Qualitative Research Methods

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QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

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Overview
This presentation will cover:

a) What is qualitative research?
b) Overview of qualitative research designs
c) Myths about qualitative research
d) The qualitative research process
   1. Getting started
   2. Data collection
   3. Data analysis
   4. Writing up findings
e) Summary and questions

What is Qualitative Research?

- Primarily exploratory research used when little is known about the subject area.
- Tells the story of a particular individual, group or community’s experience in their words, and is therefore focused on narrative.
- Is a scientific method of observation to gather non-numerical data. It aims to describe the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things.
Qualitative Research

**Qualitative research** contributes to the development of new knowledge by:

- Enabling researchers to gain a better understanding of participants’ experiences;
- Investigating how individuals, groups and communities react to, interpret and make sense of their world;
- Increasing use of mixed methods research (NHMRC, 2015). a) Quantitative-qualitative, b) Qualitative-quantitative and c) simultaneous qualitative and quantitative design


Qualitative Research Design

Each approach has a different philosophical stance that guides the questions asked and the procedure used for data collection and analysis:

> **Grounded theory** – social and psychological experience
> **Phenomenology** – descriptions of experiences as consciously experienced by people living these experiences.
> **Ethnography** – observation and cultural patterns, values, perceptions
> **Historical research** - involves examining past events to draw conclusions and make predictions about the future.
> **Collaborative yarning** – Indigenous method of sharing information, exploring ideas in explaining new topics, leading to new understandings - positioning
> **Feminist** - Understanding how women are positioned in society
> **Case Studies** - Understanding how or why an individual, group, organisation, or community has experienced a problem or intervention

Myths & misconceptions about Qualitative Research Design

> The analysis of data is not rigorous or systematic
> The best data emerge from systematic, thoughtful, and rigorous procedures for which methodological regulations have been written. (Harper & Kuh 2007).
> Rigour/credibility in qualitative - researchers aim for “trustworthiness”. Veracity, Consistency, Confirmability, Applicability (Noble & Smith, 2015)

> Findings are not transferrable to other settings
> The goal is not to generalize but rather to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspect of human experience through the intensive study of particular cases (Polit & Beck, 2010).
Myths & misconceptions about Qualitative Research Design

- The sample size is too small and is not representative of the population.
  - Typically focus on depth of findings rather than breadth and work with small samples of people (Aspland, 2013). Purposive sampling and data saturation.

- Qualitative Data Are Useful Only When Corroborated By Numbers
  - Not all qualitative studies require quantitative verification, and vice versa (Harper & Kuh 2007).

Qualitative Research Process

1. Getting Started
   - Ethical approval (including audio/video recording)
   - Problem identification
   - Justification for the study and significance of findings
   - Study design and method selection
   - Methods for managing distress
   - Subject selection and inclusion/exclusion criteria
   - Data collection and analysis
   - Description \rightarrow interpretation
   - Trustworthiness of data
   - Reporting and publication

2. Data collection – Participant Recruitment
   - Depending on subject being researched:
     - Snowballing – one participant invites another to participate and contact researcher
     - Convenience sample: Available group for topic being studied- hospital setting
     - Single participant/group design: Case studies
2. Data collection – Sampling

- Depends on design - **purposeful sampling** commonly used.
- In Grounded Theory, as data collection and analysis are done simultaneously purpose sampling is used then as analysis progresses, **theoretical sampling** may be used.

2. Data collection

Things to consider before data collection starts.

- Assumptions
- Bracketing
- Field notes/memos

2. Data collection

Most commonly through interviews or focus groups. May be teamed with observation.

- **Semi-structured interviews** are conducted usually in a place that is convenient to participants. However, be aware of your safety if you are going to participants’ homes.

2. Data collection

Quality of data collection

- McCracken (1988) referred to the long interview as “one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armoury” (p. 9).
- He proposes that, “the long interview gives one the opportunity to step into the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves” (p.9).
- Interviewing requires a high level of training and skill.
- It is important to have well-trained interviewers to reduce the possibility of bias.

2. Data collection – In-depth interview

- Have a well developed and rehearsed interview guide
- Use open ended questions
- Ask effective probing questions
- Ask respondents to think back to previous experiences
- Keep questions simple
- Avoid asking “Why”
- Be cautious about giving examples
- Move from general to specific questions
- Ask positive before negative questions
- Have a pen to write questions that may occur while listening so you do not forget
- **Always assess participant for potential distress during interview**
- Be aware of researcher distress

Guidelines for In-depth interview analysis

- What words are being used?
- When they speak, people often communicate more than they intend.
- Pay attention to the connotations of the words used.
- Look out for ambiguous words that can have multiple meanings.
- Explore these.
- **Importance of field notes and memos**

Example of a field note

[This] interviewee was someone who I believed shares similar values to me. The interviewee spoke of cultural awareness education sessions that the employer had arranged and was able to recall some things discussed in this forum. However, these seemed a sterile check list of dos and don’ts rather than a real understanding of cultural issues to be considered in the delivery of care. ….. The interviewee did not articulate their practical and personal care delivery…..
3. Data Analysis

- Make sense of massive amounts of data
- Identify significant relationships and determine how the findings are to be communicated so the “essence” is not lost.
- Challenging and at times confusing
- Qualitative data can be ambiguous, resulting in a more difficult analysis
- Analysis follows prescribed method of qualitative research being used. For example, **grounded theory** uses constant comparative method of analysis and open, axial and selective coding.

3. Data Analysis – Preparing & managing your data

- Transcribe your own data
- Decide how you are going to manage your data – manually or with software assistance
- Leave large RH margins for annotations on transcribed data
- Tidy language/ do not tidy language – remove dross (suggest you analyse first before you tidy)
- [add interpretations or clarifications]
- Keep your memos/field notes to hand when analysing your data set

3. Data Analysis – Stages in data analysis

- Become familiar with data (review, reading, listening, transcribing)
- Organising and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification.
- De-identifying data to protect participants’ confidentiality
- Coding
- Report writing, including excerpts from original data (e.g., quotes from interviews).

Example of early data analysis

But, but, um, um, er, maybe if I, er, were, er, more culturally aware – That might not be a an issue.

Okay.

You know, because you know, I don’t know that very much. Yeah, I, I’m learning all the time but I actually don’t know a of. You know about the, the, the historical inner workings of the Aboriginal community. I, I, I just don’t know.
3. Data Analysis – Theoretical sensitivity

- Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to recognise what is important in the data and to interpret it correctly
- A good understanding of the literature and clinical practice in the area
- Continual reanalysis of data
- Interviews do not occur in a vacuum; everything takes place in some kind of context. Sometimes, the context can have a big impact on the findings.

3. Data Analysis

- One of the greatest challenges in qualitative research is knowing how much attention to place on various comments.
- Need to ask yourself: To what extent is this belief, attitude or valued shared by others?
- Frequency and intensity of comments (counting, content analysis)
- Trends/themes
- Iteration (data collection and analysis is an iterative process moving back and forth between participants)
  - What are major findings, what are minor findings, and what isn’t a finding at all?

Memos - Example of emerging category

- fear of not knowing
- fear of making things worse
- fear of making previous experiences
- fear of not being perceived

3. Data Analysis – Data Saturation

- No new information is coming from analysis
- Categories/themes are clear and well defined
- Connections are clear between categories/themes and sub categories/sub themes
- Good descriptors to provide insights into experiences
3. Data Analysis – Critical Thinking

Key points when thinking critically are:

- Persistence: Considering an issue carefully and more than once
- Evidence: Evaluating the evidence put forward in support of the belief or viewpoint
- Implications: Considering where the belief or viewpoint leads; what conclusions would follow; are these suitable and rational; and if not, should the belief or viewpoint be reconsidered
- Check for hidden assumptions

3. Data Analysis

- Researcher summarises collected data
- Reduce it to a descriptive & then interpretative level
- Attempt to find meaning
- Stages of analysis not necessarily linear, in practice occur simultaneously and repeatedly.

3. Data Analysis – Managing coding

- Use computer software program
- Be creative, cut and paste blocks of text onto index cards.
- Group cards that have similar labels together
- Revisit piles of cards to see if clusters still hold together
- Use diagrams and pin boards what works for you.

For example - Grounded Theory Coding

- Open coding: Line by line identify a number of open codes (breaks data up) - (Descriptive)
- Theoretical coding: Makes connections between open codes (brings data back together). Identify core categories.
- Selective coding: Relationship between categories (Interpretative).
Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers ensure trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability of findings by:

- Adherence to all steps of methodology
- Detailed descriptions of the methodological process in written reports.
- Researcher checks & consensus
- Documenting assumptions before starting research
- Audit trails & memos to demonstrate the validity of decisions made by the researcher during data collection, analysis & interpretation
- Place finding within the context of literature
- Using COREQ (Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research) checklist in reporting findings and publications.

http://cdn.elsevier.com/promis_misc/ISSM_COREQ_Checklist.pdf

4. Writing up the findings

- Translation of data into story that will be read by others.
- Findings should be a rich, tightly woven account that "closely approximates the reality it represents".
- Implications for practice and research translation to interdisciplinary care
- Economic benefits to clinical care

References

2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

2.1 Helpful websites

Qualitative research journals
Qualitative research: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/qrj

Ethnography – Sage journal: http://journals.sagepub.com/home/eth

Grounded theory online: http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory/

Curtin library resources: http://libguides.library.curtin.edu.au/finding-qualitative-research


2.2 Reporting guidelines

Equator – Enhancing the Quality and transparency of health research
http://www.equator-network.org/?post_type=eq_guidelines&eq_guidelines_study_design=qualitative-research&eq_guidelines_clinical_specialty=0&eq_guidelines_report_section=0&s=

2.3 Focus groups & interviews


2.4 Framework analysis


2.5 Traditional transcribed method with the audio recording method


2.6 Qualitative appraisal checklist
CASP
http://media.wix.com/ugd/dded87_951541699e9edc71ce66c9bac4734c69.pdf

Joanna Briggs Institute

McMaster Critical Review guidelines for Qualitative Studies

Qualitative synthesis
https://wiki.joannabriggs.org/display/MANUAL/2.4+The+JBI+Approach+to+qualitative+synthesis

Developing a qualitative review protocol
https://wiki.joannabriggs.org/display/MANUAL/2.6+Develop+a+qualitative+review+protocol

2.7 Key resources
COREQ (Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research) Checklist
http://cdn.elsevier.com/promis_misc/ISSM_COREQ_Checklist.pdf
NVivo software support for qualitative research
https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/nvivo-products


The association for qualitative research: The hub of qualitative thinking. Retrieved on 1 October 2018
https://www.aqr.org.uk/dir/

2.8 Presentation references


https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.227


2.9 Additional reading


Noble, H. (2016). What is grounded theory? Evidence Based Nursing 19(2), 34-35. DOI:10.1136/eb-2016-102306


