

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter addresses concerns about the research methodology adopted to explore the “So Sorry” politoons. This chapter is summarised into six comprehensive sections, which helps us better understand the detailed design of the research. The first section deals with the research approach to explore the plan and procedures used in the study. The second section discusses the research design to examine the nature of the study, which also describes the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research. The third section explains the research methodology opted in the study for data collection and analyses the necessary data addressed in part after in order to investigate the research objectives raised in chapter one. The four section covers the sample size and sampling technique. The fifth section deals with the scheme of data analysis. The last section reports on the measures taken to safeguard research reliability and trustworthiness, which is the embodiment of any research discussed.

4.1 Research Approaches

The research approaches are (Creswell, 2009, p. 30) “plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.” Whereas the research design refers to the “types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approach that provide specific direction for procedures in a research study,” (Creswell, 2009, p. 41).

The plan encompasses numerous verdicts, and they need not be taken in the same sequence explained above. Which approach should be employed to study a topic is the primary decision. These choices should be based on the researcher’s philosophical presuppositions, the research design, and the specific data collecting, analysis, and interpretation techniques used in the study. The research topic or issue being addressed, the researchers’ individual experiences and the study’s target audiences are all considered when choosing a research approach. Thus, a perspective on research that sequentially offers information from general research constructs to specific methodologies is represented by the three main concepts of research approaches, research designs, and research methods.

According to John Creswell (2009, p. 5), a framework for design explained in the book *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, this study follows the qualitative research approach. The research approach (Ibid., p. 34) is “the broad research approach is the *plan or proposal to conduct research*, involves the intersection of philosophy, research designs, and specific methods.” In the qualitative research approach, this study follows the traditions of qualitative research design, in which the selected inquiry strategy is the qualitative method strategy and the research method is ethnographic content analysis.

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 10-11) state that qualitative research “means any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification.” Qualitative research is an approach to investigating and comprehending the meaning that individuals or groups assigned to a social or human situation. The research process entails developing questions and techniques, data collection that frequently takes place in the participant’s environment, inductive data analysis that builds from specifics to broad themes, and the researcher’s judgement of the significance of the findings. The final report’s structure is adaptable. People that engage in this type of research embrace an approach to research that values an inductive approach, an emphasis on personal meaning, and the significance of accurately depicting the complexity of a situation. Based on the literature review (Creswell, 2007, p. 37; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, 2005, p. 3; Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6-7; Patton, 2002, p. 39-41), it defines as

“an emergent, inductive, interpretive and naturalistic approach to the study of people, cases, phenomena, social situations and processes in their natural settings in order to reveal in descriptive terms the meanings that people attach to their experiences of the world.”

4.2 Research design

In addition to deciding whether to perform a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methodologies study, the researcher must also choose a type of study from among these three options. Within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodologies approaches, research designs are styles of inquiry that give explicit guidelines for the procedures in a study design. Others have referred to them as research strategies (Denzin & Lincoln,

2011). As computer technology has improved our data analysis and capacity to evaluate complicated models and individuals have defined new procedures for conducting social science research, the designs available to the researcher have multiplied over time.

4.2.1 Qualitative Research Design

The variety of qualitative research methodologies has also become more evident during the 1990s and into the 21st century. Anthropology, sociology, the humanities, and assessment have historically been qualitative research foundations. The many forms have been summarised in books, and detailed instructions are now available for specific qualitative inquiry methodologies. Clandinin and Connelly (2000), for instance, painted a picture of what narrative researchers perform in their study.

It should be highlighted that qualitative research does not adhere to a particular methodology or discipline (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). To support the focus on quality rather than quantity, it “draws on philosophical notions in phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, hermeneutics, and other traditions” (Brewer, 2003, p. 239). As a result, the phrase is used to describe “an umbrella category, embracing a vast range of approaches and procedures found inside distinct research disciplines” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 3). In qualitative research traditions, there are many different theoretical paradigms, methodologies, research strategies, and methodologies, from the descriptive study, case study, field research, ethnography, participant observation, biographical method, life history, oral history, and narrative inquiry to phenomenological research, ethno-methodology, symbolic interactionist study, grounded theory, and action research.

Moustakas (1994) explored the phenomenological method’s philosophical underpinnings and processes; Charmaz (2006), Corbin and Strauss (2007), and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) identified grounded theory’s procedures. Stake (1995) and Yin (2009, 2012) indicated techniques involved in case study research, and Fetterman (2010) and Wolcott (2008) outlined ethnographic procedures and the multiple faces and research methodologies of ethnography. Using the following tactics as examples, it is acknowledged that techniques like participatory action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Qualitative research is founded on constructivist epistemology and investigates what is considered a socially constructed dynamic reality using a value-laden, flexible, descriptive, all-encompassing, and context-sensitive framework, i.e., an in-depth explanation of the phenomenon from the viewpoints of the individuals involved. It seeks to comprehend the construction and interpretation of social experience. According to a qualitative perspective, realities or knowledge are socially and psychologically produced. According to the qualitative paradigm, the knower and the known are inexorably linked. Inductive reasoning-based qualitative investigations are concerned with process, context, interpretation, meaning, or understanding.

Qualitative findings are much lengthier, more in-depth, and contain a more comprehensive range of information. Purposive sampling is essential. Regardless of the unit of analysis, the primary goal of purposeful sampling in qualitative research is to choose and examine a small number of individuals or exceptional cases whose study yields a wealth of detailed information and a thorough understanding of the individuals, programmes, cases, and situations studied. However, because this sampling method does not provide sufficient information about the research issue under study, it restricts the possibility of generalising research findings to different settings or scenarios (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 2002; Wolcott, 1994).

Since the qualitative research paradigm has been used for a considerable amount of time, its distinguishing features are widely understood. But with qualitative research design, that is not the case. Therefore, a more significant explanation is required to highlight its unique characteristics. The ontology, epistemology, and methodology of qualitative research design are based on the post-positivist, post-structural, constructionist, and critical perspectives. The subjectivist epistemology, which holds that understandings are formed through interaction between the knower and the unknown or subject, the naturalistic set of methodological procedures, and the relativist ontology (which accepts the idea of multiple realities) are all associated with the qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 27). Creswell (2007) adds two more philosophic presumptions to qualitative research.

4.3 Research Method

The research method “involves the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies,” (Creswell, 2009, p. 295). The precise study methodologies comprise the kind of data gathering, analysis, and interpretation. Researchers suggest that the method is the third key component of the framework in any study. It is helpful to deliberate all the options for gathering data and categorisation, for instance, how predetermined they are, whether they use closed-ended or open-ended questions, and whether they concentrate on quantitative or non-numeric data analysis. This study employs an ethnographic content analysis method to address the research objectives mentioned earlier.

4.3.1 Ethnographic Content Analysis

Ethnographic content analysis (ECA), which is also known as qualitative document analysis (QDA; Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008), has been used as the study’s methodology (Altheide, 1987). It’s a qualitative approach that moves back and forth between developing concepts, sampling, gathering data, coding, analysing, and interpreting those findings (Altheide, 1987). Traditionally, the term “ethnographic” refers to thorough accounts of people and their culture (Wiken, Zimmerman, Metheson, Banning, and Pepin, 2012).

ECA is likewise focused on capturing and comprehending the communication of meaning and validating theoretical connections. However, the reflexive and highly interactive nature of the investigator, concepts, data collecting, and analysis is a significant distinction. Although protocols may be used in later stages of the research, unlike in qualitative content analysis (QCA), where the protocol is the instrument, the investigator is always at the centre of ECA. As with all ethnographic research, it is anticipated that the meaning of a message will be reflected in different forms of information transmission, structure, rhythm, and style, such as the aural and visual, as well as the contextual details of the report itself.

Concept formulation, sampling, data gathering, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation are all steps in the ECA process. The goal is to be analytical and systematic without being rigid. Categories and variables initially guide the study, but

others are allowed and anticipated to evolve over time, including a focus on ongoing discovery and comparison of pertinent events, settings, styles, pictures, meanings, and nuances, (Berg, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

ECA entails concentrating on and gathering narrative and monetary data. ECA is designed to verify, support, and replace previous theoretical assertions. The focus is on concurrently collecting classified, and distinct data for each case analysed to create analytical constructs suitable for several studies, (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979).

The ethnographic content analysis method has many similarities with grounded theory. But, there are evident differences in emphasis and methodology between ECA and the grounded theory standards (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pettigrew, 2000). ECA emphasises discovering and capturing the relevant data that cover the spectrum of, for example, news coverage of a topic. In contrast, grounded theory focuses more on what one does with the data after they have been obtained. Both methodologies entail fieldwork and immersion in the materials. While ECA is more focused on sensitising concepts that can lead to concept formation, data collection, and emergent data analysis, the grounded theory emphasises the systematic coding of field notes. It aims for concepts that can be integrated to build testable theory. The goal of ECA is to find similarities and differences in how the documents—or portions of them—reflect other aspects of culture, including other communication and mass media materials that are part of the cultural context. ECA recognises the importance of reflexive observation as one immerses oneself in pertinent documents.

4.3.2 Background of the Method

This study uses a methodology for ethnographic content analysis (Ahuvia 2001; Altheide 1996; 2002). Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) “is a qualitative content analysis technique used to locate, identify, and thematically analyse documents,” (Bernhard, 2010, p.17; Altheide 1987; Altheide 1996). Recent scholarship has employed ECA to analyse various documents, including how political parties have been portrayed in the media (Stock, 2007, Gormly, 2004). It has even been used in a study of wedding planning books focused on hospitality (Besel, Zimmerman, Fruhauf, Pepin, and Banning, 2009). In short, ECA tries to provide a comprehensive contextual understanding of

textual and visual meanings in order to build and test theoretical linkages by using the research tools of ethnographers to texts/visuals (rather than traditional “spaces”).

Traditionally, the term “ethnographic” refers to thorough accounts of people and their culture (Wiken, Zimmerman, Metheson, Banning, and Pepin, 2012). ECA explicitly positions documents (i.e., media forms) as products of social interaction and cultural conditions of communication deserving of in-depth study and cultural analysis as opposed to focusing on the study of human behaviour and interactions through immersion in the contexts and lives of participants/subjects, (Altheide & Schneider 2013). The ethnographic content analysis examines how meanings are formed and communicated in the media and how media affects people’s attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, and identities, (Altheide 1996).

Ethnography, in general, refers to the study of people and their cultures, (Atkinson et al., 2001; Denzin, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Ferrell & Hamm, 1998; Lofland, 1995). Many academics believe that ethnography is the written expression of culture and results from a thorough description, definition, and analysis of various elements of human interaction, (Atkinson, 1992). In this way, the technique of inquiry and the investigator’s perspective is guided by the subject matter—humans engaged in meaningful conduct. Immersion in the participants’ contexts, environments, circumstances, and worldviews are crucial to performing an anthropological study. However, ethnography can also be viewed as a methodological direction independent of a particular subject matter if the significance of action remains fundamental. In essence, fieldwork delves deeply into the material pertinent to your study question. Discovery and immersion are key. The constant comparison proposed by Glaser and Strauss can also be used to study products of social interaction, such as documents, by looking at one aspect in the context of what is known about the other features, (Glaser, 1965; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

4.3.3 Justification of the Method

Ethnographic content analysis is one of the appropriate methods to analyse media text/visuals. Ethnographic content analysis aims to discover the signifiers/signs inside visual images and to comprehend their accepted meanings within the culture in which they are located, according to Grbich (2022, p. 3) in Sage Research Methods; Content Analysis of Visual Documents. Ahern & Talens (2010, p. 321) state that “ethnographic

content analysis (ECA) is a media-oriented form of qualitative content analysis focused on identifying frames within media discourse.” This method is excellent for identifying emergent patterns and dominant themes by focusing on their narratives (Altheide, 1996). Bhat (2020, p. 72)

“ECA is well-suited to document the communication of meaning, which is assumed to be reflected in various modes of information exchange, format, aural and visual style, as well as in the context of the report itself.”

Instead of the conventional deductive coding used in content analysis, inductive coding is beneficial in media for transmitting meaning (Krippendorff, 2004). The analysis of the subjects and themes in the data, as well as the conclusions reached from them, are supported by inductive coding (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). The 33 episodes of the “So Sorry” political cartoons can be arranged and coded using ethnographic content analysis, which draws on the work of Altheide (1987, 1996; Altheide et al., 2001). According to Bhat (2020, p. 72), ECA “permits researchers to approach data without predetermined categories, and allows themes to arise inductively, and allows investigators to adopt a methodological position” that is not only adaptable but also “systematic and analytic” (Altheide, 1987, p. 68).

ECA enables the discovery and explication of underlying patterns and meanings by reflecting on emergent themes and frames through reflexive processes of “continuous discovery and constant comparison” (Altheide 1996, p. 16; Gonsalves, McGannon, Schinke & Michel, 2016). Instead of utilising “set in stone” norms that guarantee the truth, a methodologically sound ECA adheres to what Sparkes and Smith (2009) refer to as defining features, in which researchers are interpretive and focused on emergent data analysis. Instead of relying on previously established categories to guide the research process in a deductive manner, ECA conceptualises document analysis as fieldwork, allows concepts to emerge inductively during analysis, and insists upon a reflexive method whereby each textual interpretation is continually compared in contradiction of other textual clarifications, follow-on in an iterative process stimulated by the tenets of Grounded Theory (Altheide, 1987).

4.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The thesis is an exploratory study that attempts to explore the “So Sorry” politoons. To examine how the politoons set the agenda, I conducted an ethnographic content analysis of the episodes of “So Sorry” politoons. These politoons were chosen for study because these politoons are very famous among Indian audiences and have won many awards. Secondly, the politoons have a large following because it presents Indian political affairs in a humorous, approachable way (Sharma, 2020, p. 52).

The study sample is the episodes of “So Sorry” politoons. The study’s sample size is the episodes of “So Sorry” politoons broadcast three months before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, three months after the elections and two months during the elections (the elections were held in seven phases from 11th April to 19th May 2019). The unit of analysis is each episode of politoons—a total of eight months of episodes from 1st January 2019 to 31st August 2019. For data collection, purposive sampling is used, supported by the study’s research methodology. According to Rai & Thapa (2015, p.5)

“Purposive sampling represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. Also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, purposive sampling relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied. Usually, the sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with probability sampling techniques,”

The data is collected through online mode. The episodes of “So Sorry” politoons were downloaded from India Today Group’s website (<https://www.indiatoday.in/sosorry>). A total of 33 episodes have been downloaded from the India Today Group website.

4.5 Coding and Emergence of Themes

Ethnographic content analysis is a technique that has been used extensively across a variety of research issues and epistemologies to locate, assess, organise, define, and report themes found within a data collection (Nowell et al., 2017). This method is helpful in locating intriguing data points that could result in the development of themes throughout the data collection (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Vaismoradi et al. (2016, p. 101) have argued that the theme is as an

“implicit topic that organises a group of repeating ideas containing codes that have a common point of reference and a high degree of generality that unifies ideas regarding the subject of inquiry.”

This method of analysis, which is renowned for its extremely adaptable approach, is said to be excellent for identifying similarities and differences and producing themes found in the document/visual data. However, scholars like King (2004, p. 268) have stated that

“it is a suitable approach for summarising key features of a large data set as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handle data, which can be a great help in producing a clear, organised, final account of a study.”

The reflective nature of ethnographic content analysis necessitates frequent backtracking between stages (Altheide 1996). Vickovic, Griffin & Fradella (2013, p. 460) state that “this method is appropriate in order to discover emergent patterns and differing emphases among and between the articles reviewed by focusing on their narratives (Altheide, 1996). This allows for both categorical and unique data to be obtained from each episode (Altheide, 1996). Individual categories were then created based on patterns that emerged during the analyses.

From my data set, each episode of “So Sorry” politoons was exposed to immersive reading, re-reading, and coding as part of an iterative process. This made the scope and length of the content more familiar to me. Inductive analysis was used to evaluate further the data, which required reading over the whole data set several times to identify any patterns, themes, or categories that might be present. According to Patton (1990), this method draws conclusions from the data due to the analyst’s interactions with the data (Patton, 1990). Following the guidelines provided by Creswell and Creswell (2014), an analyst’s interactions with the data are coded according to a systematic method in which particular statements are divided into themes (Patton, 1990). The ethnographic content analysis has been conducted in four steps (Vickovic, Griffin & Fradella, 2013). The detail of each step is given below:

During the first step, the researcher watched each episode of politoons to determine whether it was relevant to the study. Alternatively, that episode was discarded if an episode was irrelevant to the research objectives. But in this study, all the episodes were relevant to the research objective and for further analysis.

In the second step, the researcher watches all the episodes and gets familiar with them. After getting acquainted with the context of episodes, each episode transcript was generated. Line by line, the transcript was carefully reviewed, and a label or paraphrase was attached (a code), designating the statements in that passage as being significant. According to Gibbs (2018), coding helps specify the subject matter of the data you are examining. At this point, open coding—which involves inductively coding everything that might be pertinent—was employed to begin the coding process (Creswell, 2014; Gale et al., 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because it improved and honed the data, the coding's function was crucial. To consolidate meaning and explanation, coding helps to separate, re-group, and re-link information. The researcher can find themes, patterns, and classifications by categorising the data (Creswell, 2014; Gale et al., 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In this study, there is a total of nine dominant themes which came out of after coding and categorisation of data.

Theme 1. '2019 Lok Sabha Elections'

Theme 2. 'Aspiration to become the Prime Minister of India'

Theme 3. 'Political Alliance'

Theme 4. 'Depiction of BJP leaders'

Theme 5. 'Depiction of Indian National Congress party leaders'

Theme 6. 'Depiction of Arvind Kejriwal, Akhilesh Yadav, Mayawati, Mamata Banerjee'

Theme 7. 'Important state/ constituency for the elections'

Theme 8. 'Noteworthy topics illustrated in the videos' (Miscellaneous)

Theme 9. 'The Modi government 2.0 (second tenure)'

In the third step, within the 33 significant episodes, the content analysis included coding for emerging trends. All of the episodes were compared and contrasted without the use of pre-established content analysis categories in accordance with Altheide's (1996) methodology. This made it possible for the primary themes thoroughly discussed in this article's results and discussion part to emerge.

Finally, in the fourth data coding and analysis phase, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal for cross-checking coding. Silverman (2009, p. 2) states, “Employing a reflexive process, the researcher works across documents in the sample and employs a process of iteration between the data and the emerging classification system.” After the coding helped me simplify and concentrate on particular aspects of the data, the complete data set was further examined to determine whether any of the codes combined to create a dominant theme. These themes were reviewed and improved to see whether they fit with the data set and whether any more information within them had been overlooked during earlier coding rounds. I took notes along the way and kept a reflexive notebook to assist me in keeping track of the new trends, the implications of the data, and how they related to one another. This trend of maintaining reflexive journals throughout the process is occupied by the study of Bhatt (2020), *Anti-Media Populism: Media Criticism by Right-Wing Media in India*.

4.6 Scheme of Data Analysis

In many research disciplines, data analysis entails creating aggregates of the data and abstractions from it. To draw attention to patterns, themes, and concepts, large amounts of data are typically divided into smaller parts and then put back together in qualitative traditions. The following is how Robert Bogdan and Steven J. Taylor (p. 79) define data analysis:

“A process which entails an effort to identify formal themes and to construct hypotheses (ideas) as they are suggested by the data and an attempt to demonstrate support for those themes and hypotheses.”

Tesch outlines two goals of qualitative research: descriptive analysis and theory development, within the context of data analysis using the interpretational style. The reader is once more directed to Tesch’s (1990, p. 114-34) classification of methods for every goal. Despite not attempting to duplicate Tesch’s study of the distinctions, the review of data analysis that follows will raise common difficulties and highlight several approaches that encompass both aims.

In this study, qualitative content analysis has outlined the relevance versus irrelevance of the episodes. The transcript was provided for each episode, and the context was given of

the subject matter. Line by line, the transcript was carefully reviewed, and a label or paraphrase was attached (a code), designating the statements in that passage as being significant. The content analysis of 33 episodes of “So Sorry” politoons included coding classification for emerging qualitative trends. All episodes were compared and contrasted without using pre-established content analysis categories following Altheide’s (1996) methodology. This made it possible for the primary themes that are thoroughly discussed in the results and discussion part of this article to emerge.

4.7 Evaluating Qualitative Research: Trustworthiness

One essential quality a researcher needs is integrity. It must hold throughout the research cycle to prove the findings’ validity. Therefore, a study must pass the credibility and dependability test to be regarded as valid. Results in qualitative research are guaranteed by establishing credibility. Long-term statistics were used to build credibility (Bowleg, Lucas, & Tschann, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Outlining study methodology addressed transferability, giving readers enough information to make the decision regarding its applicability to different circumstances (Bowleg et al., 2004; Merrick, 1999). By using memos and double-checking results, dependability, the data-driven aspect of the research was developed (Merrick, 1999). Finally, through this article’s transparency, confirmability—or clarity on the research process—was achieved (Bowleg et al., 2004; Merrick, 1999).

Trustworthiness is an active, systematic process employed in research from the research design stage all the way through data collecting and analysis to writing the results, according to Ravitch and Carl (2016). Finally, through this study’s transparency, confirmability—or clarity on the research process—was achieved (Bowleg et al., 2004; Merrick, 1999). I assume the collection of techniques that were chosen to be used successfully establishes the reliability of the study. However, the presentation of results, the most important part of qualitative research, has gotten little attention (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012). This study does an excellent job of conveying quotes and images from allegedly successful proceedings. Images of the incidents are required to demonstrate the accuracy of the narrative (Polit & Beck, 2012). The results must therefore reflect the concerns raised by the investigation rather than the researcher’s prejudices, goals, or worldviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Polit & Beck, 2012). One reason images are frequently utilised to indicate their original context in the transcribed visual is this

(Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). This contributes substantially to the analysis's credibility, particularly when it comes to showing how data and findings are related.