

# Qualitative Research

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## What is it?

- Qualitative research is a field of inquiry applicable to many disciplines and subject matters. Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior.
- The qualitative method investigates the why and how of decision making, not just what, where, when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed, rather than large random samples.

## History 1

- Qualitative research was one of the first forms of social studies, but in the 1950s and 1960s - as quantitative (not qualitative) science reached its peak of popularity (The Quantitative Revolution)- it was diminished in importance and began to regain recognition only in the 1970s.
- The phrase 'qualitative research' was until the 1970s used only to refer to a discipline of anthropology or sociology, and terms like ethnography, fieldwork, participant observation and Chicago School sociology were used instead.

## History 2

- During the 1970s and 1980s qualitative research began to be used in other disciplines, and became a significant type of research in the fields of education studies, social work studies, women's studies, disability studies, information studies, management studies, nursing service studies, human service studies, psychology, communication studies, and other.

## Distinctions from quantitative research

QR is random but purposive in design. In other words, cases can be selected according to whether they typify, or not, certain characteristics or contextual locations.

## Distinctions from quantitative research

Secondly, the role or position of the researcher is given greater critical attention. This is because in qualitative research the possibility of the researcher taking a 'neutral' or transcendental position is seen as more problematic in practical and/or philosophical terms. Hence qualitative researchers are often exhorted to reflect on their role in the research process and make this clear in the analysis.

## Distinctions from quantitative research

- Thirdly, while qualitative data analysis can take a wide variety of forms it tends to differ from quantitative research in the focus on language, signs and meaning as well as approaches to analysis that are holistic and contextual, rather than reductionist and isolationist.

### Distinctions from quantitative research

- Nevertheless, systematic and transparent approaches to analysis are almost always regarded as essential for rigor.
- For example, many qualitative methods require researchers to carefully code data and discern and document themes in a consistent and reliable way.

### Qualitative Methods

- qualitative methods are used for exploratory (i.e., hypothesis-generating) purposes or explaining puzzling quantitative results, while quantitative methods are used to test hypotheses.
- This is because establishing content validity - do measures measure what a researcher thinks they measure? - is seen as one of the strengths of qualitative research.

### Quantitative Methods

- Quantitative methods are seen as providing more representative, reliable and precise measures through focused hypotheses, measurement tools and applied mathematics.
- By contrast, qualitative data is usually difficult to graph or display in mathematical terms.

### Data Collection

- Qualitative researchers may use different approaches in collecting data, such as the grounded theory practice, narratology, storytelling, classical ethnography.
- Qualitative methods are also loosely present in other methodological approaches, such as action research or actor-network theory.

## Data Collection

- Forms of the data collected can include interviews and group discussions, observation and reflection field notes, various texts, pictures, and other materials.

## Data Collection

- Qualitative researchers typically rely on the following methods for gathering information:
- Participant Observation, Non-participant Observation, Field Notes, Reflexive Journals, Structured Interview, Unstructured Interview, Analysis of Documents and Materials.

## Data analysis

- Interpretive techniques:
- The most common analysis of qualitative data is observer impression. That is, expert or layman observers examine the data, interpret it via forming an impression and report their impression in a structured and sometimes quantitative form.

## Data analysis

- Coding is an interpretive technique that both organizes the data and provides a means to introduce the interpretations of it into certain quantitative methods. Most coding requires the analyst to read the data and demarcate segments within it. Each segment is labeled with a “code” – usually a word or short phrase that suggests how the associated data segments inform the research objectives.

## Data analysis

- When coding is complete, the analyst prepares reports via a mix of: summarizing the prevalence of codes, discussing similarities and differences in related codes across distinct original sources/contexts, or comparing the relationship between one or more codes.

## Data analysis

- A frequent criticism of coding method is that it seeks to transform qualitative data into quantitative data, thereby draining the data of its variety, richness, and individual character.
- Data Analysts respond to this criticism by thoroughly expositing their definitions of codes and linking those codes soundly to the underlying data, therein bringing back some of the richness that might be absent from a mere list of codes.

## Validation

- One of the central issues in qualitative research is validity (also known as credibility and/or dependability).
- There are many different ways of establishing validity, including: member check, interviewer corroboration, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, negative case analysis, auditability, confirmability, bracketing, and balance.

## Examples

Falkenstroem, F., Grant, J., Broberg, J., & Sandell, R. (2007). Self-analysis and post-termination improvement after psychoanalysis and long-term psychotherapy. *J Am Psychoanal Ass*, 55(2), 629-674.

Frommer, J., & Rennie, D. L. (Eds.). (2001). *Qualitative psychotherapy research. Methods and methodology*. Lengerich: Pabst.

## Examples

Wilke, S. (1999). Qualitative analysis of therapist process notes. In H. Kächele, E. Mergenthaler & R. Krause (Eds.), *Psychoanalytic Process Research Strategies II*. Ulm: [www.horstkaechele.de](http://www.horstkaechele.de)

Streeck, U. (1999). The interactive production of resistance. In H. Kächele, E. Mergenthaler & R. Krause (Eds.), *Psychoanalytic Process Research Strategies II*. Ulm: [www.horstkaechele.de](http://www.horstkaechele.de).

## Henseler's Suicidal Types

### Three Types

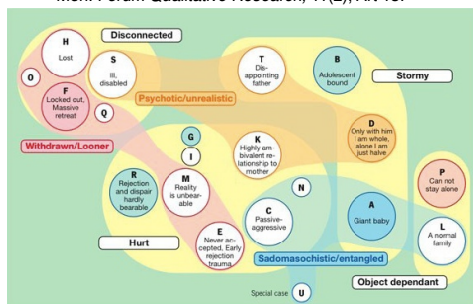
A phallic-narcissitic: mean age: 35y

B anal-narcissitic: mean age: 25y

C oral-narcissitic: mean age 18y

Henseler, H. (1974). *Narzisstische Krisen. Zur Psychodynamik des Selbstmords*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.

Lindner, R., & Briggs, S. (2010). Forming Ideal Types by Understanding: The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Suicidal Men. *Forum Qualitative Research*, 11(2), Art 13.



Replication Study

## Bibliography

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- Kvale S (1986) *Psychoanalytic therapy as qualitative research*. In: Ashworth PD (Ed.) *Qualitative research in psychology*. Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh
- Stiles WB (1993) Quality control in qualitative research. *Clinical Psychology Review* 13: 593-618
- Wachholz S, Stühr U (1999) The concept of ideal types in psychoanalytic follow up research. *Psychother Res* 9: 327-341