

Global Health Equity Pathway

Tips: Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative Research: Form of inquiry that is more exploratory versus hypothesis driven, often involving in-depth analyses of participants' experiences

*“Development of concepts which help us to understand social phenomena in natural (rather than experimental) settings, giving due emphasis to the **meanings, experiences, and views** of the participants” --Pope & Mays, 1995*

Why use **Qualitative Research Methods**?

- To explore topics that cannot be quantified, for example:
 - o Why patients and healthcare providers behave in certain ways
 - o Patients' and providers' perceptions, feelings, and experiences
 - o A study could be: *“The ‘lived experience’ of palliative care patients in one acute hospital setting – a qualitative study”*

An example of QRM: Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM)*

Ask an open research question → collect and analyze data → develop theory

To learn more about grounded theory, read *“How to do a grounded theory study: a worked example of a study of dental practices”* by Sbaraini et al. For example, they outline **fundamental components** of a grounded theory study, including:

- (1) Open research question(s), usually about a social process or action/interaction
- (2) Appropriate framing of a ‘grounded theory study’ in application for ethics board (IRB) approval(s), i.e. explaining and navigating a study that is expected to evolve
- (3) Theoretical sampling (preceded by initial, purposive sampling)
- (4) Coding data: According to Charmaz, “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means.”
- (5) Ongoing theoretical sampling, coding/data analysis, and concept mapping

**There are many other methodologies for conducting qualitative research and analyzing qualitative data. Read more [here](#).*

Most common Qualitative Research Methods*:

- (1) **Interviews:** Can be in-depth, structured, or semi-structured. Often conducted 1:1, and should be recorded and transcribed.
- (2) **Focus groups:** Often include between 5-12 participants with 1-2 facilitators. Can be structured or semi-structured, should be recorded and transcribed, and are important when group meaning-making (“group think”) is meaningful. Focus groups allow for organic interaction between participants who share something in common, and better reflect real life and how social interaction influences thoughts and decision-making.

**Surveys with open-ended questions and observation are other common methods.*

Software for qualitative data analysis (pros and cons to each):

- **Dedoose:** Annual fee, cloud-based, requires internet, intuitive but small community of users
- **NVivo:** Annual fee, advanced features but not intuitive, difficult for group work
- **Atlas.ti:** Fee, advanced features, including an app, files not stored within program
- **MAXQDA:** Fee, advanced features, good for teamwork but not intuitive

Essential resources:

- [UCLA Labor Center: About qualitative research](#)
- [UCLA Graduate Writing Center: Resources for qualitative research](#)