

Interviews as a method of collecting data sociology essay



In this essay, I will be discussing the analysis of the data collected in finding out the possibility of reality television programmes influencing the perception of the youth on matters surrounding them socially, looking at the series, " keeping up with the Kadashians" and using Ugandan youths as a case study. As a method of collecting data, I chose interviews both as a one on one and as a large group interview. I will be discussing the procedure of data collection and data analysis methods of the data collected.

During data analysis, I used the discourse analysis method mainly because I used interviews and focus groups as the data collection methods as it was informative to analyze the discourse of the interaction between the respondents and researcher.

Interviews as a method of collecting data

I chose interviews as the data collection method because they are widely used in the qualitative methodology for gaining an understanding of peoples experience (Evans, 2012). They also provide a means for exploring the points of view of the research subject, thus, granting the culturally honored status of reality (Miller and Glassner, 2011: 133).

However, qualitative interviews require a great deal of planning as the absence of a predesigned set and sequence of questions, the interviewer has to prepare to think beyond their feet during the interview. (Mason, 2002: 67). In addition, qualitative interviewing operates on the notion that knowledge is constructed rather than straight forwardly excavated (Mason, 2002: 63).

There are two forms of interviewing I used, i. e. structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews with open-ended questions
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elicit “ authentic accounts of subjective experience” (Miller and Glassner, 2011: 131), showing that interviews are very good for collecting data because they offer a researcher true accounts for data analysis. However, radical social constructionists have argued that there is no knowledge of a reality “ out there” in the social world, but rather that it can be obtained from an interview. This is because the interview is obviously and exclusively an interaction between the interviewer and interview subject where both participants create and construct narrative versions of the social world (Miler& Glassner, 1997: 99 cited in Silverman, 1997).

Interviews construct not just narratives about social world, but the primary issue is to generate data that gives an authentic insight into people’s experience, (Miller &Glassner, 1997; 100 cited in Silverman, 1997).

My previous assignment in which I described the methods of collecting data in researching and rationale of the research topic, was interested in finding out the chances of imported programming content and how it can be used to develop new characters or ways of thinking from the youth in Uganda. Such examples of imported programming are reality television programs, which are aimed at filming people in ‘ real time’ as they live out events in their lives, contrived or otherwise as they occur (Nabi et al, 2003: 304 cited in Beck, Hellmueller and Aeschbacher, 2012: 2-5).

During data collection, I set up three areas of topics to explore. Firstly, how these people made sense of reality programmes and “ Keeping up with the Kardashians” in particular. Secondly, how the respondents understood the themes played out in the series and the thirdly, how they related it to their

own experiences. I set up several questions to be answered, in some situations however, the respondents did not particularly like being asked many questions individually but could answer them in a group.

In this, several questions were asked during the interview ranging from how they understood reality television down to their perception of the program, 'Keeping up with the Kardashians'. I found that to prove my hypothesis, I had to ask questions that were more likely to explore the themes and ideas I already had about the programme. Not to impose my ideas on them, but to have something of a debate where the respondents gave me their own views.

As such, I started with the big questions, breaking them down into smaller questions where the smaller questions were supposed to get the relevant issues. I carried out three interviews with different girls and two boys from Uganda. Even though the interview is primarily about female perception on this content, the urge to get a male point of view kicked in because of the male characters in the series where I became interested in hearing their views on their portrayal. My main criterion therefore was any youth from Uganda. Luckily, I did get two Ugandan respondents living in the UK, which made it interesting because they could compare and contrast what they had seen from their experience living both in Uganda and in the UK.

Mason, (2002; 77) suggests that recordings be made as fully and explicitly as one possibly can, the route by which the researcher came to the interpretations they are making. In order to ensure that I was not imposing my own interpretations therefore, I had to obtain ethical approval and

maintain a code of ethics before we could conduct the interviews. I mentioned it to the respondents that I would have the interview recorded but that they would remain anonymous which they agreed to. However, some of the respondents had problems with the interview asking what was in it for them to gain and after I told them nothing monetary was to be given, they opted out leaving me with just four respondents. I thus gave them a form to sign and recorded the interview (on the audio device in my phone, Samsung ace).

Method of analysis

The method used in analyzing the data collected is discourse analysis mainly because I used interviews and focus groups as my data collection methods, thus analyzing the discourse of the interaction between the respondents and myself.

Discourse can mean many things depending on different disciplines. In cognitive psychology, it focuses on the use of mental scripts and schemata to make sense of narratives (Potter, 1997; 145). Discourse is a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, Images and statements (Evans, 2012). Discourse Analysis emphasizes the production of the different versions of the world, society, events and inner psychological worlds in discourse (Potter, 1997; 146). During research, I needed to find out how the youth in Uganda perceived programmes such as “ Keeping up with the Kardashians”. This kind of data analysis can only be done in the field and not in a laboratory (Evans 2012). Talking to these people and finding out from them what and how they truly feel.

According to a lecture conducted by Doctor Evans, discourse analysis has three approaches namely conversation analysis, interpretive repertoires and the Foucauldian discourse,

An interpretive approach, not only sees people as primary data sources, but also seeks their perception rather than impose an “outsider view” (Mason, 2002; 56). Mason (2002; 56) adds that it also supports a study, which uses interview methods where the aim is to explore individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, and social norms.

Conversation analysis on the other hand aims at studying methods for producing orderly and social interaction (Silverman, 2001: 167, cited in Mason, 2002; 57) especially through naturally occurring talk. Foucauldian discourse.

Discourse analysis emphasizes the role of language in the construction of social reality (Talja, 1999) where Michele Foucault says language produces knowledge through doing things such as creating meaning. Language is also produced socially and as well leads to action (Travers, 2001; 84). I would have to understand in analyzing my data how these people make sense of the information they receive from these programmes and what worlds they thus construct. How they understand themselves in this world and how it all makes sense.

According to Harvey Sacks (Travers, 2001; 84), language is a central part in the methods used for understanding things around us and displaying their meaning. He believed that one can develop a truly scientific approach to studying society through studying tape recordings of conversations.
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Data Analysis

During data analysis, I described generalized views of the respondents regarding the questions given to them. This is because they were a group of people and I could not give all transcripts of the interviews. The discursive object is the family life portrayal in the programme where the respondents generally agreed that the family members are cooperative, supporting and caring of each other. Family is a priority where they always try to spend time with each other through organizing trips and events.

Regarding how they made interpretations of reality television, the respondents said they knew it was staged but still allowed them see the characters' daily lives. How I would interpret this that the respondents like the programme because it is appealing, and however much it is staged, they still watch it. For them, it is just another entertainment programme on television.

However, the belief that what the respondents were watching goes on in the characters' lives meant they did not know much about reality television, which relates to the hypothesis that reality television programmes can be perceived in ways that could have certain attitude changing effects on the youth.

My next questions were on how they made sense of the themes portrayed in this program. When asked about the characters individual roles , the respondents agreed that the females were the more dominant parties in the family with one respondent going further to say that culturally,' women are meant to be followers of the men, not the other way round'.

Majority of the respondents said that the mother/wife tries so hard to be there for everybody, which for the respondents is what a good mother should do but that however, she often exceeded her limits. Two respondents said that she was dominating and materialistic as she at times seems to put money making before her children's needs such as when she urged Kimberley Kardashian to pose for playboy.

The respondents therefore seem to relate what they view on programmes such as ' Keeping up with the Kardashians' with their knowledge of what family should be from a cultural context. They are also able to relate to their experiences. Some expressed strong views on the portrayal of family life in the series, stating that the females were the dominant characters giving the impression that women had to have control over not only housekeeping affairs, but also their personal relationships. In line with the state of affairs in characters' home country, the respondents saw this as a means of spreading female empowerment. However, with the male characters seen as " easy", as generally agreed by the respondents, it distorted the cultural values they held.

Lastly, on whether such imported programming could be responsible for a change in the attitudes of the youth's concerning how they view their society, the respondents agreed it would be a long time before it happened. This is because, " it didn't make sense in real life" and that " it existed on a different level to that back home". However, that was true for how family life is portrayed and that on an individual level, the programming held some power in " making ' society' want to be like them through the clothes they wore" which was fine because it " encouraged females to work harder." <https://assignbuster.com/interviews-as-a-method-of-collecting-data-sociology-essay/>

Strengths and weaknesses of the discourse method

Discourse Analysis emphasizes the way versions of the world, society, events and inner psychological worlds are produced in discourse (Potter, 1997; 147 cited in Silverman, 1997) through systematizing the different ways of talking, making the perspectives and starting points on the basis of which knowledge and meanings are produced, visible in a particular historical moment (Talja, 1999).

Discourse Analysis pays attention to the way in which discourses produce and transform social reality, making it possible to evaluate the practical consequences of different ways of approaching a particular phenomenon (Talja, 1999).

On the other hand, Discourse analysis is much a craft skill because it generates interpretive claims with regard to the power effects of a discourse on groups of people, without claims of generalizability to other contexts (Cheek, 1997 cited in Powers).

Wetherell & Potter (1988), argue that discourse analysts are more interested in the regularities of language use such as the possible kinds of descriptions and accounts of a topic. What kinds of evaluations these descriptions are based on as well as how different modes of accounting construct different versions of the topic or produce different kinds of truths, and what these versions accomplish rather than the processes taking place either in individuals' minds or in reality.

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Appendix 1

M96 Research in CCM Rehema Nakalema

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Please initial box

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research

Please tick box

Yes No

I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded

I agree to the interview / focus group /consultation being recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant Date

Name of Researcher Date Signature