

2) Qualitative Sampling Techniques

Training Course in Sexual and
Reproductive Health Research

Geneva 2015



Dr. Khalifa Elmusharaf

MBBS, PGDip, FRSPH, PhD researcher Health System & Policy

RCRU / UMST

Objective of Presentation

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

- Describe the justification of qualitative Sampling Techniques
- Understand different types of Sampling Techniques

Sampling for Qualitative Research

- The aim of the qualitative research is to understand, from within, the subjective reality of the study participants.
- This will not be achieved through superficial knowledge about a large, representative sample of individuals.
- Rather we want to reach people within the study area who can share their unique slice of reality, so that all slices together illustrate the range of variation within the study area.

Sampling for Qualitative Research

- The general rule in qualitative research is that you continue to sample until you are not getting any new information or are no longer gaining new insights.

“Saturation”

Sampling for Qualitative Research

- With careful sampling and equally careful collection techniques, a surprisingly small number of interviews, narratives or focus groups can yield the data to answer your research question.

Types of Sampling

Convenience Sampling (ease of access)

- Convenience sampling defined as a group of individuals believed to be representative of the population from which it is selected, but chosen because it is close at hand rather than being randomly selected.
 - Selection of the sample is at the convenience of the researcher
 - Biased
- e.g. when you simply ask any patient in your clinic who is willing to participate.

Convenience

- Saves time, money, and effort. Poorest rational; lowest credibility. Yields information-poor cases.
- This is the least rigorous technique, involving the selection of the most accessible subjects. It is the least costly to the researcher, in terms of time, effort and money, but may result in poor quality data and lacks intellectual credibility.
- There is an element of convenience sampling in many qualitative studies, but a more thoughtful approach to selection of a sample is usually justified.

Theoretical Sample

The process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst *jointly collects, codes, and* analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop the theory as it emerges”

(Glaser and Strauss, 1967)

- The sampling process is entirely controlled by the emerging theory

Purposive Sampling (judgemental)

- The researcher attempts to obtain sample that appears to him/her to be representative of the population.

Snowball Sampling (friend of friend)

- You initially contact a few potential respondents and then ask them whether they know of anybody with the same characteristics that you are looking for in your research.
- For example, if you wanted to interview a sample of vegetarians / cyclists / people with a particular disability / people who support a particular political party etc.

Extreme or Deviant Case

- Learning from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon of interest, such as outstanding success/notable failures, top of the class/dropouts, exotic events, crises.
- To obtain information on unusual cases, which can be especially 'problematic' or especially 'good'.

Intensity

- Information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely, such as good students/poor students, above average/below average.

Maximum Variation

- Purposefully picking a wide range of variation on dimensions of interest...documents unique or diverse variations that have emerged in adapting to different conditions. Identifies important common patterns that cut across variations.
- To obtain information about the significance of various circumstances for processes and outcome (e.g. three to four cases that are very different on one dimension: e.g. largest, median and smallest size; government, aided, not-for-profit and commercial funding patterns; city, town and rural area).

Homogeneous

- Focuses, reduces variation, simplifies analysis, facilitates group interviewing.

Typical Case

- Illustrates or highlights what is typical, normal, average.
- The case is specifically selected because it is not in any way atypical, extreme, deviant or intensely unusual.
- This strategy is often used when the units of analysis are large, as for example in studies of villages in developing countries.
- Selecting a typical village allows the research to illustrate the general process that occurs.
- This strategy is particularly useful if the research report will predominantly be read by people who are unfamiliar with the area of research.

Stratified Purposeful

- Illustrates characteristics of particular subgroups of interest; facilitates comparisons.
- The technique is a kind of ‘statistically non representative stratified sampling’ because, while it is similar to its quantitative counterpart, it must not be seen as a sampling strategy that allows statistical generalisation to the large population.

Critical Case

- Permits logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases because if it's true of this once case it's likely to be true of all other cases.
- To test a hypothesis by choosing the case that permits logical deductions of the type, “If this is valid for this case, then it should apply to all cases.” Or “If it is not valid for this case, it is unlikely to be valid for any other cases”.

Key Informant Sample

- Key informants, as a result of their personal skills, or position within a society, are able to provide more information and a deeper insight into what is going on around them.
- Characteristics of an "ideal" key informant:
 1. *Role in community*
 2. *Knowledge*
 3. *Willingness*
 4. *Communicability*
 5. *Unbiased*

Criterion

- All cases that meet a set of criteria are selected. In criterion sampling it is important to select the criteria carefully, so as to define cases that will provide detailed and rich data relevant to the particular research problem.
- For example, all former clients of an intensive care unit who return to intensive care with the same complaint within three weeks may constitute a sample for in-depth, qualitative study.
- These criteria would facilitate a study of the effectiveness of after-care programs attached to intensive care units.

Confirming or Disconfirming

- Elaborating and deepening initial analysis, seeking exceptions, testing variation.

Opportunistic

- New opportunities to recruit participants or to gain access to a new site may develop after the fieldwork has begun.
- A researcher studying heart attacks may, for example, meet a cardiologist while interviewing one of his or her patients.
- The cardiologist may suggest how the researcher can contact other cardiologists who would be willing to refer clients to the researcher.

Random Purposeful

- (still small sample size) Adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is larger than one can handle. Reduces judgment within a purposeful category. (Not for generalizations or representativeness)

Politically Important Cases

- Attracts attention to the study (or avoids attracting undesired attention by purposefully eliminating from the sample politically sensitive cases).

Volunteer Sampling

- Samples are often drawn through advertising, requesting people to volunteer to participate in the study.
- This can be particularly useful when potential participants are dispersed throughout the community or difficult to contact directly.
- However, volunteer samples are typically biased in particular ways.
- For example, a volunteer sample of people living with HIV/AIDS will systematically be biased to exclude people who are denying or ignoring their HIV status.

Combination or Mixed Purposeful

- Triangulation, flexibility, meets multiple interests and needs.

End