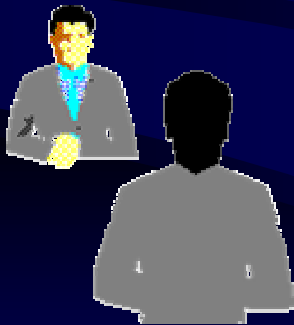


Interview as a Method for Qualitative Research



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Definitions

- The qualitative research interview seeks to describe and the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say. (Kvale,1996)
- A qualitative research interview seeks to cover both a factual and a meaning level, though it is usually more difficult to interview on a meaning level. (Kvale,1996)
- Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires,e.g., to further investigate their responses. (McNamara,1999)

Aspects of Qualitative Research Interviews.

- Interviews are completed by the interviewer based on what the respondent says.
- Interviews are a far more personal form of research than questionnaires.
- In the personal interview, the interviewer works directly with the respondent.
- Unlike with mail surveys, the interviewer has the opportunity to probe or ask follow up questions.
- Interviews are generally easier for respondent, especially if what is sought is opinions or impressions.
- Interviews are time consuming and they are resource intensive.
- The interviewer is considered a part of the measurement instrument and interviewer has to well trained in how to respond to any contingency.

Types of Interviews

- **Informal, conversational interview** - no predetermined questions are asked, in order to remain as open and adaptable as possible to the interviewee's nature and priorities; during the interview the interviewer "goes with the flow".
- **General interview guide approach** - the guide approach is intended to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee.

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- **Standardized, open-ended interview** - the same open-ended questions are asked to all interviewees; this approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared.
- **Closed, fixed-response interview** - where all interviewees are asked the same questions and asked to choose answers from among the same set of alternatives. This format is useful for those not practiced in interviewing.

Telephone Interview

- Telephone interviews enable a researcher to gather information rapidly.
- Like personal interviews, they allow for some personal contact between the interviewer and the respondent.

Disadvantages:

- Some people may not have telephones.
- People often dislike the intrusion of a call to their home.
- Telephone interviews need to be relatively short or people feel imposed upon.
- Many people don't have publicly listed telephone numbers.



Training of the Interviewer

- Since the interviewer can control the quality of the result his/her training becomes crucial.
- It is important to organize in detail and rehearse the interviewing process before beginning the formal study.

Points for Interviewer Training

- **Describe the entire study** - interviewers need to know more than simply how to conduct the interview itself. They should have background of the study and why the study is important.
- **Explain the sampling logic & process** - naïve interviewer may not understand why sampling is so important. They may wonder why you go through all the difficulties of selecting the sample so carefully.

Interviewer Bias

- Interviewer needs to know the many ways that they can inadvertently bias the results.
- Understand why it is important that they not bias the study.
- By slanting the results they might jeopardize the results or purpose of the study.

Preparation for Interview

- Choose a setting with the least distraction.
- Explain the purpose of the interview.
- Address terms of confidentiality.
- Explain the format of the interview.
- Indicate how long the interview usually takes.
- Provide contact information of the interviewer.
- Allow interviewee to clarify any doubts about the interview.
- Prepare a method for recording data, e.g., *take notes*.

Qualification Criteria for the Interviewer

- Knowledgeable - being familiar with the topic.
- Structuring - outline the procedure of the interview.
- Clear - simple, easy and short questions which are spoken distinctly and understandably.
- Gentle - being tolerant, sensitive and patient to provocative and unconventional opinions.
- Steering - to control the course of the interview to avoid digressions from the topic.
- Critical - to test the reliability and validity of what the interviewee tells.
- Remembering - retaining the subject information from the interviewee.
- Interpreting - provide interpretation of what is said by the interviewee.

Types of Topics in Questions

- Behaviors - what a person has done or is doing.
- Opinions/values - what a person thinks about the topic.
- Feelings - what a person feels rather than what a person thinks.
- Knowledge - to get facts about the topic.
- Sensory - what people have seen, touched, heard, tasted or smelled.
- Background/demographics - standard background questions, such as age, education, etc.

Sequence of Questions

- Get the respondents involved in the interview as soon as possible.
- Before asking about controversial matters, first ask about some facts.
- Intersperse fact-based questions throughout the interview.
- Ask questions about the present before questions about the past or future.
- The last questions might be to allow respondents to provide any other information they prefer to add and their impressions of the interview.

Stages of Interview Investigation

- Thematizing - the *why* and *what* of the investigation.
- Designing - plan the design of the study.
- Interviewing - conduct the interview based on a guide.
- Transcribing - prepare the interview material for analysis.
- Analyzing - decide on the purpose, the topic, the nature and methods of analysis that are appropriate.
- Verifying - ascertain the validity of the interview findings.
- Reporting - communicate findings of the study based on scientific criteria.

Procedure of the Interview

- Occasionally verify the tape recorder (*if used*) is working.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Attempt to remain as neutral as possible.
- Encourage responses.
- Be careful about the appearance when note taking.
- Provide transition between major topics.
- Don't lose control of the interview.

After the Interview

- Verify if the tape recorder, if used, worked throughout the interview.
- Make any notes on your written notes.
- Write down any observations made during the interview.

Convergent Interviewing as Action Research

- Each pair of interview, including the review session immediately following them, constitutes an action research cycle. The review sessions interpret the data emerging from the interviews.
- During the review session you also plan the questions which will give a better understanding of the situation.
- The process and the sampling are checked. They can be modified in the following attempt.

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**There are two types of overlap in the themes
and two corresponding types of probes:**

- Agreements which were listed by seeking exceptions
- Disagreements for which explanation are sought.

- You challenge the interpretations arising from early interviews.
- Ask more specific questions, pursuing deeper understanding as you follow up the explanations and disagreements.
- By seeking exceptions, you allow disconfirmation of your data and interpretations. The disagreements guide you into the pool of potentially available data.
- Probes become more specific, each interview begins with a very open-ended question.
- Each informant is given a chance to contribute data uncontaminated by your interpretations.

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