* Qualitative research involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of narrative data.
* The focus of qualitative research is typically on the quality of a particular activity.
* Holistic description of the phenomenon, setting, or topic of interest is a key characteristic of qualitative research.
* Both qualitative and quantitative research methods are valuable in their own rights.
* When deciding on a research methodology, it is best to begin with a topic of interest or specific question and then select the method that provides you with the best answer to that question.
* Five essential features of qualitative research are as follows:
  + Qualitative research is naturalistic.
  + Qualitative research is descriptive
  + Qualitative researchers are concerned with process as well as product.
  + Qualitative researchers analyze their data inductively.
  + Qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with how people make sense and meaning of their lives.
* Although the basic steps are fairly consistent, those used in conducting qualitative research may occur out of sequential order, may overlap, and are sometimes conducted concurrently.
* The general steps in conducting qualitative research are as follows:
  + Identification of the phenomenon to be studied
  + Review of the related literature
  + Identification and selection of participants
  + Collection of data
  + Analysis of data
  + Generation of research questions
  + Additional data collection, analysis, and revision of research questions
  + Final interpretation of analyses and development of conclusions
* Many different approaches exist for conducting qualitative research.
* Commonly used qualitative approaches include ethnographic research, narrative research, historical research, grounded theory research, phenomenological research, and case study research.
* Ethnographic research involves the in-depth description and interpretation of shared practices and beliefs of a social group or other community.
* Narrative research is an approach used to convey experiences as they are lived and told by individuals.
* Historical research describes events, occurrences, or settings of the past to better understand them.
* Grounded theory research is used to discover an existing theory or generate a new theory resulting directly from data.
* Phenomenological research is used to describe and interpret experiences or reactions of participants to a specific phenomenon from their individual perspectives.
* Case study research is an in-depth analysis of a single entity, known as a case.
* Ethnography is a research approach used to study human interactions in social settings.
* Important features of ethnographic research include the following:
  + Ethnographic research focuses on social behavior in natural settings.
  + It relies on narrative descriptions made by observers or participants in the studied group.
  + Its perspective is holistic.
  + In some studies, research questions may emerge after data collection is well under way.
  + Procedures of data analysis involve contextualization within the group, setting, or event observed.
* A privileged observer, also known as a nonparticipant observer, does not engage in the activities of the group.
* A participant observer actively engages in all activities as a regular member of the studied group.
* Naturalistic observation is a holistic technique where the researcher must record all pertinent information.
* A strength of ethnographic research is its holistic view of education or personal behavior.
* Concerns about ethnographic research involve the reliability of data and the validity of research conclusions, as well as the generalizability of findings.
* Several forms of narrative research exist; all forms tell stories of lived experiences, but they differ according to perspective, amount of life story told, and theoretical lens.
* A biographical study is a type of narrative research where the researcher records the experiences of another person’s life.
* An autobiographical study also involves the experiences of a person’s life, but is told by the individual who is the subject of the study.
* A life history tells the story of an individual’s entire life.
* A personal experience story is a study of an individual’s personal experience related to single or multiple incidents.
* An oral history is conducted by gathering personal reflections of events and their implications from one or more individuals.
* A key technique used in narrative research is restorying, a process of reorganizing personal information and stories into a format that makes sense for the intended audience.
* During the process of restorying, participants as well as the researcher may experience epiphanies.
* A clear strength of narrative research is its ability to tell detailed stories of people’s lives.
* Narrative research, however, is a lengthy process wherein the researcher must uncover a multitude of details in people’s lives.