

Qualitative research with women

NONE in Three research
University of Huddersfield
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Ena Trotman Jemmott PhD



Qualitative research with women

Useful for describing or answering questions about particular occurrences or contexts and the perspectives of a participant group toward:

- **Events**
- **beliefs**
- **practices**
- **Experiences**

In research with women (e.g., on domestic violence) it becomes an avenue for investigating a complex and/ or 'taboo' area about which little is known

- **Example: for groups in especially difficult circumstances such those with disabilities, in same sex relationships, those trafficked**
- **Qualitative research helps to make the 'open secrets' more mainstream and amenable to later intervention (e.g., following recommendations from the research)**

- One of the main aims is to gain an increased understanding and awareness of the impact of the experience of "sensitive" issues on people's lives. Such sensitivity refers to those situations :
- "... in which there are potential consequences or implications, either directly for the participants in the research or for the class of individuals represented by the research" (Sieber & Stanley, 1988 p. 49).
- Another view is that sensitive research "**... poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved "** (Lee, 1993, p.4)

Qualitative research provides...

- Up close and first hand insights into the problem of participants
- Often can delve deeper into the problem under investigation
- Helps to develop theories for future research, and assist hypothesising for quantitative research and for a mixed method study

- Runs counter to what Blumer, (1969 cited by Flick, 2009) contends
 - *"the initial position of the social scientist and the psychologist is practically always one of lack of familiarity with what is actually taking place in the sphere of life chosen for study"* (1969, p. 33)
- Qualitative research with women aims to counter this “lack of familiarity”
- Research with women should be confronted with their realities at ecological systemic levels

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A GLOBAL PANDEMIC IN MANY FORMS

Whether at home, on the streets or during war, violence against women is a GLOBAL PANDEMIC that takes place in PUBLIC and PRIVATE spaces.

FORMS OF VIOLENCE



Physical



Sexual



Psychological

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexually violent acts can take place in different circumstances and settings. These include, for example:

- Rape (within marriage and relationships, by strangers, and during armed conflict)
- Unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favours
- Sexual abuse of children
- Forced marriage or cohabitation, including child marriage

Fast Facts

- In some countries, up to one-third of adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced
- In the European Union, 45% to 55% of women have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

“Once you know that everyone has a right to be free from all forms of violence, and that you yourself have a responsibility to help them achieve that right, you don’t look back.”
— Sister Fa, Senegalese hip-hop star

WHAT IS FGM?

FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Beyond extreme physical and psychological pain, the practice carries many health risks, including death.



Fast Facts

133 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in the 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where the practice is more common

1/3 lower

Overall, the chance that a girl will be cut today is about one-third lower than it was 30 years ago

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Fast Facts



1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence — mostly by an intimate partner



In 2012, 1 in 2 women killed worldwide were killed by their partners or family. Only 1 out of 20 of all men killed were killed in such circumstances.

Are there laws to protect women?



2/3 of all countries have outlawed domestic violence

Only **52**

countries have explicitly criminalized rape within marriage

In fact, **2.6 billion**

women and girls live in countries where marital rape is not explicitly criminalized

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION



“I wasn’t even allowed to cry. If even one tear fell they beat me. I used to think it was better to die than to live like this.”

— Meena Hasina, a survivor of sex slavery, India

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?



Human trafficking is the acquisition and exploitation of people, through means, such as force, fraud or deception. The practice ensnares millions of women and girls into modern-day slavery, many of whom are sexually exploited.

Fast Facts

4.5 million of the estimated 21 million people in forced labour are victims of sexual exploitation

98% of them are women and girls

CHILD MARRIAGE



“Since forever, I have learned to say yes to everything. Today I have decided to say no.”

— Nujood Ali, Yemeni advocate

Fast Facts

700 million

women alive today were married before 18 — more than one-third were married before 15

2.5X

poor girls are more likely to marry in childhood than wealthy ones.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CHILD MARRIAGE?



Child marriage usually means an end to girl’s education, vocation and her right to make life choices. Research confirms that girls who marry in childhood are at greater risk for intimate partner violence than girls of the same age who marry later.

Example of Caribbean research on domestic violence



- In 2009, the Caribbean Development Research Services (CADRES) national survey Barbados (CADRES [2009], from the 2,769 cases, **86 percent were cases of violence perpetrated by men** against women, **4 percent were by women against men**, another **4 percent were adults against children**, while the remainder were other types of violence. Of the cases of domestic violence reported by interviewees, the following types of abuse occurred either some or all of the time:
 - 95 percent of cases involved "striking with [the] hand";
 - 74 percent involved "striking with [an] implement";
 - 67 percent involved "playing games/tricks on the victim";
 - 58 percent involved "non-penetrative sexual abuse";
 - 55 percent involved "deprivation of food/money to buy food";
 - and 35 percent involved "penetrative sexual abuse" (ibid., 58).

“a-ha” types of insights

“Qualitative analysis of our data has resulted in numerous “a-ha” types of insights that would not have been possible had we relied solely on quantitative data analysis (e.g., Identification ...of incapacitated rape and sexual precedence...in the way that sexual assaults arise)...

Helped us to understand puzzling quantitative observations...these insights, in turn, led to testable, quantitative hypotheses that supported our qualitative findings..., Lending rigor and convergence to the process” (Testa et al. 2011, p.242)

“a-ha” types of insights come primarily and directly

- **from the mouths of women, their experiences at various systemic levels e.g., relationship with partners, family, from cultural expectations of expected conformity (or otherwise) etc.,**
- **From the researcher's skilled analysis of the ‘voice’ in the data, recognising their own voice in the analysis**

The work of Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005) Russian American psychologist in examining the the influences of the family, economy, and political structures upon the development of a child into adulthood has been used and adapted extensively as a template and an analytical lens in myriad conditions.

Women's research- drawing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory

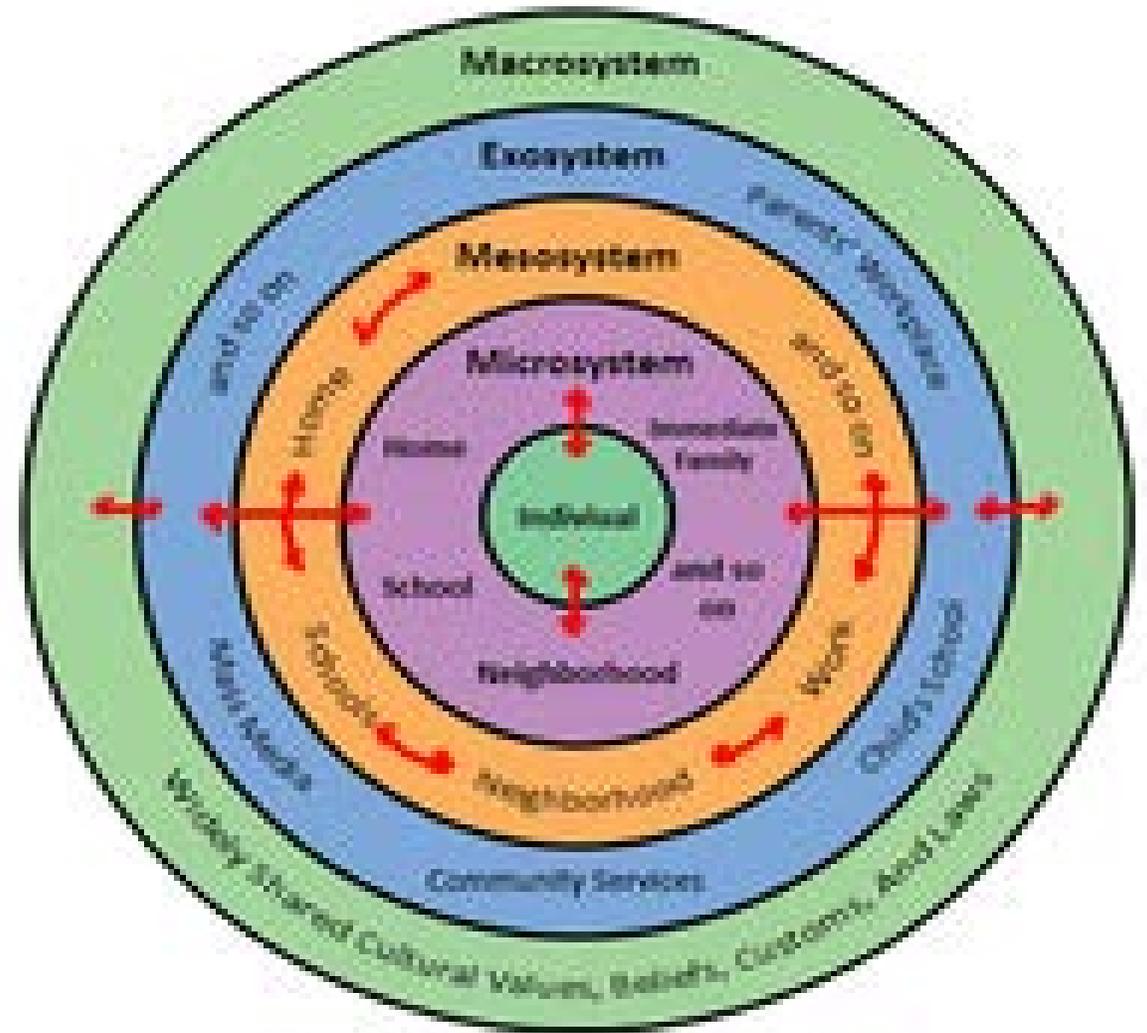
Microsystem: Includes institutions and people with an influence on the woman in her own immediate environment i.e., family members, peers etc.

Mesosystem: refers to the interactions people in the microsystems have with each other i.e., connection with other women, parents, religious and advocacy groups organization, etc.

Exosystem : refers to the broader community where the woman lives : extended family members, workplaces, neighbours, friends, mass media, community health systems, social welfare services, etc.

Macrosystem: Includes ideologies, values, attitudes, laws (or indeed an absence of laws) and customs of a particular culture or subculture impacting women's lives

Chronosystem: "reflects the cumulative experiences a person has over the course of their lifetime"; includes environmental events/major transitions... (Santrock, 2011)



<http://psychchick15.Weebly.Com/psych-journal/journal-8-urie-bronfenbrenners-ecological-systems-theory>

- **Thematic analysis**
 - provides core skills useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. A commonly used and flexible technique that involves “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns or themes within data . . . to find repeated patterns of meaning” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79)
- **Grounded theory**
 - Investigates how inductively-derived theory about phenomenon is grounded in the data of a particular situation
- **Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)**
 - An intensive analysis of detailed personal accounts. Considers how the experience of particular participants exhibits a unique perspective. Usually on small numbers of participants
- **Case study**
 - Examines the characteristics of a particular entity, phenomenon, or person
- **Ethnography**
 - Studies cultural patterns and perspectives of participants in their natural settings

Particular issues (examples only): access & selection

- **Gaining access /entry**
 - Access not taken for granted; conveying the research aims, dealing with difficult questions; researcher's personal characteristics important
- **Contacting/ introduction to likely research participants**
 - Skills in negotiation and possible 'compromising' with a gatekeeper
- **Selecting participants**
 - Objective is identifying participants who fit inclusion criteria and who can provide information on the particular topic; selecting an appropriate number of participants

Particular issues (cont.)



- primary tools include observations and interviews: can also include personal and official documents, photographs, recordings, drawings
- The interview, to explore and to probe the interviewee's responses in order to gather in-depth data; interviewees' attitudes, feelings, concerns, and values as these relate to the subject being studied
- Meanings to be explicitly probed and clarified by researcher; is not just a construction on the part of the interviewee- it is jointly constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee

- Spend substantial time in the settings/ with the women (the fieldwork)
- Use self (researcher's) as the main data collection tool (mindful of subjectivity and inter-subjectivity issues) see phenomena through participants' perspective, not own!
 - **Demonstrate emphatic neutrality: understanding the world of the participant in all its complexity, not trying to prove anything, not using research to advocate or advance personal agendas**
- Choose interpretative lenses for data analysis
- Use expressive language and **voice** in descriptions and explanations of data
- Employ ongoing analysis for providing depth
- Be mindful that research is judged in terms of believability, trustworthiness, coherence, and the logic underlying researcher's interpretations

Some features of qualitative research...

- Describes the meaning(s) of research finding(s) from the perspective of the research participants
- Data analysis is inductive where inductive reasoning is important as it is:
 - **Highly dependent on the number and representativeness of the specific observations used to make the generalization**
 - **Involves developing representations from a limited number of specific observations or experiences**
- Inductive analysis: researcher immerses self in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions, and interrelationships

- Build participant *trust* from outset for obtaining as much detailed and honest data as possible
- Extend the study time for gathering more information (saturation levels)
- Include more participants for representative-ness
- Invite participants to confirm accuracy of data collected
- Work with another researcher- where possible
- Keep reflection journal of research process (especially noting contradictions, concerns etc.,
- Triangulate: utilize different data sources to for corroborating participant information

Risks is always a major consideration-cannot be ignored at any stage of the research from example from proposal writing to dissemination of findings

- There are psychological and emotional risks that are associated potentially, with all participants including the interviewer, interviewee, transcriber, supervisor, and reader (McCosker, 1995)
- Issues of safety paramount for all when researching sensitive subjects
- All participants may experience threats to their physical and psychological safety as a consequence of their involvement in research.

Physical safety and psychological safety paramount

- Powerful others may be a threat to both participant and interviewer (e.g., in cases of domestic violence where partner (heterosexual and same-sex) becomes enraged
- Feelings of distress, anger, hateful thoughts, in the case of HIV research
- Feelings and symptoms associated with being a marginalised and stigmatised persons in case of HIV research, same sex domestic violence
- Interviewer's own position/ feelings/at interviewees descriptions of lifestyle/ experience of violence (graphic and /or unconventional)
- Reactions to traumatic information(either immediate or delayed) (ruminating, insomnia, nightmares) (Driscoll et al. 1997)
- Researcher's emotional exhaustion and being overwhelmed by the nature of the interviewees' experience – vicarious traumatization(McCosker, 1995).

Transcription (balancing risks)

- In research on women's experience of abuse (McCosker, 1995) describes feeling nauseated at times during the transcription; had to limit how much time spent in any one day working on transcription.

Thoughts to be given to:

- arranging for someone else to undertake the transcription of data,
- listening to no more than one hour of interview tapes without a break and change of activities
- maintaining balance between "safe" working environment and maintaining the "quality" of the research
- should be included in protocol
- has regular scheduled debriefing sessions,
- has prompt access to an appropriate person for crisis counselling,

Qualitative research with women demands

- Appreciation of the various ecological systemic factors which can impact their lives
- Sound Personal and people skills for sensitive interaction and data collection
- Skills in examining, exploring and synthesizing what is heard, seen and read
- Theoretical knowledge for underpinning approach, fieldwork, analysis and dissemination
- Knowledge of self and ongoing critical reflection-
- Attention to self care needs.



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Preventing Domestic Violence

Thank you

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