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## Researchers' Opinions on the Process of Collecting Data through Interviews

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### Abstract

The study aims to reveal the thoughts of the researchers about the data collection process in the studies whose data were provided by the participants' views. The case study approach, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. The study group of the research consists of a total of 12 experienced researchers, 9 women, and 3 men, working in the faculty of education of a state university, who have completed their doctorate. An interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool in the study. In the interview form, only one open-ended question was included to reveal the thoughts of the researchers about the process of collecting data with the participants' views in qualitative research. The descriptive analysis method was used to organize the data obtained. In order of importance, the participants wrote their thoughts about the questions used in qualitative research, data recording, what to do before data collection, the time and place of the interviews, the motivation of the participants, and the behavior of the researcher during the interview.

**Keywords:** Data collection, interview, researchers' thoughts, case study.

### Introduction

The quality of qualitative data relies heavily on the methodological skills, sensitivity and integrity of the researchers. There are three ways of collecting qualitative data: interviews, observation, and document analysis. Systematic and careful observation is not just about being present and looking around. Successful interviewing is not just about asking questions. Document analysis requires much more than just reading what is written there (Patton, 2014, p. 5). One of the most prominent features of qualitative research is the continuation of studies by focusing on phenomena, events, or behaviors that occur in the natural environment. Sometimes a classroom, a school, a clinic, or a neighborhood can be the natural environment. Therefore, qualitative research can generally be defined as field research (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013, p. 235).

Epistemologically, conducting qualitative research requires being as intimate and close to the participants as possible. The importance of conducting the research in the environment where the participants live, work, and live is unquestionably great. Being present in these environments means understanding correctly and evaluating what the participants say (Creswell, 2015, p. 20). When discussing data collection with young researchers in qualitative research lessons, it is often important and useful to provide accurate and effective examples. Talking about, giving examples of, and discussing an effective observation, a successful interview, a valid document review, etc. can help to create authentic and accurate pictures in the minds of the interlocutors (Yıldız, 2020).

One day Diogenes, a cynical philosopher, saw a boy drinking water from a fountain with his palms. Diogenes stops for a moment and says to himself in amazement, "Have you learned your lesson?" Then he takes out the wooden cup from his saddlebag and throws it away with a triumphant smile. Diogenes is happy because he has gotten rid of one more burden (Gros, 2019, p. 121). This observation in its natural environment provided accurate and effective qualitative data. This is

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because the person making the observation makes a correct inference and instantly reflects it in his/her own life (Feyerabend, 2015; Yıldız, 2022; Yıldız, 2020).

The environment and conditions are constantly changing. As stated in evolutionary theory, given enough time, the offspring of organisms can diversify, occupying different environmental niches and evolving into new species (Robinson, 2014, p. 211). Bugünün çocukları, şu anda 60 yaşında olan insanların çocukluklarındaki gibi davranmayabilir. This is because many of today's individuals aged 60 and above did not have telephones in their homes during their childhood. Technological possibilities and economic conditions were not favorable during their childhood. Today, on the other hand, the telephone as a means of communication has become individualized, almost everyone uses mobile phones, and the fixed home phones of childhood are no longer needed. Despite this dizzying change in fifty years, it is inconceivable that children will remain the same children they were half a century ago. They cannot be expected to use the same toys, play the same games and continue to learn in the same ways as they did fifty years ago (Yıldız, 2020).

As emphasized in a study (Yıldız, 2020), researchers can't create data sets in an original way with the understanding, methods, and tools of 60 years ago. It can be inferred that it is not possible to reveal the thoughts of participant children, students, young people, or adults in the study groups in a healthy, accurate, and effective way with the understanding of 60 years ago. In this direction, it is foreseen that experienced researchers will reveal important thoughts about the process of creating data sets with the opinions of the participants.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to reveal the thoughts of the researchers about the data collection process in the studies whose data were provided by the participants' views.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The case study approach, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the study. The most basic feature of the case study is the in-depth investigation of the situation (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018, p. 73). In this direction, small sample size is generally preferred (Merriam, 2013; Yıldız, 2023). In the study, easily accessible case sampling, one of the purposeful sampling types, was used. This sampling method provides practicality to the research by enabling the collection of data in a short time, easily, and at low cost (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018, p. 123). Patton (2014, p. 242) stated that this sampling strategy is probably one of the most frequently used, but it should be the least desired strategy.

### **Working Group**

The study group of research consists of a total of 12 experienced researchers, 9 women, and 3 men, working in the faculty of education of a state university, who have completed their doctoral studies in education. The sample selection was based on the fact that the participants had completed their doctoral studies in field education related to the undergraduate program they were working in. Instructors working in the fields of mathematics education, science education, primary education, and technology education were the voluntary participants of this study. The distribution of the participants according to the specified programs was 6, 2, 2, and 2, respectively.

### **Data Collection**

An interview form prepared by the researchers was used as a data collection tool in the study. In the form, only one open-ended question was included to reveal the thoughts of the researchers about the process of collecting data with the views of the participants in qualitative research. In addition, the

purpose of the study and the necessary explanations that the participants may need when answering the single open-ended question were made in the form. The researchers were also asked to rate their own opinions out of 100. It was stated that the participants could do this by giving the highest score to the idea they found most important among the opinions they wrote. The reason why the participants were asked to score the ideas they wrote was to identify the most prioritized and important ideas according to them.

### Data Analysis

The basis of all qualitative research reports is description. The more the researcher focuses on examining and re-reading the data, the more patterns and categories begin to appear to the researcher (Patton, 2014). Based on this claim, the descriptive analysis method was used to organize the data obtained. In the descriptive analysis method, the data are brought together in a meaningful and logical way, organized and defined in an understandable way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Subsequently, necessary inferences are made and appropriate interpretations are made about the findings. In this study, the answers were grouped under certain categories by taking into account their similarities. The created categories were re-examined and those with common and similar meanings were re-combined. The grouped answers of the participants were transferred to the relevant table prepared in separate rows for each thought.

### Findings

The findings of the study were obtained through descriptive analysis of the answers written by the participants for the open-ended question “In your opinion, how should researchers who plan to create data sets with the views of the participants behave in which stages or situations?” prepared by the researchers.

**Table 1**

*Participants' Answers to the Research Question*

View of Participants	Importance for Participants (Arithmetic Mean of Scores)	Female	Male	Total (f)
The researcher should conduct preliminary interviews with the study group or participants to allow them to get to know him/her and gain their trust. In addition, participants should be given detailed explanations about the purpose of the research and the process.	14.8			
The researcher shouldn't use questions such as “yes, no” in the interviews. The questions of qualitative research should be prepared in a way to explain the reasons or reasons for the answers given by the participants.	23.8			
The researcher should encourage the participants by explaining that they should share their ideas, even those they find absurd, without censoring them, as their opinions can provide important data for their research.	13.8	9	3	12

Interviews should be conducted at times that are convenient for the participants. Participants' views should be taken in environments where they feel safe and where there is no noise. If the researcher does not consider himself/herself experienced enough in qualitative research, he/she should prefer semi-structured interviews.	14.5			
Permission must be obtained from the participant to record audio and video or only audio with some kind of device. Subsequently, the views of the participant should be confirmed, taking into account that the participant is a volunteer.	15.8			
The audio and video recordings or only the voices of the participants should not be recorded using some kind of device. The researcher should write down the participant's views in the form of short notes and have them confirmed at the end of the interview.	4.6			
The researcher should listen carefully to the participant while he/she is speaking and not interrupt him/her. In addition, the researcher should not direct the participant, should not be offensive, and should be respectful of his/her thoughts and personality.	12.7			
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>

The answers written by the participants for the research question were grouped into seven groups as a result of descriptive analysis. When Table 1 is examined, it is predicted that a ranking can be made about which views they consider important and at what level, based on the arithmetic mean of the scores that the participants with PhDs find appropriate for the thoughts they wrote in response to the research question. For the participants, who work in an academic institution and are considered experienced researchers because they have a doctorate in field education, the questions used in qualitative research were seen as important in the first place. The researcher should not use questions such as “yes, no” in the interviews. The questions of qualitative research should be prepared in a way to explain the rationale or reasons for the answers given by the participants.

According to the participants, the second most important opinion is about the practices regarding the recording of interviews. Although the opinions given in the fifth and sixth rows in Table 1 are different, they are both about recording the interviews. Then, what the researcher should or should not do at the beginning of the research was considered important. When the arithmetic mean scores calculated in Table 1 are taken into consideration, it can be seen that the views on the importance of the time and the environment (place) in which the interview will be conducted ranked fourth. According to the arithmetic averages of the scores that the participants deemed appropriate, the fifth most important idea is related to the researcher motivating the participants to provide accurate and effective data. That is, the researcher should encourage the participants to express their opinions without censoring them. The participants' opinion about how qualitative researchers should behave during the interview is ranked sixth. This is expressed as indicated in the seventh row of Table 1.

### **Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations**

One of the important features of this study is that all participants were experienced researchers as mentioned earlier. To avoid common mistakes or failures in studies whose data were provided through interviews, the participants rated the opinions they wrote in terms of importance. The

arithmetic mean of the scores deemed appropriate was taken as the basis for creating a ranking of which opinions the participants considered important and at what level. A summary of the ranking of the participants' opinions is organized into six items as follows.

1. In qualitative research, questions should be designed in such a way that the answers are not just one or two words, but that the participant has to justify the answer.
2. Interviews should be recorded and permission should be obtained from the participant as to which devices and how the recording process will be carried out.
3. The researcher should meet the study group and gain their trust before data collection. He/she should make necessary explanations about the process for the participants.
4. Interviews should be conducted at a time and place deemed appropriate by the participants.
5. The researcher should encourage the participants to express their thoughts comfortably without censoring them.
6. The qualitative researcher should listen carefully to the participants, not interrupt, direct, and respect their opinions.

The results of this study, summarized in six items, are supported by the explanations and claims put forward in previous studies (Büyüköztürk vd., 2013; Creswell, 2015; Gros, 2019; Merriam, 2013; Patton, 2014; Sönmez & Alacapınar, 2016; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018; Yıldız, 2020; Yıldız, 2016). The participant opinions, organized as six items, are similar to the items identified by Yıldız (2020) to reach effective and accurate qualitative data. The ideas put forward as a result of the descriptive analysis of the participants' views and stated in six items are also accepted as the recommendations of this study.

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