An introduction to qualitative data analysis

Thematic analysis

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Learning outcomes

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

• identify the main principles and assumptions of qualitative research
• recognise the key features of inductive thematic analysis
• apply the basic principles of thematic analysis to a set of qualitative data.

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What are the challenges of qualitative data analysis?

- Spend a few moments thinking about what you find most challenging about the prospect of having to analyse qualitative (rather than quantitative) data.
- Discuss your thoughts with the person next to you.
Qualitative research...

• aims for **specificity** rather than generalisability and replicability
• is part of an **iterative** - not a linear - process
• acknowledges the **active role** of the researcher
• **embraces** subjectivity
• is often (but not always) **inductive** rather than deductive.
What is thematic analysis?

• “Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this and interprets various aspects of the research topic.”

(Boyatzis, 1998; cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006.)
How to do inductive thematic analysis

A step-by-step guide
An iterative approach to analysis

Stage 1: Preparing
- Immersing yourself in the data / making decisions
- Engaging with the literature
- Developing initial codes
- Searching for themes

Stage 2: Organising
- Reviewing, defining and naming themes

Stage 3: Reporting

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What is a code?

“Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to ‘the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be accessed in a meaningful way...’.”

(Boyatzis, 1998; cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88.)
What counts as a theme?

“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.”

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82)
Questionnaire data analysis

By participant or by question?

As ever, this depends on factors such as:

• the size of your data set overall
• how many questions you have
• how many participants you have
• whether you have collected the data manually or electronically (e.g. via Survey Monkey)
Practical activity

Developing themes from codes
Task

Developing themes from codes

• Working in groups of four, you are going to develop themes for the responses to Question 2 in the practice material (Part 2). This data has already been coded for you.

• Use the example given for the Question 1 data (exemplar material – Part 1) as a guide for how you might develop and represent your themes.

• Flipchart paper, markers, highlighters and Post-It notes are all available!
Task outcomes

Developing themes from codes

- By the end of this session, you should have at least developed some initial themes and sub-themes for the given codes (equivalent to “Stage 2 – Part (ii) Searching for themes” on the step-by-step guide).

- Some groups may progress beyond this to Stage 2 (iii) or (iv)....

- You may present your themes in tables, spider diagrams or in any other way which helps to visually represent your process of analysis.
References


Thank you

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