

## Qualitative research

- One of the strengths of qualitative research is its ability to explain processes & patterns of human behavior that can be difficult to quantify.
- Phenomena such as experiences, attitudes, and behaviors can be difficult to accurately capture quantitatively, whereas a qualitative approach allows participants themselves to explain how, why, or what they were thinking, feeling, and experiencing at a certain time or during an event of interest.
- Quantifying qualitative data certainly is possible, but at its core, qualitative data is looking for themes & patterns.
- Qualitative research can help expand and deepen understanding of data or results obtained from quantitative analysis.
- For example, say a quantitative analysis has determined that there is a correlation between length of stay and level of patient satisfaction, but why does this correlation exist?
- This scenario shows one way in which qualitative and quantitative research could be integrated together.

### Qualitative Research questions (Example 1)

- Research objective: to explore views of (potential participants) on COVID-19 vaccines in Jordan.
- Research questions:
  - (1) What are the major barriers and facilitators for vaccine uptake?
  - (2) Has having a vaccine (one or two doses) changed the extent to which people are adhering to COVID-19 measures (non-pharmaceutical interventions)?

### Qualitative Research questions (Example 2)

- Research objective: to explore the factors underlying willingness to receive and barriers to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Research questions (To achieve the objective of the study):
  - (1) For those who receive the vaccine, what was their experience of receiving the vaccine, and what motivated them to receive the vaccine?
  - (2) From the perspective of participants who have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, what barriers limit/hinder them from receiving the vaccine?
  - (3) From the perspective of both those who received and have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, what can the governments do to increase the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine?

### Interview questions (Example)

1. Have you received the COVID-19 vaccine? If yes, please tell us about your experience.
2. If you have received the COVID-19 vaccine, please tell us what motivated you to receive it.
3. If you have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, in your own words, discuss what factors can determine your willingness to receive the vaccine.
4. If you have not received the COVID-19 vaccine, apart from the factors that determine your willingness to receive the vaccine, describe what barriers potentially limit you from receiving the vaccine.
5. How do you think governments can encourage the general public to receive the COVID-19

vaccine? Please, provide an elaborate response.

6. Is there anything else on your willingness to receive and barriers to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine that you would like to discuss? If yes, please discuss it extensively.

### Qualitative Data Collection Methods:

1) Interviews 2) Focus Groups 3) Observation.

### Interviews:

• **Interviewing:** a conversation with a purpose. Specifically, the purpose is to gather information.

• The interviewer asks questions and the interviewee, called the **informant**, the **respondent**, or sometimes the **subject**, provides the answers.

• **Interview method** is the art of questioning and interpreting the answers

• **Advantages:**

☒ Use of open-ended questions gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than forcing them to choose from fixed responses.

☒ They allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses - that is, to ask why or how. Thus aid in further elaboration on their answers.

• Interviews can take place in an individual (one to one) or a group setting (focus group).

• **Types of individual interviews:**

☒ **Structured** (formal, standardized).

☒ **Unstructured** (informal, non standardized).

☒ **Guided Semistructured** (focused, semistandardized).

• The major difference among these different interview structures is their degree of rigidity with regard to presentational structure

### 1) Structured (standardized) interviews:

• Structured interviews (standardized).

- The interviewer asks interviewees a series of pre-established questions.

• The structured (standardized interview) uses a formally structured "schedule" of interview questions, or script. The interviewers are required to ask subjects to respond to each question, exactly as worded.

• The rationale here is to offer each subject approximately the same stimulus so that responses to questions, ideally, will be comparable.

- The questions would be asked in the same order for all respondents.

- Structured interviews are rigid as the interviewer reads from a script and deviates from it as little as possible.

- Since researchers take a very active role in question design, there is a possibility that they inadvertently or overtly bias data collected.

- Highly standardized procedures are designed to substantially reduce the probability of the results being influenced by the interviewer's bias.

• Standardized interviews are useful when the data to be gathered concerns tangible information such as recent events or relatively simple matters of opinion.

• They are also a preferred method when multiple interviewers or teams are to conduct

## comparable interviews in different settings.

- Keeping each interview on the same track makes it possible to aggregate the data despite differences among the interviewers or the subjects.
- In sum, standardized interviews are designed to elicit information using a set of predetermined questions that are expected to elicit the subjects' thoughts, opinions, and attitudes about study-related issues.
- A standardized interview may be thought of as a kind of survey interview.
- Standardized interviews measures tangible facts, without further probing questions about informants' thoughts or interpretations.
- Standardized interviews are frequently used on very large research projects in which multiple interviewers collect the same data from informants from the same sample pool.
- This format is also useful for longitudinal studies in which the researcher wishes to measure, as closely as possible, exactly the same data at multiple points in time.

8A typical standardized interview schedule might look like this job history:

1. At what age did you get your first full-time job?
2. What was the job?
3. How long did you work there?
4. Did you have another job offer at the time that you left this job?
5. What was your next full-time job?
6. How long did you hold that job?
7. How many times, if ever, have you quit a job?
8. How many times, if ever, have you been laid off?
9. How many times, if ever, have you been fired from a job?

Example of interview guide (schedule):

- What do you think is the most effective way of assessing a child's pain?
- Have you come across any issues that make it difficult to assess a child's pain?
- What pain-relieving interventions do you find most useful and why?
- When managing pain in children what is your overall aim?
- Whose responsibility is pain management?
- What involvement do you think parents should have in their child's pain management?
- What involvement do children have in their pain management?
- Is there anything that currently stops you managing pain as well as you would like?
- What would help you manage pain better?

## 2) Unstructured (unstandardized) interviews:

- More flexible, do not use predefined questions.

- Synonyms: Informal conversational interview, and ethnographic interview.

- Rely entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction (Patton, 2002).

- Can be considered as a natural extension of participant observation, because they so often occur as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork.

- It is accepted that the structure of the interview can be loosely guided by a list of questions, called an aide memoire or agenda.

- Aide memoire or agenda: a broad guide to topic issues that might be covered in the

interview, rather than the actual questions to be asked.

- Unlike interview guides used in structured interviewing, an aide memoire or agenda doesn't determine the order of the conversation and is subject to revision based on the responses of the interviewees.

- **Note-taking** is a traditional method for capturing interview data. But in an unstructured interview, note-taking is likely to disrupt the natural flow of the conversation. Thus, when possible, it is preferable to **audio record** the interviews by tape or digital recorder.

• No specific questions need to be scripted. As much as possible, the interviewer encourages the informant to lead the conversation. In place of an "interview schedule," researchers prepare a looser set of topics or issues that one plans on discussing, possibly with a preferred order in which to address them.

• These "**interview guidelines**" serve as **notes**, or possibly a **checklist**, for the interviewer. One way or another, by whatever route you and your informant follow, the guidelines indicate the subject matter that you intend to cover.

• Naturally, unstandardized interviews operate from a different set of assumptions than those of standardized interviews.

• **First**, interviewers begin with the assumption that they do not know in advance what all the necessary questions are. Consequently, they cannot predetermine a complete list of questions to ask.

• They also assume that not all subjects will necessarily find equal meaning in like-worded questions—in short, that subjects may possess different vocabularies.

• Rather than papering over these individual differences, by forcing each interview down the same path, an unstandardized interview encourages and pursues them.

• **The individual responses & reactions are the data that we want.**

• The unstandardized interview process is much more like a regular conversation in which the researcher responds to the informant as much as the other way around.

• Or to think of that differently, **the subject determines the flow of topics, rather than the interviewer.**

• The prepared guidelines keep the conversation heading in the right direction while the details are generated in the verbal exchange itself.

• The interview is therefore like an improvised ارتجالي performance in which the performers have agreed in advance on the underlying themes and purposes, but left the details to be worked out in the moment.

• **Loosely structured interviews** are sometimes used during the course of field research to **augment** field observations.

• For example, Diane Barone (2002) undertook a field study that examined literacy teaching and learning in two kindergarten classes at a school considered to be at risk and inadequate by the state. Barone conducted observations in the classrooms and wrote weekly field notes. In addition, however, she included ongoing informal interviews with the teachers throughout the year long study.

• Such unstructured interviews, or conversations, permit researchers to gain additional information about various phenomena they might observe by asking questions.

• **Unstructured interviews are optimal for dynamic & unpredictable situations, & situations in which the variety of respondents suggests a wide variety of types of response.**

• Consider the following 2 hypothetical answers to the same question.

## Interview 1

- Interviewer: What do you plan to do when this job draws to a close?
- Respondent: Well, I have a few options that I'm looking into, but I might just use the downtime to finish my training certification.

## Interview 2

- Interviewer: What do you plan to do when this job draws to a close?
- Respondent: Why do you need to know that?
- Whereas highly structured interviews assume that the researchers and informants share a system of meaning, researchers undertaking loosely structured interviews typically seek to learn the nature of the informants' meaning system itself.
- Instead of assuming that our questions mean the same thing to all subjects, we explore the meaning that each subject brings to or discovers in the questions.
- The basic framework of questions that you have prepared only serves to open the doors to an entirely different discussion. With an unstructured approach, that can lead to a successful interview of surprising richness.
- And surprises are good, because we then learn about important aspects of our topics that we had not known at the start.
- Of course, not all surprises or forms of improvisation are without risk, which is one reason that IRBs are often quite uncomfortable with unstructured interview approaches.

## Challenges of unstructured interviews:

- Requires a significant amount of time to collect the needed information.
- Especially when the researcher first enters the field and knows little about the setting.
- Because each interview is highly individualized, the length of each unstructured interview session also might be longer than structured interviews.
- The challenge for researchers to exert the right amount and type of control over the direction and pace of the conversation.
- When a new topic emerges in the discussion, it is difficult for the researcher to know whether to follow it and risk losing continuity, or to stay on the major theme and risk missing additional useful information.
- To develop your skills in controlling unstructured interviews, both training and experience are important.
- Analysing the data gathered by unstructured interviews.
- The questions asked in each unstructured interview were dependent on the context of the interview and so can vary dramatically across multiple interviews.
- Different questions will generate different responses so that a great deal of effort has to be made to analyse the data systematically, to find the patterns within it.

## 3) Semi-structured (semi-standardized interviews):

- Semi structured (Semistandardized) interview can be located somewhere between the extremes of the completely standardized and the completely unstandardized interviewing structures.
- This type of interview involves the implementation of a number of predetermined

questions and special topics.

- These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, **but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress**; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared standardized questions.

- **Certain assumptions** underlie this strategy. First, if questions are to be standardized, they must be formulated in words familiar to the people being interviewed (in vocabularies of the subjects).

#### Guidelines Development - Question order (Sequencing), Content, & Style:

- The specific ordering (sequencing), phrasing, level of language, adherence to subject matter, and general style of questions may depend on the backgrounds of the subjects, as well as their education, age, and so forth.

- Additionally, researchers must take into consideration the central aims and focuses of their studies.

- there are no hard-and fast-rules or rigid recipes for sequencing questions in an interview schedule.

- However, as many writers recommend, **it is good to begin with questions that will be fairly easy for the subject to answer**, and which are largely questions that are **not sensitive or threatening.**

- demographic questions are frequently about educational levels, date of birth, place of residence, ethnicity, religious preferences, and the like. Many of these sorts of demographic questions are regularly asked and are likely to receive quick responses with no sense of threat or concern on the part of the interviewee.

- The underlying rationale for this sort of a question sequencing is that **it allows the interviewer and the participant to develop a sense of rapport** before more serious and important questions are asked.

- As well, it fosters a degree of commitment on the part of the interviewee, since he or she will have already invested some time in the interview by answering these easy questions.

- Of course, you do not want to delay getting into the more important material for too long.

- At the least, you risk establishing a pattern of short questions and short answers that may discourage deeper responses when you need them. At worst, informants may feel ambushed or coerced when you finally get past the easy part and spring some more threatening questions on them.

- But even where the most important questions are not threatening at all, you might have established an undesirable pattern if you had begun with a series of short, irrelevant questions.

- For this reason, it might be best to begin with simple questions that are very much part of the research itself, & not waste your opening on minor details that you already know or don't need

- The following suggests a general sequencing of types or categories of questions for a semi standardized interview:

1. **Start** with a few **easy**, non-threatening questions.

2. Next, begin with some of the **more important** questions for the study topic (preferably not the most sensitive questions)—the questions should stick to a single concept or topic.

3. **More sensitive** questions can follow (those related to the initiated topic).
4. Ask **validating** questions (questions restating important or sensitive questions, worded differently than previously asked).
5. Begin the next important topic or **conceptual area of questions** (these may include the more or most sensitive questions).
6. **Repeat** steps 3 and 4, and so on, through your major topics.
7. **Return** to any key concepts that you might have had to bypass or skim through when they first came up.
8. End by **filling in any remaining** simple factual points that you have not already recorded
  - It is also important to note that *each time you change from one topical area to another, you should use some sort of a transition.*
  - This may be a clear statement of what is coming next, such as: “Okay, now what I’d like to do is ask some questions about how you spend your leisure time.” Or, “The next series of questions will consider how your family feels about voting.”
  - The logic here is to assure that the interviewee is aware of what specific area he or she should be thinking about when answering questions, & to signal an end to the previous topic even when the informant might have more to say.
  - Such transitions allow the interviewer to lead the direction of the conversation without taking too much initiative away from the informant.
  - In order to draw out the most complete story about various subjects or situations under investigation, 4 types or styles of questions possibly written into the interview instrument:
    1. **Essential** questions.
    2. **Extra** questions.
    3. **Throwaway** questions.
    4. **Probing** questions.

#### 1) Essential Questions:

- exclusively **concern the central focus of the study.**
- They may be placed together or scattered throughout the survey, but they are geared toward eliciting specific desired information.

#### 2) Extra Questions:

- Extra questions are those questions roughly equivalent to certain essential ones but worded slightly differently.
- These are included in order **to check on the reliability of responses** (through examination of consistency in response sets) or to measure the possible influence a change of wording might have.
- For example, having earlier asked an informant something general, such as, “How well do you get along with members of your family,” you might want to return to the subject by asking, “Are there people in your family who you particularly look forward to seeing, or seriously dread seeing?.”

#### 3) Throwaway Questions:

- Frequently, you find throwaway questions toward the beginning of an interview guideline instrument.

- Throwaway questions may be demographic questions or general questions used to develop rapport between interviewers & subjects.
  - You may also find certain throwaway questions sprinkled throughout a survey to set the interviewing pace or to allow a change in focus in the interview.
  - Throwaway questions, as the term implies, are incidental or unnecessary for gathering the important information being examined in the study.
- Nonetheless, these throwaway questions may be invaluable for drawing out a complete story from a respondent.
- On occasion, throwaway questions may serve the additional purpose of cooling out the subject.
  - On these occasions, a throwaway question (or a series of them) may be tossed into an interview whenever subjects indicate to the interviewers that a sensitive area has been entered upon.
  - The interviewer offhandedly says something to the effect of, "Oh, by the way, before we go any further, I forgot to ask you.." By changing the line of questions, even for only a few moments, the interviewer moves away from the sensitive area and gives the interviewee a moment to cool down.
  - This change in focus from sensitive issues to simple facts may also help to remind your informants that your goal is to collect information, not challenge, judge, or argue with them. (Of course, as the interviewer you also need to remember that, and avoid reacting emotionally to statements with which you disagree.)
  - Throwaway questions are not the only technique for reacting to emotional tension in an interview, and may not be the best.
  - At times, it is better to address the matter directly. For example, if you perceive that your respondent is getting agitated or defensive with some line of questioning, you might consider saying, "I hope these questions aren't inappropriate," or "I am getting the sense that you're not entirely comfortable with what I'm asking. Is there a different way of thinking about this topic that I haven't considered?"
  - In either case, you acknowledge what appears to be a real emotional response on the part of the respondent and offer them the chance to redirect the conversation, up to a point.
  - Pressuring a respondent to answer questions that they don't want to answer is only likely to get you false or highly edited responses. People aren't going to tell you things that they don't want to tell you. But if you can redirect the flow of conversation onto more comfortable grounds, or work to establish a more trusting rapport, you can often continue to discuss the same topic without such tensions. Again, there is a degree of art to the performance.

#### 4) Probing Questions:

- Probing questions, or simply **probes**, provide interviewers with a way to draw out more complete stories from subjects.
- Probes frequently ask subjects to elaborate on what they have already answered in response to a given question.
- For example, "Could you tell me more about that?" "How long did you have that?" "What happened next?" "Who else has ever said that about you?" or, simply, "How come?"
- For example, if an informant is telling stories about things that happened without much



examination of the meanings of the events, the interviewer can toss in the occasional “how did that work out for you?” or “why not?” to encourage more reflection from the informant.

• Lofland and Lofland (1984, p. 56) wrote the following: In interview[s].. **the emphasis is on obtaining narratives or accounts in the person’s own terms.** You might have a general idea of the kinds of things that will compose the account but still be interested in what the interviewees provide on their own and the terms in which they do it.. If something has been mentioned about which you want to know more, you can ask, “You mentioned \_\_\_\_\_; could you tell me more about that?” For things not mentioned, you might ask, “Did \_\_\_\_\_?” or “Was \_\_\_\_\_ a consequence?”

### **Wording of Questions:**

- In order to acquire information while interviewing, researchers must word questions so that they will provide the necessary data.
- Thus, you must **ask questions in such a manner as to motivate respondents to answer as completely and honestly as possible.**
- As in the saying about computers, “**garbage in, garbage out (GIGO)**,” so it is in interviewing. If the wrong questions are asked, or if questions are asked in a manner that inhibits or prevents a respondent from answering fully, the interview will not be fruitful—garbage will come out.
- We can **think of our questions as invitations** to the informants to speak their minds.
- **We conduct interviews in order to learn what people think, not to tell them what we think.**
- Among the **more common problems** that arise in preparing guidelines or schedules **is the double-barrelled question** (asking a subject to respond simultaneously to two issues in a single question).
- The logical **solution** to the double-barrelled question **is to separate the two issues and ask separate questions.**
- **Keeping questions brief and concise allows clear responses** and more effective analysis of the answers.
- **If you ask a subject about two things at once, he or she will tell you about the **second** of them, losing sight of the first.**

### **Communicating Effectively**- why effective communication is essential in research?

- Perhaps **the most serious problem with asking questions is how to be certain the intentions of the questions have been adequately communicated.**
- Researchers must always be sure they have clearly communicated to the subjects what they want to know.
- The interviewers’ **language must be understandable** to the subject; ideally, interviews must be conducted at the level or language of the respondents.

### **Pre-testing the schedule:**

- Once researchers have developed their instrument and are satisfied with the general wording and sequencing of questions, they must pretest the schedule.

**Ideally, this involves at least two steps:**

- 1) the schedule **should be critically examined** by people familiar with the study’s subject matter— technical experts, other researchers, or persons fitting the type to be studied.

- This first step facilitates the identification of poorly worded questions, questions with offensive or emotion-laden wording, or questions revealing the researchers' own biases and personal values.

2) **several practice interviews** to assess how effectively the interview will work and whether you will obtain the information you seek.

- You should record & transcribe the practice interviews and compare the transcripts to the interview guidelines.
- Make note of any point at which you had to clarify or repeat a question; you may want to modify the wording.
- At what points, if any, did your subjects become reticent, angry, defensive, or otherwise upset?
- Those sections might need to be moved, reworded, regrouped, or more carefully introduced.
- There might be follow-up questions that you found useful in more than one interview. They should probably be added to the guidelines.
- In general, look for evidence that your research subjects were more or less motivated, more or less likely to go off topic, or likely to give very short answers.
- Most importantly, look for signs that your questions had a different meaning to your subjects than that which you intended.
- Finally, you should code the practice interviews as you would any “real” data and attempt to analyse the patterns of responses.
- Ask yourself whether, if you had more data like this, you would know how to answer your research question.
- **A careful pretest of the instrument**, although time consuming in itself, usually **saves enormous time and cost in the long run.**

• The following questions may guide assessment of interview schedule:

1. Has the researcher included all of the questions necessary?
2. Do the questions elicit the types of response that were anticipated?
3. Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents?
4. Are there other problems with the questions, such as double meaning or multiple issues embedded in a single question?
5. Are the questions in logical order?
6. Finally, does the interview guide, as developed, help to motivate respondents to participate in the study?

### **Telephone Interviews:**

- Telephone interviews **lack face-to-face nonverbal cues** that researchers use to pace their interviews and to determine the direction to move in.
- Yet, researchers have found that, under certain circumstances, telephone interviews may provide not only an effective means for gathering data but also in some instances—owing to geographic locations— **the most viable method for gathering data.**
- In fact, **the primary reason that one might conduct a qualitative telephone interview is to reach a sample population that is in geographically diverse locations.**
- For example, if an investigator is interested in studying how nursing home directors define

elder abuse, he or she might consider conducting in-person interviews with some sample of nursing home directors.

- However, given that nursing home facilities may be at some distance from one another, or that such research can include facilities throughout the country, conducting interviews by telephone may be a logical resolution.

- Qualitative telephone interviews are likely to be best when the researcher has fairly specific questions in mind (a formal or semi-structured interview schedule).

- Telephone interviews are also quite productive when they are conducted among people with whom the researcher has already conducted face-to-face interviews or with whom he or she may have developed a rapport during fieldwork.

- There are several important, necessary steps to accomplish a qualitative telephone interview:

- 1) the researcher must: A) **establish legitimacy**; B) **convince** the subject that it is important for the subject to take part in the research; C) **ensure** that the information obtained is sufficiently detailed to contribute meaningfully to the study.

- This first step can be accomplished in several ways.

- For example, the interviewer might **mail** a letter to the prospective subject explaining the nature of the research and that the subject will be called to set an appointment for the actual interview.

- The letter should be on **official letterhead** and may contain supportive documentation (letters of support from relevant or significant people in the community, newspaper stories about the researcher or the study, etc.).

- 2) The second step will arise when the investigator initially contacts potential subjects and attempts to convince them to take part. This call will actually accomplish several things.

- It will allow the subjects to ask questions and raise any concerns they might have about the study or their participation.

- It will also provide an opportunity for the investigator to gain some sense of the individual and to begin developing a kind of relationship and rapport as well as an opportunity to convince the individual to participate in the study if the individual is resistant.

- **These calls should be made during normal working hours**, and researchers should break the ice by introducing themselves and ascertaining whether the individual has received the letter and accompanying materials.

- **Calls can be made approximately 1 week to 10 days following the mailing** of the letters of introduction; **less if the letter of introduction was e-mailed**.

- After the initial introduction, the researcher might ask if the individual has any questions.

- Next, using a polite and friendly but firm affirmative statement, the researcher should ask, "When would it be convenient for me to call you back to conduct the interview?"

- Recognize that not all subjects will immediately agree to take part, and the researcher may need to do a little convincing.

- This may offer the additional benefit of forging a rapport with the subject.

- Advantages of telephone interviews:

- (a) **enhanced accessibility to hard-to-reach populations** such as those who are elderly, infirm, live in geographically remote locations, and for those who must participate surreptitiously, for example, women experiencing abuse.

- (b) telephone interviews may **encompass a large geographic area** including countries and

continents

(c) they are **less costly** in terms of time and labor and are therefore more efficient

• Disadvantages include the following:

(a) **Recruitment may be compromised if** prospective participants must pay long distance telephone **charges to enroll** or find out more information about a study.

(b) **recruitment may be compromised if only** participants who have **access** to a telephone or telephone coverage may **participate**.

### Email Interviews:

- Researchers face substantial travel costs and time commitments to conduct in person interviews with study participants located in different geographical areas.
- Often the expense of time and money are too substantial and render the study infeasible.
- **A major advantage of the email interview is that it offers a convenient and practical alternative to overcome geographical barriers and financial concerns** that hinder face-to-face interviews.
- Qualitative researchers using email interviews for data collection found that scheduling advantages of the email interview **increases access** to participants **and encourages** greater participation of working adults.
- Email interviews can be conducted with participants all over the world without the additional expenses of travel costs and travel time. Although telephone interviews offer this same advantage, a distinct feature of the email interview is the **ability to conduct asynchronous interviews**.
- Unlike interviews in real time, participants can respond to email interview prompts at their own convenience at a time that is suitable solely to them.
- Email interview exchanges are not limited to the time constraints of a scheduled interview and allow for prolonged engagement with participants to connect & establish relationships.
- The back-and-forth email conversations may extend over a period of weeks or months allowing the researcher to clarify descriptive data, pursue further discovery, and ensure accuracy in describing the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants.
- Participants have time to reflect on their answers before crafting written responses. The iterative exchange and opportunity for reflective, well-formed responses results in more thoughtful, relevant data.
- Email interviews save both time and money in transcription costs. The written responses are easily converted to transcribed data resulting in significant savings over the typical expenditures for transcribing an oral interview.
- **A disadvantage of email interviews for participants is that crafting the written responses is by nature more time consuming than oral interviews.**
- Lack of email access or discomfort with email communication may limit participation.
- Limiting participation to those who have email access and are comfortable with written email communication could result in a sample bias of younger, more technologically savvy, higher educated or higher income participants.
- Finally, data collection methods that rely on technology are subject to the limitations of technology like computer malfunctions. Internet connectivity may be interrupted or slow.
- Cyber security breaches may result in a loss of confidentiality.
- With the potential for cyber security breaches, both the researcher and the interviewee

should take deliberate measures to mitigate the risk.

- Consideration for the impact of a confidentiality breach is one factor in determining the suitability of the email interview.

## The Ten Commandments of Interviewing:

- They nicely summarize the basic rules for conducting a decent interview.
  - **Better interviews will result only from practice & interviewer's self-development.**
1. **Never begin an interview cold.** Remember to spend a few minutes chatting and making small talk with the subject. If you are in the subject's home, use what's there for this chatting. Look around the room & ask about such things as photographs, books, & so forth. The idea here is to set the subject at ease and establish a warm and comfortable rapport.
  2. **Remember your purpose.** You are conducting an interview in order to obtain information. Try to keep the subject on track, and if you are working with an interview schedule, always have a copy of it in front of you—even though you should have your questions memorized.
  3. **Present a natural front.** Even though your questions are memorized, you should be able to ask each one as if it had just popped into your head. Be relaxed, affirmative, & as natural as you can.
  4. **Demonstrate aware hearing.** Be sure to offer the subjects appropriate nonverbal responses. If they describe something funny, smile. If they tell you something sad, don't smile. If they say that something upset them, empathize. Do not present yourself as uninterested or unaware.
  5. **Think about appearance.** Be sure you have dressed appropriately for both the setting and the kind of subject you are working with. Generally, casual business attire is safe. If you are interviewing children, a more casual appearance may be more effective. Remember to think about how you look to other people.
  6. **Interview in a comfortable place.** Be sure that the location of the interview is somewhere the subject feels comfortable. If the subject is fearful about being overheard or being seen, your interview may be over before it ever starts.
  7. **Don't be satisfied with monosyllabic answers.** Be aware when subjects begin giving yes-and-no answers. Answers like these will not offer much information during analysis. When this does occur, be sure to probe for more.
  8. **Be respectful.** Be sure the subject feels that he or she is an integral part of your research and that any answer offered is absolutely wonderful. Often subjects will say things like, "You don't really want to know how I feel about that." Assure them that you really do!
  9. **Practice, practice, and practice some more.** The only way to actually become proficient at interviewing is to interview. Although text books and other manuals can offer guidelines, it is up to you as a researcher to develop your own repertoire of actions. The best way to accomplish this task is to go out and do interviews.
  10. **Be cordial & appreciative.** Remember to thank the subject when you finish and answer any questions he or she might have about the research. Remember, you are always a research emissary. Other researchers may someday want to interview this subject or gain access to the setting you were in. If you mess things up through inappropriate actions, you may close the door for future researchers.

## Quality of Interviews:

- Quality of an interview can be maintained by paying careful attention to the following three principles:

(1) Maintaining the flow of the interviewee's story.

- The flow of the interviewee's story can be inadvertently disrupted by the interviewer, such as by redirecting the narrative or interrupting it, rushing to complete the interviewee's sentences, prematurely terminating a narrative, failing to clarify terms or asking questions the interviewee does not understand.

(2) Maintaining a positive relationship with the interviewee.

- Positive relationships with the interviewee can be maintained by not offering opinions about responses and avoiding non-verbal indications of surprise or shock, as well as not using non-verbal cues such as nodding to indicate approval or a correct answer.

(3) Avoiding interviewer bias.

- The interviewer should not pose leading questions or fail to follow up or omit topics introduced by the interviewee.

### Challenges of interviews:

- Most interviews are recorded and will **need transcribing before analysing**.

This can be extremely time-consuming, with 1 hour of interview requiring 5–6 hours to transcribe.

- The **analysis itself** is also time-consuming, requiring transcriptions to be pored over word-for-word and line-by-line.

- Interviews also present the problem of **bias** the researcher needs to take care to avoid leading questions or providing non-verbal signals that might influence the responses of participants.