

The complexity of methodology essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Ethics](#)



Nowadays, the academic world becomes more and more interdisciplinary and interconnected between various research patterns. One of the ways to analyze the validity of certain research and compatibility with another is through the framework of the applied methodology and research design. The aim of this paper is to analyze two articles that contain findings of two distinctive pieces of research in the field of psychology. In this regard, attention is paid to methodology, validity, strategies of inquiry and type of research design.

Although both articles are in the field of psychology, they use different research design and methods. Marques uses “ a quasi-experimental design where we compared psychological health of individuals in four different areas” (Marques, 2011, p. 316). On the other hand, Burger’ research design is entirely experimental, in which Milgram’s test is verified through the application of experiment (Burger). In this regard, the first article uses personal interviews and surveys as primary methods, while the second applies experiment and its interpretation as the main source of data for analysis. In both cases, validity is strong since precautions for biases and secondary factors that could influence or compromise data collection are taken into account and showed in calculations conducted (Elms, et al., 2011). In terms of strategies of inquiry, Marques uses ethnographic and participant observation strategy while Burger tests clinical model of Milgram (Elms, et al., 2011).

Marques’ research has various strengths. First of all, the research covered not only a single industrialized area but three, which were further compared to a non-industrialized area. Since the primary question of the research is

how living in industrial zones affects one's mental and psychological well-being, a single non-industrial area is used for the purposes of borderline comparison for the three industrialized areas (Elms, et al., 2011). Another strong point is that the choice of areas was conditioned by existing administrative and urban characterization of areas as industrial, which eliminated the factor of biased and personal perception of areas as industrial. In terms of interview conduct, the strength was the preliminary preparation of interviewers and conduct of interviews in the environment comfortable for the interviewees – their homes. The research was also well-structured according to the existing academic discourse on the subject matter and used common “ measures of psychological health in the psychological literature: psychological well-being, dispositional optimism, anxiety and depression, psychiatric comorbidity and coping strategies” (Marques, 2011, p. 315).

The weakness of Marques' research or rather a slight criticism is its scope. Although at the outlined stage, analysis of four areas, one of which is non-industrial is justified, for the future and a more profound contribution to the field and cross-verification of the claims, the research will have to be conducted on a larger scale involving different areas within Portugal and further within a different nation and country. The research also does not outline the impact of the ethno-cultural belonging on the findings and whether it could differ.

The strength of Burger's research is its experiment-oriented and testing nature. Since it aims at replication and verification of previously existing test of Milgram, its methodology is very straightforward: verification of data from

the previous experiment and testing the results thirty years after the first one. In this regard, Burger's methodology is more clear and quantifiable than Marques' (Elms, et al., 2011). Furthermore, another strong point is that Burger expanded the initial studied group and included more women in the experiment in order to avoid gender factor bias from the data. The level of electric shock potentially inflicted upon the subject was lowered to 150 volts, which made the experiment more ethically acceptable. All participants were well informed about the details of the test except for the fact that the subject was not inflicted any electrical shock at all (Burger, 2009). Further ethical backup of the research was conducted by freedom of withdrawal " participants were told at least three times (twice in writing) that they could withdraw from the study at any time and still receive their \$50 for participation" (Burger, 2009, p. 2).

Consequently, since Burger's research paid so much attention to the ethical aspect of the research, the primary weakness of this type of research is ethical clearance. From various perspectives, such approach to research would require a profound discussion and elimination of any ethical bias and potential negative implications for the participants. For the same reason, the initial test by Milgram was not verified for the thirty years after it was conducted (Burger, 2009). In this regard, comparing the two research approaches, Marques' research is more ethically appropriate and neutral rather than Burger's. Although it does not undermine the credibility of the data analysis and interpretation, in a long-term perspective, it can challenge the research itself just as in the case of Milgram and the initial test. Thus, Marques' approach to research is more promising and open for the future

expanding of the research scale, while Burger's is more limited in this sense (Elms, et al., 2011).

Overall, from all mentioned above, it can be concluded that any type of research methodology and design has its strengths and weaknesses. The choice of one type of design and method over the other is largely conditioned by the nature and requirements of the posed question and how a certain method or approach can be crafted to answer this question. In other words, Burger would be able to answer his research question with Marques' methodology and vice versa. Thus, a researcher needs to explore both pros and cons of each method and then decide which one can answer the research question in full. Although Burger's research required a profound ethical clearance, it managed to make a thirty-year breakthrough in the target field. So did Marques, although his research covered a few areas it gave the ground for the further research on the national scale and answered the question.

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