

CONTENT ANALYSIS: A WAY TO MAKE SENSE OF TEXT OR NARRATIVE DATA

SO WHAT IS IT?

Content analysis is form of qualitative evaluation, which is concerned with understanding multiple truths or ways of knowing and being. Qualitative data takes into account various forms of human communication and expression, not numbers.

Content analysis is a process of sorting and making sense of the data, especially written and narrative data. The goal is not to generalize across a population, but rather to provide understanding and explanation from the respondent's perspective.

WHEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

When you want to analyze and interpret non-numerical data such as:

- Open-ended questions and written comments on questionnaires
- Testimonials about a program
- Individual interviews
- Discussion or focus groups
- Logs, journals and diaries
- Stories people share about a program's impact
- Documents, reports and news articles
- Observations
- Case studies

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN?

Evaluation time varies depending on the amount of data and its intended end-use.

- Step 1: Download "10 Steps to Make Sense of Answers to Open-Ended Questions" for quick tips. <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/resources/quicktipssubject.html#analyze>
- Step 2: Download [Analyzing Qualitative Data](#) (G3658-12) for more in-depth understanding.
- Step 3: Get to know your data by reading and re-reading the text
- Step 4: Focus the analysis by identifying a few key questions you want answered.
- Step 5: Categorize the information by identifying and organizing themes
- Step 6: Identify patterns and connections within and between categories.
- Step 7: Interpretation - Understanding the connections and how can they be applied to other settings, programs and studies.

HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

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