

Guideline for examination HELSEF4410 Introduction to Qualitative Methods

Home exam – Autumn 2023

This exam consists of two parts: Part I and part II. Both parts are to be answered and both parts must be passed. References are not included in the word count. The exam can be answered in English or Norwegian language. To answer the exam, please use literature from the syllabus.

In writing the exam, please avoid bullet points, and make sure you follow the standards for academic writing, including writing/using your own words and making sure that you use proper referencing techniques when you cite or paraphrase other publications or texts.

PART I

500-1000 words.

1. Propose a research aim/objective and formulate a relevant research question that can be explored through qualitative methods related to the vaccine hesitancy.
2. Develop a qualitative study design to achieve the aim of your chosen research question including the following:
 - Sampling and participant recruitment strategy
 - Data collection techniques and an explanation of why these are suitable
 - Possible strategies to improve the validity of the study

PART II

500-1000 words.

You are going to conduct a focus group discussion among people > 65 years old. Two men and five women are recruited, based on an information sheet at the local library. You, the researcher, is interested in how the persons think about and plan for their future as older people. What do they look forward to, and what are the worries? This knowledge may be used to inform local elderly care planning.

Concerning research ethics and values, what should you think about before and during the focus group discussion?

Grading scale: grades are awarded on a pass/fail scale.

In the assessment of PART I of the exam, emphasis should be placed on whether:

The research question, research design, data collection techniques as well as sampling and participant recruitment strategies and validity considerations in Part I are justified, clearly formulated and relevant to the topic of research.

Assessment of PART II: Green & Thorogood chapter 4 is relevant. The following values are described and discussed in this chapter: the research study should be scientifically sound; 'the four principles' (autonomy, doing good, not doing harm, justice), research should contribute to social justice, one issue of relevance may be hierarchy in social settings. Connected to these 'values' are three different researcher positions: the researcher as the 'neutral outsider', the 'liberal relativist,' the 'radical'. From the chapter: "the key issue about values becomes one of identifying the potential contribution" (p. 87); further, "one task of ethical reviews is to adjudicate between (different stakeholders/interests): to balance society's need for knowledge against the rights of individuals involved in the research" (p. 88).

From chapter 4 and Lisbeth's lecture: Basic research ethical principles are informed and freely given consent and confidentiality (but also GDPR/personal data and duty of secrecy). Other issues to be aware of: are there any risks to consider; for instance: can the topic of the focus group interview become emotional for the participants – how to handle this? Is the topic sensitive? Are the questions to be discussed reflecting the participants' concerns or the researcher? How to get the seven participants engaged? What about secrecy (taushetsplikt) between the participants? What about location?

From Line's lecture: social or cultural barriers, power imbalance, unexpected reactions,

From Victoria's lecture: the role of the moderator, feedbacking findings to participants, discussing sensitive issues (local cultural values, power relations, nature of the group), group interactions and discussions prompt participants to remember, think or talk more about their own experiences, hierarchy and marginalization of opinions, gender and class considerations, homogeneous groups vs heterogeneous groups.

For both I and II: The language complies with standards of academic writing and the use of references is in accordance with academic standards.