

An Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

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Qualitative & Quantitative

Qualitative

Form/Nature

Underlying factors

Decision processes

Processes/Systems

Generating theories

Case-testing

Particular

Detailed accounts

Flexible

Quantitative

Extent/Location

Statistical Correlation

Discriminatory variables

Outcomes

Predictive Modelling

Numerical testing

General

Summaries

Fixed

Qualitative Data Collection Methods

- Qualitative Methods
 - In-depth interviewing
 - Focus groups
 - Observation
 - Documentary (Textual analysis)

Fey Features of Qualitative Research

- Holistic
- Depth
- Detail
- Contexts
- Accounts
- Systems

When to use qualitative methods

- Ill-defined or not well understood
- Complex
- Sensitive
- Concerned with systems/processes
- Require an understanding of detail
- Personal context

Observation

- Observing what is happening
- Looking...Seeing
- Participant & Non-participant
- Record: Space, Object, Actors, Act, Time, Goal & Feelings (Spradley, 1980)

Depth Interviewing

- One to one discussion
- Encourage respondent to talk freely and openly
- Interviewer: attentive & receptive, controlling direction and depth
- Detailed guide of topics
- Quiet, Non-distracting environment
- Taped
- Length: 30 - 60 minutes

Focus Groups

- Talkative, Knowledgeable & Interested
- Attitudes & Opinions of Group Members
- Interaction between Participants
- Taped / Video-taped
- 7-10 people
- 3-4 groups
- Length: 1-2 hours
- Advance notice

Key Requirements

- Suspension of Assumptions
- Curiosity
- Ability to Listen
- Concentration
- Memory
- Adaptability
- Patience

Methods of Sampling - Qualitative

- Purposive Sampling
- Information-rich cases
- Opportunistic Sampling

The Topic Guide

- An aide memoir
- Essential topics to be covered
- Groupings
- Initial approach
- Ordering topics
- Aids for conducting the interview
- Resources – literature, brainstorming, experience

The Focus Group Interview

- Open discussion
- Lay down the ground rules
- Introductory comment from each participant
- Introduce a general question about a topic
- Summary of each topic

Focus Group Interviews - Logistics

- Satisfactory room
- Name tags
- Seating
- Interference with recording

Transcribing

- What does it mean?
- Who should do it?
- Must consider cost

Analyzing Qualitative Data -1

- Objective
- Impartial
- Descriptive
- Cyclical Nature

Analyzing Qualitative Data -2

- Immediately write-up
- Coding
 - Open Coding
 - Selective Coding
- Theme Analysis
- Cognitive Mapping
- Software

Traps

- Non-Scientific??
- Easy
- Materials
- Insufficient notice to participants
- Not enough time for analysis
- Insufficient funding
- Not enough interviews/groups
- Inexperienced facilitator

Suggested Reading

- Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. London: SAGE.
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- Krueger, R.A. (1994). Focus Groups: a practical guide for applied research. London: SAGE.
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- Morgan, D. (1997). Focus Group Discussions as Qualitative Research. London: SAGE.
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