

Introduction to semi-structured interviews

Introduction to Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a common qualitative research method used to gather in-depth information from participants. This glossary aims to provide a comprehensive overview of key terms related to semi-structured interviews for learners enrolled in the Advanced Certificate in Semi-Structured Interviews course.

A

1. Audio Recording

Definition: Audio recording refers to the process of capturing spoken information during a semi-structured interview using recording devices such as a digital recorder or smartphone. It allows researchers to accurately transcribe and analyze the interview data.

Related Terms: Transcription, Data Analysis, Verbatim

Example: Researchers often use audio recordings to ensure they capture all the nuances and details of participants' responses during semi-structured interviews.

B

1. Bias

Definition: Bias refers to the systematic error introduced into research findings due to the researcher's preconceived notions, preferences, or expectations. In semi-structured interviews, bias can influence the interpretation of data.

Related Terms: Researcher Bias, Confirmation Bias, Interviewer Bias

Example: A researcher's bias towards a particular outcome may inadvertently influence the questions asked during a semi-structured interview, leading to skewed results.

C

1. Coding

Definition: Coding is the process of categorizing and labeling data from semi-structured interviews to identify patterns, themes, or concepts. It helps researchers organize and analyze large volumes of qualitative data efficiently.

Related Terms: Thematic Analysis, Data Coding, Qualitative Analysis

Example: Researchers may use coding software to systematically analyze the responses from semi-structured interviews and identify common themes or topics across participants.

D

1. Data Saturation

Definition: Data saturation occurs in qualitative research, including semi-structured interviews, when no new

information or themes emerge from additional interviews. It indicates that researchers have reached a point of theoretical sufficiency.

Related Terms: Theoretical Sampling, Grounded Theory, Qualitative Research

Example: After conducting multiple semi-structured interviews, researchers may observe data saturation, indicating that they have captured a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

E

1. Ethical Considerations

Definition: Ethical considerations in semi-structured interviews refer to the principles and guidelines that researchers must follow to ensure the well-being, confidentiality, and rights of participants. It includes obtaining informed consent, maintaining anonymity, and protecting sensitive information.

Related Terms: Confidentiality, Informed Consent, Research Ethics

Example: Researchers conducting semi-structured interviews must adhere to ethical guidelines to protect the privacy and dignity of participants throughout the research process.

F

1. Field Notes

Definition: Field notes are written or typed observations recorded by researchers during or immediately after a semi-structured interview. They capture non-verbal cues, contextual information, and the researcher's reflections.

Related Terms: Observation, Qualitative Data, Memoing

Example: Researchers may use field notes to document their impressions, thoughts, and observations during semi-structured interviews to supplement the audio recordings.

G

1. Grounded Theory

Definition: Grounded theory is an inductive research approach used in qualitative studies, including semi-structured interviews, to develop theories or concepts based on empirical data. It involves the systematic analysis of data to generate new insights.

Related Terms: Inductive Reasoning, Theoretical Sampling, Qualitative Inquiry

Example: Researchers may employ grounded theory to analyze the data from semi-structured interviews and derive theoretical explanations or frameworks from the participants' experiences.

H

1. Human Subject Research

Definition: Human subject research involves conducting studies that involve human participants, such as semi-structured interviews, to investigate social, psychological, or behavioral phenomena. Researchers must comply with ethical guidelines and obtain institutional review board approval.

Related Terms: Informed Consent, Research Ethics, Participant Recruitment

Example: Researchers conducting semi-structured interviews with human subjects must prioritize the safety,

privacy, and welfare of participants throughout the research process.

I

1. Informed Consent

Definition: Informed consent is the voluntary agreement of participants to participate in a research study, such as semi-structured interviews, after being informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. It ensures that participants are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Related Terms: Ethical Considerations, Confidentiality, Human Subjects

Example: Researchers must obtain informed consent from participants before conducting semi-structured interviews to ensure that they understand the study's objectives and implications.

J

1. Journals

Definition: Journals refer to academic publications that disseminate research findings, including studies employing semi-structured interviews. Researchers may submit articles or papers detailing their methodology, results, and implications to journals for peer review and publication.

Related Terms: Peer Review, Publication, Academic Writing

Example: Researchers can share their insights and discoveries from semi-structured interviews with the broader academic community by publishing their work in reputable journals.

K

1. Key Informants

Definition: Key informants are individuals with specialized knowledge, expertise, or experience relevant to the research topic who are selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. They provide valuable insights and perspectives based on their unique qualifications.

Related Terms: Expert Sampling, Purposive Sampling, Snowball Sampling

Example: Researchers may engage key informants in semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth information and expert opinions on specific aspects of the research topic.

L

1. Literature Review

Definition: A literature review is a critical analysis and synthesis of existing research studies, theories, and concepts related to the research topic, including those employing semi-structured interviews. It helps researchers contextualize their study within the broader scholarly discourse.

Related Terms: Secondary Data Analysis, Scholarly Sources, Conceptual Framework

Example: Researchers conducting semi-structured interviews may conduct a comprehensive literature review to identify gaps in existing knowledge and inform their research design.

M

1. Moderator

Definition: A moderator is the individual responsible for facilitating semi-structured interviews by asking open-ended questions, guiding the conversation, and ensuring that the discussion remains focused on the research objectives. Moderators must possess strong communication and interpersonal skills.

Related Terms: Interviewer, Facilitator, Focus Group Moderator

Example: A skilled moderator can create a comfortable and engaging environment during semi-structured interviews, encouraging participants to share their thoughts and experiences openly.

N

1. Non-Verbal Communication

Definition: Non-verbal communication refers to the transmission of messages or cues through gestures, facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice during semi-structured interviews. It can convey emotions, attitudes, and intentions without spoken words.

Related Terms: Body Language, Paralanguage, Communication Skills

Example: Researchers conducting semi-structured interviews must be attentive to participants' non-verbal cues to understand their reactions, perceptions, and feelings beyond verbal responses.

O

1. Open-Ended Questions

Definition: Open-ended questions are inquiries that prompt participants to provide detailed, descriptive responses during semi-structured interviews. Unlike closed-ended questions that require a specific answer, open-ended questions encourage exploration and elaboration.

Related Terms: Probing, Qualitative Research, Data Collection

Example: Researchers often use open-ended questions to initiate meaningful conversations and elicit rich narratives from participants in semi-structured interviews.

P

1. Pilot Study

Definition: A pilot study is a small-scale trial conducted before the main research project, such as semi-structured interviews, to test the feasibility of the research design, procedures, and instruments. It helps researchers identify and address potential issues before full-scale implementation.

Related Terms: Feasibility Study, Pretesting, Research Design

Example: Researchers may conduct a pilot study to refine their interview questions, sampling strategy, and data collection methods for semi-structured interviews based on initial feedback and observations.

Q

1. Qualitative Data

Definition: Qualitative data consist of non-numerical information obtained from sources such as observations, interviews, and documents, including data collected through semi-structured interviews. It provides detailed insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors.

Related Terms: Quantitative Data, Data Analysis, Triangulation

Example: Researchers may analyze qualitative data from semi-structured interviews to explore themes, patterns, and relationships within the narrative responses of participants.

R

1. Reliability

Definition: Reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and repeatability of research findings obtained from semi-structured interviews. It ensures that the data collection methods, instruments, and analyses produce consistent results under similar conditions.

Related Terms: Validity, Triangulation, Research Design

Example: Researchers can enhance the reliability of their study by using standardized interview protocols, conducting member checks, and employing multiple coders to analyze data from semi-structured interviews.

S

1. Sampling

Definition: Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants or cases for inclusion in semi-structured interviews based on specific criteria, objectives, or strategies. It ensures that the sample represents the target population and allows for generalization of findings.

Related Terms: Convenience Sampling, Purposive Sampling, Snowball Sampling

Example: Researchers may use purposive sampling to select participants with diverse perspectives, experiences, or expertise for semi-structured interviews to capture a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

T

1. Transcription

Definition: Transcription is the process of converting spoken words from audio recordings of semi-structured interviews into written text. It facilitates data analysis, coding, and interpretation by providing a written record of participants' responses.

Related Terms: Verbatim, Data Analysis, Qualitative Research

Example: Researchers may hire professional transcribers or use transcription software to accurately transcribe and analyze the content of semi-structured interviews for research purposes.

U

1. Unstructured Interviews

Definition: Unstructured interviews are qualitative research methods that allow participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without a predetermined set of questions or a strict interview guide. Unlike semi-structured interviews, unstructured interviews offer flexibility and spontaneity.

Related Terms: Semi-Structured Interviews, Qualitative Research, Data Collection

Example: Researchers may choose unstructured interviews when exploring complex or sensitive topics that require participants to share personal narratives and reflections in their own words.

V

1. Validity

Definition: Validity refers to the accuracy, truthfulness, and appropriateness of research findings obtained from semi-structured interviews. It ensures that the data collection methods, instruments, and interpretations measure what they intend to measure.

Related Terms: Reliability, Triangulation, Internal Validity

Example: Researchers can improve the validity of their study by using multiple data sources, triangulating methods, and conducting member checks to verify the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected from semi-structured interviews.

W

1. Written Consent

Definition: Written consent is a formal agreement signed by participants before engaging in a research study, such as semi-structured interviews, to indicate their voluntary participation, understanding of the study's purpose, and rights as research subjects. It serves as a legal document and record of consent.

Related Terms: Informed Consent, Ethical Considerations, Confidentiality

Example: Researchers may ask participants to provide written consent to participate in semi-structured interviews and acknowledge their agreement to the study's terms and conditions before commencing the research.

This glossary provides an overview of essential terms related to semi-structured interviews for learners in the Advanced Certificate in Semi-Structured Interviews course. By understanding these concepts, researchers can enhance their knowledge, skills, and proficiency in conducting qualitative research and analyzing data from semi-structured interviews effectively.