

Level: Master 1 (LS)

Module: Methodology in Social Sciences

The Case Study

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The Case Study

A case study is a research method that focuses on the analysis of one entity; it helps the researcher to identify a problem and provide a set of suggestions. There are various types of case studies.

Types of Case Study

Types of Case Study according to the Purposes of Research:

This category includes descriptive, explanatory and exploratory case studies.

- *The descriptive case study attempts* to describe the object or phenomenon. It puts emphasis on the specific characteristics of a certain issue. It tries to answer the question: 'What?'

Types of Case Study

- *The explanatory case study* concerns the reasons of a problem and explains why something happens. It answers the question: ‘Why?’
- *The exploratory case study* focuses on the study of a problem to understand the issue and to bring ideas about the way of improving the existing situation. It answers the questions ‘What?’ and ‘How?’. This type of case study constitutes a prelude to other research works.

Types of Case Study

Types of Case study in terms of the Number of Cases :

This group involves single and multiple case studies.

- *The single case study* focuses on one case. There are two types of single case studies: intrinsic and instrumental. *The intrinsic* case study aims at understanding the studied case without giving importance to the generalization of the results. *The instrumental* case study attempts to generalize the research results.

Types of Case study

- *The multiple case study* is also called the collective case study. It aims at studying and comparing multiple cases in a single research work.

Types of Case Study according to the Unit of Analysis :

This category involves holistic and embedded case studies.

- *The holistic case Study* has one unit of analysis.

Thus, a global view is provided about the nature of the studied object which leads the case to function as one unit of analysis.

Types of Case Study

- *The embedded case study implies that the case is divided into multiple units that are analysed separately to come out with general results about the problem. Thus, sub-units of analysis are designed to provide information about various aspects of the studied issue.*

The Design of a Case Study

The design of a case study should take into consideration the following elements: The elicitation of the research questions, the identification of the hypotheses and the specification of the unit of analysis.

The Elicitation of the Research Questions

After choosing the topic and identifying the research problem, one should state the research questions. In a case study, the most common questions that are often asked are in the form of ‘why?’ and ‘how?’.

The research questions should elicit the relationship between the existing variables.

The Identification of the Hypotheses

A hypothesis is a tentative answer of the research questions provided by a researcher. It constitutes the researcher's prediction about the factors that create a specific problem. A hypothesis should be testable. In fact, hypotheses are generated from previous knowledge accumulated from experience, observation and library research.

The Specification of the Unit of Analysis

The case study concerns one aspect or phenomenon within a specific population. It focuses on a sample selected from the target population. This sample constitutes the unit of analysis. It has to be chosen on the basis of a set of criteria related to the accessibility of the participants, the particularity of the research instruments and time management.

The Case Study

The case study provides a holistic presentation of a specific instance designed to explain a more general principle by making generalization and drawing conclusions.

References

- Cohen, Louis, Manion, Lawrence, and Morrison, Keith. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Yin, Robert K. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.