**Little Learning outcomes for QR**

* **Distinguish between qualitative and quantitative**
* **Explain strengths and limitations of a qualitative approach to research**
* **To what extent can findings be generalized from Qualitative studies?**

What does generalization mean?

a general statement or concept obtained by inference from findings

what can be claimed from the study

Why is generalization of results from QR not always possible?

* sampling is based on selection criteria and not representativeness (e.g volunteer)
* most studies have few participants
* data analysis aims to understand the subjective experience of participants in the study

Representational generalization

•    Findings from a study that can be applied to populations outside of the study.

•    If findings from similar studies corroborate findings, generalization may be possible.

•    EG: Interview data from a study with homeless people in city X and in city Z have generated similar findings

Inferential generalization/transferability

•    Findings can be applied to settings outside the study

•    EG Results from a pilot study on victims of domestic violence towards women to test the effectiveness of a service to help them cope and develop resilience could be transferred to similar settings (shelters for abused women)

Theoretical generalization

•    Theoretical concepts developed in the study can be used to develop theory.

•    EG the theory and theoretical concepts developed on what might be effective problem solving in a particular area (developing resilience in homeless adolescents, could be effectively applied in policies to establish help centers for people.

How will you use this in the exam?

•    Consider different types of generalization and how things can be generalized – Lewis and Richie (2003)

* **Discuss ethical considerations in qualitative research**

**Ethical issues in QR**

**What are the ethical issues related to QR?** 5 bullet points

* Anonymity -- small number of participants
* Research topics are often sensitive – require particular consideration (past experience of abusive family or drug addictions)
* Researcher objectivity – hard to maintain due to the long-term research process and close personal contact (ie. if the researcher had experienced the same thing as the participants eg. molestation)
* Informing authorities – as the research process may result in obtaining sensitive information (ie. murder or rape)
* Informed consent – must always be obtained as researchers might want to adjust the study throughout the process

Easy way to remember this:

**ARRII** **ARIRI**

Explain how the following ethical considerations need to be dealt with in QR *Ignore issues that* *relate to both quantitative and qualitative data*

**Informed consent**

* Participants must understand what the study will involve and they must agree to participate. Participation is voluntary.
* Participants should be able to understand the information given before, during and after the study.
* If informed consent can’t be obtained researchers can try and get it approved by an ethics committee.
* Researchers must consider in covert observation studies whether or not it is justified to not obtain consent.

**Protect participants from harm**

* It has to be considered if participants will be in any way harmed.
* Clear and direct questions if it is a sensitive topic area.
* Consider possible discomfort or distress
* Protect participants from any consequences.
* Follow up research.

**Anonymity and confidentiality**

* Full anonymity is always required if possible
* If not they must be informed that it wont be
* All research material should be destroyed and the study transcripts should be made anonymous

**Potential exploitation of participants**

* Researcher could use reflexivity and consult other researchers when researching socially or psychologically vulnerable people who are not able to protect themselves
* Seriously consider whether findings are based on deception and covert observation in research on sensitive issues can be justified
* The degree to which “invasion of privacy” is acceptable should be critically evaluated and the study abandoned in some cases

**How will you use this information in the exam?**

The ethical issues mentioned are general so you must try to see which ones would be most appropriate to mention in relation to the specific study in the stimulus material.

Also, you would have to argue why this could be relevant by giving example (finding evidence) from the study

* **Discuss sampling techniques appropriate to qualitative research**

**Sampling techniques in QR**

The goal of qualitative sampling techniques: select participants who are particularly informative about the research topic under investigations (i.e. information-rich participants) and generalization of findings is less important

**Goal of sampling in QR**

-       Objectives of the research project & characteristics of the population of interest will influence the choice of sampling method

-       Sampling include:

1.     Purposive sampling

2.     Snowball sampling

3.     Convenience sampling

**Purposive sampling**

Definition:

The basis of selection depends on characteristics of individuals. This is to reflect the diversity of the sample population. The recruitment of participants continues throughout the research until researchers have enough data to generate theory.

Example: Participants can be selected based on

1.     Socioeconomic status

2.     Gender

3.     Age

6.     Specific experiences (domestic violence, HIV status)

7.     Purpose of the study

Strengths:

+ Participants represent the research topic – they are selected specifically based on salient characteristics to the research

+ Easy to select a sample

Weaknesses:

-       Sampling may be biased; bias is only limited if sampling process is explained or based on objective selection criteria

-       Hard to generalize from a small purposive sample

**Snowball sampling**

Definition:

-       Snowballing is a type of purposive sampling.

-       Non-probability sampling technique

- Existing participants help recruit more participants through their social networks

- May be used when it is difficult to recruit participants

- Can go on until research is over, or contacts are exhausted

Example:

-       When research is socially sensitive

-       Drug addicts, homeless people

-       Undocumented immigrants

Strengths:

-       Cost-efficient, easy to recruit

-       Useful in sensitive research on drug abuse, criminal offenders

Limitations:

-       Likely to be biased, because participants know each other

-       Biased because participants have same attitudes and experiences

-       Ethical issues:

o   anonymity and confidentiality difficult to maintain

o   participants already know each other

**Convenience sampling**

Definition:

-       Participants are chosen depending on availability

-       Simply asked if they are willing to participate, become volunteers

-       Could be surveying friends, family, students, colleagues, etc.

Example:

-       Social workers in a resilience project

-       Group of co-workers

-       Students

Strengths:

-       Do not need to search for participants, they are at hand

-       Easy and cost-efficient

-       Quick way to collect data and do research

Limitations:

-       Not recruited based on population, difficult to generalize

-       Biased

-       Likely to generate research with low credibility, low in information

-       the researcher cannot control how well the characteristics of the sample (gender, age, race, education, etc.) match the characteristics of the larger population it is intended to represent.

* **Explain the effects of participant expectations and researcher bias in qualitative research**
* Participant bias:
* *Participant factors that influence the outcome of the research (e.g. the participants’ ideas of what happens in the research, how they should behave or what they expect to gain from participation in the research,*
* Researcher bias:
* *Personal bias of the researcher effecting results. E.g a gay researcher could focus too much on data that shows gay discrimination rather than contradicting data. (aka confirmation bias)*
* **Potential effects of participant bias/expectations**
* ·      Participant’s ideas of the research could lead them to behave in not natural ways to please the researcher or they have idea of getting advantages of participating.
* ·      Participants may not agree with the researcher’s interpretation of the data if it is presented to them.
* e.g. “self-preservation”—if the research reveals sensitive things that the participant will not accept ore recognize.
* ·      Participants in qualitative research bring individual perceptions or ideas that influence the research process and the results.
* ·      Social desirable--Participants may behave in ways that they feel is expected of them. Or they may conform to other participants’ ideas because they want to be accepted.
* ·      Participants try to be consistent in their answers and sometimes a previous statement influences a later one. Some answers would be untrue. The researchers should not believe everything the participants say.
* **Potential effects of researcher expectations**
* ·      The results could be a reflection of the researcher own believes rather than the objective result.
* ·      Researcher bias could influence the research process such as selecting participants and interpretation of the data
* ·      If the research is prolonged, the researcher’s attitude could change and affect the data
* ·      The researcher could affect interviews of participants via actions such as smiling or acting surprised when they give an answer.
* **Explain the importance of credibility in qualitative research**

**Credibility –** Is a criteria used to judge the quality of qualitative research. The validity of qualitative research and data.

**How is credibility assessed in QR?**

* It must be valid from the perspective of the participants
* Supposed to measure what it intended to measure
* Researchers must be critical when self reflecting as to how his or her potential biases could affect the research and conclusion (reflexivity)

**Credibility within a study depends on factors such as:** *define each of the following*

**Triangulation – The use of alternative methods of data collection and analysis. Similar outcomes make the study more valid.**

**Researcher reflexivity – Researcher must be aware of bias and explain how it is avoided.**

**Cross checking – Facts and discrepancies in the participants accounts.**

**Having others check the results -**

**Leaving a decision trail – Step by step method of concluding.**

* **Explain the effect of triangulation on credibility**

Triangulation is used to increase the credibility of the conclusions in a qualitative study. Researches use difference methods and sources in the study to ensure that the conclusion gives an accurate picture of the investigation.

Credibility is based on an evaluation of whether or not the research findings represent an accurate interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data.

By comparing data obtained from different methods or different researchers in the same setting, it is possible to overcome potential biases which occur when only a single method or single researcher is used.

**Method triangulation**

Use of different methods (observation + interview or two ways of interviewing)

-Biased reduced, credibility increased

-takes advantage of strengths of different researches, compensates for methodological limitations.

**Data triangulation**

Comparison of people from multiple sources (participants, days, pictures, texts

-Bias reduced credibility increased

-provides additional source to describe phenomenon

**Researcher triangulation**

Uses methods which involve multiple researchers to collect + analyze data

-Bias reduced credibility increased

-Counteract researcher bias

**Theory triangulation**

Use of several competing theories to analyze data

-Bias reduced and credibility increased

-Promotes deeper and more credible understanding of topic

-reveals contradiction in data to protect against research bias

* **Explain reflexivity in qualitative research**

This is the expectation that the researcher themselves show awareness of the part they paly in the research process. It allows the researcher to reflect on ways in which bias may occur in data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is an acknowledgment of the subjective nature of their findings. Critical self reflection is required.

Good reflexivity adds credibility.

Personal reflexivity

Reflecting on researchers own values, beliefs, experiences, interests and expectations. How has the research affected them personally and professionally?

Epistemological reflexivity *(think methodological)*

Investigates the origin, nature, methods and limits of how information was gathered in the study AND the knowledge generated by the study. Would a different approach have been better?