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## A Comparative Review of Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation

biniam getnet agazu Mr.

*Jimma University*, biniamgetnet1@gmail.com

Adissu Ketemaw Dejenu Mr.

*Jimma University*, adissuketemaw8@gmail.com

Kenenisa Lemi Debela Dr.

*Jimma University*, kenenisalemi@gmail.com

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## A Comparative Review of Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation

### Abstract

We review Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell's 2016 book, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* and then compare it to three other introductory to qualitative research texts. We found the Merriam and Tisdell book to be useful for both novice and more experienced researchers. The two authors are highly experienced in qualitative research and their book may provide an opportunity to improve our understanding of qualitative research design and implementation when compared to other different qualitative books.

### Keywords

qualitative, design, implementation, review

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## A Comparative Review of *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*

Biniam Getnet Agazu, Adissu Ketemaw Dejenu, and Kenenisa Lemi Debela  
Jimma University, Ethiopia

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We review Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell's 2016 book, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* and then compare it to three other introductory to qualitative research texts. We found the Merriam and Tisdell book to be useful for both novice and more experienced researchers. The two authors are highly experienced in qualitative research and their book may provide an opportunity to improve our understanding of qualitative research design and implementation when compared to other different qualitative books.

*Keywords:* qualitative, design, implementation, review

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### Introduction

Qualitative research is rapidly evolving with new methods and approaches such as digital and social media research. As a result, new books and journals with qualitative approach and findings are released on a regular basis. The reviewers chose a single article that gives a detailed qualitative design and implementation. The book in titled *Qualitative Research a Guide to Design and Implementation* was written by Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell and published in 2016.

The goal of this book review was to better understand the process, design, and implementation of qualitative research, as well as to evaluate the arguments, theories, and scientific literature reviews presented in the texts, and to provide a critical assessment of the book's contributions to readers. We prefer this book for a critical review was in three main reasons. First, in an easy-to-follow narrative accessible to both novice and expert researchers, the book provides a deeper grasp of the process of conducting a qualitative research inquiry. Second, because this book was published in 2016, it provides a wonderful opportunity to see contemporary qualitative research trends and changes from both theoretical and empirical viewpoints. Finally, the book covered everything from qualitative research concepts to qualitative research report writing, and it was written for beginners.

The book is divided into three sections and ten chapters. Part One, "The Design of Qualitative Research," contains four chapters that cover the foundational history, epistemology, and characteristics of qualitative research, as well as a synthesis of six popular approaches within this tradition as well as emerging approaches gaining traction among qualitative scholars and practitioners, as well as the initial stages of designing the research and selecting a sample. Three chapters in Part Two, "Collecting Qualitative Data," include interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Part Three, "Analyzing and Reporting Qualitative Data," addresses data analysis, research ethics, and difficulties surrounding the drafting and dissemination of qualitative reports for various audiences. Graduate students using qualitative designs in their thesis or dissertation work will find a template in the appendix.

## **Theoretical foundation**

### **Part One: Qualitative Research Design**

The book begins on the first chapter by asking, “what is qualitative research?” And define research. In addition, the author classifying research into basic and applied research and asking, “where does qualitative research come from?” The development of qualitative research, two important mid-twentieth-century publications contributed to its emergence. In 1967, sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss published the discovery of grounded theory some strategies for qualitative research. The second was a monograph by Egonguba published in 1978, titled toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation.

The other topic discussed in this chapter was philosophical perspectives that is almost no consistency across writers in how this aspect of qualitative research is discussed. A positivist orientation assumes that reality exists “out there” and that it is observable, stable, and measurable. Interpretive research assumes that reality is socially constructed there is no single and observable reality. Critical research goes beyond uncovering the interpretation of people’s understandings of their world. A postmodern world is one where the rationality, scientific method, and certainties of the modern world no longer hold.

Furthermore, the authors given definition and characteristics of qualitative research how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense. Qualitative research is a type of research that encompasses several philosophical orientations and approaches.

The second chapter describes six common qualitative research studies. It identifies that a challenge especially to those new to qualitative research is trying to figure out what “kind” of qualitative research study they are doing and what their “theoretical framework” is. In addition, describes the six common qualitative research designs, “basic qualitative research” the most common “type” of qualitative research is a basic interpretive study. The primary goal of a basic qualitative study is to uncover and interpret these meanings. “Phenomenological research” the assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experience. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced. And the product of this study is a “composite description that presents the ‘essence’ of the phenomenon, called the essential, invariant structure (or essence).” Furthermore “an ethnographic study” the factor that unites all forms of the study is its focus on human society and culture.

The other type of research design was “grounded theory research.” The result of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is “grounded” in, the data hence, grounded theory. That differentiates grounded theory from other types of qualitative research is its focus on building theory. The oldest and most natural form of sense making is that of “narratives study.” The key to this type of qualitative research is the use of stories as data, the term. And “case study” is often used interchangeably with “qualitative research,” however they are not the same. Qualitative research a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. Finally, authors summaries this chapter by determining the ways that a qualitative researcher could design a study. How a researcher does so is determined in part by both the theoretical framework of the study and the purpose of the study as shown in its focus and research questions.

The third chapter discussed in this book was expanding the qualitative paradigm mixed methods, action, critical, and arts-based research. As the author stats that mixed methods approaches to research have developed and been accepted over time and the other topic discussed in section was Action research, is a form of practitioner research. It identifies the

principles action research, these are focuses on a “problematic situation” in practice, the design of the study is emergent “oriented toward some action or cycle of actions, researchers engage participants as co-investigators, Responsible for the study is an insider or outsider to the community under study makes a difference and must be a consideration and Researchers and co investigators collect and analyze multiple forms of data in a systematic way as the research process unfolds.

In addition, the author described that there are many types of action research that are variously named: teacher research, collaborative action research, cooperative inquiry, appreciative inquiry, critical action research, feminist action research, and participatory action research. “Technical action” research guided by an interest in improving control over outcomes. “Practical action” research guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and “prudently and critical action research” guided by an interest in emancipating people and groups from irrationality, unsustainability, and injustice. “Critical” is the theoretical framework that informs the study to help people understand and challenge power relations in the process of the study and to make something happen while the study is going on. And “art-based research” researchers can make use of arts-based practices at different phases of the research study or at all phases. Many researchers make use of arts-based approaches more as part of their data collection methods, to a lesser or greater extent, and sometimes in the presentation of the findings to clarify a point.

The fourth chapter deals about designing your study and selecting a sample. This chapter were how you select a topic for a research study, followed by how to focus this topic and shape it into a research problem. they state in applied fields of practice such as education, management, social work, health professions, and so on, most research topics come from one’s personal interest in the field and from the work setting itself.

The author proposes that most people understand what it means to have a “problem.” A problem in the conventional sense is a matter involving doubt, uncertainty, or difficult. They suggest that the first task, then, in conducting a qualitative study is to raise a question about something that perplexes and challenges the mind. And also, the structure of a problem statement, which essentially lays out the logic of the study, can be compared to a funnel shape broad at the top and narrow at the bottom and the problem statement is a carefully crafted essay that lays out the logic of the research study. The other topic was identifying the theoretical framework qualitative study. As the author proposed that qualitative research is designed to inductively build rather than to test concepts, hypotheses, and theories. One way to identify and establish the theoretical framework of a qualitative study is to review the relevant literature.

It present and discusses about the two basic types of sampling are probability and nonprobability sampling. They suggest since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research. The most appropriate sampling strategy is non probabilistic the most common form of which is called purposive. Some of the more common types purposive sampling are typical, unique, maximum variation, convenience, and snowball or chain sampling. lastly the author points out that, the question of how many people to interview, how many sites to visit, or how many documents to read concerns more likely, haunts the novice of qualitative researcher.

## **Part Two: Collecting Qualitative Data**

Chapter five in part two discussed about conducting effective interviews. It begins from defining concept of interview data and present in this chapter, in most forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all the data are collected through interviews. The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter, in which one person elicits information from another. Group or collective formats can also be used to obtain data. In

addition, they state that interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them.

Furthermore, it discussed about the types of interview indifferent perspectives. these are by structure perspective; structured semi structured and unstructured interview, by philosophical and disciplinary orientation: census taking, surveying, and opinion polling have long been and still are measurement-oriented forms of interviewing. the other is focus group interviews. In addition, the author points out that the key to getting good data from interviewing is to ask good questions and asking good questions takes practice. Finally, the author suggests six basic interview questions experience and behavior questions, opinion, and values questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, background/demographic questions, and skilled interviewers can do much to bring about positive interaction.

Chapter six present being a careful observer and shows distinguishing from interviews in two ways. First, observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs rather than a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second, observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview. In addition, observations are also conducted to triangulate emerging findings; that is, they are used in conjunction with interviewing and document analysis to substantiate the findings and to provide some knowledge of the context or to provide specific incidents, behaviors, and so on that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews.

The other point they described that what to observe is partly a function of how structured the observer wants to be. We observe the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversation, subtle factors, your own behavior. And also, the researcher can assume one of several stances while collecting information as an observer, furthermore the author identifies types of observation as complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. Finally, what is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge. This written account of the observation constitutes field notes. Indeed, this chapter would not be complete without some discussion of online observation and gathering observational data by making use of new media technologies.

Chapter seven discussed about mining data from documents and artifacts, starting from describing types of documents and artifacts. In this case public records are the official, ongoing records of a society's activities discussions of educational issues and bills in the congressional record; federal, state, and private agency reports; individual program records; and the statistical database of the center for educational statistics. On the other hand, Personal documents are a good source of data concerning a person's attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world. artifacts and physical material consist of physical objects found in the study setting; some qualitative researchers collectively refer to such physical objects and artifacts as material culture.

According to this book describes that the specific purpose for generating documents is to learn more about the situation, person, or event being investigated. They are extremely common in action and participatory research studies. Using documentary material as data is not much different from using interviews or observations. in addition, the author sums up by underline those special considerations in dealing with online data sources, the internet has become a standard resource for anyone who has a question, or is curious about something, or just wants to randomly explore topics of interest online and off line data.

### **Part Three: Analyzing and Reporting Qualitative Data**

Chapter eight deals about qualitative data analysis. In this section suggests 10 helpful for analyzing data as they are being collected: (1) Force yourself to make decisions that narrow

the study, (2) force yourself to make decisions concerning the type of study you want to accomplish, (3) develop analytic questions, (4) plan data collection sessions, (5) write many “observer’s comments” as you go, (6) write memos to yourself about what you are learning, (7) try out ideas and themes on participants, (8) begin exploring the literature while you are in the field, (9) play with metaphors, analogies, and concepts, and (10) use visual devices. In addition, the author proposed that Managing data involves coding categorization, interpretation and so on. And qualitative data analysis is primarily inductive and comparative. This chapter described that step-by-step process of analysis, category construction, computers, and qualitative data analysis and how each type of qualitative research design can be analyzed.

Accordingly, phenomenological analyzed epoché, bracketing, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and so on. A grounded theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses that are the conceptual links between and among the categories and properties. Narrative analysis focuses more on a holistic analysis, a case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single, bounded unit. And in a multiple case study, there are two stages of analysis the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis. During action research the data analysis as described in other types of studies in terms of coding data and gathering it into themes

Chapter nine discussed about dealing with validity, reliability, and ethics. It described where research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner. as stat in the book, being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields because practitioners intervene in people’s lives. In addition, research validity and reliability are concerns that can be approached through careful attention to a study’s conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented.

Finally, authors described that standard data collection techniques of interviewing and observation in qualitative research present their own ethical dilemmas, no regulation can tell a researcher when the questioning of a respondent becomes coercive, when to intervene in abusive or illegal situations, or how to ensure that the study’s findings will not be used to the detriment of those involved.

The last, chapter ten covered how to write up qualitative research and suggest helpful steps for writing qualitative research report. First, assemble all the materials related to the study in an organized fashion. Second, determine the intended audience since different audiences will be interested in different questions and components of the study. Third, select a focus that meets the interest of the intended audience and addresses the original purpose of the study. Fourth, outline the report once the central message has been determined. Finally, author stated that there is no standard format for reporting qualitative research and contents of a qualitative study report depend on the audience’s interest as well as the investigator’s purpose in doing the research in the first place.

### **Evaluations on the Strength and Weakness of the Book**

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) draw upon their diverse experiences conducting qualitative research, comprehensive knowledge of the history and development of the qualitative paradigm, and their rich experiences mentoring and advising generations of students to provide a hands-on pragmatic approach to learning about qualitative research. There are several key strengths of this work that, taken together, separate it from other texts on qualitative design and implementation. The text is extremely well organized, easy to read, and systematically laid out for those new to qualitative research, although more experienced researchers will also find it helpful. It provides a succinct but solid background of epistemology, theory, history, and shared

characteristics of qualitative research that sets the stage for the design and implementation chapters that follow.

The book discussed on interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis are also key in that the authors provide a host of useful explanations, examples, diagrams, and so on, that explicate techniques, strategies, and challenges of the data collection process. Similarly, another strength of the text lies in the authors' treatment of challenging aspects of the data analysis phases of qualitative research where they clearly delineate this process from the initial planning stages through the formation of categories, themes, and theory. Here they discuss the use of computer data analysis software and unique challenges presented by the types of qualitative designs covered in the text. The chapter on validity and reliability is quite useful, especially the exhibits and tables focusing on trustworthiness, member checking, and strategies for promoting validity and reliability. Students identified the Problem Statement Worksheet (p. 83), examples for asking good interview questions (pp. 118-124), and the Interview Guide (p. 126) as particularly helpful.

To see the detail strength and weakness of the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book, we conducted comparative analysis with three contemporary introductory books: Robert K. Yin's (2011) *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*; Sarah J. Tracy's (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact*; and John W. Creswell's (2013) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*. Our comparison recognizes differences in terms of structure/scope, pedagogical features, purpose of the book, approach followed, and target audiences.

### ***Comparison between Merriam and Tisdell and Sarah J. Tracy Books***

First the book by Tracy (2013) structured in fourteen chapters that aimed to fill a gap in terms of data analysis and provides step-by-step explanation of analysis in commonsense terms, understandable both to newcomers and to those well versed in the practice and more focused on data analysis. Whereas the book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) structured three part and a total of ten chapter aimed to provide better understanding about the process of conducting a qualitative research investigation and a concrete foundation for understanding how qualitative research has been done, more focused on process of qualitative design, stating at research design and indeed by research report writing.

Second in Tracy (2013) book, methods Qualitative, Historical matters qualitative research, the importance of self-reflexivity, Comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods, Paradigmatic reflections and theoretical foundations, participant action research and participant observation was presented and discuss a detail and more understandable manner. on the other hand, nature of qualitative research historical back ground of qualitative research, the six basic qualitative research, method of data collection, and research report was discussed in Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book is better than (Tracy, 2013). But Comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods was not considered. In addition, Paradigmatic reflections and theoretical foundations was not discussed good enough.

Thirdly and in the last Tracy (2013) gives an emphasis for research quality offers an overview of qualitative quality and making good clarification about observation and the role of participant observation as well as it provides detailed information on how to write the qualitative research report whereas the book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) give emphasis in Validity, Reliability, and Ethics as well as action research and more importantly online method of data collection.



### ***Comparison between Merriam and Tisdell and John W. Creswell Books***

First, regarding the structure, the book by Creswell (2013) composed of eleven chapters mainly emphasize on philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks, designing a qualitative study, five qualitative approaches to inquiry, data collection, data analysis and representation, writing a qualitative study, standards of validation and evaluation and conclusion, however, the book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) consists of ten chapters that classified in to three parts emphasizes on designing a qualitative study, collecting qualitative data, analyzing data and writing the research report.

Second, the purpose of the book by Creswell (2013) is to provide insight and display differences among five different approaches to qualitative inquiry narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. On the other Merriam and Tisdell (2016) aiming to provide better understanding about the process of conducting a qualitative research investigation and a concrete foundation for understanding how qualitative research has been done. In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) include giving a highlight presentation on six different approaches the additional of basic research approach better than (Creswell, 2013). However, he gives a detail explanation of those research approach better than this book.

Third, more expressive, applied and practical approach by Creswell (2013), however, the book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) inductive, and more adaptive process approach was used to present that make qualitative research understandable. In addition, Creswell (2013) present the five key qualitative research design in detail of each approach in terms different perspectives like discussing their nature advantage, types, challenges and so on. Whereas Merriam and Tisdell (2016) present and discuss the research design in six types, one more in addition to Creswell's five key researches design. but the discussion was not detail and presented in short summery narrower than Creswell's it gives less opportunity to understand the research approach in different perspective.

### ***Comparison between Merriam and Tisdell and Robert K Yin Books***

First, the book by Yin (2011) consists of twelve chapters which are broken down into a separate four parts that are relevant to understand qualitative research procedures this are about understanding qualitative research, designing qualitative research, data collection method, analyzing data and presenting the results. on the other hand Merriam and Tisdell (2016) the around same structure that overall structure mainly consists of designing a qualitative study, collecting qualitative data, analyzing data and writing the research report, but the types of qualitative research approaches were not described and presented in detail for easy understanding.

Second, pedagogically the book by Yin (2011) chapters starts with a brief abstract, key terms and concepts appear in italics throughout the text, sub -topics within each chapter start with a preview box, each chapters ends with listed important terms, phrases, and concepts, and suggested exercises and field based project. Whereas the book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) consists key terms and concepts appear in italic throughout the text and each chapter ends with summary.

Third, from the perspective of approaches both books are process oriented which describe the basic qualitative research designing procedures specific to designing a qualitative study, collecting qualitative data, analyzing data, and writing the research report. In addition, Yin (2011) book more emphasized on partial of general qualitative research process and specifically social sciences fields, While Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book focuses on the design and implementation of qualitative research in social science field.

## **Summary**

Generally, the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) text creates good opportunity for the reader to understand qualitative research design and implementation. To begin with, this book provides a deeper grasp of the method of doing a qualitative research investigation as well as a solid foundation for understanding how qualitative research has been conducted. Second, when compared to other publications, the overall structure and chapters used in this book are more appropriate, being explained in a clear and consistent manner so that readers can easily comprehend each portion and have a better knowledge from each chapter. Third, the book covered all the expected components, such as data collection method, design, data analysis method, validity and reliability, ethical considerations, and study report, in a concise and accurate manner.

Furthermore, each chapter of the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book includes distinct smart objectives at the start, allowing readers to simply traverse their demands. They have the necessary activities and examples to back up the various concepts addressed in the book. As a result, assist readers in comprehending the applicability of generalization in a variety of topics. The book offers basic facts regarding qualitative research that every new researcher should know, understand, and investigate. It is the ultimate guide to conducting qualitative research. The book featured a comprehensive set of ideas and processes, as well as several vignettes depicting scholars' qualitative research experiences.

When compared to other books, the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book has some flaws, such as types of qualitative research approaches not being described and presented in detail in an easily understandable manner, and it being presented more narrowly than what other books present. It also gives less opportunity to understand the research approach from different perspectives. Second, the book focuses on the design and implementation of qualitative research in the social science field from the perspective of readers from various disciplines who may find it difficult to comprehend some examples, elaborations, and exercises that are more social science concepts and languages. Third, there is less consistency in this book, and essential elements are missing, such as important terms, phrases, suggested exercises, and field-based projects. Furthermore, the comparison of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was not explored in this book, and the paradigm view and theoretical foundations were not adequately discussed.

## **Conclusions and Argumentation**

The book by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) aimed to explicitly address basic phases of qualitative research to provide a concrete foundation for understanding how qualitative research is carried out. This book offers a novel and thorough method for conducting qualitative research. Researchers and readers can learn about adaptive approaches of designing studies, collecting data, evaluating data, and publishing findings by reading this book. Furthermore, the book excels in that each chapter begins with precise smart objectives so that readers may quickly traverse their demands. There are relevant and essential activities and examples to support the many topics addressed in the book, which assist readers grasp the relevance of generalization in a variety of studies. The book offers basic facts regarding qualitative research that every new researcher should know, understand, and investigate. It is the ultimate guide to conducting qualitative research. The book presented a comprehensive set of ideas and procedures for conducting qualitative research, as well as numerous vignettes depicting other scholars' experiences.

However, despite its many positive aspects, the Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book is vulnerable to criticism because the text places less attention on the various qualitative research

approaches/types that are pertinent to qualitative research investigations. Its discussion was insufficient to enable readers to comprehend each type of qualitative research approach from both a theoretical and empirical standpoint. Furthermore, the authors focus entirely on the research phases without elaborating on the fundamental philosophical foundations of research and qualitative research methodologies that are fundamental to a researcher, which may make the book more useful for experienced researchers than novices. Furthermore, the book concentrates on the design and implementation of qualitative research in the social scientific sector, and readers from many disciplines are limited to understanding some examples, elaborations, and exercises that are more social science concepts and languages.

The Merriam and Tisdell (2016) book contains various noteworthy features, including: First, it will provide a thorough knowledge on the subject of qualitative research stages (including start-up, design, data gathering, analysis, and composition; includes start-up, design, data collection, analysis, and composing). Second, it provides fundamental abilities that are required of the researcher prior to participating in the inquiry for individuals who are interested in qualitative research. Such provisions may assist beginners in preparing for qualitative research. Finally, the book portrays qualitative research as an iterative process. The reader can focus on a methodological topic while also being invited to investigate and work with several qualitative research as examples. Finally, this book defines the characteristics of five essential qualitative research methodologies and maps out the web of their interrelationships in a steady, explicit, and logical manner, as if it were a tailored discussion with the readers.

For qualitative research techniques courses and researchers looking for advice in a deeper knowledge of qualitative research, we strongly recommend the book *Qualitative Research a Guide to Design and Implementation* (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is a fantastic book that gives concise and informative descriptions of core qualitative research characteristics.

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### Author Note

Biniam Getnet Agazu is a lecturer in the Department of Management at Bonga University. He is now pursuing his doctorate degree in Management, Jimma University, Ethiopia. He has published six research article papers in national and international journals in different peer-review journals. Email: [biniamgetnet1@gmail.com](mailto:biniamgetnet1@gmail.com)

Adissu Ketemaw Dejenu is a lecturer in the Department of Management at Bonga University. He is now pursuing his doctorate degree in Management, Jimma University, Ethiopia. He has published three research article papers in national and international journals in different peer-review journals. Email: [adissuketemaw8@gmail.com](mailto:adissuketemaw8@gmail.com)

Kenenisa Lemi Debela is an academician, researcher and leader, who, born in 1985. He pursued BA and MBA from Jimma University and, PhD in Management studies from Punjabi University, India in 2016. He published more than 22 scientific papers. He is an associate professor of management and currently working as administrative and student affairs vice

president of Jimma University, Ethiopia. He is married and a father of two children. Email: [kenenisalemi@gmail.com](mailto:kenenisalemi@gmail.com)

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