Research Education Series:  
Module 6  

“The Basics of Qualitative Research:  
Strategies and Benefits”  

Kyla Pongratz, OT, (Ont.), PPL  

Michelle Hedges, OT (Ont.)  

In collaboration with the department of  
Inter-Professional Research, Knowledge Translation, and Academic Development  
Vytas P. Velyvis, Director, Research
Research

• Exploratory in nature
• Helps move practice forward
• Challenge the unknown
Types of Research

- Experimental (usually quantitative): refers to when the researcher manipulates and controls one or more variables and observes effect on other variables.

- Non-experimental (usually qualitative): investigations that are generally more descriptive or exploratory and do not exhibit control over the studied variables.

- Mixed Methods: combination of both experimental and non-experimental.
## Qualitative Versus Quantitative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong></td>
<td>To understand</td>
<td>To predict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
<td>Rich “thick” descriptions, process &amp; context driven</td>
<td>Outcome oriented, controlled &amp; experimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methods</strong></td>
<td>Observation, focus groups, interviews</td>
<td>Experiment, survey, questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td>What is X?</td>
<td>How many Xs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning</strong></td>
<td>Inductive</td>
<td>Deductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sampling Method</strong></td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>Statistical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1
Qualitative Research
"All research ultimately has a qualitative grounding"
- Donald Campbell
Qualitative Research

• “An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human program.” (Creswell, 1998)

• “Aim to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them, and they use a holistic perspective which preserves the complexities of human behaviour.” (Greenhalgh, 1997)
Why Qualitative Research?

• Understanding meanings, experiences, phenomena and social processes as they evolve.

• Explore, interpret or gain a deeper understanding of clinical issues
Why Qualitative Research?

- Better understand phenomenon
- Gain new perspectives
- Collect and explore in-depth information
- Provide rich descriptions of complex phenomena
- Explore sensitive topics
- Explore issues of ‘difficult to access’ groups
- Explore culturally defined experiences
- Track unique and unexpected events
- Explore experiences
- Gives voice that is rarely heard
“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”

- Einstein
Writing a Purpose Statement

- Imply or express the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm
- Clearly identify central concept to be explored and the research context
- Specify the fit within the tradition of inquiry
Qualitative Research Question

- Convey general sense of concepts
- Open ended and non-directional
- Central broad question
- Identify who/what/where/how of the study
- Identify target population
Exercise 2
Qualitative Sub-Questions

• Provide reader with some sense of initial breakdown of overall objective
• May turn into initial guidelines for data collection
• May or may not be required
“The design emerges as the study unfolds”

- Miles & Huberman, 1994
Theoretical Background
Theoretical Background

• Grounded Theory
• Ethnography
• Phenomenology
• Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Please see Appendix for more information
Methodology
Methodology

SAMPLING

- Purposive
- Convenience
- Snowball
Methodology

Data Collection

- In-Depth Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Participant Observation
- Historical
- Other
Methodology

Enhancing Credibility of Findings

• Quantitative: reliability & validity
• Qualitative: credibility, trustworthiness, authenticity
Methodology

Strategies to Enhance Credibility of Findings

Audibility: Peer debriefing
Data collection: Member checks
Purposeful Sampling: Discrepant data
Procedural rigor: Triangulation
Data Analysis
Data Analysis

General Comments

• Interactive in nature
• Continuous emerging of new ideas
• Develop your own unique style
• Become “Immersed” in your data
Data Analysis

Raw Data $\rightarrow$ Codes $\rightarrow$ Categories $\rightarrow$ Themes
Data Analysis

RAW DATA

• Review all data
• Initial sorting out process
• Make notes of your observations
• Can start some credibility activities
Data Analysis

CODES

- Use initial notes to start code list
- Start defining code book
- Flag good quotes
- Review text within codes
Data Analysis

CATEGORIES

- Grouping of codes by content area
- Natural groupings of codes
Data Analysis

THEMES

• 3-6 max overriding themes

• Key take home messages!
Example

- Caregiving Occupations (THEME)
  - Helping with ADLs (CATEGORY)
    - Helping with toileting (CODE)
    - Helping with feeding (CODE)
    - Helping with getting around (CODE)
Exercise 4
Data Analysis

Higher Level Analysis

- Are there differences in codes, categories, themes by characteristics of sample?

- Examples
  - Urban/rural
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Undergrad program
Interpretation

• What lessons were learned?
• What do we do with this information?
• Will it change our practice?
• Will it change policies?
• What about future research?
• What are our next steps?
Questions???
References


