Qualitative research 2

Dr Raqibat Idris, MBBS, DO, MPH

Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research

29 November 2017

From Research to Practice:
Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research
Geneva Workshop 2017

Overview of presentation

This presentation will discuss the methods of data generation for qualitative research, their uses and their limitations.

Introduction

The following methods can be used to generate data for qualitative research:

1. Individual interviews
2. Focus group discussions
3. Observations
4. Ethnography
5. Action Research
6. Others: Longitudinal, historical, case studies
7. Triangulation: use of different methods

University of Surrey, n.d.

Interviews

- Unstructured
- Semi-structured
- Structured

University of Surrey, n.d.

Unstructured interviews

- The researcher investigates a problem with no structured plan
- To investigate a problem with no prior expectations
- Interview topics are limited but covered extensively
- In-depth
- Interview questions are determined by the interviewee's responses

University of Surrey, n.d.

Semi-structured interview

- Focused interviews
- Most commonly used
- Open ended questions about the topic
- Can ask broader questions
- Use prompts to help interviewees
- Probing to obtain a more detailed information or explore a new topic emerging from the interview
- Suitable when the topic areas are many

University of Surrey, n.d.

Structured interview

- Interview schedule is tightly structured
- The same questions asked in similar manner to all participants
- Responses to questions are limited
- May use a questionnaire or structured interview plan as appropriate
- Exploring the breadth or depth of the topic may be compromised

University of Surrey, n.d.

Good quality interviews

- Fairly informal
- Conversation or discussion form and not a question and answer section
- Adequately prepared and planned
- Develop interview schedule
- Careful and thoughtful conduction of interview and analysis of data

University of Surrey, n.d.

Focus group discussions (FGDs)

- Generates data through the active group interaction on a topic set by the researcher.
- Explores the views and opinions of the participants
- When collective discussion or group dynamics are necessary to understand the phenomena
- Members of the focus group share a feature that is relevant to the study

Jayasekara, 2012;

Features of FGDs

- Convenience or purposive sampling
- Group size depends on study purpose and type of participants
- 4- 12 (optimal 5- 10) group members- limited information if too small and limited participation and interaction of participants if too large
- Homogenous group in terms of how the group members experience the problem (age, gender, social status or class, race, occupations)-avoids power imbalance and participants can better interact and data more valid Jayasekara, 2012
- Minimum of 3 focus groups to have a more objective and broader insight into the problem

University of Surrey, n.d.

Researcher skills for FGDs

1. Group skills
2. Facilitating
3. Moderating
4. Listening/observing
5. Analytical

University of Surrey, n.d.

Uses of FGDs

- Show collective opinions, values and beliefs
- Can provide insights into the sources of complex behaviours and drivers
- To develop or improve research instruments (questionnaires, interview guides etc)
- Explore issues and generate data
- Evaluate and validate findings from other research methods
- To tailor interventions to the needs of clients

Jayasekara, 2012

Advantages of FGDs

- With group dynamics, participants can express themselves more freely than in an individual interview
- Tilt power balance to participants instead of the interviewer
- Perspective and experiences of key stakeholders about a phenomenon can be obtained
- Marginalized groups can air their opinions
- Can quickly generate data

Jayasekara, 2012

Disadvantages of FGDs

- Psychological distress: over-disclosure of personal information or sensitive topics- debriefing, counselling
- Withholding of information
- Cannot ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality- anonymous teleconference calls

Smith, 1995

Limitations of FGDs

- Less useful to study sensitive issues or socially deviant behaviours
- Personal characteristics of participants causing power imbalance can limit group interaction
- More difficult to arrange
- Energy, time and money intensive
- Irrelevant discussion and data if moderator is inexperienced
- Transcription is more complex and expensive

Jayasekara, 2012

Observation

- Data is collected by observing people or environment to understand a social phenomenon
- Observation in natural setting
- Researcher may be a participant (participant observer)- acceptance, better understanding
- Good for investigating how people behave or to confirm information obtained through other data collection methods

University of Surrey, n.d.

Strengths of observation

- Provide clues to the source of a problem
- Provide insight into a phenomenon
- Show sub-groups
- Useful background information for future research

University of Surrey, n.d.

Limitations of observation

- Change in behaviour of participants- validity of data
- Only provides a ‘snap shot’ of the observed phenomenon
- Important information may be missed during observation and note taking
- Researcher may misunderstand or misjudge the situation
- Not every situation is observable in their natural settings

University of Surrey, n.d.

Data collection techniques for observation

- Written description: information miss, focus on a particular event, subjective interpretation of the situation
- Video recording: researcher can observe and record, participant may act or avoid the camera, camera may not see all
- Photographs (buildings, neighbourhoods, clothing, appearances) and artefacts (instrument, tools)
- Documentations: newspapers, notice boards, administrative policies and protocols, previous studies

University of Surrey, n.d.

Ethnography

- Descriptive studies of culture and people
- Fieldwork is extensive
- Time consuming
- Data collection through interviews (formal and informal), long-term participative observations
- Interpretation of data is based on the selected sample
- Misinterpretation if researcher is unaware or does not understand the social norms of informants

University of Surrey, n.d.

Action research

- Collaborative inquiry
- Practical intervention
- Researcher actively involved in the inquiry and intervention
- Checkland's FMA model is often used (F- Framework of ideas, M- Methodology being applied and A- Area of concern)
- PEArL mnemonic (P- Participants, E –Engagement, A- Authority, r –relationships and L- Learning) indicates the elements of inquiry. Most important element is relationship.

University of Surrey, n.d.

Other types of qualitative research

- Longitudinal research or panel studies: The participants are contacted at different times over a long-term period
- Historical: investigates past events to make a meaning of present event and predict future ones
- Case study: researches a single case study unit (individual, group of individual, organization or an institution), small number of units or series of cases. Uses various data collection methods including interviews and observations.

University of Surrey, n.d.

References

- Jayasekara RS. Focus groups in nursing research: Methodological perspectives. Nursing Outlook. 2012 Nov;60(6):411-6. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2012.02.001
- Smith MW. Ethics in Focus Groups: A Few Concerns. Qualitative Health Research. 1995 Nov;5(4):478-86. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/104973239500500408
- University of Surrey. Introduction to Research: Unit 6 Qualitative Research [Internet], no date. Available from: http://libweb.surrey.ac.uk/library/skills/Introduction%20to%20Research%20and%20Managing%20Information%20Leicester/page_52.htm