

More About Qualitative Analyses!

Qualitative research is a type of research that is focused on understanding people's experiences, opinions, and feelings about a particular subject. It involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, media archives, and open-ended survey responses, and using that data to gain insights into the subject being studied.



Uses for Qualitative Data

- Understanding rarer experiences or experiences of a smaller subpopulation.
- Making the data “come alive” using respondent's own words.
- Identifying gaps in your knowledge and conceptualization of the issue.
- Asking respondents to share more about certain experiences.

When taking a qualitative approach, we are reading through and synthesizing respondent's answers, looking for similarities and differences across participants. From there, we work to create “codes” or “themes” that summarize those similarities and differences. Once we make these categories, we can use them in a number of ways.

- Identify compelling quotes to illustrate points or add further context to qualitative data.
- Use the categories to organize a written narrative where you dive deep into each category.
- Provide frequencies and percentages of each category in the sample.

Types of Qualitative Approaches

There are different approaches to qualitative analyses. First, you might want to consider whether you are taking an inductive or deductive approach. An **inductive approach** means that you have some preconceived ideas about what you will find in your qualitative analysis, and use those ideas to guide your analysis. For example, in

analyzing data to a question “What are your overall impressions of the Clark University dining hall?”, I could take several inductive approaches.

- Coding responses as positive/neutral/negative
- Coding specific issues (i.e. hours/options/cleanliness/crowds/nutrition) that you know are relevant to the issue at hand.
- Coding for venting/solution-oriented feedback.

You can also take a **deductive approach**, where you try to be open to whatever appears in the data, without preconceived themes in mind. Most of the time, we are doing a little bit of both. For example, we may inductively code our responses for venting/solution-oriented responses, then take a deductive approach to coding specific solutions proposed by respondents. Overall, we can use preconceived ideas to guide our analysis, while still remaining open to being surprised by our participants' responses.

Analytic Methods

Beyond the approach you take to preconceived ideas, you can also choose to utilize a more structured qualitative method to complete your analyses. Two commonly used methods for written qualitative data are **thematic analysis** and **content analysis**. Both methods utilize a systematic process of coding to summarize written qualitative data. A main difference of these two methods is that thematic analysis is preferable for detailed descriptions of themes, whereas content analysis is useful for transforming qualitative data into percentages and frequencies.



[Additional Resources](#)

[Intro Guide to Qualitative Research Analysis](#)

[Thematic Analysis Summary](#)

[Content Analysis.](#)