

# Scope of Combining the Research Methods in Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Behavior (OB)

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**Abstract:** It is difficult to choose between the Glaserian and the Straussian grounded theory approach when adopting them as a methodology. Many researchers in human resource management and organizational behavior rely on grounded theory to guide their work. They use it sometimes as a method and sometimes as a methodology. The disagreement between Glaser and Strauss, the theory's originators, led to its unique application. There is some social sciences research that suggests using case studies and grounded theory at the same time. Theoretical work pertaining to the area of human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior (OB) has yet to define how grounded theory may be utilized to develop a research methodology using an interpretive case study approach. The purpose of this article is to help HRM and OB researchers who are considering using grounded theory as a data analysis approach in integration with the case study method. It accomplishes this by first justifying the use of Strauss' methodology in this integration and then enlisting indicators to assist researchers in determining how to carry out this integration.

**Keywords:** Grounded Theory, Case Study, Method, Methodology, Combination, HRM & OB.

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## 1. Introduction:

Human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior (OB) studies have been using grounded theory since the early 1990s (see, for example; de Lucas Ancillo, del Val Núñez, and Gavrilá (2021); Izvercian, Potra, and Ivascu (2016); Klimoski (1991); Malakoutikhah, Jahangiri, Alimohammadlou, Faghihi, and Kamalinia (2021); Schalow, Winkler, Repschlaeger, and Zarnekow (2013); Turbill (1993)). It is becoming popular in human resource management and organizational

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behavior research since it is generally believed to be a trustworthy tool for investigating social and organizational phenomena (Murphy, Klotz, & Kreiner, 2017). Even though Glaser and Strauss designed it in 1967, the method is still relatively new to this field, having been first used some thirty years later. Though it was recommended for use in the past; research in the field of HRM & OB has been slower to embrace grounded theory than the research taking place in other areas of management (Malakoutikhah et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2017).

Despite the fact that the HR and OB literature does not seem to be brimming with such studies, the HR and OB research published in the top management journals reveals a shortage of grounded theory investigations. A cursory search, for example, reveals that just 25 of the over 270 papers that have incorporated key components of grounded theory and have been published in one of the field's most highly cited journals, "Academy of Management Journal," are focused on HRM-related research topics. This information was collected from the search results. A grounded theory article has never been published in *Personnel Psychology* as of July 2022; the journal only focuses on HRM & OB research. *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, *Annual Review of Psychology*, and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes* have very few investigations on HRM and OB issues based on grounded theory. Although there has been an upsurge in HR-based grounded theory research in journals (such as; "Leadership Quarterly" and "Organization Science"), this research technique has yet to be adopted by OB & HR scholars, as is evident from the studies to date.

Human resources scholars are reasonably skeptical about the value of this approach compared to the deductive methods which have long served the area. In addition, HR researchers may be skeptical of grounded theory, much as qualitative methodologies in general have been for years, due to concerns about rigor (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Pratt, 2008). To publish their work these efforts have not always been effective among HRM & OB researchers who have adopted the grounded theory method. Because most of the times, HR & OB researchers have not used grounded theory in its entirety but have been applied it in parts (as noted by Dunwoodie, Macaulay, and Newman (2022); Pratt (2009)). For example, scholars in HR and OB have used the term "grounded theory" to denote inductive coding efforts rather than the formation of new theories. In other instances, the whole process of grounded theory is detailed in many papers; however, it is unclear how the author team moved from the facts to the resultant theory. This clarity is either missing or nonexistent. HR & OB researchers, like those in other business disciplines, may benefit from a better understanding of grounded theory (Murphy et al., 2017).

The grounded theory seeks to comprehend the social context by developing theories, based on data. Corbin and Strauss (1990) says, development of a grounded theory that is inductively generated about a phenomenon via the use of a standard set of methods is one of the primary objectives of this qualitative research approach (known as "grounded theory"). According to Turner and Astin (2021), in addition to the method, grounded theory has been employed in studies as a methodology too. In other words, it has been utilized in both capacities. Those that utilize it as either a method or a methodology do not illustrate and defend their usage of this idea in a sound and logical manner (Turner & Astin, 2021). Lack of this explanation causes many issues for OB & HR researchers in practicing this technique.

A method as defined by this research is a strategy or procedure for gathering and/or analyzing data. Relatively considering it another way, the word "methodology" covers the whole research

process, from the development of a research question to the selection of a research method to the presenting of results and conclusions; and the philosophical principles underpin the whole method (ontology and epistemology). A methodology, according to Ostrowski, Helfert, and Gama (2014), is a collection of procedures centered on a philosophical stance; if not, the approach is essentially a formula-like technique. Rather grounded theory, case study approach falls under the head of method. Therefore, in the context of a case study the researcher may refer to an approach such as an analysis of the grounded theory that is founded on interpretative assumptions. The case study method may be used in conjunction with grounded theory (a methodology) to create a viable research approach, and this article will show the path that how this can be done. This combination will enable future OB & HR researchers to take a more comprehensive and accurate track, which will be more beneficial for publishing their work.

The remainder of this work is divided into six parts. The grounded theory technique is discussed in detail in the *second* portion of this paper. The *subsequent* section contains a summary of the two different approaches of grounded theory, and the *fourth* part illustrates when it is appropriate to apply grounded theory in HRM and OB studies. The *fifth* part demonstrates how to integrate grounded theory with the case study technique. This fourth part shows why it makes sense to construct a methodology using grounded theory (Strauss' approach) and the case study technique. In the section *sixth*, the reader will find the evaluation criteria and a road map for implementing a combination of grounded theory and case study in HR & OB research. The *concluding* paragraph sums up the main points of the article. In addition to the aforementioned benefits of the grounded theory, the current time is a perfect moment for HR& OB researchers to commence employing grounded theory methodologies more regularly since the methodology is gaining acceptance even in publications that are considered to be almost solely statistically oriented, such as the Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Organization Science and Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes(Murphy et al., 2017). Following the procedures put forth in this study, researchers in HR & OB may benefit from grounded theory.

## 2. Grounded Theory Approach:

Initially, the grounded theory method was introduced by two researchers, Glaser and Strauss (1969), to create theories by using collected data and explore possible facets of the social sciences field through the use of theory (Corbin. & Strauss, 2008). Moreover, Glaser (1978) has described the criteria to spot a best fit grounded theory: by saying that it has to be aligned with the data, thinking that it must explain the occurrences and predict what may occur. According to the Corbin. and Strauss (2008), a well-planned and effective implementation of the methodology fulfills all the scientific research requirements.

Even though the Grounded Theory has been used in sociology, Giménez (2007) points out that it has also been used in a lot of other fields of study, such as hotel and tourism management (Crawford, Weber, & Lee, 2020), innovation (Zhang et al., 2022), general management (Partington, 2000), values co-creation (Werner, Griese, & Faatz, 2019),and businesses mergers (Lowe, 1998). According to Corbin. and Strauss (2008)grounded theory allows for a more extensive and in-depth investigation of a previously examined phenomenon. The qualitative aspect of the method encourages the formation of responses to social conditions in terms of what happens and why it occurs. These responses may then be used to inform decision-making. Furthermore, it flows to get the answer by applying well-defined strategies and processes based on a well-structured question or

group of questions. Its data analysis technique, after discovering answers for them, offers them a structure (model) that establishes or improves comprehension of an unknown or ambiguous phenomena. However, the approach for its data analysis procedure differs, since its originators apart their ways after a few years of this method formation. The next section goes into more detail about this.

### 3. Glaser vs. Straus:

A protracted debate has erupted about the use of grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss (1969) presented it initially, but they eventually parted ways. The approach to data analysis is the primary distinction between Glaser and Strauss. Glaser adhered to the original grounded theory approach to data analysis, whereas Strauss and Julie Corbin developed their own version of the method (Annells, 1997; Glaser., 1992; Heath & Cowley, 2004; Melia, 1996; Walker & Myrick, 2006). Strauss and Corbin had to create two more volumes to illustrate how researchers should approach data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) because the first book just provides a cursory overview (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This method of analysis, on the other hand, was heavily criticized. For instance, it was described as 'programmatically and over formulaic' by Melia (1996). Glaser. (1992) was especially scathing, accusing Strauss of favoring a "forced, detailed, conceptual descriptive" writing style (Glaser 1992). Strauss stated that his methodology was no longer based on grounded theory, but rather on an altogether new technique.

Strauss and Corbin (1998), in the second edition of their book, revised their approach to analyze the data. They claimed that the approaches they provided were "guidelines, recommended strategies, not commandments" and that their intention was not to encourage rigidity. They are not often lauded for their adaptability. Even though Strauss and Corbin (1998) 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of their book "Basics of Qualitative Research" is much less prescriptive as compared to the previous edition, the vast majority of objections, including those that were just published, are aimed at the 1<sup>st</sup> edition. Researchers are urged to employ the methods in their own unique manner using the third edition, which is far more customizable (Corbin. & Strauss, 2008).

The essence of the dispute between Glaser and Strauss is, whether or not verification should be based on grounded theory analysis (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Charmaz, 2000; Heath & Cowley, 2004; I. Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; MacDonald, 2001). According to Strauss, induction, deduction, and verification are 'very fundamental' (Strauss., 1987), but the grounded theory is just inductive, according to Glaser. (1992). Glaser's data analysis technique varies from Strauss' in that it is less systematic. In contrast to Glaser, who recognizes just two different types of coding processes (substantive and theoretical), Strauss recognizes a total of three specific forms of coding processes (open, axial, and selective). The core of the difference may be understood in a number of different ways. According to Glaser and Strauss (1969), the formation of theory by comparative analysis comprises and implies both verification and accurate description, but only insofar as the latter is employed to construct theory.

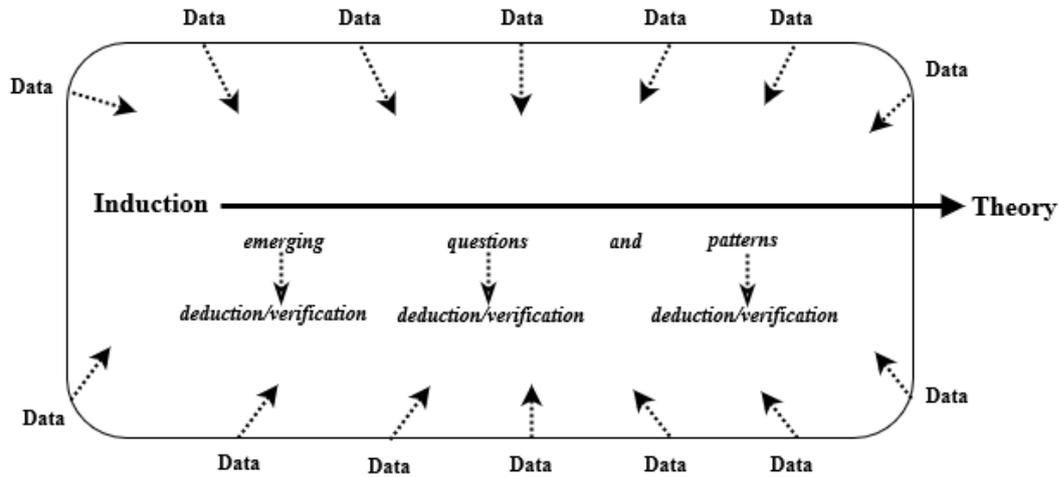


Figure 1: Process of induction, deduction, and verification in grounded theory approach, according to Glaser (1978, 1992).

Glaser maintained his conviction by emphasizing induction and theory emergence, according to Heath and Cowley (2004). Strauss on the other hand, emphasized the significance of deduction and verification, claiming that the role of induction had been exaggerated (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Heath & Cowley, 2004). In their second and third volumes, Corbin and Strauss (2008) mention deduction, validation, and elaboration but not verification (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), Validation is the process of comparing ideas and their connections to evidence acquired throughout the research process in order to assess how well they hold up to such examination. This comparison is done in order to decide whether or not the ideas can be trusted. It gives the impression that the conclusions of the researcher are validated by the participants and the data as the investigation progresses (Corbin and Strauss 2008).

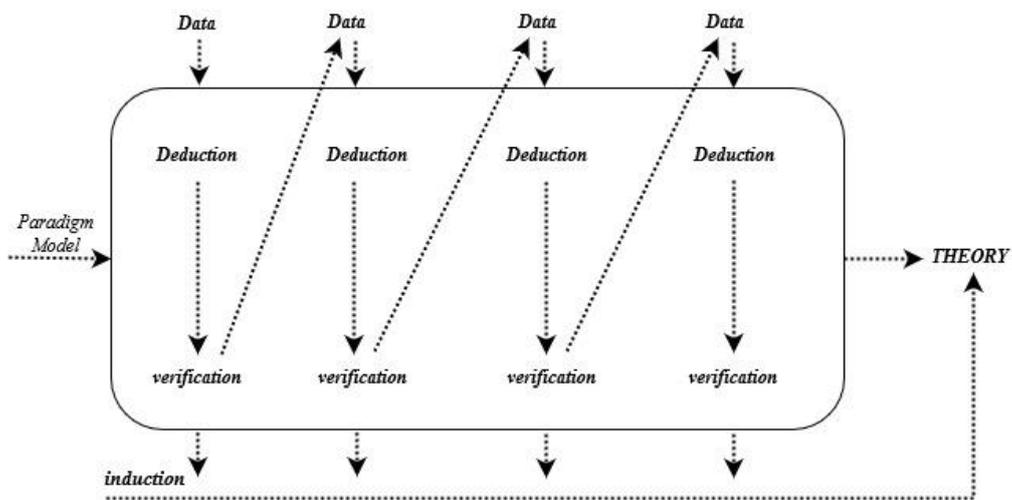


Figure 2: Process of induction, deduction, and verification in grounded theory approach, according to Strauss (1987), Strauss and Corbin (1990).

Strauss' thinking has altered according to this technique. Reichertz (2007) concurred, claiming that Strauss later works employed 'abductive' logic. In order to arrive at the most likely explanation for observed facts, abduction starts with data analysis, assessing all possible explanations,

and then formulating a hypothesis to test or refute until the researcher gets the most probable conclusion. (Reichertz, 2007).

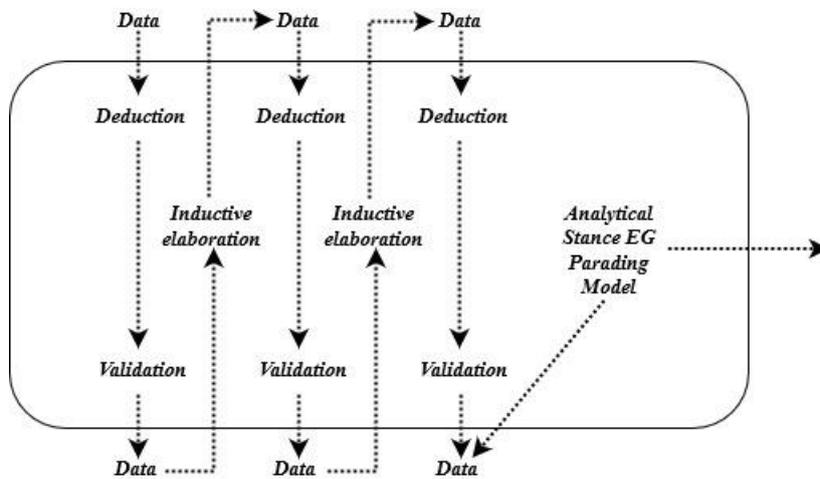


Figure 3: Process of induction, deduction, and verification in grounded theory approach, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998).

As a consequence, Strauss concedes that the data might be interpreted in several ways. In addition to this, he understands the need to take into account the wider contextual factors that might have an effect on a situation; events “out there” are more than just fascinating background information, according to Strauss and Corbin (1998). This focus indicates how Strauss’ version of the grounded theory has grown and become more congruent with constructivist philosophy.

The development of Straussian grounded theory is evident in all three iterations of Basics of Qualitative Research. Methodological disagreements have had an impact on how Corbin and Strauss (2008) have understood the grounded theory. Glaser, on the other hand, is certain that a theory that is based on solid footing should not be changed. Though, he persists in the belief that the concept ‘emerges’ from the data (Babchuk, 1996; Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2000). In view of recent discussions on other methodological approaches, this seems too simple.

Two distinct methodologies have emerged as a result of these disparities (Babchuk, 1996; Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Melia, 1996; Stern, 1994). Researchers must keep this in mind while selecting an approach, deciding whether to use the Glaserian or Straussian approach (Boychuk Duchscher & Morgan, 2004; Stern, 1994).

Table 1: Grounded Theory Variants

The Glaserian Way of Thinking	The Straussian Way of Thinking
It starts with the sense of awe (blank mind).	Having a general idea of how to get started.
The researcher maintains a passive attitude and displays self-control.	The researcher is active.
Theory formation based on even-handed questions.	Putting the theory to the test with organized questions.
The formation of a conceptual theory (by	Description of the concept (description of

considering abstraction of time, people and place).

The theory is grounded in the data

Inductive method

Data reveals the theory

The coding is less rigorous and regularly compares incidents to each other, with neutral questions as well as categories and attributes that are always developing. Be careful not to “over-conceptualize” and pick out the most important parts.

There are two different steps or sorts of coding: simple (first break the data apart, then conceptually organize it) and substantial (open or selective, to produce categories and properties).

One of the few Grounded Theory Methodologies that some believe to be the most authentic (GTM).

situations).

An observer interprets the theory.

Inductive-deductive method.

The data are organized such that the theory may be seen.

Coding is more rigorous and technique-based. The kind of comparisons that may be made depends on the coding method used. Labels are made with a lot of care. Data is analyzed word-by-word in ‘micro-analysis,’ which yields codes.

There are three different kinds of coding: open coding (which involves recognizing, labeling, categorizing, and summarizing things), axial coding (which refers to the process of linking codes to one another), and selective coding (selecting a core category and establishing connections to it from other categories).

Considered by some to be a method of qualitative data analysis (QDA).

#### 4. When to Use:

When studying human behavior and interaction, grounded theory is often thought to be useful (Baker, Wuest, & Stern, 1992; Immy Holloway & Todres, 2003; Parse, 2001). An emphasis on social process, social structure, and social interactions is appropriate for grounded theory (Annells, 1997). When investigating societal challenges or situations that individuals must adapt to, grounded theory is quite effective (Benoliel, 1996; Schreiber & Stern, 2001). As a result, it is a logical match for HRM & OB researches, which looked at how people live and cope with different situations at the workplace (either at national or international levels; at individual, organizational, or team levels). It will assist OB & HR researchers in understanding many situations such as how people interact at work, the problems they face, the coping mechanisms they use to deal with them, the types of social contacts they have with other nationals and national colleagues, and their perspectives of their ‘social world’ both within and outside the organization. Also, the grounded theory will assist OB & HR researchers to transition from a description of what is occurring to an understanding of the process by which it is happening (Corbin. & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), so that the study purpose of developing a substantive theory can be achieved.

#### 5. Using Case Studies and Grounded Theory Together as an Approach:

According to Halaweh, Fidler, and McRobb (2008), Glaserian method of grounded theory and case studies may be combined. The Glaserian approach of grounded theory is used in this combination by Halaweh et al. (2008). Grounded theory researchers believe that literature shouldn’t be looked at before fieldwork, Furthermore, the subject of the research is reliant on the development

of codes during data collection and analysis - although this contradicts Yin (1994) case study research approach.

Grounded theory, according to Hughes and Jones (2003), is compatible with interpretative case studies that study social and organizational environments. According to Hughes and Jones (2003), the application of grounded theory in interpretative case studies has certainly acceptable justifications. But they do not explain “how and why” the case study technique is compatible with grounded theory and so may be utilized to construct a methodology. This is something that has to be done in order to establish this compatibility. Furthermore, they do not indicate which kind of grounded theory is more suited.

The purpose of this work is to demonstrate, from a Straussian point of view, that case study and grounded theory are two research approaches that are consistent with one another. The similarities between the case study method and the Straussian approach to grounded theory are shown in the below points:

- ❖ Yin (1994) method of case study analysis suggests that the researcher should start with a clear problem statement, a set of research questions, and research propositions. According to him, research propositions aid in instructing the researcher on what kind of information to collect; without research propositions, the researcher may be inclined to collect everything. These concepts have been gleaned from the body of previous research. In addition to this, he consults the literature review in order to design the case study protocol. This protocol contains the research goals as well as the case study questions; however, the case study questions serve more as a reminder than as the actual questions that are used to gather data from the interviews. Finding out about previous constructs helps the researcher figure out how to build a theory and makes it easier to evaluate these constructs during interviews (Eisenhardt, 1989). Even in theory-building research, researchers cannot begin with a clean theoretical ground; instead, they must predetermine previous variables without looking for connections among them (Eisenhardt, 1989). New variables may emerge during data collection, necessitating revision of the theory if it is confined to only those already known. This is also consistent with Corbin and Strauss (1990) stance that a researcher cannot begin without a body of literature on the issue being investigated; yet, the researcher is not constrained by the literature and welcomes the flexibility of adopting emerging ideas. In addition, a well-grounded theoretical research question should make it clear to the researcher exactly where and what the investigator hopes to learn about the topic of the study.
- ❖ Interviews are used as a method for collecting data in both case studies and grounded theories (Allan, 2003). Moreover, these approaches see the interview as the primary source of information gleaned from the data collected (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Walsham, 1995; Yin, 1994).
- ❖ The most important part of case study research is determining the constraints, scope, and unit of analysis (for example, an organization, a group of individuals, a given system, or an activity). This fits with the idea of theoretical sampling in grounded theory, as stated by Corbin and Strauss (1990). In a case study, the selection of the examples and the unit of analysis is based on their relevance, and theoretical sampling is utilized to find out more about the instances.
- ❖ Similarities between case studies and grounded theory allow researchers to generalize their conclusions to new contexts and situations with the same features of the original study. Grounded theory strives to produce ideas and concepts that may be extended and used in various contexts. The grounded theory’s generalizability is partly achieved by abstraction; the more abstract the concepts,

the broader the theory's applicability (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In the same vein, Yin (1994) asserts that the purpose of doing research via the use of case studies is for the researcher to broaden and extend ideas, using the term "analytic generalization" rather than "statistical generalization." This method of analytical generalization was characterized by Walsham (1995) as consisting of the development of ideas, the extension, and generation of concepts and theories, as well as the drawing out of particular implications.

#### **6. Criteria to use grounded theory and case study combination in HR & OB research:**

When doing research, an author must determine the grounded theory approach they will use in their study. This research has developed this combination base by using the Straussian method; thus, if HR & OB researchers are using a Straussian approach of grounded theory, they may utilize the points stated below to use this combination. The following criteria must be met to use this approach:

- ❖ It adheres to modern standards of thought. According to the examined literature, Straussian grounded theory demonstrates a shift toward social constructivist ontology and postmodernism, which is more compatible with recent understanding (Annells, 1997; Corbin. & Strauss, 2008). So, if they use these philosophical positions, they can employ this combination in their studies.
- ❖ It considers the larger environmental and contextual elements (macro factors) that influence the occurrence that remains the focus of HR & OB research and which is an important component to address. Thus, if they are investigating larger and more complex phenomena, they may use this approach.
- ❖ The goal is to come up with a theory that is both useful and relevant for guiding action and practices. Like other grounded theory approaches, Straussian grounded theory tries to come up with a theory that fits the situation, adds to what is known, and helps guide action and practice (Corbin. & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the primary purpose of studying a phenomenon using this combination should be to gain a thorough understanding and to find solutions to problems.
- ❖ There are detailed instructions for data analysis accessible. The more specific analytical standards should be considered as advantageous rather than restrictive.
- ❖ The Straussian approach incorporates a case study research methodology. The goal of using this method should be to demonstrate the steps that should be taken, beginning with the formulation of the research question and ending with a comparison of the developed theory with the existing body of literature. The Straussian approach as a grounded theory was used first by (Pandit, 1996) in his doctoral thesis. Further (Halaweh, Fidler, & McRobb, 2008) has described its process in detail. This can be understood in Figure 3 also. Therefore, HR & OB researchers have to follow Straussian grounded theory by integrating it with the case study research method to find solutions for the queries.

#### **7. Conclusion:**

In the field of HR & OB researchers have attempted to use grounded theory in many aspects, sometimes they have used it as a method and sometimes as a methodology. However, the studies were not clear about the path, and even many used this methods tenet rather than employing it in full form. This deficiency causes many issues in the field for HR & OB researchers. But recent development in the field has allowed them to follow this path in a clearer way. Consequently, many top journals in the area have started to accept publications with the approach. Taking a step ahead, this article has tried to show another map to researchers that how to use grounded theory in the combination of the case study approach; which is an emergent concern in many fields and also the

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best suite for HR & OB researchers. As a result, the objective of this article is to provide assistance to researchers in the fields of HRM & OB who are considering using grounded theory as a data analysis approach in conjunction with the method of case studies. It does this by first justifying the use of Strauss' technique in this integration and then establishing a criterion to aid academics in selecting how to implement this integration.

This will benefit HR & OB researchers in several ways; some of them are discussed here. It enables HR and OB researchers to do in-depth research on a problem even if they have prior knowledge of the phenomenon. Prior studies had not allowed for this concept, limiting HR & OB researchers to mainly use deductive methodologies. In an organization, information can take many forms. Employees have information and experience about various aspects in multiple kinds, just as knowledge has many forms. All of this can be elicited from them in detailed interviews to elicit more relevant information. This will aid in the development of a theory grounded in actual and accurate data.

Another important aspect of this combination is that it allows OB & HR researchers to use any type of unit of analysis to extract information about a specific phenomenon. To find in-depth answers to ambiguous or unknown fact, a combination of two or more units of analysis can be considered too in this approach. Furthermore, the theory that resulted from its findings has another beauty; its adaptability to other contexts with similar characteristics makes it more effective in nature. Findings in the domains of HR and OB can frequently be applied in different contexts, as many businesses and organizations have to follow several similar cycles or processes in a range of situations. Because of the nature of abstraction, they can use it in several situations and even at distinct intervals.

A criterion was established for this approach, which states that if HR & OB researchers are employing constructivist ontology and postmodernism philosophical perspectives in their research, they may apply this combination. If they are exploring bigger and more complicated phenomena that have not been studied in the same way before and for which they have no clear theoretical explanation, they may employ this combination. In addition, the major goal of researching a phenomenon in this manner should be to get complete knowledge and to find solutions to challenges. Researchers in HR & OB are required to adhere to Straussian grounded theory by combining that theory with the case study research technique in order to discover answers to the questions that have been raised; if they are following the combination as per this research findings.

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