

Qualitative coding



Coding is a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it | Gibbs (2007).

In qualitative research coding is “how you define what the data you are analysing are about” (Gibbs, 2007). Coding is a process of identifying a passage in the text or other data items (photograph, image), searching and identifying concepts and finding relations between them. Therefore, coding is not just labeling; it is linking from the data to the idea and back to other data..

The codes which are applied enable you to organise data so you can examine and analyse them in a structured way, e.g. by examining relationships between codes.

Approaches to coding qualitative data



A basic division between coding approaches is **concept driven coding** versus **data driven coding** (or open coding). You may approach the data with a developed system of codes and look for concepts/ideas in the text (concept driven approach) or you can look for ideas/concepts in the text without a preceding conceptualisation and let the text speak for itself (data driven coding). Investigators can either use a predetermined coding scheme or review the initial responses or observations to construct a coding scheme based on major categories that emerge.

Both methods require initial and thorough readings of your data and writing down which patterns or themes you notice. A researcher usually identifies several passages of the text that share the same code, i.e. an expression for a shared concept.

An example

A code in a qualitative enquiry is most often a word or short phrase. In the table below an example (Saldaña, 2013) is given.

	Raw data	Preliminary codes	Final code
	The closer I get to “retirement age” the faster I want it to happen. I’m not even 55 yet and I would give anything to retire now. But there’s a mortgage to pay off and still a lot more to sock away in savings before I can even think of it. I keep playing the lottery, though, in hopes of dreams of early winning those millions. No retirement luck yet.	* retirement age* financial obligations dreams of early retirement	RETIREMENT ANXIETY

Expert tips

Any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily. The excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding | Strauss (1987).

Source: <https://www.cessda.eu/Training/Training-Resources/Library/Data-Management-Expert-Guide/3.-Process/Qualitative-coding>

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