

CHAPTER 3: STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to present and introduce the research strategy and the empirical techniques applied. The chapter also defines the scope and limitations of the research design and situates the research amongst existing research traditions in the social sciences. Thus, shall present in sequence the research philosophy, research methodology approach, research design, population and sampling, research instruments, data collection procedures and data presentation and analysis.

Research philosophy can be defined as the development of the research background, knowledge and its nature (Saunders and Thornhill, 2007). Research philosophy is also defined with the help of a study paradigm. In the words of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), a study paradigm is defined as a broad framework, which comprises perception, beliefs and understanding of several theories and practices. Research methodology is used to conduct a study. It can also be characterised as a precise procedure, which involves various steps through which a researcher creates a relationship between the research objectives and questions.

The word 'ontology' was first coined by Augusté Comte in 1865 who proposed that social phenomena can be studied scientifically. The positivist position assumes that there is truth out there and we need to have the proper methodologies to discover it. This position presumes the social world exists objectively and externally, that knowledge is valid only if it is based on observations of this external reality and that universal or general laws exist or that theoretical models can be developed that are

generalisable, can explain cause and effect relationships and which lend themselves to predicting outcomes (Flower, 2009).

Positivism is based upon values of reason, truth and validity and there is a focus purely on facts, gathered through direct observation and experience and measured empirically using quantitative methods and statistical analysis. It refers to the claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality (Blaikie, 2000). Positivists believe that the world is external to individuals (Carson *et al.*, 1988), and that there is an objective reality to any research of this phenomenon or condition regardless of the researcher's perspective or belief (Hudson, 1988), to research by selecting a study subject which has clear and appropriate hypotheses and adopt appropriate research methodology (Churchill, 1996).

Positivist researchers remain far from participants of research by creating a space, which is important in remaining emotionally neutral to make a clear distinction between reason and feeling (Carson *et al.*, 2001). They also maintain a clear distinction between science and personal experience and judgment and truth value. (Carson *et al.*, 2001). The aim of positivist researchers is to make time and context free generalizations. Positivist researchers think that is possible because it can explain human behaviour because of the real reasons that precede the temporary behaviour and researcher and his research on separate themes and do not affect each other (Hudson, 1988).

Accordingly, positivist researchers also try to remain detached from research participants by creating distance between themselves and the participants. This is an important step in remaining emotionally neutral to make a clear distinction between reason and feeling, and the relationship between science and personal experience. Researchers should seek positive objectivity and always use a rational and logical approach to research (Carson *et al.*, 2001; Hudson 1988).

Epistemology refers to the possible ways of gaining knowledge of social reality, whatever it is understood to be. It reflects the transitions that took place from the time Auguste Comte adopted the scientific approach to the study of social phenomena to the time that social scientists made a radical epistemological shift. This shift in paradigms is shown in figures Figure 3.1 shows the broad categories into which paradigms are fitted.

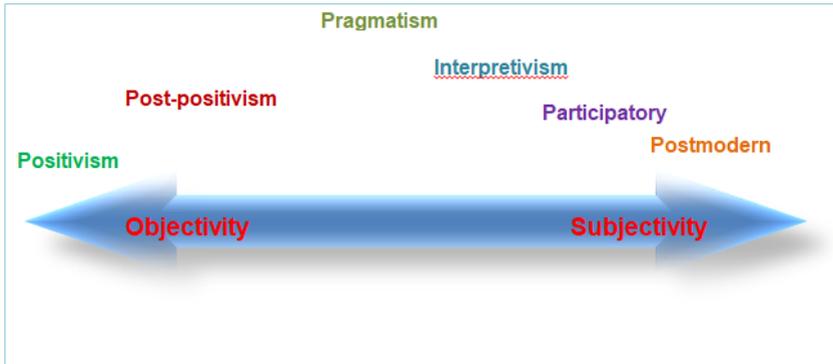


Figure 3.1: The Epistemological Continuum (*Carson et al., 2001*)

The position of interpretivism in relation to ontology and epistemology is that interpretivists believe that reality is multiple and relative (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that these multiple realities also depend on other systems for meanings, which make it even more difficult to interpret in terms of fixed realities (Neuman, 2000). The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined (*Carson et al., 2001:5*) and perceived (Hirschman, 1985, Berger and Luckman, 1967: 3, Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Interpretivists avoid rigid structural frameworks such as in positivist research and adopt a more personal and flexible research structure (*Carson et al., 2001*) receptive to capturing meanings in human interaction and making sense of what is perceived as reality (*Carson et*

al., 2001). They believe the researcher and his informants are interdependent and mutually interactive (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The interpretivist researcher enters the field with some sort of prior insight of the research context but assumes that this is insufficient in developing a fixed research design due to complex, multiple and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). The researcher remains open to new knowledge throughout the study and lets it develop with the help of informants. The use of such an emergent and collaborative approach is consistent with the interpretivist belief that humans have the ability to adapt, and that no one can gain prior knowledge of time and context bound social realities (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Therefore, the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behaviour rather than to generalize and predict causes and effects. For an interpretivist researcher it is important to understand motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context- bound. In this study the researcher bases her research on an epistemological interpretivist approach which assumes that humans are actively engaged in interpreting their social world and makes the following assumptions:

- Meanings are constructed by humans as they engage with the world they are interpreting.
- Humans make sense of the world based on their historical and social perspective. They seek to understand the context and then make an interpretation of what they find which is shaped by their own experiences and backgrounds. The basic generation of meaning is always social.

A qualitative interpretive research approach was adopted for this project. The qualitative approach breaks with traditional research methodology in that it does not focus on the production of objective and reproducible data but is concerned with meaning, and the way it informs subjective understanding of issues. Where quantitative

research primarily concerns itself with techniques and instruments of obtaining data in hypothesis testing, qualitative research is concerned with the meaning of experience, language and symbol. Qualitative approaches aim at enriching our understanding of human experience (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001).

Qualitative analysis emphasises the importance of the context of behaviour as it is influenced by historical, ecological, socio-economic, political, cultural and temporal conditions, and subsequent interpretation of the meaning. Human behaviour is rendered more meaningful when experience is understood within a framework of culture and connectedness of being in the world and part thereof (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001). A qualitative approach recognises that human experience has meaning in terms of involvement and values and does not start from an absolute origin or certain unquestionable 'observations', but from a perspective of an everyday understanding of people and events. One must consider the context and temporal aspects of an action if one is to gain a meaningful and comprehensive understanding. Behaviour is thus viewed in the context of narrative, history, text and story.

Qualitative interpretation appropriates sense in human behaviour through meaning of experience and is not purely based on objective observation and description (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001). Rather, description in this sense is part of the construction and reconstruction of meaningful experience in human activity. The process of initiation and practice of indigenous forms of healing exists in a context of underlying values and customs that cannot be comprehensively understood through pure description and numerical categorisation of data.

Qualitative approaches identify the role of the researcher as actively engaged in the making of meaning from the text or with the 'subject'

under study. A qualitative approach is theoretically underpinned by the understanding of meaning as constantly constructed experience revealed through the lens of a particular interpretive framework, (Hollway and Jefferson, 2001) Thus, the researcher's own subjectivity is considered to inform interpretation of data and consequent findings, challenging the natural scientific claim to value-free objectivity as an imperative condition for causality. Hence for this reason extensive reference is made to participants' own words in both the presentation and discussion of results for this study. In providing detailed descriptions of participants' accounts, the researcher has attempted to illustrate the lived meaning of their experiences. This study attempts to adopt explicitly a qualitative approach to research methodology. The approach usually yields richest data, details, new insights, permits face-to-face contact with respondents, provides opportunity to explore topics in depth and allows interviewers to experience the affective and cognitive aspects of responses. In addition, it allows the interviewer to explain or help clarify questions, increasing the likelihood of useful responses and allows interviewer to be flexible in administering interview to individuals or circumstances. However, it may need well-qualified, highly trained interviewers since interviewees might distort information through recall error, selective perceptions, and the desire to please the interviewer. The volume of information, being large, may be difficult to transcribe and reduce the data.

The researcher used qualitative research methodology. Qualitative researchers view the world as socially constructed through individual perceptions. The researcher is pessimistic of providing possible explanations without carefully examining the process. Therefore, the research is more concerned with understanding what is happening as viewed by the participants. The project, therefore, seeks to understand the entire environment and help other scholars understand how participants view the situation being studied. There are varieties of methods that are common in qualitative research. The methods

include focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, content analysis and unstructured interviews to mention just a few.

According to the 2012 Census Report Chitungwiza has a population of about 356 840, 150586 (42.2%) where men and 206254 (52.8%) were women. The study sample population of this study included 10 households, a focus group of 10 participants and 1 officials from the Ministry of Local Government and National Housing, 1 officials from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, 1 from the Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate and 1 Chitungwiza Town Council officials making it a total of 24 interviewees.

Due to the qualitative and specific nature of the research project, a purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling. With this type of sampling, the sample was “hand-picked” for the research process. In effect, members of the sample were selected with a specific purpose in mind, and that purpose reflected the qualities of the subject chosen and their relevance to the topic of investigation. The advantage of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to focus on subjects or events, which have good grounds for what they believe. Instead of going for the typical instances, a cross-section or a balanced choice, the researcher was able to concentrate on instances which display wide variety and even focus on extreme cases to illuminate the research questions at hand. In this sense, it might not only be economical but also informative in a way that probability conventional sampling cannot be. With a non-probability sampling the researcher is of the position that it is not feasible to include a sufficiently large number of examples in the study, this very much goes hand in hand with qualitative research. The aim of the study is to explore the quality of data derived from the perceptions of people on the gender, housing

poverty nexus, and not the quantity and technical components, previously done in other studies highlighted in the literature review.

The research was based on 10 households, 5 Selected from St Mary's, Zengeza 1, 2, 3 and 5 selected from Unit A, N, J, D and L Seke, and a focus group discussion of ten participants in Chitungwiza, with participants from mainly Zengeza. Other stakeholders are key informants from the Chitungwiza Town Council and the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works and National Housing, The Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development and Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate were interviewed to get an understanding of what they think of the gender perspective to housing poverty in Zimbabwe. Among the 10 households interviewed 4 were men and 6 were women. Of the 4 men, 2 were unemployed and 2 were employed in the public and private sectors. Of the 6 women, 3 were housewives who stayed at home and carried out housework chores with the aid of their children and had not worked in a permanent job before; 3 were self-employed and ran small businesses such as vegetable marketing (musika). In the focus group of 10,3 women were hairdressers 2 worked at flea markets and 1 was a cross-border trader and tuck shop owners. 4 of the men were employed as follows: 2 were schoolteachers, 1 was a nurse and 1 was a policeman. The respondents were between the ages of 20 - 50 years old. The selection of these respondents was based on their experiences and their rich historical knowledge of housing in Chitungwiza since they were members of the Chitungwiza Housing Association (CHITREST).

Personal interviews were used as the method of data collection for this study. The personal interview involved the interviewer visiting the respondent's home or workplace. For this research project, semi-structured interviews were conducted at participants' residences and places of work. An interview guide for the first interview was

developed in accordance with principles outlined by Hollway and Jefferson (2001). The reason for using semi-structured interviews is that they are flexible and have a fluid structure unlike structured interviews which contain a structured sequence of questions to be asked in the same way of all interviewees. The structure of a semi-structured interview is usually organised around an interview guide. This contains topics, themes, or areas to be covered during the course of the interview, rather than a sequenced script standardised questions. The aim is to ensure flexibility in what sequence questions are asked, and in whether and how particular areas might be followed up and developed with different interviewees. This is so that the interviewee's own understanding and the researcher's interests can shape the interview process. This worked well in the research project, as an in-depth analysis was the main objective. 60 people participated in this research project; 10 were key informants while 50 were women and men from Chitungwiza who bear the brunt of housing poverty in Chitungwiza.

To minimise the effects of bias and false information of self-report data, guidelines from Welman and Kruger (2001) were adopted for the process of data collection. They recommend that the researcher should dress in more or less the same way as the participants. Of relevance to this research project, they point out that there may be resistance if the interviewer arrives 'all dressed up' for an interview in a squatter camp. Affiliation with a particular social group or organisation is not advised as this may adversely affect participants' responses. Since aspects such as gender, race, physical appearance and background are factors out of the researcher's control, which affect response, the researcher took care not to engender resistance against this. A researcher should constantly remain aware of the possibility of being viewed as an intruder, particularly if there is a political perception or ideological difference between researchers and researched.

While flexibility and adaptability are great advantages of personal interviews, they are costly and time-consuming. Personal interviews cannot be conducted anonymously, and interviewers must thus take care not to say anything that may be construed as a desired response but use open-ended questions instead. Some advantages of personal interviewing include control over participants' responses and response rates. There is emphasis on the control of the researcher in the interview situation through personal interaction, whereby they may gain the confidence of evasive respondents and record respondents' answers and follow up on incomplete or vague responses and so obtain rich data. The researcher's physical presence may reduce elusive responses during a direct encounter and participants who may be unwilling or unable to complete a questionnaire may be more willing to talk about their experiences in an interview. Semi-structured interviews were used as certain aspects of the topic may have been sensitive and the participants were from divergent backgrounds. A basic interview guide was used with open-ended questions which focus on the population's housing needs.

A focus group discussion is a rapid assessment, semi-structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants gather to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher. The focus group usually consists of six to ten people. The researcher used the method because one is able to understand the why behind behaviour and attitudes. It also enables in-depth discussion of the concept. The researcher was also able to clarify responses and probe for additional information. Further, the researcher incorporated group dynamics to enable further discussion around the varying opinions shared. The technique inherently capitalises on group dynamics. It can produce valuable information that is not likely to come from a personal interview or a survey and uses fewer resources (time and money) than multiple personal interviews or large surveys that fail to ask the important questions.

Responses also can be clarified and expanded upon with probing follow-up questions, non-verbal responses can be recorded and interpreted, group members can react to and build upon each other's responses to produce information or ideas that they might not think of on their own and focus groups can be a natural forum for new ideas.

The researcher used this method because it is very discreet, and it allows the researcher to examine social interactions based on texts or transcripts. It provides a historical outline and the changes of approach to presentation of information become clear as time elapses and more data is brought into play.

The researcher acquired an introductory and permission-seeking letter from the learning institution i.e. Women's University in Africa. The researcher then took the letter to the Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development, Ministry of Local Government and National Housing and the Chitungwiza Town Council and the ward councillors. The researcher went on to visit the Chitungwiza Town Council and spoke to officials there for permission and made appointments to interview the incumbents and was given permission to do her research in the area. The researcher entered the community and then did convenient sampling, whereby interviews were done with the first respondents she met. Data collection was done in a month by the researcher since she was only able to do it effectively over weekends.

To ensure validity and reliability the research used multiple data instruments in the form of interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher also used simple language, mostly *Shona*, an indigenous Zimbabwean language spoken and understood by the respondents who were then able to articulate clearly their responses in *Shona*. Consistency in the way questions were asked by the researcher also helped in acquiring valid and reliable data. The researcher also

maintained a dress code similar to that of the respondents, hence they felt that the researcher was one of them and opened up to her. This ensured successful collection of valid and reliable data.

The researcher applied the thematic approach to data analysis by which data that were similar were grouped together under a theme and analysed from that stance. The researcher agreed to the request of the participants to conceal their identities for the purposes of confidentiality. In this respect, the researcher used pseudonyms in the study. The linchpin of ethical behaviour in research is the doctrine of informed consent. The people in the research were free to choose to take part or refuse to do so after having been given the fullest information concerning the nature and purpose of the study. In this regard, the subjects had the right to know that they were being researched and that in some sense they would have actively given their consent. In this case, the researcher was open about her intention as she did not conceal or hide her identity or the purpose of the study. Assurances were given to those who provided responses to interview questions that the data were needed for purposes of academia and research. The researcher avoided methods that could bring harm to subjects and researchers. It is often argued that the perils of role-pretence; dissimulation and deception are harmful for the individual and for development as a profession. The researcher did not use any deceit or lie to the research subjects to gain data.

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research philosophy, research methodology of this study and its research design, explain the population and sample selection, describe the methods and procedures used in designing the research instrument and collecting the data, and provide an explanation of the presentation and procedures used to analyse the data.