Advance Course in Social Psychology

Lecture 08: Methods Adopted in Social Psychology: Part-VI

Hello friends, welcome back. I will continue my discussion with focus group in lecture 8, that is methods adopted in social psychology. In the previous discussion, I have talked about qualitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. In this discussion, I will also talk about some drawbacks and benefits of different kind of thematic analysis. So the major drawback of qualitative thematic analysis is that it can lose sight of where the coded data sit within the whole transcript. This is but natural that whenever a group discussion is being initiated by the moderator, then the discussion can go in any direction.

So maybe initially the codes have been identified by the moderator or the researcher and initial collection of codes is being done. With the gradual process of in-depth discussion, the coding can mismatch with the ongoing interaction and the researcher can lose sight of the connection between the codes and the interaction. So this becomes a major drawback of qualitative thematic analysis. Initially the themes can be identified by the researcher but with the gradual process of in-depth discussion and conversations, the themes can derail or the ongoing conversation can derail the identified themes of the researcher.

So this becomes the drawback of qualitative thematic analysis. There are also some other key issues in qualitative thematic analysis such as how to select the material to present. Now when the discussion goes on, there can be unnumber of conversations and responses given by the participants. How to pick those relevant material to be researched that becomes a key issue in qualitative thematic analysis. The other is how to give due weight to the specific context within the material was generated.

Even the material that is being transcribed generates a number of material of conversation. How to relate and choose which conversation is more relevant to the theme that becomes a difficult task in qualitative thematic analysis because so many themes generates, so many codes generate, so many conversations generate. How to give more weightage to one particular conversation and less weightage to another because it can affect the interpretive repertoire process and at the same time in general interpretation of the researcher. And the other is how best to prioritize participants orientations in presenting an interpretive account. Because any individual participant is being studied, then how to identify and prioritize that which participant has better orientation to understand or reflect the own problems that becomes a major issue in qualitative thematic analysis because every participant response is very important in its own way.

But how to prioritize that which participant has given a more relevant response because every participant's response is relevant in its own way. But it becomes difficult to for the researcher to decide and give more priority to one particular orientation of the participant. Therefore, we can say that according to Wilkinson, these issues are usually answered by selective quotations from what participants says. So, the only solution to these issues is that how every participant answers all the questions or in the during the conversation in a very selective manner. There can be any particular response of the participant that emphasizes the participants experience, in-depth experience.

For instance, any participant would say that chemotherapy during the treatment of breast cancer was cruciating or it was crucial. I somehow survived. So, all these words which are being quoted by the participants in during the conversation that helps in selecting the quotations of the participants and then giving priority to create an interpretive account by the researcher. So, this is how these issues are being resolved. But definitely these issues also becomes a drawback of qualitative thematic analysis.

Thus, Wilkinson helpfully provided two different analyses, the quantitative and qualitative. Although it is qualitative, but definitely Wilkinson has identified a thin line difference between qualitative and quantitative analysis which marks a major difference also between these two types of methodology. The results of the quantitative context analysis are present in content analysis are presented in frequency counts. As I told mentioned in the previous discussion that the responses can be also be tabulated to a certain point of time. We can identify the frequency or the counts to one particular response that is through content analysis where responses can be quantified based on frequency distribution.

While the results of qualitative analysis are presented as illustrative quotations that is about thematic analysis. In content analysis still there are chances to quantify the responses based on frequency. One particular word is recurring under a particular theme or code or the participant. Whereas in thematic analysis there are illustrative quotations which gives in-depth meaning to their experiences, which gives social account of every particular participant. Although both the analysis mentions a cause as the unit of analysis and organize these mentions using category theme.

That unit of analysis will remain the same because that is the cause of the discussion, cause of the problem and how those causes are being identified under different themes that is very much common in both the kind of analysis that is content analysis and thematic analysis. Further quantitative analysis systematically records the number of mentions within each category summarizing what these mentions are. While in qualitative analysis records the words in which the mentions are couched. Couched here means in what manner the experience, the words, the emotions are been expressed by the participants presenting them as quotations under each category heading. So, this is again a thin line difference between qualitative and quantitative analysis in content analysis the number of mentions in terms of frequency.

And summarizing those frequency that this is the percentage that the people have identified this kind of feeling. Whereas in qualitative thematic analysis that analysis based on the records of the words which are mentioned based on the style of expression or sharing of experiences by the participants. It is couched that means the way the experiences have been shared by the participants and presenting them those quotations under every different category heading. So, this is how Wilkinson has identified the difference between qualitative and quantitative analysis based on content analysis and thematic analysis. The other third method is constructionist method.

This has a very different meaning to understand which we have discussed till now about qualitative content analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. This is something way different from the other two methods we have discussed because when we are talking about constructionist methods. The most basic understanding about this method is that whenever the participants engage in any kind of in depth discussion then there is some kind of direction or sequence of discussion that catches or connect from one topic to another to the other third and

participants try to connect the dots which gives out a different meaning. So, there is sense of construction of meaning to that particular experience. So, when we are talking about constructionist method it is an approach to qualitative analysis that seek to analyze the process of interaction within a focus group.

Here the process is the direction in which the group discussion takes on and how there is a sequence in that interaction rather than inferring meaning from what one person says and the aim is to expose the local and sequential construction of meaning. Local and sequential here means local what instantly participants tend to express and how those local experiences or expressions are forming into a sequence. There is a series or connection of dots among all those expressions that comes out to be another way of discussion of the participants. In this method the data is generated within a cautious environment and subsequently withdrawn when challenged. A particular environment is been created in the focus group discussion by the moderator.

It can be a particular topic, research topic, it can be a particular trigger, trigger of emotion and how participants are discussing or revealing their own feelings, emotions, ideas and opinions about that particular topic that makes the environment very cautious and as soon as the discussion becomes derailed then immediately the discussion can be terminated or it can be withdrawn. This approach makes sense within the turn by turn organization of any conversation. There can be a way to channelize the communication within the focus group that one participant first of all participant A will be given a chance to express then participant B, C and D and there is a direction and sequence of interaction that plays within the group itself. So, the focus group speakers skillfully attend to the constraints and opportunities presented by positioning of what they say within a sequence of turns. So, here the focus group speakers skillfully attend the constraints and opportunities presented by the positioning of what they say within a sequence of turns.

So, whenever there is a turn by turn way to give opportunity to every focus group speaker or the participant they make it a point to be very cautious of what they respond. This is constructionist method. I repeat that the focus group speakers skillfully attend to the constraints and opportunities presented to them by positioning of what they say within a sequence of turns. When there is a sequence there is a direction given to that interaction then even the participants becomes cautious enough that how to constraint and how to evolve or respond to a particular event. So, this makes a constructive way to analyze human behavior while identifying important aspects of the responses and controlling not to respond in a particular manner.

So, this is a nature of constructionist method used in qualitative analysis where the participants are also constrained and at the same time they seek opportunity to express themselves in a very directional manner because there is a sequence of conversation that takes place within the group itself. The researcher can establish participants own understanding as displayed directly in the talk. When there is a sequence of interaction then even researchers can establish participants own understanding. Participants themselves become so conscious what to speak and what not to speak which can give a very concrete structure to that discussion. In other words we can say that the statements with positive thinking are treated as actions and seek to understand their functions in particular sequences of talk.

For instance every member of the group where women suffered from breast cancer while they are sharing their experiences may be based on their own experiences they will constraint themselves not to share a particular information or experience rather they would also share at the same time that how they build up their own willingness to cope up with that problem that chronic illness and how they have evolved as a new person. So, there is a possibility for the researcher to identify the positive aspects of behavior and how that behavior is reflected in their action. So, this gives a sequence or sequential way of conversation among members because participants also become very conscious of share experience and what not what they can display directly and how it is being identified in form of their behavior, in form of their responses and in form of their action. So, this is how constructions method involve focus group conversations or discussion in a very concrete and structured manner as the term implies constructionist method. Next comes advantages of focus group.

There are certain advantages of focus group as well. The technique is a socially oriented research method capturing real life data in the social environment. There is no manipulation in the environment. There is no manipulation or no information is being concealed from the participants and participants tend to interact and behave in a very natural course of action. It has flexibility, it has high phase validity, it has speed results and it is low in cost.

As it implies since no manipulation is being done in the environment. So, there is lot of flexibility in the environment as well as in the cost because no cost is required to manipulate the environment and at the same time people are free to respond in their own way. And the most important advantage is that it has high phase validity which entails that this is a most powerful advantage of focus group while gaining insights into the nature of human affairs with lot of complexity. Whatever the researcher purports to measure he or she is measuring the same in a very natural setting in a very rich complex environment and how they are gaining insights, natural insights of human behavior. So, this is the most advantageous point of focus group that it has high phase validity.

What we are seeing? We are observing and we are sharing the same thing with the participants and the participants with the researcher. The other disadvantages of focus group are that the researcher has less control on the participants than the individual interviews that is the difference also. That in interviews there is a controlled environment and in focus group there is no control on the participants and the environment and the interviewer or the researcher has to completely depend on the natural responses that the responses come to them and how they handle those responses in a very raw manner. Moderators require lot of special skills to stimulate those discussions for in depth analysis. There is a difference between groups and within the groups or between groups.

For example, if any researcher wants to make a comparative analysis between two types of groups regarding one social problem then it can be found that the two groups are not aligning on the same wavelength and there can be some troubles which can be created by any particular group. At the same time groups are difficult to assemble because it is very difficult to convince group members to be part of the study and to what extent they are true to their experiences and responses. The other is that a discussion must be conducted in a conducive environment. There has to be a complete consent between the researcher and the participant that whatever response they will give they are true to the best of their knowledge and how those responses will be helpful to the researcher. The most important significant problem that has been

identified as a disadvantage of the focus group is that sometimes there is problem of group conformity and group think as well.

When people are discussing within the group maybe one member would dominate the discussion then first of all the other members will not get enough chance and time to express their own ideas, opinions, feelings and experiences. And sometimes also when any member dominates the discussion then there is a tendency of conformity and group think also arises and the other participants tend to comply with what one dominating member is saying so. So all these problems can also create a hindrance or obstruction in analyzing the in or making an in depth analysis of the themes or the content that is being reflected in the conversations or group discussions of the focus group. So these are the advantages and disadvantages of focus group along with the discussion of qualitative thematic analysis, content analysis and constructionist method. Where to identify? Constructionist method is one of the most different method from thematic and content analysis because in constructionist method there is a particular direction that is being offered to the discussion so that the responses are being collected to one particular topic and direction.

So, the conversation is not haywired it is sequential and it is related to previous and the forthcoming conversation. So I end up my discussion here. Thank you so much. I will meet you in the next class. Thank you. Thank you very much.