The Case Study Method in Business

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Abstract: Social science researchers have made wide use of case study method to investigate contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Hence, this article discusses several aspects of case study method in business. These include the definition, types and design of case study. It also confers on data collection method in case study that discusses in detail about interview, observation, and document analysis. The quality in case study and previous research that relate with case study also converse in this article. This study contributes and assists individuals or researchers to obtain ideas particularly in studies of real-life context governing social issues and problems.
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INTRODUCTION

A case study is a narrative about interesting or unique and in relation to individuals, organizations, processes, programs, neighborhoods, institutions, and events [1]. In general, case studies are the desire manner on "how" and "why" questions, has little control over occasions and the focus in on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, which is not clearly evident[2] . According to Imas[3], a case study is a method of learning in relation to multifaceted situation, based on broad understanding, attained through extensive explanation and analysis in its context.

The purpose of a case study is to endow with a more information through analysis of a situation or a case that expose interesting knowledge to the reader [2]. The case study in business intends to look deeply for explanations and expand perceptive of the phenomenon through various data sources [4].

LITERATURE REVIEW
Case study design
Components of case study research design

The case study design is the consistent progression that links the empirical data to a research questions and eventually, to its conclusions [2]. The main idea of the design is to avoid the situation in which the evidence is not complying with the initial research questions.

There were five components of case study research design as suggested by Yin[1]. The first component is a study's questions. The term of "who", "what", "where", "how" and "why" will be significant sign concerning the relevant research method to be used. Second component is study proposition (if any). Each proposition has directs interest to situation that should be investigated within the scope of study.

Third component is unit of analysis that relate to the elementary dilemma of classifying what the "case" is ([5]. The suitable information will be collected from organizations or individuals through research questions and propositions. The fourth component is linking data to propositions. In order to link the data with proposition, analytical techniques were important in case study for example, time series analysis, pattern-matching, explanation building or cross case synthesis. The case study analysis needs the data as a direct reflection of study propositions. The fifth component is interpreting a study's findings. In interpretation of data, an important approach is to classify and deal with rival justifications for research findings[4].

Choosing case(s)

Yin [2] proposed four types of case study design. It is stand on a matrix of holistic, embedded, single case and multiple cases. The first type of case study is holistic single case study and it corresponds to

the critical in testing a well-formulated theory. It used to determine whether a proposition in the study is correct or other rationalizations might be more relevant. The second type is embedded single case study. An embedded single case study engages with more than one unit of analysis but regularly within one institution or organization. It allows in-depth investigation into the questions across a number of units within a single organization in order to generate rich data of the research.

Third type of case study is embedded multiple case study design. It enables the researcher to compare and contrast cases or explore the phenomenon in number of different cases or various organizations. Fourth type of case study is holistic multiple case study design. Holistic multiple case designs retrieves through understanding of literal and replications [6].

Triangulation

Triangulation refers to the intersection of three difference references points that used to calculate the precise location of an object[7]. In data collection, the principal of triangulation aims to fine various kinds of sources in order to confirm the relevant information. As case study research can consist of multiple data sources or multiple methods, there is a need to bring these various sources together at some stage which described by Yin[2] as converging lines of enquiry.

Piloting

A pilot case study helps to test and refine one or more aspects of a final study. For example, the test of design, fieldwork procedure, data collection process or analysis plans. In this sense, the pilot case study provides another opportunity to research practice [8]. Piloting may be conducted for several reasons, for example, the informants at a pilot site can be accessible, or the site geographically convenient and easily retrieve document and data of organization[9].

Types of case study
Descriptive

Yin [1] differentiated several types of case study. In business context, the relevant types of case study consist of descriptive, explanatory and exploratory case study. Descriptive case study shows an absolute description of a phenomenon within its situation[1]. Descriptive case study involves a descriptive theory that establishes the overall outline for the researcher to pursue all over the study. According to Kohlbacher [10], descriptive case study needs the researcher to put off his or her earlier knowledge and understanding with the subject matter in order to understand the experiences of the participants.

The researcher needs to explore upon the study without any visualized concepts concerning the outcomes of the study. In fact, Lopez & Willis[11]

suggest that no literature review or research questions be created, and that the researcher simply describe the experiences of the participants. The goal in descriptive phenomenology is to arrive at an unbiased, true description of the phenomenon that can be generalized to the common lived experiences of others.

Explanatory

An explanatory case study can be defined as relationship between cause and effect, and clarifying how the events take place [1]. According to Imas [3], the explanatory case study investigates link among variables and usually involves multi-method considerations. In addition, it also examines process and procedure at several places.

Explanatory case studies are valuable when conducting causal research study. Mainly in-complicated studies of institutions or organizations that need researcher to employ several cases to examine a plurality of influences. This may be achieved via a pattern-matching technique suggested by Yin and Moore [12]. Pattern matching exists when there is a situation where information come from the similar cases related to some theoretical proposition.

Exploratory

An exploratory case study aims (i) to define the questions of research and (ii) to determine the possibility of the research procedure[1]. In exploratory case study, data gathering and fieldwork are vital in order to define the suitable questions and hypotheses. However, the goal may justifiably be to discover theory by directly observing a social phenomenon in its raw shape[13]. Therefore, exploratory case study has been recognized a preface to much social sciences research[14-15].

Empirical research using case study

A study of Islamic leadership theory and practice in K-12 Islamic schools in Michigan by Aabed [16] used descriptive case study. The study described about leadership approaches that influenced by Islamic leadership principles. The study populations participated in the study was 12 Islamic school principals in the state of Michigan. The data obtained from face to face interview in order to get rich descriptive information about leadership approach, trait, styles and principles. It found that all of the principals used some element of the servant leader approach, transformational leadership and practiced the situational leadership approach in their schools.

An institutionalist study on the performance management system (PMS) in Malaysian government-linked company (GLC) by Alwi [17] focused on explanatory case study method. The data collected through semi-structured interviews, document reviews, informal conversations and observations. The data

reveals that the performance management system related activities have somehow been viewed as a routine mechanism for appraising the employees' performances and become decoupled from the organizational activities. It provides evidence to the government that any change management program introduced in a government-linked organisation should take into account the norms and values of the organizational members, and receive strong support from both the top management and the trade unions.

A case study evaluation of the Royal College of Nursing Clinical Leadership Programme in England by Large, Macleod, Cunningham and Kitson[18] used multiple case study approach. The study undertaking 16 case studies through semi structure interviews with key stakeholders and an assessment of documentary data. The study found that the important finding of this study is the positive change in leadership capability of clinical leaders. Clinical leader describe a commitment to improving service user care and developing team effectiveness, more confident in their leadership approach and have a greater sense of value and optimism about their clinical roles.

A study conducted by Carter III [19] on the topic of the leadership qualities of family business successors within United States used exploratory case study method. There were six cases selected for in-depth analysis including an air conditioning wholesale company, a pest control company, an automobile dealership, a printing business, a funeral home, and an air conditioning service company. The primary data collection methods included qualitative interviews, observation of the participants, documents analysis, and a survey questionnaire. The results of study show that (i) the family business is an institution worth preserving and protecting for its owners, managers, employees, customers, suppliers, and stakeholders (ii) the current generation of the family business believes in passing the business to the next generation (iii) a possible successor generation exists.

A case study of organizational climate, transformational leadership, and leading organizational change among senior business leaders in the United State life insurance industry by Willet [20] used exploratory case study. Purposive samples of 10 participants were used as the sample in the study and consist of senior business leaders. The data collection methods that have been used by researcher are interviews, observation, and document review. The result revealed that senior business leaders in this study perceived organizational climate as a differentiating variable to an organization's performance and success. The study also suggested that senior business leaders perceived that organizational climate affects employee feelings, employee thoughts, and as a result, employee behaviors. Finally, senior leaders in the study perceived that an organization's climate and a leader's leadership style affect a leader's ability to lead organizational change.

METHODOLOGY
Data collection methods
Interview

Data serve as the basis for a research study. The case study method in business has three relevant field-based activities[1]. It consists of interview, observation and document analysis that discussed below.

In qualitative data collection, Farquhar [4] explained that interviews are generally semi-structured. It means that the researcher follow and interview guide but allow for the flexibility and contextual adaption requires[21]. According to Yin [8], conversation between the researcher and the participant is strictly less scripted and researcher does not influence any uniform behavior for every interview.

According to Merriam [22] the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions and the types of questions asked depends on the focus of the study. There are three basic interview formats [22, 23-24] consists of structured interview, semi-structured interview and unstructured interview. A structured interview uses a set of questions with fixed wording. While a semi-structured interview may have a set wording of questions, the sequence and wording of questions in a semi-structured interview can be varied allowing the researcher to respond to the situation and emerging views of the participant [2].

Observation

Observation can be useful mode of data collection and it is a form of primary data to be highly valued [8]. The relevant items to be observed depends on the topic of the research for example (i) characteristics of individual/employee; (ii) interactions between or among people; and (iii) physical surroundings, including visual and audio cues.

Merriam [22] explains that effective qualitative researchers must be good observers and listeners, as well as noting the silences, whether in interviews, observations, or documents, is an important component of being a good listener. When possible, a record of an observation during an interview will be made on the spot [24]. However, as qualitative researchers[22, 24] suggest, even if the researcher is able to take some notes during the interview in relation to an observation, full notes will be written and dictated immediately after the interview to ensure that the observation is accurately captured, understood, and used in conjunction with interview responses and document reviews to make appropriate modifications in subsequent interviews.

Document analysis

In combination with interviews and observation, the researcher will review relevant documents where available to support triangulation of data. Relevant documents will most likely include letters, reports, job descriptions and performance expectations, newsletters and intranet data sources, and artifacts from participant work spaces[20].

Merriam [22] suggests that as the primary instrument for collecting the data, the qualitative researcher needs to think creatively about the research problems, keep an open mind, and rely on skill and intuition when it comes to reviewing and interpreting data from documentation. Similar to how data from observation will be used, data from documentation will be used in conjunction with interview data and observation data to make appropriate modifications in subsequent interviews and the evolving study design.

Quality in case study

Case study method suggests that in order to sustain the quality of data, the research needs to be consistent and involve techniques such as construct validity, internal validity and reliability [2, 4]. It is important to ensure the quality in case study because it represents a reasonable set of statements.

Construct validity

Construct validity refers to the extent of the study explores and what it declares to investigate[4]. There were two steps to follow in testing construct validity in the study. First, identify neighborhood change in terms of precise concepts and relate them to the original objectives of the study. Second, identify operational measures that match the research concepts.

Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the existence of causal relationships between variables and outcomes; related with data collection and analysis stages in research[25]. The aim of internal validity is to convince the reader that research results are based on critical investigation of the data.

Reliability

Reliability focuses to the lack of random error, so, if the research repeated, researchers would appear at the same insights [2]. According to Gibbert and Ruigrok [25], transparency and replication are important in declares for reliability. Transparency can be exhibited through detail documentation and references to the case study research database. Replication questions can be deal through references to the research strategy processes with recognized protocols.

Authors writing on qualitative research[22, 24, 26] posit that the reliability of a case study can be particularly potential for researcher bias because the researcher represents as primary mechanism for gathering and analyzing data. Therefore, the researcher will acknowledge and observe any biases, and utilize appropriate data collection and analysis techniques[27].

CONCLUSION

In summary, case study is useful in understanding complex social processes in organizational and environmental context. It specially made for exploring new processes or behaviors that are little known. The strength of case study relies in the capacity to describe, explain and explore social process in organizations. In addition, a case study method will help to generate research questions more correctly to the dynamic nature of research phenomenon. Discussions of this article will assist individuals or researchers to obtain ideas particularly in studies of real-life context governing social issues and problems.

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