

Lecture 6 + 7

Interviews

Interview Method:

The art of questioning and interpreting answers.

Advantages:

- Use of open-ended questions allows participants to respond in their own words, rather than choosing from fixed responses.
- Flexibility to probe (that is, to ask why or how) initial participant responses, aiding in further elaboration.
- Can be conducted individually (one-on-one) or in a group setting (focus group).

Types of Individual Interviews:

1. Structured (Standardized) Interviews:

- Interviewer asks a series of pre-established questions.
- Questions are asked in the same order for all respondents.
- Interviewer follows a script with minimal deviation.
- Active role of researchers in question design may introduce bias.
- Highly standardized procedures aim to reduce interviewer bias.

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 from managing pain as well as you would like?
- What would help you manage pain better?

2. Unstructured (Unstandardized) Interviews:

- More flexible, without predefined questions.

- Synonyms: Informal conversational interview, ethnographic interview.
- Rely on spontaneous generation of questions during interaction (Patton, 2002).
- Often part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork.
- Can be guided loosely by a list of topics (aide memoire or agenda).
- An aide memoire serves as a broad guide, not determining the conversation order.
- Note-taking may disrupt conversation flow; audio recording is preferable.

Challenges:

- Time-consuming to collect needed information, especially in unfamiliar settings.
- Highly individualized interviews can be longer than structured ones.
- Difficulty in exerting control over conversation direction and pace.
- New topics can cause a dilemma: follow and risk losing continuity, or stay on theme and miss useful information.
- Requires training and experience to manage effectively.
- Analyzing varied responses systematically to find patterns is challenging.

Quality of Interviews

Maintaining Quality:

1. Flow of the Interviewee's Story:

- Avoid disrupting narrative by redirecting or interrupting.
- Ensure clarity of terms and questions.

2. Positive Relationship with Interviewee:

- Avoid offering opinions, showing non-verbal reactions, or indicating approval/disapproval.

3. Avoiding Interviewer Bias:

- Do not pose leading questions or omit topics introduced by the interviewee.

Challenges:

- Recording and transcribing interviews is time-consuming.
- Avoiding bias requires careful question formulation and non-verbal behavior.

Probing Question:

"A probing question is designed to encourage deeper thought and more detailed responses."

Focus Groups

Focus Groups (Focus Group Interviews):

- Conducted in a group setting.
- Not recommended for sensitive topics because it can cause discomfort and lack of privacy.
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- Key characteristic is interaction between group members.
- Typically consist of 8-12 people (ideal 4-8), with a moderator focusing the discussion non-directively.

Considerations:

- Smaller groups yield less information.
- Larger groups (more than 10) become crowded, limiting participation.
- Multiple focus groups are needed for comprehensive data collection.

Advantages:

- Convenient.
- Time and cost-effective.
- Less researcher bias due to a less active role of the moderator.

Role of Moderator:

"The moderator guides the discussion, ensures all participants contribute, and keeps the conversation focused without directing it."

Sample Studies:

- "Surgeons' aims and pain assessment strategies when managing paediatric post-operative pain: A qualitative study" (Interview study).
- "I couldn't even talk to the patient": barriers to communicating with cancer patients as perceived by nursing students (Focus group study).

Observation: sometimes referred to as unobtrusive method

- Involves going into the field, describing, and analyzing what is seen.
- One of the oldest and most fundamental research methods in social sciences.

Advantages:

- Checks for nonverbal expressions, interactions, and time spent on activities.
- Verifies definitions and observations from interviews.
- Provides insights into natural behaviors and settings without social desirability bias.

Observation' is more than just recording of data from the environment.

When we observe, we are active, not passive collectors of data like a tape recorder or video camera.

Observation seeks to find out "what is going on here?"

Data collected in observational studies can be qualitative, quantitative or both.

Types of Observation:

1. Non-Participant Observation:

- Researcher observes without participating.
- Maintains a detached role.

2. Participant Observation:

- Researcher takes part in the activity or community being studied.
- Provides deeper insights through active engagement.

Styles of Observation:

1. Unstructured Observation:

- Descriptive, with no preconceived ideas.
- Uses thick descriptions in researcher's words.

2. Structured Observation:

- Based on predefined criteria and measurements.
- Uses templates to record specific behaviors for statistical analysis.

3. Mixed Observation:

- Combines unstructured and structured approaches.

Data Collection Methods:

- Field notes: Written records of observations, impressions, reactions, and hypotheses.
- Photos: Visual documentation of people and settings.
- Audio/Video recordings: Capture detailed interactions and environments.

Conducting Observations:

1. Ethics:

- Inform participants about research purposes and maintain their anonymity.
- Gain informed consent and handle data with caution.

Informed Consent: Informed consent involves explaining the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits, ensuring participants' voluntary participation.

2. Gaining Entry & Establishing Rapport:

- Establish trust and rapport with participants.
- Use letters of introduction and information about affiliation, funding, and research duration.
- Meet with community leaders or authorities for permissions.

Why Use Observation to Collect Data?

Observation is a valuable data collection method for several reasons. It allows researchers to check for nonverbal expressions of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, understand how participants communicate, and assess how much time is spent on various activities. Participant observation helps verify definitions of terms used in interviews, observe events that informants might be unable or unwilling to share, and identify inaccuracies in descriptions provided by informants. Additionally, it facilitates the collection of diverse data types over time, familiarizes researchers with the community, and allows involvement in sensitive activities. This method also aids in developing culturally relevant questions and provides a deeper understanding of the cultural context, enabling the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.]

Maintaining Ethics in Naturalistic Observation

Use only if no other research alternative possible

Avoid being discrete where not necessary

Include a thorough debriefing

Maintain confidentiality in the research report

- to not undertake this type of observation if another research method is possible to investigate the same problem;
- to take complete permissions of those in the research environment, who are not a target of the research i.e. of concerned authorities such as school administrators or parents or community leaders, etc. in the least, and at least inform others who may be affected by the process of research;
- to explain to the people observed, after observation why it was necessary to carry out the research, why they could not be told about the observation, how their contribution is very valuable, and to patiently address their doubts and queries;
- to assure the target observed that their confidentiality would be maintained and to keep this promise. That is, the names or faces of the target or any information that could reveal their identity should not be known to anyone but the researcher(s). All the records of observation should be handled with utmost caution, and reports made without any identifications.

3. Data Collection:

- Shift focus from wide to narrow perspectives.
- Pay attention to key words and phrases.

Challenges:

- Hawthorne effect: Participants may alter behavior when observed.
- Observer dependency: Observer's understanding and judgment affect reliability.
- Missed moments: Critical events might be missed due to distractions.

Sample Studies:

- "Participant Observation" by DL Jorgensen.
- "Using participant observation in pediatric health care settings: ethical challenges and solutions."
- "Do physicians clean their hands? Insights from a covert observational study."
- "Tensions in ethnographic observation: overt or covert?"

Overall Ethical Considerations for Observation

- Preserve participants' anonymity and confidentiality.
- Obtain necessary permissions and inform affected individuals.
- Address any observed poor or dangerous practices appropriately.
- Explain the purpose and value of the research to participants.

Each method of observation has its advantages and disadvantages...

Research method	Advantage	Disadvantage
Participant observation	Observer can be a part of the process so can really see & experience what is going on	Can be dangerous for observer
Non-participant observation	Observer remains safe	Observer cannot get a feel for what is happening
Overt observation	Ethical	"observer effect" means respondents may act differently
Covert observation	Respondents act as they normally would	Unethical

types of observation based on whether researcher is known :
Overt vs. Covert Observation: (check the table) -----

- **Overt Observation:**
 - Participants are aware they are being observed and know the study's purpose.
- **Covert Observation:**
 - Participants are unaware of being observed, or the real reason is concealed.
 - Covert observation typically lacks informed consent as participants are unaware they are being studied.

Unobtrusive Methods: "Methods like covert observation and archival research are considered unobtrusive because they do not interfere with participants' natural behavior."

Reactive Effect: The reactive effect occurs when individuals change their behavior because they know they are being observed."

Maintaining Ethics in Observation:

- Include thorough debriefing and maintain confidentiality in reports.

Observational Research Types:

1. Participant Observation:

- Researcher interacts with and participates in the observed activities.
- May alter events due to involvement.

2. Non-Participant Observation:

- Researcher observes without interaction.
- May not gain complete understanding of events.

Stages of Gaining Rapport:

1. Formal Introduction:

- Researcher is a stranger learning social rules and language.

2. Acquaintance Stage:

- Researcher merges with the crowd, becoming less intrusive.

3. Intimate Stage:

- Established relationships allow for natural interactions.

Tips for Effective Observation:

- Familiarize with the setting beforehand.
- Keep initial observations short to avoid overwhelm.
- Explain activities honestly to participants without being too technical.
- Pay attention to conversations and key words.

Flexible Data Collection: "Unstructured interviews are the most flexible form of data collection."

Good Interview Questions: "Examples: 'What makes you feel relaxed after a hardworking day?' and 'Can you describe a time when you faced a significant challenge at work?'"

Example Research Design Using Observation:

- Observe interactions in operational settings.
- Use varied data collection methods (e.g., field notes, interviews).
- Analyze data to answer specific research questions.

Challenges:

Hawthorne Effect: The Hawthorne effect refers to participants altering their behavior due to the awareness of being observed. It can be reversed through habituation

- Participants' behavior may change initially but revert to normal over time.
- Dependence on observer's judgment and attention.
- Critical moments might be missed due to distractions.

Key Informant: A key informant is a member of the community who provides researchers with essential information and access."