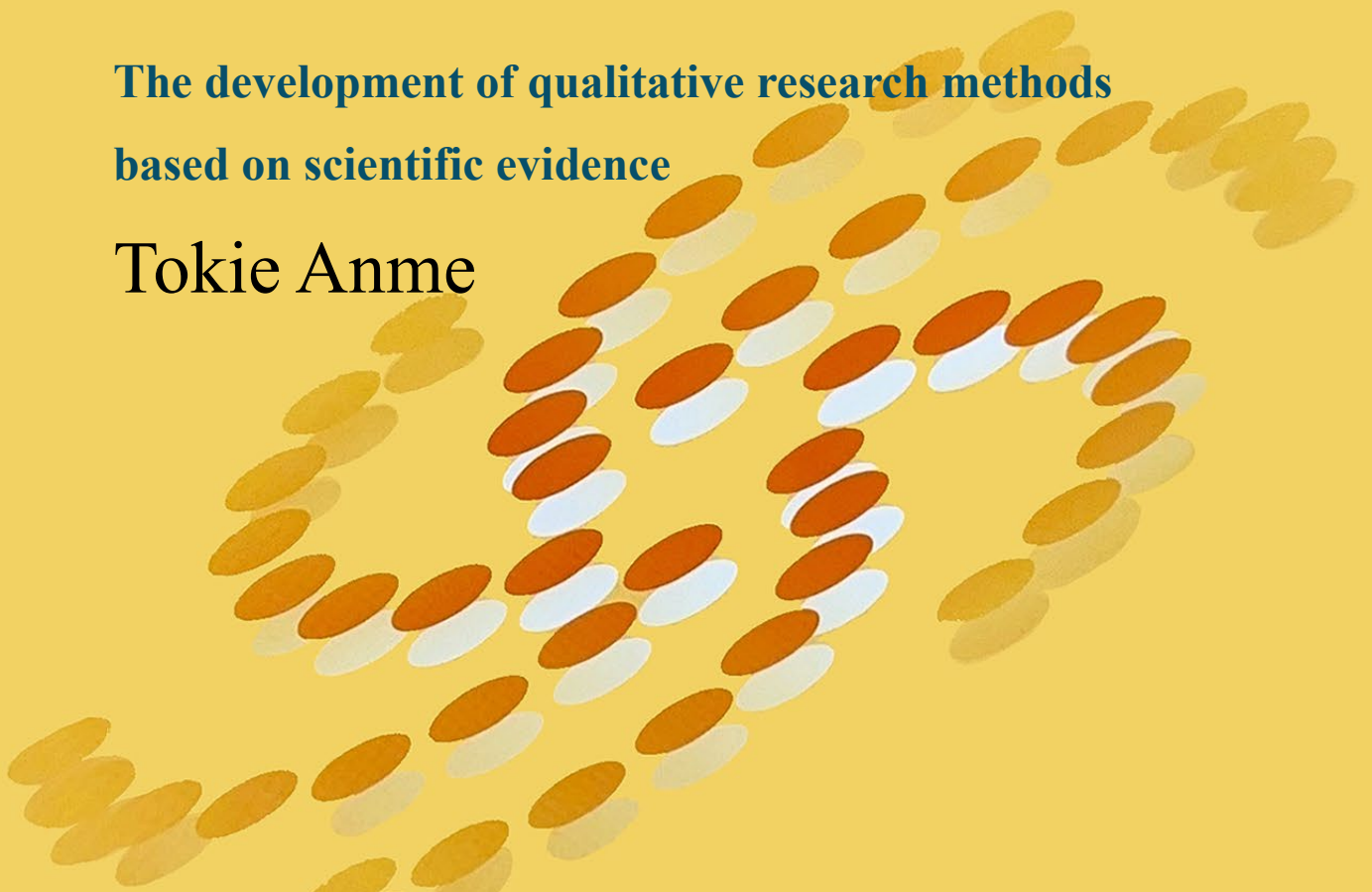


For Human services

Group Interview Method

The development of qualitative research methods
based on scientific evidence

Tokie Anme



Focus Group
INTER-
VIEW

Chapter 1 What is the definition of the group interview method?

① Definition of the group interview method

The group interview method is a scientific methodology that uses group dynamics to understand information qualitatively. It systematically organizes information generated by the dynamic involvement of multiple people and uses it as a “scientific basis.” Therefore, group interviews make it possible to make use of “information as it is in the raw voice” and obtain “in-depth information” that cannot be obtained through quantitative research, as well as “accumulated information,” “wide-ranging information” and “dynamic information” that cannot be obtained through single interviews.

In other words, group interviews are characterized by the following four points:

1. The ability to approach information “as it is in reality” as an extension of everyday life
2. It is a qualitative, “member-centered” information-gathering process
3. It is possible to “draw information” based on group dynamics
4. It is possible to grasp both the “actions” (including verbal and non-verbal) of the members and the “background situation” (attributes, lifestyle, etc.) that give meaning to those actions.

- Characteristics of information obtained from group interviews

“Information as it is in real voices.”

“In-depth information”

“Piled information”

“Wide range of information”

“Dynamic information”

- The mainstay of future services



2 What is group dynamics?

Group dynamics is an idea proposed by Kurt Levin as “field theory” in 1939 and aims to observe the dynamic properties and changes within a group in order to develop and apply theories in practice. It aims to theorize further and put it into practice.

The three elements of group dynamics are as follows:

1. Intrapersonal

The attributes of each group member, such as gender, age, occupation, physical characteristics, mental situation, etc.

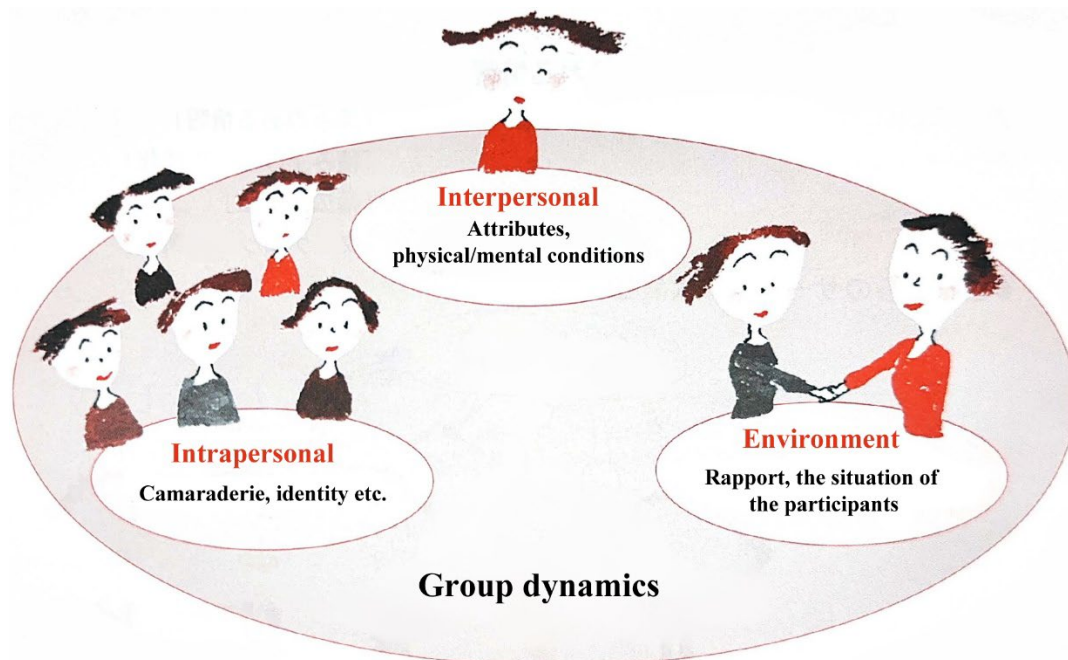
2. Interpersonal

It is the relationships between group members. Specifically, peer relationships, identities, competition, conflicts, leadership, etc. occur between members.

3. Environment

The relationship of each member with the group as a whole. Specifically, the status of the member’s participation in the group, the degree of rapport (relationship of trust) between the interviewer and the members, etc.

Figure 1 Composition of group dynamics



3 Purpose of group interview method

The group interview method is one of the most effective qualitative research methods.

Group interview methods can be used for a variety of purposes. What is especially meaningful in the field of human services is that it allows the “raw voice” of the target person to be directly reflected. As users’ active participation and the importance of self-care are strongly sought after, it can be said that gathering information through group interviews is a method that is expected to be increasingly used in the future. (See my book, *Care Science of Empowerment*).

The main purposes of using group interviews can be broadly summarized as follows:

1. Systematically organize the “real voices” of the people of concern
2. Understand the latent and explicit information behind the topic of interest
3. Formulate hypotheses for further research using a qualitative approach
4. Create new ideas, concepts, ways, and solutions
5. Identify the basic challenges of new programs, services, etc.
6. Clarify the impressions of stakeholders about the program, service, institution, etc. of interest
7. Identify the needs and opinions of the stakeholders
8. Draw out the questions and survey items necessary for qualitative or quantitative research
9. Clarify the appropriateness and validity of items used in qualitative or quantitative research
10. Evaluate existing programs



4 Characteristics of the group interview method

The characteristics of the group interview method can be made clearer by comparing it with other methods.

There are two basic types of “data.”

Data referred to as “emic” is “a perspective close to the subject” and uses the data as it emerges.

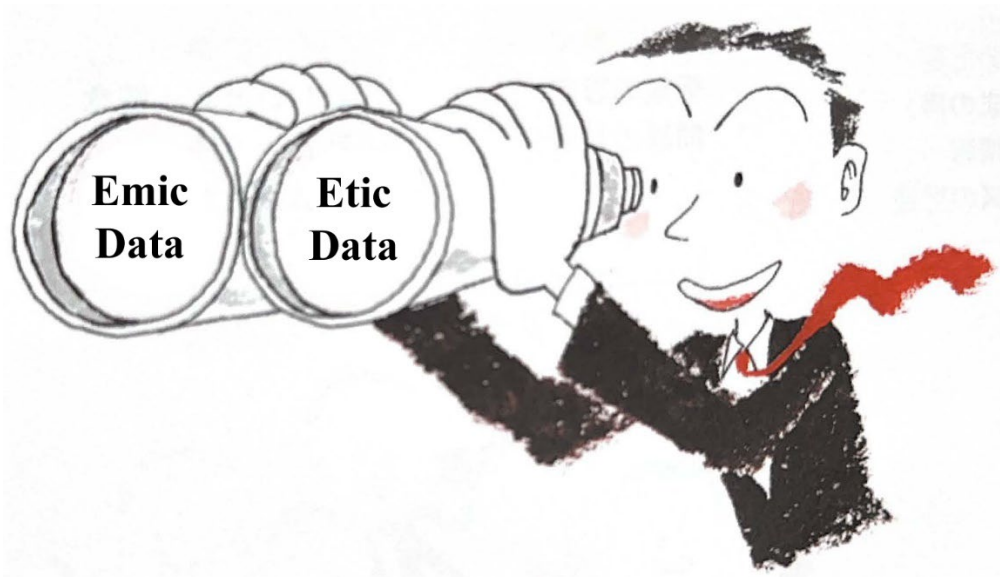
On the other hand, “etic” data is “from a perspective closer to the provider” and is used by processing the data in some way, such as converting “true/false” answers into numbers and inputting them.

In many cases, information obtained by qualitative methods is “emic data,” while that obtained by quantitative methods is “etic data.”

What I would like to emphasize here is that it is crucial to understand information from both sides.

Many reports of etic data show that “a significant difference was observed at a significance level of 5%” using continuation data because it is scientifically based evidence. However, there are many quantitative studies whose results are erroneous or misleading because of inappropriate sampling (selection of subjects), survey methods, and analysis methods. Also, many quantitative research results may be wrong or misleading. There is always a risk that once an incorrect number is out there, it could spread widely and become difficult to correct.

This is where emic data comes into play. By capturing the raw appearance and raw voice of consumers up close, which cannot be read from processed numerical data (etic data), and combining the two, it is possible to obtain even more accurate information. (See my book, *Community Empowerment Techniques*).



Additionally, compared to the social survey methods, the group interview method has the following advantages.

1. Shorter survey period

Social survey methods generally require at least several months to set up the problem domain, prepare the questionnaire, distribute the questionnaires, analyze, and report.

With the group interview method, it depends on the number of groups to be conducted,

The time required to select the subjects, call the members, conduct, analyze, and report on one group can be shorter than with the social survey method.

2. Inexpensive survey costs

Social survey methods that deal with large amounts of data often involve large costs for postage, data entry, and data processing.

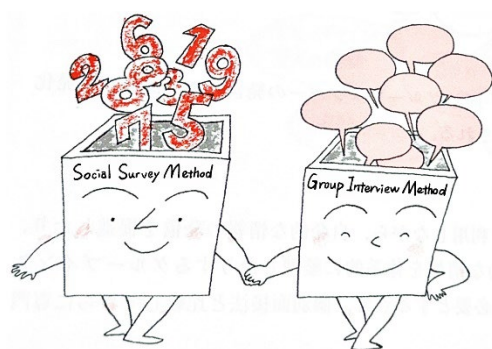
On the other hand, in the group interview method, costs are incurred for postage of notices, remuneration of participants, tea and medicine, etc. However, if the group interviewers themselves are involved in the preparation, analysis, and reporting of verbatim records, they can save on personnel costs. However, if the entire process is outsourced to a specialized group interviewing company, the overall cost may not always be affordable.

3. The person in charge or the researcher directly interacts with the subject

One of the greatest advantages of the group interview method is that the interviewer or researcher is directly involved with the subject. The face-to-face interaction with the subjects allows them to express themselves 'as they are' and to make effective use of this information in future services and research.

4. Non-verbal reactions can be grasped through observation

It is possible to grasp a broad and deep range of information and background factors closer to the real needs from not only verbal expressions but also non-verbal expressions such as appeals, facial expressions and gestures, and the flow of conversation.



5. Possible to accumulate the opinions of members

Opinions can be elicited and accumulated, based on group dynamics.

Furthermore, compared to the individual interview method, the group interview method has the following advantages:

1. Build opinions as a group

It is feasible to create an opinion that is not based solely on one's thoughts but also on the perspectives of the participants and surroundings, which are projected from various viewpoints.

2. The ability to elicit opinions through interaction

Group dynamics arise, and during mutual interaction, points that even the participants themselves were not aware of can come to light, new ways of solving problems can be found, and even latent opinions can be elicited.

3. Mutual stimulation

When participating members come face to face and exchange opinions on topics of mutual interest, they stimulate each other both verbally and non-verbally, which is a catalyst for the creation of new ideas.

4. The wisdom of three is better than one

It is easier to produce more valid opinions and new ways of thinking when stimulated by the opinions and attitudes of other members of the group, rather than when interviewed individually.

5. Less bureaucracy

Whilst it might be challenging for an individual to speak up on their own, they can still express themselves more easily in a group interview than in an individual interview by listening to what other participants are saying, responding to their comments, and offering additional viewpoints.

6. Elicit spontaneous statements

Spontaneous statements are encouraged when discussion is stimulated by the same group member's comments, rather than by one-to-one interviews.

7. Professionalism

The group interview method, which employs group dynamics to facilitate spontaneous information transmission and systematically organizes verbal and nonverbal information obtained, necessitates even more specialization than the individual interview method in terms of skill.

8. Highly scientific (low secretive nature)

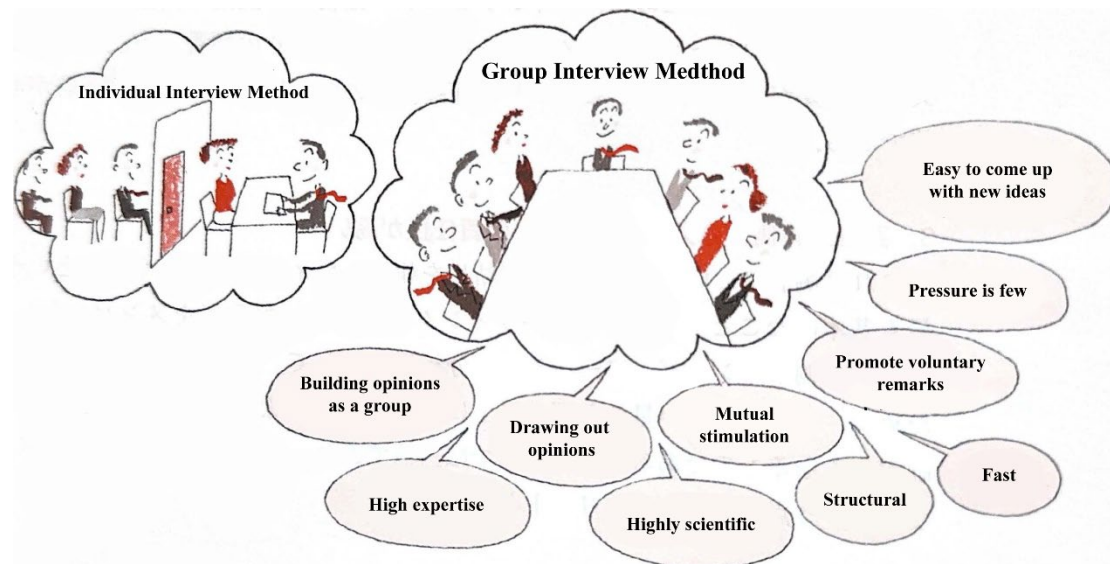
The group interview method, in which multiple people conduct, analyze, and report, is less closed-door than the individual interview method, in which the process is carried out by one person, making it easier to maintain objectivity and more scientific.

9. Structural

In the group interview method, an interview guide is created, and semi-structured settings are made in advance about the points that will cause group dynamics. In order to conduct an objective analysis, the discussion methods and rules should be understood and shared among the members in advance.

10. Fast

If ten people are interviewed together using the group interview method, it will take less time than using the individual interview method.



On the other hand, the group interview method also has various limitations. However, most of these limitations can be solved by improving the interviewer's technique and the selection method of the participating members.

1. Prone to Sample bias

Because group interviews provide information to a small number of people, bias is likely to occur depending on how the participants are selected (sample bias). To avoid this as much as possible, ① Be clear about the purpose of the group interview. ② Determine the targets for which the most effective qualitative data can be obtained. ③ Be able to explain in a permissive manner what characteristics of the members were selected among the whole group. It is important to devise such measures at the stage of member selection.

2. One can be influenced by the opinions of others

As group interviews take the form of a discussion among the participating members of the group, it is possible to be drawn towards a particular vocal member of the group. In the case of highly dependent members, this can lead to a situation where they simply follow someone else's opinion rather than expressing their own.

To prevent this, interviewers need to understand the personality characteristics of the participating members from the flow of the conversation at an early stage and to work out the order and method of allocation. This can be easily prevented by improving the interviewer's interviewing skills.

3. The administrator bears a high level of responsibility to respond to opinions

This is the most basic thing to do in a survey, which is to always report the results to the subjects and give them feedback. In group interviews, the subjects are the members, and the implementer, as interviewer or analyst, talks to them face to face, so the responsibility for responding to the opinions expressed is higher than in quantitative surveys, where there is no face-to-face contact. In a sense, this is natural and can be seen as an advantage in that it facilitates cooperation with the parties concerned.

4. Analysis can be difficult

There are situations in which it is difficult to analyze the content of the conversation or nonverbal expressions as they are due to intergroup dynamics or biases imposed by the interviewer or other sources. For example, strong interests may arise between members and the discussion may end up being only superficial, or members may strongly empathize with each other over similar experiences and the entire group may become emotionally unstable.

To prevent this, it is effective to avoid situations in which interested members participate together as much as possible at the sampling stage and to devise the content of the interview to avoid emotional reactions.

These can be covered by the skill of the interviewer and the way the interview is set up.



5 Theoretical development of the group interview method

The group interview method has been developed based on a number of theories about human interaction. Only the most important ones are eased here.

First, the theory of particularity identifies the following five 'partiality characteristics' that need to be taken into account when analyzing the dynamics of the nascent strain about one member of the group participating in the generation tariff.

1. Susceptibility to influence from others

(e.g., how they express their opinions, how they react to others, etc.)

2. Sensitivity to others

(e.g., the ability to read and make sense of others' reactions).

3 Degree of assertiveness

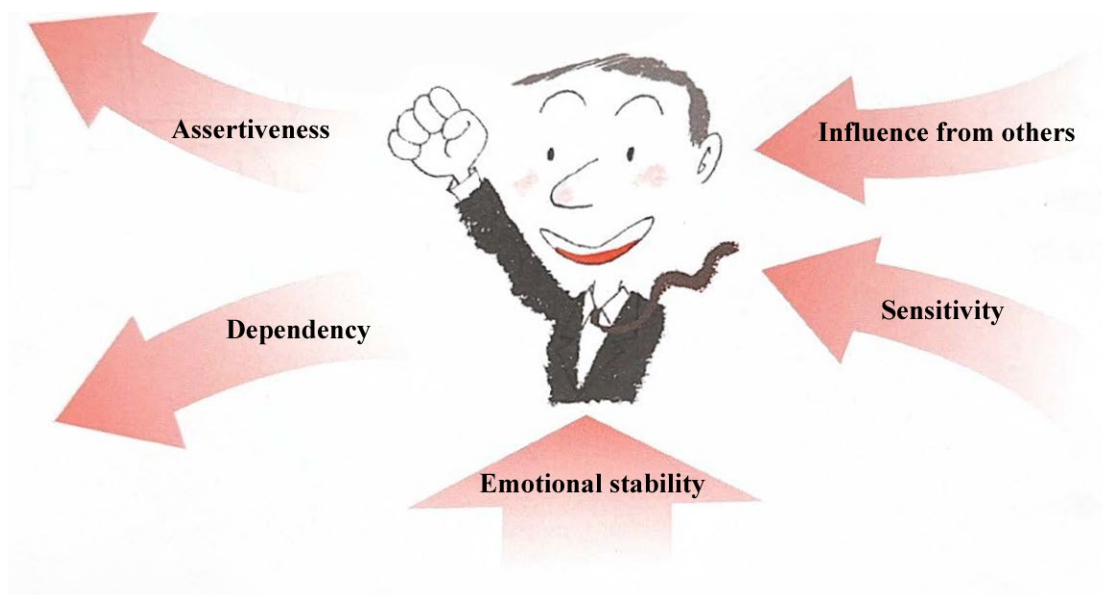
The extent to which one's ideas are emphasized in the group.

4. Dependence

Dependence across multiple orders, e.g., consistency of self-image, competence, and attitudes.

5. Emotional stability

Emotional stability, e.g., emotional stability in the event of conflict.



In addition, from group dynamics theory, the following two factors have been identified as influencing factors on group dynamics.

1. Conformity Compatibility

How well the group conforms to other members and to the movement of the group as a whole. Strength of group membership, sympathy, and antagonism, etc.,

What is the group interview method?

2. Influence on others social power

As a member of the group, are you aware of your influence on other members, and whether you are involved in trying to influence them or not?

Furthermore, from the group dynamics theory, the following four elements are identified as relevant to the progression of a group interview.

1. Group cohesion

Group cohesiveness refers to all the forces that keep the individual members participating in the group interview within the group.

It includes,

- 1) Attractiveness to the group, such as resistance to leaving the group
- 2) Morale and awareness as a group member.
- 3) Cooperation in the group's efforts.

2. Harmoniousness

Harmoniousness refers to the similarity of members' personalities and backgrounds within the group.

Harmoniousness is linked to satisfaction with participation in the group interview and a feeling of security.

3. Social influence

Social influence refers to the balance of influence between participating members. The interviewer adjusts the opportunities to speak, for example, so that the whole group is not heavily influenced by a particular 'vocal person' and, conversely, so that no member does not speak at all.

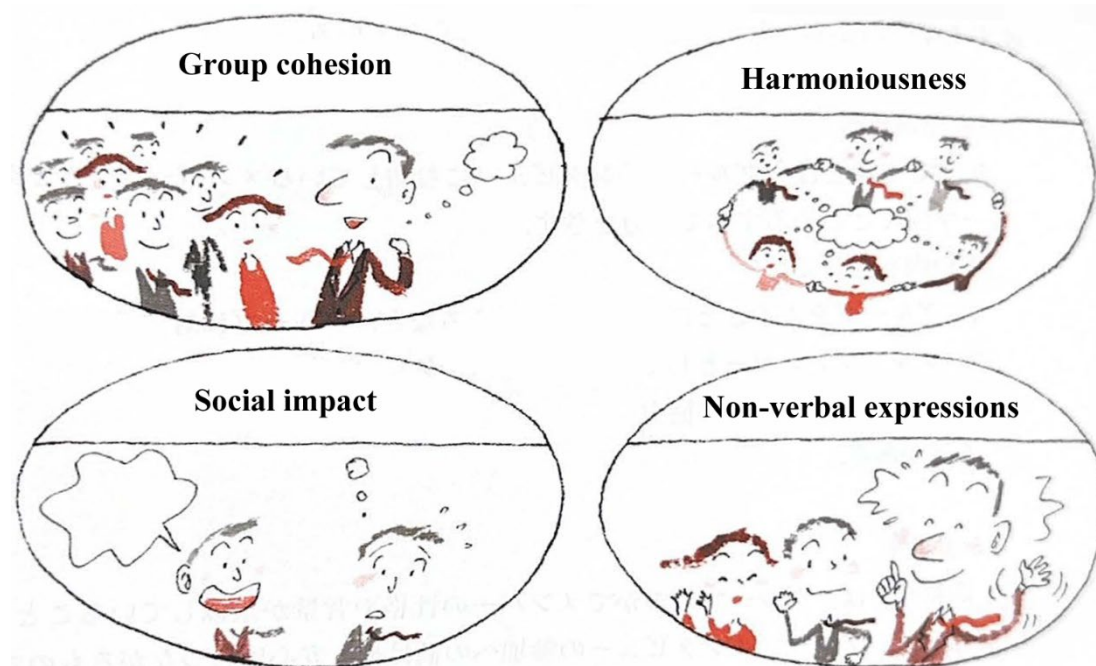
4. Non-verbal expressions

Non-pictorial expressions are the front of the group member's mind. They refer to gestures, reactions, etc.

There are three specific types.

1. Relating to the relationship between members (friendship, agreement, goodwill, etc.)
2. Reactions to an opinion expressed by someone else
3. Dialogue, e.g., synchronization, laughter, posture, etc.

For information on how to record these non-verbal reactions, see p. 31.32.



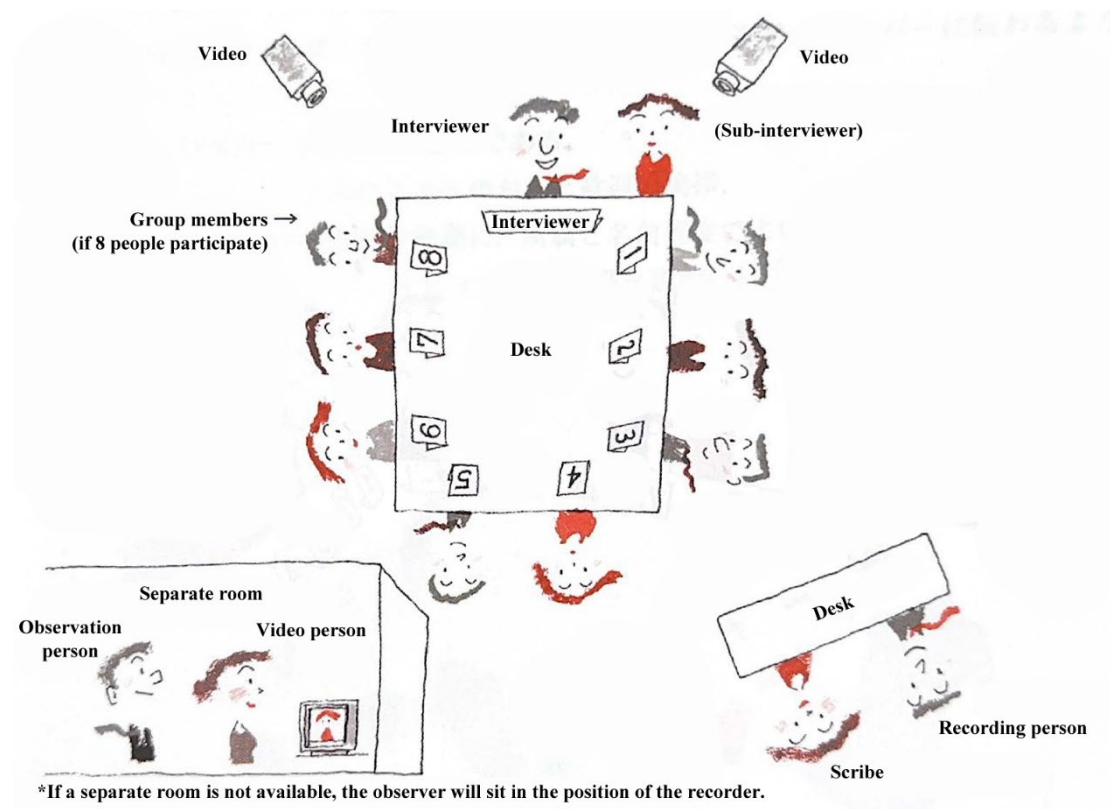
Chapter- 2 Group interview methods

① Setting up group interviews

When conducting group interviews, at least three people are involved: an interviewer, a transcriber, and an observer. In some cases, there may also be a sub-interviewer, an assistant and two transcribers or observers who are in charge of specialized content.

- 1) Presider: one interviewer (one sub-interviewer).
- 2) Recorder: one person each in charge of written recording and observation (1 person each in charge of recording and video)
- 3) Interviewees: usually 6-12 persons
- 4) Duration: 1.5-2.5 hours.
- 5) Location requirements: quiet private room, recording and video recording facilities (if video is used, two units should be used to capture everyone's facial expressions).

Figure 1 Group interviews in practice



There are various ways of conducting group interviews, but the authors often use 'number slips' as a substitute for names. This is effective in that it guarantees that the members' names are not revealed, thus giving a sense of security in what is said, and also allows discussion between strangers without having to memorize each other's names. In the USA and other countries, calling each other by first names is considered to be a good way of creating a sense of familiarity. It is advisable to select a method that promotes active group dynamics, taking into account the cultural background of Japan and the characteristics of the participating members.

The costs of conducting a group interview survey include the following:

1. Honorarium and travel expenses for participating members
2. Interviewer rewards and travel expenses
3. Honorarium/transportation costs for the interviewer
4. Meeting expenses (refreshments)
5. Venue expenses
6. Equipment (recording, video equipment, etc.)
7. Consumables (tapes, video cassettes, etc.)
8. Wages (tape recording, scene report preparation)
9. Rewards for analysis of results
10. Report writing rewards



2 Group interview process

The interview procedure is carried out in seven main stages.

1. Introduction
2. Explanation of the purpose of the group interview
3. Explanation of the group interview method
4. Starting with specific, easy-to-answer questions
5. Acting as a guide to facilitate group dynamics
6. Summarizing to facilitate the next development
7. Thanking members for playing a meaningful role

The checklist for each of these stages can be summarized as follows.

1. Introduction

A good beginning is a good end. In many cases, the assembled members are nervous about their first experience. The key is to make a good first impression, to ease them in, and to relieve their nerves. It goes without saying that the interviewer should be polite, non-intimidating, helpful and courteous.

The interviewer should not play a special role in leading the discussion but should be a guide when the time comes. It often works best if the interviewer takes the same point of view as the members and tries to convey to them a 'let's think together' attitude.

Specifically, the following should be done.

- 1) Thank them for coming and welcome them to the meeting.
- 2) Introduce yourself briefly with a smile. It is sufficient to mention your affiliation and name.
- 3) Explain the implementing organization and the position of the interviewer. For example, "I have been asked to play a role from OO."



2. Explain the purpose of the group interview

Clearly stating the purpose of the group interview is a crucial step in ensuring that the subsequent discussion is meaningful. Explain what you want to discuss and how you want to discuss the time. It is advisable to give three themes in line with the purpose, for example, “There are three points to be discussed,” so that the focus of the discussion can be narrowed down easily.

Did all members understand the objectives without misunderstanding? Check the expressions and reactions of the members.

Check the expressions and reactions of the members.

In addition, at this stage, it is important to motivate the members of the group to participate in the group interview, and to communicate to them how their participation and comments will be useful and meaningful.

Specifically, the following should be done.

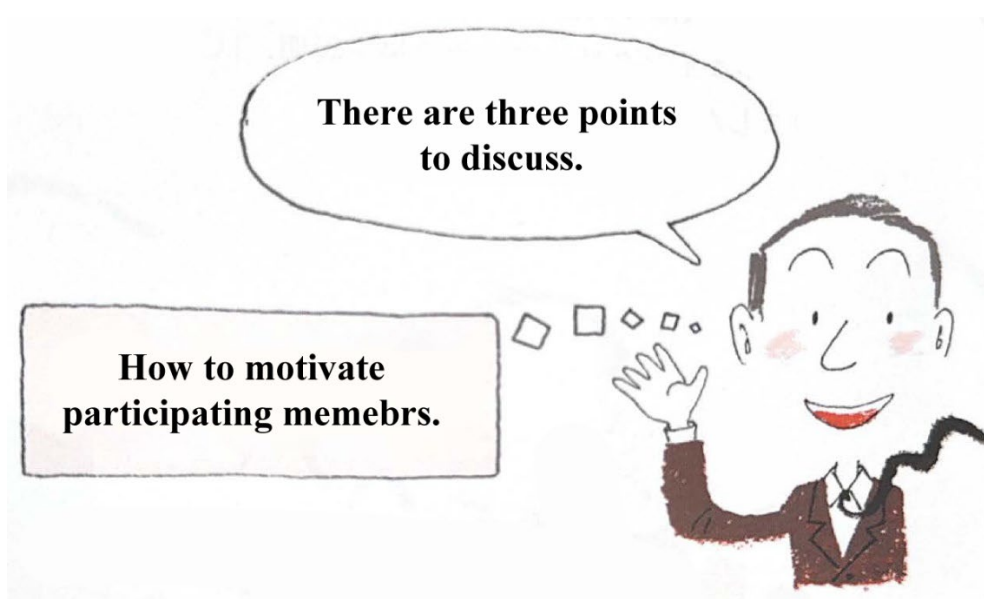
1) The purpose should be clearly stated in concrete terms.

2) Clearly explain who is implementing the project and for what purpose.

3) The background behind the premise of the objectives and the definitions of words should be explained in easy-to-understand language so that they can be shared by all. However, avoid providing too much information that could bias subsequent interviews. It is sufficient if the main points are conveyed in a concise manner.

4) The content should be such that members can confirm the significance of expressing their opinions. 'We will get feedback from actual users and reflect it in our services' etc.

5) Devise content that motivates and raises members' awareness of the importance of participating in the group interviews. For example, “We will incorporate the opinions we receive more and more into our measures.”



3. Explain of the group interview method

In many cases, the participating members are new to the group interview method. The reason for this is clearly stated as 'to analyze the opinions we receive in a scientific way and make the most of them'.

Particular emphasis should be placed on fully informing all members about the content of the discussion: 'There are no wrong opinions, the aim is to gather a wide range of opinions, both for and against'.

Also, explain in plain language that the method of discussion is manipulative, e.g., calling each other by number tags and not revealing names. Always check that they have fully understood at the end.

Specifically, the following should be done.

1) Explanation that the group interview method is a scientific method of ascertaining information.

2) A specific explanation of how to do it. Explain that when using name tags, they can freely say what they want to say, e.g. "I am number 1, but in response to opinion number 3".

3) Fully explain that there is no such thing as a wrong opinion, and that the aim is to gather a range of opinions, including those in favor and those against.

4) Obtain consent to take a video for the record. 'We would like to record your valuable opinions so that we can refer to them without omission. Use it only for the purpose of analysis. I will erase it completely when the analysis is finished. Your name will never be outed, and you will never be held accountable,' he emphasizes.

5) Provide an estimate of how long it will take, e.g. "It will take approximately 0 hours to discuss this. The time should be kept to the time stated at the beginning as much as possible, except in special cases (e.g., members are not fatigued when the time comes, active discussion continues and there is time to spare).

6) At the end, always ask if there are any questions about how to proceed. Make sure that everyone understands how to conduct a group interview before moving on.



4. Start with specific, easy-to-answer questions

open with a question that is easy to answer, while only being asked in the first part of the question, and the tension in the second part of the question will be taken up. In many cases, the question will be answered. The first question should be as specific and easy to answer as possible. It is best to use questions that do not require you to summarize or present your thoughts in any particular way.

Nervousness about the first question is the same for all members of the group, although the intensity varies from person to person. While in observation without one Manji. Casually observe how other members of the group are moving and how they are interested and nervous. Develop the characteristics of listening to others. Using this. Once spontaneous comments have been made among the members, they can be used as a reference for who to broach the topic next.

Specifically, the following can be used.

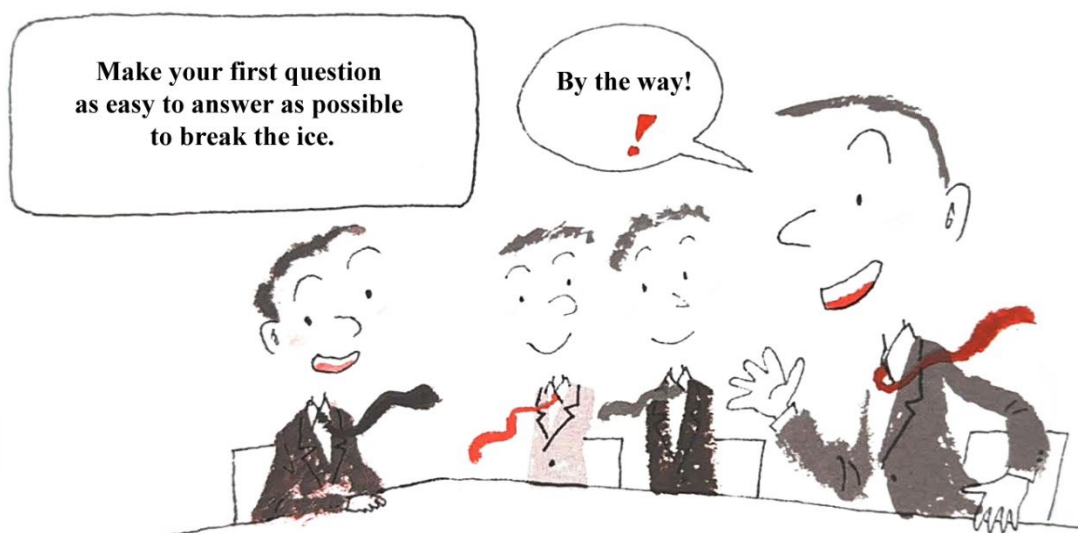
(1) If members are very nervous, you can ask them to talk about specific 'experiences' and other questions in a round of introductions.

(2) Try to avoid asking "how do you feel" or "what is your opinion" and ask questions about specific experiences in line with the flow of the conversation.

(3) It is advisable to include some humor to make the members feel relaxed.

4) It is meaningful to talk by yourself.

(4) Make them realize that talking on their own is meaningful. For example, "Every opinion you give us will help us to improve our services."



5. Act as a roadmap to facilitate group dynamics

In group interviews, try to elicit as many 'spontaneous statements' from members as possible. This is called 'facilitating group dynamics'. The role of the interviewer is to be a 'facilitator of discussion'. Keep in mind that the role of the interviewer is to “guide,” not “lead.”

To maximize the role of the facilitator, the interviewer should listen attentively to the members and ensure that their interest is clearly conveyed to the participants.

If necessary, feedback should be given to members that what they have said is meaningful, to encourage them to speak out more actively and to stimulate group dynamics among members as a whole.

Specifically, the following are used.

- 1) Care should be taken to encourage members to 'speak up' on their own.
- 2) Motivate members to speak spontaneously. For example, if a member says, “I don't have enough experience,” translate it into “If you have fresh eyes,” or devise adjectives that encourage members to speak up, such as “I appreciate your strong opinions.”
- 3) Demonstrate that each of the member's statements is meaningful with a convincing gesture, such as “I see,” to give the member the impression that you are listening carefully.
- 4) Nod while listening to the speaking member, and at the same time, watch the reactions of the other members. Get ready to invite the next member who seems interested to speak by leaning forward or using similar gestures.
- 5) Casually observe the attitude of other members towards the member who speaks and read whether it is the opinion of the group as a whole or not.
- 6) Introduce issues that have not yet been raised in a way that seems to be taken from the flow of the conversation.



6. Summarize so that it can be developed into the next

For each of the themes listed to focus on the objectives. When moving on to the next theme, the content of the previous encounters should be summarized gracefully. Also. At the end when all the themes have been discussed, also summarize them in a holistic way.

The point of the agreement on each theme is only to lead to the development of the theme of light. Therefore, the summary should be as concise as possible and focus on the content leading to the next theme.

In addition to concluding the agreements on the respective themes, the agreement at the end should also include directions for future development. The members should be informed that the results of the group interviews will lead to the next development and that they will be fully utilized. It is necessary to ensure that the results of the group interviews will be fully utilized in the next phase of development.

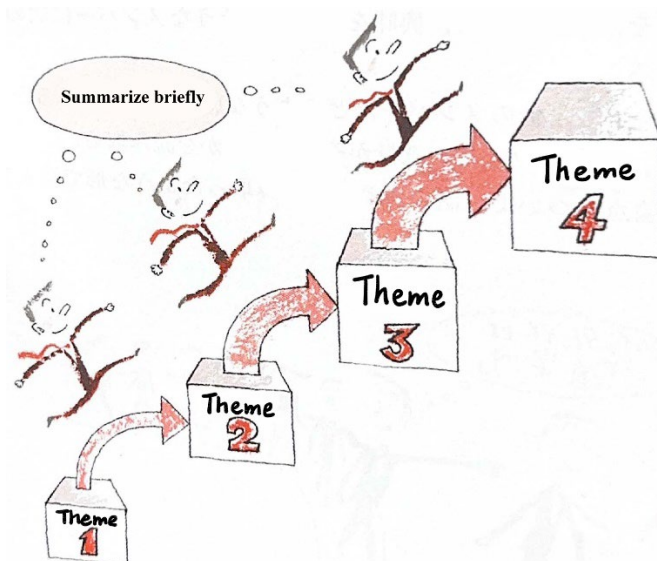
Specifically, the following should be done.

1) Summaries should be brief and to the point.

2) The purpose of the summaries on each topic is to lead to the next topic. Therefore, rather than systematically organizing all of the content, the summaries should focus on topics that need to be developed into the next theme. 'Three points O, O and O were raised as points that are expected to be developed in the future. It is advisable to connect the three points with each other, for example, "If we look for solutions to these points, we will find..."'

3) The purpose of the summary at the end is for the participating members to confirm and agree on the results of the discussion. The content agreed by all members should be included with as little omission as possible summarize it briefly to include as much as possible.

4) After summarizing, ask if there is any further content that needs to be added. If possible, it is advisable to indicate the specific direction of development. Conclude with something like, "We will submit these as a report and use them to improve our services."



7. Thanking members for playing a meaningful role

The final part of the group interview is designed to end the interview with the impression that the group members are glad to have participated. At this point, the tension has eased considerably, and the atmosphere is often one of freedom to speak. If there is still a desire to speak, you can tell them, "I would like to let you know that we will continue to create opportunities like this in the future." Explain that it was a meaningful discussion, including gratitude for cooperation, so that the members will be satisfied that the opinions discussed will be used in future developments.

In addition, provide a contact point for any content that was not fully explained, and explain that you may ask additional questions at a later date.

- 1) "All's well that ends well." Always recognize that the end is the most important thing.
- 2) Clearly convey that the opinions offered by the members were extremely useful and helpful, and express your gratitude.
- 3) To maintain motivation as a participant, ask for further cooperation in the future. For example, "I may ask you again for more details."
- 4) Provide a contact point for further information. For example, "If there's anything else you'd like to say, please contact XX when you get home and think of something."



3 Preparation for conducting a group interview

To make a group interview successful, proper preparation is essential.

Before starting a group interview, you need to check the following points to ensure you are fully prepared.

Group interview preparation checklist.

1	Is an interview guide prepared?
2	Have you selected people who can obtain the most useful information as members?
3	Have the date, time, place, and purpose of the group interview been clearly communicated to the members in writings?
4	Is a place for the interview secured?
5	Is the place for the interview properly set up?
6	Is the equipment to be used such as video recorders in good condition? Are there spare or extra equipment?
7	Are numbered signs prepared to replace name tags?
8	Are signs displayed on the building so that members can easily find the location of the group interview?
9	Has the seating order of the members and the facilitator been decided?
10	Is the air conditioning and soundproofing of the room or venue sufficient?
11	Are recorders, observers, analysts and note takers available?
12	Are refreshments and gifts prepared?

4 How to request a group interview session

When conducting a group interview, select the members and make a written request in advance. When making the request, clearly indicate 1. the purpose of the group interview, 2. the method, 3. the date and time, 4. the location, 5. that the names will not be disclosed to the public, 6. whether or not compensation will be paid, 7. contact information, etc., and obtain consent. Ethical consideration is essential, and you must obtain a consent form before conducting the interview.

An example is given below.

Figure 2 Example of a request to participate in a group interview (in creating Health Japan 21 policies)

To the citizens of XX

In XX city, we have decided to ask the citizens who actually use our services for their opinions on what kind of services they will need in the future in order to realize “Health Japan 21”.

We would be grateful if you could come to [location] on [date] (day of the week) from [time] to [time] and have a chance to talk to us in a group interview.

All information shared at this meeting will be reported anonymously, and individual names will never be made public. We plan to report the final results in the city newsletter.

We have prepared a small token of appreciation for all participants. We hope you will participate in order to improve the city's services. If you agree, please sign the attached consent form, and return it to the Health Center in the enclosed envelope by [deadline].

If you have any questions about this, please contact the person in charge of thedepartment of City, (phone). Thank you very much.

Attachment

City Department

Person in Charge

Consent form

I agree to participate in the group interview.

Date.....

Name.....

5 Key points of the interviewer's role

The key points of the interviewer's role can be summarized as follows:

1. Create an environment where members feel comfortable speaking.

Listen receptively, nodding and listening carefully, without hindering any members, and be careful not to let the interviewer's personal preferences influence the members.

2. Create an environment where members want to speak.

Motivate them to speak. Make the significance of speaking clear. Create a sense of unity among members, and encourage other members to speak up, so that they are interested and actively participate.

3. Promote group dynamics among members.

For example, connect and develop the discussion, as necessary.

4. Guide the group along the theme of the interview.

It is desirable for the interviewer to be knowledgeable about the field. However, to maximize the group dynamics among the members, he should keep his/her own comments to a minimum. Try not to intimidate the members.

5. Adjust the flow of comments as necessary so that the opinions of all participants are reflected.

For example, ask a member who has not spoken to speak, or ask a member who is assertive to speak to another person.

6. Deepen the members' opinions.

If a member does not fully understand, clarify the essence of the flow of the conversation and invite a more sophisticated and in-depth opinion.

7. Check whether the group agrees or disagrees with the opinions of the group.

From verbal and non-verbal reactions, clarify what intentions the group has.

8. Detect non-verbal behavior of members and guide them to speak up.

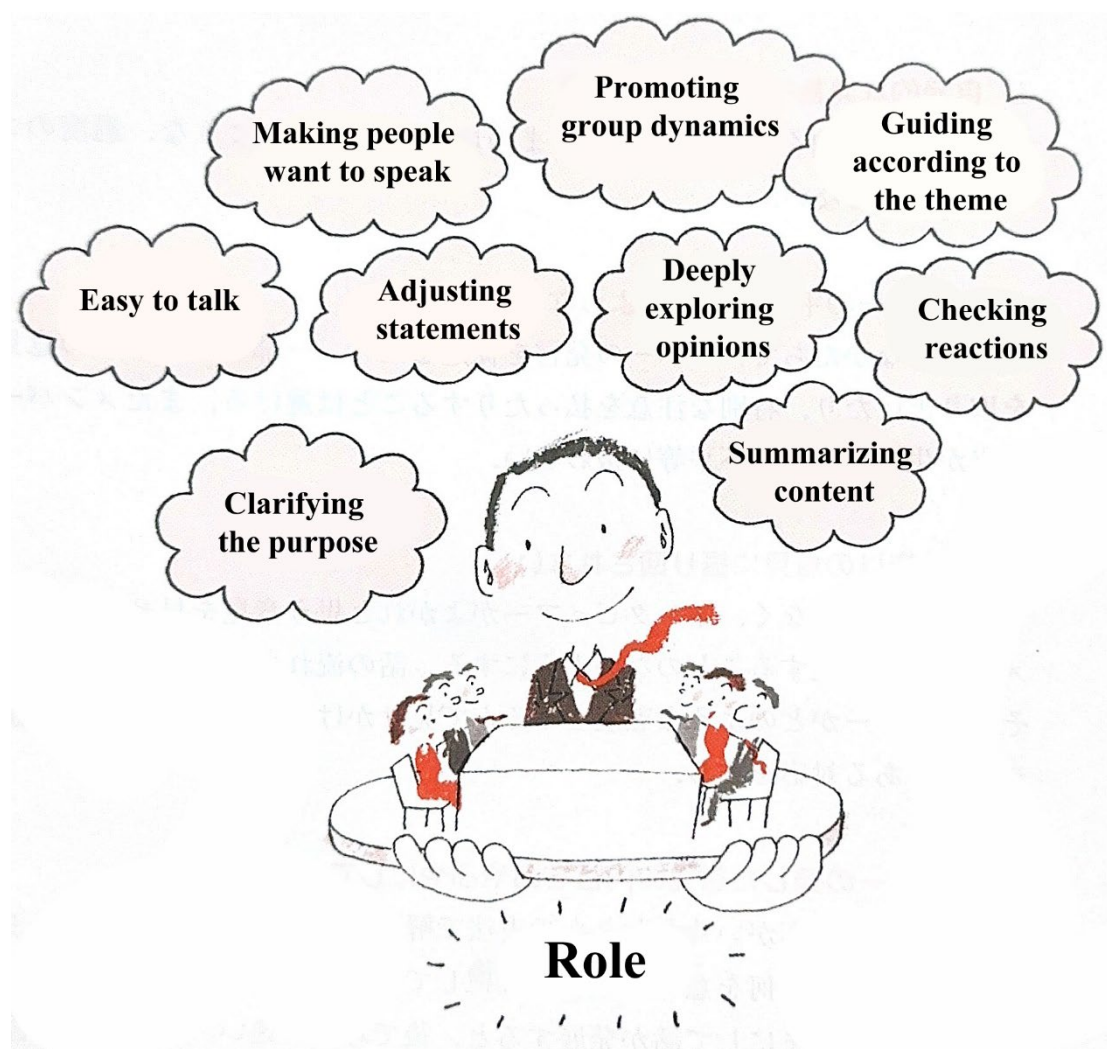
Always observe the speaker and the non-verbal behavior of other members toward the speaker, and if necessary, bring up a topic or confirm.

9. Summarize the members' comments on the topic.

Mid-way summaries for each topic are made to connect to the next topic. The final summary should be organized so that the results of the entire interview are easy to understand. In both cases, explain the main points as briefly as possible.

10. Finally, clarify the significance of the members' contributions to the topic and make them feel satisfied.

Take care to ensure that the members have a good impression of having participated.



6 Points to Note for Interviewers

There are seven main points that interviewers should be aware of when conducting an interview.

1. Don't give too much information in the introduction

When introducing a group interview, do not give too much information that would clearly reveal the interviewer's or the researcher's preferences or intentions regarding the topic.

2. Keep a firm grip on the compass

The interviewer should not become so passive that the group interview loses its direction. To ensure that the discussion continues on the topic, play the role of guiding the way to the end.

3. Don't stifle spontaneous comments

Do not use excessive control that would suppress the members' spontaneity or natural reactions.

4. Do not do anything that undermines the equality of members.

Avoid encouraging members to speak up in an unequal way, highlighting only some members' opinions, or giving special attention to them. Also, do not treat members unequal when conflicts arise between members.

5. Do not be swayed by pretentious opinions.

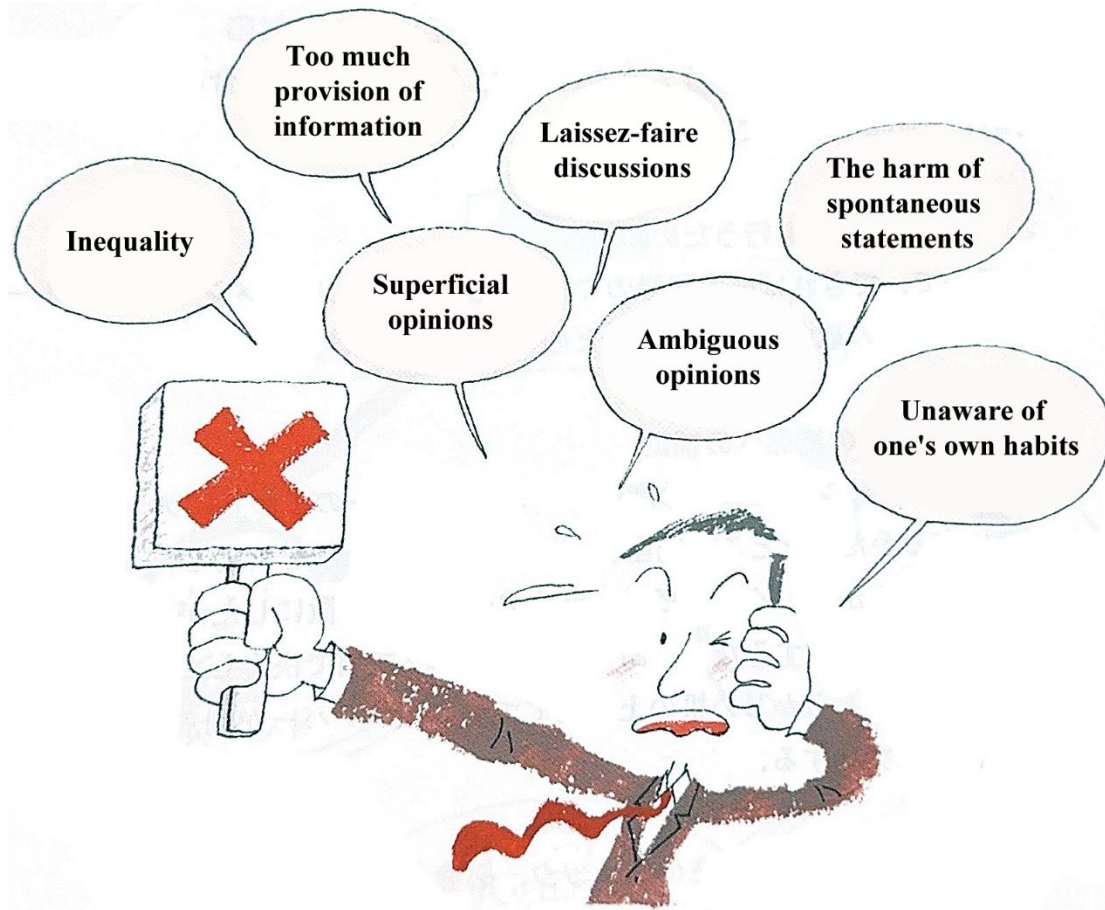
Do not show respect to members who express opinions that the interviewer thinks are good, rather than giving genuine reactions. Respond in a balanced manner, considering whether they are pretentious or not based on the flow of the conversation or the attitude of the other members when they speak.

6. Do not leave the content of the opinions expressed by members ambiguous.

When a member's reaction can be interpreted in several ways, do not leave it ambiguous, but confirm what it means. For example, if you leave an ambiguous statement at the beginning as it is and the discussion develops, it is possible that later the understanding will differ, and the situation will become inconsistent.

7. Ignorance of the interviewer's own habits

Always be aware that the interviewer's own habits may inhibit the free participation of all members. If possible, have the opportunity to be supervised and get advice from a third party.



7 Roles of the interviewer's assistant, recorder, and observer

In addition to the interviewer, a group interview requires an interviewer's assistant, recorder, and observer. The assistant can also serve as both recorder and observer, so the minimum number of staff members required for one group interview is three. In addition, with the recent development of video equipment, it is now possible for the interviewer to conduct the group interview by himself while recording with video equipment, and for multiple staff members to analyze the video later.

The roles of the interviewer's assistant, recorder, and observer are listed below.

<The role of interviewer's assistant>

1. Contacting, notifying, and responding to inquiries from group members

Create and notify members who will be participating. Respond to any inquiries and consult with the interviewer, as necessary.

2. Preparing the room for the interview

A quiet room, preferably one that can be video recorded, is preferable. Keep the room tidy so that members do not get distracted during the group interview.

3. Assisting Members with Seating

Group interviews are conducted in a U-shape with the interviewer and the other members seated around the interviewer. If a round table is available, it can be used. Where and who sits should be decided in advance by the staff, for example, according to the characteristics of the interview guide's subjects, with people of similar backgrounds seated nearby. If numbered cards are used, they should be placed on the desk in advance. When members arrive, confirm their names, and guide them to their seats.

4. Check the temperature and brightness of the room.

Adjust them if necessary. Adjust the heating and air conditioning as necessary, open the blinds, turn on the lights, and take care to create a comfortable atmosphere.

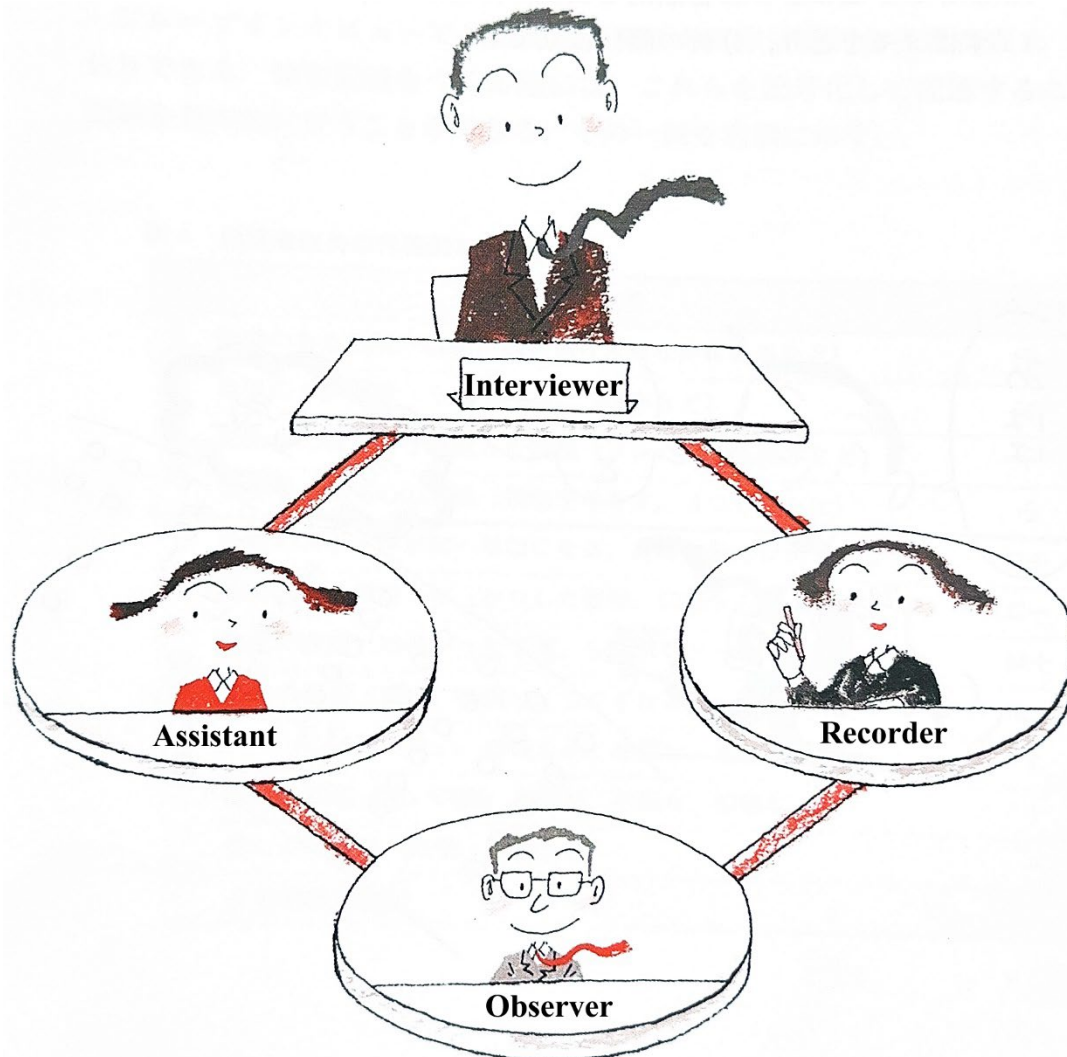
5. Prepare drinks and other items and offer them before the group interview begins

Before the group interview begins, it is effective to offer tea or other drinks while greeting the interviewees to ease tension. Canned juice can also be placed in front of each person.

During the interview, it is best not to offer drinks, as this helps maintain focus in the group dynamics. If necessary, provide food after the interview is over.

6. Setting up and operating recording videotapes, cassette tapes, etc.

These days, it is common to set up two videotapes so that the words, gestures, and expressions of all members can be recorded. Set up and operate the videotapes, prepare the tapes, and replace them when the first tape ends, all in an efficient manner.



<The role of the recorder>

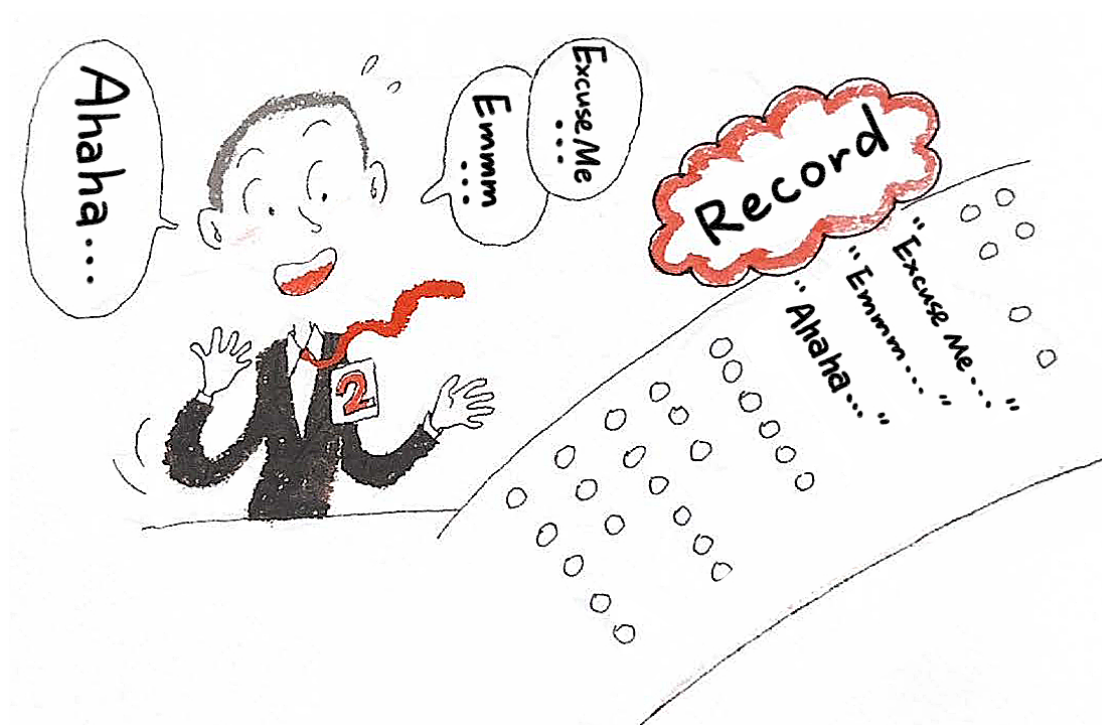
1. Record verbatim the verbal expressions of all group members

Record everything that is said verbally. Including “that one,” “um,” laughter, etc., everything is a valuable source of information for analysis. If numbered tags are used, organize the verbal expressions after the numbers.

It is preferable to record everything during the group interview, but if this is difficult, transcribe it later from the video recording.

2. Summarize and record the interviewer's questions, summaries, etc.

The interviewer's verbal expressions do not need to be verbatim. Take notes without missing the main points and use them for analysis.



<The role of the observer>

The observer verbally records the non-verbal expressions of all group members.

In this system, all non-verbal behaviors, facial expressions, etc. are recorded. The non-verbal expressions of the speaker and other members at the time of the speech are recorded in correspondence with the speech.

For example, from the speaker's attitude (non-verbal expression), we can infer the degree of confidence in his/her opinion and the degree of intention to influence other members. Also, from the attitudes of other members, we can infer whether they agree with the speaker's opinion, reject it, are interested in it, or are not interested in it.

It is possible to gauge whether the person is indifferent or wants to express their opinion. The non-verbal expressions that need to be captured in a group interview are shown in Tables 1 and 2. When creating an observation record, you can make the record more efficient by symbolizing and writing down these. An example is shown in the right column.

Table 1. Representative non-verbal expressions of the speaker

	Nonverbal expression	Examples of symbols
Required field matters	Confident expression (speaking clearly and loudly, etc.)	O
	Unconfident expressions (looking down, speaking in a low voice, etc.)	X
	Expressions that show awareness of the impact they have on others (such as looking around at the members)	+
	Expressions of disinterest in others (looking away, looking down, etc.)	-
Additional information	Expressions of excitement (higher voice, faster speech, large body movements, etc.)	C+
	Dejected expressions (disappointed facial expression, tone of voice, etc.)	C-
	Expressions of satisfaction (facial expressions, nodding, gestures, etc.)	M+
	Expression of dissatisfaction (facial expression, head shaking, gestures, etc.)	M-
	Expressions of enjoyment (laughter, smiles, gestures, hand movements, intonation, etc.)	T
	Expressions of anger (strong tone, gestures, hand gestures, intonation, etc.)	I

	Expression of sadness (facial expression, tone, etc.)	K
	Add others as appropriate	

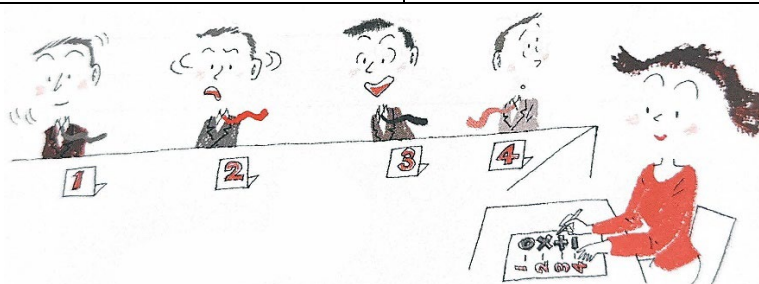
Table 2 Typical nonverbal expressions of other members to the speaker

Nonverbal expression		Examples of symbols
Required field matters	Expression of agreement (nodding, etc.)	O
	Expressions of refusal/opposition (shaking one's head, etc.)	X
	Interested expressions (turn your body, open your eyes, etc.)	+
	Expressions of indifference (facial expressions, gestures, etc.)	_
Additional information matters	Expression of elation (large body movements, etc.)	C+
	Expressions of depression (disappointed expression, stopping movement, etc.):)	C-
	Expressions of satisfaction (facial expressions, nods, gestures, etc.)	M+
	Expression of dissatisfaction (facial expression, head shaking, gestures, etc.)	M-
	Expression of fun (laughter, smile, gestures, hand gestures, intonation, etc.)	T
	Expressions of anger (strong tone, gestures, hand gestures, intonation, etc.).	I
	Expression of sadness (facial expression, tone, etc.)	K
	Add others as appropriate	

The recording method is shown in Table 3. Nonverbal expressions only when there is a significant response; it is not necessary to record all nonverbal expressions.

Table 3 Examples of non-verbal expression descriptions

Speaker, content of speech	Other members' responses
1: Regional disparities	2:+3: 4:+5:- 7: 8:0 10:0
4: High salt content, T	1~3:+ 6: O 9,10:T
7: Enjoyment of life is important	All O
.....



Chapter 3 Group Interview Analysis

① Scientific Analysis: Validity and Reliability

1. Validity and reliability of group interview method

In the field of human services, there is a significant demand for services grounded in scientific evidence. Scientific analysis results are those that clearly demonstrate the “evidence” supporting such outcomes. Additionally, it ensures that consistent results can be achieved when the same method is applied multiple times, a concept known as “reproducibility.”

Quantitative research methods, such as surveys, use concepts like “validity” and “reliability” to statistically express how “close to the truth” and “without deviation” the results are, serving as key indicators.

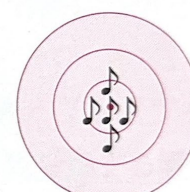
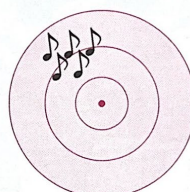
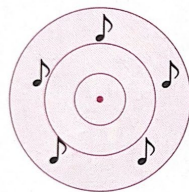
Although qualitative research methods, like group interviews, cannot rely on statistical figures as indicators, they can utilize other criteria to assess the “validity” and “reliability” of the research.

Column Validity and reliability

A good example of validity and reliability is the target arrow.

High validity means that the data are well balanced around the center, and high reliability means that there is little variation.

For survey results to be used as evidence, both validity and reliability must be demonstrated using scientific indicators.



High validity Low reliability Low validity but high reliability High validity and reliability

2. Validity and reliability of group interview method

The validity of the group interview method is determined by the amount of evidence it provides. It is possible to consider whether “evidence” can be used as evidence and to what extent it is appropriate from the following four aspects.

1) Fit

The framework (constructed categories) developed through the group interview method should be directly applicable to real-world situations. It should be practical and implementable, rather than remaining purely theoretical.

2) Grab

The insights obtained through the group interview method should be directly applicable to the practical setting, meaning they must effectively capture the key aspects relevant to that context.

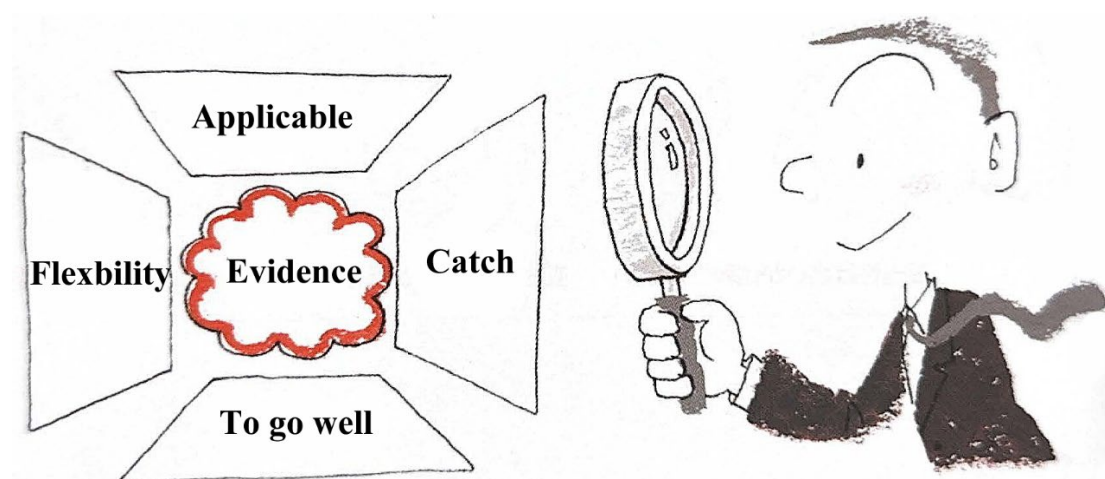
3) Work

The findings from the group interview method are effective in explaining, interpreting, and predicting the phenomenon being studied. In other words, they are valuable for understanding the causes of the issue, the emergence of the problem, and the potential future trajectory.

4) Flexibility

The findings from the sense group interview method are not rigid but can be adapted flexibly to various situations. This means they can be easily adjusted in response to changes in social context, among other factors.

Conversely, the reliability of group interviews can be assessed by applying the results in a practical setting and determining whether they can be effectively used in similar situations or with different problems.



3. Enhancing the Validity of Group Interview Methods

To elaborate, “validity” refers to the accuracy of the results, meaning that the findings are genuinely correct (or, in more complex terms, that the proposition reflects the truth as closely as possible). Validity is typically categorized into two types: 1) internal validity and 2) external validity.

When using group interviews for qualitative research, it is essential to carefully consider the following points beforehand to enhance the validity of both these types.

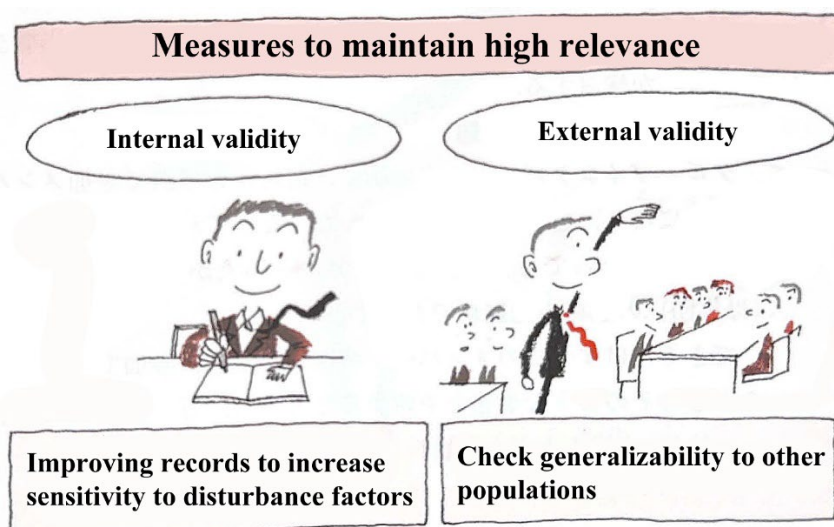
1) Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the extent to which the relationship between two variables, as determined through group interviews, accurately reflects the true connection between them. The closer this relationship is to the truth, the higher the internal validity. Therefore, accurately analyzing the relationships between variables identified in group interviews is key to achieving high internal validity.

To maintain this high internal validity, it is crucial to ensure the “precision” of the data collected during the group interviews. This means accurately recording both verbal and non-verbal data without omissions, so the data can be fully utilized if further examination of influences is required. In other words, enhancing the quality of records increases sensitivity to factors that impact internal validity.

2) External validity

External validity refers to the extent to which the results obtained from the group interview method are accurate and applicable to other similar groups or populations, ensuring the universality of causal relationships across different populations. To determine the generalizability of the results derived from the group interview method, it is essential to assess how well these findings can be applied to the broader world. A key approach to achieving this is by verifying whether the results are applicable to other groups with similar characteristics.



4. Enhancing the Accuracy of Group Interview Method

To improve internal validity--ensuring the relationship between two variables is as accurate as possible--it is essential to eliminate factors that interfere with establishing this relationship, known as confounding factors. Achieving highly accurate results requires identifying what influences the outcomes and taking preventive measures whenever possible.

There are six key factors that can disrupt internal validity:

1) Influence of Individual Background

Differences in participants' backgrounds, such as past experiences, gender, and age, can significantly impact the outcomes. It is crucial to carefully consider how these background differences might influence the group interview or analysis process.

2) Changes in Members Through Interactions

As group dynamics develop, participants may blend their original thoughts with those of others, leading to the formation of new perspectives. Over the course of the group interview, each member will likely undergo changes, which can affect the relationships being studied. It is important to clearly understand how participants' original thinking evolved and what influences contributed to these changes.

3) Bias in Group Membership

If the group interview participants do not represent the full spectrum of people relevant to the subject, the relationships observed may not be generalizable to the entire population. It is essential to understand the participants' positions and characteristics relative to the broader group and consider how these characteristics might influence the findings.

4) Dropout Issues

If a participant becomes passive or stops contributing during the group interview, it can hinder the ability to capture the views of the original population they represent. To address this, efforts should be made to ensure all members remain actively engaged in the discussion, and the impact of any participant withdrawal on the results should be analyzed.

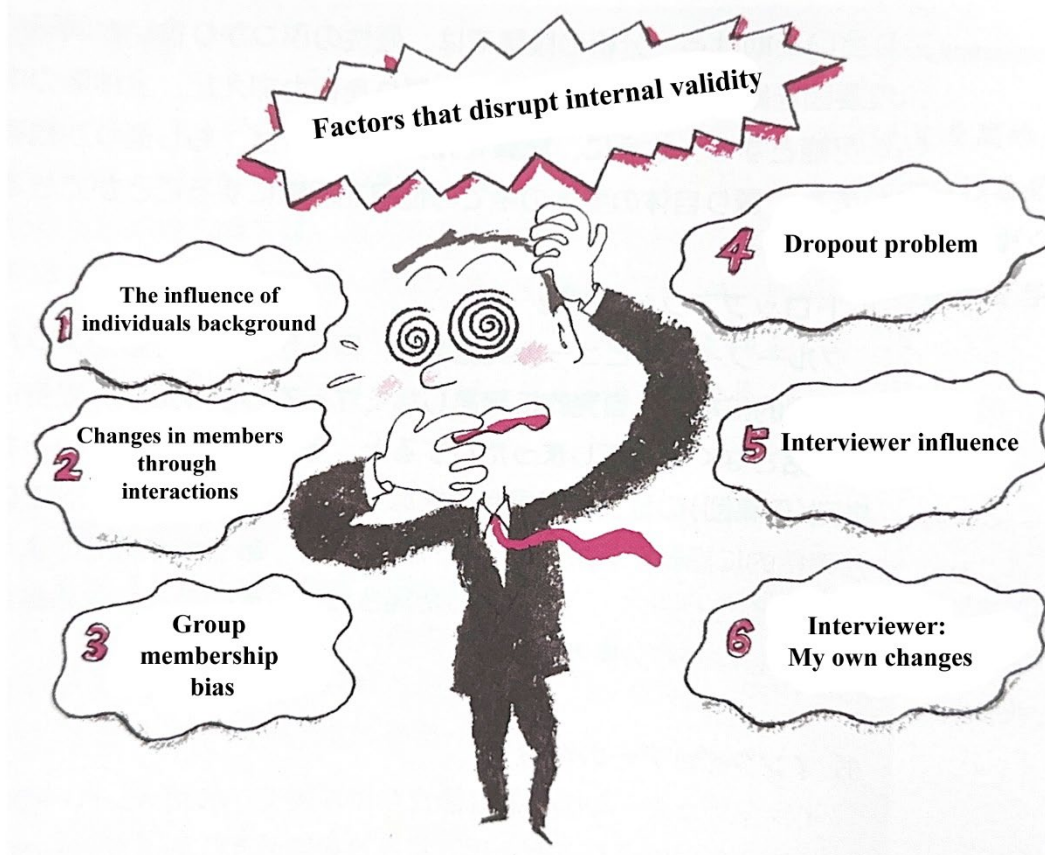
5) Interviewer Influence

If the interviewer exerts too much control or hinders participants from expressing their opinions freely, the resulting opinions may not accurately reflect those of the members. This can distort the observed relationships.

Interviewers should be mindful of how their approach and attitude affect participants and strive to minimize this influence. During the analysis phase, it is also important to consider the impact of the interviewer's role on the findings.

6) Evolution of the Interviewer

The interviewer may also undergo changes due to the dynamics of the group. This can lead to the introduction of new paths or a shift in focus from the original plan. For instance, the interaction within the group might highlight more significant issues and prompt deeper discussions that diverge from the initial objectives. During the analysis phase, it is important to account for both the evolving dynamics among participants and the changes in the interviewer themselves.



5. Evaluation of Group Interviews as a Qualitative Research Method

In summary, the concepts of validity and reliability in qualitative research differ somewhat from those in quantitative research. Specifically, validity in qualitative research refers to how effectively the results can serve as “evidence,” while reliability pertains to the “certainty” or consistency of the results and their reproducibility.

Table 1 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

Quantitative research	Qualitative research
Validity	Evidence
Reliability	Certainty (reproducibility)

Sejima et al. (11th Japanese Journal of Public Health, 48(5), 2001) list the following nine items as evaluation criteria for qualitative research.

(1) Design

- 1) Does the author provide a rationale for choosing qualitative research?
- 2) Are the selected qualitative methods appropriate?
- 3) Are ethical considerations being addressed?

(2) Sampling

- 1) Are the criteria for selecting subjects clearly defined?
- 2) Is the process for selecting subjects described?

(3) Research and Analysis

- 1) Is a detailed process provided?
- 2) Are measures taken to ensure validity?
- 3) Is the distinction between data and interpretation well-defined?
- 4) Is the conclusion clearly presented?

It is essential to use these as references to develop group interview techniques that are grounded in scientific principles.

2 Analysis Perspective of Group Interview Method

There are several analytical perspectives on the group interview method. Here, I will outline and explain five key ones.

1. Systemic Perspective

The group interview method captures both verbal and nonverbal expressions from each participant, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the overall structure. It is essential to examine these elements systematically.

Each word and nonverbal cue are a component of the larger whole, and understanding the evolving dynamics within the group is crucial. It is important to maintain an overview of the entire discussion while focusing on these individual elements.

To achieve this, first assess the role of each participant's expression within the broader context. Then, gather similar expressions and categorize the underlying themes. Organizing these themes into a coherent system can also be beneficial.

2. Multiple Perspectives

The results from the group interview method can be interpreted from various viewpoints. For instance, how do analysts with different backgrounds and perspectives interpret the same group interview data? Alternatively, shifting the focus of the analysis can reveal how interpretations vary based on background factors and group dynamics.

It is advantageous to consistently analyze data from multiple perspectives, using different viewpoints and focuses.

3. Comparative Perspective

Conduct multiple group interviews and compare and analyze the results. Focus on identifying commonalities and differences between the groups, examining factors such as member backgrounds that might explain variations in outcomes and the underlying causes of shared findings.

4. Feedback perspective

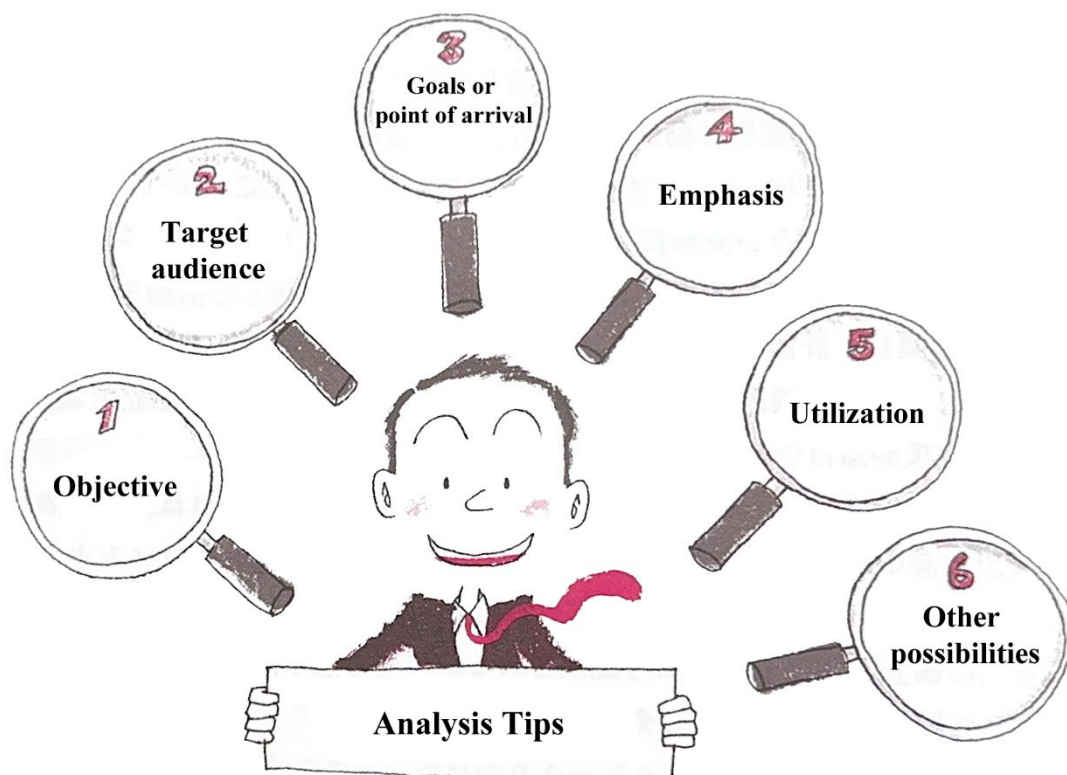
When conducting multiple group interviews, the insights gained from the initial interview can be utilized in subsequent sessions through a process known as feedback. For example, you might adjust the questions you ask or share the results from the previous interview with participants to gauge their reactions.

A key feature of group interviews in qualitative research is their ability to reveal “opinion groups.” Unlike methods such as spontaneous research, which involve asking the same questions under uniform conditions to gather homogeneous information, qualitative methods aim to achieve a “depth of information.” Therefore, maintaining a focus on feedback is crucial for enriching the overall depth of the information collected.

5. Usability Perspective

In human services, the results from group interviews should be directly applicable to practice. Group interviews should not be conducted merely for research or academic purposes without a clear plan for future application.

Group interviews involve multiple participants dedicating their valuable time to share their insights based on group dynamics. These participants typically have high expectations for the improvement of human services. Since the interviews are conducted face-to-face, the interviewers bear significant responsibility for the participants' opinions and must consistently aim to utilize these insights effectively.

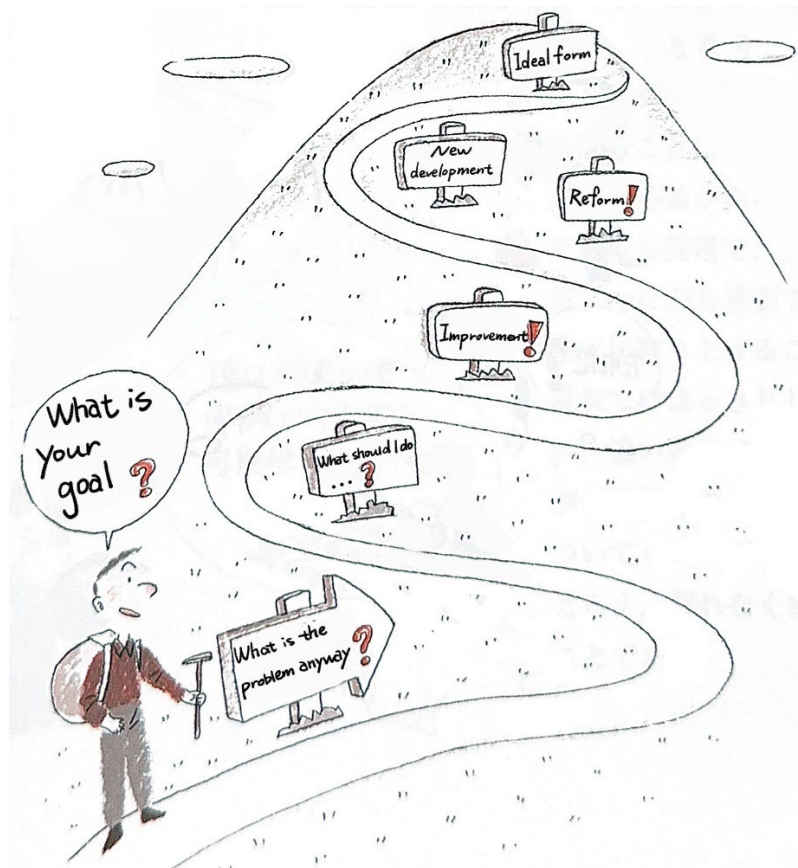


Chapter 4 Analysis tips

To analyze a group interview effectively, use the “MOTTEYUKIKATA” framework, which includes six key elements: “purpose (MO),” “goal (TTE),” “destination or impact on the audience (YU),” “emphasis (KI),” “method of application (KA),” and “other possibilities (TA).” By keeping each of these elements in mind, you can systematically organize and interpret the results. Below is an explanation of each element.

① Purpose: What is the objective?

When analyzing a group interview, it is crucial to keep the purpose in mind from start to finish. The key question to ask is, “What is the group interview intended to achieve?” Although this may seem obvious, it is essential to remember that group interviews are conducted to meet specific goals. Analyzing data in alignment with the original purpose is fundamental. However, during complex analyses, it is easy to lose sight of this goal. If the analysis begins to deviate from the intended purpose, identifying the reasons for this divergence can help ensure that the results remain aligned with the original objectives from a more in-depth perspective.

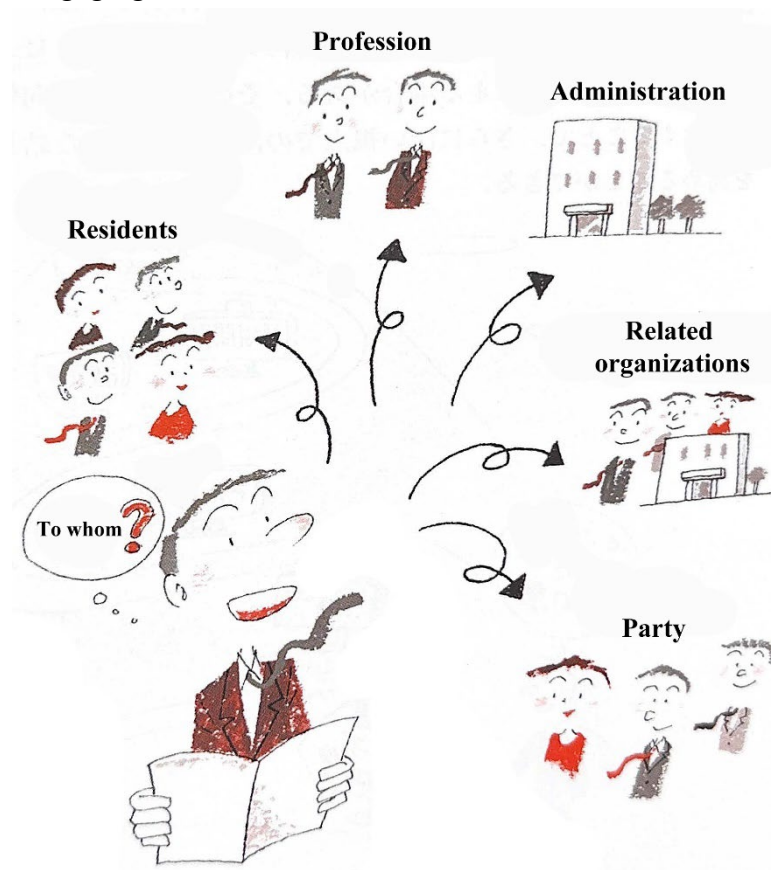


2 Goal: How much do you want to clarify?

In addition to understanding the purpose of the group interview, it is important to define the extent to which you want to achieve that purpose through scientific evidence—this defines your goal. For example, if you are investigating an issue in human services, determine whether you need only to identify the problem area or if you also need specific responses or solutions. The depth of analysis will vary depending on whether your goal is to understand how people live their lives or another dimension of the issue. Clarifying the goal of the analysis from the design stage of the group interview is essential.

3 Target Audience: Who you aim to reach and what message you want to convey.

The focus and method of analysis should be tailored to what you aim to communicate to the target audience. Ensure that the content is presented in a way that has the most relevant impact for the intended recipients. Keeping the audience in mind while analyzing the group interview will help in crafting content that is appropriately impactful and engaging.



4 **Emphasis: Where should your focus be?**

Once you have clarified the purpose, goal, and target audience, determine what to emphasize in your analysis to communicate effectively. Focus on specific elements, such as key words and gestures, which provide strong evidence during the analysis, and integrate these with background information for a more comprehensive interpretation.

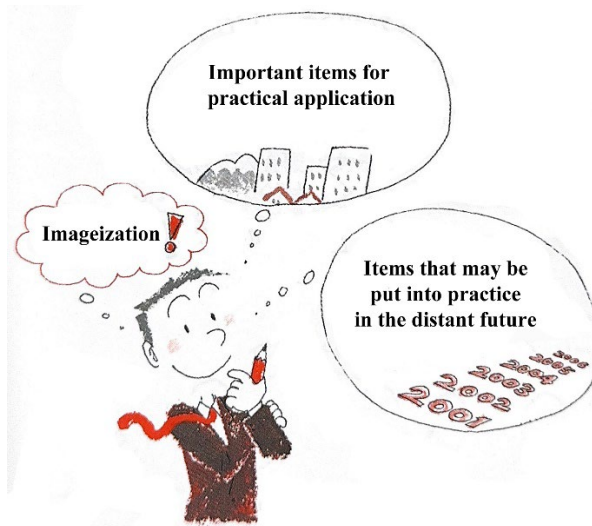
There are two main aspects to consider: those that can be predetermined when designing the group interview guide and those that arise from new insights and perspectives during the group dynamics.

Start by reviewing the entire group interview transcript and observation records multiple times to identify significant “peaks” that should be emphasized. While there may be several key points, it is crucial to understand the relationships between them. Concentrate on the most important “peak,” gather related expressions from other parts of the interview and develop these points systematically.

5 **Application: How does it translate into practice?**

The results of group interviews in human services are analyzed with the goal of applying them practically. The analysis should consider how the findings can be implemented in real-world scenarios.

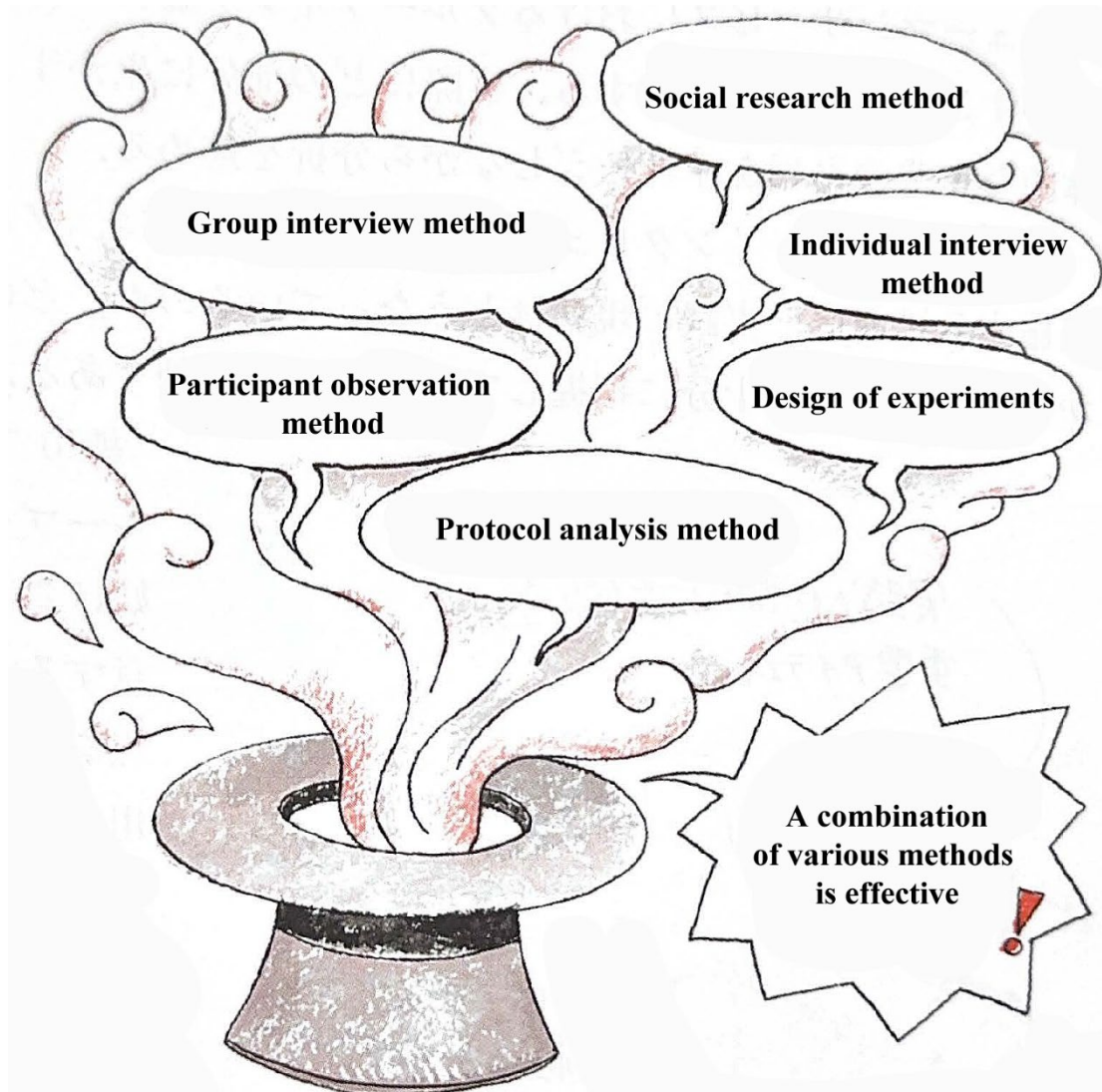
To achieve this, the interviewer or analyst should start by understanding the current state of practice and identifying existing issues. A thorough grasp of these factors is beneficial, but it is important to avoid letting this understanding restrict the emergence of dynamic group interactions. When focusing the analysis, ensure to highlight actionable insights that can be implemented immediately, while also considering and developing ideas that might be applicable in the future. Aim to capture and explore both immediate and potential future applications of the findings.



6 Other possibilities: Are there alternative approaches?

To gather robust “evidence,” consider what topics should be covered in the group interview, which participants should be involved, and how to proceed with subsequent steps.

It is also valuable to explore additional methods, beyond group interviews, to enhance the significance of the information obtained. For example, integrating quantitative research can provide further validation. Even if constraints such as time or budget limit further research, remain mindful of additional strategies that could be employed to collect more accurate information, allowing for a more comprehensive analysis.



Chapter 5 Focus of Analysis

1 Contents

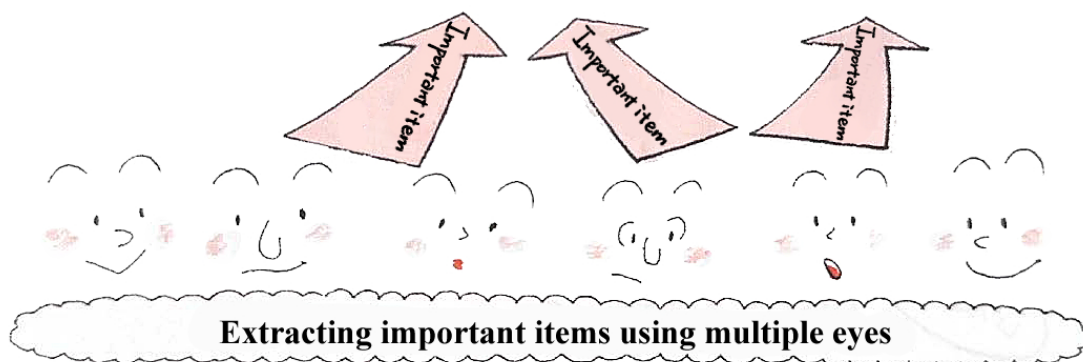
This method centers on analyzing the ‘content’ expressed by group interview participants. The term ‘expressions’ encompasses both verbal and non-verbal cues, examining the “means” used by these expressions.

Assessing the strength and clarity of these presentations helps gauge the presenter’s confidence in the content. Pay attention to the manner of expression, the context in which words are spoken, and how these elements evolve or influence group dynamics. This analysis can reveal whether the project has shifted direction.

Extract key content based on the group interview theme, known as “important items.” Start by identifying as many “important items” as possible from the expressed content. These items may be refined or adjusted during further analysis.

This step is crucial. While maintaining a holistic view, list and organize individual important items. To prevent losing sight of the broader context, continuously evaluate and analyze how these items fit within the overall picture.

Items identified as important by multiple analysts should be organized clearly, explaining why they are significant and for whom. To ensure objectivity in the selection and interpretation process, review the descriptive data multiple times, consult various sources, and maintain thorough records.



2 Expressions

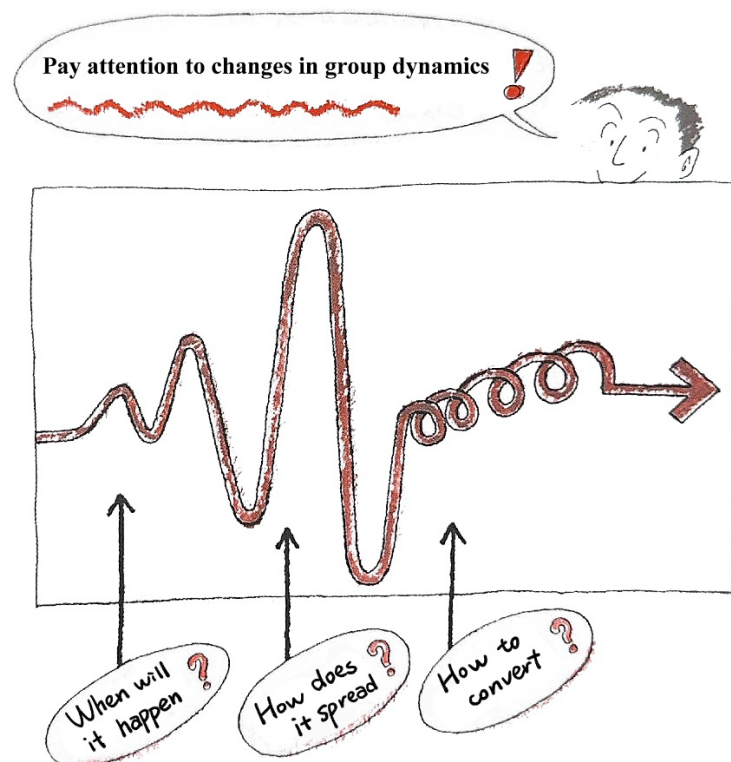
This analysis method focuses on the types of expressions used, treating each word spoken as raw data. It is important to respect and utilize this raw data as accurately as possible as the “basis for analysis.”

However, this approach does not apply if the expression has been deliberately altered. For instance, statements made to please the interviewer or other group members, rather than providing honest feedback, should be analyzed with caution.

Additionally, it is crucial to distinguish between hypothetical, future-tense, third-person statements (e.g., “If..., then...”) and confident, present-tense, personal opinions (e.g., “I think this way”). Understanding these differences helps gauge how the speaker perceives the message—whether they view it as personally relevant or as an attempt to influence others.

3 Flow

The full interview content highlights the progression of the group interview. In line with the theme, we will explore the emergence, dissemination, and evolution of group dynamics. Additionally, it is crucial to differentiate between majority and minority opinions within the flow of a group interview. This study aims to clarify the background factors of participants that influence the group interview's trajectory and examine whether members with these characteristics tend to align in their opinions.



4 Internal Consistency

Group dynamics is an analytical method that examines how the consistency of each participant's position evolves over time. Often, members' opinions are influenced to varying degrees as the process unfolds. Therefore, assessing the degree of influence is a crucial part of the analysis.

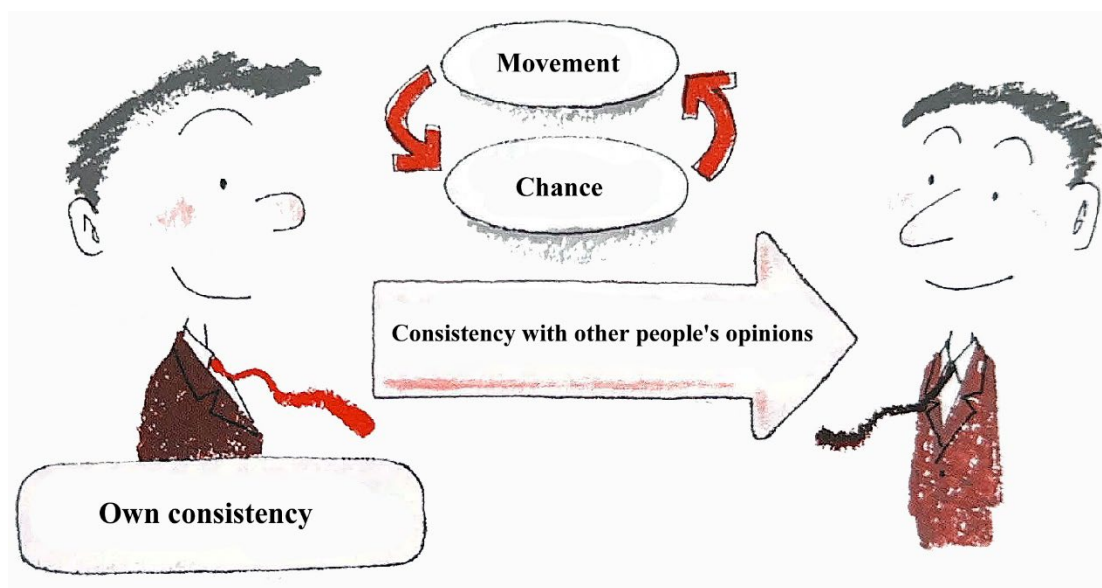
Internal consistency can be viewed from two perspectives:

Consistency in One's Own Statements and Attitudes: This involves examining whether a participant's opinions remain stable throughout the group interview or if they undergo significant changes due to specific triggers. It is important to understand what prompts any changes that occur.

Consistency with Others' Opinions: This perspective looks at whether a participant's responses and reactions align with those of other members. If there is a lack of consistency, the analysis should delve into the underlying reasons. Additionally, if inconsistency arises midway through, it is essential to explore what caused it and its implications.

To effectively organize the internal consistency of each participant, use “movement” and “trigger” as key indicators. This means evaluating the extent to which participants maintain consistency during the group interview process, noting any shifts in their positions, and identifying the conditions or stimuli that prompted these changes. Each time a “movement” occurs, simultaneously capture, and describe the “trigger.”

Analyzing internal consistency is particularly effective when aiming to clarify the dynamic changes within participating members.



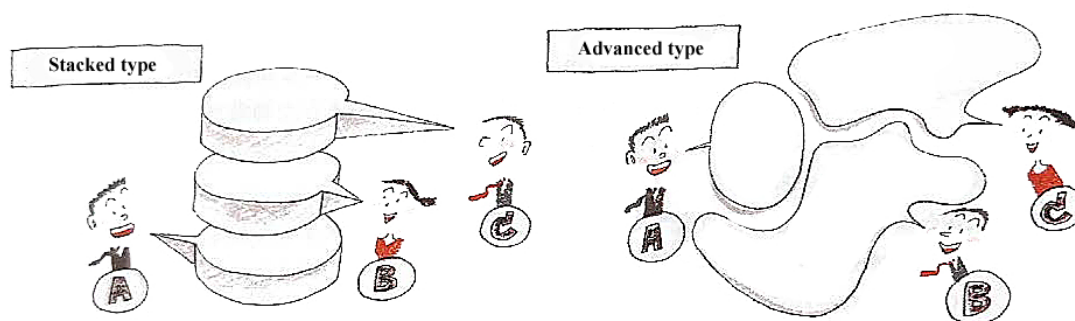
5 Frequency

This analytical method focuses on the number of times certain expressions are repeated, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal cues. Repeated expressions often carry specific meanings, such as an emphasis on particular points, a desire to stress something important, or an intent to leave a lasting impact. This includes instances where the same idea is conveyed multiple times, even if expressed differently.

6 Range

This analysis examines the extent to which the scope of discussions in group interviews expands and the areas in which they develop. Understanding the range of conversation in free-flowing group dynamics is effective in gauging the members' breadth of interests.

The spread of content shared by each member often builds upon what others have said. When analyzing this, it is helpful to distinguish between expansions that extend others' ideas and new expansions that go beyond them.



7 Intensity

Assess the strength of participants' reactions to the issue and the depth of their emotional connection to it. The next step is to identify the reasons participants provide for these feelings and to explore the underlying background factors.

8 Specificity

Specificity is an analytical method that focuses on the emergence of content or perspectives that differ from the previous flow of the discussion. When a new development arises, it often indicates that something significant is behind it. If the goal is to uncover new information from such changes, it is important to pay close attention to specificity.



9 Unexpressed Content

There is significance in the absence of expected content, whether it was not expressed spontaneously or even when prompted by a question. Analyzing this non-expression can be insightful. While it is uncommon to focus solely on what was not expressed, combining this approach with other methods allows for a highly effective analysis of the unspoken content and the underlying factors behind it.

10 New Ideas

Group interviews are designed to gather opinions through group dynamics, fostering an environment where new ideas are more likely to emerge from participants' interactions. It is common for better solutions to arise when multiple participants share their insights on a given topic. Depending on the purpose of the group interview, this process can also serve as a catalyst for generating new ideas.

Regardless of whether the intention to generate new ideas was present from the outset, these ideas often become key elements in the analysis process. Focusing on new ideas is particularly effective in group interviews aimed at developing a theme.

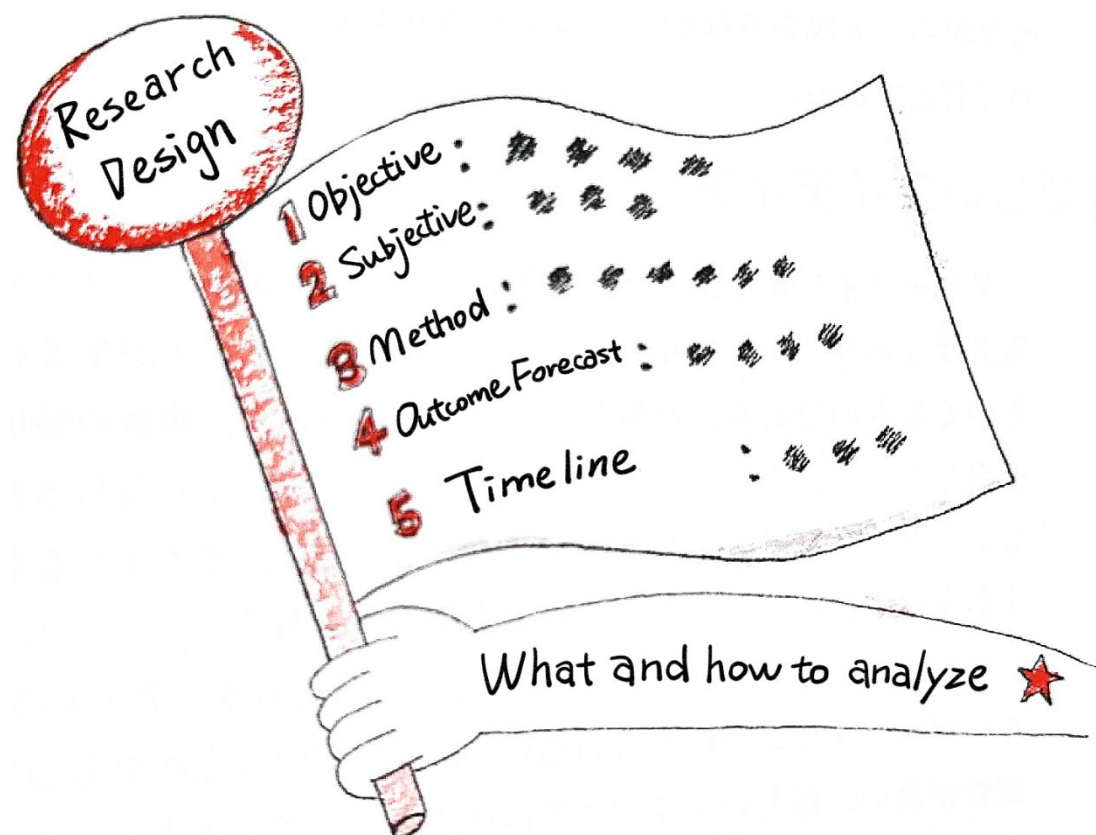
Chapter 6 Analysis process

The analysis of group interviews begins at the planning stage and continues until the final report is completed. It is not an exaggeration to say that the entire group interview process is integral to the analysis, rather than just a discrete phase after the interview is conducted.

This chapter outlines the process of analyzing group interviews across 10 stages: (1) research design, (2) report design, (3) interview guide creation, (4) interview method selection, (5) conducting the interview, (6) simple description, (7) systematic description, (8) conducting subsequent interviews, (9) composite analysis of multiple interviews, and (10) report creation.

1 Research Design Stage

The analysis of group interviews truly begins at the very outset, during the research design phase. In this stage, it is crucial to “clarify the analysis approach” and “carefully design the analysis strategy.”



2 Report Design Stage

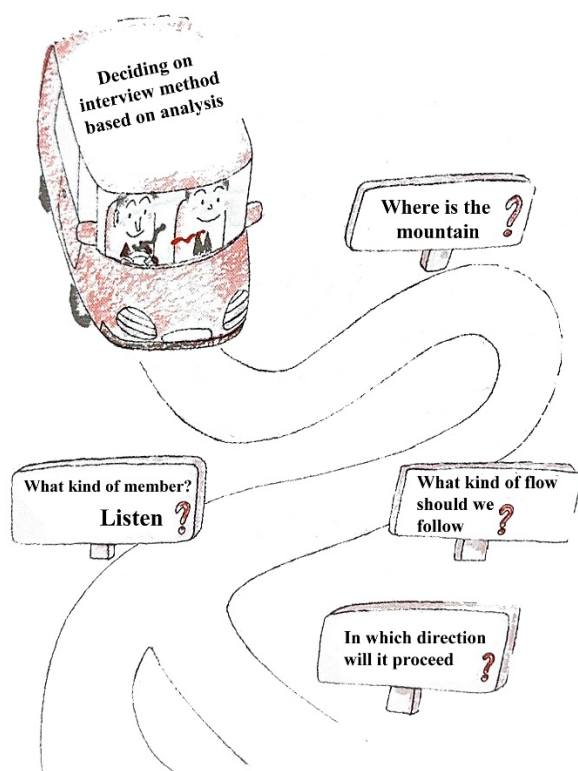
After completing the research design, the next step is to plan how to report the findings. It is advisable to use multiple methods and present the results from various perspectives. Consider a report design that incorporates “multiple approaches,” including group interviews, surveys, and individual interviews.

3 Stages of Creating an Interview Guide

When developing an interview guide, it is important to include “items that are easy to analyze.” These items should focus on concrete experiences rather than abstract ideas, concepts, or images. Questions should address content that participants encounter in their daily lives.

Verbal and non-verbal expressions from participants often reveal clearer relationships because they are based on real experiences. Thus, when creating an interview guide, it is beneficial to design specific questions that vividly capture the group dynamics.

4 Deciding on the Interview Method



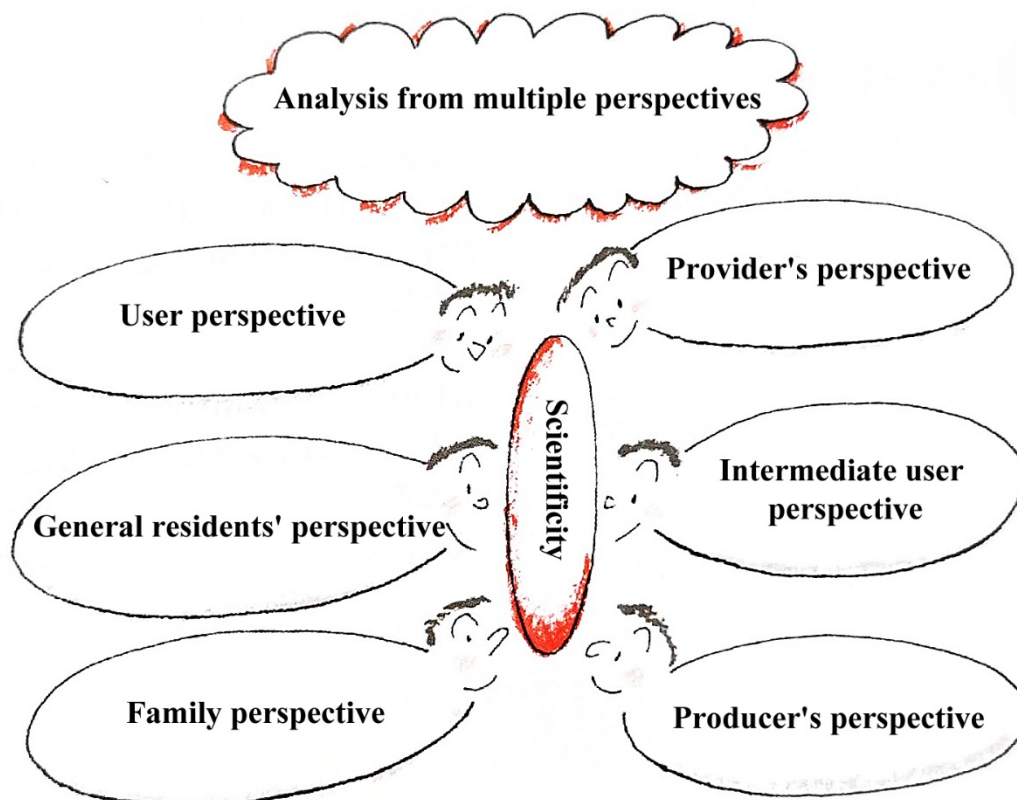
Before conducting the group interviews, it is essential to select the interview method and concurrently plan the “how to analyze” the data with the analysis team.

For example, establishing a general strategy for focusing attention—such as pinpointing “key moments” and identifying which members have the most relevant background for a specific theme—can help streamline and organize the analysis process.

5 Interview Stage

When conducting group interviews, it is beneficial to “analyze multiple groups” whenever possible. A comprehensive analysis enables comparative examination and verification of background factors that may not be captured in a single group interview.

When organizing multiple groups, ensure that the content to be explored can be analyzed from various standpoints or perspectives. For instance, to qualitatively understand needs for a service, consider setting up groups that provide different viewpoints on the same service, such as: 1) perspectives from service users with diverse background characteristics, 2) perspectives from the service provider, and 3) perspectives from intermediate users (professionals) who are familiar with the experiences of many users.



6 Simple Description Stage

During or shortly after the group interview, while the details are still fresh, accurately record both verbal and non-verbal information and verify the content. This will serve as the foundation for all subsequent analyses and will constitute the “raw data.” Thorough description is crucial for enhancing internal validity and providing robust scientific evidence.



7 Systematic Description Stage

In the systematic description of the group interview data, it is essential to refer to the “tips for analysis” discussed in Chapter 4. At this stage, you will identify the “important categories” that will serve as the framework for organizing the data systematically. To determine these “important categories,” consider the following points:

1. Define an “important category” as a “systematic collection of meaningful information” relevant to the purpose of the study. “Meaningful information” refers to data that either supports achieving the purpose or presents obstacles to it.
2. Important categories should represent the smallest unit of useful information that is understandable and interpretable on its own, even if the overall context of the group interview is not fully clear.
3. The size of “important categories” can range from individual words to sentences or paragraphs.
4. When defining “important categories,” it is beneficial to incorporate the opinions expressed by group interview members as “intentions derived from their lived experiences.”

The technique of “systematic description” becomes easier with hands-on experience in group interviews and repeated organization of results under supervision. While the process may be time-consuming initially, it becomes more efficient with practice as you establish a solid framework centered around “important categories.”

To extract the “important categories,” analysts must have a thorough understanding of the objectives and issues of the subject matter. This familiarity allows multiple analysts to review verbatim records and identify appropriate “important categories.”

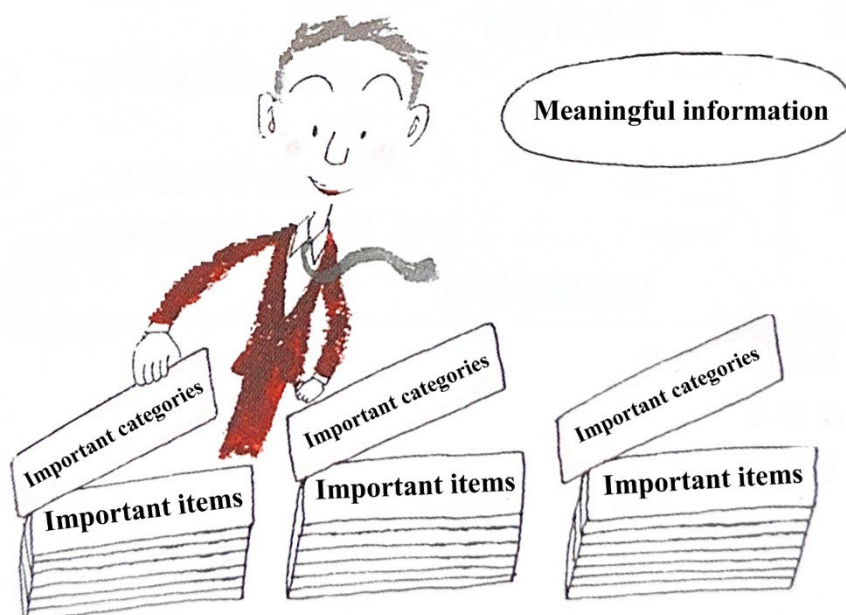
The steps to identify “important categories” are as follows:

- 1. On the sheets with verbatim and observation records, highlight the “meaningful items (important items)” according to the study’s purpose.**
- 2. Consider recording important items in the rightmost column of the record sheet, as shown in the Appendix (p.85). While optional, this practice can facilitate easier information retrieval later and expedite report creation.**
- 3. Compile all extracted “important items” and consider the narrative flow to achieve the goal, including underlying aspects not directly conveyed by members’ comments.**
- 4. Group the “important items” for each part of the narrative and assign them a “heading,” which will become the “important categories”.**
- 5. Multiple analysts should perform similar tasks, discuss their findings, and agree on the “important categories” that are most objectively explainable and widely accepted.**

Once the “important categories” are established, the next step is to develop each category by adding specific member comments and summaries of the content. The procedure for elaborating each category includes:

- 1. Gather all verbatim and observation records related to each “important category”. It is helpful to break down long statements into relevant parts and list them clearly.**
- 2. Be prepared to adjust the names and contents of the “important categories” as needed. Both “important categories” and “important items” should be considered flexible and open to change rather than fixed.**

3. Always consider what the “important categories” represent in the broader context, assess their accuracy, and determine if they can be used as scientific evidence.
4. Continue this process for each “important category” until all analysts agree that the representation is comprehensive and balanced. It is acceptable to introduce new categories as needed during this process.
5. Document the rationale behind the adoption of each “important category.” This will be useful for future efforts to enhance internal validity.
6. During this process, you might find important items that do not fit into existing categories or appear to warrant their own category. Instead of discarding these items, create an “Other” category on the analysis sheet to organize them for potential future use.
7. While developing the important categories, keep a complete transcript of all records. Even after sorting observations into categories, continue to review the contents and criteria of these categories.
8. Verify that all collected important items relate to their respective categories. If further clarification is needed, establish a new important category, and reassign the relevant items.
9. After incorporating all important items, recheck to ensure there are no duplicates and that the overall system is cohesive. Merge categories with similar content into a larger category if it helps consolidate the information.
10. Finally, review the entire document multiple times to assess the balance and structure of the important categories. With input from multiple reviewers, confirm that the system is optimal.



8 Next Stage of Conducting Interviews

One of the key advantages of group interviews is the ability to obtain more in-depth content by accumulating data over time. The results from one group interview can be used as feedback for subsequent interviews, allowing for deeper insights. (Refer to *Feedback Perspective* p.39).

9 Complex Analysis of Multiple Interviews

When analyzing multiple group interviews, start by nearly completing the analysis for each individual interview using the previously described methods.

Next, focus on the “important categories” identified in each interview. Examine what is common, what differs, and what background factors contribute to these variations.

For group interviews involving three or more groups, organize the commonalities and differences among the important categories using a star chart. Categorize the background factors of each group and analyze their relationships. If possible, include specific content from the group interviews to facilitate later analysis.

Identify any new items that need to be added to the “Important Categories” or any “Important Items” requiring detailed background analysis from a different perspective.

“Important Categories” that appear frequently across multiple group interviews are likely to be significant for the theme. When summarizing the results of the composite analysis, consider using these frequent categories as a foundation for the overall report.

Table 1. Example of creating a table of highlights for multiple group interview analysis

Target group	People at risk of	Elderly people	Elderly people living
Important category	lifestyle-related disease group	requiring care group	alone group
Enhancing health promotion	◎Emphasis on everyone		○Easy to do
opportunities for social interaction		◎Securing opportunities to go out	○Have fun with Minato
Emergency response		○	◎Emergency call required
Barrier-free	X	◎Wheelchair accessible	◎Enhanced fall prevention
Fulfilling purpose		○Allows you to	

in life		continue your hobby	
Information service	○Accurate information		

◎: Very applicable

○: Applicable

×: Not applicable

10 Review at the Report Writing Stage

During the report writing stage, consistently review and organize the results to ensure they align with the original analysis policy.

Pay special attention to the audience for whom you are writing the report and the potential impact it may have. Focus on the most effective way to structure and present the report and select the most suitable format. I will make every effort to summarize it as follows.



Chapter 7 Specific Methods of Analysis

① Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis focuses on the “description” of the words and non-verbal expressions from group interview participants. It involves organizing these verbal and non-verbal cues in their most authentic form and summarizing them with straightforward titles.

This method highlights the “raw voices” of participants, making it particularly effective when the main goal of the group interview is to capture and understand the genuine perspectives of the subjects.

Examples of Descriptive Analysis Methods

1. Service Proposal

“For instance, various groups may propose how they plan to implement certain actions, such as activities for the school nurse group or the kind of support needed from the medical association.”

“In our city, we are considering measures like limiting the number of tobaccos vending machines or regulating them through ordinances. Similarly, for alcohol, we should enforce stricter controls, requiring customers to show age and ID before purchase. Creating such an environment could significantly improve public health.”

“We need to develop tools that will drive behavioral change among various organizations, commercialize them, and present them to the public.”

2. Securing a Forum for Regular Information Exchange

“While having a forum for sharing opinions is valuable, the goal should not solely be policy implementation. The opportunity to interact and collaborate across various settings is what makes Health Japan 21 meaningful.”

“Merely gathering is not enough; it's important to have something meaningful to share collectively.”

2 Content Analysis Method

Content analysis in group interviews focuses on understanding the underlying meanings. By following the procedure outlined in the “Systematic Description Stage” (see p. 53), we extract the “important categories.”

This content analysis method is often used in conjunction with the descriptive analysis method. By combining these approaches, you can delve deeply into both the raw expressions of the participants and their underlying meanings, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of both aspects.

Examples of Content Analysis Methods

1. Characteristics of Our City

(1) Large Regional Differences

Since its establishment in 1911, the city has merged with other villages, including six town and village mergers. This history has resulted in a vast area with diverse industries and significant regional differences between urban and rural areas. It is crucial to consider the unique characteristics of each area when developing policies, rather than treating the city as a uniform entity.

(2) The Temperament of Our Citizens

The citizens of our city demonstrate a craftsman-like (entrepreneurial) spirit. The “Yaramaika” (let us do it anyway) attitude, as embodied by “Enshu Mori no Ishimatsu,” is highly respected. However, many people also take a more passive or bystander approach. Some residents are actively involved as founders and managers of services, while others use these services either actively or passively. When designing policies, it is essential to focus on citizen empowerment—developing services that help individuals address their own issues.

(3) Citizens' Perceptions of Home Welfare Services and Nursing Care Insurance Services

Although nursing care insurance services were introduced in 2000, there is considerable confusion among the elderly. Urban areas tend to rely on nursing facilities, while rural areas focus on home care. However, the use of these services is often deferred for appearance's sake, leading to dissatisfaction with the quality of life (QOL) for the elderly. A 1999 survey indicated a wide variation in home helper usage rates, with higher rates in suburban areas. Overall, the usage of home help services is lower than the national average.

3 Abstract Analysis Method

The gist analysis method involves crafting an executive summary that distills the key findings from a group interview. Typically presented on a single page, this summary highlights important categories and significant content.

In practice, the final report often includes a summary report created through the gist analysis method, positioned at the beginning or end of the report. This summary complements the main body of the report, which combines descriptive and content analysis methods, thereby presenting the findings in a clearer and more accessible format.

Example of Gist Analysis Method

1. Essential Items for the Health Japan 21 Survey

- (1) Incorporate both “healthy lifestyle habits” and “quality of life (QOL)” items broadly.
- (2) Standardize items related to “healthy lifestyle habits” (e.g., nutrition, rest, exercise, smoking, drinking, and lifestyle rhythms) in alignment with the objectives of Healthy Japan 21 to enable comparison with other regions.
- (3) Include QOL-related items that focus on “health for living happily,” such as social participation, interaction with others, leisure activities, hobbies, societal harmony, sense of fulfillment, and satisfaction, to reflect the unique characteristics of the city.
- (4) Add items that address ways to motivate (empower) citizens, covering aspects like values, lifestyle preferences, and desired longevity, to encompass a broad range of well-being factors.

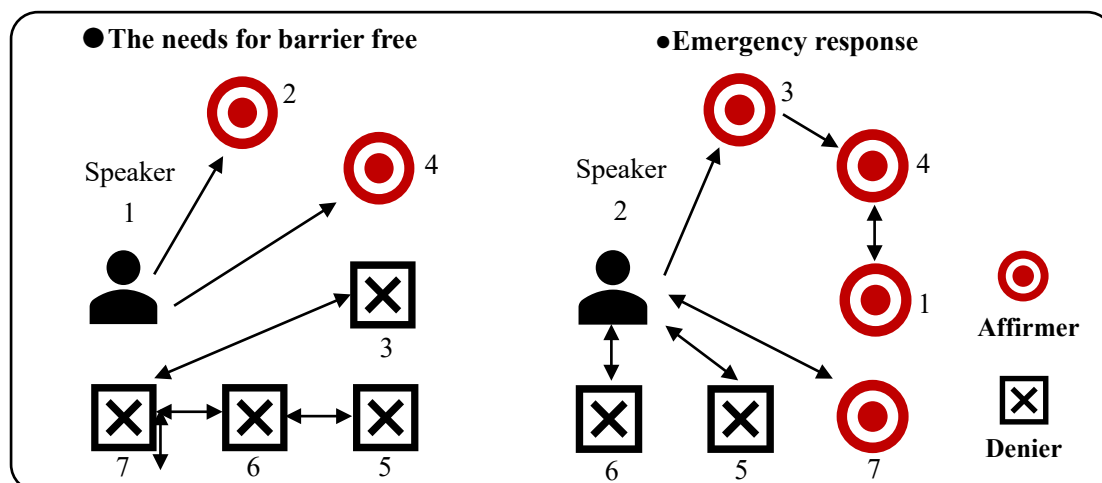
2. Enhancing the Environment to Support Health Japan 21

- (1) Gather all public and private facilities, institutions, and organizations related to “health” to propose future initiatives. By integrating these proposals, we can explore new possibilities for future actions without being constrained by past frameworks.
- (2) Align goals, organize actionable procedures based on the above content, develop a new system, and collaboratively create health behavior change tools.
- (3) Establish a platform for regular information exchange among related facility organizations.
- (4) Design a satellite system closely connected to the local community, utilizing community centers and other local resources. This system should be resident-focused, multifunctional, and adaptable, offering a flexible and practical approach.
- (5) Develop an information system to ensure that these satellite facilities work together seamlessly and are easily accessible to residents.

4 Relational Analysis

The relational analysis method involves mapping out the group dynamics of participants in a sociometric format, noting any changes and their timing. This approach is effective for analyzing group interviews, as it helps describe shifts in interactions among members and identify factors that influence these interactions.

Examples of relational analysis methods



5 Non-verbal Communication Analysis Method

This analytical method encompasses all forms of non-verbal communication, including observations of children playing, sign language among individuals with hearing impairments, and more. It involves behavioral observation of interactions among multiple members, where non-verbal elements—such as specific actions, attitudes, and facial expressions—replace the verbal “language” component in the analysis. This method is especially useful when information is challenging to capture through verbal expressions alone.

Examples of non-verbal communication

1. Interaction with Children Under Stressful Circumstances

Child A was being pursued by Child B, who was holding a rolled-up newspaper in both hands and tapping it loudly like a drumstick. Child A's hands tensed up as the newspaper bent and made a loud noise.

While occasionally glancing at Child A, Child B tried to maintain a certain distance, seemingly trying to catch A. Child B ran around the area, showing interest in A.

Child A, struggling to keep up and becoming increasingly distressed, had a flushed face and emitted an 'ooh' sound. A then cried out and looked at Child C, seemingly seeking help.

Child C made eye contact with A but did not alter their expression or move. In response, Child A ran over to Child C.

Chapter 8 Specific Example of Analysis

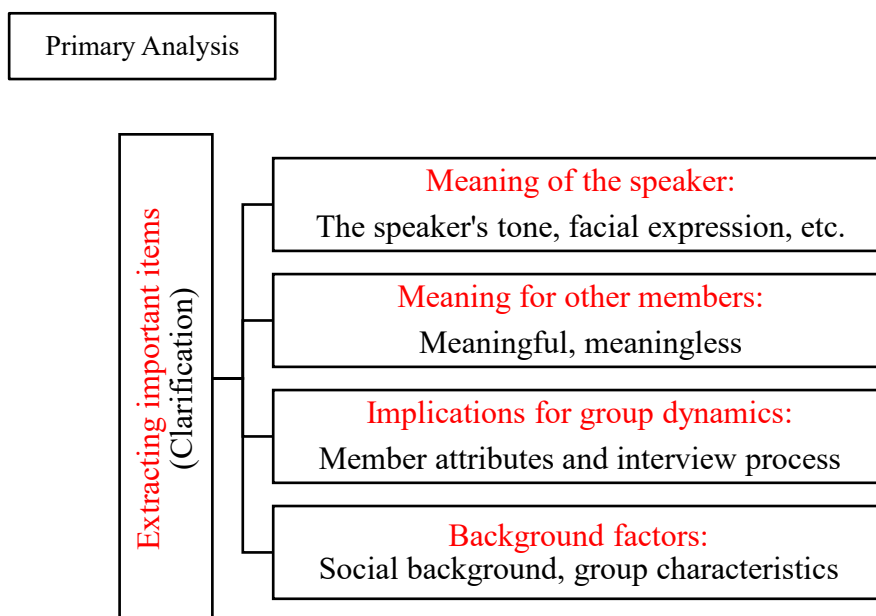
1 Record of Group Interview

Once the group interview is complete, promptly prepare a full transcript and record your observations to ensure nothing is forgotten. These transcripts and observations form the foundation for all subsequent analyses, so it is essential to review and finalize them thoroughly.

2 Primary Analysis

Once the verbatim and observational records are fully organized, it is crucial to begin primary and secondary analysis as soon as possible to avoid the risk of forgetting important details.

1. In the primary analysis stage, identify and extract “important content” and “meaningful content” based on the interview guide’s questions. These are referred to as “**important items.**”
2. Facial expressions can provide insight into how strongly the speaker feels about the content.
3. By observing the reactions of other group members, including their gestures and facial expressions, you can determine whether an opinion represents the “consensus of the group,” the “view of a few members with specific backgrounds,” or the “opinion of an individual.”



4. Analyze the context behind the extracted “important items” by considering group dynamics. Determine whether these items arise from the members' attributes, their social background, or the dynamics within the group. Also, examine “how the statement was expressed” and “the context in which the statement was made.”
5. Document each group member's reaction to the statement and, if necessary, reevaluate your interpretation.

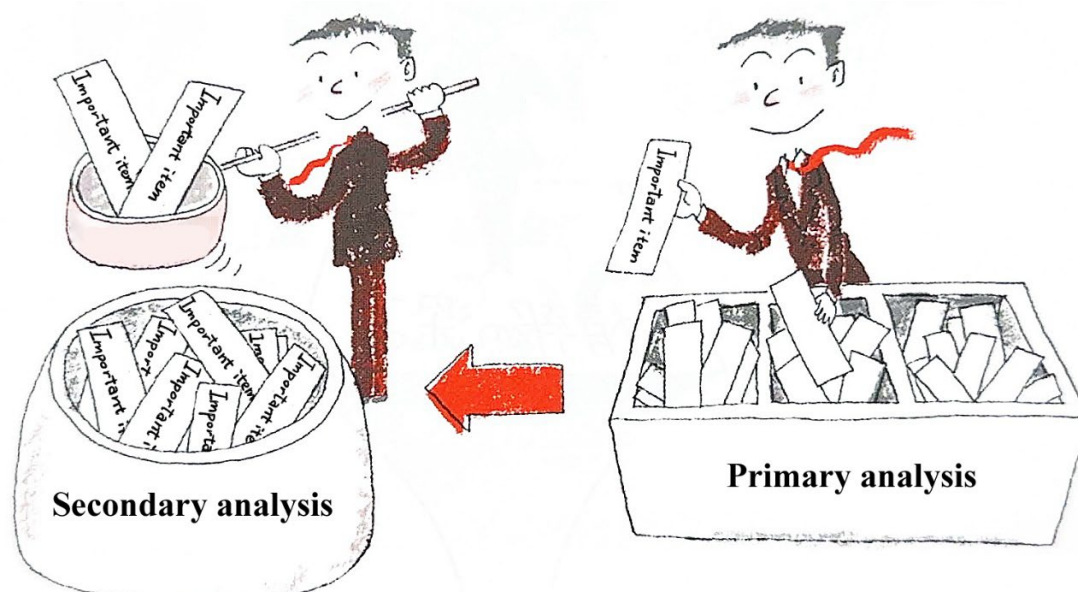
3 Secondary Analysis

The secondary analysis involves extracting “important categories” from the list of “important items” and their background factors identified in the primary analysis. This stage aims to create a comprehensive overview of the overall flow. For detailed instructions on identifying and extracting important categories, refer to “The Systematic Description Stage” (p.53).

In secondary analysis, **the quality of results** from group interviews hinges on effectively utilizing analysis skills. While systematically developing “important categories” is crucial, it is equally important to consider “what is the most relevant to highlight” for each category.

All verbal and non-verbal expressions collected during the group interview are like raw ingredients—how they are utilized can greatly affect their value. Just as professional skills in cooking continue to evolve, so does the pursuit of excellence in group interview analysis.

Additionally, the book delves into detailed analysis, including discussions on the validity and reliability of scientific evidence.



Group Interviews with Experts for Developing Health Japan 21 Interview Guide

1. Purpose

In preparation for the **Health Japan 21 Formulation**, which is based on the local characteristics of our city, we will gather information from various specialist perspectives and use it to help **prepare the necessary forms**. In addition, we aim to **clarify the conditions necessary** to provide effective services that emphasize resident participation, and to assist in the consideration of future cooperative local service delivery systems.

Clear Goal

Specific Goals

2. Target

Ten professionals from the following fields who are **familiar with** the local characteristics of our city and issues in health and welfare services.

Explicit Condition

- 1) Public health nurse (chief level or above, responsible for promoting health for everyone from children to the elderly)
- 2) Visiting nurse (chief level or above)
- 3) Medical assistant (person knowledgeable in the fields of medical and occupational health)
- 4) Dentist (someone who is knowledgeable about dealing with local bedridden people and people with disabilities)
- 5) PSW or local mental health worker
- 6) Nutritionist (in charge of local nutrition improvement activities)
- 7) Care manager (a person with qualifications and experience as a care worker)
- 8) Social worker (someone who is knowledgeable about home support for children and adults with disabilities)
- 9) Physical therapist (at least a senior level in charge of local health promotion and exercise)
- 10) School nurse (someone knowledgeable about the health of children and school students)

Explicitly specifying the targets

Specific characteristics are shown in parentheses.

By clarifying the characteristics of the participating members, the validity of the project can be

3. Interview Contents

- (1) The local characteristics and issues regarding health and welfare in our city that need to be reflected in Health Japan 21.
- 2) Survey items necessary for the formulation of Health Japan 21 from the perspective of various professionals.
- 3) Environmental conditions necessary for promoting the Health Japan 21 project, which emphasizes resident participation.
- 4) Ideas for future developments, etc.

Due to limited time, it is better to set 3 to 5 specific pillars.

Verbatim Records, Observation Records, and Analysis Sheet

Bold speaker number: aware of their impact on others and visibly has high confidence.

Speaker	Content	Reaction / Analysis
Moderator (M)	<p>Nice to meet you. I am ○○ from ○○, and I will be moderating today's discussion. The purpose of our meeting is to gather your insights on the direction we should take in developing Health Japan 21 policies for our city. We have assembled a diverse group of professionals, with one representative from each field. We are looking forward to hearing about your expertise and backgrounds, but please feel free to share any additional perspectives you might have.</p> <p>Given the limited time, I will focus on three key questions. The national government has outlined a framework for developing Health Japan 21. The first point is "appropriately reflecting local characteristics." Based on your expertise and experience, I would like to hear your thoughts on what you consider to be "the characteristics of our city" and how you believe these should be incorporated into Health Japan 21.</p>	<p>Reaction:</p> <p>Number 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 take notes.</p> <p>First, brief introduction.</p> <p>Objective is clearly stated at the beginning.</p> <p>Narrowing down specific objectives to three points makes them easier to understand.</p>
M	<p>The second point is that Health Japan 21 aims to enhance its focus on prevention, particularly for individuals in the grey zone who are closer to the healthy side. To achieve this, we are developing appropriate indicators and will periodically assess whether these indicators are being met. This summer through autumn, we will conduct a survey to gather the necessary data for these indicators. We would appreciate your expert opinions on which items should be included in the survey, especially those relevant to individuals in this grey area. Additionally, please suggest any essential items or those that would be beneficial to include if possible.</p> <p>The third point concerns the need for enhanced cooperation in promoting this policy. Developing an effective system for fostering collaboration is crucial. Are there any current issues with cooperation that you have identified? Do you believe there are better approaches or initiatives that could be undertaken? Your honest feedback on these aspects is valuable. In order to establish and implement effective indicators, it is essential to consider how to build a robust cooperation system. Please share your candid thoughts on this matter.</p>	<p>Reaction:</p> <p>Number 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 take notes.</p>

M	<p>One more thing I need to address is the format for today's session. You will notice that each of you has a number assigned to you. This is because we are using a method called Group Interview, and since we have gathered a diverse group of experts, we want to ensure that your insights are used effectively and scientifically.</p> <p>Today, you are not just individuals but representatives of your respective professions, and these numbers will be your identifiers. Please feel free to speak openly. For instance, when I call out a number, you can respond by saying, "Number 6 here." Anyone can then ask questions freely. For example, if you are Number 9, you might say, "Yes, I'm Number 9, and I have a question for Number 6." Please raise your hand and speak up. This approach will help facilitate a dynamic exchange of ideas among participants.</p>	<p>Reaction:</p> <p>Everyone looks up.</p> <p>The method is explained clearly, concisely, and without omissions.</p> <p>It will be easier to understand if you give a concrete example.</p>
M	Do you have any questions?	<p>Reaction:</p> <p>No reaction</p> <p>Be sure to check that participants understand the method.</p>
M	<p>We will also be keeping a record of today's interview if that is okay. This will be used solely for analysis purposes. Your name will not be made public, and you will not be held responsible later. So please feel free to say whatever you want. The time allocation is 90 minutes.</p> <p>If that is okay, let us get started.</p> <p>First, I would like to ask you about the characteristics of our city, the characteristics that you have seen from your backgrounds, and your professional background and self-introductions. Starting from Number 1, please give us a brief explanation of your professional background and the characteristics of our city.</p>	<p>Reaction:</p> <p>Number 1-10 give no objection.</p> <p>4: laugh at "responsible."</p> <p>Must be mentioned.</p> <p>To break the ice, start with self-introduction and easy topics.</p>
1	Occupation too?	
M	Yes, occupation too.	

1	As for my occupation, well, I am a public health nurse. I have been working here for 21 years. Um... I have always worked as a local public health nurse, and I have had contact with all kinds of people, from babies to the elderly... Well, what can I say? Is it okay if I tell you what I feel?	All words, verbatim.
M	Yes, please.	
1	Certainly, there are significant regional differences, with the city being divided into about five distinct areas, each with substantial contrasts between urban and rural settings. Instead of treating the entire city as a single entity, it would be more effective to tailor activities to the unique characteristics of each area.	Reaction: Number 5, 8, 9, 10 take notes. Number 7 nods Analysis: Regional differences ← Large differences between urban and rural area.
M	Can you give us an example? -----	Encouraging conversation.
1	Ah, yes, in the countryside, the elderly people are quite healthy. They work in agriculture and seem to be able to live reasonably well. However, in the city, there are a lot of people who live alone, and in some places, there are groups to prevent people from becoming isolated at home. In the countryside, there are well-established senior citizens' clubs, and there are people who participate in those, so there are differences of duties of the public health nurses in the cities and the rural areas.	Reaction: Number 5 strongly agrees with the part on urban vs. rural.
M	Thank you very much. I will get back to you later. -----	Always reply in some way.
2	I am a nurse with eight years of clinical practice, 18 years in nursing education, and now, eight years in government service as the manager of a visiting nurse station in our city. Today, as a representative of my profession, I would like to discuss the nature of my work. My primary focus is on elderly individuals, and I have observed that since the introduction of the long-term care insurance system in April 2012, there seems to be a disconnect between the new system and traditional perceptions of elder care. While this is a subjective viewpoint, I believe the system has faced implementation challenges. It is crucial to consider the elderly, their caregivers, their families, and the surrounding community in this aging society.	Reaction: Number 7, 8, 9, 10 take notes. Everyone looks up and see the speaker. Number 4's arms crossed, looking positive.

The End

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