

# Chapter 14

# Qualitative Research

# Analysis:

# A Thematic Approach

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Thematic analysis (TA) is an incredibly useful approach for gaining insights into the patterns of meaning found within qualitative data. This tool is adaptable and can be used in different theoretical frameworks and research paradigms. This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of TA, its position concerning other qualitative methods, and its alignment with scientific and conceptual perspectives. It provides detailed guidance on how to effectively conduct thematic analysis with purpose and precision. This chapter explores an overview of TA, including its definition, a comprehensive six-phase guide for conducting TA, common mistakes to be aware of, criteria for evaluating the quality of TA, and an examination of its advantages and disadvantages. The authors highly endorse TA as a valuable and versatile approach to qualitative research.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Many years ago, it was observed that “everything is data.” Data refers to a collection of information that is acquired by the process of observing, measuring, analysing, and conducting research (Lochmiller, 2021). Data is classified into

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two types: quantitative and qualitative. Creswell (2004) categorised research by differentiating between quantitative and qualitative research. An often employed, albeit rather imprecise, differentiation between the two is that quantitative research converts human experiences into numerical data, whereas qualitative research converts human experiences into verbal expressions. Both quantitative and qualitative research need the manipulation of numerical data and the interpretation of linguistic information. Furthermore, the conventional “false dichotomies” between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies have been scrutinised or, at the very least, elucidated in a beneficial manner. Qualitative research is commonly characterised as a subjective and inductive investigation of the real world, focusing on non-numerical data. In contrast, quantitative research is typically described as an objective and deductive study conducted in a laboratory, emphasising numerical data. By adopting a broader viewpoint, researchers can acknowledge that both quantitative and qualitative research rely on empirical data and answer scientific concerns, albeit in different ways (Willig, 2013). By eliminating the obstacles between these two approaches, researchers can adopt a more inclusive viewpoint on research methodologies. This enhances comprehension of the potential benefits that both qualitative and quantitative methodologies might provide, resulting in more comprehensive and meaningful study results. Instead of viewing them as contradictory methodologies, researchers should choose to embrace the idea that they can complement one other and provide a deeper understanding of the research topic at hand (Duffy & Chenail, 2009).

## **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research methods are a crucial tool in social work, sociology, psychology, and anthropology disciplines, allowing researchers to analyse and disseminate participant discourses. These methods, based on values of respect for personal and collective rights, recognise the interconnectedness of human beings and the potential for change. Researchers have a responsibility to promote social change by analysing and disseminating collected testimonies, which serve as the basis for future research and intervention paths. Qualitative research empowers individuals and communities to advocate for their rights and informs policymakers and practitioners about developing more effective interventions to address the root causes of social problems. By amplifying the voices of marginalised communities, qualitative research fosters a deeper understanding of their experiences and challenges (Labra et al., 2020).

Qualitative research uses participant-driven methodologies to collect data. The primary methods are semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and focus groups. Semi-structured interviews facilitate comprehensive investigation by giving participants the freedom to steer the discussions. Participant observation

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