

Session 2: Introduction to Qualitative Research: Interviews and Focus Groups

Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Peer Research Study
Research Training Programme

mspeerresearch.co.uk



2 Before we get started...



- Allow everyone to speak, one at a time.
- Respect everyone's comments and suggestions. This is a safe space for everyone to share their ideas.
- There are no right or wrong answers. All comments and suggestions are welcome.
- Raise your hand to let us know you would like to speak, ask any questions or use the chat function to add any comments.
- If you need to take a break at any point let us know by using the chat. You do not need to state the reason.
- We will be **recording** the session to help us keep track of comments. We will only use the audio to refine the training program.

3 Welcome to Session 2 of the training programme!

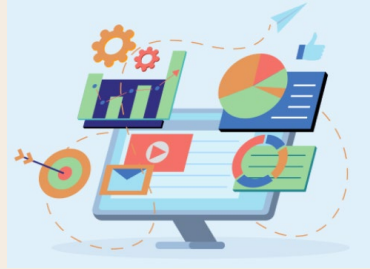
Session Objectives

By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1. Understand qualitative research and its related methods.
2. Learn about interviews and focus groups.
3. Learn the principles of good practice in interviews.
4. Devise an interview topic guide suitable for the research study.



4 Types of research



Quantitative

- Concerned with discovering widely accepted facts, and generalisations.
- Answers 'what' and 'how many' questions.
- Methods: coding and measuring, random sampling, surveys.



Qualitative

- Concerned with descriptions of experiences and exploring the world around us.
- Answers 'how' and 'why' questions
- Methods: dialogue, interviews, observations, visual arts, storytelling

5 Types of research



6 Why are we using qualitative research for our study?

- We chose to make this study qualitative **to provide an in-depth understanding** of Black British and South Asian British people with MS experiences of healthcare and possible barriers to access to care.
- We plan to involve people living with MS as peer researchers to empower them to make changes in service development.
- Statistics related to MS research paint a partial picture. People from ethnically minoritised backgrounds are under-represented in research.



7 What are the advantages and weaknesses of qualitative research?

Advantages

- Helps understand why a topic of interest is occurring where there is limited data.
- Generates rich, in-depth data which takes the context into account.
- Adapted over the course of research.
- Allows researchers to reflect on their relationship with the topic, participants & influence on the research findings.

Weaknesses

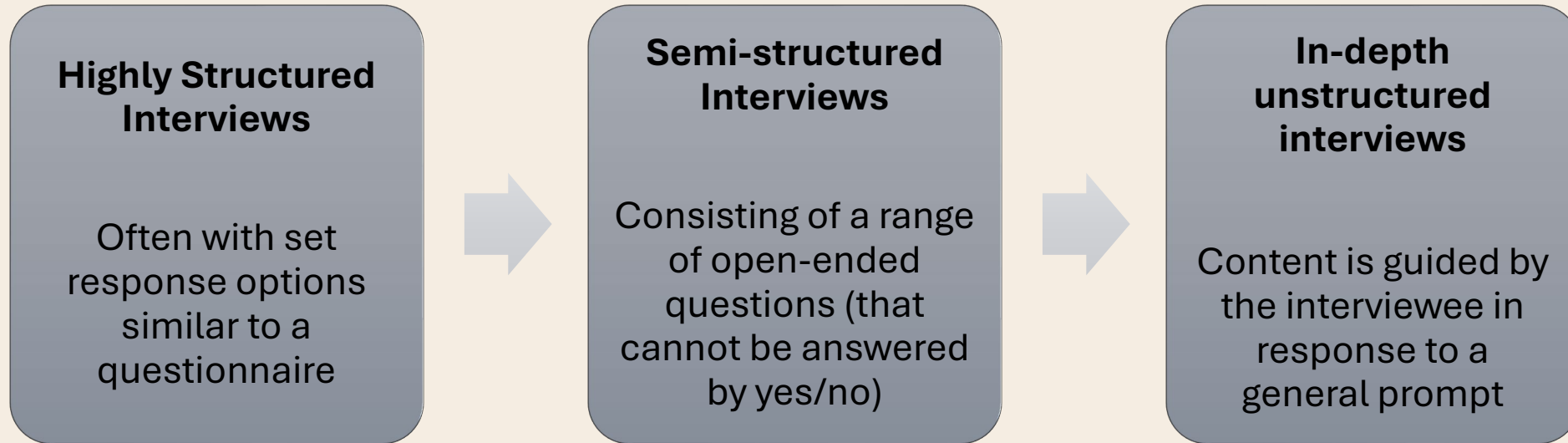
- Findings are not generalisable to larger groups as they are context specific.
- Cannot produce the same results everywhere.
- Data collection is time-consuming.
- Interpretation and analysis is often influenced by the researchers' assumptions and perspectives.

8 Understanding interviews

- An interview is a qualitative method. It is like a guided conversation that takes place between two or three people.
- There will be someone who asks the questions (Interviewer) and someone answering the questions (research participant).
- You will interview people living MS from similar ethnic backgrounds to understand their experiences of care.
- **You will be supported in the interviewing process by Sharifa. You won't be responsible for recording or transcribing the interview.**



9 Types of Interviews



Taken from Brooks, Bee & Rogers (2018)

10 Who will you interview?

- You will interview people based on the following inclusion criteria:
 1. Must be over the age of 18.
 2. Diagnosed with MS.
 3. Able/ willing to give consent.
 4. Identify as Black British or South Asian or as a person with mixed ethnicity (between these two ethnic backgrounds).
- You do not need to recruit participants as they will be recruited through the clinical co-investigators of the study.



11 Interview arrangements

- We will be recruiting the patient participants for you.
- You will be speaking to ten people (10 interviews x 1 hour each).
- Sharifa will set up an online call where you can interview the participant. She will start the recording which will be uploaded to a secure online folder after the interview.
- You do not need to worry about transcription as this will be done for you.
- Sharifa will set up a SharePoint online folder for each one of you.
- After the interview Sharifa will arrange a 30-minute debrief meeting to talk about the interview and how it went.



12 Discussion activity



What might be some of the advantages/disadvantages of conducting interviews with South Asian/ Black British people living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS)?

13 Interview guides

An interview guide is a list of topics, themes, or areas to cover during your interview. It is based on the research question(s) of the study.

When preparing an interview guide you need to keep in mind the following points:

1. Write your questions so they help to answer your research questions, and make sure all the questions are relevant.
2. Make sure your questions are clear and easy to understand.
3. Do not use questions that will influence what people tell you (leading questions).
4. Make sure your questions do not have yes/no or simple answers.



14 Key considerations



Here are some questions to think about before starting to plan an interview:

- Who will you interview? Whose perspective are you interested in? (E.g., Patients? Doctors? Faith leaders? Case-workers? Community members? A combination of different actors?)
- What kinds of information are you interested in? (E.g., Personal or lived experiences of an illness? Information on creating good practice? Difficulties adhering to treatment plans?)
- How and where will you do the interview? (E.g., Face to face in a café, a home, or a clinic? Telephone or online?)

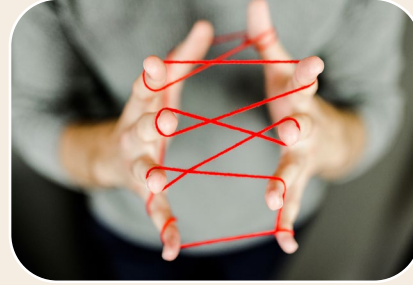
15 Key qualities of an interviewer



Knowledgeable
& Critical



Sensitive &
Gentle



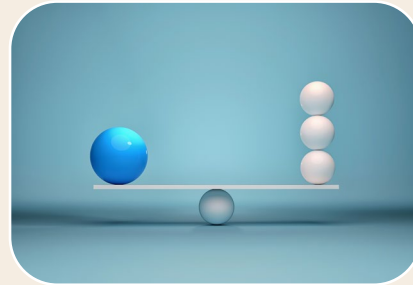
Steering &
Structure



Balanced &
Clear



Open,
Interprets &
Remembers



Ethically
Sensitive

16 Activity: Designing an interview guide

The research questions (RQs) of the study are as follows:

1. How do people from ethnically minoritised groups experience MS healthcare?
2. What barriers and challenges exist for people with MS from minoritised ethnic groups when engaging with healthcare services?
3. What interventions can address these barriers and challenges for people with MS from minoritised ethnic groups?

Look at the RQs to brainstorm interview questions related to the research questions. Organise them into separate themes if possible.



17 Here are some example questions to help you!

Introductory	"Can you tell me about...?"
Follow-up	(e.g. direct question of what was just said)
Probing	"Could you say something more about that?"
Specifying	"What did you actually do...?"
Direct	"Have you ever...?"
Indirect	"How do you believe other people..."
Structuring	"I would now like to introduce another topic..."
Silence	
Interpreting	"Is it correct that you feel that...?"



Break Time

18 Practicing your interview skills activity

- Work in pairs to practice your interviewing skills.
 - Use some of the questions you drafted for the interview topic guide from the previous activity.
-
- After the interview practice, let's talk about the following questions:
 1. How did it feel to be the interviewer/interviewee?
 2. What went well?
 3. How could you replicate that in the future?
 4. What did you struggle with?
 5. How do you think you could address that ?



19 Discussion

What would you do?

Interviewee begins to describe very sensitive, personal history

Interviewee asks you if you are experiencing issues related to MS care?

Interviewee asks you for medical advice?

20 Understanding focus groups

- Focus groups are group discussions; a facilitator will ask the group questions. Then, people talk to each other, and are gently guided by the facilitator.
- The number of people you will include in a focus group depends on the questions you're asking and how many perspectives you want to include (ideally 6-10 people).
- Focus groups are ideal for getting group agreement on a topic.
- The group can reflect on questions, give their opinions, and build on ('spark off') each other to come up with new ideas. Also, seeing how the group agrees or disagrees on a subject can reveal important information about your topic.



21 Facilitating focus groups: practical things to consider



1

When you're facilitating a focus group, ensure that everyone can participate. Always maintain a safe space by using appropriate and respectful language. Make sure that the focus group participants are respectful of each other.



2

During the focus group, try not to judge what participants say and encourage people to see each other's point of view. Use active listening as it will help them to speak more clearly and powerfully.



3

Give careful attention to the aim of the focus group and intervene if people do not keep to these aims or go off topic.

22 Discussion



Would conducting focus groups be beneficial to the research questions of the MS care experiences study? Why or why not?

Who are some participants you would want to include?

Would you include them in one focus group, or would you want to have multiple focus groups?

Are there any people you would want to interview alone?

Why do you think grouping certain people together would (or would not) be appropriate?

23 Facilitating focus groups: practical things to consider

- You will be co-facilitating the focus group with Sharifa.
- The participants will be grouped according to ethnic groups and gender. We aim to run 4 focus groups
- We will take turns in asking the participants questions.
- The participants will answer the questions and may interact with each other to comment on what someone said.
- After the focus group, you will have a debriefing meeting with Sharifa to talk about what happened in the focus group.

24 How to cope with difficult interviews

If, despite your preparations, an interviewee does become upset, you need to know how to respond to them:

1. If you observe any signs of upset in your participants, the first step is to acknowledge this. You can do so by saying things like 'I can see that question upset you' or 'Is thinking about that difficult?'.
2. Give them the option to take a break from the interview, or to stop altogether.
3. If they would like to proceed, be led by them and give them time. Remind them that they are under no obligation to answer particular questions if they do not wish to do so (as per the consent form).

25 How to cope with difficult interviews

- Debriefing meetings are ‘check-in’ meetings to see how you find the experience of doing interview or focus group.
- They are used to troubleshoot issues, identify ways forward and reflect on your emotions.
- These meetings are 1:1. Sometimes we arrange group meetings where all the peer researchers reflect and share experiences.

26 Emotional First Aid



Only support when you are **comfortable with the emotion** (anger, fear, sadness)



Non-judgemental peer support communicates that “**experiencing emotions is natural and normal**”



Offer acceptance with words, gestures, facial expressions and touch (with permission)



Make **no attempt to deepen the emotions**, give advice or direct someone



Get support for yourself to **debrief**

27 Key points from Session 2

Interviews are like conversations that researchers have with participants to collect data. Remember to:

- Identify your sample (who you want to interview).
- Determine whether an interview is appropriate, what kind of interview you should do, and where to do it.
- Come to the interview prepared with an appropriate interview guide.
- Think about ethics- make sure participants give informed consent to take part, including gaining additional verbal consent prior to starting.
- Reflect on power dynamics and your own position within the research process.

28 Key points from Session 2

Focus groups are a great way to collect views from different people at one time on a particular topic.

Remember to:

- Think about the ethics involved in your research.
- Consider people's background, gender, class, religion etc. and how these can affect the group dynamics, who speaks and the data you get. It is good to have groups with people who can talk easily with each other.
- It is important to facilitate the group with a carefully defined topic, along with questions/prompts.
- Remember to listen carefully- there can be a lot going on!

30 Time for reflection



What went well?

What did you like?

What surprised you?

Did we achieve our objectives?



What could have been done better?

How will you apply today's learning?



How did the session meet your expectations?

What are you interested in exploring in more detail in the next session?

31 Next steps...

Our next session will be on March 21 (13:00 to 15:00) . It will be done face-to-face. Venue details will be conformed soon

The next session will focus on the basics of research ethics.

