

Making sense of your data: Some reflections on analysing qualitative data

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Goals for today...

- To discuss and share some ideas about analysing qualitative data
- To address your questions about analysing qualitative data
- To provide you with a set of accessible references on qualitative research and data analysis

The research process...

- Starts with the developing a research question.
- What research approach will allow me to generate the kind of data that I need to answer my research question?
- The research approach is also aligned with the researcher's assumptions, existing knowledge and reasons for doing the research.
- Once the research question has been developed and translated into a series of aims and objectives; all other methodological decisions must be aligned with the research question.

We use qualitative research to...

- To explore people's perceptions, experiences, practices, life histories, beliefs, views, interactions.
- Understand social phenomena and the sociocultural and political contexts in which they take place.
- Make sense of these phenomena by exploring them through the lens of the "insider".

Qualitative research is...

- an inductive and iterative process
- researcher is the primary research instrument.
- a process of active engagement between the researcher and his/her participants
- co-construction of knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon being investigated

Qualitative research is...

- partnership and collaboration between the researcher and the participants
- creating a narrative, “thick description” of the phenomenon of interest
- “*giving voice*”?

Qualitative data....

- Textual and/or visual data
- Can be generated using a number of techniques:
 - Dialogue: Interviews, focus groups
 - Observation: participant observation
 - Visual techniques: photovoice, bodymapping, drawings
 - Writing: diaries, reflexive logs, stories
- Collecting demographic data

Qualitative data....

- Participants describe, reflect on and narrate their social worlds through the use of these techniques.
- Data is collected in the form of audio recordings, video footage, photographs, drawings, diaries/reflexive logs, observation notes/logs, existing texts.
- Must be transformed to text to facilitate analysis
- Quality of the data collected depends on the researcher

Analysing your data...

- Decontextualising data, i.e., separating it from its original context by assigning codes to units of meaning in the text.
- Looking for patterns and themes in the data.
- Reintegrating data, i.e., organising and reducing data around themes, drawing relationships between themes.
 - (Stark & Trinidad, 2007)

The process of qualitative data analysis...

- Transforming your data into text
- Applying your chosen analytic framework
- Verifying your findings
- Reporting your findings
- Process is NOT linear or sequential

Transforming the data...

- “Construction site of knowledge “ (Kvale, 1996)
- Creating text for analysis
- Goal is to get rich, full-description of the participant/s experiences.
- Transcription, i.e., creating a verbatim record of the audio recording.
- Translation into language that you will analyse the data in.
- Verification of transcription and translation

Engaging in data analysis...

- Researcher is the instrument for analysis
- Familiarising yourself with the data (making notes, memoing)
- Applying your analytic framework, e.g., thematic analysis, interpretive phenomenological analysis, etc.
- Using software, e.g., AtlasTi, Excel
- Integrating multiple data sources
- Generating themes
 - Code-book development: generating a list of codes and their meanings that can be applied to the text

Engaging in data analysis...

- *“I will analyse my study data using thematic analysis”*
- *“Themes emerged from the data.”*
- “thematic analysis “can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’”
 - (Braun & Clarker, 2006, p. 9).
- Generating themes follows a number of steps that must be documented.

Engaging in data analysis...

- Thematic analysis Braun and Clarke (2006)
 - *“Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data”*
- Inductive (bottom-up) vs theoretical, deductive (top-down) approach to identifying themes

Figure 2
Summary of the six phases of thematic analysis



Source: (Braun & Clarke, 2006:35)

Interpretive phenomenological analysis

- Smith and Osborn's (2008) four step approach includes:
 - Looking for themes: reading and listening to the transcripts multiple times; making notes about observations and reflections that you consider to be important
 - Examining your notes and starting to transform notes into emergent themes
 - Looking for connections between emerging themes, clustering, labelling
 - Writing up the narrative/story represented by the themes

Verifying your analysis...

- Participatory process
- Ensuring the trustworthiness and authenticity of your data.
- Researcher reflexivity, i.e., considering the impact of the researcher's perspectives, pre-existing thought, beliefs, knowledge, assumptions, personal characteristics on the process of data collection and analysis.
- Reflexive practices that may assist the researcher include: consulting with colleagues and mentors, writing memos to examine how thoughts and ideas and evolve, keeping a research journal.

Verifying your analysis...

- Peer review:
 - Working with an expert in your area to discuss your interpretation of your data
- Member checking:
 - Meeting with participants to verify their account and to check the accuracy of the initial data, as well as the final description of the findings.
- Triangulation:
 - Of various sources of data to generate a holistic picture of the phenomenon being investigated

Reporting your findings...

- Deciding on a visual format: Thematic map
- Choosing illustrative quotes
- Confidentiality of participants in reported data
- Writing a story or narrative that illuminates the phenomenon that forms the focus of your study.
- Meaning-making: Integrating findings with available literature and your theoretical framework.
- Integrating your analysis with your findings.

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