

# Qualitative Counselling

# What is Qualitative Research?



# What is qualitative research?

- In contrast to quantitative data, qualitative data **does not simply count things**, but is a way of recording people's **attitudes, feelings and behaviours** in greater depth.

# What is qualitative research?

- Looks further than precise numerical evidence

# What is qualitative research?

- Collection and analysis of **non-numerical** information via formal research methods e.g. range of **individual perspectives**  
**common group perspectives**
- Researcher perspective

# Qualitative Research

- *‘Qualitative Research...involves finding out what people think, and how they feel - or at any rate, what they say they think and how they say they feel. This kind of information is subjective. It involves feelings and impressions, rather than numbers’*
- Bellenger, Bernhardt and Goldstucker, Qualitative Research in Marketing, American Marketing Association

# Why do we need qualitative?



# Why qualitative?

- MEANING
- Experiences
- Situations
- Exploration - generation and clarification
- Interpretation - what does this mean?
- Explanation - of complex processes

# Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research is based on a more phenomenological [understanding the **meaning** of events] position
- The individual and the world co-constructed

# How do Qualitative Researchers Collect Data?



# Examples of Qualitative Methods

- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Observation
- Diaries, journals, etc

# STRENGTHS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- Some things cannot be answered numerically
- Qualitative research is more holistic

# Strengths of Qualitative Research?



# Advantages of Qualitative Research

- Enables more **complex aspects of experience** to be studied

# QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- **Fewer restrictions or assumptions** are placed on the data to be collected.

# QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

- For example, if I measure depression by asking ten **1-10 scale questions**, I can only collect data on these ten things I'm asking about

# Rather.....

- What is it like to feel depressed?

# Advantages of Qualitative Research

- **Not everything can be quantified,** or quantified easily, and an advantage of qualitative research is that it can investigate these things (for example, individual experiences)

# Advantages of Qualitative Research

- The participants are able to provide data in their **own words and often in their own time**

# Advantages of Qualitative Research

- Individuals can be studied in more depth
- Because **fewer assumptions** are placed on the thing being studied it is great for exploratory research

# Challenges?



# Challenges of Qualitative Research

- Qualitative research can be seen as having more potential for **researcher bias**
- Is very time and labour intensive

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- Can be more difficult to determine **reliability** of linguistic data

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- Can be harder to determine the **influence of the researcher** (e.g., through researcher bias). That is, there is **more subjectivity** involved in analysing the data

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- Note, **data is not necessarily less valid or reliable**, just that it's harder to know this (with quantitative data, you can do validity tests, confirmatory analyses, etc)

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- “Data overload” – open-ended questions can sometimes create **lots** of data, which can take a long time to analyse!

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- Transcription of recorded interviews can often take a lot of time and/or money

## Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- **Usually fewer people studied:** collection of qualitative data is generally more time consuming than quantitative data collection and therefore unless time, staff and budget allows it is generally necessary to include a smaller sample size.

# Disadvantages of Qualitative Research

- **Less easy to generalise:** because fewer people are generally studied it is not possible to generalise results to that of the population. Usually exact numbers are reported rather than percentages

## DIRECTED READING

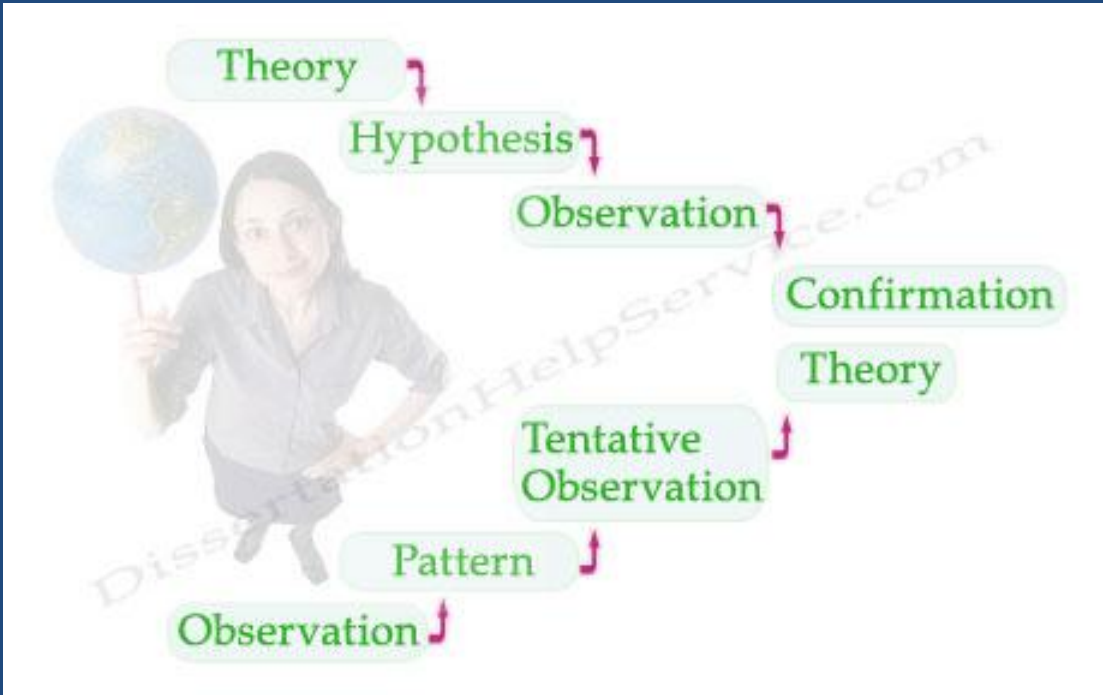
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- Maxwell, J. 2005. *Qualitative research design*. London: Sage.
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*qualitative or quantitative analysis  
depends on several things:*

- The subject of study
- Researcher's preferred philosophical approach.
- Researcher's skills and abilities with methods of data collection and analysis.
- The topic or issue interested in
- The research question



Figure: Deductive Vs. Inductive Approach (Trochim 2011)



# Quantitative v Qualitative

- As we have seen, qualitative and quantitative research have several advantages and disadvantages, depending upon the researcher's aim and area of focus.

# Quantitative v Qualitative

- Lot depends upon the comfort zone of the researcher

# Quantitative v Qualitative

- Check out quantitative and qualitative research papers in journals on line
- CPJ

# Quantitative v Qualitative

- Complement each other – mixed methods – one can inform the other

# Quantitative v Qualitative

- Neither is inferior or superior
- Different
- Can be complementary
- Mixed methods can provide more comprehensive answers

There are many ways in which qualitative and quantitative data and analysis can be combined

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- You may be interested in doing an analysis that is **primarily quantitative**, looking at social trends, or policy implications. However you also want to introduce a '**human touch**' by conducting one or several **interviews** asking what these trends mean to people or **how particular individuals experience** events.

# Quantitative v Qualitative

- There is **room** for both **quantitative** and **qualitative** approaches in **counselling** and psychology **research**
- Neither is superior, both have strengths and challenges

# REFLECTION

I like quantitative research because.....

I like qualitative research because.....