Qualitative Research Guide

Developing a post-data collection analysis plan

This resource has been developed as a part of the How-To series on Qualitative Research for the NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) Hub delivered by King's College London (KCL) and Partners.

More about the Research Support Service Hub delivered by King's College London and Partners

The Research Support Service Hub delivered by King's College London and Partners | NIHR is a national centre of excellence for research methodology in mental health, psychology and neuroscience. It is delivered by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience and King's Clinical Trials Unit at KCL, in partnership with PRIMENT Clinical Trials Unit at University College London, Leeds Institute of Clinical Trials Research, the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Oxford and Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust.

The hub brings together experts in research methodology and clinicians in psychiatry, psychology and neuroscience. The Qualitative Applied Health Research Centre (QUAHRC) at King's College London, provide expert advice on the design and conduct of qualitative research through the RSS, advising researchers in seeking funding to conduct mental health research, supporting pre and post-award skill development, and advancing research methodology.

So, you've collected qualitative data, but your analysis plans weren't clearly formulated, or they need to change...

NOW WHAT?

This guide is for you

As qualitative methodologists, we often receive requests to support other researchers to manage their already collected qualitative data.

Like the researchers who reach out to us, you may find yourself in a situation where you are looking for advice and support on analysis methods. It could be that you need to develop an analysis plan ad hoc, or your initial qualitative analysis plan requires adjustment. Although not ideal, this situation is also not uncommon. There are many reasons why this might have happened:

- Perhaps you had carefully considered and developed an analysis plan, only to find that the data you collected did not work out the way that you anticipated – and you now need to find a new way to work with the data.

- Perhaps you have joined a research project after the data has been collected and there is no analysis plan – and you have now been tasked with data analysis.

This guidance document is for anyone who finds themselves in this kind of situation, for whatever reason. The guide will take you through considerations for analysis – based on our experience and relevant literature – to get you back on track and to help you to develop (what we call) a post-data collection analysis plan.

This guide is presented in four parts.

Part 1: Taking Stock

Questions to consider for getting started with developing a post-data collection analysis plan.

Part 2: Working out the details

Questions that will help you to consider the specifics about how you will undertake the analysis.

Part 3: Common methods to consider

Analysis methods that are commonly used in post-data collection situations.

Part 4: The way forward

A practical tool to support the development of a post-data collection analysis plan. Where to go from here and how to apply this thinking in your research.

You may want to refer to the practical tool provided in part 4 as you work through parts 1-3

We mostly use data analysis examples specific to research in Mental Health, Psychology, and Neuroscience throughout the guide. While our focus is on these disciplines, the considerations that we present are applicable across different fields and research contexts. Our aim is to provide you with a versatile and adaptable approach to creating a robust post-data collection analysis plan, regardless of your specific area of study.

Part 1: Taking Stock

Questions to consider for getting started with developing a post-data collection analysis plan

When faced with the need to modify your qualitative research analysis plans, it may be tempting to rush into analysing the data, but it's essential to take a step back to consider your research programme holistically before doing so. Before developing or making adjustments to your analysis plans, it is important to i) evaluate the qualitative component of your research within the context of your overall research objectives and ii) consider how it relates to other (qualitative and/or quantitative) aspects of your study. By understanding the broader implications of your research and how you plan to use your findings, as well as taking stock of what qualitative data you have actually collected, you can choose appropriate analysis methods and strategies.

There are five areas/questions that we suggest you consider to help develop your analysis plan, choose a method, and get your post-data collection qualitative research analysis plans back on track.

Taking Stock to develop your plan

1

The Big Picture

How does the qualitative component relate to your study as a whole?

It is helpful to think carefully about the role of the qualitative component within the broader context of your study and how it contributes to the overall research goals. It's worth considering how your qualitative findings could provide context, depth, or nuance to the wider data in your study.

For example, in mixed methods studies, qualitative data can illuminate the mechanisms or processes underlying quantitative findings. Qualitative data can also be used to identify areas for improvement or development in interventions or trial designs. This might involve exploring participant perspectives on intervention components, barriers to engagement, or contextual factors that influence outcomes.

Determine the role of your qualitative data in the wider study context

The important thing is to be clear about what role your qualitative data is playing in your overall project.

Consider overarching theories or conceptual models

Your qualitative analysis plan should also be guided, in some way, by the overarching theories, conceptual models, or frameworks that inform your study. For example, if your study is grounded in a social-ecological framework, your qualitative analysis might explore how individual, interpersonal, and environmental factors interact to influence participant experiences or outcomes. Similarly, if your study is rooted in the biopsychosocial model, your qualitative analysis might delve into the interplay between biological, psychological, and social factors that shape participant experiences or outcomes, examining how these components influence health, coping mechanisms, or treatment responses.

2 Objectives

What do you want to achieve with the qualitative component?

Establish clear objectives for qualitative component

To develop an effective post-data collection qualitative analysis plan, it is important to establish what you aim to achieve with the qualitative component of your research.

Clearly outlining the objectives of your qualitative analysis will provide direction for your research and help you to make informed decisions throughout the analysis process. Your objectives should align with your overall research goals and clarify what you hope to achieve through your qualitative analysis.

Determine how you intend to use your findings

It's important to think about how you intend to use your findings as this may influence the decisions you make during the analysis planning process. Uses could include, among others, informing future intervention iterations or implementation strategies, influencing practice, shaping policy, or evaluating programmes.

Examples

If your goal is to use your findings to refine or improve an intervention, your analysis plan may focus on identifying areas of strength and weakness within the current intervention, and your analysis can be structured to provide actionable insights for future iterations of the intervention. This might involve analysing participant feedback on specific intervention components, examining barriers or facilitators to engagement, or exploring the impact of contextual factors on implementation or intervention outcomes.

If your goal is to inform policy development, your analysis plan can prioritise extracting insights that are relevant to key stakeholders and decision-makers. This might involve examining the potential impact of policies on target populations, exploring the perspectives of marginalised groups, or highlighting systemic barriers or facilitators to change. Your analysis should be structured to provide clear, actionable recommendations for policy development.

3

Research questions

Determine specific research questions to address

It is important to determine or reassert the specific research questions that your qualitative analysis will address. This will help to ensure that your analysis is focused and purposeful, with a clear connection to your research objectives. In conjunction with the overarching theories and/or models, this will also provide a framework for organising and/or interpreting your data when you start to analyse it. We refer to this is more detail in Part 2.

Ensure alignment with collected data

While it may be tempting to create questions that cover a wide range of topics, it is essential that there is sufficient and relevant data to answer the research questions effectively - you won't be able to answer some questions that you might come up with now if you have not collected the relevant data. Looking carefully at your e.g., interview schedule / guide or questionnaire as you revisit or start to set out the questions for your analysis can help you to establish which questions you have collected enough or relevant data to answer.

When developing a post-data collection analysis plan, your research questions must align with the data you have already collected. You will need to collect new data to answer questions that you have determined are important if you have not collected the kind of data that will answer these questions.

Example

You are conducting research on a newly developed mobile app intervention for anxiety. As part of the research, you conduct interviews or surveys with participants about their experiences.

In this case, your overall research **objective** for the qualitative component of the study might be related to intervention experiences, focusing on feasibility and acceptability.

Your aim for the analysis of your qualitative data might be to explore the perceived usefulness, usability and barriers to using the app.

Key research questions that the qualitative analysis might address, in this case, include:

- How do participants perceive the usefulness of the app in managing anxiety symptoms?
- What factors influence the usability of the app for participants with varying levels of technological literacy?
- What barriers or challenges do participants encounter when using the app, and how might these impact adherence?
- How satisfied are participants with the intervention overall, and would they recommend it to others?

The usefulness of any of these questions, however, is limited by the data collected. If the survey didn't ask about levels of technological literacy (and this data was not collected in any other way), or if participants in interviews were not given an opportunity to discuss whether or not they would recommend the app to other users, these are of course, not questions that could be answered through the analysis of the qualitative data that has already been collected.

4 Your Data

What does your data actually look like?

Having looked at whether the data you have aligns with the specific questions you plan to answer through your qualitative analysis, you can now spend more time looking at the data to help you develop your analysis plan. The answers to these questions can help you choose the appropriate method to use.

Identify participant groups (single or multiple)

Have you collected data from one participant group or multiple stakeholder groups? You should identify the distinct participant groups represented in your dataset. These might include different stakeholder groups, demographic characteristics, or individuals with varying experiences or perspectives. Understanding participant groups can inform how you approach comparing and contrasting perspectives or exploring similarities and differences across different contexts.

Example

For example, if your dataset includes both patient and clinician interviews, your analysis plan might involve comparing their perspectives or experiences of a particular healthcare intervention.

Determine if data is individual or group-level

Have you collected individual or group-level data? Determine whether your dataset comprises individual-level data (e.g., personal experiences or opinions) or group-level data (e.g., focus group discussions or community narratives). This distinction can influence the types of analysis method/techniques you choose and how you interpret your findings.

Example

For example, if your data consists of focus group discussions, your analysis plan might involve identifying shared understandings or group dynamics, while individual interviews might require more in-depth exploration of personal experiences or narratives.

Does your data focus on depth or breadth?

Having looked at whether the data you have aligns with the specific questions you plan to answer through your qualitative analysis, you should now spend more time looking at the data to help you develop your analysis plan. The answers to these questions can help you choose the appropriate method to use.

Is your data rich?

Rich data that focuses on depth and detail contains in-depth information, context, and descriptions of experiences, perceptions, or phenomena under study. It often includes stories, narratives, and thick descriptions of the research setting, participants, and their experiences. Rich data is typically collected through open-ended methods like in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations.

Is your data thin?

Thin data in a data set focusing on specific variables or questions is typically collected through more structured methods such as surveys or questionnaires, focusing on pre-determined categories and variables, for example questions relating to satisfaction with an intervention. This kind of thin data typically contains little contextual information, making it difficult to make any inferences beyond the surface level meaning of the data and it is unlikely to contain stories or narratives.

The richness and complexity of your qualitative data can influence the choice of analysis approach, as different methods/techniques are better suited to handling varying levels of detail and nuance. Does your dataset contain in-depth, detailed information from semi structured interviews, or does it contain more structured questions, such as from a questionnaire or structured interview? If your dataset comprises detailed personal narratives from semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis might be an appropriate choice to help you identify recurring experiences, emotions, or perspectives across participants. If your dataset consists of short, structured responses to closed-ended questions about patient satisfaction with a healthcare service, content analysis could help you efficiently categorise and interpret these responses. You can read more about this in Part 3.

5

Audience

The scope and nature of your intended write-up can influence choices you make about your analysis.

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Determine where you will publish your findings

If you plan to present your findings as part of a standalone qualitative study, your analysis plan will typically focus on more in-depth explorations and rich descriptions of the qualitative data.

Example

For example, when publishing a standalone qualitative paper on patient experiences in a mental health treatment programme, your analysis might focus on in-depth exploration of patient narratives, including themes related to treatment benefits and challenges.

Sometimes it's the case that qualitative data collected on acceptability or feasibility does not yield substantial or unique enough insights to warrant a standalone publication. Here, it might be more suitable to combine the qualitative findings with quantitative feasibility data to provide a more comprehensive and valuable contribution to the literature.

Who is the target audience?

Thinking about your target audience and dissemination channels may also influence the structure and style of your write-up, as well as your analysis.

Example

For example, when targeting policymakers and aiming to publish your findings in a policy brief, your analysis plan might prioritise identifying systemic barriers or facilitators to change, explore the potential impact of policies on target populations, and highlight key findings that can guide policy development. But, if your goal is to disseminate your research to the broader public your analysis plan should focus on presenting findings in an accessible and relatable way. Your analysis might involve highlighting compelling participant quotations or stories that illustrate key themes, using clear and straightforward language to discuss your findings, and to highlight the potential impact of your research on people's lives.

Part 2: Working out the details

Questions that will help you to consider the specifics about how you will undertake the analysis

Will you use an inductive, deductive or combined approach?

When analysing qualitative data, you will need to decide whether to use an inductive, deductive, or a combined approach.

Most qualitative analysis methods (of text) involve sorting into themes or categories, either inductively, that is, derived from the data, or deductively. Often, a combination of inductive and deductive approaches is used.

Your choice of approach should be guided by your research question and the nature of your data. Consider the following questions:

- Are you aiming to capture variation?
- Are you interested in allowing unexpected themes to emerge?
- Is there a lack of existing frameworks or theories that apply to your data?
- Do you want to explore the relevance of an existing framework to your data?

An inductive approach involves allowing themes, concepts, and categories to emerge from the data without imposing pre-existing frameworks or assumptions. Key characteristics of an inductive approach include:

Identifying the range and diversity of new themes and concepts

Being inclusive (themes/concepts/categories are added to reflect as many of the nuances in the data as possible)

Synthesising the range and diversity of the key concepts generated from the data

Placing emphasis on the participant's perspective

When might you use an inductive approach?

Inductive analysis is well-suited for exploratory research where the aim is to generate new theories or hypotheses based on the data. It's also useful when you aim to explore new or under-researched topics, where existing theories or frameworks may be absent or limited. Inductive approaches are also useful when you want to understand the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals without being confined by pre-existing assumptions.

When the aim of the analysis is to understand the meanings given to a situation as expressed by interview participants, verbatim transcription of the participants' own words in the interviews is important, to privilege their voices in the analysis and interpretation.

Example

When studying the experiences of patients living with a rare neurological disorder, an inductive approach can help to identify patterns and themes in personal experiences to begin to better understand the impact of illness on their lives.

A **deductive approach** involves applying pre-existing frameworks or theories to categorise and analyse the data. Key characteristics of a deductive approach include:

Mapping data to a pre-defined framework

Using a priori descriptions/definitions

Testing the applicability of existing theories or frameworks to the data

Comparing data to predetermined criteria, themes, or categories

When might you use a deductive approach?

A deductive approach would typically be most useful when you want to test the applicability of an existing theory or framework in a specific context through your analysis, or if you want to compare different data sets or cases based on predetermined criteria. You could also use this approach when your analysis aims to see how well pre-defined themes or categories explain the experiences of individuals.

Example

A study investigating healthcare professionals' perceptions of implementing trauma-informed care in mental health settings could use a deductive approach. Researchers might apply the established "SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach" framework to analyse interview transcripts. This pre-existing framework includes categories such as safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. By using this deductive method, the researchers could systematically assess how well these principles are understood and applied in practice.

In some cases, researchers may choose to **combine inductive and deductive approaches**, integrating elements of both inductive and deductive methods. It involves using pre-existing theories, models, or frameworks to guide the analysis while simultaneously allowing new themes, concepts, or categories to emerge from the data. This approach enables researchers to build on established knowledge and explore previously unidentified aspects of the research topic.

When might you use a deductive/inductive approach?

Using a combined approach can be useful when you would like to use an existing framework as a foundation for your analysis while remaining open to new themes or categories that may arise from the data. It can also be useful when you want to incorporate both existing theories or models and novel concepts that emerge from the data.

Example

A study that investigated the applicability and relevance of an already developed conceptual framework of recovery (called CHIME framework) used a combined inductive/deductive approach. Current service users (i.e., people who may be at an earlier stage of recovery) were asked about their understanding and experience of personal recovery. Deductive (the CHIME framework) and inductive analysis (to identify new themes) was used. CHIME was found to be relevant to current mental health service users, and the framework was also extended to include new themes (practical support, diagnosis and medication, and scepticism surrounding recovery).

How will you draw on existing theory and/or frameworks?

Incorporating existing theories, frameworks, and models into qualitative analysis can enhance the depth and rigor of your research by providing a foundation for understanding and interpreting your findings.

In part 1 we mentioned that your analysis plan should be guided by the overarching theories, conceptual models, or frameworks that inform your study. In addition to these, you may also want to consider broader theories that may be relevant to your research topic. For instance, theoretical frameworks of acceptability can be useful in understanding how individuals perceive and engage with mental health interventions or treatments. Or, theories of stigma and discrimination could shed light on the barriers faced by individuals with mental health conditions.

These models/theories/frameworks can be used to help you develop a coding framework, guide the coding process, and support how you analyse and interpret the data.

Developing a Coding Framework

Create a coding framework that integrates the key components of your chosen model or theory. This can involve creating a hierarchical codebook that includes main categories and sub-codes to capture the richness of your data.

Coding and Organising Data

Use the framework or model to guide your coding process. Identify and label themes that correspond with the key components of the framework. For example, if you are using the Biopsychosocial Model, you might organise your data into themes related to biological, psychological, and social factors.

Analysing and Interpreting Data

Use the framework or model as a lens to interpret your findings. Identify patterns and relationships within your data that align with the theoretical concepts. Consider how your findings can contribute to or challenge existing theory.

Example

A study that explored participants' experiences of receiving/delivering a complex intervention used inductive analysis to develop an initial coding frame and to identify themes generated in the data. An implementation framework (the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research was then used as a matrix to organise the early themes, to explore patterns and relationships in the data, and to map connections between themes and participant groups.

It can still be useful to present your findings using a framework or model as an organising structure. You can discuss your themes in relation to the key components of the framework/theory/model. This can involve using tables, diagrams, or visual representations to illustrate the relationships between themes and theoretical concepts. In your discussion section, you could consider the implications of your findings in the context of the broader theoretical landscape. You can also discuss how your study contributes to existing theory, and consider potential applications for research, policy, or practice.

Example

A study that explored the understanding of what it means to live with and beyond cancer used theories of adjustment and post-traumatic growth to situate the findings in the wider context of psychological adjustment and transitioning to life with a long-term health condition.

Are you conducting the analysis on your own or will there be more than one analyst?

When planning your post-data collection qualitative analysis, you should consider whether you will be conducting the analysis on your own or as part of a team. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages.

Individual Analysis

Conducting qualitative analysis individually allows for a deep immersion in the data and can help maintain a consistent analytical perspective throughout the process. This approach may be more suitable for smaller datasets or when focusing on a narrow topic. However, working alone may limit the scope of interpretation and can be time-consuming, as you need to manage all aspects of the analysis process independently. Reflecting on your own role, assumptions, and biases as a researcher is essential for maintaining rigor and credibility in your work. However, engaging in reflexivity on your own can be challenging because it requires a high level of self-awareness and introspection, and without the input of other researchers, it may be more difficult to identify and address your own biases.

Group / Team Analysis

A team-based approach to qualitative analysis has several potential benefits, particularly when working with larger datasets or complex research questions. Distributing the workload among team members can speed up the analysis process. This is helpful when using rapid analysis methods or working with time-sensitive data. Working with a second analyst, or team, also provides an additional perspective, has the potential to enhance the interpretive depth of the data, and offers an opportunity to reflect on the analysis approach. However, working in a team can sometimes result in inconsistent interpretations of the data and you should develop a strategy to manage this appropriately.

Part 3:

Common methods to consider

Content analysis

Content analysis is a systematic approach used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts. This method allows researchers to distil words into fewer content-related categories, with the assumption that when classified into the same categories, words or phrases can share the same meaning.

Qualitative content analysis can go beyond coding for the surface meaning of texts to look at determining the meaning of the data by interpreting the patterns behind those determined presences.

Content analysis is particularly useful when dealing with large volumes of textual data, such as social media posts, policy documents, or surveys, as it can allow for both quantitative (e.g., frequency of themes) and qualitative (e.g., contextual interpretation of meanings) insights.

Three distinct approaches to content analysis have been outlined:

Conventional content analysis	Coding categories are derived directly from the text data.
Directed content analysis	Analysis starts with a theory or relevant research findings as guidance for initial codes.
Summative content analysis	Involves counting and comparisons of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context or patterns.

The choice between different approaches to content analysis - conventional, directed, or summative - depends on the research question and the nature of your data.

Content analysis shares some similarities with thematic analysis, yet there are key differences:

Although content analysis can examine both, it often focuses more on manifest (surface-level) content, while thematic analysis tends to look deeper into latent (underlying) meanings.

Content analysis is particularly useful for large datasets, as it can handle large amounts of text efficiently. Thematic analysis is often used for smaller, more focused datasets.

When to choose content analysis:

- You have a large volume of text or media to analyse systematically
- You have pre-existing categories or theories you want to test
- Your qualitative data is structured (from a questionnaire or structured interview)

Strengths

- Systematic approach
- Handles large volumes of data efficiently

Weaknesses

- May miss nuanced meanings or context
- Risk of oversimplification of complex phenomena if using the wrong data

Example

Abroms et al. (2011) used content analysis to evaluate smoking cessation apps. They developed a coding scheme based on established guidelines for smoking cessation, then systematically categorised and quantified the features of each app. This allowed them to statistically analyse how well the apps adhered to evidence-based practices.

Abroms LC, Padmanabhan N, Thaweethai L, & Phillips T. (2011). iPhone Apps for Smoking Cessation: A content analysis. American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 40(3):279-285.

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FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

Framework analysis is a structured, matrix-based method for organising and analysing qualitative data, which allows researchers to move systematically from raw data to descriptive and explanatory accounts while maintaining transparent links to original data sources. It involves a five-step process: familiarisation, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation. This method is particularly useful when working with multidisciplinary teams or when there are specific questions to address from the outset. It allows for both *a priori* and emergent concepts to be included in the analysis, making it a flexible yet systematic approach.

When to choose framework analysis:

- For applied or policy-relevant research where structured outputs are beneficial
- In team-based research projects requiring a collaborative analysis approach
- For studies with clear, focused research questions or theories that can guide initial framework development

Strengths

- Flexible, allowing for both a priori and emergent themes
- Enables collaborative analysis in team-based research projects
- Produces highly structured outputs, making it easier to navigate the data

Weaknesses

- Less suitable for highly inductive or exploratory research questions

Example

Frazer et al. (2023) provide a worked example of framework analysis in psychological research. The Framework Method allowed the researchers to systematically organize and analyse a large volume of data (over 1,000 minutes) while preserving the original meaning and enabling them to condense the vast quantity of data into a series of thematic matrices, making it easier to identify and analyse key themes. The framework analysis allowed the researchers to start with broad, literature-based themes (based on existing literature about the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on families) and then develop more nuanced themes as the analysis progressed (supporting a more nuanced understanding of the pandemic's impact on Australian and non-traditional families).

Frazer, I., Orr, C., & Thielking, M. (2023). Applying the framework method to qualitative psychological research: Methodological overview and worked example. Qualitative Psychology, 10(1), 44–59. https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000238

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REFLEXIVE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Reflexive thematic analysis (TA) is situated within a qualitative paradigm. Its procedures and process are grounded by qualitative values. Researcher subjectivity is considered as the primary tool for reflexive TA. Researcher subjectivity is seen as a "resource for doing analysis" rather than as a "problem to be managed or controlled, to be gotten rid of" (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 8). Reflexivity is also seen as key to successful reflexive TA.

Reflexive TA involves six phases of analysis: familiarisation with the data; coding the data; generating initial themes from the codes and coded data; reviewing and developing themes; defining, naming and refining themes; and writing up the report.

Reflexive TA typically begins with individual-level case-by-case repeated re-reading of interview transcripts and re-listening of sound files for data immersion. This phase called dataset familiarisation also involves critical engagement with the data and asking questions about the content of the data. This is followed by line-by-line open coding, where segments of data that appear potentially interesting and relevant to the research question are identified and given "code labels". In reflexive TA, themes are built from codes by the researcher through their systematic engagement with and what they bring to (e.g. their research values), the data. Themes are conceptualised as "shared patterned meaning" (Braun et al., 2014). Each theme continues to be refined, and where data allows, further sub-themes are developed. Thematic maps, visual representations of the themes, are a helpful tool for organising the themes by clustering all codes according to connections in the data and by considering the patterns and relationships between themes.

When to choose thematic analysis:

Thematic analysis offers a way to i) provide a rich description of the data and ii) organise themes through interpretive analysis by grouping themes and sub-themes into overarching themes.

Strengths

- Can go beyond coding for the surface meaning to capture detailed meanings and to interpret patterns and connections in the data
- Suitable for rich data sets
- Can highlight key features of a large body of data
- Can be used to identify similarities and differences across the data

Weaknesses

- Less suitable for thin data sets
- Has limited interpretative power if not used in combination with a particular theory or concepts.
- It is time-intensive

Example

Anderson and Clarke (2019) used inductive thematic analysis to analyse posts from an online support forum for people who pick their skin with a view to explore disgust and shame associated with skin picking and its psychosocial impact.

Their analysis started with data familiarisation which involved re-reading the online posts by the first author. This was followed by coding, specifically coding interesting features of the online posts that were relevant to the topic. The codes were then reviewed by the second author and subsequently sorted into themes. The authors then collated all data relating to each theme. They then revised and refined each themes and subthemes to make sure that there is a good fit with the data. Researcher reflexivity was central throughout data collection and analysis process. The authors indicated that researcher reflexivity helped them to suspend their presuppositions and allowed them to present a more representative description of participants' reality. They also said they delayed writing the literature review until after they analysed the data to reduce the impact of their preconceptions. In the paper, the authors reported on three themes.

Anderson, S., & Clarke, V. (2019). Disgust, shame and the psychosocial impact of skin picking: Evidence from an online support forum. Journal of Health Psychology, 24(13), 1773-1784.

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Part 4:

The way forward

Now that we've explored the key considerations for developing a post-data collection qualitative analysis plan, it's time to put this thinking into practice.

In this section we've put together a tool for you to help you think about the considerations presented. Once you have gone through this table and populated it for the project you are working on, you should be clear about your new analysis plan, be ready to engage with the further resources we have provided in part three and at the end of this guide, and to get started on your analysis!

As you work with the tool, remember to provide a clear rationale for your choices, this will be useful when writing up your methods section.

Questions to consider	Answer	What will this mean for my analysis?	Rationale
What role is your qualitative data playing in your overall project and how is it contributing to your overall research aims?			
What overarching theories, conceptual models, or frameworks inform your study?			
What are the specific objectives of your qualitative analysis?			
What research questions will your qualitative analysis address?			
Is the data you have collected aligned with and able to answer the above questions?			
Have you collected data from one participant group or multiple stakeholder groups?			
Have you collected individual or group-level data?			

Questions to consider	Answer	What will this mean for my analysis?	Rationale
Does your data focus on depth or breadth? Is it rich or thin?			
Will your findings be presented as part of a standalone qualitative study or as part of a mixed-methods study?			
Who is your target audience, and how might this influence your analysis and presentation?			
Will you use an inductive, deductive, or combined approach? Why?			
How will you draw on existing theory and/or frameworks in your analysis?			
Are you conducting the analysis on your own or will there be more than one analyst?			
Which analysis method (e.g., Content Analysis, Framework Analysis, Thematic Analysis) are you considering – and why?			

Useful readings and resources:

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https://www.ucl.ac.uk/qualitative-health-research-network/training-programme

www.quahrc.co.uk

NIHR | Research Support Service

This is a living document created by the NIHR RSS Qualitative team (at KCL & Partners) to support post-award training and development.

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