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Q7(a)

Describe various methods of qualitative data analysis. Highlight some popular computer softwares used in qualitative analysis.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 20 marks · Analysis, interpretation and presentation of data.

(d) Analysis, interpretation and presentation of data.

Core demand of the question

- Describe various methods of qualitative data analysis
- Highlight some popular computer softwares used in qualitative analysis
- Write at 20-mark length

Revision summary

Qualitative analysis codes and compares meaning in notes and talk.

Thematic analysis, **grounded theory**, narrative, discourse, and framework analysis are the main named methods.

The Manchester extended case tests theory in a crisis.

CAQDAS includes **NVivo**, **ATLAS.ti**, MAXQDA, and Dedoose.

Software retrieves; it does not interpret.

Geertz still has to be written after the nodes.

Introduction

Qualitative analysis turns field notes, interviews, and images into an argued account. The methods are ways of coding and comparing meaning, and software now holds the corpus without doing the thinking.

Body**From data to account**

- The corpus is usually transcripts, diaries, photographs, and documents produced in ethnography or in mixed methods.
- **Analysis is iterative:** read, code, memo, compare, and write, as **Barney Glaser** and **Anselm Strauss** set out for **grounded theory**.

Main methods

- **Thematic analysis**, taught widely after **Virginia Braun** and **Victoria Clarke**, groups repeating patterns of meaning across a set of interviews.
- **Content analysis** counts categories in texts when the question needs frequencies as well as quotes, a bridge toward mixed methods.

- **Grounded theory** builds categories from open, axial, and selective coding until a mid-level theory of a process, such as stigma or migration, stabilises.
- **Narrative analysis** follows plots, voices, and life stories, used in medical and refugee ethnography.
- **Discourse analysis**, after **Michel Foucault** and later linguistic anthropology, asks how talk makes power, caste, or gender, not only what a person reports.
- **Conversation analysis** looks at turn-taking and repair in recorded talk, a stricter cousin used in some institutional studies.
- **Framework analysis** (Ritchie and Spencer) uses a case-by-theme matrix, common in applied policy anthropology.
- **Analytic induction** and the **extended case method** of the Manchester School, associated with **Max Gluckman** and later **Michael Burawoy**, test a theory against a crisis in the field.

Computer software

- **NVivo** is widely used to code interview trees, query text, and link memos.
- **ATLAS.ti** supports coding of text, image, and video and is common in European and development research.
- **MAXQDA** mixes qualitative codes with simple quantitative overlays, useful in mixed-method theses.
- **Dedoose** is a web-based mixed-method option for teams.
- Open tools such as **RQDA** (older R package), **TAMS**, and **Taguette** exist for students without a licence.
- **CAQDAS** is the family name: Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software.

What software does not do

- It stores, retrieves, and shows co-occurrence. It does not know a culture.
- **Clifford Geertz's** thick description still has to be written by the ethnographer after the nodes are coded.
- Poor interviews remain poor after a beautiful **NVivo** map.

Flow diagram

Field corpus -> Coding memos
 Coding memos -> Thematic grounded discourse
 Coding memos -> NVivo ATLAS MAXQDA
 Thematic grounded discourse -> Written argument

Conclusion

Qualitative methods include thematic, grounded, narrative, discourse, and extended-case analysis. **NVivo**, **ATLAS.ti**, **MAXQDA**, and **Dedoose** are popular **CAQDAS** tools, and they assist retrieval rather than replace ethnographic judgement.

Facts & figures

Grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss's method of building categories from coding rather than testing a pre-set survey grid.

Thematic analysis

Braun and Clarke's widely taught approach to patterning meaning across a qualitative set.

NVivo

A leading CAQDAS package for coding interviews, linking memos, and querying text.

ATLAS.ti

A CAQDAS tool strong on multimedia coding of text, image, and video.

Extended case method

Manchester School and later Burawoy: use a field crisis to reconstruct theory, not only to illustrate a theme.

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