

QUALITATIVE METHOD - CASE STUDY

The background of the slide is white with abstract green geometric shapes on the right and bottom edges. These shapes include overlapping triangles and polygons in various shades of green, from light to dark, creating a modern, layered effect.

Introduction

To graduate students and researchers unfamiliar with case study methodology, there is often misunderstanding about what a case study is and how it, as a form of qualitative research.

Case study is a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, a small group of participants, or a group as a whole. This qualitative method of study emphasizes detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines.

Case Study - Defined

- It is a systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest.
- It refers to the collection and presentation of detailed information about a particular participant or small group, frequently including the accounts of subjects themselves.
- It is an in depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey.

When is a case study appropriate?

According to Yin (2003), a case study can be considered when:

- a. the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions
- b. you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study
- c. you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study
- d. the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context

What may be revealed?

- Through case study, a researcher can closely examine the data within a specific context.
- Through case study, a researcher can examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods.
- Through case study, a researcher can test theoretical models by using them in real world situations.
- A case study may not answer a question completely, but it will give some indications and allow further elaboration and hypothesis creation on a subject.

Why use a case study?

- Case studies are a great way to improve a learning experience, because they get the learner involved, and encourage immediate use of newly acquired skills.
- They differ from lectures or assigned readings, because they require participation and deliberate application of a broad range of skills.
- Case studies help researchers make the difference between knowing what to do, and knowing how, when, and why to do it.

Case Study Applications

- Utilization of the case study as a teaching method.
- Practical application and testing of scholarly knowledge.
- Provides an approximation of various professional environments (i.e. classroom, board room, courtroom, or hospital).
- Incorporates the idea that students can learn from one another "by engaging with each other and with each other's ideas, by asserting something and then having it questioned, challenged and thrown back at them so that they can reflect on what they hear, and then refine what they say". (Boehrer 1990)

Designs of Case Study

To obtain as complete a picture of the participant as possible, case study researchers can employ a variety of a variety of case study designs. Some common designs include single-case and multiple-case design.

- ❑ **Single-case design** – It is where events are limited to a single occurrence. However, the drawback of this design is its inability to provide a generalizing conclusion, in particular when the events are rare.
- ❑ **Multiple-case design** - It can be adopted with real-life events that show numerous sources of evidence through replication rather than sampling logic.

Types of Case Study

1. Explanatory - This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.

Example: Joia (2002). Analysing a web-based e-commerce learning community: A case study in Brazil. Internet Research, 12, 305-317.

2. Exploratory – It is a type of case study that is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.

Example: Lotzkar & Bottorff (2001). An observational study of the development of a nurse-patient relationship. Clinical Nursing Research, 10, 275-294

Types of Case Study

3. Descriptive - This type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.

Example: Tolson, Fleming, & Schartau (2002). Coping with menstruation: Understanding the needs of women with Parkinson's disease. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 40, 513-521.

4. Multiple Case Study - It enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases.

Example: Campbell & Ahrens (1998). Innovative community services for rape victims: An application of multiple case study methodology. American Journal of Community Psychology, 26, 537-571.

Types of Case Study

5. Intrinsic - The term 'intrinsic' suggests that researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest.

Example: Hellström, Nolan, & Lundh (2005). "We do things together" A case study of "couplehood" in dementia. Dementia, 4 (1), 7-22.

6. Instrumental – It is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory.

Example: Luck, Jackson, & Usher (2007). STAMP: Components of observable behaviour that indicate potential for patient violence in emergency departments. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 59, 11-19.

Types of Case Study

7. **Collective** – It is similar in nature and description to multiple case studies.

Example: Scheib (2003). Role stress in the professional life of the school music teacher: A collective case study. Journal of Research in Music Education, 51, 124-136

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study

- ❑ The primary advantage of case study is that it **provides much more detailed information than what is available through other methods, such as surveys.** Case studies also allow one to present data collected from multiple methods.
- ❑ **Can be lengthy** - Because they provide detailed information about the case in narrative form, it may be difficult to hold a reader's interest if too lengthy.
- ❑ **Concern that case studies lack rigor** - Case studies have been viewed in the evaluation and research fields as less rigorous than surveys or other methods. Reasons for this include the fact that qualitative research in general is still considered unscientific by some and in many cases, case study researchers have not been systematic in their data collection or have allowed bias in their findings.

Advantages and Limitations of Case Study

- ❑ **Not generalizable** - A common complaint about case studies is that it is difficult to generalize from one case to another. But case studies have also been prone to overgeneralization, which comes from selecting a few examples and assuming without evidence that they are typical or representative of the population.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

The steps involved in a case study are as follows:

1. Plan

- Identify stakeholders who will be involved.
- Brainstorm a case study topic, considering types of cases and why they are unique or of interest.
- Identify what information is needed and from whom
- Identify any documents needed for review.
- List stakeholders to be interviewed or surveyed (national, facility, and beneficiary levels) and determine sample if necessary.
- Ensure research will follow international and national ethical research standards, including review by ethical research committees.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

2. Develop Instruments

- Develop interview/survey protocols — the rules that guide the administration and implementation of the interview/survey. Put simply, these are the instructions that are followed to ensure consistency across interviews/surveys, and thus increase the reliability of the findings.
- Develop an interview guide/survey that lists the questions or issues to be explored and includes an informed consent form. Please note that you will likely need interview guides/surveys for each group of stakeholders, as questions may differ.
- Where necessary, translate guides into local languages and test translation.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

3. Train Data Collectors

- Identify and train data collectors (if necessary).

4. Collect Data

- Gather all relevant documents.
- Set up interviews/surveys with stakeholders.
- Seek informed consent of each respondent (written or documented oral).
- If the respondent has consented, conduct the interview/survey.

Steps Involved in a Case Study

▶ 5. Analyze Data

- ◀ Review all relevant documents.
- ◀ Review all interview/survey data.

▶ 6. Disseminate Findings

- ◀ Write report.
- ◀ Solicit feedback.
- ◀ Revise
- ◀ Disseminate.

What are the potential sources of information?

Case studies typically rely on multiple sources of information and methods to provide as complete a picture as possible. Information sources could include:

- Project documents
- Project reports, including quarterly reports, midterm reviews
- Monitoring visits
- Mystery client reports
- Facility assessment reports
- Interviews
- Questionnaire/survey results
- Evaluation reports
- Observation
- Others

Elements of a Case Study

A case study do not have set elements that are needed to be included. These elements will vary depending on the case or story chosen, the data collected, and the However, case studies typically describe a program or intervention put in place to address a particular problem.

Elements of a Case Study

Here are some elements that you could draw out from in order to conduct your case study:

1. Problem. *(It is essential to identify what the problem was.)*

- i. Identify your problem
- ii. Explain why the problem is important
- iii. How was the problem identified?
- iv. Was the problem for identifying the problem effective?

2.Steps taken to address the problem. *(What was done (activities/ interventions/inputs), where, by whom, for whom?)*

3.Results. *(What were the results of your intervention, particularly the significant or unique results?)*

Elements of a Case Study

4.Challenges and how they were met. *(This focuses on what challenges or difficulties you encountered and what you did to overcome them.)*

5.Beyond Results. *(Are the results mentioned above sustainable? Why or why not?)*

6.Lessons learned. *(What lessons were learned: programmatic, technical, financial, process, etc.?)*

How are Case Studies Presented?

Case studies are flexible in that they can be presented in a number of ways — there is no specific format to follow. Here is a suggested report outline that could be use in presenting a case study:

I. Introduction and Justification

II. Methodology

- a. How was the process carried out? (Describe the process of selecting the case and data collection sources, as well as how data was collected.)
- b. What assumptions are there (if any)?
- c. Are there any limitations with this method?

How are Case Studies Presented?

d. What instruments were used to collect data? (You may want to include some or all in the appendix.)

e. What sample(s) is/are being used?

f. Over which period of time was this data collected?

III. The Problem

IV. The Steps Taken to Address the Problem

V. The Results

VI. The Challenges and How They were Met

VII. Beyond Results

VIII. Lessons Learned

IX. Conclusion

X. Appendices

Evaluation Research

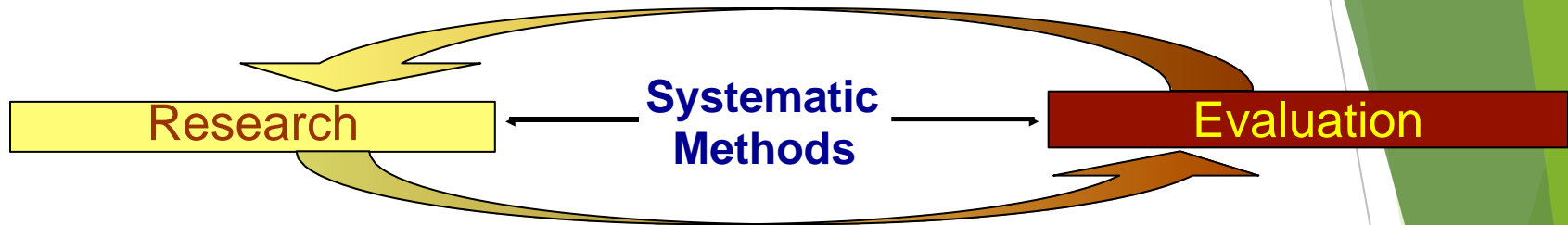
Note:

***Some of the material on these slides is
derived from the Centers for Disease Control***

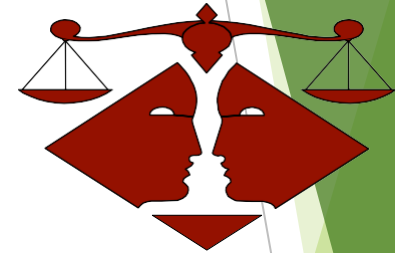
De@initions

- ❏ Evaluation research, sometimes called *program evaluation*, refers to a research purpose rather than a specific method.
- ❏ This purpose is to evaluate the impact of social interventions such as new treatment methods, innovations in services, and a host of others.
- ❏ Evaluation research is a form of applied research—it is intended to have some real-world effect.
- ❏ Many methods, like surveys and experiments can be used in evaluation research.
- ❏ In recent years, the field of evaluation research has become an increasingly popular and active research specialty, as reflected in textbooks, courses, and projects.

Research vs. Evaluation



- Production of generalizable knowledge
- Researcher-derived questions
- Paradigm stance
- More controlled setting
- Clearer role
- Often published
- Clearer allegiance



- Knowledge intended for use
- Program- or funder-derived questions
- Judgmental quality
- Action setting
- Role conflicts more likely
- Often not published
- Multiple allegiances

“Research seeks to *prove*,
evaluation seeks to *improve*...”

M.Q. Patton

Surveillance & Monitoring vs. *Program Evaluation*

Surveillance -tracks diseases, problems, or risky behaviors

Monitoring -tracks changes in program outcomes over time

Evaluation -seeks to understand specifically why these changes occur

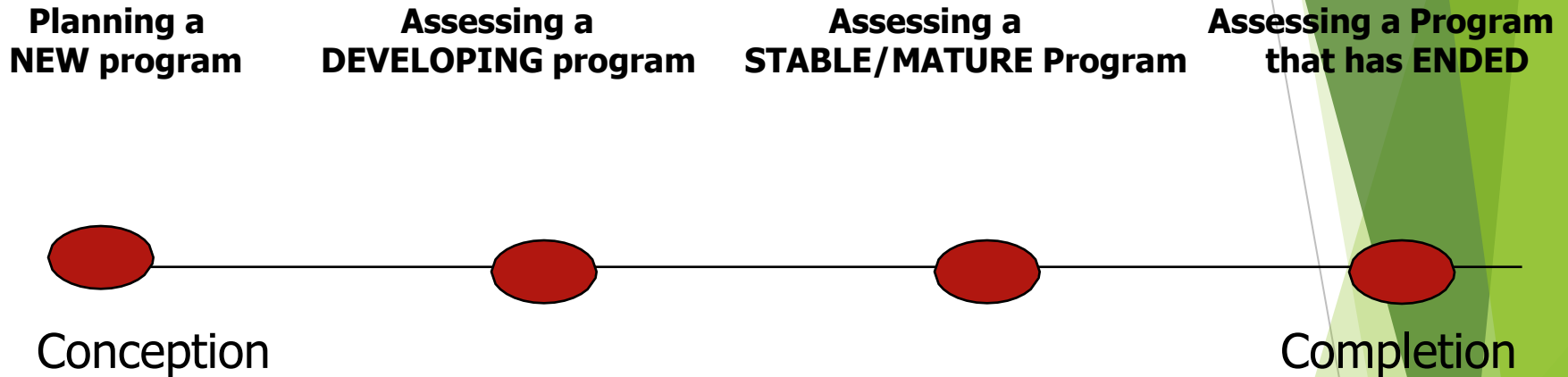
Topics Appropriate to Evaluation Research

- ◆◆ Evaluation research is appropriate whenever some social intervention occurs or is planned.
- ◆◆ Social intervention is an action taken within a social context for the purpose of producing some intended result.
- ◆◆ In its simplest sense, *evaluation research* is the process of determining whether a social intervention has produced the intended result.
- ◆◆ The topics appropriate for evaluation research are limitless.
- ◆◆ The questions appropriate for evaluation research are of great practical significance: jobs, programs, and investments as well as values and beliefs.

What Can be Evaluated?

- **Direct service interventions**
 - ◀ **Community mobilization efforts**
 - ◀ **Research initiatives**
 - ◀ **Surveillance & monitoring systems**
 - ◀ **Policy development activities**
 - ◀ **Problem/crisis investigations**
- **Client Assessments**
 - ◀ **Communication systems**
 - ◀ **Infrastructure-building**
 - ◀ **Training and educational services & staff qualifications**
 - ◀ **Administrative systems**

When to Conduct Evaluation?



The **stage of program development** influences the reason for program evaluation.

Why Evaluate Programs?

- ▶ ◆◆ To **gain insight** about a program and its operations - to see where we are going and where we are coming from, and to find out what works and what doesn't
- ▶ ◆◆ To **improve practice** - to modify or adapt practice to enhance the success of activities
- ▶ ◆◆ To **assess effects** - to see how well we are meeting objectives and goals, how the program benefits the community, and to provide evidence of effectiveness

Steps in Program Evaluation

Step 1: Engage the Stakeholders

Step 2: Describe the Program

Step 3: Focus the Evaluation Design

Step 4: Gather Credible Evidence

Step 5: Justify Conclusions

Step 6: Ensure Use & Share Lessons Learned

Identifying Stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders?

- ✓✓ Persons involved in program operations
- ✓✓ Persons served or affected by the program
- ✓✓ Intended users of evaluation findings

What is their interest in the program?

- ✓✓ Do they support the program?
- ✓✓ Are they skeptical about or antagonistic toward the program?

Identifying Stakeholders

❖❖ Persons Involved in Program Operations

➤➤ Staff and Partners

❖❖ Persons affected or served by the program

➤➤ Clients, their families and social networks, providers and community groups

❖❖ Intended users of the evaluation findings

➤➤ Policymakers, managers, administrators, advocates, funders, and others

❖❖ **Be Sure to Include both Supporters and Skeptics!**

Engaging Stakeholders

Stakeholders should be involved in...

- ✓✓ Describing program activities, context, and priorities
- ✓✓ Defining problems
- ✓✓ Selecting evaluation questions and methods
- ✓✓ Serving as data sources
- ✓✓ Defining what constitutes the “proof” of success
- ✓✓ Interpreting findings
- ✓✓ Disseminating information
- ✓✓ Implementing results

Working with Stakeholders

Identify stakeholders for your program

- ✓✓ Those involved in program operations
- ✓✓ Persons served or affected by the program
- ✓✓ Intended users of evaluation findings

Think about which ones you need most for...

- ✓✓ Credibility
- ✓✓ Implementation
- ✓✓ Advocacy
- ✓✓ Funding

List ways to keep them engaged



Formulating the Problem: *Issues of Measurement*

- ◆◆ **Problem: What is the purpose of the intervention to be evaluated?**
- ◆◆ **This question often produces vague results.**
- ◆◆ **A common problem is measuring the “unmeasurable.”**
- ◆◆ **Evaluation research is a matter of finding out whether something is there or not there, whether something happened or did not happen.**
- ◆◆ **To conduct evaluation research, we must be able to operationalize, observe, and measure.**

What is the outcome, or the response variable?

- ☐☐☐ If a social program is intended to accomplish something, we must be able to measure that something.
- ☐☐☐ It is essential to achieve agreements on definitions in advance.
- ☐☐☐ In some cases you may find that the definitions of a problem and a sufficient solution are defined by law or by agency regulations; if so you must be aware of such specifications and accommodate them.

Operationalizing Success/Failure

- ▶  Potentially one of the most taxing aspects of evaluation research is determining whether the program under review succeeded or failed.
- ▶  Definitions of “success” and “failure” can be rather difficult, and these are usually not binary, but on a scale.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

How much does the program cost in relation to what it returns in benefits?

- ✓✓ **If the benefits outweigh the cost, keep the program going.**
- ✓✓ **If the reverse, change it or 'junk it'.**
- ✓✓ **Unfortunately this is not an appropriate analysis to make if thinking only in terms of money.**

Ultimately, the criteria of success and failure are often a matter of agreement.

The people responsible for the program may commit themselves in advance to a particular outcome that will be regarded as an indication of success.

Measurement in Evaluation

- ❖ Researchers must take measurement quite seriously in evaluation research, carefully determining all the variables to be measured and getting appropriate measures for each.
- ❖ Such decisions are often not purely scientific ones.
- ❖ Evaluation researchers often must work out their measurement strategy with the people responsible for the program being evaluated.
- ❖ There is also a significant political aspect.

Additional Issues and Implications

The Social Context

- ✓✓ Evaluation research has a special propensity for running into problems.
- ✓✓ Logistical problems
- ✓✓ Ethical problems

Three important reasons why the implications of the evaluation research results are not always put into practice.

- ✓✓ The implications may not always be presented in a way that the non-researchers can understand.
- ✓✓ Evaluation results sometimes contradict deeply held beliefs
- ✓✓ Vested interests in the programs assert their influence