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Module 3
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

G.A. N° 2022-2-IE01-KA220-YOU-883F8363

Module 3 aims to improve youth workers' knowledge and competences in qualitative research method aimed at collecting data and information on young carers' needs and thoughts.

Lesson 1
Aims and scope of qualitative research pros and cons

Objectives

- Understanding Qualitative Research
- Comparing Research Approaches
- Examine practical considerations in qualitative research

QUANT vs QUAL research: when to use the first or the second?

Quantitative research is applied to validate or substantiate a hypothesis. In QUANT research, adequate comprehension of a subject is essential to formulate a testable hypothesis. Due to the structured nature of quantitative research, it is crucial to grasp the parameters and variability of variables in practical terms. This allows you to create a research outline that is controlled in all the ways that will produce high-quality data.

Conversely, qualitative research can be adopted to provides preliminary insights for quantitative investigation or for proofing and deepening some aspects that need further in depth analysis to be understood or to develop a hypothesis.

QUANT vs QUAL research: when to use the first or the second?

When delving into a subject with limited prior knowledge, qualitative research proves valuable in revealing underlying themes. Consequently, qualitative research sometimes precedes quantitative research, providing a foundational comprehension of the topic and facilitating the formulation of hypotheses related to correlation and causation.

If QUANT research give information on how much a phenomenon is present, the QUAL research said us WHY and HOW it happens.

Thus, the research topic and question has to lead the choice of a QUANT or QUAL methodology.

QUANT vs QUAL research: when to use the first or the second?

If you want to know how many individuals have a certain behaviour and which factors influences the adoption of that behaviour, you need a QUANT study. If you want to know why a certain population of individuals adopt a certain behaviour, you need to search for this through a QUAL study.

Today most researchers agree on that the best option to understand a phenomenon is applying a mixed-method approach, that means have both QUANT and QUAL data collection tools.

Qualitative Research	Quantitative research
It collects and analyses non-numerical data (e.g. verbal or text answers). It is used to understand and describe how social actors attribute meaning to their actions and problems. It focuses on the social and cultural construction of variables.	It focuses on quantifying data and analyses them using statistical methods. The aim is to produce objective, empirical data that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms. It is often used to test hypotheses, identify patterns, and make predictions.
Types of Qualitative Research	**Types of Quantitative Research**
• Face to Face interviews • Focus Groups • Surveys (open-ended questions) • (Participant) Observation	• Surveys (ratings, scales, closed-ended questions) • Experiments (based on empirical or scientific research)

Videos

YouTube Video 1: The differences between quantitative and qualitative research
https://youtu.be/a-XtVF7Bofg

YouTube Video 2 : Preparing for Focus Groups: Qualitative Research Methods
https://youtu.be/VSwTvkTsOvI?si=mII0y7ke6qMn0H7O

Ethical and Practical considerations in Social Research

In social research, ethical and practical considerations play a crucial role in shaping the design, conduct, and outcomes of the study.

These considerations are essential for maintaining the integrity of the research process and safeguarding the well-being of participants.

Here are some key ethical and practical considerations in quantitative and qualitative research.

1.Informed Consent:

- Ethical: researchers must obtain informed consent from participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits, and of the data (personal or not, sensitive or not, health-related or not) they would process. Participants must understand their right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- Practical: clear communication of the research objectives and procedures helps establish trust between researchers and participants, contributing to the overall success of the study.

2. Confidentiality and Anonymity:

- Ethical: researchers must protect the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. This involves securing data in a way that prevents the identification of individual participants.
- Practical: implementing robust data protection measures, such as using pseudonyms and secure storage methods, is crucial to ensure participants' privacy.

3.Respect for Participants:

- Ethical: researchers should treat participants with respect, acknowledging their autonomy and ensuring that their perspectives are accurately represented.
- Practical: developing the relationship respectful research environment.

4.Dealing with Sensitive Topics:

- Ethical: when researching sensitive topics, researchers must handle information delicately and be prepared to provide support or referrals to participants who may experience emotional distress.
- Practical: incorporating debriefing sessions or providing resources for emotional support can help address any potential psychological impact on participants.

5.Power Dynamics and Reflexivity:

- Ethical: researchers should be aware of power dynamics between themselves and participants, striving to minimise any potential exploitation or coercion.
- Practical: practicing reflexivity, where researchers critically examine their own biases and assumptions, helps maintain objectivity and ensures the research is conducted ethically.

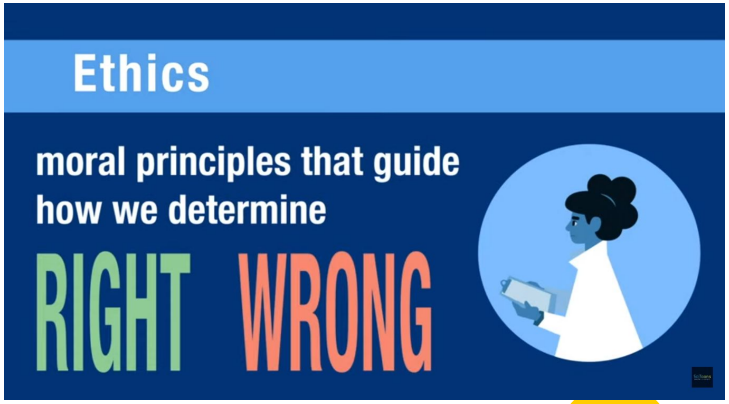
6.Transparent Reporting:

- Ethical: researchers should provide transparent and accurate reporting of their findings, avoiding selective representation that may mislead readers.

- Practical: clearly documenting the research process, including data collection, analysis methods, and any changes made during the study, enhances the credibility and replicability of the research.

Video

YouTube Video: **Ethics in Research**
https://youtu.be/mtLPd2u4DiA?si=bmOicTszE99yDfrS



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Module 3
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Lesson 2. Qualitative data collection research techniques

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Lesson 2

Qualitative data collection research techniques:
life story, structured, non-structured, semi-structured interview, focus group, user-centred design methods, specific qualitative techniques (SWOT analysis, Delphi study, etc.)

Objectives

- Learn what qualitative research is and its purpose.
- Realise the difference from quantitative research.
- Learn the data collection tools.
- Define the skills a qualitative researcher needs.

Introduction to Qualitative Research

Definition and purpose of qualitative research

Qualitative data analysis refers to the systematic process of examining and interpreting non-numerical data (i.e. texts and images) to gain meaningful insights and generate new knowledge. It involves dissecting text, images, videos, and other forms of qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships.

Here are key characteristics and purposes of qualitative research:

- **Exploration and Understanding**: qualitative research is often used to explore and understand social phenomena, cultural practices, and individual experiences in-depth. It aims to uncover the meanings people ascribe to their experiences and behaviours.
- **Contextualization**: it provides a rich understanding of the context in which a phenomenon occurs. This context is crucial for interpreting the findings accurately.
- **Flexibility**: it is flexible and adaptable, allowing researchers to adjust their methods and questions during the study based on emerging insights.
- **Subjective Perspective**: researchers recognise and embrace the subjective nature of human experiences, acknowledging that individuals interpret and perceive situations differently.
- **Small Sample Sizes**: qualitative studies often involve smaller sample sizes compared to quantitative research, with a focus on depth rather than breadth.

Comparison with Quantitative research

Quantitative methods allows to “test” theories or investigate a phenomena by examining the relationship among variables which in turn can be measured, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures.

On the contrary, qualitative techniques do not necessarily seek to generalise their findings to a wider population. Rather, they attempt to find examples of behaviour, to clarify the thoughts and feelings of study participants, and, above all, to interpret participants’ experiences of the phenomena of interest, in order to “understand” human behaviour (or values, perceptions, etc.) in a given context.

Comparison with Quantitative research

In qualitative studies, data is usually gathered in the field from smaller sample sizes, which means researchers might personally visit participants in their own homes or other environments – if it is the case, e.g. for semi-structured interviews. Once the research is completed, the researcher evaluate and make sense of the data in its context, looking for trends or patterns from which new theories, concepts, narratives, or hypotheses can be generated – or that could confirm, strengthen and complement existing theories.

Quantitative research is typically carried out via questionnaires or survey that can be administered by researchers or self-compiled by respondents. While in qualitative studies it is common to use the data to build hypotheses (this is true especially for the Grounded Theory approach), in a quantitative analysis the researcher sets out to test a hypothesis.

Comparison with Quantitative research

Both qualitative and quantitative studies should subject to rigorous quality standards. However, the research techniques used in each type of study differ, as do the questions and issues they address.

In quantitative studies, researchers tend to follow more rigid structures to test the links or relationships between different variables, ideally based on a random sample. On the other hand, in a qualitative study, not only are the samples typically smaller and narrower (such as using convenience samples), but the study's design many times is more flexible and less structured to accommodate the open-ended nature of the research.

In summary, qualitative and quantitative research serve different purposes and involve distinct methods of data collection and analysis. The choice between them depends on the research question, the nature of the phenomenon observed, the goals of the research project and the time available to carry out the research.

Qualitative methods - Pros and Cons

Pros

- More flex room for creativity and interpretation of results
- Greater freedom to utilize different research techniques as the study evolves

Cons

- Potentially more vulnerable to bias due to their subjective nature
- Sample sizes tend to be smaller and non-randomised

Qualitative methods: how to ensure trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), there are four criteria for minimising the bias of the QUAL research and reach its trustworthiness. They allow to ensure methodological rigor and track internal processes (Shenton, 2004; Golafshani, 2003):

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability

Expert researchers skilled in QUAL research know that they have to consider using some expedients to address these criteria and that have to plan it from the study design (see the table below).

Criteria to match	Measures to adopt
Credibility	Using data collection tool already successfully used in previous studies
	Frequent debriefing
Transferability	Examination of previous research findings
Dependability	Detailed description of research design
Confirmability	Justifying the choice of the methods adopted

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Credibility

The confidence in the “truth” of the findings can be sought by using data collection tools based partly on questionnaires or interview topic-guide already successfully applied in previous projects concerning the same target and phenomenon e.g. young caregivers. This kind of data can be used for confirming or not what interviewees stated during the qualitative interview. The interview topic-guide should have a structure that allow for a “thick” description of the phenomenon.

Credibility can be also reached through frequent debriefing sessions between researchers, a senior coordinator and peer scrutiny of the research project. Especially in QUAL research, it is important that the research team includes a senior researcher for the project coordination and one researcher for data collection and analysis who is especially skilled in qualitative research techniques. The latter should be responsible for ensuring quality during the data analysis and interpretation through frequent discussions and constant reflective commentary among colleagues and also within each team with the senior researcher, in order to limit the investigators’ bias.

Transferability

This criterion (showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts) can be achieved through the examination of previous research findings: a literature review can be carried out, in order to assess if the achieved results are congruent with those reached by past researches. The purpose of this comparison with other findings referring to the same issue but emerging in other cultural and geographical contexts, is twofold: on the one hand, it helps design a protocol allowing for the transferability of the study; on the other hand, it make researchers aware that the obtained findings should be considered as a baseline contribution to be compared with future studies for further developments.

Dependability

Showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated it is possible through the description of: a) research design and its realization; b) details of data collection; c) analysis processes.

Confirmability

The objectivity (the “neutrality” of the findings, not influenced by researcher bias, motivation, or interest) can be reached by justifying the choice of the methods adopted, admitting the researchers’ predispositions, explaining the reasons behind the decisions made, and identifying both strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

Qualitative methods - Pros and Cons

Quantitative research also comes with drawbacks and benefits, depending on what information you aim to uncover. Here are a few pros and cons to consider when designing your study.

Pros

- Large and random samples help ensure that the broader population is more realistically represented
- Numbers allow to give a clear and concrete representation of the phenomena observed, and to easily communicate

Cons

- Data can suffer from a lack of context or personal detail around participant answers
- Numerous participants are needed, driving up cost while posing logistical challenges

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QUAL data collection tools

Life Story

It involves collecting a detailed narrative of an individual's life, often focusing on significant events, experiences, and perspectives. This tool is useful for understanding the contextual and historical aspects of a person's life, offering rich insights into their unique journey.

Structured Interview

This is an interview with predetermined questions and a fixed format. The researcher follows a set script to maintain consistency across participants. This tool is suitable for gathering specific information in a standardised (uniform) manner, allowing for easier comparison between participants.

Unstructured Interview

This is an open-ended interview without a predetermined set of questions, but the researcher ask a wide question on the core theme of the research, allowing for a more flexible and conversational approach. This tool enables in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences, fostering a more natural and nuanced conversation.

Semi-Structured Interview

It combines elements of both structured and non-structured interviews. Researchers have a set of predetermined questions but can also explore new topics as they arise (questions could be integrated during the conversation, also choosing to skip some of them or to not respect the order established by the researcher: this technique is adaptable to the responses received). This tool balances flexibility and structure, offering the benefits of standardised data collection while allowing for deeper exploration of specific themes.

Focus Group

It involves a group discussion facilitated by a researcher, helped by another researcher who takes notes, where participants share their thoughts and experiences on a particular topic. It is useful for exploring group dynamics, understanding shared perceptions, and uncovering diverse perspectives on a given subject.

User-Centred Design Methods

These techniques involve end-users in the design and development process, ensuring that products or services meet their needs and preferences. They are applied in various fields, such as product design, software development, or service provision, to enhance user satisfaction and usability.

Delphi Method

A structured communication technique involving multiple rounds of surveys or questionnaires with a panel of experts. Participants provide feedback anonymously, and the process continues until a consensus is reached. This technique is useful for forecasting, decision-making, or gathering expert opinions on complex or uncertain issues, often in fields like healthcare or policy development.

Skills required to the QUAL researcher

Qualitative research skills are the strengths that allow a researcher to produce insight and knowledge from information that does not involve numbers. Because qualitative researchers might perform surveys, have conversations and interview their subjects, researchers should pay attention to interpersonal and communication skills.

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Skills required to the QUAL researcher

Some important **skills and abilities** for **qualitative researchers** are:

- Question framing: the ability to frame questions well can help qualitative researchers gather valuable information. They ask questions that encourage the participant to express their feelings fully.
- Aptitude for listening with intention: being a good listener – listening beyond just what the participant is saying to figure out where they are coming from and what they are getting at. Good listening skills include responding to comments and questions, treating the other person with respect and showing curiosity.

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Skills required to the QUAL researcher

- Establishing relationship: the ability to create quickly a relation and a sense of trust with the subject, it makes the person feel comfortable talking to you. Listening to the person you are speaking to and trying to understand what they want to communicate is essential. When subjects feel relaxed, they might be more open with you. It is also important to use non-threatening body language and understand the one of the other person.

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Skills required to the QUAL researcher

- Collecting data: data collection and sharing are key steps in the qualitative research process. Effective researchers usually understand how to take good notes and organise their data. They also know how to compile the information and present it in a way that is easy for others to read and comprehend.
- Think and articulate both big and small: the ability to internalise the big picture questions, as well as the small details of the concept, feature, or content in question, so you have the ability to think quickly and adapt in real time.

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Module 3

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Lesson 3: Analysing qualitative data:

Content analysis, Thematic analysis, Network analysis

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Analysing qualitative data: Content analysis, Thematic analysis, Network analysis

Objectives of the lesson

- Familiarise with techniques of qualitative data analysis
- Learn about software tools for Qualitative Analysis

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How QUAL data can be analysed? Explaining the techniques

Qualitative data analysis refers to the systematic process of examining and interpreting non-numerical data to gain meaningful insights and generate new knowledge. It involves dissecting text, images, videos, and other forms of qualitative data to identify patterns, themes, and relationships.

Qualitative data analysis methods offer an in-depth exploration of reasons behind social phenomena (*why*) and of their characteristics (*how*), enabling researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of complex social issues. It is strong valuable in fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education, where human behaviour and social interactions are studied.

Here are some commonly used qualitative data analysis techniques.

Content Analysis

Objective: To systematically analyse and interpret textual or visual content by categorising and quantifying specific elements

Procedure

1. Define Unit of Analysis: determining what constitutes a unit of analysis (e.g., words, phrases, images)
2. Develop Coding Categories: creating a set of codes that represent key concepts or categories.
3. Coding: applying codes to segments of the data based on the coding categories.
4. Analysis: quantifying and analysing the frequency of codes. Identifying patterns and trends in the data.
5. Draw Conclusions: interpreting the findings and draw conclusions about the content.

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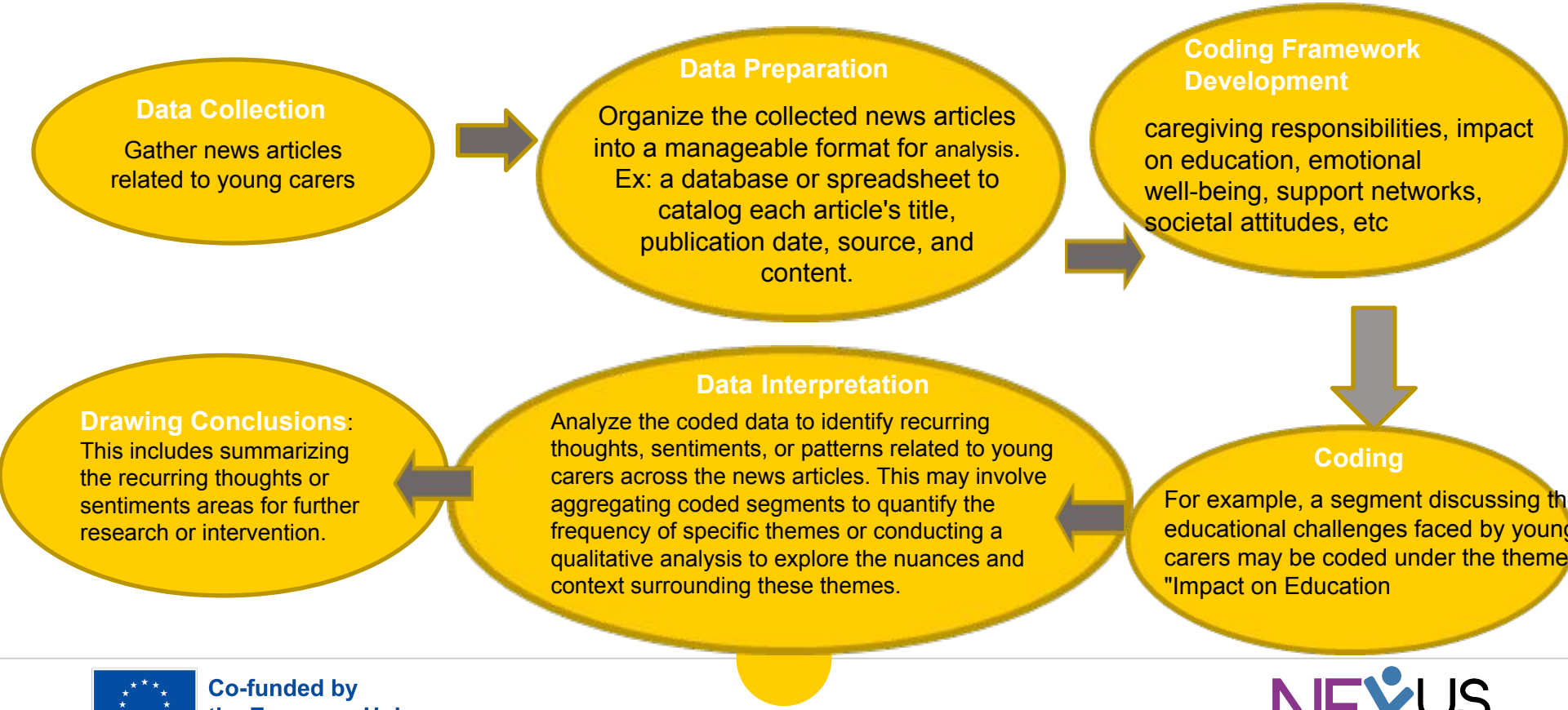
Example: Analyzing news articles to identify recurring thoughts or sentiments related to a specific topic.



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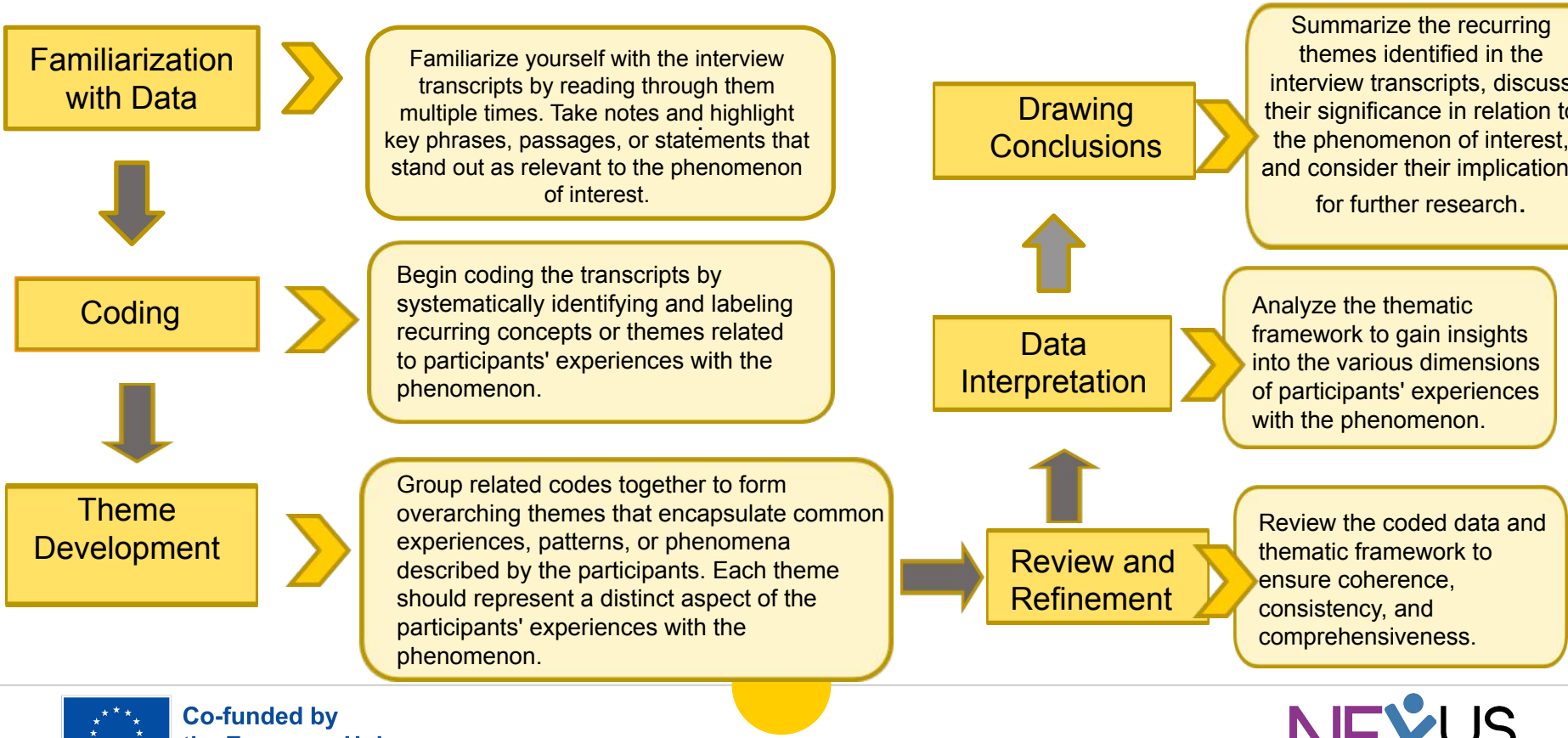
Thematic Analysis

Objective: To identify and analyse patterns or themes within qualitative data, providing a rich understanding of the data

Procedure

1. Familiarisation: diving themselves in the data to become familiar with their content.
2. Generate Initial Codes: by identifying interesting features or patterns.
3. Search for Themes: identifying groups of codes, to translate them into potential themes based on similarities.
4. Review Themes: refining and reviewing themes to ensure they accurately represent the data.
5. Define and Name Themes: clearly defining and naming each theme.
6. Writing the Report: presenting findings in a coherent and meaningful way.

Example: Analyzing interview transcripts to identify recurring themes related to participants' experiences with a particular phenomenon.



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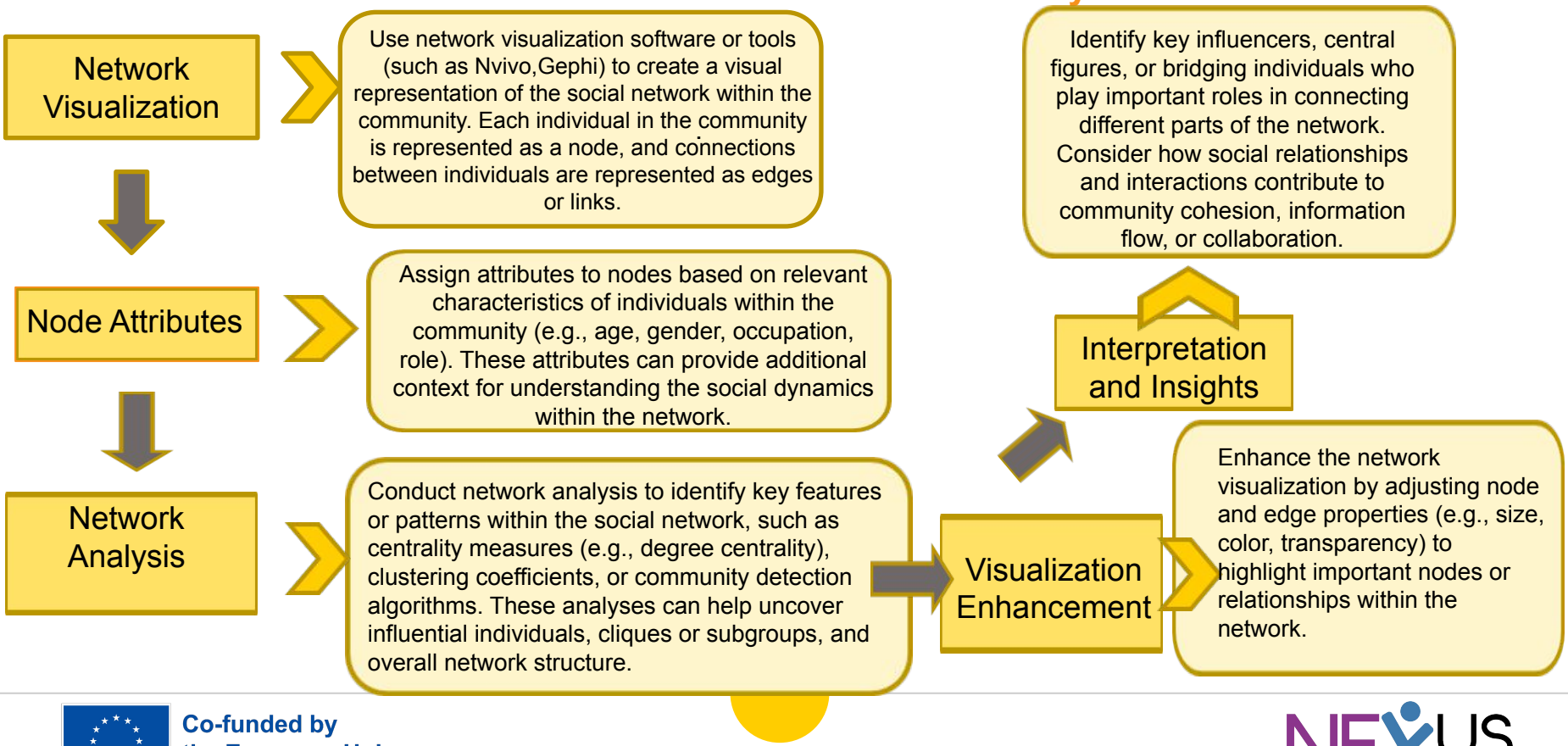
Network Analysis

Objective: To examine and visualise relationships or connections between entities (nodes) within a network.

Procedure

1. Identify Nodes and Connections: defining the entities (nodes) and the relationships or connections between them.
2. Data Collection: gathering data on the relationships, often in the form of a matrix or network dataset.
3. Data Analysis: using network analysis tools to examine the structure and dynamics of the network.
4. Visualization: creating visual representations (network graphs) to illustrate the relationships.
5. Interpretation: interpreting the network patterns, identifying central nodes, clusters, or other relevant features.

Example: Analyzing social relationships within a community by mapping connections between individuals to understand social dynamics



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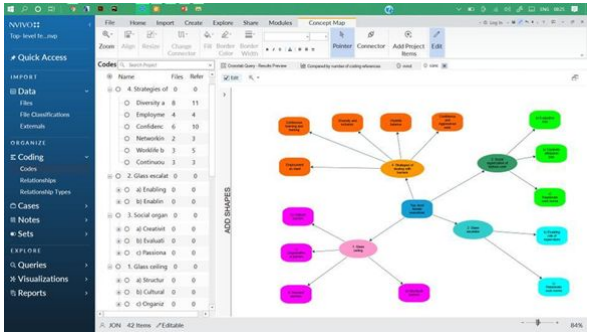
Software Tools for Qualitative Analysis

There are several software tools available to assist researchers in conducting qualitative data analysis. They are designed to facilitate tasks such as coding, organising, and analysing qualitative data. Here is a popular qualitative analysis software tools:

NVivo: is a comprehensive qualitative data analysis software that allows researchers to organise, code, and analyse various forms of data, including text, audio, video, and images.

Features: coding, matrix coding, thematic analysis, visualization tools.



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Module 3

WORKSHOP 1: Writing a participatory research project WITH young carers

G.A. N° 2022-2-IE01-KA220-YOU-883F8363

- Understanding Participatory Research Principles
- Identifying the Needs of YCs
- Writing a Participatory Research Proposal

Learning objectives

Overall activity description

Introduction to concept of participatory research

- Definition and principles of participatory research
- Emphasising the collaborative nature of the approach

Understanding YCs

- Defining YCs and their unique challenges

As defined by The Carers (Scotland) Act, “a young carer is aged under 18 years or aged 18 and a pupil at school and who provides or intends to provide care for another individual.” According to Carers.org as many as 1 in 5 young people may be considered a young carer.

Four main challenges that YCs face are:

1. Their everyday – Many young people do not identify themselves as YCs – they don’t see the work they do as out of the ordinary and don’t always know how to ask for support.
2. Their fear – YCs often hide their role – they are often concerned about stigma and fear of what intervention might mean for their family. This is especially true in families with mental health and/or addiction struggles.

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Four main challenges that YCs face are:

3. Their experiences – Many YCs have had complicated experiences with public services or have not been reached out to with support.
4. Our expectations – Society expects YCs only to take care of their people and forget that they have needs too. YCs should understand the importance of taking care of themselves. We have to take into consideration all our young people's experiences and provide them with the tailored support they need to thrive.

In addition, another challenge concerning the overall society and welfare policies is recognizing the importance of involving YCs in research.

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Ethical Considerations

- Discussing ethical guidelines and considerations specific to working with vulnerable populations, such as YCs.
- Ensuring informed consent and confidentiality.

Benefits of Participatory Research with YCs

- Empowering participants: exploring how participatory research empowers YCs to share their experiences.
- Building trust and rapport: discussing how collaborative research enhances the researcher-participant relationship.

Developing Research Questions with YCs

- Techniques for co-creating research questions with YCs
- Ensuring that research questions are relevant to their experiences

Designing Inclusive Research Methods

- Exploring participatory methods suitable for YCs
- Adapting research tools to be age-appropriate and accessible

Co-Designing Research Tools

- Involving YCs in the design of surveys, interview guides, or other research instruments
- Ensuring the tools resonate with their perspectives

Data Collection Strategies:

- Discussing various participatory data collection methods (e.g., storytelling, arts-based methods) suitable for YCs
- Addressing potential challenges in data collection

Building a Supportive Environment

- Creating a safe and supportive space for YCs to share their experiences
- Strategies for mitigating potential emotional impact on participants.

Analysis and Interpretation

- Discuss about the data analysis techniques to be used
- Ensuring that the interpretation of findings is shared and validated by YCs

Writing the Research Project Proposal

- Structuring a participatory research project proposal.
- Emphasising the importance of clarity and feasibility.

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Module 3

WORKSHOP 2: Deep into the texts of the interviews

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Learning objectives

- Understanding the Importance of In-Depth Analysis
- Practice in Qualitative Coding
- Applying Thematic Analysis Methods

Overall activity description

Introduction to Deep Text Analysis

- Defining deep text analysis in the context of qualitative research.
- Emphasising the importance of detailed exploration of interview texts.

Theoretical Frameworks for Analysis

- Exploring different theoretical perspectives that inform deep text analysis.
- Connecting theoretical frameworks to research questions.

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Coding Techniques

- Coding is an essential activity of the qualitative research process called qualitative data analysis (QDA). Qualitative coding involves organising and categorising data to uncover patterns, themes, and meanings. By coding the data, babels (codes) are applied to segments of data.
- Coding plays a vital role in qualitative research as it enables researchers to make sense of large volumes of qualitative data. It allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and relationships within the data, leading to the emergence of meaningful interpretations and insights. It helps transform raw data into a structured format (the code system) that can be analysed and interpreted effectively.

Coding Techniques

- Different coding approaches exist. Grounded Theory methodology distinguishes into the following three types: open coding, axial coding, selective coding.
- Other types of categorizations exist as well and are equally valid approaches.
- Be sure to follow the approach detailed in the method reference you cite in your scientific work.

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Coding Techniques

- **Open Coding**, also known as initial or descriptive coding, is the first step in the coding procedure. It involves the identification and labelling of concepts, ideas, or incidents within the data. Researchers engage in line-by-line analysis, assigning labels or codes to segments of data that capture their essence. This process generates a comprehensive set of codes, providing a foundation for further analysis.

Coding Techniques

- **Axial Coding** is the next stage in the coding process and involves examining the relationships between the codes identified in the open coding phase. Researchers analyse the connections, overlaps, and associations between different codes, seeking to establish a conceptual framework that explains the underlying phenomena. Axial coding enables the researcher to develop a more refined understanding of the data by exploring the relationships between various categories and subcategories. During axial coding, the code system is also structured hierarchically into categories. Further, relationships between codes should be documented during memo-writing.

Coding Techniques

- **Selective Coding**, the final stage of the coding process, involves refining and integrating the categories and subcategories identified in the previous phases. Researchers focus on identifying the core or central category that best represents the phenomenon under study. This category provides a unifying theme that ties together the different elements of the research, allowing for a comprehensive interpretation of the data. If following a Grounded Theory approach, the core category should be explored in all dimensions of the coding paradigm.

Thematic Analysis

- Understanding the process of identifying and analysing themes in interview texts.
- Walk through steps of thematic analysis using examples.
- Engage participants in thematic analysis exercises.

Narrative Analysis

- Analysing and interpreting the structure and content of the stories and narratives people tell in order to gain insights into the meanings, experiences, and perspectives that underlie them.
- Identifying storytelling elements and patterns.

Content Analysis

- Examining the content of interview texts for patterns and trends.
- Coding for specific words, phrases, or concepts.

Using Software Tools for Text Analysis

- Overview of qualitative analysis software.
- Practical demonstration of how these tools can aid in deep text analysis.

Practical Guide: https://monkeylearn.com/textual-analysis/

Comparative Analysis

- Analysing multiple interview texts for similarities and differences.
- Drawing connections between individual experiences.

Reflexivity and Positionality

- Discussing the researcher's role in deep text analysis.
- Addressing biases and maintaining reflexivity throughout the process.

Ethical Considerations in Text Analysis

- Respecting participant confidentiality during analysis.
- Addressing potential ethical dilemmas that may arise in deep text analysis.

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