

BEING THE REPORT OF THE TWO-DAY METHODOLOGY TRAINING WORKSHOP IN SOCIAL SCIENCES ORGANIZED UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF AFRICAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE HELD BETWEEN 9TH AND 10TH OF MAY, 2023 AT FACULTY OF ADMINISTRATION BOARD ROOM, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE

The two-day Methodology Training Workshop in Social Sciences, organized by the African Research University Alliance, commenced with an opening address by Prof Olayode, the principal investigator. In his speech, Prof Olayode highlighted the primary goal of the three-year project, which began in 2021, to contribute to sustainable peace and development. The workshop aimed to enhance participants' understanding of scientific research methods and approaches, analyze different types of research, and deepen knowledge of formulating research questions. The participants represented various departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences and education studies.

Day One:

Lecture One: Scientific Methods and Research Process (Prof Olayode)

The first part of Prof Olayode's lecture focused on the scientific method of research. It was emphasized that the purpose of any research is to provide solutions to identified research problems. This requires generating new knowledge through a systematic process and method. The interconnection between research problems, research questions, and research objectives was explored. The research problem forms the foundation for the research questions, making the identification of the problem and the existing research gap the initial step in any research. The researcher follows a systematic and orderly approach to explore the identified problem.

The lecture also highlighted the underlying reasons for conducting research, such as human curiosity and the desire for knowledge, as well as the practical need to handle complex situations and find solutions to problems. The essential characteristics of research were discussed, including its systematic, logical, empirical, and evidence-based nature. Prof Olayode engaged the participants in a thought-provoking discussion on the various research domains that benefit humanity, including health, weather, politics, security governance, and more.

The research process was then explained in detail. Prof Olayode emphasized that problem identification, or problem definition, is the first and most critical step in research. Following this is the formulation of objectives, hypotheses, and the justification for the study. The importance of conducting a preliminary literature review before problem identification was highlighted. The research problem is significant as it reveals the gap in existing knowledge and serves as the foundation for the research objectives, hypotheses, and research questions.

During the discussion on literature review, Prof Olayode stressed the need for both conceptual and empirical reviews, which should guide the review process. The session concluded at precisely 12:03 pm, with an interactive Q&A session between the participants and Prof Olayode.

Lecture Two: Quantitative Approach (Dr. Amos Oyedokun)

Dr. Amos Oyedokun delivered a lecture on the quantitative research approach, which involves the numerical and statistical analysis of data collected by researchers. He explained that this approach revolves around quantifying a problem and identifying the percentage and numerical values associated with the variables. According to Dr. Oyedokun, this approach aids in understanding the prevalence of an issue. Data analysis within this framework is considered a complex process that encompasses inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as prediction and description.

In his lecture, Dr. Oyedokun outlined four key aspects of the data analysis process. These include: providing a clear description of the data, identifying what is typical of the problem, establishing relationships between variables or data issues, and ensuring that the research question and hypothesis are addressed.

Regarding the purpose of the literature review, Dr. Oyedokun compared it to joining a conversation. Just as one cannot contribute meaningfully to a discussion without a good understanding of the topic, a literature review enables researchers to engage in an informed

dialogue within their field. To conduct a thorough literature review, it is crucial to delve into comprehensive studies and review previous research. This ensures that researchers are well-versed in existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and build upon the work of others.

Characteristics of a good literature review can be summarized as follows:

Comprehensive Coverage: A literature review should encompass relevant and up-to-date sources that provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Critical Evaluation: Researchers should critically analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature, including the methodologies used, limitations, and biases, to provide an objective assessment.

Clear Organization: The literature review should be well-structured, logically organized, and present the information in a coherent manner, enabling readers to follow the flow of ideas.

Synthesis of Findings: The review should synthesize and integrate findings from different sources, highlighting common themes, trends, and areas of consensus or divergence.

Identification of Research Gaps: A good literature review should identify areas where further research is needed and highlight the specific research questions that have yet to be answered.

Expanding on the quantitative research approach, Dr. Oyedokun stressed the importance of substantial numerical data. This means that quantitative research relies heavily on collecting and analyzing data in numerical form. It involves quantifying variables and using statistical analysis to understand the relationships and patterns within the data.

In quantitative research, three types of variables are commonly discussed:

Dependent Variable: This is the variable that is being studied and measured. It is influenced or impacted by other variables in the research study.

Independent Variable: This variable is manipulated or controlled by the researcher and is believed to have an effect on the dependent variable. It is often used to test hypotheses or make predictions.

Intervening Variable: Also known as a mediating variable, it comes between the independent and dependent variables and helps explain the relationship between them. It mediates the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. These variables play crucial roles in quantitative research, allowing researchers to examine and understand the relationships and effects between different factors in a systematic and measurable way.

According to Dr. Oyedokun, the purposes of statistics in quantitative research are as follows:

- Identifying errors in variables by highlighting coefficients.
- Testing the significance of findings.
- Supporting researchers in making inferences about variables.
- Identifying patterns between variables that might otherwise go unnoticed.

In the context of quantitative research, values are expressed numerically, and scales can be categorized as interval, ratio, nominal, or ordinal. Interval scales represent the equal intervals between values, while ratio scales have a meaningful zero point. Nominal scales involve categorical data without inherent ordering, and ordinal scales represent data with a specific order or ranking. Dr. Oyedokun emphasized the importance of selecting an appropriate sampling style that aligns with the scope of the study. Furthermore, he noted that the nature of the research questions and objectives plays a significant role in determining whether a quantitative or qualitative approach should be adopted.

The lecture concluded with an interactive discussion and responses to probing questions raised by the participants.

Lecture Three: Qualitative Research Method (Dr. Melvin Agunbiade)

Dr. Melvin Agunbiade emphasized the significance and usefulness of the qualitative research approach, just like the quantitative research approach. The qualitative approach involves the analysis of data through thematic or content analysis. It focuses on depth and contextualization,

guided by well-developed research questions and guides. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is more iterative, allowing for new questions to emerge from the field. Dr. Agunbiade highlighted that the primary objective is not to establish superiority between the methodological approaches, but rather to choose the approach that provides the clearest answers to the nature of the reality being investigated.

The benefits of using a Qualitative Research Method include:

Rich and in-depth data: Qualitative research allows for a deeper understanding of the studied phenomenon by capturing the complexities and nuances of human experiences.

Contextual insights: This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which the research takes place.

Flexibility: Qualitative research offers flexibility in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, allowing researchers to adapt their methods as new insights emerge.

Participant perspectives: Qualitative research focuses on capturing the perspectives and voices of the participants, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of their experiences.

Dr. Agunbiade identified three key methods for collecting qualitative data:

Key Informant Interview: This involves conducting in-depth interviews with individuals who possess specialized knowledge or expertise related to the research topic. These interviews aim to gather rich and detailed information.

Focus Group Discussion: Focus groups involve bringing together a group of participants to engage in open and interactive discussions about the research topic. This method allows for the exploration of shared experiences, opinions, and perspectives.

Observations: Observations involve systematically observing and documenting the behavior, interactions, and context of participants in their natural environment. This method provides valuable insights into people's behaviors and the social dynamics surrounding the research topic.

Dr. Agunbiade also explained the concept of coding in qualitative research, which involves the process of reducing and categorizing data. Coding can be conducted through two approaches:

Inductive Coding: This involves allowing categories and themes to emerge from the data itself, without preconceived notions or theoretical frameworks. It is a bottom-up approach that allows for new insights and patterns to emerge.

Deductive Coding: In this approach, predefined categories and themes are derived from existing theories or prior knowledge. The coding process aligns the data with the predetermined categories.

The section concluded with a general overview of the day's lectures, and the session ended with a discussion at precisely 3:06 PM.

From the first day of the Methodology Training Workshop in Social Sciences, several key insights can be drawn:

The workshop aimed to enhance participants' understanding of scientific research methods and approaches, emphasizing the importance of formulating research questions and conducting thorough literature reviews. The scientific method of research was highlighted as a systematic process for generating new knowledge to address identified research problems. The research process involves problem identification, formulating objectives and hypotheses, and conducting a literature review.

The quantitative research approach, presented by Dr. Amos Oyedokun, involves numerical and statistical analysis to quantify and understand the prevalence of a problem. It relies on substantial numerical data and utilizes dependent, independent, and intervening variables to examine relationships and patterns. The qualitative research approach, discussed by Dr. Melvin Agunbiade, focuses on depth, contextualization, and capturing rich and in-depth data through methods such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Coding, both inductive and deductive, is used to reduce and categorize qualitative data.

The benefits of using qualitative research methods include obtaining contextual insights, flexible data collection and interpretation, and capturing participant perspectives. The workshop emphasized the importance of selecting the research approach that best suits the nature of the research question and provides the clearest answers to the investigated reality.

In conclusion, the workshop provided participants with valuable knowledge and skills in scientific research methods, quantitative and qualitative approaches, and conducting literature reviews. The training aimed to contribute to sustainable peace and development, and the participants represented various departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences and education studies.

DAY TWO (10TH MAY, 2023).

The seminar commenced promptly at 9:15 am with a welcome address delivered by Dr. Wale Olusola from the Department of International Relations at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife. Following the welcome address, the members were introduced.

First Lecture: Utilizing Mixed Method in Research by Dr Damilola Agbalajobi.

The first lecture titled "Utilizing Mixed Method in Research" was presented by Dr. Damilola Agbalajobi, the Head of the Political Science Department at OAU, Ife. Dr. Agbalajobi began by providing a clear explanation of mixed methods in research. This approach combines quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of a subject. The historical origins of mixed methods can be traced back to sociology and anthropology, where it initially started with triangulation—a technique involving the use of multiple approaches in research. Triangulation can take the form of data triangulation or investigator's triangulation. Dr. Agbalajobi highlighted three possible outcomes of triangulation: convergence, inconsistency, and contradiction. According to the speaker, there are several advantages of employing triangulation. First, it allows researchers to have greater confidence in the outcomes of their efforts. Second, it provides access to richer data and helps uncover any contradictions within the data. Finally, it serves as a litmus test for competing theories.

Expanding on this topic, Dr. Agbalajobi discussed the different types of triangulation—simultaneous and sequential. Scholars have identified various rationales for using mixed methods in research. These include encouraging elaboration on a phenomenon, enhancing clarification, uncovering contradictions, and expanding the range of inquiries.

The speaker emphasized the importance of understanding what is being mixed and why researchers choose to employ mixed methods. The purposes of using mixed methods should be clearly established. By combining different approaches, researchers can address a phenomenon from various angles and analyze data through balanced perspectives. While statistical data may provide precise or closely related answers, diverse views and perspectives often exist, influenced by factors such as researchers' biases or knowledge. Therefore, combining both methods is essential for obtaining a balanced overview. Based on the research question, a researcher employing a mixed methods approach can use different methods to explore each question, resulting in a more comprehensive outcome.

Dr. Agbalajobi discussed the considerations for using a mixed methods approach, including understanding various aspects of the phenomenon under review, determining the theories to be tested or generated, considering the ideological drive, selecting a sampling method, and deciding whether to perform the experiment naturalistically or otherwise. Additionally, researchers must consider cultural factors, gender focus, environmental and contextual aspects, and the values that guide people's actions when using mixed methods.

To conclude, Dr. Agbalajobi listed and discussed the challenges of using mixed methods in Africa. These challenges include data availability, the presence of capable research staff, safety and security concerns, and financial limitations. Scholars and participants engaged in rigorous discussions to share their experiences and explore ways to overcome these challenges.

The seminar provided valuable insights into the concept of mixed methods in research, its advantages, considerations for implementation, and the challenges specific to the African context.

Second Lecture

The second lecture titled "The Nature of Post-Conflict Research" was delivered by Prof. Charles Ukeje from the Department of International Relations at OAU Ife. Prof. Charles examined the concept of conducting research in a post-conflict context. Africa has witnessed numerous conflicts, internal and external challenges, and bitter experiences. Therefore, studying a country that has undergone a period of conflict, whether political, economic, or ethno-religious, is crucial in understanding its experiences. Africa, as a whole, can be seen as a vast post-conflict space, necessitating an examination of the unique characteristics of its states.

Prof. Charles highlighted several important considerations when conducting post-conflict research. These include:

Understanding the field: Each field is unique, and one cannot apply the lens of one field to engage with another. It is essential to grasp the specific aspects of the field one intends to venture into.

Defining the scope of the research while in the field.

Recognizing that the people being studied have gone through challenging times, requiring researchers to be sensitive, empathetic, and considerate of their emotions.

Being mindful of language use, as different categories of people with varying experiences will be encountered.

Prioritizing inclusion: Post-conflict researchers must ensure that no one is left behind and that inclusivity is a fundamental principle.

Practicing patience throughout the research process.

Recognizing the voice and agency of critical actors in the field.

Adequately responding to the financial demands of post-conflict research.

Emphasizing the importance of continuous engagement.

Prof. Charles urged post-conflict researchers to be mindful of the available resources. While financial considerations are important, the focus should be on generating research ideas that bring funding opportunities rather than prioritizing money alone.

The lecture was followed by a robust interactive session where participants responded to probing questions posed by the speaker.

In the closing remarks, Prof. Olayode, the principal investigator, expressed appreciation for the efforts of the participants who represented frontline departments. He encouraged them to seize the opportunities provided by the ARUA project to advance research and promote knowledge. Prof. Olayode highlighted three funding opportunities within the ARUA project, including PhD grants, policy briefs, and journal articles. Despite the challenges faced by the project, it has successfully provided multiple grant opportunities, including six PhD students.

Dr. Wale Olusola then delivered the vote of thanks, bringing the seminar to a close.