Applied qualitative interviewing – Data collection and analysis (PSMT62)

Master's Programme, VT25, Department of Psychology, Stockholm University

Course leader: Charlotte Alm

Overarching purpose and content

The purpose of the course is to give advanced theoretical and applied knowledge within the area qualitative research interviews. The course is especially focused on interpersonal processes in the interview situation. The course gives advanced competency in the application of qualitative interview methods as a data collection instrument, including strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations in qualitative studies, transcription of interview data, as well as interpretation and analysis of interview data.

Expected study results

A passing grade on the course requires that the students:

- understand, analyze, discuss, compare and apply theories and models presented during the course
- show advanced competency in the application of qualitative interview methods in association with data collection
- show insights concerning ethical considerations that relate to data collection as well as to management and processing of data
- plan and conduct data collection through qualitative interviews
- transcribe interview data and conduct data analysis

Course activities

The course covers theoretical and applied aspects on qualitative interviews in particular research interviews. The course includes strategies and pre-requisites for qualitative data collection, ethical considerations, construction of an interview guide, conducting, transcribing and analyzing interview data. Also, it includes recorded interviews as well as psychological aspects on the interview situation. The course activities consist of lectures, seminars and workshops, interview exercises and data collection under supervision. Attendance on all course activities is mandatory.

Course activities related to the interview work

During the course, the course participants will in depth explore qualitative interview and its possibilities as a data collection method. The interview course activities start in association with the course introduction when smaller groups are formed (3-4 course participants/interview group), followed by introductions to the two approaches Thematic Analysis (TA) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). After this one lecture on quality in qualitative interviews and one lecture on methods and ethics will be given after a seminar on the choice of topic for the interviews with 1-2 interview groups and supervisor will be conducted. Participants will also start working individually on their separate interview guides. The purpose, research question(s) and interview guide including presentation of the topic and frames are to be uploaded at Athena no later than the

time specified in the schedule. The supervisor needs to approve of the content of this document before the interviews are commenced; revisions may be required before it is approved.

Ethical considerations

Research ethics, in particular concerning qualitative interview methodology, will be covered during the lecture on method and ethical considerations. *Well in advance* of each interview these ethical aspects are to be communicated to the respondent *in writing* e.g. through text message or email, using the document ”Ethics & frames” on Athena. This is done so that an **informed consent** in the form of a written response to the text message/email, can be collected. An informed consent means that the respondent receives information about what it means to be a respondent in this particular study and which they have a chance to say yes or no to before being included in the interview. The ethical aspects are presented within what is called the frames and which introduces the interview together with a presentation of the interviewer and the purpose of the interview. Right *before* the interview starts, the participant is to receive the same information and give their consent, once again in writing. For interview 2 and 3 if conducted in Zoom, the consent should be given through message/email right before the interview starts. For interview 1 and 4 the consent is to be collected in writing and handed in to the respective supervisor. Ethical issues are to be dealt with on an ongoing basis during the interview and can therefore be subject to the feedback when it is processed within the interview group. Such aspects can involve that the interviewer poses questions about things that are not part of the agreement about the contents of the interview etc. Interview questions are not to ask about sensitive personal data/information (e.g. ethnic origin or political opinion and health data). If such information should be brought up by a participant, the information can not be used in tasks that are submitted including the exam and is to be deleted in transcriptions.

Please note that the frames including the ethical aspects are to be stated exactly as they are formulated in the document “Ethics & frames” once they have been adopted appropriately to the specific study and interview occasion. A documented fully informed consent in writing is a requirement for an interview to be given a passing grade.

Confidentiality

Conducting the interviews on the course requires that course participants both interview and are interviewed as well as take part of other participants’ interviews. In addition, the feedback process requires a sensitivity regarding how information is conveyed and handled. Even though the interview is to avoid ethically sensitive subjects, taken together this means that information related to interviews and feedback occasions are to be kept confidential. More specific, the information is not to be spread outside of the supervision and the interview group, recorded interviews are to be erased permanently after the course is finished and feedback occasions are not to be recorded or shared with third party. Course participants are to hand in a signed agreement with the confidentiality statement to the course leader before they can conduct interviews (the document can be found on the planning for the introduction at Athena).

Interviews

There are in total four interviews in the course, each 10 minutes. The interviewer is responsible for keeping the time and for making sure that the interview questions in the interview guide are covered adequately. For interviews 2 and 3, make sure that both interviewer and interviewee are seated in a place where they are not disturbed. Due to confidentiality, other people are not to be able to take

part of the interview. If conducting these interviews in Zoom, it is possible to use headset/head phones (but please see below about recording in Zoom). Interview 1 and 4 are recorded during the specified times in the schedule.

There will be a schedule on Athena, pairing interviewees and interviewers among the course participants for interview 1 and 4. If one chooses not to interview the assigned person, or if not consenting to be interviewed, please inform both the course leader and the assigned interviewee/interviewer well in advance so that appropriate adjustments can be made. Having the experience of being an interviewee is important for one's understanding of conducting interviews, and thus pedagogically meaningful. Course participants decide for themselves, and without any consequences, whether to participate as an interviewee or not in any given interview. Course participants recruit their own respondents for interview 2 and 3 (not family members/partners, close relatives or friends). Please note however that choosing a topic that does not work with course participants as interviewees means that one needs to recruit own participants external from the course so as not to interrupt the recording schedule.

Each interview will be played back and analyzed within the interview group and together with the supervisor. Note that interview 3 is played back and analyzed within the group only, that is without the supervisor. A verbatim transcription of interview 3 together with a reflection about the own interview (about 1 A4-page) is to be uploaded on Athena for the supervisor to approve of (see schedule for deadline). If interview 3 contains any sensitive personal data/information (e.g. ethnic origin or political opinions or health data) such parts need to be omitted when transcribing and uploading it on Athena for review by the supervisor. It is not permissible to bring up such information in the reflection part of this task. It is expected that the course participants learn from all interviews and apply insights into each new interview. This process is an important foundation for the knowledge progression throughout the course. Interviews are therefore not to be conducted before all previously conducted interviews have been given feedback. All participants in the interview group are expected to be active (listening – reflecting) during the entire feedback occasion, also in connection with the other participants' interviews.

Recording device

Audio tracks of interviews conducted in Zoom can be recorded through the interviewer's cell phone or with a digital recording device that can be borrowed from the course leader. There is a recording function in Zoom but it may not be used in this course since it produces not only an audio file but also a video file. Participants have not given their consent to being video recorded during interview 2 and 3. Please also note that it is not permissible to ask for participant's consent to do so for these two interviews. Breaches of this will result in interviews not being subject to examination and having to be erased immediately. Video recording is only done supervised during interviews 1 and 4, and for which participants are asked for their consent. Do a recording test before each interview to check that the technique is working and that the sound quality is sufficient to be able to hear what is being said.

Transcription of interviews

Interview 3 is transcribed as part of the material for the supervisor to evaluate (see above). For the examination task, two transcribed interviews (each interview judged by the supervisor to be fulfilled)

are to be attached and used for an analysis of the data. It is possible to choose interview 3 as one of these two interviews.

Bear in mind that it may take about 1-2 hours to transcribe 10 minutes of interview material. The transcription is to be verbatim which means that all words uttered by both interviewer and interviewee are to be written down. Indicate throughout who is saying what (e.g. R = respondent, I = Interviewer). For the purpose of this course it is however not necessary to write in spoken language, write repetitions of words and letters etc. if they do not fill a function for instance if an interviewee emphasize the importance of something and therefore repeat it. Do include filler word such as eh and um, note silences (e.g. with three dots …) and note laughter, clears throat etc. to the extent that these things are possible to hear in the audio tracks. An example of a transcribed statement from a respondent is given below. Note how some information about the respondent has been removed since it might identify them (the place where they work). Such information should be removed in the transcription and also when providing quotes when writing up the results. Here, R stands for respondent.

R *When I looked down at my cell phone (…) it became like a reflection, it was like I saw myself exactly then and there and I realized that I didn't (…) ehh really need to go in there [the name of the company where the respondent work].*

When giving quotes from an interview make sure to use a system that makes it possible to find the quote in the transcription. For instance, give each respondent a pseudonym, state on which page and which row number the quote is to be found: 4: 23-24. In Word this is done through **Insert --> Page number** and **Layout --> Page number --> Start over for each page**.

All interview files are to be erased as soon as the course is finished.

Information about our course quality work

We continuously work on securing the quality in our education. One part of this work is that we, with the consent of the course participants, save interview 4 for analysis of the supervisors' work and evaluations. This work is done completely separate from the evaluation of the students' work and has the sole purpose of developing supervisor competency and work with course quality. Interviews are saved only with participant's consent which is given both prior to and after interview 4 has been conducted. This is entirely voluntary and those that have consented have the right to withdraw their consent at any time and request without any consequences to have their interview deleted. The interviews will be saved at Stockholm University GDPR-safe cloud service where only teachers working on course quality for this course have access. The interviews will be deleted after 1,5 years since we work continuously with these issues and as part of that work use current supervisor work as a starting point.

Format of the course

Most activities on the course are given on site at campus, specifically all activities in the whole class including all lectures and workshops. Please note it will not be possible to attend digitally on any of these activities. Interview 2 is analyzed and given feedback on in Zoom meaning we early on in the process can direct full attention towards aspects related to the contents of the interviews. For ethical reasons – since we listen to and process interviews – course participants are to use their own screen and headset/sit in a secluded place where third party cannot take part of the meeting. Interviews 1 and 4 will be conducted on site at the department's own recording studio equipped with video recording devices in separate interview rooms. Video recorded interviews give an opportunity to include also interpersonal aspects that are otherwise are not observable. Interview 3 is processed and given feedback without the supervisor present and can be conducted in the format which suits both interviewer and interviewee best, either face-to-face or through Zoom.

Course requirements/mandatory parts

The following are course requirement/mandatory parts:

- Individual written take-home exam which is handed in before deadline in accordance with the course leader's instructions.
- Taking part in the interview exercises requires attendance on activities that concern ethical aspects as well as choice of topic.
- Fulfilment of at least 3 of 4 interviews are required in order to be able to take part in the written examination
    - Note that all 4 interviews are required to have passed in order to receive a course grade

Students with a maximum of one interview that is not fulfilled can in consultation with the supervisor and the course leader do one compensatory task during the course period. A maximum of two missed lectures, seminars or workshops can be compensated through specific tasks in consultation with the course leader. Please note that missed choice of topic seminar as well as interview feedback sessions cannot be compensated.

A document including purpose, research questions, frame and interview guide must be submitted before the deadline. If submitted after the deadline, interview 1 is to be conducted at a later time than the one scheduled. The reason for this is that the document must be approved of before the student can start interviewing. A late submission means that the feedback is given at the earliest during the feedback occasion for interview 2. It is still mandatory to take part in the feedback session for interview 1. Submission after deadline of the transcription of interview 3 (including the reflection of the own interview) renders an additional task to be completed. This task can be retrieved from the course leader.

Plagiarism, cheating and unallowed cooperation

It is a part of the responsibility as a student to be aware of the rules that concern examination. More detailed information can be found on the webpage of Stockholm University (see under the heading Plagiarism and regulations for disciplinary matters): Your rights and responsibility. Teachers are required to report suspected plagiarism to the principle and the Disciplinary Council. Plagiarism and cheating are always disciplinary cases and may lead to suspension of education. One example of plagiarism is to word-by-word or almost word-by-word copy a text (even occasional sentences) regardless of whether a source is given or not. This applies also to own previous texts (self-plagiarism) and translations from one language to another. One example of cheating is to use unallowed aids and resources such as using the help of another person or letting another person or AI such as chatgpt create or write the exam, search or use information on the Internet or in course text books in an exam where such resources are not permitted. To study in groups with other students is often rewarding and time saving, but when it comes to examination tasks it is important to work alone (unless otherwise stated in exam instructions) in order to avoid unallowed cooperation.

Examination

The course is examined through active and satisfactory participation in workshops, interview exercises, data collection under supervision, and through a written individual take-home-exam and submission of transcriptions of interviews of sufficient quality.

An individual take-home exam is the basis for the final course grade and is made available at the end of the course. The exam is to be uploaded on Athena before deadline according to schedule and will then be checked for plagiarism. Exams that are uploaded after deadline will not be evaluated and given the grade Fx. The exam is made up of an analysis of two interviews of sufficient quality, as evaluated by the supervisor, and which is presented according to instructions. It also includes a number of essay-type questions regarding interview method requiring reasoning based on course content explicitly shown by ongoing references to course literature.

The interviews are to be uploaded in a separate box on Athena by the same deadline as the exam. They are to be devoid of possible identifying information. Quotes from the transcriptions are to be used to illustrate results and reasoning. It should be made explicit from where in the transcripts the quotes are taken. References with page numbers (but all else should be according to APA) to the course text books should be made ongoing, in addition to at least one reference to one of the articles covered in the course. The course books are primary sources for this task, but lectures and seminars can also be referenced. Do not refer to information in the course that comes from other participants' interviews or the like.

Literature

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data (3rd ed.).* Sage. ISBN: 9781412978378.

Smith, J. A., & Nizza, I. E. (2021). *Essentials of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.* Essentials of Qualitative Methods Series. American Psychological Association. ISBN: 9781433835650.

Terry, G., & Hayfield, N. (2021). *Essentials of Thematic Analysis.* Essentials of Qualitative Methods Series. American Psychological Association. ISBN: 9781433835575

Articles (NOTE this list can be updated up until the course starts)

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *18*, 328-352, DOI: 10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Levitt, H. M., Bamberg, M., Creswell, J. W., Frost, D. M., Josselson, R., & Suárez-Orozco, C. (2018). Journal article reporting standards for qualitative primary, qualitative meta-analytic, and mixed methods research in psychology: The APA Publications and Communications Board task force report. American Psychologist, 73(1), 26–46. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000151

Nizza, I. E., Farr, J., & Smith, J. A. (2021). Achieving excellence in interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): Four markers of high quality. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *18*(3), 369-386. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1854404

Smith, J. A. (1996). Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, *11*(2), 261-271. https://doi.org/10.1080/08870449608400256

Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health*, *15,* 215-228. DOI: 10.1080/08870440008400302

Reference literature and other resources (non-mandatory)

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. Qualitative Research in Sport, *Exercise and Health*, *11*(4), 589-597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

King, N., Horrocks, C., & Brooks, J. (2019). *Interviews in qualitative research (2nd Edition)*. Sage. (Pages 192-196 about transcription can be found on Athena.)

McClelland, S. I. (2017). Vulnerable listening: Possibilities and challenges of doing qualitative research. *Qualitative Psychology*, *4*(3), 338-352. https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/qup0000068

Website with many good IPA-resources: http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk.ezp.sub.su.se/

Website with many good TA-resources: https://www.thematicanalysis.net/

Grading criteria

The evaluation of the take-home-exam will be the basis for the final course grade on a scale from F to A. In order to pass the course, the exam is to receive a grade of at least E and course requirements need to be fulfilled. Exams that are uploaded after the deadline will not be evaluated and given the grade Fx. It is possible to compensate an Fx-grade at the next examination occasion, meaning such an exam can be uploaded again and re-evaluated. The grades A-E will be used for a compensation of passing quality where the revisions concerns minor formality errors. The grades C-E will be used for a compensation of passing quality where the revision concerns issues of comprehension. Compensations that are uploaded after deadline are given the grade Fx.

Grade	Score	Criteria
A. Excellent	94-100	Student can independently connect central concepts, theories and models. Student can independently argue and discuss in relation to the course literature as well as integrate in a commendable way relevant principles and problematizations at a comprehensive theoretical level.
B. Very good	86-93,5	With their own words, student can account for differences and similarities between central concepts, theories and models as well as reason about the relevance, drawbacks and validity of central concepts.
C. Good	78-85,5	With their own words, student can account for differences and similarities between central concepts, theorier and models as well as apply central concepts on examples of their own.
D. Satisfying	70-77,5	With their own words, student can define central concepts, theories and models.
E. Suffient	60-69,5	Student can define central concepts and account for the main parts of relevant theories and models.
Fx. Insufficient	<60p	Compensation is required in order for the student to reach the expected study results.
F. Completely insufficient		The student does not reach the expected study results.