Lecture 8

Thematic Analysis (TA) of Qualitative Data

Transcribing Data

- Audio or video data are commonly collected in qualitative research.

- Researchers allocate time to transcribing data for further analysis.

- Verbatim transcripts, capturing every participant utterance, are common for thematic analysis.

Identifying Patterns or Themes

- Goal of Thematic Analysis: Identify themes or patterns in the data that are important or interesting, addressing the research questions.

- TA is not just data summarization; it involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data.

- It is a descriptive method that reduces data flexibly and is widely used due to its applicability to various research questions and topics.

- TA explores teaching and learning contexts deeply, offering flexibility and interpretation.

Conducting Thematic Analysis

- Six Phases of TA:

1. Familiarization with data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes among codes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the final report

Keep in mind……

- Analysis is saying: What does the data say.
- Interpretation is saying: What does it mean?

- Theme Definition:

- According to Speziale and Streubert, a theme is a structural, meaningful unit of data necessary for qualitative findings.

- DeSantis and Ugarriza found that 40% of qualitative papers used the term "theme" without a specific definition.

- Brink and Wood (1997): Data grouped around a main issue.

- Polit and Hungler (1999): A recurrent, systematic occurrence in qualitative data analysis.

Steps in Thematic Analysis

1. Familiarization:

- Read and re-read transcripts, participant observations, and documents.

- Immersion in the data is crucial for understanding content depth and breadth.

- Make notes and jot down early impressions (memoing).

2. Generating Initial Codes :

- Once transcribed, use margins for coding, especially for hand-coding.

- Holistically read data multiple times, classifying and categorizing for deeper immersion.

- Write notes in the margins (memoing), and categorize raw data into groupings (chunking).

- You might decide that something is relevant because:
  - ❑ It is repeated in several places;
  - ❑ It surprises you;
  - ❑ The interviewee explicitly states that it is important;
  - ❑ You have read about something similar in previous published research;
  - ❑ It reminds you of a theory or concept.

3. Search for Themes:

- Examine data to identify specific patterns and meanings.

- Preliminary classification schemes emerge, categorizing raw data into groupings.

- Ensure all data parts are considered to avoid selective study.

4. Reviewing Themes:

- Themes should be coherent and distinct from each other.

- Delete or collapse themes, identifying subthemes as necessary.

- Ensure themes make sense, are supported by data, and are free from overlaps.

5. Defining and Naming Themes:

- Write detailed analysis for each theme, considering their overall story in relation to the research questions.

- Rename themes for clarity and impact.

- Peer debriefing with experts can enhance theme clarity and comprehensiveness.

6. Producing the Final Report:

- Use direct quotes from participants as essential components.

- Literature can confirm findings or challenge and add to the research.

- Member checking with participants for feedback is recommended.

Example Analysis: Student Feedback

- Students value feedback but often find it unhelpful.

- Assessment processes, including feedback, can be perceived as threatening.

- Students prefer specific, personalized feedback and one-on-one discussions with lecturers.

- Emotional impact of feedback is significant.

Coding in Thematic Analysis

- Codes and Coding:

  - Labels assigning symbolic meaning to descriptive data.

  - Each data segment relevant to the research question is coded.

  - In vivo codes use participants' own words to capture meaning.

- **Coding Process:**

  - Simplifies data and focuses on specific characteristics.

  - Moves from unstructured data to developing ideas about the data.

  - Labels can represent actions, activities, concepts, opinions, etc.

- Structural coding (or index coding): Coding based on questions (research questions, interview guide questions) and/or topics of inquiry.

- Descriptive coding: Coding of the basic topics of chunks of data (often a noun).

- Process coding: Using gerunds ("-ing" words) to code action in the data (Frequently used in grounded theory).

- Interview Excerpt:

  - A family member's account of witnessing abusive situations between relatives.

  - Codes and themes extracted from the interview, illustrating roles and cycles of violence.

Final Refinement

- Refine themes to identify their essence.

- Themes must be coherent and distinct, telling a comprehensive story about the data set.

- Peer debriefing and member checking enhance research validity.

Final Report

- Thematic analysis usually culminates in a report, journal article, or dissertation.

- Direct participant quotes and literature integration are essential.

- Example studies: Physicians' empathy levels and understanding of Pharmacovigilance.

Deductive Thematic Analysis:

Deductive thematic analysis Doesn't involves analyzing data with little or no predetermined theory or framework, allowing patterns to emerge naturally from the data.

Errors in Data Transcription:

Common misconceptions include that junior researchers always do transcription for seniors and that transcription is done after analysis, which is incorrect.