Qualitative Inquiry for Social Sciences

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Abstract - *[Objectives]*: **The goal of this study is to explore the analysis of qualitative interview transcripts without the use of a computer software. *[Background]*: Research into social problems, problems of deviation, of control and of crisis and the like, the general subject matter to which social problems is devoted is still mainly feasible through methods which yield qualitative data. *[Problem Statement]*: It is a common knowledge that many researchers are not too conversant with the best technique to analyse interview transcripts, particularly when they are not comfortable with the use of a computer analytical software. *[Methods]*: In-depth review of archival studies to present an approach to conveniently conduct qualitative research by reviewing secondary documents and referring to samples of manually analyzed transcript of recent authors. *[Results]*: This study provides an overview of important concepts related to qualitative content analysis. *[Conclusions]*: This research serves as a resource guide for qualitative researchers in social sciences investigation, discussing data collection techniques, data analysis, reporting, and the issues of trustworthiness, dependability, credibility and ethics..**

Keywords: Case Study, Data Analysis, In-depth Interviews, Qualitative Research, Content Analysis, Credibility

I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Qualitative research methodology is regarded by authors as a science because the scientific part is systematic, analytical, rigorous, disciplined, and critical in perception [1]. However, other authors opine that qualitative research method is an art because the artistic part is exploring, playful, metaphorical, insightful, and creative [2, 3]. In the opinion of Patton [4], the human element of qualitative inquiry is both its strength and weakness - its strength is fully using human insight and experience, its weakness is being so fully reliant on the researcher's skill, training, intellect, discipline, and creativity. The author added further that the researcher is the instrument of qualitative inquiry, so the quality of the research depends profoundly on the qualities of that human being. To complement this assertion, they prepare the groundwork for quantitative researchers to work on. Hence, this study explains the research paradigm, research methods, ethical considerations, and data analysis process through which researchers could answer research questions.

II. RESEARCH PARADIGM

It is Qualitative research is based on the principles of naturalistic, constructivist, realist (qualitative) viewpoint of inquiry [5, 6, 7]. This paradigm is important because literature review indicates a need for a better understanding of the experience of participants under investigation. In situations that the study seek to understand experience, it must recognise how it is created. The naturalist paradigm holds that [8, 6]: Realities are multiple, constructed, and holistic. The knower and the known interact and are inseparable. Only time and context-bound hypotheses are possible. All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. Lincoln and Guba [5] suggested 14 principles for qualitative studies. In qualitative research, the researchers could choose to adopt either the organisational or individual unit of analysis to measure the selected sample population for the study. Depending on which is most suited for that particular sample population. In qualitative method of data collection there are three basic techniques commonly used by researchers such as; observation, interview and document review. Adopting the three method to collect data is known as triangulation, because it involve collecting data using multiple sources. Although the most frequently used technique of data gathering in qualitative research is the interview. The purpose of any qualitative research is to observe the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to realize how and why it comes up to have this point of view [1, 9, 7].

III. THE ASSUMPTIONS OF QUALITATIVE APPROACH

The design of a research study begins with the selection of a topic and a paradigm. A paradigm is essentially a worldview, a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place. It is this world views within which researchers work. According to Creswell [6], a qualitative study is defined as an inquiry process of

understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting. According to Siegle Research [10]: Qualitative researchers are concerned primarily with process, rather than outcomes or products. They are interested in meaning how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines. It involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details.

IV. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

It is often suggested to adopt the inductive approach to collect data for qualitative inquiry from selected sample population chosen across the geographic location. The main reasons for making use of the inductive method are to (i) condense raw textual data into a brief format; (ii) set out clear connections between the research objectives and the summary findings obtained from the raw data; and (iii) develop a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident in the raw data [8, 11, 12].

Creswell [2] noted that in qualitative studies (multiple case studies) it is typical to study a few individuals or a few cases, because the overall ability of the researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site. Third, the sample size for a particular study is dependent on the nature of the study; some qualitative studies examine one case in depth, while others take a broader approach, focusing on 10 or 20 cases – but may only be able to offer superficial perspectives [6, 2]. During qualitative interviews, participants are asked a series of questions using an interview guide approach [6, 12].

Ethical Issues: Should in case data collection for qualitative inquiry is carried out through in-depth interview, it is important to recognise the use of human as instrument. Humans can be a highly valid data collection instrument; provided that they are trustworthy. Lincoln and Guba [5] note several benefits to the use of human as instrument [8, 12]: Humans can be responsive to the environment and "interact with the situation to sense its dimensions and make them explicitly". Humans are adaptable and can measure a variety of constructs, whereas most instruments cannot assess any other factors aside the ones which they have been designed to assess. Humans can grasp the holistic world of any phenomenon with all its "buzzing confusion" in one view. Humans can work with the respondent "on the spot" for "clarification, correction, and amplification" of data. Humans

can process data, form hypotheses, and test those hypotheses with respondents as soon as the data is available.

Semi Structured Interview: Conducting interviews are known to be a significant source of providing information for a research. The preferred data collection approach could be employed because it will allow the researcher better access to the thoughts and feelings of the participants to be interviewed as compared to other approach, such as observations and questionnaires, which may not provide the same richness of data. It is important to ask people questions about how they organise their world and the meanings they attach to what goes on if one wishes to gain insight into how they interpret that world [8, 13]. On the other hand, Brookfield [14] recommended that interviews should only be used when no other method can gather the information one is seeking.

Interview is a conversation with a purpose, of which the collection of data must occur in a face to face situation in a research context and involve the posing of questions by the interviewer [2, 3]. As they suggested, the ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while exploiting their value and belief agendas, is practically impossible without face to face and verbal interaction with them. Other researchers highlighted that the respondent is not a passive vessel for the interviewer to open and unload [8, 11, 15]. The interview is a social interaction where the validity of the data is derived from the cooperation of the investigator and the interviewee to construct meaning about situated experimental realities in terms that are locally comprehensible. There are several influencing factors that determine the quality of the data gathered in an interview, comprising the structure of the interview, the types of questions asked and the capability of the interviewer.

Observations: Observation allows a researcher to understand a phenomenon to an extent not entirely possible using insights of others obtained through interviews [13, 16, 17]. Much of the literature on research methods suggested that observational studies may help a researcher to comprehend complex issues through direct observation, either as a participant or a nonparticipant observer [18, 19]. Researchers put forward that this method plays an important role in helping the researcher gain an insight into the participants under investigation. Each observation could be tape-recorded with an observation guide in the form of contact sheets which details each recorded entries including description of activities, behaviour, language, lists of personnel present, the setting or environment and the researcher's personal subjective notes and observations. An important feature of the participant's research is its reflective character: to recognise that researchers are part of the social world they study [16]. It was further justified that the crucial roles of reflexivity and participant-observation in social research in which we act in the social world and yet are able to reflect upon ourselves and our actions as objects in the world

V. VALIDATION OF INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

A pilot study was defined by Shuttle Worth [20] as a standard scientific tool for 'soft' research, which allows scientists to conduct a preliminary analysis before committing to a full-blown study or experiment. In other words, in qualitative research, the researcher could conduct a pilot to validate the research interview questions to assess how much the questions are relevant and clear. The validation should be conducted among experts in the field to ascertain whether the questions that is designed is clear enough to enable the researcher ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument chosen for the survey. It is necessary to clarify that those respondents who participated in the interview schedule validation should be excluded from the population sample of the study

VI. CASE STUDY

Case study is another approach recognised by researchers as very suitable in conducting qualitative research because it is recognised as among the many ways of conducting social science investigation [3]. Some other methods are historical analysis, surveys, experiments, observation, and the analysis of archival documents. Yin [8] posit that each of this method has its distinctive benefits, considering three circumstances: (a) the type of research question, (b) the control the researcher has over actual behavioural activity, and (c) the emphasis on current as opposed to historical occurrence. This approach is important because it deals with the "how" or "why" questions of the experiences of the participants studied. This approach is also suitable in situations where the researcher has some level of control over the events under investigation, and because the emphasis of the study is on contemporary phenomenon within some real-life perspective. Explanatory multiple case studies of this nature may be supported by two other types- exploratory and descriptive case studies. Not minding the type of case study chosen, researchers should be careful in designing and conducting case studies to overcome the traditional criticisms of the approach.

Although previous studies reported that adopting the case studies approach may be a daunting task [21, 22]. The goal of using the case studies approach is to design good case studies and to gather, present, and analyse data articulately. As a research strategy, the case study is adopted in several situations to add to the body of knowledge of organisational, individual, group, social, political and other similar activities [22, 8].

VII. DATA COLLECTION

Because secondary sources provide second-hand data while primary sources provide first-hand data, the use of secondary data alone is not enough to give credence for a reliable report, hence, the need to carry out an extensive primary data collection in order to have or feel the practical scenario on ground and get useful and reliable information from the participants [9, 2]. Secondary data collection is mainly based on ideas and work of previous researchers and scholars who have worked on topics related to this study [2].

The secondary sources of data collection will rely on various reliable resources such as; books, journals, earlier research, personal records, electronic documents, journals, websites, online materials, mass media and government or semi-government publications. Primary data collection can be gathered through the use of questionnaires, interviews, observations and experiments. Although previous writers acknowledge the difficulty and huge resource requirements of carrying out a research through interview [9], qualitative researchers prefer this method as their data collection instrument.

VIII. SAMPLING

Researchers could adopt the purposive sampling approach which is according to some authors judgemental in nature, it is carried out for a unique purpose [16, 18]. Purposive sampling method has been acknowledged to be very effective and this is particularly when the researcher is working on a specific case study [16, 18]. However, snowballing sampling method could also be used to achieve the particular objectives of the research because it is the most suitable technique for qualitative study. The type of study that is very qualitative and exploratory are most appropriate for a purposive sampling design, because it is not after the representativeness of the samples, it depend strictly on the availability and willingness of respondents to participate in the interview especially those who are very busy and difficult to track down for discussions [23, 24, 2].

In qualitative data collection, interviews should continue until the responses reached a saturation point, that is until the responses from each additional respondent no longer provided unique or new information regarding the questions being asked [2, 3]. This is also consistent with the suggestion of Eisenhardt and Santos [25] who emphasised that a "researcher should discontinue conducting additional cases and interviewing additional respondents" when he reaches 'theoretical saturation'; that is, once the statistically significant number of cases has been reached, the researcher should discontinue collecting cases so as to avoid repetitive data and hearing the same stories repeated again and again. Other scholars recommended that the number of case studies is determined by the researcher himself and in qualitative sampling; there are no general rules for the sample size [13]. As in any qualitative study, the crucial factor is not the number of respondents but rather the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insights and understanding of the phenomenon [11]. Authors also posited that qualitative samples may be little in size, but the yield is usually rich.

IX. INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Data in qualitative study could be analysed using inductive analysis, and certain techniques from the constant comparison method could also be used to perform the analysis of the experience of the participants under study [8]. The constant comparative method involves the researcher in conducting data analysis from the start of observation [26, 3]. Initial data is coded to indicate the concept or dimension it represents, and

the researcher links concepts together into a theory, or explanation of the phenomenon studied. Analyzing qualitative data requires understanding how to make sense of text and images so that you can form answers to your research questions.

Creswell [2] mentioned the six steps used in analyzing and interpreting the qualitative data. These steps are not always taken in sequence, but they represent preparing and organising the data for analysis; engaging in an initial exploration of the data through the process of coding it; using the codes to develop a more general picture of the data - descriptions and themes; representing the findings through narratives and visuals, making an interpretative meanings of the results and connecting the findings to the literature with the aim of validating the research findings. However, qualitative research is an iterative phase like, meaning that you cycle back and forth between data collection and analysis by going back to your respondents to collect more information to fill in gaps in their stories as your analysis proceeds. Also it involves reading through the data several times and conducting an analysis each time. Each time you read your database you develop a deeper understanding about the information supplied by your respondents. Creswell [2] pointed out that there is no single accepted approach to analyzing qualitative data, although several guidelines exist for this process [27]. Furthermore, qualitative research is an interpretative research, in which you make a personal assessment as to a description that fits the situation or themes that capture the major categories of information. The interpretation that you make of a transcript, for example, differs from that someone else makes. This does not mean that your interpretation is better or more accurate; it simply means that you bring your own perspective to your interpretation [6].

X. Manual Analysis

Although the use of computer for various purposes is recently very popular, researchers still have a choice about whether to analyse data manually or use a computer [28, 27, 22, 2]. The manual analysis of qualitative data means that researchers read the data, mark it by hand, and divide into parts. Traditionally, analysing text data involves using colour coding to mark parts of the text or cutting and pasting text sentences onto cards. Some qualitative researchers like to analyse manually all of their data. A manual analysis may be preferred when you: Are analysing a small database of less than 500 pages of transcript. You are not comfortable using computers or have not learned a qualitative computer software program. You want to be close to the data and have a hands-on feel for it without the intrusion of a machine. A major disadvantage of using a computer software is that it distances the researcher from the raw data and will not have the opportunity of been immersed into the raw interview transcript. You have time to commit to hand analyse, since it is labour intensive requiring manual sorting, organise, locate words in a text database.

XI. Data Analysis and Coding

After the researcher have organised and transcribed the data and decided to analyse the data manually. Then the researcher could analyse manually based on the earlier stated reasons [28, 27, 2], and could be a justification for the researcher's main decision to manually analyse the data. The initial preparation of the data for analysis requires organizing the vast amount of information, transcribing it from spoken to written words or to typed file [22, 2].

After the data is transcribed the researcher should depending on the amount of files or number of pages of the transcript organise it into different files and folders based on participants, sites, locations and keep the duplicates copies of all forms of his data. It could take the researcher approximately four hours to transcribe an hour interview. The researcher have to listen to the audio tape and write out the interview into a word file, sometimes when the researcher did not get the words properly, the tape is replayed until the researcher is able to understand the proper words and sentences used by the participants, this process could be very labour intensive and the researcher should make sure that adequate time is allowed for the process. The next thing the researcher should do is to explore the data several times and make sure that general sense of the data is obtained, memoing ideas, thinking about the organisation of the data, and considering whether more data is required. The researcher should further read through the data several times and try to be immersed in the details before breaking them into parts by writing out memos like short phrases, ideas, concepts, hunches that occurred, by re-arranging and removing irrelevant words that has no meaning to the study. The researcher should try again to arrange and put responses that are related and with similar meanings by grouping them under the same research question/interview theme.

Coding is the process of segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. Creswell [6] and Tesch [28] mentioned that there are no set guidelines for coding data. The main objective of the coding process is to make sense out of the data, divide it into parts or image segment, label the segment with codes, examine codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapse these codes into themes. At the end the researcher should select specific data to use and disregard other data that do not specifically provide evidence to the themes. Creswell [2] and Yin [3] posited that codes can be stated in the participants' actual words which are called "in vivo codes" or rather the researcher may choose to use his own words or phrase and this is known as "lean coding".

For example as reported in previous study conducted by Ajagbe & Ismail [29] and Ajagbe [30], the first level coding process involves bringing in all the related codes under the same interview question/theme, for each interview theme the number of coding categories initially and finally generated after repeated counting is reported (3569 codes). At the second level coding, the researchers sub-categorised the generated codes into sub-themes by screening out all codes that are not important to this particular study and codes which have the same meaning are further removed to avoid

unnecessary repetition. Because the researchers later in the process found that there are so many repeated codes from different respondents, what they did was to remove these codes that are similar and repeated and put them aside. Finally, they were able to come up with an agreeable and more refined number of codes (489 codes). The third level coding involved the re-grouping of the coding categories generated from the second level coding under 21 coding groups and this third level sub-themes as the case may be were finally prune down to the 7 major themes which was finally used for the theme development and was what the researchers eventually used to write the research report and findings. After the coding process was concluded, the next the researchers did was to perform a cross-case analysis [26, 31, 3]. Units of analysis from across cases (multiple sources) were combined into one document and grouped by category within the document. The researchers added a column beside each unit of analysis entitled 'conclusion' and put summary-level conclusions that could be drawn based on that unit. When the researchers answered the study's research questions, they synthesised the conclusions drawn in the categories that were relevant to the particular research question.

After the researcher concluded the coding process of the transcript and merged all the themes that emerged from the first, second and third level coding categories under the 7 main selected themes for the development of interpretation for the research. The researcher went further to search for the most important themes that were most frequently mentioned by each respondent under the coding categories listed under the main themes, then selected 5 important themes in some cases, 4 in some cases and 3 themes in other cases. This categorisation was tabulated for easy understanding because this revealed the figures that show the frequency of responses for the items. Afterwards, the researcher converted these coded frequencies to quantitative terms and was used to plot the frequencies of occurrence of the important themes (as mentioned by the respondents) on either a pie chart or a bar chart. Table 1 shows a typical sample of the interview analysis document as suggested by Krathwohl [26] and Joubish *et al.* [31], and the qualitative analytical process and coding process adopted by the researcher based on the recommendation of similar researchers (Figure 1 and Table 1) [27, 31, 3].
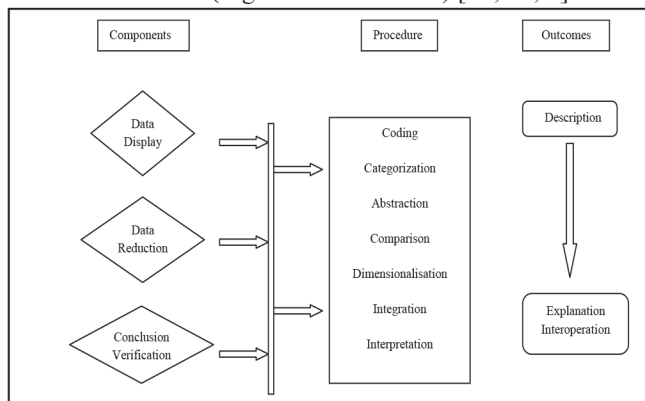

Fig. 1. The Qualitative Analytical Process [27, 31, 29, 30]

TABLE I. SAMPLE RESULT OF THE CODING PROCESS SOURCE: [30, 29]

Major Emerging Codes	Sub-Codes	Coding Categories
Funding Structure	6 Sub-Codes	95 Codes
Further Funding	5 Sub-Codes	121 Codes
Investment Decision	2 Sub-Codes	112 Codes
Roles of VC	2 Sub-Codes	50 Codes
Exit Options	1 Sub-Code	20 Codes
Tech Commercialisation	4 Sub-Codes	60 Codes
Start Up Performance	1 Sub-Code	31 Codes
7 Major Codes	**21 Sub-Codes**	**489 Codes**

A. Turn Transcript to Story Telling and Link to Literature

Typical example of how to turn an interview transcript to storytelling is as reported below from the extract of the study of Ajagbe [30] and Ajagbe & Ismail [29]:

"In fact there are no fixed and or general rules to measure performance of technology based firms. The findings from this research is consistent with earlier study of Mason and Harrison (2010) who reported that investments in early-stage firms are repellent since they are less safe and that is the reason Malaysian government is mostly involved at that stage through its established GVCFs who help to bud young TBFs until they are matured enough to stand alone. Although private VCs in Malaysia in most cases are more skilled in venture investing than their counterpart GVCFs, in addition, the private VC managers often have stronger performance motivations compared to their colleagues in public VCFs. Moreover, business relations are more possible at a pretty later stage of the TBFs growth cycle since they are often supported by external capital from other sources (Dimov and Murray, 2008). It is therefore important for VCs, like all financial partners, to continue a positive reputation if they are looking for energetic long-term group of actors in the financial markets

B. Use Quotations

This can be confirmed from the response of this participant: *"with the involvement of external financing agency in my company, the product development have been made faster, commercialisation have been achieved, because when they give us funding it comes with a milestone to achieve, this makes you to be on the alert to meet up your milestone so that you will be qualified for the next round of funding"*=respondent TBF002.

C. Operationalise and Make Measurable

This sample extract is from the study conducted by Ajagbe [30] and Ajagbe & Ismail [29]:

"This bar chart represents the opinion of the 28 TBFs and 19 VCFs interviewed for this research. On financial prudency and increased market share 28 TBFs (100%) and 19 VCFs (100%) mentioned those items as among the main areas their company improved tremendously after VC involvement. While 26 TBFs (93%) and 19 VCFs (100%) said that revenue growth improved more for their company as a result of VCFs involvement. Adequate capital provision by VCFs was listed by 24 TBFs (86%) and 17 (90%) VCFs as areas important to the performance of their firms after VCs infused capital into their firm, and lastly 22 TBFs (79%) and 14 VCFs (74%) concluded that the business reputation of the TBFs increased tremendously after VCFs invested in their technology"

Figure 2 and 3 indicates the bar and pie charts from statistical analysis of coded data extracted from the sample research study.
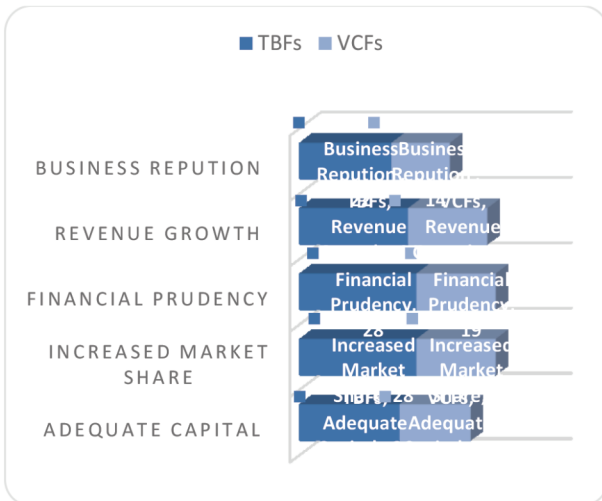
Fig. 2. Bar Charts from statistical analysis of coded data

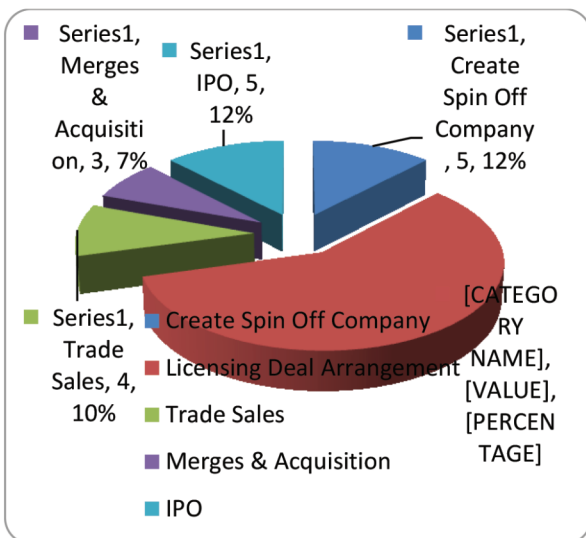Source: Ajagbe [30] and Ajagbe & Ismail [29]

Fig. 3. Pie Charts from statistical analysis of coded data

Source: Ajagbe [30] and Ajagbe & Ismail [29]

XII. RESEARCH VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Qualitative study design is often predicated on the principles of Lincoln and Guba [5] and Miles & Huberman [27]. For example, it could adopt purposeful sampling, use the case study as a reporting mechanism, and employ analogous means to establish the positivist concepts of validity, reliability, and objectivity as the researcher moves through the phenomenon under study. This is because naturalistic inquiry will employ other, analogous means to establish the positivist concepts of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity (namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability).

Triangulation is described as studying the same research problem from varied perspectives in terms of data sources, methods, investigators or theories, so that the convergence of results can be obtained to increase their credibility [2, 3]. The research objectives could be achieved through the combination of several methods of data gathering approaches (within method triangulation) when answering the research questions. In view of this, a purposely developed set of research instruments which consist an in-depth interview, observation and document review could be adopted. Observations and document review could be used as support to answer some of the study questions as mentioned that "within method triangulation approach" Van Maanen's [32] is another reliable technique used to ensure trustworthiness within the conventional concepts of such research method [11, 8]. It is however important to note that after the data is transcribed and analysed, the researcher should send the analysed data to the respondents to cross check if what they said during the interview were actually what was reported in the interview transcript. This the researcher should do to ensure research credibility, conformability and trustworthiness, subsequent upon which the coding and theme development could go ahead.

XIII. METHODOLOGICAL CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study discusses the qualitative research paradigm, ethical issues, data analysis and coding process through which researchers could develop new themes for writing final research findings for their study. The goal of this study is to explore the analysis of qualitative interview transcripts without the use of a computer software. This is because many researchers are not too conversant with the best technique to analyse interview transcripts, particularly when they are not comfortable with the use of a computer analytical software. Through in-depth review of archival studies to present an approach to conveniently conduct qualitative research by reviewing secondary documents and referring to samples of manually analyzed transcript of recent authors. This study has provided an overview of important concepts related to qualitative content analysis. This research serves as a resource guide for qualitative researchers in social sciences investigation, discussing data collection techniques, data analysis, reporting, and the issues of trustworthiness, dependability, credibility and ethics.

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