

A Comparative Study on Scientific and Literature Based Thematic Analysis in Social Science and Humanities Researches: A Case of University of Sri Jayewardenepura Sri Lanka

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Generally, social science research heavily relies upon literature-based studies to draw conclusions about social phenomena. However, the excessive application of literature-based thematic research is likely to impose a limitation in studying actual social behavior. Therefore, the preference of Sri Lankan undergraduates of Faculties of Social sciences and Humanities over scientific and literature-based thematic analysis was tested in this study. The 165 focused group sample size was selected which represents 5 Departments at the Faculty of Social Sciences and humanities, University of Sri Jayewardenepura. Data were analyzed using statistical methods and content analysis. It was revealed that the respondents are more focused on literature-based thematic studies rather than scientific and statistical analysis. Structured interviews, content analysis were used as the main methods of data collection. The in-depth interviews were continued with an interview guide which was designed with open-ended, closed questions, Likert scale, binary questions, and numerical values. Content analysis was used as a research tool to determine the presence of themes or theories (concepts) within some given qualitative data. It was found out that that majority of the students of the faculty tend to select literature based thematic analysis rather than statistical or scientific analysis. This is a consequence of factors such as higher proportion of female students who usually have the tendency to step away from lab and field work, lack of resources to engage in scientific methods, lack efforts to be put forth, high budgets required, lack of available knowledge and practice on statistics, academic staff's encouragement towards thematic method etc. The importance of combining literature-based studies and the scientific methods was highlighted.

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