

In-depth interviews : knowledge- producing Dialogue**Received date: 05/11/2022 Accepted date:22/03/2023 Published date:28/03/2023****Souad Oulddjaballah**Laboratory of research and studies in new media, University Mohamed Boudiaf of
M'sila Email: souad.oulldjaballah@univ-msila.dz**Abstract:**

In-depth interview ,one of qualitative research methods , has been widely used in a variety of disciplines in which the researcher obtains detailed information directly from the participants to explore in depth their underlying opinions, motivations, beliefs, experiences, and feelings on a particular subject.

The purpose of the present paper is to provide various definitions of in-depth interview, its epistemological origins, the history of its use, the different types of interviews, the purposes for which it is used. This article aims to introduce the principles and procedures that should be used in conducting in-depth interviews.

Keywords: in-depth interview; qualitative research methods; semi-structured interview; Open-ended interview; in- depth interview stages.

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1. Introduction:

In-depth interview, also called Intensive interview, is one of data collection methods used in qualitative research assuming that oral communication with the participating individuals enables the researcher to acquire their own and unique knowledge of the social life to which they belong. Scholars and researchers of humanities and social sciences stress the importance of interviewing individual participants to grasp their point of view, ‘and personal accounts are seen as having central importance in social research because of the power of language to illuminate meaning’ (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003).

Consequently, in-depth interview is considered a kind of meaning-making partnership between the interview (researcher) conducting the interview and the individual respondent (interviewee). The researcher is able to observe the social reality through the visions and experiences of the individual respondents, this makes the in-depth interview, for the qualitative researcher, who stems from hermeneutic epistemology and interpretive perspective, a special kind of dialogue that produces knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

Therefore, in-depth interview requires active questioning and active listening. This basis is known as a qualitative interview in which the interviewer seeks knowledge from the respondent’s point of view.

This paper presents an overview of what is known about it, including its various definitions, history, and purposes, the stances of the researcher, and information about how to conduct in-depth interviews.

1. Objective of the Study

In this article, we have tried to highlight aspects of in-depth interview method in qualitative research. This study will bear the following specific objectives:

- To provide a basic understanding of in-depth interviews.
- To highlight different types of in-depth interviews.
- To describe in brief the characteristics, advantages, and importance of in-depth interviews.
- To describe the mechanics of conducting in-depth interviews

2. Definitions

An in-depth interview ‘is one of the main methods through which we collect data for qualitative research.’ (Kielmann, Cataldo, & Seeley, 2012 p.24) It is ‘a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective on the research topic.’ (Mack , Woodson, Macqueen , Guest , & Namey, 2005, p.29) In depth interview is an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. ‘It is also an opportunity to gain insight into how people interpret and order the world. We can accomplish this by being attentive to the causal explanations.’ (Zaharia , Grundey , & Stancu , 2008)

The in-depth interview is defined by focusing on the nature of its questions as a tool for data collection through which the researcher works to collect information without committing to asking the same questions to all persons concerned with the interview, although this does not prevent the presence of some general questions common to all participants or to a number of them.

3. A brief history of in-depth interview as a method

As all data collection methods, including -but not limited to- focus groups, participant observation, discourse analysis..., in-depth interview has been developed over several decades. it has a long history, probably the first use of interviews in social research was Charles Booth's seminal study of poverty in London in the 1880s (Morris, 2015) (O'Day, 1989) (Spicker, 1990) Booth published the first part of 'life and labour in London' it was the beginning of seventeen volumes which covered, in three series, the issues of "Poverty", "Industry", and "Religious Influences" in his work, Booth relied on a new approach to defining poverty , that's why "his methods were quite different' (Spicker, 1990, p. 21) .He obtained data from interviews he conducted with school board visitors (SBVs) in the poverty stricken East End of London, (SBVs) were responsible for conducting house-to-house visits to gather detailed information about poverty levels and types of occupation among families, and record their children's school attendance. 'Its methodology was differently conceived and practiced' (O'Day, 1989, p. 361)



Sigmund Freud worked on psychoanalysis and developed his theory of human personality by conducting in-depth interviews over an extended period of time with his patients.

In 1926, Emory Bogardus, professor of sociology at the university of southern California (USA) published what may be considered the first detailed report of the in-depth interview as a method (Morris, 2015)

However, in the social sciences ‘in the first part of twentieth century there was still a great deal of doubt about using interviews as a method’ (Morris, 2015, p. 02)

Currently, the in-depth interview is one of the most widely used qualitative data collection tools, that the social researcher talks about ‘interview society’ (Fielding, Raymond , & Grant , 2008) (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003)

4. In-depth interview and Personal interview: The differences

Researchers (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011) consider the in-depth interview a hybrid type of personal interview, also called one-on-one interview, approach. and they identify their differences in several aspects including:

- compared to the personal interview used in survey research, in-depth interview generally uses smaller samples
- in-depth interview is usually long, compared to the quantitative interview used in survey research, which may take only a few

minutes, the in-depth interview takes several hours and requires more than one session.

- in-depth interview, which is characterized by taking a longer time, allow for lengthy observation of respondents' nonverbal responses.
- in-depth interview enables the researcher to obtain a detailed background on the reasons that motivate the participants to provide certain answers about their attitudes, opinions, values, feelings.....
- Unlike the quantitative interview, in which the researcher asks the same questions to all the respondents, in-depth interview allows the researcher to build questions and modify them depending on the participant's answers. Unlike the interview in quantitative research, in which the same questions are usually directed to all respondents, the researcher works on building questions for each of the participants independently.

5. Characteristics of Intensive Interview:

The in-depth interview is characterized by a number of characteristics as follows

- An in-depth interview is a tool for obtaining information on a specific topic and for an accurate understanding of it, depending on the representation of the individuals participating in the interview.

- An in-depth interview is used to obtain descriptive or explanatory data.
- The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say
- The in-depth interview includes a distinct process of interaction and a special type of dialogue where the researcher asks the question and then plays the role of an effective listener who urges the participant to continue speaking and thus continue to give information by notifying him of integration and notice of attendance based on body language such as signs, gestures and other means of showing interest and achieving familiarity Between the researcher and the participant in addition to the possibility of prompting him to continue the conversation by mentioning a meaningful word or asking another question.
- The in-depth interview is used as a single research tool in the research, and it can also be used in conjunction with other data collection tools.

6. Types of Intensive Interview:

The status of the in-depth interview in the research varies according to its objective. Therefore, the interview is classified according to its structure, in form and design, into three main types:

- **structured interview:** it is a type of in-depth interview in which the researcher depends on asking the same questions to

all participants while working to direct the participant to talk about certain topics and return him to the questions asked in case he deviates from the frameworks that you specify. This type of intensive interview is often adopted by researchers working from post-positivist perspectives (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006 p. 222). The structured interview is used to reinforce the data collected using other tools, that can be quantitative, and can also be employed when the researcher wants to collect data with a high degree of standardization and unification in order to be able to make comparisons between the respondents' answers. In this context, it is mentioned that qualitative researchers do not tend to adopt the standardized form of the intensive interview, given that the main objective of this tool is to provide an adequate opportunity for the participant to express his experiences about the studied reality.

- **semi-structured interview:** the semi-structured interview is built from a set of questions that the researcher is keen to remain the focus of the ongoing dialogue according to a high degree of flexibility, as the participant is given a very wide margin of freedom in expressing his experience on the one hand On the other hand, the researcher works on keeping pace with the participant and following up the dialogue with him by asking the necessary questions according to his answers, which allows the dialogue to flow naturally, which can direct

him towards topics and issues that were not expected by the researcher, which prompts the latter to create appropriate questions, which illustrates the importance of the semi-structured interview.

- **Open-ended interview:** in it, the researcher is satisfied with referring to the topic in question leaving the space for the participant to express fully his experiences towards the reality in question Although the researcher has a specific topic for study, it allows the dialogue to go where the respondent desires. Thus, each individual interview becomes highly individualized. In the open interview, the researcher asks a few questions of a general nature in order to allow the participant to move the discussion to the directions he desires. Which shows the consistency of this type of intense interview to a large extent with the postulates of the qualitative theoretical trend.

7. In-depth interview: types of questions

Researchers classify the questions in the in-depth interview into types based on different criteria into the following types:

Introductory questions: these are the type of questions that the researcher aims to push the participant to provide an automatic description of the research topic.

Follow-up questions: the researcher employs it to urge the

participant to follow up on his speech. Therefore, it depends on the researcher's skill and ability to formulate it in the appropriate form during the interview. It can also be reduced to a sign, gesture, or phrase.

Checking and scrutiny questions: aimed at obtaining specific information and checking its content.

Determining questions: in it, the qualitative researcher asks the participant to provide more accurate information that goes beyond the general information in order to obtain more accurate description about the participant's vision of the subject under study based on his own experiences.

Explanatory questions: questions that are built based on previous answers in order to clarify them, explain their introductions and indicate their reasons.

Whereas the nature of the formulation of the questions, they can be classified into types as follows:

Direct questions: explicit questions aimed at obtaining information about specific aspects of a specific topic. Therefore, it is preferable to leave this type of question to advanced stages of the intensive interview, after the participant has answered questions related to the basic aspects of the study which he may not answer, or at least not answer in a similar way if direct questions are asked.

Indirect questions: these are optional questions through which the researcher aims to lure the participant to express his views and positions on specific aspects of the subject under study, which may not be expressed if asked directly.

8. in-depth interview stages

An in-depth interview involves a number of stages (Herbert & Irene , 1995) (Robson, 2002) (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). The researcher aims, through his use of the intensive interview tool, to identify individuals' representations of their social reality by urging them to provide an extensive description on specific topics identified by the researcher. In this sense, in-depth interviews are designed to access information and data hidden in the breasts.

Therefore, the researcher must rely on a number of necessary procedures in conducting the intensive interview, which we summarize as follows:

- Determining the topic in question: by setting the goal of the research and its formulation.
- Determine the research community concerned with the study.
- Choosing the type of sample, taking into account its relevance to the nature and purpose of the research on the one hand, and to the nature of the society under study on the other.
- Choosing the individuals involved in the interview, as they should possess the type of knowledge and information that the



researcher is interested in obtaining. The researcher must also take into account the willingness of the participating individual to disclose the details of his experience about the subject under study, As the best interviews are conducted with individuals who would like to inform others of their knowledge and information.

- Determine the place and time of the interview: The location of the interview is chosen within the frameworks of ensuring the element of privacy in order to provide comfort to both parties (the researcher and the participant), so the interview is often conducted either in the researcher's office or the interviewee's home. The intensive interview usually takes one to two hours, and some may take less than that.

-Preparing for the interview: This is done by designing an interview guide, which is a list of the sub-domains of the main research topic, which includes or does not include questions specific to all the mentioned fields. However, this does not mean that the design of the guide is final and not be modified. The qualitative researcher must realize and prepare accordingly that the basic details in the design of the interview take place during the implementation period, in parallel with obtaining more information about the participants' environment and how they represent themselves and their awareness of the facts around them.

- Conduct the interview: this stage represents a communication process that includes the introduction of listening and speaking. The intensive interview in this sense is a collaborative process to reach knowledge (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 233). In order for the researcher to obtain the information he aims for, he must possess a set of skills in managing and conducting the interview, the most important of which are summarized as follows:
- Start the interview with sound introductory questions.
- Achieving the highest possible degree of familiarity with the participant by showing sincere interest in the interviewee and the information he provides.
- Show enthusiastic listening.
- Notify the participant of comfort and safety.
- Show appreciation for the participant's answers.
- Body language (eyes meet, gestures, gestures) is an important aspect of intimacy.
- Good at picking up and reading the cues and gestures of the participant since all forms of non-verbal communication represent a valuable source of information and a key element of the intensive description that distinguishes the collected data from the intensive interview.

- Good use of sensors as the easiest way to push the respondent to continue his conversation on a particular topic to obtain a more intense description. The sensor may be a word as an example, an incident that causes the participant to go on talking and in cases where the sensor is just a gesture of understanding or interest shown by the researcher to the participant immersed in the description.

- Analyze and interpret extensive interview data.

9. in-depth Interview: Advantages and Disadvantages:

– Advantages:

- The intensive interview provides a wealth of information and rich details about the situations investigated.
- Direct contact between the researcher and the participant for an extended period of time provides a higher ability to understand and analyze the behavior of the individual.
- The intensive interview allows the researcher to obtain more accurate information about sensitive situations due to the possibility of conducting it in several sessions, which creates a kind of familiarity between the researcher and the participants.

–Disadvantages

- Search results based on this type of tool are not generalizable.
- The difficulty of adhering to impartiality for the researcher.

- The difficulty of analyzing the collected data due to its abundance and diversity.

10. Conclusion

In-depth interviews are a flexible data collection tool, researchers suggest that the flexibility of the in-depth interview structure is one of its greatest strengths. in-depth interviews can be an invaluable tool when usability data is needed from the participant's social world, their meanings and experiences, this meant that the main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say about the social milieu in which they exist . It is also worth mentioning that in-depth interviews are appropriate for addressing sensitive topics that people might be reluctant to discuss; This explains the important role of the the interviewer in the Different stages need to be followed when conducting an interview.

To in obtain successful outcome, in-depth interviews involve the interviewer 's involvement, as a good listener, in an extended period of time So that he can collect individuals' representations of their lives, attitudes, opinions, The utility of the in-depth interviewing technique depends on the interviewer-interviewee interactions, it is pertinent to stress the importance of the role of the interviewer in the process of conducting the interview, questioning techniques, listening methods and the ethical considerations.

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