

Expanding the qualitative repertoire in organizational research: a framework for hybrid reflexive narrative inquiry

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper introduces Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI), a novel methodological framework designed to address the complex interplay of organizational research’s temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions, overcoming limitations inherent in traditional qualitative approaches.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on the Structuration Theory, Power and Politics Theory, and Institutional Theory, HRNI integrates longitudinal narrative analysis, contextual embedding, and reflexive triangulation. The methodological approach includes repeated interviews, reflective journaling, and contextual observations, systematically synthesizing micro-level narratives with macro-level organizational structures.

Findings – HRNI reveals hidden dynamics, such as informal power structures, evolving identities, and the interplay between agency and structure, enabling researchers to connect individual narratives with broader systemic influences. The approach enhances methodological rigor, yielding nuanced insights into the complexity and dynamics of organizational change.

Research limitations/implications – Due to its intensive longitudinal and reflexive components, HRNI requires substantial time and resources, which may limit its wider application. Future research should explore digital adaptations and cross-cultural validations to broaden HRNI’s accessibility and generalizability.

Originality/value – HRNI significantly advances qualitative research methodologies by seamlessly integrating temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions. It provides scholars and practitioners with a transformative tool for understanding and addressing organizational complexities.

Keywords Hybrid reflexive narrative inquiry, Temporal analysis, Contextual embedding, Reflexive triangulation, Organizational complexity, Qualitative research

Paper type Conceptual paper

1. Introduction

Organizational phenomena, such as power dynamics, identity formation, and organizational change, are inherently complex and multifaceted. These phenomena are not static; they evolve through the interplay of individual agency, structural frameworks, and external environmental influences (Braun and Clarke, 2024). For instance, power dynamics often extend beyond formal organizational structures, operating through informal networks, unwritten norms, and shifting hierarchies (Hardy and Thomas, 2014). Similarly, organizational identity is fluid, shaped by individual roles, team interactions, and broader structural transformations (Zhang, 2025). Capturing and analyzing these complexities necessitates a methodological approach that can effectively address their temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions (Adam, 2013). Nevertheless, traditional qualitative methods often fall short, focusing on isolated aspects without comprehensively integrating them (Colla and Kurtz, 2024).

Traditional methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, ethnography, and case studies, have significantly advanced organizational research (St. Pierre, 2021). Narrative inquiry excels in capturing the depth of lived experiences but often emphasizes static or episodic narratives,



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neglecting their longitudinal evolution. Reflexivity foregrounds the collaborative nature of researcher-participant interactions but is frequently limited to addressing biases rather than serving as a central analytical lens (Rogers, 2025). Contextual analysis provides valuable insights into how organizational behavior is shaped by culture and environment, but struggles to link these insights to the temporal progression of narratives or reflexive practices (Onwuegbuzie and Abrams, 2024). This compartmentalization leaves critical gaps in understanding complex phenomena, such as power dynamics and identity formation, which require a more integrative approach.

For example, power is not confined to formal hierarchies; it often manifests in informal practices and evolving interpersonal relationships (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Traditional approaches that focus narrowly on structural or interpersonal aspects frequently fail to capture these nuances (Hardy and Clegg, 2006). Similarly, identity formation reflects a delicate interplay between personal aspirations, team dynamics, and cultural influences (Finlay and dela Cruz, 2023), necessitating a methodological approach that connects individual experiences with systemic contexts and temporal changes. The inability to integrate these dimensions restricts the scope of qualitative research, limiting its capacity to offer nuanced insights into organizational phenomena (Zhang, 2025).

The increasing complexity of organizational settings, driven by globalization, technological advancements, and shifting societal expectations, amplifies the need for a robust methodological framework that closes these gaps (Mazzei, 2021). We introduce Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) as a transformative methodological innovation. HRNI integrates three core dimensions—temporal analysis, contextual embedding, and reflexive triangulation—to provide a comprehensive framework for studying the dynamic and multidimensional nature of organizational phenomena. Temporal analysis captures how narratives and identities evolve (Coley et al., 2024). Contextual embedding situates these narratives within broader cultural and environmental contexts, revealing the external forces that shape organizational behavior (St. Pierre, 2021). Reflexive triangulation incorporates the perspectives of researchers, participants, and external observers, ensuring a co-constructed and nuanced understanding of the data (Sergeeva, 2025).

This paper's central research question is: How can Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) provide a comprehensive methodological framework to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of organizational phenomena, integrating temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions? To address this, the paper pursues two primary objectives. First, it establishes HRNI as a robust framework that overcomes the limitations of traditional qualitative methods by synthesizing these three dimensions. Second, it examines the applicability of HRNI in analyzing complex organizational phenomena, such as hidden power dynamics and identity formation, thereby enhancing methodological rigor and providing practical insights.

This paper makes significant contributions to organizational research and practice through several key advancements. First, it addresses critical methodological gaps by introducing a comprehensive framework that integrates temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions, enabling a more nuanced analysis of complex organizational phenomena (Suddaby and Foster, 2017). Second, it transcends the limitations of traditional qualitative approaches by offering an innovative lens (Ghanbar, 2024) to examine evolving dynamics such as power structures, identity reconfigurations, and organizational change (Onwuegbuzie and Abrams, 2024). Third, the paper enriches theoretical discourse by linking micro-level narratives to macro-level systems, thereby advancing scholarly understanding of the interplay between agency, structure, and culture (Ku, 2025). Fourth, it provides practical effectiveness by equipping researchers and practitioners with a robust methodological toolkit for piloting the multifaceted challenges of organizational environments. Finally, this framework lays the groundwork for future methodological innovation, establishing HRNI as a transformative approach that elevates the rigor and relevance of organizational studies (Molina-Collado et al., 2022).

2. Theoretical foundations

Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) emerges as a response to the methodological limitations of traditional approaches, addressing the complexity and multidimensionality of organizational phenomena (Mazzei, 2021). By combining temporal narratives, contextual insights, and reflexive triangulation, HRNI offers a comprehensive framework to capture the dynamic interplay between individual agency, structural constraints, and cultural contexts (Giddens, 1984; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). We integrate the need for methodological innovation with the theoretical foundations that underpin HRNI, demonstrating its relevance and contribution to organizational research.

The inherent limitations of ethnography and longitudinal studies underscore the critical need for their integration to comprehensively understand organizational dynamics. Organizations are simultaneously temporal and contextual systems that evolve while being shaped by cultural, structural, and environmental factors (Islam, 2025a; Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; Pettigrew, 1990). Ethnography excels in capturing the cultural and ecological context of organizational behavior, but often lacks the temporal depth to understand how narratives unfold over time (Czarniawska, 2004). Conversely, longitudinal studies provide insights into temporal evolution but may overlook the immediate context that shapes these changes (Langley, 1999). Together, these methods offer complementary strengths that, when combined, yield a more layered and nuanced understanding of organizational phenomena.

For example, integrating ethnographic observations of daily interactions with longitudinal interviews conducted over several years can uncover both immediate and evolving power dynamics within a multinational organization (Brown and Humphreys, 2006). Ethnographic methods might reveal how informal hierarchies manifest in daily decision-making processes (Molina-Collado *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, longitudinal data can reveal how these dynamics evolve as the organization undergoes structural changes or expands into new markets (Greenwood *et al.*, 2002). This dual approach enhances the richness of insights and enables researchers to address theoretical gaps by embedding narratives within their temporal and contextual landscapes.

Three foundational theories underpin HRNI: Structuration Theory, Power and Politics Theory, and Institutional Theory. Each provides unique insights that inform the design and application of HRNI, addressing gaps identified in traditional methodologies.

Developed by Anthony Giddens, Structuration Theory explores the dynamic interplay between individual agency and structural constraints. The “duality of structure” central to this theory posits that structures—such as rules, norms, and resources—both constrain and reproduce or transform human action (Giddens, 1984). In organizational contexts, this interplay explains how individuals explore and influence their environments while being shaped by them. HRNI builds on Structuration Theory by capturing the recursive relationship between agency and structure through its temporal and reflexive dimensions (Rogers, 2025). For instance, longitudinal narratives collected during corporate restructuring could reveal how employees reinterpret their roles and adapt to changes in organizational culture. Simultaneously, these narratives highlight how individuals’ actions reshape organizational norms (Pettigrew, 1990; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

Unlike traditional models that view power as a fixed resource distributed through formal hierarchies, Power and Politics Theory emphasizes the fluid, relational, and often hidden influence dynamics within organizations (Lukes, 2005; Hardy and Thomas, 2014). It recognizes that power is exercised through informal networks, symbolic actions, and covert resistance, all of which require nuanced methodological approaches to uncover. HRNI’s reflexive and contextual dimensions are particularly suited to exploring these hidden dynamics (Sergeeva, 2025). Reflexivity enables researchers to critically examine their positionality and how power is manifested in researcher-participant interactions (Cunliffe, 2004). Contextual analysis situates narratives within broader organizational environments, uncovering how norms and informal hierarchies shape power relations (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). For instance, HRNI could investigate how middle managers understand competing demands from

senior leadership and frontline employees, revealing the interplay between formal structures and informal practices.

In contrast, Institutional Theory focuses on the formal and informal rules, norms, and practices that govern organizational behavior (Islam, 2024b; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2014). Organizations are embedded in broader institutional environments that exert pressures to conform through regulatory mandates, cultural expectations, or mimetic behaviors. These pressures shape individual and collective actions, often creating tensions between innovation and conformity. HRNI aligns with Institutional Theory by embedding individual narratives within their broader institutional contexts (Xiao *et al.*, 2023). Its contextual dimension captures the environmental and cultural factors influencing organizational behavior, while its temporal focus reveals how these factors evolve (Greenwood *et al.*, 2002). For example, in examining diversity and inclusion policies in a multinational corporation, HRNI could uncover how regional cultural differences impact employees' perceptions and experiences.

Through integrating Structuration Theory, Power and Politics Theory, and Institutional Theory, HRNI narrows micro-level narratives to macro-level systems, providing a robust framework for exploring complex organizational phenomena. Structuration Theory emphasizes the dynamic interplay between agency and structure, providing insights into how individuals address and shape their organizational contexts (Yu and Cheng, 2025). Power and Politics Theory sheds light on the hidden mechanisms of influence that shape behavior, while Institutional Theory situates these dynamics within broader cultural and systemic frameworks (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). For instance, in leadership transitions, HRNI can shed light on how institutional norms influence individual leaders' narratives and decision-making processes. Simultaneously, it reveals how leaders exercise agency within these structural constraints and how power dynamics influence their relationships with other stakeholders. Via synthesizing these perspectives, HRNI offers a multidimensional analysis that contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical application.

Additionally, Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) emerges from established traditions in qualitative research but seeks to address specific limitations within adjacent methodologies. While approaches such as autoethnography, dialogic inquiry, and sensemaking-based research have advanced understanding of subjectivity, discourse, and meaning-making in organizations, they often prioritize one epistemic dimension—such as personal reflection or discursive construction—over a more integrated perspective (Braun and Clarke, 2024). Autoethnography, for example, foregrounds the researcher's positionality and emotional experience but is often criticized for lacking structural engagement with organizational systems or collective meaning (Islam, 2024a). Dialogic inquiry emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge through dialog, but tends to focus on language and discourse rather than the embedded temporal or institutional contexts that shape narratives. Sensemaking approaches are valuable for exploring how actors interpret ambiguity. However, they may not always account for the researcher's reflexive stance or the long-term evolution of meaning across time.

Thus, HRNI departs from these by explicitly integrating three methodological commitments: (1) longitudinal temporal tracing of narratives, (2) contextual embedding of organizational stories within institutional and cultural frameworks, and (3) structured reflexive engagement by the researcher and participants. This triangulated design facilitates a more comprehensive understanding of organizational phenomena, particularly in contexts involving identity negotiation, institutional change, or contested moral landscapes. Via embedding reflexivity not only as an ethical stance but also as a method of triangulation and interpretation, HRNI can push beyond existing boundaries in narrative-based organizational research (Zhang, 2025).

In strengthening HRNI's theoretical positioning, we recognize its conceptual affinity and points of divergence with adjacent methodologies. Dialogic inquiry foregrounds shared meaning-making through interactive dialog, yet often underplays temporal fluidity and institutional structuring—domains in which HRNI embeds reflexive co-construction across

narrative arcs. Critical ethnography's focus on systemic critique and participant voice shares epistemic commitments with HRNI, but differs in its reliance on immersive field presence rather than longitudinal narrative scaffolding. Likewise, narrative sensemaking traditions emphasize interpretive reconstruction of ambiguity. However, they may marginalize positional reflexivity, which is central to HRNI's multi-layered engagement with voice, temporality, and institutional framing. Furthermore, the reflexive foundation of HRNI aligns with traditions that treat reflexivity not as a procedural step, but as an epistemic and ethical imperative (Cunliffe, 2004; Finlay, 2002). Our commitment to multi-positional reflexivity—attuned to voice, silence, and power—bears theoretical resonance with feminist and decolonial thought, particularly in its interrogation of positional authority, knowledge asymmetry, and the relational production of meaning (Onwuegbuzie and Abrams, 2024). In embracing reflexivity as recursive, situated, and institutionalized, HRNI addresses persistent calls in qualitative inquiry to move beyond procedural introspection and toward relational accountability (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008; Islam, 2025b).

Table 1 outlines key distinctions between Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry and three commonly used approaches in qualitative organizational research. It highlights how HRNI offers a more integrated and longitudinally embedded framework for understanding complex processes of meaning-making.

Table 1. Comparison of HRNI with adjacent qualitative methodologies

Criteria	Autoethnography	Dialogic inquiry	Sensemaking	Hybrid reflexive narrative inquiry (HRNI)
Primary Focus	The researcher's personal experience and emotional truth	Co-construction of meaning through dialog	Interpretation of ambiguous events	Multi-layered narrative construction integrating time, context, and reflexivity
Role of Reflexivity	Central to the researcher's self-understanding	Emerges through participant dialog	Implicit or under-theorized	Systematically embedded as a method of triangulation and interpretation
Temporal Dimension	Often episodic or retrospective	Typically focused on momentary dialog	Event-driven, short-term focus	Explicit tracing of longitudinal narrative evolution
Contextual Embedding	Limited engagement with structural or institutional factors	Focused on conversational context	Often decontextualized from power structures	Embedded in institutional, cultural, and political context
Researcher Role	Emic, insider position	Facilitator of shared meaning	Observer/interpreter of sensemaking processes	Reflexive interpreter and co-constructor of meaning over time
Strengths	Rich introspective depth, emotional authenticity	Illuminates intersubjective meaning-making	Explains how actors interpret disruptions	Offers a holistic, theory-integrated, multi-actor understanding of complex organizational phenomena
Limitations	Limited generalizability; often individual-centric	Underplays structural context and temporality	May lack reflexive depth and power awareness	Requires longitudinal access, high reflexive commitment, and institutional familiarity

Source(s): By author

3. Context

Organizational phenomena, such as power dynamics, leadership transitions, and identity formation, are inherently multidimensional, requiring methodological approaches that capture their complexity. These phenomena can be shaped by the interplay of temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions, each contributing distinct but interconnected insights (Adam, 2013; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). Despite the rich contributions of existing methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, ethnography, and longitudinal studies, their fragmented application leaves significant gaps in understanding. We critically examine these dimensions, synthesize scholarly contributions, identify methodological limitations, and position Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) as a transformative framework (Rogers, 2025).

The temporal dimension is pivotal in understanding how organizational phenomena unfold and evolve. Longitudinal studies have been instrumental in tracking changes over time, offering valuable insights into leadership development, organizational change, and employee engagement (Pettigrew, 1990; Langley, 1999). The extant literature emphasizes the importance of temporal analysis for uncovering patterns and causality, such as how leadership strategies adapt during organizational mergers or crises. Longitudinal approaches provide robust frameworks for examining the trajectory of events, such as the progression of team cohesion or the iterative cycles of organizational restructuring (Pettigrew, 1990). However, it often fails to capture the immediate cultural and situational factors that influence these temporal trajectories. For instance, while longitudinal research may document shifts in leadership strategies, it may neglect to contextualize these shifts within the cultural norms or informal practices that shape decision-making processes (Van Maanen, 2011). To address this gap, temporal analysis must be integrated with contextual and reflexive methodologies to provide a holistic perspective.

Conversely, contextual analysis excels in situating organizational phenomena within their broader cultural, structural, and environmental landscapes. As championed by Van Maanen (2011), ethnography has been particularly effective in illuminating the nuances of organizational life, such as how cultural norms influence communication styles, team dynamics, and decision-making processes. Ethnographic research has provided rich insights into informal practices, such as how startup teams foster creativity or how multinational corporations understand cross-cultural challenges (Czarniawska, 2004). Despite its strengths, ethnography is often temporally limited, capturing static snapshots rather than the dynamic evolution of contexts over time. For example, while ethnographic studies may reveal how employees initially perceive a diversity initiative, they often fail to track how these perceptions shift as the initiative matures or as external societal expectations evolve (Colla and Kurtz, 2024). Moreover, ethnographic methods may overlook broader systemic influences, such as regulatory pressures or market trends, that shape organizational behaviors. These limitations underscore the need for a methodological framework that combines ethnographic depth with longitudinal breadth.

As Finlay (2002) emphasized, reflexivity is a critical yet often underutilized dimension in qualitative research. Reflexivity systematically examines how researchers' positionality, biases, and interactions influence data collection and interpretation. Through documenting these dynamics, reflexivity enhances transparency and fosters the co-construction of meaning between researchers and participants. However, reflexivity is frequently treated as a peripheral consideration rather than an integral analytical tool (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008; Islam, 2025c). In narrative analysis, for instance, researchers may prioritize the content of stories without interrogating how their framing of questions or the interaction context shapes those narratives. Similarly, contextual analyses often fail to account for how researchers' cultural assumptions influence their interpretation of organizational phenomena (Coley *et al.*, 2024). Neglecting reflexivity risks producing oversimplified or biased accounts, particularly when studying power dynamics or leadership transitions, where participants may tailor their narratives to align with organizational norms (Hardy and Clegg, 2006). Reflexivity must be systematically integrated with temporal and contextual analyses to address these limitations.

The fragmented application of these dimensions has left significant gaps in organizational research, particularly for complex phenomena like leadership transitions or identity formation, where individual agency intersects with structural constraints and cultural norms (Bourdieu, 1990; Scott, 2014). While longitudinal studies effectively trace temporal changes, they often neglect situational factors that influence these trajectories (Finlay and dela Cruz, 2023). Conversely, contextual analyses provide insights into cultural and environmental determinants but fail to account for their temporal evolution. Though recognized as critical, reflexivity is rarely integrated systematically with temporal and contextual dimensions, further limiting the explanatory power of traditional methodologies. Emerging trends in organizational research underscore the importance of integrating approaches to address these gaps. For instance, integrating ethnographic observations with longitudinal interviews could uncover immediate and evolving dynamics, such as how informal hierarchies shape decision-making processes over time (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Similarly, embedding reflexive practices into temporal and contextual analyses could provide insights into the co-construction of narratives and their systemic influences.

Thus, Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) (Appendix A: Glossary of Core Concepts in HRNI) emerges as a response to these gaps, synthesizing the strengths of narrative inquiry, ethnography, and longitudinal studies while embedding reflexivity as a core component. Grounded in Structuration Theory (Giddens, 1984), Power and Politics Theory (Hardy and Thomas, 2014), and Institutional Theory (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), HRNI offers a robust framework for studying the dynamic interplay between individual agency, structural constraints, and cultural contexts (Ghanbar, 2024). Structuration Theory provides insights into the recursive relationship between agency and structure, explaining how individuals assess and reshape their environments (Giddens, 1984). Power and Politics Theory illuminates informal and covert influence dynamics, while Institutional Theory situates individual and collective behaviors within broader systemic frameworks (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). In integrating these theoretical foundations, HRNI links micro-level narratives with macro-level systems, addressing the limitations of traditional methodologies.

To conclude, HRNI's innovative integration of temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions enhances its applicability to complex organizational phenomena. Temporal analysis captures how narratives and identities evolve (Pettigrew, 1990), contextual analysis situates these narratives within broader cultural and environmental settings (Scott, 2014), and reflexivity ensures a critical examination of researcher-participant interactions (Cunliffe, 2004). For instance, in studying leadership transitions, HRNI can reveal how institutional norms shape leaders' narratives and decision-making processes while uncovering hidden power dynamics that influence stakeholder relationships. This multidimensional approach advances theoretical understanding and provides actionable insights for practitioners, such as designing inclusive leadership development programs or addressing systemic inequities in organizational practices (Ku, 2025).

4. Validation of HRNI

Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) is a qualitative research methodology designed to address the complexity and multidimensionality of organizational phenomena. Through integrating three core dimensions—temporal narratives, contextual insights, and reflexive triangulation—HRNI offers a comprehensive framework for examining how individuals and groups address organizational environments (Mazzei, 2021). In contrast to traditional approaches, which often focus on isolated aspects of behavior, HRNI weaves these dimensions together to capture the interplay between individual agency, structural constraints, and contextual influences (Giddens, 1984; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). This integration enables researchers to bridge gaps in existing methods, providing a nuanced and holistic understanding of organizational life. We discuss the conceptual grounding (the “why” and “what”) and operational framework (the “how”) of HRNI.

A key strength of HRNI lies in its emphasis on temporal narratives, which capture the dynamic and evolving nature of individual and collective stories. Traditional qualitative methods, by comparison, often provide static snapshots, isolating moments without accounting for the unfolding of narratives over time (Pettigrew, 1990; Langley, 1999). HRNI adopts a longitudinal perspective, recognizing that organizational phenomena—such as identity formation, power dynamics, and change—are inherently fluid and shaped by temporal processes. For instance, HRNI might track a leader's journey across several years, from initial strategies and challenges to their evolving relationships with team members. This temporal approach reveals how leaders adapt to and influence organizational structures, offering insights into the iterative nature of leadership development. Similarly, HRNI can follow an employee's transformation from resisting a new policy to advocating for it as its benefits become apparent. In capturing these shifts, HRNI addresses critical gaps in traditional methods, providing a richer understanding of organizational behavior.

Complementing this longitudinal focus, HRNI situates individual and collective narratives within their broader organizational, cultural, and environmental contexts. This contextual emphasis ensures that personal experiences are not viewed in isolation but are understood as part of a more extensive system of influences, including organizational norms, industry trends, and socio-political conditions (Van Maanen, 2011; Czarniawska, 2004). For example, HRNI goes beyond personal accounts of diversity and inclusion to analyze how organizational policies, cultural norms, and societal expectations shape these narratives. This contextual embedding reveals the structural and environmental constraints that shape individual agency and collective outcomes. Furthermore, HRNI can identify regional cultural differences that impact employee engagement in multinational corporations, enabling more tailored and effective interventions (Molina-Collado *et al.*, 2022). Via integrating contextual analysis, HRNI addresses the limitations of decontextualized narratives often seen in traditional approaches, ensuring a more holistic understanding of organizational phenomena.

In addition to its temporal and contextual dimensions, HRNI emphasizes reflexive triangulation, a defining innovation that integrates the perspectives of researchers, participants, and external observers to co-construct meaning. Reflexivity, long recognized as a foundation of qualitative research, is expanded in HRNI to ensure a multi-layered and transparent analysis (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008; Finlay, 2002). Researchers maintain reflexive journals to document their assumptions, biases, and evolving interpretations throughout the research process, fostering critical self-awareness. At the same time, participants are engaged as collaborators, revisiting and refining their narratives through reflective practices such as iterative interviews or journal writing. For instance, an employee reflecting on a corporate merger might initially describe uncertainty but later reinterpret their experiences as a journey of resilience and growth (Sergeeva, 2025). To further enhance credibility, HRNI incorporates external perspectives, such as peer reviewers or independent analysts, who validate and refine the analysis, ensuring balanced findings. This reflexive triangulation is particularly effective in uncovering hidden dynamics, such as power relations, by synthesizing multiple viewpoints and providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Cunliffe, 2004).

What sets HRNI apart, however, is its seamless integration of temporal narratives, contextual insights, and reflexive triangulation. This multidimensional approach enables researchers to capture not only the content of narratives but also the processes, contexts, and collaborative meaning-making that shape them. For example, in a study of organizational identity, HRNI would explore how identity narratives evolve, situate them within cultural and environmental contexts, and incorporate reflexive perspectives from all stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). In a different context, such as studying the impact of a new policy on employee behavior, HRNI could track how narratives about the policy change over time, how the organizational culture influences them, and how participants' reflections on the policy evolve. This holistic framework ensures that findings are both nuanced and actionable, addressing gaps in qualitative research that fail to account for the interconnected nature of organizational phenomena (St. Pierre, 2021).

HRNI also significantly advances traditional narrative inquiry by addressing its limitations. While conventional approaches often treat narratives as static and narrowly focused on individual perspectives, HRNI integrates reflexivity and contextual analysis to embed narratives within temporal landscapes, generating dynamic insights (Riessman, 2008). In capturing the interplay between personal agency, organizational structures, and cultural contexts, HRNI offers both theoretical understanding and practical applications in qualitative research.

In this backdrop, Reflexivity emerges as the basis of HRNI, distinguishing it from conventional narrative inquiry by emphasizing the collaborative and evolving nature of narrative construction (Gioia *et al.*, 2013). In traditional narrative inquiry, researchers may acknowledge their biases and assumptions, but in HRNI, they actively interrogate them, documenting reflections to ensure transparency and critical engagement (Xiao *et al.*, 2023). Participants are similarly encouraged to reinterpret their narratives over time, enriching the data with new dimensions of meaning. For instance, an employee revisiting their experience during an organizational restructuring may shift from frustration to emphasizing personal growth and resilience. External perspectives further enhance this process by validating findings and providing alternative interpretations, ensuring robustness.

HRNI embeds narratives within broader contexts, linking individual experiences to organizational norms, cultural dynamics, and societal influences. For example, in studying employee identity, HRNI examines personal accounts and the organizational policies and hierarchical structures shaping that identity. HRNI connects local and global dynamics by situating narratives within larger frameworks, addressing the interplay of shifting contexts and evolving narratives (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). To operationalize HRNI, each of its three core components—temporality, contextuality, and reflexivity—is enacted through distinct methodological strategies. Temporal tracing is implemented by collecting narratives at multiple points in time to capture how meanings evolve (Langley, 1999; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002), such as tracking frontline employees' shifting sense of identity during a merger process. Contextual embedding involves situating narratives within organizational, institutional, and socio-political structures (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; Greenwood *et al.*, 2002), for instance, by linking a middle manager's career story to changing labor policies or organizational reforms. Structured reflexivity requires both researcher and participant to interrogate their assumptions and positionalities throughout the research process (Cunliffe, 2004; Hardy and Thomas, 2014); this can be facilitated by including reflexive journaling, co-interpreting narrative excerpts, or using dialogic interviews. Together, these practices make HRNI not only a conceptual advance but also a practical guide for conducting rigorous, situated, and ethically grounded qualitative inquiry in organizational research.

5. Framework for hybrid reflexive narrative inquiry

The framework for Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) operationalizes its methodology by systematically integrating the temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 1. This structured approach is not merely a methodological choice but a critical response to the limitations of traditional qualitative methods in capturing the complexity of organizational phenomena. Integrating these three dimensions into the research process, HRNI connects micro-level narratives with macro-level systems, thereby enhancing the depth, credibility, and interpretive rigor of qualitative analysis. We explore the implementation of the HRNI framework through meticulously designed processes for data collection, integration, and analysis (Yu and Cheng, 2025).

The temporal dimension is a basis of HRNI, emphasizing the need to go beyond static or episodic snapshots of organizational life. Instead, HRNI adopts a longitudinal perspective to capture how individual and collective narratives evolve (Pettigrew, 1990; Langley, 1999). A critical feature of this approach is repeated interviews conducted at key junctures in participants' experiences. For instance, researchers might schedule interviews at the onset of a

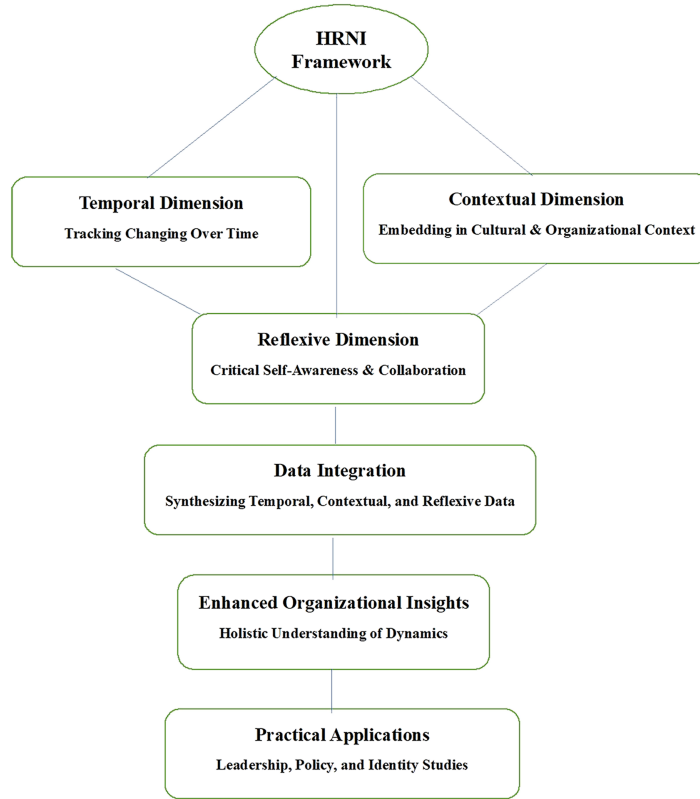


Figure 1. Framework of HRNI. Source: By author

leadership tenure, during significant organizational milestones, and after pivotal transitions. These temporal anchors provide a rich dataset, enabling researchers to trace changes in participants' perceptions, strategies, and interpretations (Braun and Clarke, 2024).

Moreover, reflective journals maintained by participants offer continuous insights into their lived experiences. These journals document real-time thoughts and emotions, capturing nuanced shifts that may not emerge during scheduled interviews (Cunliffe, 2004). For example, an employee undergoing a corporate restructuring might chronicle their journey from initial uncertainty to eventual adaptation and growth (Zhang, 2025). Through combining repeated interviews with real-time journaling, HRNI uncovers the dynamic interplay between continuity and change, providing a nuanced understanding of the temporal patterns in organizational narratives.

Crucially, the temporal dimension also challenges researchers to adopt a more dynamic analytical lens. Rather than focusing solely on events or outcomes, the framework emphasizes processes—how organizational phenomena unfold, adapt, and interact over time (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). This temporal depth is indispensable for revealing hidden patterns, such as the gradual emergence of informal power dynamics or the long-term effects of policy shifts on organizational culture.

Complementing the temporal focus, the contextual dimension ensures that individual and collective narratives are not analyzed in isolation, but are instead embedded within broader organizational, cultural, and societal systems (Xiao et al., 2023). This dimension addresses a critical gap in qualitative research by situating narratives within the structural and cultural frameworks that shape them (Van Maanen, 2011; Czarniawska, 2004).

To achieve this, researchers immerse themselves in the organizational environment, observing interactions, rituals, and practices that provide insights into underlying norms and power dynamics (Gaventa, 1980). For instance, attending team meetings or leadership workshops might reveal subtle communication styles, unspoken hierarchies, or cultural practices that influence organizational behavior. In addition to direct observations, analyzing organizational documents—such as policy statements, internal reports, and cultural artifacts like slogans or logos—further enriches the contextual analysis. For example, comparing a diversity and inclusion policy with employees' lived experiences can expose discrepancies between formal commitments and actual practices (Colla and Kurtz, 2024).

Significantly, HRNI's contextual dimension extends beyond organizational boundaries. It examines how external factors—such as industry trends, regulatory frameworks, and societal norms—intersect with internal organizational dynamics (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). For example, in a study of women leaders, the framework might examine how societal expectations surrounding gender roles impact organizational policies and individual career trajectories. Embedding narratives within their broader contexts, HRNI ensures that findings capture personal experiences while addressing the systemic factors that shape them (Mazzei, 2021).

The reflexive dimension is integral to HRNI, as it embeds critical self-awareness and collaboration throughout the research process. In this framework, reflexivity is not an auxiliary practice but a central methodological principle that enhances transparency, rigor, and interpretive depth (Finlay, 2002). Researchers maintain detailed reflexive memos to document their assumptions, positionalities, and evolving interpretations. For instance, a researcher studying power dynamics in organizations might critically reflect on how their professional background or personal biases influence their analysis of participants' narratives.

Reflexivity extends to researchers and participants, who actively revisit and refine their narratives through iterative discussions (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008). This collaborative process, where everyone's voice is heard, allows participants to reinterpret earlier accounts in light of new experiences, enriching the depth of the analysis. For example, an employee reflecting on a challenging project might initially frame it as a source of frustration but later view it as an opportunity for professional growth and resilience (Rogers, 2025). This iterative engagement facilitates the co-construction of meaning, ensuring that the findings remain grounded in participants' lived realities and fostering collective understanding and growth.

Additionally, HRNI incorporates external validation mechanisms, such as peer reviews and independent analyses, to further enhance reflexive rigor. These external perspectives challenge researchers' assumptions, identify potential blind spots, and provide alternative interpretations (Finlay and dela Cruz, 2023). For instance, in a study of workplace conflict, peer reviewers might highlight overlooked themes, such as the role of implicit biases or organizational silos, thereby enriching the overall analysis.

HRNI distinguishes itself from traditional methods by integrating temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions into a cohesive and unified framework. This integration is not a mechanical process but a deliberate effort to capture the organizational phenomena's multi-layered and interconnected nature (Onwuegbuzie and Abrams, 2024). For example, in a study of workplace conflict, temporal data from repeated interviews might reveal how participants' perceptions evolve. Contextual data from observations and document analysis would situate these narratives within broader structural and cultural frameworks. Reflexive insights, derived from researcher memos and participant reflections, might uncover hidden dynamics, such as informal power relations or implicit biases, that shape the narratives (Sergeeva, 2025).

This multidimensional synthesis ensures that HRNI captures the content of participants' narratives and the underlying processes, contextual influences, and collaborative construction of meaning. The framework generates theoretically rigorous and pragmatically relevant insights by triangulating data across temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions. This approach connects the in-depth details of individual experiences with the broader systemic, cultural, and structural dynamics, enabling a comprehensive understanding of organizational phenomena (Yu and Cheng, 2025). Additionally, HRNI reveals hidden patterns and

interdependencies, offering a transformative lens to address complex challenges within organizational systems.

5.1 Methodological steps of HRNI

The methodological steps (Table 2) of Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) are purposefully designed to operationalize its integrative framework, ensuring that each foundational dimension—temporal, contextual, and reflexive—contributes uniquely to the research process. Moving beyond traditional methodological silos, these steps prioritize a seamless synthesis of longitudinal perspectives, environmental embedding, and collaborative meaning-making, offering researchers a comprehensive toolkit to interrogate the multifaceted nature of organizational phenomena.

HRNI's methodological rigor lies in its ability to adapt dynamically to the evolving contexts of research settings. To begin with, participant recruitment in HRNI emphasizes the use of purposeful sampling to ensure diversity across roles, regions, and demographics. Such diversity is desirable and essential for understanding the multifaceted narratives embedded within organizational contexts. Participants typically include senior executives, middle managers, and emerging leaders from various cultural and professional backgrounds (Mazzei, 2021). For instance, the perspectives of a senior female executive operating within an inclusive corporate culture may differ substantially from those of a middle manager addressing a male-dominated industry. These diverse insights enrich the dataset, illuminating how organizational narratives evolve under varying conditions.

To develop methodological operationalization, Table 3 also provides practical tools for coding, interviewing, and reflexive engagement, aligned with HRNI's three core dimensions. These tools are derived from interpretive qualitative traditions but have been explicitly adapted to address the temporal, contextual, and reflexive challenges that HRNI faces. They are not prescriptive, but indicative of how researchers might translate the model into practice.

Data collection in HRNI employs a triadic approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews, reflexive journals, and contextual observations. Each method contributes uniquely to the research process. Semi-structured interviews are conducted periodically, often coinciding with key organizational milestones, such as leadership transitions or policy implementations. This longitudinal approach enables researchers to track changes in participant perceptions and strategies. For example, interviews held before and after a significant organizational restructuring can reveal shifts in leadership styles and employee responses, illustrating the temporal dimension of HRNI (Sergeeva, 2025).

In addition to interviews, reflexive journals maintained by participants and researchers provide a continuous account of lived experiences. Participants document their thoughts, emotions, and observations in real-time, offering rich insights into their day-to-day realities (Cunliffe, 2004). For instance, an employee directing a corporate merger might chronicle their journey from initial skepticism to eventual acceptance and growth. Conversely, researchers use reflexive journals to critically examine their biases, assumptions, and evolving interpretations (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008). This practice fosters transparency, ensuring that data interpretations remain balanced and grounded.

Contextual observations complement these methods by embedding narratives within broader organizational, cultural, and environmental contexts (Van Maanen, 2011). Researchers attend key organizational events such as workshops and team-building exercises to observe informal interactions and cultural dynamics. For example, attending a leadership seminar may reveal subtle power hierarchies or unspoken norms that influence decision-making processes. Organizational artifacts, including mission statements and policy documents, are also analyzed to provide structural insights that situate individual experiences within larger systemic frameworks (Thornton *et al.*, 2012).

The data analysis (Figure 5) phase in HRNI integrates insights from the temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions into a cohesive process. Temporal mapping traces the

Table 2. Methodological steps of HRNI

Dimension	Comprehensive description	Examples	Validation
Temporal Dimension	It focuses on understanding how organizational narratives, behaviors, and practices evolve. Capturing these changes provides a deeper insight into processes like adaptation, leadership development, and response to policy changes	Conduct repeated interviews during key milestones such as organizational restructuring or leadership transitions	Provides longitudinal insights, enabling tracking patterns, progress, and transformations in behaviors and decisions over time
		Use participant-maintained journals to track how their perspectives and emotions evolve during significant organizational events, such as mergers or crises Study employee adaptation to new policies over a multi-year timeline to uncover the long-term impacts of organizational initiatives	It offers a dynamic view of organizational processes, revealing shifts and adaptations that static snapshots cannot capture Captures gradual changes and patterns in organizational and individual adaptation processes
Contextual Dimension	It embeds individual and group narratives within broader cultural, organizational, and environmental contexts. This approach highlights how external influences like organizational culture, industry trends, and societal expectations shape behaviors and decisions	Observe team meetings and decision-making processes to uncover the influence of informal norms and cultural practices	Ensures findings are within a broader system, connecting individual actions to organizational and cultural contexts
		Compare written policies, such as mission statements or diversity guidelines, with actual workplace practices to identify implementation gaps Analyze how external industry trends, regulatory mandates, or societal expectations influence leadership narratives and organizational policies	Reveals discrepancies between stated organizational values and lived experiences, providing a richer understanding of systemic factors Contextualization links organizational behaviors to external pressures, creating a complete picture of influencing factors
Reflexive Dimension	It emphasizes critical self-awareness and collaborative approaches throughout the research process. Reflexivity enhances transparency, reduces researcher bias, and ensures that findings are co-constructed with participants	Maintain detailed reflexive journals where researchers document their assumptions, positionality, and evolving interpretations	Encourages researchers to critically examine their influence on data collection and analysis, ensuring balanced and unbiased findings

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Dimension	Comprehensive description	Examples	Validation
Integration and Synthesis	Combines insights from the temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions into a unified framework. This step ensures a multidimensional understanding of the data, linking micro-level narratives with macro-level systems	Conduct iterative discussions with participants, encouraging them to revisit and refine their narratives based on new experiences or perspectives	Fosters collaboration, ensuring that participant insights and meaning-making enrich findings
		Validate findings with external reviewers or peer debriefing sessions to challenge assumptions and ensure robustness	Adds credibility to the research by incorporating diverse perspectives and mitigating bias
		Merge findings from longitudinal interviews, observational data, and reflexive journals to reveal hidden dynamics like informal power structures	Creates a cohesive analysis that connects individual experiences with systemic organizational patterns and structures
		Synthesize participant narratives with organizational policies to understand systemic barriers to diversity initiatives	Enables actionable insights by connecting lived experiences to organizational and cultural frameworks
		Present findings holistically, linking changes in individual behavior to more significant organizational dynamics and external pressures	Ensures comprehensive findings, addressing theoretical and practical implications for organizational research and management

Source(s): By author

evolution of narratives over time, identifying turning points and patterns. Reflexive coding synthesizes data from journals, researcher memos, and interviews, ensuring that findings are grounded in participants’ lived experiences while critically examining the researcher’s biases (Xiao *et al.*, 2023). Contextual analysis situates narratives within systemic factors, uncovering gaps between organizational goals and practices. Finally, triangulation combines all dimensions to produce a multidimensional understanding, revealing hidden dynamics and linking individual narratives to larger organizational systems (Miles *et al.*, 2014).

Figures 2–4 visually represent the core dimensions of the Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) framework, illustrating its methodological rigor and comprehensive approach. Figure 2, focusing on the Temporal Dimension, visualizes the longitudinal data collection and analysis process, emphasizing how narratives and organizational behaviors evolve. It highlights key milestones, such as leadership transitions or policy implementations, showcasing the dynamic and iterative nature of temporal inquiry. Figure 3, dedicated to the Contextual Dimension, illustrates the embedding of individual and collective narratives within broader cultural and systemic frameworks. This figure highlights the importance of situating personal experiences within organizational norms, industry trends, and societal expectations, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of organizational phenomena. Figure 4, emphasizing the Reflexive Dimension, illustrates the iterative and collaborative reflexive

Table 3. Practical coding, interview, and reflexivity strategies for applying HRNI

HRNI dimension	Coding strategies	Interview designs	Reflexivity protocols
Temporal Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Time-indexed trajectory codes: e.g. Before Policy Change, Crisis Phase, Post-Intervention (2) Emotional evolution markers: e.g. Initial Enthusiasm, Cynical Drift, Re-engagement (3) Plot-point coding: aligning participant narratives with key temporal milestones (e.g. onboarding, resignation, recovery) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Repeat interviews across critical organizational phases (e.g. 6-month intervals) (2) Episodic interview schedules focused on before, during, and after turning points (3) Use of life-mapping tools to prompt temporally sequenced storytelling from participants 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reflexive memos after each interview round, noting changes in participant tone, openness, and narrative structure (2) Cross-time reflective grids to track how interpretations shift (3) Time-based analytic journaling to capture researcher evolution in theoretical framing
Contextual Embedding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Situated codes: e.g. ritualized interaction, organizational silence, performance scripts (2) Institutional discourse markers: e.g. policy speak, compliance jargon, branding talk (3) Code clusters around spatial and symbolic triggers (uniforms, slogans, posters) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Contextual walkthrough interviews: ask participants to describe meanings of physical spaces (e.g. reception desk, uniforms) (2) Use of symbolic object prompts (e.g. handbook, feedback form) to elicit embedded assumptions (3) Context-recall elicitation based on specific event settings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Field-based reflexivity journaling of sensory-emotional responses to institutional environments (2) Researcher narrative memos around perceived power relations during observation (3) Annotated positionality statements tied to institutional roles (e.g. “as former HR staff ...”)
Reflexive Triangulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Multilayer coding: first-order codes (participant terms), second-order codes (researcher interpretations), third-order reflections (e.g. “why did this make me uncomfortable?”) (2) Reflexive misalignment flags: codes for dissonant interpretations (3) Double-coding by peers to elicit blind spots 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Co-constructed interviews: researcher shares partial interpretations and invites feedback (2) Participant-researcher joint sensemaking sessions (3) Identity-mirroring interviews: researcher invites participants to reflect on the interviewer’s role, accent, or background 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Reflexivity dashboards combining identity markers, emotion logs, and power analysis notes (2) Weekly team reflections on interpretive tensions (3) “Critical incident” logs where researcher felt ethical discomfort or interpretive conflict

Source(s): By author

practices integral to HRNI. It captures the dynamic interplay between researchers, participants, and external reviewers, fostering transparency and enriching the co-construction of meaning. Figure 5 demonstrates the integration of insights from the temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions into a cohesive process.

While these figures enhance the framework’s accessibility by clarifying its multidimensional structure, their interpretive power must be approached cautiously. While helpful in communicating complex ideas, the simplified visual format risks obscuring the

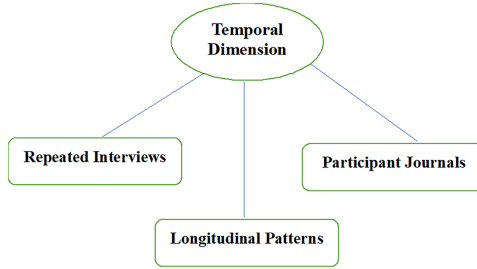


Figure 2. Temporal Dimension. Source: By author

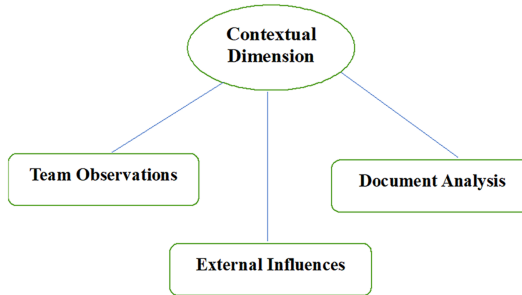


Figure 3. Contextual Dimension. Source: By author

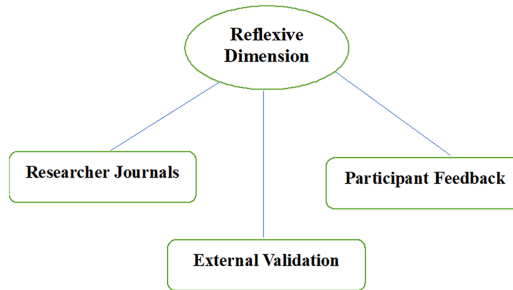


Figure 4. Reflexive dimension. Source: By author

nuanced interdependencies between temporal, contextual, and reflexive dimensions. These figures should be viewed as complementary tools that support the textual analysis, requiring careful contextualization to fully convey HRNI’s methodological depth and multidimensional nature without oversimplification.

6. Theoretical contributions

This paper makes a significant contribution to organizational research by advancing four key theoretical frameworks. First, it enriches Structuration Theory by illustrating the dynamic interplay between individual agency and structural constraints over time. The paper highlights how leaders evaluate and challenge gendered norms as they adapt to evolving organizational cultures (Giddens, 1984). For instance, female leaders employ strategies to overcome systemic biases, such as leveraging informal networks or advocating for policy changes, demonstrating

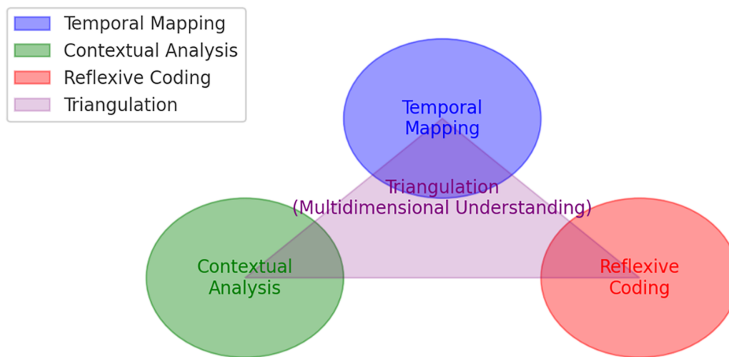


Figure 5. Data analysis in hybrid reflexive narrative inquiry (HRNI). Source: By author

the recursive relationship between agency and structure (Braun and Clarke, 2024). This interaction enhances our understanding of how organizational structures are shaped by and influence individual behaviors, reinforcing the duality of structure central to Structuration Theory. Second, it advances Power and Politics Theory by offering a nuanced understanding of informal power networks and their impact on leadership dynamics. The article uncovers hidden mechanisms through which power is negotiated and exercised by integrating reflexive and contextual insights (Lukes, 2005; Fleming and Spicer, 2014). For example, formal policies may support diversity, but informal hierarchies and covert resistance to change often undermine these efforts. In revealing how these dynamics perpetuate gendered barriers in leadership, the article provides a comprehensive explanation of the persistence of inequities despite formal organizational commitments (Colla and Kurtz, 2024). Third, it strengthens Institutional Theory by linking individual leadership narratives to broader cultural and organizational systems. The findings demonstrate how global norms, regional cultures, and institutional policies intersect to shape leadership experiences (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2014). Variations in gendered expectations across regions highlight the complex interplay between institutional pressures and individual agency. The paper contributes to a holistic understanding of how institutional influences shape organizational behavior by situating leadership narratives within these broader contexts (Zhang, 2025). Fourth, the paper linked micro-level narratives to macro-level systems, providing an integrative framework for analyzing complex organizational phenomena. This multidimensional approach enables researchers to connect individual experiences with systemic structures, advancing a more comprehensive theoretical understanding (Greenwood et al., 2002).

Finally, these contributions enrich theoretical discourse and offer actionable insights for promoting inclusive leadership practices and addressing organizational systemic inequities. This integrative perspective establishes HRNI as a transformative framework for organizational research and practice.

7. Practical implications

Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) holds significant potential for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand complex and evolving organizational realities across various industries. Its integrative emphasis on temporality, contextuality, and reflexivity provides a robust methodological lens to examine lived experiences in emotionally charged, ethically complex, and institutionally constrained environments. The following implications demonstrate how HRNI can enhance both research and practice in diverse settings, including education, NGOs, hospitality, and healthcare.

7.1 Implications for researchers

First, HRNI equips researchers with a rigorous framework for investigating longitudinal identity formation and role transitions. For example, in a hospital undergoing digital transformation, HRNI can track how nurses recalibrate their professional identities over time in response to new technologies and evolving patient expectations. In an educational setting, it can capture how teachers renegotiate their roles amid curriculum reforms or shifting cultural norms (Giddens, 1984; Pettigrew, 1990). Second, HRNI enables researchers to identify policy-practice gaps by situating narratives within institutional and socio-political contexts. An NGO focused on gender equity might promote inclusive values, yet the stories of its fieldworkers may reveal conflicting moral pressures from local communities. HRNI enables researchers to interpret these dissonances across time and across hierarchies (Langley, 1999; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). Third, the structured reflexivity embedded in HRNI enhances the researcher's positionality, particularly when studying emotionally sensitive or politically charged environments. In healthcare, this could involve examining how frontline staff cope with moral distress during end-of-life care. In international development, it can help researchers account for their own assumptions when working across North–South epistemic divides (Cunliffe, 2004; Alvesson *et al.*, 2008). Fourth, HRNI fosters collaborative knowledge production. In higher education, for instance, HRNI can be used to co-interpret narratives from both faculty and administrators during institutional mergers, enabling multi-perspective understanding and reflexive dialog (Finlay, 2002). Similarly, in NGOs operating in post-conflict areas, HRNI can surface competing stakeholder narratives that would otherwise remain latent.

Finally, HRNI offers a methodological gold standard for complex qualitative research by uniting narrative evolution, embedded context, and reflexive accountability. This makes it especially suited for investigating moral ambiguity, institutional change, and identity-work in sectors where human stakes and institutional contradictions are high (Miles *et al.*, 2014; Riessman, 2008).

7.2 Implications for practitioners

First, HRNI helps uncover the emotional realities of policy implementation. For example, an NGO promoting climate resilience may find through HRNI that field officers experience conflicting demands between donor expectations and local resistance—insights that can inform more adaptive, empathetic strategies (Fleming and Spicer, 2014; Lukes, 2005). Second, in schools or universities implementing inclusion policies, HRNI can expose how diverse student or faculty groups perceive these changes—revealing disconnects between institutional discourse and lived experience. This can guide equity interventions that are locally grounded and culturally sensitive (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). Third, HRNI supports crisis-response learning. In hospitality or healthcare organizations recovering from pandemic-related disruptions, HRNI can map the evolving emotions of workers—from initial fear to pride or burnout—enabling more humane HR and leadership strategies that recognize the temporal arc of trauma and adaptation (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2014). Fourth, HRNI can identify ethical tensions in hierarchical institutions. For example, in a public hospital, formal codes of care may conflict with informal staff practices. HRNI makes these tensions visible by contextualizing them within both regulatory frameworks and evolving professional cultures (Van Maanen, 2011; Czarniawska, 2004).

Finally, HRNI enables practitioners to design interventions that are not only evidence-informed but meaningfully anchored in the stories of those most affected. Whether in an NGO designing gender-sensitive programming, a university addressing faculty burnout, or a hospitality chain addressing post-crisis brand recovery, HRNI offers a reflexive, contextually grounded path for turning insight into action (Giddens, 1984; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002).

8. Limitations and future research directions

While the current paper offers a theoretically grounded and methodologically innovative articulation of Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI), several opportunities remain for

empirical engagement and methodological expansion. One limitation lies in the absence of field-based demonstrations of HRNI across different organizational settings. The conceptual strength of the model calls for contextual trials that can illuminate its operational nuances. Future studies are encouraged to implement HRNI in specific domains such as healthcare (e.g. nurse leadership under institutional restructuring), education (e.g. school administration during curriculum reform), and hospitality (e.g. service worker narratives under precarious contracts). These settings, characterized by emotional labor, shifting power dynamics, and narrative pluralism, provide fertile ground for examining HRNI's analytic capacities.

Future research can also articulate more focused research questions that align with HRNI's three core dimensions—temporal analysis, contextual embedding, and reflexive triangulation. Examples of such questions include: How do organizational actors narrate ethical dilemmas across time under shifting institutional logics? In what ways do marginalized voices reconstruct strategic histories during post-merger integration? How does power shape researchers' positionality and storytelling during embedded fieldwork in hierarchically stratified organizations? These questions not only reflect HRNI's potential for illuminating complexity but also demonstrate its practical utility in capturing layered organizational realities.

Moreover, HRNI has the potential to challenge and extend adjacent methodological traditions. Compared to narrative sensemaking approaches, which focus on fragmented and polyphonic storytelling, HRNI explicitly incorporates reflexive triangulation that prioritizes ethical self-awareness and researcher positionality. In contrast to critical ethnography, which emphasizes systemic critique and resistance, HRNI embeds that critique within participants' lived experience over time. Likewise, dialogic inquiry engages co-construction in relational settings, whereas HRNI anchors this co-construction within temporal unfolding and institutional memory. Future research can conduct comparative methodological studies that assess these frameworks side by side—investigating how HRNI generates different insights when applied to the same phenomenon, such as organizational forgetting, employee silence, or identity conflicts.

Another productive avenue involves exploring HRNI in the study of epistemic injustice in organizational research. For instance, researchers may ask: How does HRNI reveal forms of testimonial smothering or silencing in knowledge-intensive work cultures? Such work could make a meaningful contribution to both the methodological canon and the ethics of qualitative inquiry. Additionally, HRNI's emphasis on reflexivity can enrich feminist and decolonial research agendas that seek to decenter dominant narratives and foreground intersectional subjectivities.

Finally, as HRNI gains traction, interdisciplinary research collaborations may expand its methodological toolkit. Integrating HRNI with participatory visual methods, digital ethnography, or narrative GIS could open new directions for understanding how space, memory, and storytelling interlink within complex organizational ecologies. These interdisciplinary synergies would support HRNI's evolution not only as a qualitative technique but as a generative, ethical, and context-sensitive orientation for future organizational scholarship.

9. Conclusion

This paper introduces Hybrid Reflexive Narrative Inquiry (HRNI) as a methodological advancement designed to address unresolved challenges in qualitative organizational research. HRNI moves beyond surface-level reflexivity or descriptive narrative accounts to emphasize the interplay of temporality, contextuality, and reflexive responsibility as inseparable dimensions of meaning-making. Drawing on interpretive and critical traditions, it repositions the researcher not as an external recorder of reality but as a participant engaged in shaping the very narratives they study. This shift is particularly consequential in organizational contexts where emotional harm, silencing, and structural ambiguity render traditional methods inadequate. Where existing approaches often isolate reflexivity as a post-hoc ethical gesture or

treat temporality as a linear backdrop, HRNI integrates these elements into the core design of the inquiry. In doing so, it responds to methodological limitations that have made it challenging to study organizational complexity in its whole, lived richness.

To offer methodological specificity alongside conceptual innovation, the paper outlines the three analytical anchors of HRNI—temporal analysis, contextual embedding, and reflexive triangulation—through concrete tools and illustrative pathways. The table of practical instruments outlines coding strategies attuned to narrative disjuncture, interview designs responsive to emotional asymmetries, and structured reflexivity protocols that help researchers remain ethically accountable throughout the interpretive process. These additions not only address gaps in prior reflexive or narrative models but also provide a coherent and replicable roadmap for applying HRNI in practice. In particular, the inclusion of comparative methodological perspectives such as dialogic inquiry, critical ethnography, and feminist-decolonial reflexivity further deepens the theoretical grounding of HRNI. This methodological expansion enables researchers to engage meaningfully with power, voice, and positionality—dimensions often excluded or abstracted in conventional qualitative designs.

Taken together, HRNI contributes to a more effective understanding of organizational complexity by offering a flexible yet rigorous approach capable of responding to situated emotional, symbolic, and structural tensions. Rather than aiming to replace existing qualitative paradigms, it builds upon their insights to form a composite framework that emphasizes the co-construction of meaning, the ethical burden of interpretation, and the situatedness of voice and silence. As a conceptual and methodological contribution, HRNI aligns with broader calls for reflexivity not as decoration but as a design principle, especially in emotionally volatile or politically sensitive contexts. It invites future researchers to adapt its components within their respective domains while remaining faithful to the principle that inquiry is always situated, interpretive, and ethically consequential. Thus, HRNI offers not only a conceptual innovation but a structured and practical response to the enduring problem of how to study organizations without flattening the emotional, narrative, and power-laden textures of lived experience.

Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found online.

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