Sampling in Qualitative Research:
⬚ While **quantitative** studies often aim to <u>maximise statistical power through the use of as large a sample size as feasible</u>, **qualitative** studies usually <u>work with a small number of cases that are feasible</u> to study in depth. While subjects/cases in quantitative studies are stripped of their context, the smaller numbers involved in qualitative research allows exploration of the detail and richness of the data collected.
⬚ **Sample sizes** for qualitative research vary by technique but **are generally small**.
⬚ **Qualitative research involves non-probability sampling**, where little attempt is made to generate a representative sample.

⬚ The <u>sampling process</u> in qualitative research <u>is iterative and is expected to continue to develop</u> and be refined <u>during the research process</u>.
⬚ Analysis and **interpretation of data collected after initial sampling feeds back to influence sampling methods and decisions regarding sample size**.
⬚ <u>As the research progresses, and the sampling of additional data yields no further themes/ ideas/concepts on analysis, the point of</u> **data 'saturation'** <u>is reached & sampling can cease.</u>

==Types of sampling:==

Sampling Methods

Probability Sampling

Non Probability Sampling

==Approaches to sample selection in Qualitative Research:==
⬚ They fall under 2 broad categories:
1) **non-conceptually-driven approaches** (convenience & opportunistic sampling).
2) **conceptually-driven approaches** (purposive & theoretical sampling).

==Sampling strategies in qualitative research:==
==Convenience sampling:==
⬚ In this approach, the potential participants/research settings/ that are **most easily accessible** to the researcher are sampled.
⬚ Its advantages are that it is <u>less expensive and time- and effort-intensive</u>.

Convenience Sampling

QuestionPro
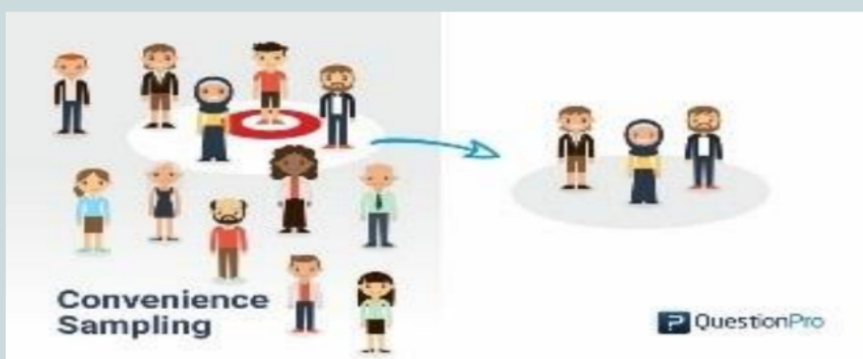
Opportunistic sampling:

▪ This sampling method involves the researcher taking advantage of circumstances that occur as the study progresses, **taking up emerging opportunities for data collection** along the way.

▪ This flexible approach lends itself to exploratory field research, where **little is known** about a phenomenon or research setting.

Purposive/judgement sampling:

- A frequently-applied **conceptually-driven** approach.
- It involves the **researcher** deliberately and purposefully selecting the sample they **believe** can be the most fruitful in answering the research question.
- This selection process can be guided by consideration of the variables or qualities of potential participants that affect the contribution they could provide to the study.
- These variables may be simple demographics such as age, gender and socioeconomic status but can also include other aspects such as specific attitudes or beliefs.

Forms of purposeful sampling:

▪ **Maximum variation** (**Heterogenous**) sampling.
▪ **Homogenous** sampling.
▪ **Deviant** sampling.
▪ **Typical case** sampling.
▪ **Critical case** sampling.
▪ **Confirming and disconfirming** sampling.
▪ **Stratified** purposeful sampling.
▪ **Snowball** sampling.

Maximum variation sampling (Heterogenous sampling):

▪ Entails the recruitment of study participants who **vary widely** on the dimensions of interest with the aim of: identifying central themes/elements that hold true across the diverse sample.

▪ This allows for multiple perspectives of individuals to be presented that exemplify the complexity of the world.

Homogenous sampling:

▪ aims to select a group of cases with similar backgrounds and experiences, **simplifying** analysis and **facilitating** group interviewing.

▪ This sampling approach often is used to select focus groups.

Deviant sampling:

▪ Involves the selection of **extreme** or **outlying cases** of the studied phenomenon, such as **crises**, **exceptions or remarkable failures or successes**, in an attempt to glean as much information relevant to the research question as possible from each case.

▪ Example, in a study of performance of graduate students, a researcher can select the best and the worse students in class and compare the causes of their performances.

Typical case sampling:
⬚ <u>focuses on **typical/average** cases</u> with the aim of building up a profile of a typical case.
⬚ <u>General agreement (consensus) on what constitutes a 'typical' case **is required**</u> for this approach.
⬚ The <u>researcher should consult several experts</u> in the field of study in order <u>to obtain a consensus</u> as to what example(s) is typical of the phenomenon and should, therefore, be studied.

Critical case (critical incident sampling) sampling
⬚ selects <u>cases that will produce **critical information with maximum generalisability**</u> of information to other cases.
⬚ Given that the researcher correctly identifies what makes a 'critical case', <u>knowledge gained may be applied to other cases</u>.
⬚ A simple example would be exploring the understandability of a set of flat-pack furniture instructions with a group of talented engineers. If they're unable to understand them, it's reasonable to assume the general population won't either.
⬚ if it happened to so and so then it can happen to anybody, or if so and so passed that exam, then anybody can pass.

Confirming & disconfirming sampling:
⬚ involves the <u>selection of a mixture of cases that tie in with expectations or findings up to that point in the study and cases which deviate from them</u>.
⬚ The **confirming** cases serve to **add depth, detail & enhance credibility** while the **disconfirming** cases **challenge the prevalent narrative** & may **bring** to light **alternative interpretations**.
⬚ This approach is generally <u>utilised at **later stages** of a study when preliminary fieldwork has already established what qualifies as a 'confirming case'</u>.

Stratified purposeful sampling:
⬚ <u>Selects participants from specific **sub-groups** of the population of interest, enabling easier comparison of the variation across sub-groups</u>.

Snowball/chain sampling (FRIEND OF FRIEND):
⬚ involves identification of participants by a technique known as 'snowballing' whereby <u>**initially identified participants are asked to suggest other possible candidates**</u>.
⬚ This is especially <u>**useful when the studied population is hard to access**, and/or may not publicly signal that they belong to the group of interest (e.g. drug-users)</u>.

Theoretical sampling:
⬚ <u>Theoretical sampling is an approach where **sampling decisions** are guided by the theoretical framework that underlies the study or by the theory that starts to emerge from the collected data (the latter is especially relevant to grounded theory methods).</u>

The goal is to collect data that either **further develops or challenges existent hypotheses**. Initial cases selected have similar characteristics & are studied in depth. The researcher then samples outlying cases **to see whether the developing hypothesis 'holds up' to these**.

 Once no new insights are derived from further data collection, sampling is ceased. **This approach necessitates that data analysis and coding commence**بدأ **while data collection is still ongoing**.

CONCLUSION- FLEXIBILITY IN QUALITATIVE SAMPLING:
 A **flexible** research & sampling design is an important feature of qualitative research.
 When little is known about a phenomenon or setting, a priori sampling decisions can be difficult. In such circumstances, creating a research design that is **flexible enough** to foster reflection and preliminary analysis may be a good idea.