



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Research Methods Workshop

(Workshop / Session 8)

Collecting Primary Data through Qualitative Interviews

Trawsnewid Addysg; Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education; Transforming Lives



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This session's **Aims**

- classify research interviews
- be aware of situations favouring the use of particular types of research interview
- consider the development of your competence to prepare and undertake semi-structured and in-depth research interviews
- identify potential data quality issues related to the use of research interviews and evaluate how to overcome these

Qualitative Interviews

- Collection of non-numerical data (spoken or written words)
- A purposeful conversation between two or more people
- Can vary in terms of the settings – face-to-face, telephone, internet-mediated
- Can vary in terms of the number of people involved – one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many



Levels of Standardisation / Structure

- Structured interviews – pre-determined set of precise and short closed-ended questions, following a standardised schedule
- Semi-structured interviews – pre-determined list of themes and open-ended key questions, following a flexible schedule depending on the flow of the conversation
- In-depth interviews – pre-determined topic, but no list of themes or questions, non-directive (let the interview lead), aim to find out which themes derive from the interview



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When to use semi-structured and in-dept interviews?

- When it is necessary to understand the reasons behind specific behaviour, and the attitudes and opinions of your participants, as well as to get detailed explanations and discussions.
- When it is important to create trust (sensible topics) and to have a certain degree of control (e.g. need to ask for qualification).
- When it is necessary to ask complex, open-end questions in a varying logic and order (linked to interpretivism).



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Careful Preparation is Key!

- Your level of knowledge - e.g. about the research topic, the literature, the company, the industry, the cultural context
- Supply of information – provide the participant with the list of themes and key questions BEFORE the interview
- Appropriateness of the interview location – interviewee should feel comfortable, disruption should be minimized, location should be neutral

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Appropriateness of your Appearance



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Nature of your Comment to open the Interview

The first few minutes have a huge impact!

- Start some small talk, show interest in the person
- You could ask about his/her position in the company
- Be friendly and relaxed; but do not overstate things
- Introduce your research
- Explain how data will be used
- Highlight data protection and anonymity
- Gain consent (consent form!)

Approach to Questioning

- Questions need to be phrased clearly and asked in a neutral tone
- Use open-end questions to start a theme, follow up with probing questions (to further explore the topic)
- Do not use leading and double-barrel questions
- Do not use jargon
- Do not use theoretical definition and concepts (if you have to, explain them at the beginning)
- Leave sensitive questions until the end

Prompting

You can prompt further answers without asking a question by using

- Follow-up expressions, such as 'Ah', 'Oh'
- Follow-up statements, such as 'That's interesting!'
- Follow-up encouragements, such as 'Please tell me more!'
- Silence

Impact of your Behaviour during the Interview

- Avoid comments and non-verbal behaviour, such as gestures and facial expressions, which indicate a bias in your thinking
- Look neutral, but not bored
- Avoid folded arms
- Listen, rather than speak
- Hold back your own thoughts
- Give the interviewee time to think
- Summarise their answers in your own words to confirm your understanding

Recording of Information

- Where possible audio-record the interview (ask for permission first!)
- Take notes in addition to the audio-record
- Write down contextual data, such as the location, date / time, background information (e.g. role in the company, gender), your immediate impression

CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS DURING COVID19

Microsoft Teams

- It is possible to invite externals to Microsoft Teams
- It is possible to record meetings in Microsoft Teams
- It is possible to create a transcript of recorded meetings in Microsoft Teams
- However, the meeting links have to be created by your supervisor (contact them early to discuss the timing!)

Final Points to Highlight

- Data quality issues have to be highlighted
 - Interviewee bias – answers are always subjective, socially-constructed opinions
 - Interviewer bias – your interpretation is always socially-constructed, too
 - Generalizability depends on the sampling approach – often NOT generalisable
- Proper time management is needed – access needs to be negotiated, interviews need to be scheduled, interviews can easily take an hour or longer

Research Activity

Have a look at page 491 of Saunders et al. (2019). Follow the different steps and answer the questions. Write down your justification (if you do not plan to collect qualitative data, discuss why you decided to not use qualitative data).

In addition, IF you want to conduct qualitative interviews for your dissertation, develop your interview guide (list of questions you want to ask your interview partners) and discuss it with your tutor!