

**UNDERSTANDING THE GROUNDED THEORY FOR QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS****Seema Kiran Bhandare, Ph. D.**

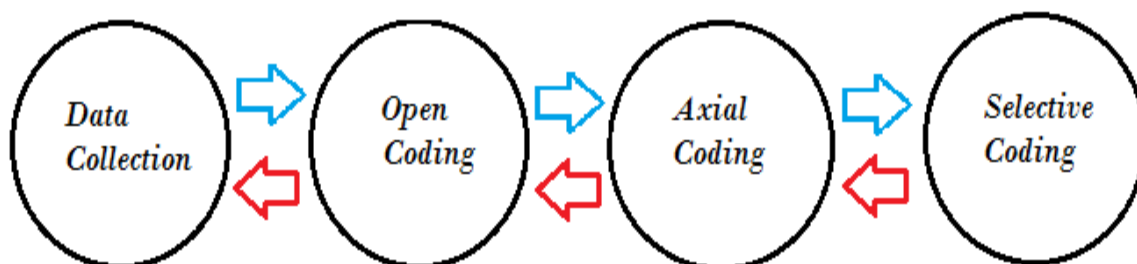
Associate professor

A.C.C.E.R

*Scholarly Research Journal's* is licensed Based on a work at [www.srjis.com](http://www.srjis.com)**Introduction:**

Qualitative research can be defined as a type of scientific research that tries to bridge the gap of incomplete information, systematically collect evidence, produces findings and thereby seeks answer to a problem or a question. It is widely used in collecting and understanding specific information about the behaviour, opinion values and other social aspects of a particular community, culture or population. Qualitative research helps in providing an in depth knowledge regarding human behaviour and tries to find out reasons behind decision making tendencies of humans. Attempting to understand human nature, marker research purposes, current trends, changing tastes and preferences of people, there certain approaches of qualitative research. They are - Case study, ethnography, historical method, phenomenology and grounded theory.

Grounded theory is one of the basic approaches and most prominently used technique in qualitative research.



### **Definition of Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory involves the collection and analysis of data. The theory is “grounded” in actual data, which means the analysis and development of theories happens after you have collected the data. It was introduced by Glaser & Strauss in 1967 to legitimize qualitative research.

### **History of Grounded Theory**

Grounded Theory (GT) was first developed by Sociologist Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. During this period, they criticized the predominant approach to qualitative research, which they found to be very limited. Qualitative studies at this time were following traditional methods which basically involved coming up with a hypothesis and conducting research to validate it. Glaser and Strauss pioneered a new methodology for discovering theory by taking an inductive approach to qualitative research. They formally presented their newly developed research method by publishing *Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (1967).

Since then, various evolutions of grounded to theory emerged, including *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (1990) by Strauss and Corbin. This shifted from the concept of the natural emergence of theory by designing an analytical coding framework for generating theories from data systematically.

In 1990s, Kathy Charmaz published a new approach called constructivist grounded theory, and argued that neither data nor theories are discovered but are constructed through the researchers' past and present experiences.

### **Meaning of grounded theory**

"Grounded theory refers to a set of systematic inductive methods for conducting qualitative research aimed toward theory development. The term grounded theory denotes dual referents: (a) a method consisting of flexible methodological strategies and (b) the products of this type of inquiry.

### **Steps for grounded theory**

1. Determine initial research questions
2. Recruit and collect data (theoretical sampling)
3. Break transcripts into excerpts (open coding)
4. Group excerpts into codes (open coding)
5. Group codes into categories (axial coding)
6. Analyse more excerpts and compare with codes
7. Repeat steps 2-6 until you reach theoretical saturation
8. Define the central idea (selective coding)
9. Write your grounded theory

You can do your grounded theory coding by hand, using word processors and spreadsheets such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel, or use Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software such as Delve. There are pros and cons to each approach, and you should choose one based off what is most appropriate for your research.

### **Aim of grounded theory**

The primary objective of grounded theory, then, is to expand upon an explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context and process of the experiment.

The defining characteristics of grounded theory include: simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, construction of analytic codes and categories from data (not from preconceived logical hypotheses), use of the constant comparative method/analysis that involves making comparisons during all steps of the research study.

Grounded Theory (GT) works in following fashion. It is a structured, yet flexible methodology. This methodology is appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon; the aim being to produce or construct an explanatory theory that uncovers a process inherent to the substantive area of inquiry.

Grounded theory differs from either qualitative content analysis or thematic analysis because it has its own distinctive set of procedures, including theoretical sampling and open coding. In contrast, the procedures in the other two are not specified at the same level of detail.

Grounded theory has considerable significance because it (a) provides explicit, sequential guidelines for conducting qualitative research; (b) offers specific strategies for handling the analytic phases of inquiry; (c) streamlines and integrates data collection and analysis; (d) advances conceptual analysis of qualitative data; and (e) legitimizes qualitative research as scientific inquiry. Grounded theory methods have earned their place as a standard social research method and have influenced researchers from varied disciplines and professions.

Increasingly, researchers use the term to mean the methods of inquiry for collecting and, in particular, analysing data. The methodological strategies of grounded theory are aimed to construct middle-level theories directly from data analysis. The inductive theoretical thrust of these methods is central to their logic. The resulting analyses build their power on strong empirical foundations. These analyses provide focused, abstract, conceptual theories that explain the studied empirical phenomena.

Yet grounded theory continues to be a misunderstood method, although many researchers purport to use it. Qualitative researchers often claim to conduct grounded theory studies

without fully understanding or adopting its distinctive guidelines. They may employ one or two of the strategies or mistake qualitative analysis for grounded theory. Conversely, other researchers employ grounded theory methods in reductionist, mechanistic ways. Neither approach embodies the flexible yet systematic mode of inquiry, directed but open-ended analysis, and imaginative theorizing from empirical data that grounded theory methods can foster. Subsequently, the potential of grounded theory methods for generating middle-range theory has not been fully realized."

**When should you use grounded theory?**

You should consider using grounded theory when there is no existing theory that offers an explanation for a phenomenon that you are studying. It can also be used if there is an existing theory, but it is potentially incomplete as the data used to derive that theory wasn't collected from the group of participants that you plan on researching.

**Benefits of using grounded theory -**

**• Findings accurately represent real world settings**

The theories you develop using grounded theory are derived directly from real world participants in real world settings using methods like in depth interviews and observation, so your findings will more accurately represent the real world. This is in contrast to other research approaches that occur in less natural settings like research labs or focus group tables.

**• Findings are tightly connected to the data**

Because grounded theory primarily relies on collected data to determine the final outcome, the findings are tightly connected to that data. This is in contrast to other research approaches that rely more heavily on external research frameworks or theories that are further removed from the data.

**• Great for new discoveries**

Grounded theory is a strong, inductive research method for discovering new theories. You don't go in with any preconceived hypothesis about the outcome, and are not concerned with validation or description. Instead, you allow the data you collect to guide your analysis and theory creation, leading to novel discoveries.

**• Offers strategies for analysis**

The process of grounded theory describes specific strategies for analysis that can be incredibly helpful. While grounded theory is a very open-ended methodology, the analysis strategies enable you to stay structured and analytical in your discovery process.

- **Data collection and analysis are streamlined**

Data collection and analysis are tightly interwoven. As you collect data, you analyze it, and as you learn from analysis, you continue to collect more data. This helps ensure that the data you collect is sufficient enough to explain the findings that arise from analysis.

- **Buffers against confirmation bias**

Because data collection and analysis are tightly interwoven, you are truly following what is emerging from the data itself. This provides a great buffer against confirming preconceived beliefs about your topic.

### **Limitations of grounded theory**

- **Difficulty recruiting**

Grounded theory relies on an iterative recruiting process called theoretical sampling where you continuously recruit and conduct new rounds of interviews with new participants and previous participants while you analyse data. The recruiting criteria also evolves and changes based on what you learn. Because the recruiting is not predefined, it can be challenging to continuously find the right participants for your study.

- **Time consuming to collect data**

There is no way to know ahead of time how much data you will need to collect, so you need to be flexible with your time. With grounded theory, you continuously collect and analyze data until you reach theoretical saturation, which is the point at which new data does not contribute new insight to your evolving theory. This means that you are likely to conduct many rounds of data collection before your theory is complete.

- **Challenges in analysis**

Data analysis occurs on a rolling basis and involves making constant comparisons between different excerpts of data. It can be challenging to keep track of your comparisons and findings as you go. It can be helpful to use a qualitative data analysis software like Delve to help you stay organized during your analysis.

Grounded theory is not a linear process where you collect data, analyse it, and then you're done. It is an iterative research methodology that involves cycling through the steps iteratively. Part of what made Grounded Theory revolutionary was that it mixed data collection with analysis. It emphasized going back to the field even after conducting some analysis. You will recruit some participants, gather data and analyse it, and go back into the field again with a different recruiting strategy and focus of inquiry. Then you'll incorporate those findings into further rounds of analysis. Grounded theory is deliberately cyclical in nature.

**Flexible guidelines to be considered when conducting qualitative inquiry in general or constructing a grounded theory study in particular-**

**How to go with grounded theory?**

**Strive to achieve methodological self-consciousness (Charmaz 2017).** Why have you chosen the specific topic, methodology and methods, and how do these fit with who you are and your research objectives and questions? What version of grounded theory have you adopted and why? What are the ontological and epistemological assumptions, and what do these mean for the research process, researcher position, findings, and quality issues, including transferability?

**Learn everything you can about the type of qualitative inquiry** you adopt, whether it's narrative inquiry, discourse analysis, or a version of grounded theory. If possible, work with a mentor who is knowledgeable about your approach.

**Take an open, non-committal, critical, analytic view of the existing literature in the field.**

In contrast to Glaserian grounded theory but in line with Straussian and constructivist grounded theory, we recommend that you review the literature to establish a defensible rationale for the study, to avoid re-inventing the wheel, and to increase theoretical sensitivity. Treat the literature as provisional and fallible, not as the Truth (for further reading, see Thornberg 2012; Thornberg and Dunne 2019).

**Gather rich data.** For psychologists, rich data usually means learning and collecting the stories of people who have had or are having a specific experience. Rich data means an openness to the empirical world and a willingness to try to understand the experiences of people who may be far different from you.

**Be transparent.** Describe how you conducted your study, obtained your sample and state how and why you have included the participants, and how you have used grounded theory and data collection methods. Include justifications of your choices.

**Go back and forth between data** and your developing analysis to focus your subsequent data collection and to fill out your emerging analytic categories. Tolerate ambiguity while you struggle to gain intimate familiarity with the empirical world and to create an analytic handle to understand it. As you proceed, ask progressively focused questions about the data that help you develop your emerging analysis. Play with your data and your ideas about it. Look for all possible theoretical explanations of the data and check them.

**Collect sufficient data** to (a) make useful comparisons, (b) create robust analytic categories, and (c) convince readers of the significance of your categories.

**Ask questions about your categories:** What are their properties? In which ways do they subsume minor categories? How are your main categories connected? How do they make a theoretical statement? What is the significance of this statement?

**Always treat your** codes, categories and theoretical outlines as provisional and open for revision and even rejection in the light of new data and further analysis.

**Conclusion:**

Grounded theory is one of the best ways of systematically generating a theory on the basis of corpus of data. The data collected by the theorists is analysed systematically and their interpretation leads to formation of reports, which ultimately leads to creation of theories. Wherein, theory can be defined as a framework on the basis of which things, properties, behaviour and events can be interpreted. The basic purpose of grounded theory is to emphasise on the process or method of formulation of a theory. Memoing, sorting and writing are the systematic steps of the grounded theory. The needs to take care of the data or the information collected. Researcher needs to enhance the sensitivity of the variables.

**References:**

- Anells, M. (1996). *Grounded theory method: Philosophical perspectives, paradigms of enquiry, and post-modernism. Qualitative Health Research*, 6, (3), 379-393.
- Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (2007). *Asking questions of the data: memo writing in the grounded theory tradition. In Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. The SAGE handbook of grounded theory (pp. 245-264). SAGE Publications Ltd*
- Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (2007). *Teaching grounded theory. In Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. The SAGE handbook of grounded theory (pp. 311-338). SAGE Publications Ltd*
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). *Grounded theory in historical perspective: An epistemological account. In A. Bryant & K.*
- Chamberlain, J. M. (2013). *Grounded theory analysis. In Understanding criminological research: A guide to data analysis (pp. 74-104). London, : SAGE Publications Ltd.*
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. London. Sage*
- Charmaz, K (2011). *Grounded theory methods in social justice research. In N. Denzin & N. Yvonne (Eds.), The SAGE handbook of qualitative research (pp. 359-380).*
- Clarke, A.M. (1998). *The qualitative-quantitative debate: Moving from positivism and confrontation to post-positivism and reconciliation. Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 27, 1242 – 1249.
- Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (2014). *The SAGE encyclopaedia of action research (Vols. 1-2). London, SAGE Publications Ltd*
- Creswell, J.W. (2014) *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (4th ed.). London, UK: SAGE Publications.*
- Crossin, F. (2003). *Research philosophy: Towards an understanding. Nurse Researcher*, 11 (1), 46-55.
- Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln. (2005). *Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of qualitative research (3rd., pp.1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.*