

An Introduction to Qualitative Research

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of the presentation, you should be able to:

1. Describe what is qualitative research
2. Demonstrate the differences between Qualitative & Quantitative research
3. Understand the basic concepts of Qualitative studies:
4. Characteristics of qualitative research
 1. Bias
 2. Triangulation
 3. Trustworthiness

Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research is an approach to obtain a lot of in-depth information from people. The aim is to understand WHY people think and behave the way they do. Because we spend a lot of time with people to get this information we usually can only talk with a FEW people.
- Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live, and understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures.

Qualitative Research Cont...

- This is different from quantitative methods like surveys and case control studies. In quantitative research we obtain relatively little detailed information from each person. This is because with quantitative methods we are interested in describing WHAT people do (things like how many people have had vaccinations) - without really wanting details about why the situation is like that. Because we need less time with people to get this information, we can interview A LOT OF people.
- **Both qualitative and quantitative methods are important, and whether we use one or the other depends on what we are trying to learn.**
- **Quantitative approaches are important and solve many type of research problem. Qualitative research is appropriate for different type of questions.**

Qualitative Research Cont....

- Qualitative research can provide insight which is not possible to elucidate with purely quantitative data
 - A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems
 - Study human behavior and social world
- Help us to understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are

Qualitative Research Cont....

- Qualitative research answer questions on:
 - Why people behave the way they do
 - How opinions and attitudes are formed
 - How people are affected by the events that go on around them
 - How and why cultures have developed
 - The difference between social groups

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research

	Qualitative	Quantitative
1. Aim	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Exploration of participants' experiences and life world2. Understanding, generating theory from data3. Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Search for causal explanations2. Testing hypothesis, prediction3. Confirmatory
2. Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Broad focus2. Process oriented3. Context – bound4. Getting close to data	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Narrow focus2. Product oriented3. Context free4. In artificial or laboratory setting

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Cont...

	Qualitative	Quantitative
3. Sample	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Participants & Informants2. Purposive and theoretical sampling3. Flexible sampling that develops during research	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Respondents2. Randomised sampling3. Sample frame fixed before research starts
4. Data collection	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. In-depth non-standardised interviews2. Participant observation / fieldwork3. Documents, photographs, videos	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Questionnaire, Standardised interviews2. Tightly structured observation

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Cont...

	Qualitative	Quantitative
5. Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Thematic, constant comparative analysis2. Content analysis3. Grounded theory4. Ethnographic analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Statistical analysis
6. Outcome	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Story2. Ethnography3. Theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Measurable results

Differences between Qualitative and Quantitative Research Cont...

	Qualitative	Quantitative
7. Relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Direct involvement of researcher2. Research relationship close	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Limit involvement of researcher2. Research relation distant
8. Rigour	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Trustworthiness2. Authenticity3. Typicality4. Transferability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Internal validity2. External validity3. Reliability4. Generalisability

Qualitative Research Designs

- Four major types of qualitative research design include:
 - Phenomenology
 - Ethnography
 - Grounded theory
 - Case study

Phenomenology

- Study of a phenomena – describing something that exist as part of the world
- Phenomena might be:
 - An event, a situation, an experience or a concept
 - e.g. back pain
- It begins with the acknowledgment that there is a gap in our understanding
- It may not necessarily provide definitive explanations but it does raise awareness and increase insight

Ethnography

- The term means “portrait of people”
- It is a methodology for descriptive studies of cultures and peoples
 - e.g. cultural parameter is suspected of affecting the population’s response to care or treatment
- It requires extensive fieldwork by the researchers
- Data collection includes formal and informal interview on several occasion and observation
- It is extremely time consuming

Ethnography Cont.....

- Data analysis – “emic” approach: researcher interpret data from the prospective of the population under study
- Results are expressed as they are expressed by the subjects themselves
- These studies might be problematic when researchers are not familiar with social norms and language

Grounded Theory

- Main feature: development of a new theory through the collection and analysis of data about a phenomenon
- It goes beyond phenomenology as the explanations are genuinely new knowledge and are used to develop theories
- Various data collection techniques are used
 - Literature review, documentary analysis, interviews, observation

Grounded Theory Cont.....

- Key feature: constant comparative analysis – simultaneous collection and analysis of data

Case Study

- Case studies might be qualitative or quantitative
- In-depth analysis of a single or small number of unites
- It is used to describe an entity that forms a single unit such as a person, an organization or an institution
- Complexity: illustration of an event VS. analysis of social situation over time
- As a research design, it offers rich and in-depth information which is not usually offered by other methods

Case Study Cont...

- It is highly versatile method and employs any or all methods of data collection
- It can be used for different purposes e.g. development of new services, organizational changes in planning, purchasing or delivery of health services, evaluation of a program
- A critic - case may not be representative of similar cases (findings are not generalizable)
- Can we apply findings elsewhere?

What is the Right Approach?

BE FLEXIBLE

- We need to be FLEXIBLE when carrying out a qualitative study.
- There are many methods we can use to achieve the same learning objective.
- Also we can ask different kinds of questions to learn the same information.
- So, if we find that a method or question we are using isn't being understood or isn't working well, we can change methods or use a different question.

Example – The Mountain

Think of a mountain. If you were standing in one place looking at a mountain and tried to describe it, you would only see one side.

So your description would be biased. You would need to stand at different places to be able to see the whole mountain and really describe all of it.

But even then the description would be biased because you may prefer to describe some things and not others.

Example – The Mountain Cont...

Ask other people in the room to describe the mountain below



But even then the description is biased because we are all looking at the mountain with the same method, our eyes.

We should use different methods, like using a telescope as well as our own eyes, to get a more complete description.

Bias

“Bias means having only part of the truth, but we use the information as if it were the whole truth”

- Since bias is having only part of the truth, we reduce bias by getting more information.
- We get more information by looking at something in different ways.

Example – The Mountain Cont...

Even if we ask other people to get involved and describe the mountain the description is still biased as we are all looking at the mountain at the same time of year.

Some months there may be snow on the mountain but not at other times, so we would want to look at different times of the year.

There is a name for reducing bias by using different ways to study the same thing. It is called TRIANGULATION. We do this, triangulation, in qualitative studies to describe populations instead of mountains.

Triangulation

Reduce bias by using team members with different experiences and perspectives

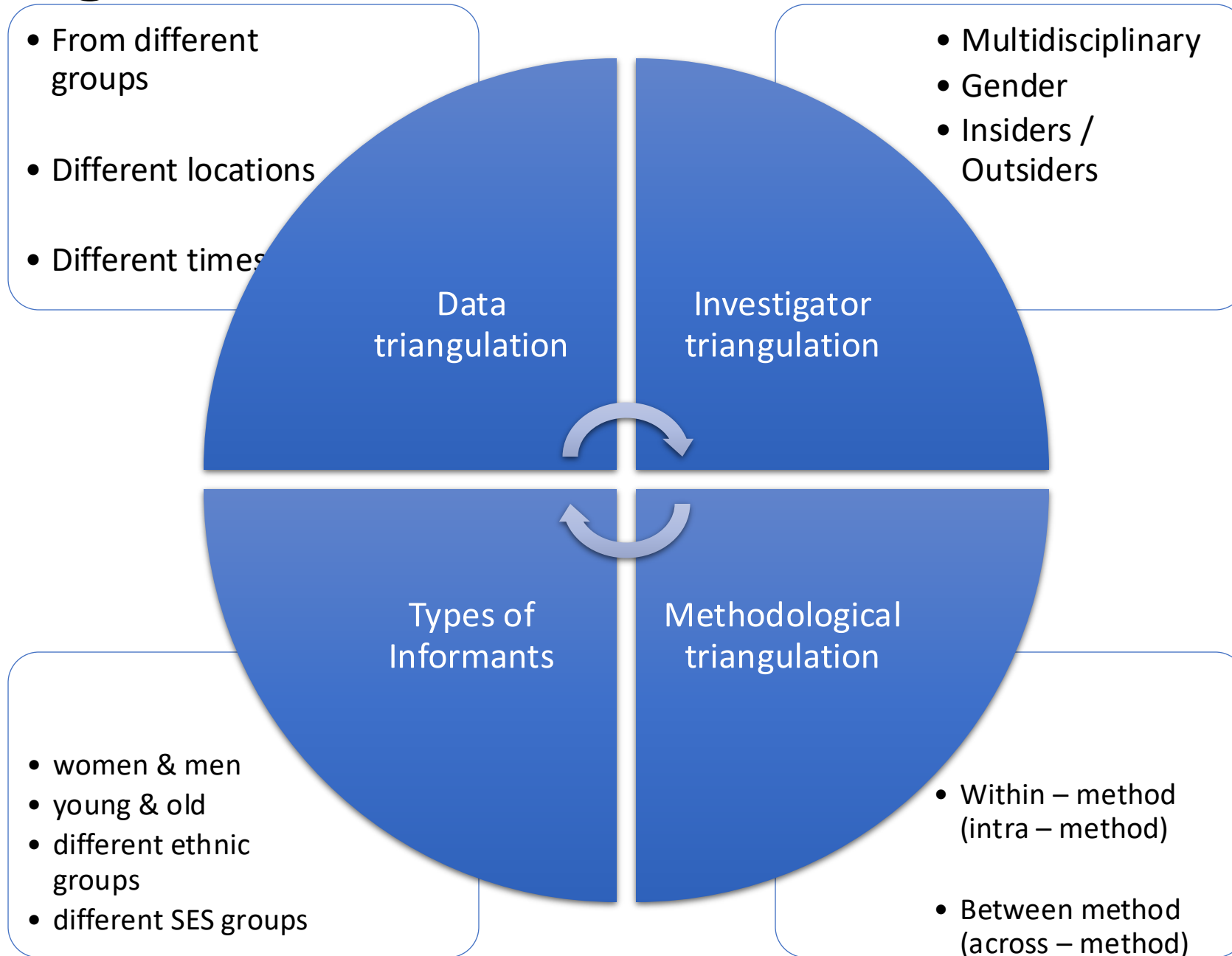
Continuously cross-checking information using different methods and types of informants

- Actively identify bias at the end of each day
- Decide how to manage bias in days ahead

Levels of triangulation

- Data
- Investigators
- Methods
- Information

Triangulation Cont...



Trustworthiness

We sometimes say that we trust a person. With this we mean that his behaviour is predictable in that similar behaviour is expressed at different occasions and we believe that the person is not lying. A trustworthy person is someone who tells us the “truth” and does so consistently.

What then, is trustworthy research?

How can we judge what findings are worth believing?

Several criteria have been established within both quantitative and qualitative research to judge their trustworthiness or rigor:

Four Criteria for Assessing Trustworthiness

Question asked	Issue	Qualitative	Quantitative
1. Have we really measured what we set out to measure	Truth value	Credibility	Internal validity
2. How applicable are our result to other subjects and other context	Applicability	Transferability	External validity
3. Would our findings be repeated if our research were replicated in the same context with the same subject	Consistency	Dependability	Reliability
4. To what extend are our findings affected by personal interest and biases	Neutrality	Conformability	Objectivity

Truth Value: Credibility

The ability of the study to capture what the research really aimed at studying, meaning that the result are not simply the product of research design errors, misunderstandings, or influence of unknown factors.

How Can We Improve the Credibility of a Study?

1. Prolonged Engagement (Stay in the field until data saturation occurs.)
 1. counters distortions from researcher's impact on the context
 2. limits researcher biases
 3. compensates for effects of unusual or seasonal events
2. Persistent Observations (Consistently pursue interpretations in different ways in conjunction with a process of constant and tentative analysis. Look for multiple influences. Search for what counts and what doesn't count)

How Can We Improve the Credibility of a Study? Cont...

3. Triangulation (The best way to elicit the various and divergent constructions of reality that exist within the context of a study is to collect information about different events and relationships from different points of view.)
 - ask different questions
 - seek different sources
 - utilize different methods

4. Referential adequacy (What materials are available to document your findings? Video tape provides a good record but it can be obtrusive.)

How Can We Improve the Credibility of a Study? Cont...

5. Peer Debriefing (This is done with a similar status colleague (not with a junior or senior peer) who is outside the context of the study and who has a general understanding of the nature of the study and with whom you can review perceptions, insights, and analyses.)
 - tests working hypotheses
 - helps develop next step
6. Negative case analysis: involves the conscious search for data that don't fit the current working hypothesis, within existing data as well as in planned data collection.

How Can We Improve the Credibility of a Study? Cont...

7. Member Checks : is an activity that entails bringing back the results to the members of the studied group. At different levels:

- Transcripts
- Preliminary report

- corrects errors
- provides additional information
- puts respondent on record
- assesses the overall adequacy of the data in addition to individual data points

Applicability: Transferability

■ Thick Description

- Because transferability is a naturalistic study depends on similarities between sending and receiving contexts, the researcher collects sufficiently detailed descriptions of data in context and reports them with sufficient detail and precision to allow judgments about transferability to be made by the reader.

■ Purposive Sampling

In contrast to random sampling that is usually done in a traditional study to gain a representative picture through aggregated qualities, naturalistic research seeks to maximize the range of specific information that can be obtained from and about that context by purposely selecting locations and informants that differ.

Consistency: Dependability

An inquiry must also provide its audience with evidence that if it were replicated with the same or similar respondents (subjects) in the same (or a similar) context, its finding would be repeated

Increasing Dependability

To enable readers of the research report to develop a thorough understanding of the methods and their effectiveness, the text should include sections devoted to:

Consistency: Dependability Cont...

The research design and its implementation, describing what was planned and executed on a strategic level;

The operational detail of data gathering, addressing the minutiae of what was done in the field;

Reflective appraisal of the project, evaluating the effectiveness of the process of inquiry undertaken.

Neutrality: Confirmability

To what extent are our findings affected by personal interest and biases

This is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher.

Confirmability Audit Trail

An adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry

To Recap

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Teamwork 1

In a small team of 5 discuss and write down your own definition of “qualitative research”

Get ready to present your findings with everyone in 10 minutes

Teamwork 2

In a small team of 5 think, discuss and identify an issue relevant to your team that might be explored by adopting a qualitative approach

After you have done that develop a research question around which we will be working during our intensive at the University of Parma

Get ready to present your findings with everyone in 20 minutes

Thank You for Your Attention!!