

Qualitative research methods workshop

"Qualitative research aims to provide us with a rich understanding of people's lived experiences and perspectives, situated within the context of their particular circumstances and settings" (Murphy et al. 1998).

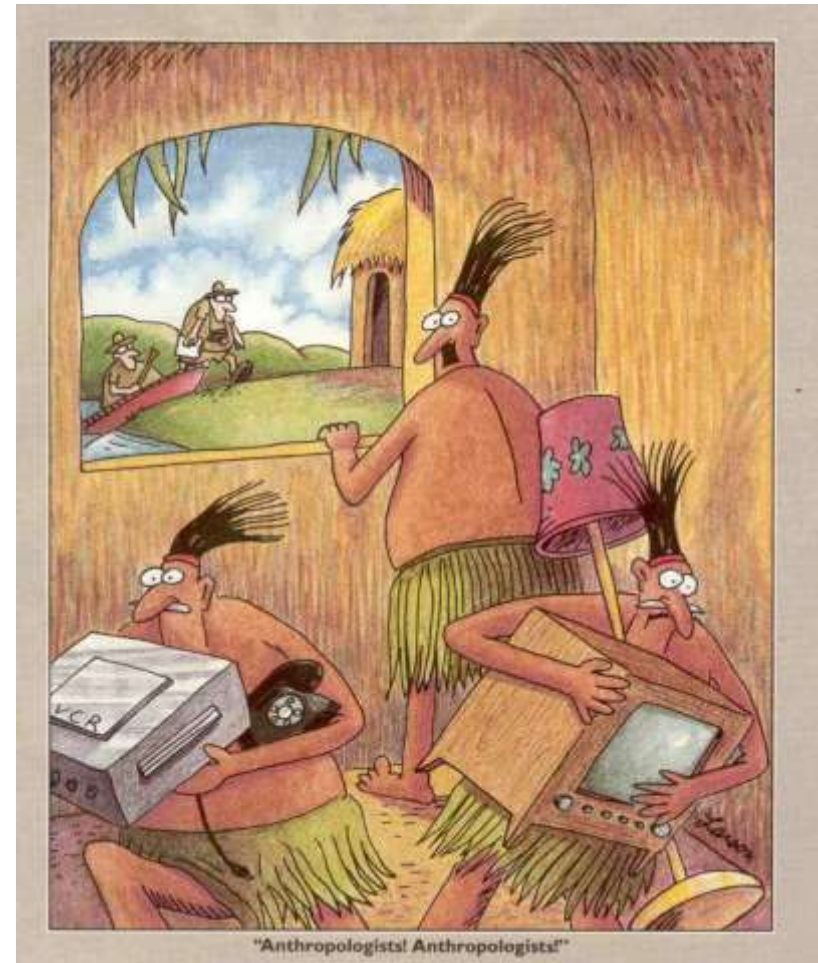
Workshop aims

- Familiarization with common qualitative research designs and methods
- Assist the participants in developing the aim, design, methods, tools and analysis plans for a qualitative sub-study.

Workshop aims

- At the end of the workshop students should be able to:
 - Explain when to use what methods, and their advantages and disadvantages (SAT)
 - Select appropriate sampling strategies and determine sample sizes (SUN)
 - Develop a guide using open ended questions in the most appropriate order (MON)
 - Use appropriate probing and facilitation skills in interviews and focus groups (MON)
 - Understand issues with transcribing and translating interviews and FGDs (MON)
 - Understand quality assurance in qualitative research and identify things that may improve or hinder quality (TUE)
 - Identify different approaches to analysis (TUE)

Selecting methods: Advantages and disadvantages



Main methods used in qualitative research

1. In-depth interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Observations

Exercise: In-depth interviews

In teams make a list of the ways an in-depth interview is similar and a list of how in-depth interviews are different from a conversation

Conversation vs in-depth interview

Similarities

- 2 people discussing a topic of mutual interest in a relaxed and open way
- Flexible and free flowing

Differences

- Interviewer directed to get as much relevant info as possible and to ensure all topics are covered
- Question, response, probe
- Respondent opens up to a stranger who divulges little about themselves
- Confidential and de-identified
- Power dynamics

Exercise: Focus group discussions

In your teams work together to define a focus group and list their unique properties

Focus group discussions

- Organized and focused discussion among 6-12 people
- Guided by a moderator in a permissive and non-threatening environment
- Group interaction help participants explore and clarify their views and encourage participation
- Interactions help clarify similarities and differences in opinions/values
- Interaction are part of the research data: jokes, anecdotes, arguing tell us a lot
- Participants are not asked questions in turn, rather encouraged to: ask questions, exchange anecdotes, comment on views and experiences

Exercise

1. Describe what you think is the best use of IDIs and FGDs
2. Name 2 advantages and 2 disadvantages of each method

Main purpose of the method

Method	Main use
IDIs	Understanding personal perspectives and experiences and linking concepts at an individual level
FGDs	Understanding social norms, dominant cultural values, group opinions Testing concepts and materials
Observation	Understanding behaviors in their physical, social and economic context

In-depth interviews

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can explore complex and detailed issues• Good for high volume issues• Opportunity for probing and clarifying questions• One on one enhances rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time consuming and can result in large volumes of data• Interviewer must have good listening and probing skills• Respondent may want to please interviewer

Focus groups

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gets information quickly and cheaply• Good for 'low volume' issues• Group interaction can stimulate response• Peer pressure can challenge thinking• Good at identifying content that do or do not resonate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cannot explore complex or detailed issues• Respondents may be concerned about anonymity• Responses influenced by peers• Some participants may dominate, others may not speak• May not be suitable for sensitive topics• Skilled moderator required• Can be logistically difficult• Writing up from audio can be difficult

Exercise: Discussion of paper

Read the excerpts from the paper on FGD research. As you read think about the following

1. What are the key points the paper is making
2. Do you think these points are relevant to the Ethiopian situation – why/why not?
3. What is positionality
4. What are the conversational norms in Ethiopia, are they different for men and women?
5. How might the Ethiopian cultural context affect the conduct of a FGD? What modifications might be needed?
6. What is reflexivity and why is it important

Sampling approach size and recruitment

Sampling approaches: general principles

- Stem logically from the research question- strategic and thoughtful
 - Focus on depth rather than generalizability
 - Iterative
 - Feasible
 - Ethical
 - Describe it in your research papers
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- Most often need to think about selection of communities and of respondents

Sampling approaches

- Standard criteria:
 - “Good” and information rich informant: Articulate, reflective, and willing to share
- Choices:
 - Convenience- Select easily accessible subject
 - Theoretical sampling: Analyse as you go along and adjust sampling based on the findings, sampling controlled by emerging theory
 - Purposive- Select based on researchers judgement of who will be information rich/useful
- Do not focus too much on names and definitions think about what each type of sampling gives you and how this would help you answer your questions

Exercise

1. Give an example of a convenience sample
2. Discuss the advantages of convenience sampling

Exercise

Advantages

- Cheap, fast and easy

Disadvantages

- May get information poor cases
- Least legitimate

Element of convenience sampling in all qualitative research but needs to be done within a thoughtful and justifiable approach to sampling

Purposive sampling to expand variation

- Quota – A range or certain number of respondents with certain characteristics that may influence responses/outcomes to facilitate comparison
- Maximum variation – Broadest range possible to identify common patterns that cut across variations and emerge out of heterogeneity
- Extreme/Deviant – Sample outliers so can learn from an unusual manifestations of phenomena of interest
- Intensity sampling: Sample those who manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely as the extremes may be too unusual
- Confirming and disconfirming – include people with expected and exceptional outcomes to test variations and emerging trends in the data – done in later stages of data collection

Purposive sampling to narrow variation and explore similarities

- Criterion- Those who meet specific criteria of importance
- Critical case – Decisive cases to allow test hypothesis and allow generalization to other cases as if it's true of this case it's likely to be true of others
- Typical case – An average person with no unusual characteristics to highlight what is typical, normal or average
- Homogeneous – respondents have similar background and experiences to describe a sub group in depth

Examples

- Deviant/Extreme sampling:
 - Community health workers representing those having the highest and lowest motivation scores
 - Men who do not beat their wives in a culture where wife abuse is culturally accepted
- Intensity sampling:
 - Mothers who received above and below average number of visits from community health workers
 - Communities near and far from a facility but not the extremes
- Maximum diversity:
 - Women with a range of SES and education levels, parities and ethnicities
 - Communities with a range of ethnic or religious affiliations

Examples

- Criterion: Mothers who followed referral advice for their newborn and did not receive treatment
- Typical case: Average communities

Example: Quota

Age Group	Reproductive experience in ART programme	
	Never experienced a pregnancy within the ART programme	Experienced a pregnancy in the ART programme since 2008
18-24	4	3
25-34	4	4
35-49	4	4

Sample information and recruitment

- Snowball
 - Gatekeepers/key informants
 - Key locations
 - Adverts/flyers
 - Networks
 - Quantitative surveys
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- Tally sheet

Sample size

- Should be based on the concept of saturation:
 - Theoretical: no new data, or themes/codes and the ability to replicate
 - Practical: diminishing returns' from further data-collection i.e. sufficient conceptual depth
- Very little written about sample size and no empirical reasons given when sizes are given

Sample size

- Rule of thumb
 - Range from 20-50 interviews and 2-5 FGDs per category
 - Some say that for interviews 15 is the smallest acceptable and that >50 is too many
- Generally sample size depends on the level of homogeneity of the sample, the complexity of the research and the quality of the interviews
- Too large a sample is as harmful as too small as it reduces the quality of the analysis.

Group work

- You are interested in understanding women's experiences with long lasting injectable family planning in a Woreda. You think there may be important differences in experiences for women by parity and education
1. Describe the sampling criteria for your communities and the women
 2. Describe how you would identify and approach the women
 3. How would you determine sample size for planning purposes
 4. How will you know when saturation is reached

Planning

- Write down your research aims and objectives
- Where you plan to collect data
- Who you will sample and why
- How you will sample them

Getting good data from respondents: interviews

