



## **Why is Qualitative Research Sparse in Africa? Understanding Interviews as a Data Collection method**

Nekpen E. Okhawere and Osaiga F. Isibor

To cite this article: Okhawere, N.E. and Isibor, O.F. (2021). Why is Qualitative Research Sparse in Africa? Understanding Interviews as a Data Collection method. *Mkwawa Journal of Education and Development*, 5(1): 1-17. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37759/mjed.2021.5.1.1>

Link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.37759/mjed.2021.5.1.1>



## Why is Qualitative Research Sparse in Africa? Understanding Interviews as a Data Collection method

Nekpen E. Okhawere<sup>1</sup> and Osaiga F. Isibor<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

This paper addresses the reasons qualitative research appear to be more popular in the western countries than in African countries. Specifically, the paper explores interview as a qualitative data collection tool and provides details of required documents for conducting interviews. Drawing on extant literature and the observations and experiences of the authors while conducting both quantitative and qualitative research in Nigeria, an African country and Australia, a western country, the paper identifies the cultural and technological differences between Nigeria and Australia as significant for the quality of data that can be collected using interviews. In addition, cultural and technological challenges such as superstitions, lifestyle of narcissism and dominance, inaccessibility to internet services and poor urban planning are discussed as accountable for sparse qualitative research in Africa countries. The paper recommends that the subjective nature of qualitative research should be utilised by researchers in Africa to minimise cultural and technological challenges.

### Paper History:

Received: 18 July 2020

Accepted: 21 November 2020

### Key words:

Qualitative Research; Interviews; Data Collection; Culture; Technology

### Motivation for this study

Africa has continuously been denied the rich understanding and interpretation of philosophies, decisions, behaviours, and human values which qualitative research produces (Abdullahi, Senekal, Zyl-Schalekamp, Amzat, & Saliman, 2012; Ejohwomu & Oshodi, 2014; Umeokafor & Windapo, 2018). This denial is especially a concern because qualitative research is advantageous for minimum misinterpretation and misunderstanding for research conducted amongst people like Africans who have deep seated cultural beliefs (Keikelame & Swartz, 2019; Mazonde & Carmichael, 2020). However, in Africa, instead of having more intellectual debates on the need for qualitative research among researchers, there has been more discussions promoting quantitative research over qualitative research, in the guise that quantitative research is more rigorous and (or) accurate than qualitative research (Neal Kimball & Turner, 2018; Mazonde & Carmichael, 2020). Another reason attributed for why quantitative research is preferred to qualitative research is the challenge of insufficient expert teachers and reviewers of qualitative research (Beaudry & Mouton, 2018). As a result,

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of Industrial and Personal Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Nigeria. E-mail: [nekpen.okhawere@uniben.edu](mailto:nekpen.okhawere@uniben.edu)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Nigeria. E-mail: [Osaiga.isibor@uniben.edu](mailto:Osaiga.isibor@uniben.edu)

upcoming African researchers tend to gravitate towards acquiring more of quantitative skills than qualitative skills.

While Africa seems not to be promoting qualitative research, western countries are demanding and experiencing increasing number of qualitative researchers (Agnisarman, Chalil Madathil, Smith, Ashok, Welch & McElligott, 2017). This increase in demand is attributed to the fact that qualitative research is fundamental for the analysis of complex phenomena that are difficult to quantitatively measure. Qualitative research is also basic to the origination of basic data for adequate understanding of an identified problem, and the comprehension of outcome and process variables (Crick, 2021). Qualitative research investigates behaviours and the context within which behaviours occur to provide understanding to possible causal systems. It builds measurement instruments for quantitative research and investigates unique populations (Achterberg & Arendt, 2008; Curry, Nembhard & Bradley, 2009). Qualitative research requires full comprehension of a subject area through laborious study of associated phenomena. Qualitative research demands in-depth comprehension as well as interpretation of human behaviours, values, and perceptions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It critically finds participants who, for the purpose of retrieving data are voluntarily active in producing broad and specific data until it appears there is no further data to be explored.

Despite the advantages of qualitative research, Africa still minimally engages and promotes qualitative research methodologies. This poor participation in qualitative research calls for concerns. Even though, several research indicate that Africans believe that qualitative papers are less rigorous and therefore not convincing enough to be regarded as valid and reliable (Bubaker, Balakrishnan & Bernadine, 2005; Laryea, & Leiringer, 2012; Umeokafor & Windapo 2018). a few research findings show that certain factors associated with the way a people are shaped and made to function can affect their choice of research methodology as well as the effectiveness of their chosen method (Keikelame & Swartz, 2019; Mazonde & Carmichael, 2020). Therefore, this paper raises questions on how Africans are shaped and made to function. It specifically seeks to ascertain factors that account for how the African is shaped and functions and the extent to which these factors have influenced choice of research methodology on the continent. Furthermore, the paper provides a guide on the processes involved in conducting interviews as a qualitative data collection method.

The motivation of this paper therefore is to contribute towards the adoption of interviews as a qualitative research technique in the African context by providing details of documents required to ensure interviews are effectively conducted. In addition, the paper compares the cultural and technological differences between Nigeria, which is an African country and Australia, which is a western country and how these two factors significantly influence researchers' preference for qualitative or quantitative research methods in both Nigeria and Australia. The authors of this paper carried out research in Nigeria and Australia, hence the decision to compare the two countries. The comparison of Nigeria and Australia allows the authors to draw from their observations and participatory experiences. The hope is that this paper would help create awareness of qualitative research as significant for research decolonisation and ignite the debates that qualitative processes are as well rigorous. It is also hoped that details of conducting interviews provided in this paper would add to the scarce teaching of qualitative process to African students and scholars, and ultimately Africa would enjoy the in-depth analytical strength of qualitative research.

## What makes qualitative research different from quantitative research?

Qualitative research generally investigates, and analyses experiences drawn from behaviours and relationships and does not utilise statistics or numerals for such (Maxwell, 2010). Based on extant literature, qualitative research has some specific features that are listed in Table 1 below

**Table 1: Features of qualitative research**

Specific features of Qualitative research	Literature
It assumes an interpretative paradigm	Johnson, de Waal, Stefurak, & Hildebrand, (2017); Knoblauch & Pfadenhauer, (2018)
Data are employed to answer the questions- ‘how’ ‘why’, ‘what’ and where.	Rose, (2016); Baur & Lamnek, (2017); Knoblauch & Vollmer, (2019)
It involves single case studies which means it focuses on very few cases. However, data drawn from the few cases are huge.	Behnke, Baur& Behnke,(2010); Rose, (2016); Baur & Lamnek, (2017); Knoblauch&Vollmer, (2019); Traue&Schünzel, (2019); Schünzel&Traue, (2019); Schmidt, (2019); Helfferich, (2019)
Data is retrieved using interviews or ethnography (natural data). The data collection methods are less structured.	Miles & Huberman, (1994); Kaplan & Maxwell, (1994); Kumar, (2005); Merriam, (2009); Hennink,, Hutter, & Bailey, (2010); Goertz & Mahoney, (2012); Helfferich, (2019); Rose,(2016); Traue & Schünzel, (2019); Schünzel & Traue, (2019); Knoblauch &Vollmer, (2019)
The data collection methods utilise open-ended questions	Rose,(2016); Knoblauch & Pfadenhauer, (2018); Traue & Schünzel, (2019); Helfferich, (2019)
Data are typically prepared and organized either by hand or by using qualitative data analysis software (such as NVivo, MAXqda or Atlas/ti)	Achterberg & Arendt, (2008); Knoblauch & Pfadenhauer, (2018);
Data obtained through Data collection methods are verbiage.	Goertz & Mahoney, (2012); Knoblauch & Vollmer, (2019)
Allows understanding the nature and complexity of the phenomenon under consideration. Facilitates research in new areas, supports the examination of a phenomenon in its natural environment, supports in depth research	Lincoln & Guba, (1985); Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, (1987); Denzin & Lincoln, (1994)

Source: Authors’ compilation

Broadly, quantitative research is the use of statistics for empirical investigation. It involves the analysis of data using numbers that help to describe the implications of empirical observations (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012). The advantages of numerical analysis of data include that research process and outcome are not influenced by personal preconceptions, data is simplified, and easily comparable and valuations standards are effortlessly created (Martin & Bridgmon, 2012; Caputi, 2001). Specifically, the definition of quantitative research is represented in the features motioned in Table 2 below

**Table 2: Features of Quantitative Research**

Features of Quantitative Research	Literature
Assumes the positivist paradigm	Ametowobla, Baur, & Norkus, (2017); Baur & Blasius, (2019)
Possesses the ability to analyse numerous quantitative data aimed at testing hypotheses or a theory. To eliminate researcher bias, quantitative research requires a large population that is normally distributed.	Kumar, (2005); Singh, (2006); Bhattacharjee, (2012); Goertz & Mahoney, (2012).
May focus on several cases but retrieves data that are little information drawn from each case.	Singh, (2006); Hartmann & Lengerer, (2019)
Retrieves data through structured means such as a survey or using mass data that include information from websites and other bookkeeping data. This ensures that results are highly reliable.	Dawson, (2002); Singh, (2006); Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Baur (2009); Singer, & Tourangeau, (2009); Goertz & Mahoney, (2012); Blasius & Thiessen, (2012); Baur, (2014); Foster, Ghani, Jarmin, Kreuter, & Lane (eds.). (2017); König, Schröder, & Wiegand, E. (eds.) (2018); Schmitz & Yanenko, (2019); Hartmann & Lengerer, (2019)
Survey as data collection methods uses direct questions, which are short and closed ended such that quantification and comparison of the research is possible.	Balnaves & Caputi, (2001); Singh, (2006); Goertz & Mahoney, (2012).
Builds data base with data retrieved and analyses data by employing statistical tools, text, or programming techniques. Statistical tools include AMOS, SPSS and or advanced programming techniques (e.g. Python).	Black, (1999); Balnaves & Caputi, (2001); Martin & Bridgmon, (2012); Baur & Lamnek, (2017).
Survey used for data collection obtains Numeric (quantified) data	Miles & Huberman, (1994); Goertz & Mahoney, (2012).

Source: Authors' compilation

### **What is an interview as a qualitative data collection method?**

Qualitative research data collection methods include documents review/analysis, case study, focus groups, participant observations, and interviews (Sutton & Austin, 2015). Qualitative research interview entails retrieving information by having conversations with an interviewee, who is also referred to as a research participant. Interviews draw stories or narratives about experiences that give meanings to emotions, relationships, and values. Interviews involve active listening and probing that encourages open discussion. Interviews are verbal interactions between an interviewer and an interviewee. Interviews can be open ended or semi-structured discussions carried out face to face or through other means such as social media or a telephone conversation (Block & Erskine, 2012).

Qualitative research interview is guided by an interview protocol and schedule which is prepared beforehand by the interviewer. The Interview protocol and schedule contains the preliminary interactions such as exchange of pleasantries that is expected to take place on the day of the interview. It provides guidelines for the interviewer on what to do just before the interview begins (Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009). Activities that can be done before the interview begins include, exchange of pleasantries and signing of consent forms, the interviewer reminding the interviewee of the research work being done, interview process for the day, rights of the interviewee and post interview activities. The interview's protocol and schedule also has the interview questions which usually would have prompts. The questions

may be structured or semi structured. While the prompts help ensure research driven questions, it also points direction for each discussion during the interview such that the open discussion between the interviewee and interviewer remains focused on answering the study's research question.

The questions the interviewer ask the interviewee are aimed at providing an understanding of the interviewee's perspectives, which usually are drawn from the interviewee's experiences/participation or observations of the research subject. The interviewer is in search of rich information that cannot be gotten from the interviewee if closed ended questions were to be utilised. The interviewee is expected to express deep-seated feelings and opinions on the subject being investigated. The interviewer must create the environment (such as creating privacy and comfort for the interviewee) to motivate the interviewee to provide rich information. It is more difficult for respondents to circumvent any question during an interview than for surveys because interviews are usually on the spot conversation between the two parties.

Interviews also provide the interviewer the opportunity to eradicate irrelevant discussions and explain concepts that the interviewee may regard as ambiguous. Furthermore, interviews allow the interviewer to observe the behaviors and environment of the interviewee as well as emotions displayed by the interviewee. Such observations could form data that can be added to other data or used to confirm other data retrieved from the interview. To conduct an interview, the interviewer must observe certain standards. Interview standards range from issues that concern ensuring voluntary participation, gaining access to participants, creating a comfortable balance of power between the interviewer and the interviewee, ensuring open discussions during the interview, upholding confidentiality of information given by the participants and avoiding the self-preconception influence on data analysis (Solarino&Aguinis,2021). Although, conducting interviews is generally guided by the aim which the research seeks to achieve, there are standards documents that should be used as tools by the interviewer to ensure privacy and confidentiality of the interviewees thereby being able to retrieve adequate data (Harvey, 2015). The documents, Participant Interview Statement (PIS), Consent Form and Interview Protocol and Guide for conducting effective interviews are described as follows.

#### Participant Interview Statement (PIS)

The PIS contains answers to questions which a prospective interviewee requires to decide if s/he would be willing to be interviewed. The PIS is prepared by the researcher and given either by hand or by mail to the prospective interviewee. The interviewee is given time, which could be days or weeks to read through the PIS, after which s/he may decide not to be interviewed or inform the researcher of the willingness to be interviewed. The PIS contains answers to the following questions: *Why is the research being done? Who can participate in the research? What would you be asked to do? What choice do you have? How much time will it take? What are the risks and benefits of participating? How will your privacy be protected? How will the information collected be used? What do you need to do to participate?* The PIS also provides further information such as the contacts of the researcher and any other specific information that the interviewee may need. See **Figure 1** for a sample of a PIS.

**Figure 1: A Sample of Participant Information Statement**

[insert name of Principal Research] [insert name of Co Research(s)]  
[insert affiliation/address of Principal Research] [insert affiliation/address of Co Research (s)]

**Participant Information Statement for the Research Project**

[insert title of research]

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above. [insert name] is conducting the research under the supervision of [insert name] of the [insert affiliation]. The research is for [insert purpose of research]

**Why is the research being done?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**Who can participate in the research?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**What are you required to do as a participant?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**What options do you have?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**How much time will the interview take?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**What are the risks and benefits of being a participant?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**How will your privacy be protected?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**How will the information retrieved be used?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**What do you need to do to become a participant?**

[insert the answer to the question]

**Further information**

If you require further information, please contact [insert name] via the contact information on this document.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

[insert name]  
Principal Researcher

[insert name (s)]  
Co Researcher(s)

**Consent Form.**

A consent form stands as a contractual agreement between the interviewee and the interviewer showing that the interviewee granted the interview voluntarily after being informed of all necessary details of the research. The interviewee who has voluntarily accepted to be interviewed signs the consent paper usually just before the interview on the interview day. The signing of the consent form makes it official that the interviewee is a participant in the research and agrees to all the terms and conditions already indicated in PIS. Just before the consent form is signed, the interviewer verbally again states some highpoints of the interview process and ask the interviewee if there are further questions s/he has that are yet to be answered by the PIS. Some of the high points to be reiterated by the Interviewer include the reminder of the aim of the research, the fact that the interview will be recorded, how the recorded interview would be used and whether the identity of the interviewee would

be stated in publications that may be produced from the research. Other reminder could also include the rights of the interviewee at that point to continue or stop the interview process, and the interviewee's access to the transcribed copy of the interview. The signed consent form should be kept by the interviewer for a certain number of years that might have been mentioned in the PIS, after which both soft and hard copies can be destroyed. See **Figure 2** for a sample of one of a consent form.

**Figure 2: A Sample of an Interview Consent Form**

**Principal Researcher:** [insert name]

[insert Principal Researcher's affiliation and email]

Project Title: [insert the research title]

I have read the provided information on the research being conducted by [insert Principal Researcher's name] and his team from the University of Benin.

I indicate my interest to participate in the intended research and I willingly give my consent by signing this document. I am aware that the research will be conducted as specified in the Participant Information Statement that I read and was given a copy. I am aware that I can decide to renounce my participation in this research at any time and I am not obligated to give reasons for my decision. I understand that I can choose not to answer all questions in the interview and decide to withdraw my transcript until [insert a period] from the day I was interviewed.

I freely agree to having my responses audio-recorded and transcribed by a third party scribe who has signed a confidentiality declaration. I am informed that I will be given the opportunity to read through the transcript for confirmation and that I am able to request for amendments to be made to the transcript. I understand that I can accept or refuse to be quoted anonymously.

I am informed that my personal information will be confidential and securely stored by the researchers. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to ask questions about my concerns and accept answers when I am satisfied

Name (Please Print): -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

Email: -----

Phone: -----

☐ I give consent to be quoted anonymously and be identified with a pseudonym.

### *Interview protocol and guide*

An interview protocol and schedules comprise of two major sections: the protocol and the schedule. The protocol is made of itemised details in the order of occurrence of how the interview was arranged between the interviewer and the interviewee, and actions prior and after interview. The interview guide provides what questions the interviewer should ask and prompts on how to facilitate the discussions during the interview. Therefore, each question for the interview has prompts. See **Figure 3** for a sample of an interview protocol and Guide.



### Figure 3: Interview Protocol and Guide

#### Interview Protocol

##### A. Preparing for the interview

1. When a potential participant indicates interest to participate, researcher will make available a convenient time and place for interview and bring along a consent form.
2. Interview venue should be noiseless and drinks/ water made available.
3. Recording device should functional, have sufficient battery power and have a spare

##### B. Prior to the interview

1. Thank the participant for choosing to participate
2. Ensure participant is comfortable, offered a drink /water and signs the consent form
3. Remind the participant that the interview will be recorded and should be about [insert expected time of interview]. Confirm that participant has sufficient time.
4. Reiterate that interview will be confidential and pseudonyms will be used.
5. Explain that participant can ask for recording to stop and edited or erased. Participant will also be told when interviewer stops and restarts the recording.
6. Explain that the interviewer will take notes during the interview
7. Reiterate that participant can decide to not answer any question, withdraw any information given during the interview, and decide at anytime up until the final draft of the thesis not to be a participant.
8. Before commencing the interview, ask the participant if they have any questions

##### C. After the interview

1. Thank the participant again for deciding to participate and the time spent for the interview
2. Ask the participant whether s/he have any questions
3. Assure them that their privacy/ confidentiality will be kept.
4. Ask the participant if s/he can be contacted later, should there be additional questions
5. Inform the participant that you will send the interview transcript for verification.
6. Test the recorder just after the interview to ensure the whole interview was recorded. Fill in any gap in the interview with interview notes and write down observations about the interview.

#### Interview Guide

**Question 1-** [insert questions]

Prompts: [insert as many prompts as required]

**Question 2-** [insert questions]

Prompts: [insert as many prompts as required] [insert as many questions and prompts as may be required]

From the understanding of qualitative and quantitative research presented in Table 1 and Table 2, and definitions of interview, factors to consider towards achieving best outcome from using qualitative collection tool such as interviews are presented in Table 3. These factors are specifically drawn from qualitative research features that are directly related to data collection.

**Table 3: Techniques for Achieving Best Outcome from Using Interviews as a Qualitative Collection Tool**

Techniques for Achieving Best Outcome from Using Interviews as a Qualitative Collection Tool	
✓	Case study (s) selected should be organisations/institutions in domain considered to be relevant to the purpose of the study
✓	Selected potential participants should be individuals who can provide adequate information
✓	Participation in the interview should be voluntary
✓	Participants should be adequately informed of the research being done and the process of the interview.
✓	Interview guidelines and schedules should have a degree of flexibility that allows participants to be comfortable enough to provide large data
✓	Interview questions should be open-ended in ways that allow the participants to provide emergent themes.
✓	Participants should be comfortable and relaxed in the venue of the interview

### **What factors account for the differences between conducting qualitative research in Africa and Australia?**

Despite growing globalization that aims to minimise international barriers, research continues to be affected by the context within which data is gathered and analysed. Hence, measurement scales in quantitative studies and interview guides for qualitative studies must be adapted to suit the peculiarity of any research context before they are employed. Quantitative survey items or qualitative interview text produced from different context cannot be measured or coded as the same (Michailova, Liuhto, 2000; Voldnes, Grønhaug, & Sogn-Grundvåg, 2014; Siregar, 2021). Researchers therefore need to identify the peculiarities of various contexts to determine the methodologies that would be most effective to draw significant data. Research aims at deriving new perspectives that become useful for improved lifestyle first for a group of persons or phenomena with similar characteristics and thereafter such perspectives may be applied for other set of persons or phenomena. Therefore, it is important to consider certain factors when carrying out research across countries.

In Africa, research processes have been found to differ from what western literatures propose because of the peculiarities of the African context (Ngozwana, 2018). Not only are there evidence that several research outcomes derived from the adoption of western originated research processes were not beneficial when applied to the Africa, studies on same or similar phenomenon in the west and in Africa yielded different result due to the power of context (Wagner, Hansen, & Kronberger, 2014; Ngozwana, 2018). Drawing from literature (e.g Voldnes et al 2014; Ngozwana, 2018) and the authors' experience while conducting research in Nigeria (an Africa country) and Australia (a western country), it is evident that the difference in research process, particularly qualitative data collection process between the west and Africa stems from culture and technology. Although the authors acknowledge the account of some literature (e.g., Umeokafor & Windapo, 2018; Carter & Fortune, 2004) that qualitative research is sparse in Africa because academics in Africa have poor qualitative research skills and believe that qualitative research is not as rigorous as quantitative research, this paper proposes that cultural and technological challenges which have largely not be surmounted also stand as reasons for sparse qualitative research in Africa.

Culture is the totality of the belief and behavioural display of a group of individuals, and research is culture specific (Wagner et al, 2014). It is a "a pattern of shared attitudes, beliefs, categorisations, self-definitions, norms, role definitions, and values" (Triandis 1996: 408). Culture characteristics include the display of attitudes among individuals of a group, and these characteristics are relevant for qualitative research. Culture driven attitudes include the level of power distance, individualism, collectivism; the desire to avoid uncertainty and particularism attitude (See Table 4 below for further culture characteristics). Technology is facilities, equipment and all scientifically innovated means that aid the achievement of goals. In research, the effectiveness of technology is associated with the availability and the application of available technology. Based on the characteristics of culture and technology with regards to research, the authors compare Nigeria and Australia as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Comparison of cultural and technological characteristics of Nigeria and Australia**

<b>Nigeria</b>	<b>Cultural characteristics</b>	<b>Australia</b>
High	Power distance	Low
High	Individualism (Celebration of wealth)	Low
Low	Collectivism (democratism)	High
High	Uncertainty avoidance	Low/moderate
High	Particularism (Grit)	Low
Hierarchical	Organizational structure	Flat
Autocratic	Leadership style	Democratic
High	Chauvinism	Low
Synchronic	Time orientation	Sequential
Suspicious	Suspiciousness	Naïve
Distrustful	Trust	Trustful
Informal	Formality	Formal
	<b>Technological characteristics</b>	
Low	Availability of Infrastructure such as internet and databased systems	High
Narrow	Application of technology	Broad

Source: Authors' compilation

### **Cultural challenges of conducting interviews in Africa**

The cultural challenges of conducting interviews include the ways Africans have been shaped to discuss or present narratives. Unlike western countries where philosophies of open-mindedness, freedom of speech and expressions, free will, justice and behaviours are daily philosophies for how individuals should live (Voldnes et al 2014), Africa is characterised by cultural values that enthrone narcissism, superstitions, and secrecy and dominance (Keikelame& Swartz,2019). In fact, ordinary citizens including journalists have been jailed countless number of times by political authorities for releasing information to the public (Conroy-Krutz, 2020). Therefore, people living in Africa are not outspoken. Instead, information is hoarded until rare circumstances when individuals feel safe that the releasing of information would not bring ‘curses’ or political attacks on them and their lineage. Consequently, in Africa, qualitative research is threatened specifically in the areas of ethics, data collection and data analysis. For example, whereas the purpose of choosing to conduct a face-to-face interview with participants is to provide the opportunity for expressions of themes and concepts in certain ways that might be limited by quantitative instruments such as surveys; secrecy and superstitious beliefs and the dominance of insecurity hinder interviewees from discussing freely on certain subjects.

Africans associate superstitious beliefs with demographic factors such as gender and age, and this influences the manner Africans present narrative. Even though these factors are not as much statistically relevant to qualitative research, they affect the richness of information about the phenomenon that qualitative research chooses to analyze (Kleinman & Benson, 2006). African cultures promote sexism allowing men to be seen as the gender deserving of good education and capable of contributing more intellectually to a society. The perception of sexism affects the attention and how much of information interviewees would be willing to give female interviewers. The effect of sexism on qualitative research is especially true on issues that some African societies have classified as ‘male domain’. For example, certain sports such as football are still highly regarded as domains for men and political ambitions

are seen as careers mainly for males. When a woman attempts to explore her political ambitions, she is regarded as being too ambitious and labelled as -rude, unfit to be married to a man and venturing into a wrong career.

In Africa, age depicts experience, intelligence, and authority. As a result, young researchers may not be able to freely access research information through interview from an older person. This is because the interviewee may find it disrespectful to show vulnerability to the young researcher and may want to enforce his/her preconception on the interviewer. An older interviewee might opt out of answering some of the interview questions because of the perception that the younger interviewer is not authorized to ask such questions. Hierarchy in workplace and other societal gathering are barriers to free flow of communication between interviewees and interviewers. Subordinates are perceived as inadequate to interview superiors, especially when expecting sincere information on issues. Closely related to hierarchy is strong group affiliation. In this case, people's association with groups is based on the notion that such associations signify more bond with members of the same group than members of other groups. This implicit association segregation within a community affects who individuals permit to interview them. Even though some people may permit 'outsiders' to interview them, they are still reluctant to release rich information, because such information are regarded as sacred for those in the same group. Consequently, there are constraints to the retrieving of data using interviews.

### **Technological challenges of conducting interviews in Africa**

Africa is rich in natural resources yet regarded as the poorest continent on planet Earth mainly because of technological underdevelopment. Technological underdevelopment is determined by availability and usage of technologies. Specific technological challenges that face the conducting of interview include poor access to internet facilities, poor postage systems and poor national/ regional records. These challenges have implications for conducting interviews as well as the quality of data that can be retrieved from interviews (Johnson, 2013; Adam & Wood, 1999; Clarke, 2000).

Poor accessibility to internet facilities affects qualitative research in Africa. Despite the popularity of the importance of internet, many Africans lack the skills required for its usage or the financial capability to access sufficient internet (Evans, 2018). According to Mojapelo, (2020), networked computers for Internet access and use may be present in Africa but challenges such as organisational policies, poor usage skills and maintenance culture may reduce accessibility. In qualitative research, besides face-to-face private correspondence, the internet services such as electronic mails helps to provide privacy and confidentiality between the interviewer and interviewee. It is important that some or all parts of correspondence such as invitation to participate in the research, an acceptance to participate alongside the agreement on the date and venue of the interview and, the interviewee's access to the transcript as a way of validating that the transcript represents his/her opinion should be private and confidential.

Also, a reasonable number of Africans do not have access to internet apps that can help with the translation of recorded message to transcripts. While a few of those Apps can be downloaded, they still require internet services to function while others must be used directly online. Consequently, many Africans are left with the option of cumbersome and mistake prone approach of typing out the recorded interview by constantly pressing the 'start, pause,

rewind or forward' buttons on their computer while attempting to transcribe. To overcome the challenge of possible break in privacy and confidentiality and cumbersome full manual transcribing process, qualitative researchers in Africa resort to hand to hand or postage of handwritten/ hard typed copy of documents, which may leak into the hands of an outsider.

In Africa, the rather easy process of identifying and reaching participants can be challenging. Due to informal settlements which resulted from fast growing population faced with poor urban planning, many residential areas have no government documented address. Some small cities and villages in Africa have poor address numbering systems and surprisingly, sometimes no address numbering system (Dano, Balogun, Abubakar, & Aina, 2020). In cases of no address numbering systems, houses are located by certain landmarks or family names such as 'two houses away from the stream' or 'chief Ibanke's first daughter's house'. Hence, there are difficulties in locating occupants of such settlements and this has consequences for service delivery to such settlements. For example, public offices such as the post office and electric power stations may not be available within informal settlements. Whilst essential public services are not available in many villages, the available ones are not equipped with adequate manpower and facilities (Smit, 2018; Dano, Balogun, Abubakar, & Aina, 2020). Personal stories, which may not have been documented, indicate that some posted documents/items were never delivered to recipients due to unpassable roads to places where delivery was to be made. Besides poor urban planning, the usage of communication media such as smart phones are yet to be harnessed as much as their significance to daily lifestyle. People may be able to buy smart phones but may not be financially empowered to maintain regular phone/data service to the extent to which they require it (Onyema, 2019). Furthermore, many Africa countries do not have good data base systems, files, registers, or archives of residents and companies within its domain. This certainly makes it difficult for researchers to rely on such data base for the identification of participants or companies appropriate for their research.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

This paper aimed at highlighting the issues that have hindered the popularity of qualitative research in Africa. Therefore, the paper raised the following questions: What makes qualitative research different from quantitative research; what is an interview as a qualitative data collection method; what factors account for the differences between conducting qualitative research in Africa and Australia? To provide answers to the above questions, the paper drew from literature as well as the authors' participation and observations while carrying out research both in Nigeria (an African country) and Australia (a western country). Consequently, the paper elaborated on the relevance of qualitative research to tell African stories and provided an understanding of interviews as a qualitative data collection tool. It provided samples of PIS, Consent Form and Interview protocol and schedule. Furthermore, the paper highlighted culture and technology as significant factors with implication for research in Africa and the west. Some of the cultural and technological challenges identified in the paper as the reasons for sparsity of qualitative research in Africa include superstitions, lifestyle of narcissism and dominance, inaccessibility to internet services and poor urban planning. To minimise the effect of the challenges, the authors therefore recommend that Africa researchers while acknowledging challenges should utilise the subjective nature of qualitative research to decolonise interview processes. An African interview should therefore be the case where the interviewer and interviewee work based on agreed terms that are flexible as long as ethics (voluntary/privacy/confidentiality) are adhered to as much as possible within its context, and rich data can be retrieved.

## Reference

- Abdullahi, A.G., Senekal, A., Zyl-Schalekamp, C.V., Amzat, J., & Saliman, T. 2012. Contemporary Discourses in Qualitative Research: Lessons for Health Research in Nigeria. *Contemporary Discourses in Qualitative Research*, 16(1): 19-40.
- Achterberg, C., & Arendt, S. 2008. The philosophy, role, and methods of qualitative inquiry in research. *Research: successful approaches*, 3, 65-74.
- Adam, L., & Wood, F. 1999. An investigation of the impact of information and communication technologies in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of information Science*, 25(4), 307-318.
- Agnisarman, S. O., Chalil Madathil, K., Smith, K., Ashok, A., Welch, B., & McElligott, J. T. 2017. Lessons learned from the usability assessment of home-based telemedicine systems. *Applied Ergonomics*, 58, 424–434. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2016.08.003>
- Ametowobla, D., Baur, N., and Norkus, M. 2017. Analysis methods of empirical organisational research. In S. Liebig, W. Matiaske, and S. Rosenbohm (Eds.), *Handbook of organisational research* (pp. 749–796). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Balnaves, M., & Caputi, P. 2001. *Introduction to quantitative research methods: An investigative approach*. Sage.
- Baur, N. & Lamnek, S. 2017. Multivariate analysis,” in The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology, ed G. Ritzer (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.). doi: 10.1111/b.9781405124331.2007.x
- Baur, N. (ed.). 2009b. Social Bookkeeping Data: Data Quality and Data Management. *Historical Social Research* 129. Mannheim and Köln: GESIS.
- Baur, N. 2009a. Measurement and selection bias in longitudinal data: A framework for re-opening the discussion on data quality and generalizability of social bookkeeping data. *Hist. Soc. Res.* 34(3), 9–50. doi: 10.12759/hsr.34.2009.3.9-50.
- Baur, N. 2014. Comparing societies and cultures: Challenges of cross-cultural survey research as an approach to spatial analysis. *Hist. Soc. Res.* 39(2), 257–291. doi:10.12759/hsr.39.2014.2.257-291.
- Baur, N., & Blasius, J. 2019. Methods of empirical social research: an overview. In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Eds.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 1–30.). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Beaudry, C., & Mouton, J. 2018. *The next generation of scientists in Africa*. South Africa:
- Behnke, J., Baur, N., & Behnke, N. 2010. Empirical method of political science. Paderborn: Schöningh.
- Benbasat, I., Goldstein, D. K., & Mead, M. 1987. The case research strategy in studies of information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 369-386.
- Bhattacharjee, A. 2012. Social Science Research: Principles, Methods and Practices, Global Text Project.
- Black, T. R. 1999. *Doing quantitative research in the social sciences: An integrated approach to research design, measurement and statistics*. Sage Publishers.

- Blasius, J., & Thiessen, V. 2012. *Assessing the Quality of Survey Data*. London: Sage.
- Block, E. S., & Erskine, L. 2012. Interviewing by Telephone: Specific Considerations, Opportunities, and Challenges. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 428–445.
- Bubaker, S., Balakrishnan, P. & Bernadine, C. 2005. Qualitative case study research in Africa and Asia: Challenges and prospects. Procs. 3rd International Qualitative Research Convention, Malaysia, 1–13.
- Carter, K. & Fortune, C. 2004. Issues with data collection methods in construction management research. In: Khosrowshahi, F (Ed.), Proceedings 20th Annual ARCOM Conference, 1–3 September 2004, Edinburgh, UK, (2), 939–46.
- Clarke, P. 2000. Internet as a medium for qualitative research. *South African Journal of Information Management*. 2(2/3). Retrieved from <http://general.rau.ac.za/infosci/raujournal/default.asp?to=peer2>.
- Conroy-Krutz, J. 2020. The Squeeze on African Media Freedom. *Journal of Democracy*, 31(2), 96-109.
- Crick, J. M. 2021. Qualitative research in marketing: what can academics do better? *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 29(5), 390-429.
- Curry, L. A., Nembhard, I. M., & Bradley, E. H. 2009. Qualitative and mixed methods provide unique contributions to outcomes research. *Circulation*, 119(10), 1442-1452.
- Dano, U. L., Balogun, A. L., Abubakar, I. R., & Aina, Y. A. 2020. Transformative urban governance: Confronting urbanization challenges with geospatial technologies in Lagos, Nigeria. *GeoJournal*, 85(4), 1039-1056.
- Dawson, C. 2002. *Practical Research Methods*. New Delhi, UBS Publishers Distributors.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. 1994. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, SAGE Publications, London, UK.
- Ejohwomu, O.A. & Oshodi, O.S. 2014. A review of construction management and economics research outputs in Nigeria: To towards a sustainable future. *Journal of Construction Project Management and Innovation*, 4, (S1): 900–905.
- Evans, O. 2018. Connecting the poor: the internet, mobile phones and financial inclusion in Africa. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*, 20(6), 568-581.
- Foster, I., Ghani, R., Jarmin, R. S., Kreuter, F., and Lane, J. (eds.). 2017. *Big data and Social Science. A Practical Guide to Methods and Tools*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Goertz, G. & Mahoney, J. 2012. *A tale of two Cultures: Qualitative and Quantitative Research in the Social Sciences*. Princeton University Press.
- Groves, R. M., Fowler, F. J., Couper, M., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. 2009. *Survey Methodology*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Hartmann, P., & Lengerer, A. 2019. Administrative data of statistics. In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 1223–1232). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Harvey, L. 2015. Beyond member-checking: A dialogic approach to the research interview. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38(1), 23-38.

- Helfferrich, C. 2019. Guide for expert interview. In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 669-686.). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Hennink, M., Hutter, I. & Bailey, A. 2010. *Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publication.
- Johnson, A. T. 2013. Exploring the use of mobile technology in qualitative inquiry in Africa. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(22), 1-14.
- Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. 2020. A review of the quality indicators of rigor in qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1), 138-146.
- Johnson, R. B., de Waal, C., Stefurak, T., & Hildebrand, D. L. 2017. Understanding the philosophical positions of classical and neopragmatists for mixed methods research. *Kölner Z. Soz. Sozialpsychol.* 69(Suppl. 2), 63–86. doi: 10.1007/s11577-017-0452-3.
- Kaplan, B., & Maxwell, J. A. 2005. Qualitative research methods for evaluating computer information systems. In *Evaluating the organizational impact of healthcare information systems* (pp. 30-55). Springer, New York, NY.
- Keikelame, M. J., & Swartz, L. 2019. Decolonising research methodologies: lessons from a Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B., 2017. Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of higher education*, 6(5), 26-41.
- Kleinman, A., & Benson, P. 2006. Anthropology in the clinic: the problem of cultural competency and how to fix it. *PLoS medicine*, 3(10), e294.
- Knoblauch, H., & Pfadenhauer, M. (eds.). 2018. *Social Constructivism as Paradigm? The legacy of the Social Construction of Reality*. London: Routledge.
- Knoblauch, H., and Vollmer, T. 2019. Ethnography. In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 599-618). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- König, C., Schröder, J., & Wiegand, E. (eds.). 2018. *Big Data. Opportunities, risk and development trends*. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Kumar, R. 2005. *Research Methodology-A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners*. Singapore, Pearson Education.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*, SAGE, Beverly Hills.
- Lobe, B., Morgan, D., & Hoffman, K. A. 2020. Qualitative data collection in an era of social distancing. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19: 1–8.
- Martin, W. & Bridgmon, K. 2012. *Quantitative and Statistical Research Methods: From Hypothesis to Results*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Maxwell, J.A., 2010. Using numbers in qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16(6): 475-482.
- Mazonde, N. B., & Carmichael, T. 2020. The African context, cultural competence and emic aspects of qualitative research. *Journal of African Business*, 21(4): 476-492.
- Merriam, S. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.



- Michailova, S. & Liuhto, K., 2000. "Organization and Management Research in Transition Economies. *Journal of East-West Business*, 6(3): 7-46.
- Miles, M. & Huberman, A. 1994. *Qualitative data analysis*. SAGE Publications.
- Mojapelo, S. M. 2020. The internet access and use in public libraries in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Public Library Quarterly*, 39(3): 265-282.
- Neal Kimball, C., & Turner, S. 2018. Nurturing the apprentice: An immersion training in qualitative research. *Qualitative Psychology*, 5(2): 290.
- Ngozwana, N. 2018. Ethical dilemmas in qualitative research methodology: Researcher's reflections. *International Journal of Educational Methodology*, 4(1): 19-28.
- Onyema, E. M. 2019. Opportunities and challenges of the use of mobile phone technology in teaching and learning in Nigeria—a review. *International Journal of Research in Engineering and Innovation*, 3(6): 352-358.
- Rose, G. 2016. *Visual Methodologies*. London; New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. 2009. Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, 16(6): 309-314.
- Schmidt, J.-H. 2019. "Blogs," In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 1015–1026.). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Schmitz, A., & Yanenko, O. 2019. Web Server Logs und Logfiles," In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 991–1000). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Schünzel, A., & Traue, B. 2019. "Websites," In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 1001–1014). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Singh, Y. 2006. *Fundamental of Research Methodology and Statistics*, New Age International.
- Siregar, I. 2021. The Existence of Culture in its Relevance to the Dynamics of Globalization: Bahasa Indonesia Case Study. *International Journal of Cultural and Religious Studies*, 1(1): 33-38.
- Smit, W. 2018. Urban governance in Africa: An overview. In C. Ammann and T. Förster (Eds.), *African cities and the development conundrum* (pp. 55–77). Brill Nijhoff.
- Solarino, A. M., & Aguinis, H. 2021. Challenges and best-practice recommendations for designing and conducting interviews with elite informants. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(3): 649-672.
- Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. 2015. Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian journal of hospital pharmacy*, 68(3): 226.
- Traue, B., & Schünzel, A. 2019. "YouTube und andere Webvideos," In N. Baur and J. Blasius (Ed.), *Handbook methods of empirical social research* (pp. 1065–1078.). Wiesbaden: Springer.

- Umeokafor N. & Windapo A. O. 2018. Understanding the underrepresentation of qualitative research approaches to built environment research in Nigeria. *International Journal of Construction Education and Research*, 14(3): 198-217.
- Voldnes, G., Grønhaug, K., & Sogn-Grundvåg, G. 2014. Conducting qualitative research in Russia: Challenges and advice. *Journal of East-West Business*, 20(3): 141-161.
- Wagner, W., Hansen, K., & Kronberger, N. 2014. Quantitative and qualitative research across cultures and languages: Cultural metrics and their application. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 48(4): 418-434.