The Use of Online Semi-Structured Interviews in Interpretive Research

Dr. Khadija Al Balushi

Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman

Abstract: *Semi structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research generally and interpretive research in particular.Semi-structured interviews can be an effective tool in interpretive research because they help the researcher gain in-depth data of participants' perspectives and make sense of their lived stories and experiences as told by them. Semi structured interviews can take different forms such as face-to-face and online and have a number of advantages like flexibility and are interactive in nature. However, semi-structured interviews especially the online ones can be challenging for researchers because all the visual and non-verbal cues (facial expressions, gestures, body language) which can help to contextualize the interview in a face-to-face scenario are lost (O'Connor et al., 2008). This paper presents the researcher's experience of using online semi-structured interviews in interpretive research, and what the researcher has learnt from this experience.*

Keywords: Semi-structured interviews, online interviews, interpretive research

1. Introduction

Interviews generally and semi-structured interviews in particular are commonly used in qualitative and interpretive research. This interest is linked to the expectations that interviewees' viewpoints are better expressed in an openly designed interview than in a standardized interview or questionnaire (Flick, 2009). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) explained that the purpose of semi-structured interviews is to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives. They added that the interviewer records and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said. Semi-structured interviews can take different forms, where the most common form is the face to face interview, online interviewing are increasingly used nowadays as a data collection method by social scientists. A distinct advantage with online interviewing is the wide geographical access; people from all over the globe can be interviewed -if they have telephone and computer access- (Mann & Stewart, 2000) However, online interviewing can be challenging for researchers. This is because all the visual and non-verbal cues (facial expressions, gestures, body language) which can help to contextualize the interview in a face-to-face scenario are lost (O'Connor et al., 2008). This paper will delve into the researcher's experience of using of semi-structured interviews in an interpretive research project; as such the paper is not focusing on the data collected from the interviews but on the experience of using semi-structured interviews in interpretive research.

The focus of this interpretive study was in-service teacher education and development. In-service Education of Teachers or INSET means 'those education and training activities engaged in by secondary and primary school teachers and principals, following their initial professional certification, and intended mainly or exclusively to improve their professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes in order that they can educate children more effectively'(Bolam, 1982 in Somers &Sikorova, 2002:96) This means INSET provides teachers with the appropriate required skills through training to help them to develop professionally and to contribute positively to the learning of children. INSET training and development has been the focus of a growing literature in various national contexts (see e.g. Choi, 2013; Forsberg &Wermke, 2012; Borg, 2006; Borg, 2003; Lamb, 1995) In this regard, some researchers studied the role of narration, self-expression and reflection in teachers' professional learning (Choi, 2013), the sources teachers use to improve their knowledge to develop professionally (Forsberg &Wermke, 2012), the role of teachers' beliefs and cognitions in teachers learning (Borg, 2006; Borg, 2003), and teachers' reluctance to change after joining INSET courses (Lamb, 1995). While many researchers looked at impact of INSET courses on teachers' beliefs, we have yet to fully understand impact of INSET courses on teachers' classroom practices. In specific, the role of school tasks (course homework) in improving participant teachers' classroom performance which is a problem I faced as an INSET teacher trainer. This study developed to reflect on my professional practice by interviewing two INSET teacher trainers from Oman who experienced using school tasks in their INSET courses. This may help me develop a better understanding of using these tasks in INSET courses. In order to dig deeply in the two participants' experience of using school tasks in INSET, semi structured interviews were used in this interpretive research.

2. Interpretivism and interpretive research

Interpretivism developed as a reaction to positivism in attempts to understanding and explaining human and social reality. Hammersley (2012a) indicated that interpretivism began by insisting that there is a difference between the nature of the phenomena investigated by the natural sciences and those studied by historians, social scientists, and educational researchers. He added that people are not like atoms, chemicals, or even most non-human forms of life. This is because people understand, give meaning and value to their environment and themselves. In his view, the ways in which they do this are shaped by the particular cultures where they live, and this generates the actions and institutions in which they participate.

Interpretive research is heavily influenced by phenomenology or/and hermeneutics phenomenology. Phenomenology grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl focusing on the study of lived experiences of the life world as lived by a person, and trying to unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence (Laverty, 2003). This means phenomenologist study human's experiences as it is lived. In educational research, phenomenology means a detailed investigation of how people see or experience themselves and their world (Hammersley, 2012a). Hermeneutics phenomenology grew with the German philosopher Martin Heidegger (Laverty, 2003); hermeneutics phenomenology also focused on human experience but concentrated more on illuminating details of experience with a goal of creating meaning and interpretation from these experiences (Mack, 2010). Heidegger focused on 'the situated meaning of a human in the world' (Laverty, 2003:7). Meaning can be found 'as we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences' (Laverty, 2003:8). This means hermeneutics is a meaning-making process between the individual and the world. Despite that, a common argument against interpretive research is that it has little or no practical value as you do nothing with phenomenological or hermeneutic knowledge (Garrick, 1999:147). Based on my experience of carrying out an interpretive research, I disagree with this as I made use of the phenomenological knowledge I gained from doing that research by changing some of my own practices through studying others' experiences. Garrick (1999:147) further argued that an interpretive methodology assumes that phenomenological knowledge can do something with us; certainly, personal stories/experiences may be sought to bring to light one's research topic issues.

The researcher plays an important role in interpretive research. In this regard, Walsham (1995:77) showed that the interpretive researcher can be an 'outside researcher' or an 'involved researcher' explaining the former as a researcher carrying out his/her research mainly through formal interviews, without any direct involvement in action in the field or giving feedback to the research participants. While he explained the latter 'involved researcher' as a participant researcher; he/she is part of the group being studied. He added that from interpretivists' perspectives, in neither of the two roles the researcher can be an objective reporter because the data collection and analysis involves the researcher's own subjectivity. This means interpretive researchers make sense of the researched world and share meanings in a more subjective than an objective way (Walsham, 1995; Walsham, 2006). Though, this subjectivity of the interpretive researcher was criticized especially by positivist researchers who believe more on objectivity (Garrick, 1999). In this respect, Mack (2010) states that all research is subjective. He proposed that by choosing your paradigm, you are being subjectively oriented towards one way of doing research and cannot divorce yourself from your perspective/s as the researcher. Qualitative researchers are more subjective because they are not using a hypothesis and they are involved in the research. Yet, interpretivists still take an objective stance when analyzing the collected data; they look at the data thoroughly so that the data informs the researcher about what is going on in the environment,

instead of the researcher's own preconceptions (Mack, 2010: 8).

Interpretive research usually generates qualitative data where it focuses on verbal and textual data. Hammersley (2012a) commented that interpretive research normally adopts qualitative methods, such as ethnography, in-depth or unstructured interviewing, or documentary analysis. This is because interpretive researchers try to understand the nature of participants' perceptions and to learn the culture of the people being studied. For ethnographers who study cultures, thick descriptions are desirable in order to see underlying meanings and understandings (Lichtman, 2006). Thick descriptions have been adopted by many qualitative researchers where they include details about the setting in which the study was conducted, how the participants looked, even respondents non-verbal gestures are included (Lichtman, 2006). However, relying solely on qualitative methods in data collection and abandoning the scientific procedures of verification resulted in criticisms against interpretive research. It was criticized as the results cannot be generalized to other situations. Therefore, many positivist researchers question the overall benefit of interpretivist research (Mack, 2010:8). But, Mack (2010) responded to this by claiming that the research will resonate with other teachers, as it can be similar to other peoples' work. I think teachers facing similar problems investigated by interpretive researchers can benefit from the research recommendations/outcomes.

In relation to this study, it adopted the phenomenological idea of Husserl discussed earlier; it attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from participants' own perspectives. In other words, the study tried to understand meanings of human's experience as it is lived (Garrick, 1999); participants' description of their use of school tasks in training sessions. The study also rested heavily upon Heidegger's theory of being in the world for giving justifications. Since interpretation is seen as critical to the process of understanding, Heidegger stressed that human's should interpret experiences based on their background and historicality (Laverty, 2003). I think through interviewing my participants and listening to their descriptions of their experiences, we were together interpreting their stories based on our background of using school tasks. This happened through participants' telling their stories of using school tasks in training sessions, and the follow up questions I asked to understand the told stories as well as their responses to my questions.

Concerning my role in this research project, I was an outsider doing semi-structured interviews with my research participants; yet, it was a more reflexive role. Reflexivity involves an 'ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within research in order to produce more accurate analyses of our research' (Pillow, 2003:178). My role in this research was self-reflexivity; self-reflexivity falls into seeking similarities between the researcher and the subject(s) which seeks at making the researcher closer to his/her subject(s) (Pillow, 2003). I believe it was a self-reflexive role because I was using my own life experiences (in this case, my training experience of

using school tasks) to find similarities with my subjects who experienced the same thing, and to gather the data from the semi-structured interviews that will help me reflect on that experience.

For example, as a bulimic woman Christine Kiesinger (1998:72) discussed in her research how the difficulties of writing about the lived emotional experiences of (Abbie) a woman who was struggling with bulimia and obesity helped her to reflect on her own life history; she says 'I attempt to reflexively connect our experiences in ways that use Abbie's life story to challenge and deepen my understanding of my own life, and my own experiences to heighten my comprehension of hers'. I think Kiesinger situated her understanding of her research from a similar personal experience like her subject Abbie and through this research I believe I did the same. Hence, in this interpretive research I adopted a self-reflexive role as a researcher.

In terms of the data collection methods, I used semi-structured interviews for my research project. Johnson (2001) pointed out that semi-structured interviewing seeks 'deep' information and understanding about an individual's self, lived experience, values, cultural knowledge, or perspectives. For my research project, I was seeking participants' information and understandings about their perspectives of a lived experience (their use of school tasks). In Johnson's (2001) view, deep understandings are held by participants in some everyday activity, event, or place. I believe through doing this research project I was seeking to achieve the same level of deep knowledge and understanding as my research participants (Johnson, 2001) in relation to using school tasks in training sessions, and this may ensure the interpretive nature of it.

3. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interview is very close to everyday conversations, but it has a purpose and involves a specific approach and technique (Kvale& Brinkman, 2009). It is semi-structured; neither a normal everyday conversation nor a closed questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and may include suggested questions (Kvale& Brinkman, 2009:27). According to Johnson (2001:106) semi-structured interviewing is a commonsensical and inter-subjective enterprise; it begins with participants' common-sense perceptions, explanations, and understandings of some lived cultural experience. In his view, it aims to explore the contextual boundaries of that experience or perception, to uncover what is usually hidden from ordinary view or to penetrate to more reflective understandings about the nature of that experience. For example, in one of his own research projects Johnson (2001) used this type of interviewing to explore the complicated phenomenon of 'stalking'; he was seeking to learn how those who stalk others actually see or interpret their actions, as well as to explore the nature of the emotions that lie underneath these actions.

On the one hand, there are a number of advantages of using semi-structured interviews. The first key advantage of this popular method of interviewing is that it combines structure with flexibility. This means the structure of the interview is 'sufficiently flexible to permit topics to be covered in the order most suited to the interviewee, to allow responses to be fully probed and explored and to allow the researcher to be responsive to relevant issues raised spontaneously by the interviewee' (Legard et al., 2003:141). The second key advantage is that the interview is interactive in nature. This means the material is generated through an interaction between the researcher and the interviewee (Myers & Newman, 2007; Legard et al., 2003). For example, the researcher asks an initial question in a way that encourages the interviewee to talk freely when answering that question. The next intervention by the researcher (the follow up question, prompt or probe) will be determined by the interviewee's answer (Legard et al., 2003).

On the other hand, there are some potential difficulties in using semi-structured interviews especially for novice researchers. Legard et al., (2003) argue that this type of interviewing makes some demands on the mental and intellectual abilities of the interviewer. First, the researchers' listening ability is fundamental during the interview. The researcher must hear and understand the interviewee's responses in order to probe further (Myers & Newman, 2007; Legard et al., 2003). Second, good semi-structured interviewing requires a clear and logical mind. The researcher should be able to think quickly to distill the essential points from the participants' responses and accordingly formulate the appropriate follow up questions (Myers & Newman, 2007;Legard et al., 2003). The researcher can do his/her role properly and overcome any difficulties with the interview through careful preparation (Legard et al., 2003; Robson, 2002; Johnson, 2001). For example, the researcher needs to be fully conversant with the research objectives and within the topic guide (Legard et al., 2003). To achieve this, the novice researcher can practice/rehearse the interview with a friend. This is because this type of interviewing is similar to the kind of talking done between friends with some differences related to its purpose and way (Johnson, 2001). This practicing/rehearsing will help the researcher familiarize him/herself with the research objectives and with the interview schedule.

Regarding the use of semi-structured interviews in interpretive research, Walsham (2006:323) puts in 'Interviews are a part of most interpretive studies as a key way of accessing the interpretations of informants in the field'. However, the use of interviews generally and semi-structured interviews in particular in qualitative and interpretive research have been argued. Some authors considered that through interviews we can gather richer data in comparison to other ways of data collection. For instance, Forsey (2012) assumed that the research interview provides an opportunity to create and capture insights of a depth and level of focus that rarely can be achieved through surveys, observational studies and the other types of casual conversations done with human beings. In his view, we interview to find out what we do not and cannot know from other sources of data collection. We also record what we hear to systematically process the data and to better understand and analyse the insights shared through the dialogue. Moreover, semi-structured interviews are used a lot in interpretive research because of its phenomenological and hermeneutic nature mentioned earlier and to Johnson's (2001) idea of the commonsensical and inter-subjective

nature of interviewing. This is because the interview focusses on understanding participants lived experiences and interpreting them.

Garrick (1999:148) stressed that what makes interpretive researchers different from positivist researchers is precisely their attempt to make sense of lived experiences. He added that the basis of interpretive researchers' knowledge claims rests upon assumptions that make use of participants' stories, their language, descriptions and metaphors to highlight what is important to them; the subjects of the investigation. These stories/descriptions are usually told by interviewees during the interview. The interviewer is an active sense maker and interpreter of the heard stories (Johnson, 2001). However, Forsey (2012) warned from rushing into this most used qualitative research instrument. This is because interview data alone are 'notoriously unreliable' as 'incomplete and faulty memories and particular forms of image management conspire to ensure interviewees offer only what they are prepared to reveal about the subjective preconceptions of events and opinions' (Walford, 2007 in Forsey, 2012:365). This idea is related to what was discussed earlier about interpretive research being criticized because of its subjective nature. It seems that semi-structured interviews are used a lot in interpretive research because subjectivity is the concern of interpretive researchers than objectivity; they like to interpret things based on their own background and experiences as well as others. In fact, a common principle of qualitative data like interviews is that it is subjective and reflexive; the researcher is a key by actively co-constructing the situation which he/she wants to study and re-constructing subjective viewpoints (Flick, 2009)

There are several ways for using semi-structured interviews in interpretive research: face to face interviews and new technology interviews. Face to face interviews offer non-verbal cues (body language, gestures and facial expressions) which may give messages that help in understanding the verbal response, possibly changing or even, in extreme cases, reversing its meaning (Robson, 2002). However, nowadays new technology is used in interviewing such as telephones (Opdenakker, 2006; Robson, 2002), computers mediated communication/CMC (Opdenakker, 2006; Mann & Stewart, 2000), Skype interviewing (Robson, 2002), and internet based interviewing (O'Connor et al., 2008; Opdenakker, 2006) to make things geographically accessible (Lichtman, 2006), so you do not need to travel for long distances to reach your research participants.

In the case of my research, I faced the problem of finding a suitable way of interviewing my selected participants who were in a different country (Oman) to the one I was studying in (UK). With this aim in mind, I decided to interview them via smartphone, in specific using "WhatsApp Messenger" as I believe it is a flexible technology for conversation and I can get instant responses from participants. Smartphones can be powerful tools in interviewing, as many people carry them around on a permanent basis, so can be contacted easily, regardless of their location (Raento et al., 2009). However, 'qualitative studies that utilize telephone interviews, as a primary data collection mode, often are not discussed in the qualitative research literature'(Lechuga,

2012:251). Smartphones as well have not been widely utilized as research tools in the social sciences (Raento et al., 2009). In my case, I searched a lot for studies in the social sciences that used smartphones/"WhatsApp Messenger" in interviewing but found nothing. Yet, since the type of telephone interview I used "WhatsApp Messenger" has the instant replay feature and you have to be online to use this programme; it is like online interviewing. Although online interviewing is increasingly being used as a data collection method by qualitative and interpretive researchers, its use has been argued. For example, some authors think that the use of these methods mitigates the distance of space and enables the research to be easily internationalised without usual travel costs, and can be valuable for researchers contacting groups or individuals who may otherwise be difficult to reach, such as the less physically mobile (O'Connor et al., 2008:271). While others think that online interviewing cannot achieve the high interactive, rich and spontaneous communication that can be achieved through face to face interviewing (Lichtman, 2006; Mann & Stewart, 2000) This is because the non-verbal cues such as intonations and body language of the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the interviewee's verbal answer to the question (Opdenakker, 2006) Written responses would not provide such information usually. However, online interviewing does have distinct advantages and in many respects does closely resemble a traditional face-to-face interview (O'Connor et al., 2008). For example, through adopting a semi-structured World Wide Web-based interview, Chen and Hinton (1999) noticed that online interviews can provide greater spontaneity and can enable participants to answer immediately. I agree with Chen and Hinton as I noticed from the two interviews I conducted that the interviewees were responding immediately to my questions.

4. Researcher's Role

It is important that the researcher starts by establishing good rapport with the participants to have an interview that generates meaningful and useful data (Given, 2008; Lichtman, 2006; Legard et al., 2003; Johnson, 2001). Rapport refers to the degree of comfort in the interactions between the researcher and research participants. For interviewing, it refers to the relative ease of exchanges between the interviewer and interviewee(s) (Given, 2008). However, O'Connor et al., (2008) claimed that building rapport online, without the usual visual cues used in face-to-face interviews can be a challenge for the online interviewer. This is because the traditional researcher relies heavily on the visual cues such as smiles and eye contact for rapport building. O'Connor et al., (2008:280) added that in the online interview, 'both the interviewer and interviewee are relying on the written word as a means of building rapport'. For example, Kivits (2005) facilitated her email interviews by using the method of sharing personal information with the research participants. So, usually she started or ended her emails by asking participants some general personal information about their families, holiday or work then moved to the interview questions. This method was important for building rapport and helped Kivits to easily develop an online relationship with her participants. This encouraged her to ask participants more sensitive questions.

I did the same as Kivits, I started both interviews by asking each participant some questions about family and work. This step was very significant in trust building and having good rapport with the two participants of my research. It helped me to gain participants' confidence and to develop equal power relationships between myself and the interviewees. Both participants told me frankly that they want to participate in this research because the topic was interesting for them which resulted in their positive cooperation with me. Karnieli-Miller et al., (2009) identified that the nature of participants' interest in the research topic can affect their cooperation with the researcher.

Regarding ethical considerations, when conducting interviews, it is 'crucial to try to reassure the interviewee at the start about your purpose and about confidentiality' (Walsham, 2006:223) Therefore, I explained the purpose of my study to the research participants and told them that the provided information would be used for my research purposes only and assured them of anonymity. Besides, consent form was sent to the participants as an attachment via email two weeks before conducting the interviews. The use of the voluntary informed consent prior to the research was necessary to ensure participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress (BERA, 2011). However, O'Connor et al., (2008) advised that getting participants to sign a consent form sent via email may not be straightforward. This is because ideally the form should be downloaded electronically and the signed form to be returned back to the researcher via surface mail or fax. They warned that in practice this may discourage respondents from participating in the research. Hence, to try to avoid this, I asked participants to just type their names in the signature column and email the form back to me. Both participants signed the consent form by typing their names and emailed it back.

Through the process of designing the semi-structured interview, I considered the points discussed in designing a semi-structured interview by Robson (2002). He recommended that the interview schedule can include the following: an introductory comment about the topic of the interview, a list of key questions, a set of associated prompts and probes, and closing comments. Therefore, I developed my interview schedule with an introductory comment followed by a number of questions that will help me answer my main research question; each question has its follow up prompts and probes. Forsey (2012) stated that the semi-structured interview schedule should guide rather than determine the shape of the interview. He added that he likes to keep the opening and the closing questions more or less the same, but the conversations process in different directions in moving from the beginning to the end according to the interviewee's responses. However, Lichtman (2006) highlighted that novice interviewers prefer to have a clear set of guidelines to follow. I agree with Lichtman (2006) as I believe that Forsey's (2012) idea of processing the conversation in different directions according to interviewees' responses can be difficult for novice researchers like me who are interviewing for the first or second time. Robson (2002) advised that it is important to pilot the interview schedule as a way of training for the interviewer. Therefore, I piloted the interview with one

teacher trainer also via "WhatsApp Messenger". I prepared the draft schedule and tried it with my pilot study volunteer. Accordingly, I developed the questions by changing the wording in some difficult questions to make them easier for interviewees.

Regarding administering the interviews, as I mentioned earlier I did the interviews online via "WhatsApp Messenger". Opdenakker, (2006) talked about the challenge of administering interviews online. In his view, the interviewer has no view on the situation in which the interviewee is situated; therefore, the interviewer has lesser possibilities to create a good interview ambience. This can possibly result in not having a good in-depth interview. However, in most cases (in online interviews) the interviewer would have prior contact with interviewees where suitable interview time, venue and way are arranged during these interactions (O'Connor et al., 2008). Therefore, I told my participants that the interview would be through the "WhatsApp Messenger". Several days before actually administering the interviews; I sent messages to the participants and we agreed on specific times to do the interviews (e.g. participant B and I agreed to do it at 9a.m on Saturday) so both of us at the agreed time were on the telephone and I started sending the questions and the participant sent her/his replies immediately (Lichtman, 2006). The participant had the freedom to ask for any clarification and I was always giving examples and providing probes and prompts where necessary.

5. Reflection

I have learned many positive issues from using the "WhatsApp Messenger" to conduct the semi-structured interviews online; two of these will be discussed in details. The first is related to transcribing the interview. Transcribing interview data is not an easy task for the interviewer. For example, Hammersley (2012b) stated that it is very important to remember that the aim of transcription is to produce an accurate record of what is said, so a great care is needed in transcription. He added that we should try to ensure that we are identifying the words and phonetic characteristics accurately; as sometimes we need to include detailed extracts from transcripts. This is because we need to provide readers with sufficient data that allows them to consider whether alternative interpretations from those we have put forward would be plausible (Hammersley, 2012b). However, in online interviewing (the method I used) the transcripts are automatically created (O'Connor et al., 2008; Lichtman, 2006; Opdenakker, 2006) and this is a great advantage with this type of interviewing. You write the question, send it to the interviewee who types his/her reply and send it back. Hence, as a researcher you do not need to spend a lot of time and effort transcribing your data.

The second issue is the instant reply and interview speed. Legard et al., (2003) noted that in semi-structured interviews people are asked to think and give views about issues that are not necessarily in their mind at the moment the question is asked. In other words, they require time to think about a particular point and then formulate their response. This required time may affect the length of the interview. However, Robson (2002) declared that interviews which

take long time make unreasonable demands on busy interviewees, and could have the effect of reducing the number of people willing to participate, which may lead to biases in the sample you achieve. In the case of online interviewing, 'responses can be immediate and a relatively fast-paced exchange of questions and responses can be achieved' (O'Connor et al., 2008: 273). This is because participants send instant responses to the researchers' questions.In order to reply quickly they use lots of abbreviations (e.g. u instead of you, ur instead of your…etc). They also sometimes just send emoticons (Opdenakker, 2006) like a happy face to show that they understand what is said. The use of such abbreviations, emoticons and instant replies to the interviewer's questions probably result in the interview proceeding quickly and smoothly. This is true because I planned to do each interview in 30 minutes but the actual interview took only 22 minutes each. This is not to say that in online interviewing participants are just sending brief replies to the interviewer; they still send rich descriptions when they share their experiences and stories. Opdenakker (2006) proposed that when interviewees are asked about their perspectives online, then the chance to give richer responses is higher than in face-to-face interviews. Taking into account the various arguments in the literature that I have discussed, it seems reasonable to conclude that online interviewing is a sufficiently effective method to adopt by interpretive researchers.

6. Conclusion

Semi-structured interviews can be an effective tool in interpretive research because they help the researcher gain in-depth data of participants' perspectives and make sense of their lived stories/experiences as told by them. The use of online semi-structured interviewing has been criticized as it cannot achieve the highly interactive communication that can be achieved in face-to-face interviews due to the loss of the non-verbal cues. However, there is a growth in the number of researches carried out using online interviews (O'Connor et al., 2008). This is not only because you can interview people who are geographically dispersed (Lichtman, 2006), but it also has some distinct positive sides in comparison to face-to-face interviews. The researcher does not need to spend a lot of time and effort transcribing interview data as it is already transcribed. Besides, the interview speed is faster than the normal face-to-face interview because the researcher gets instant replies from interviewees on his/her questions. I agree with Kvale and Brinkman (2009:32) that a 'well-conducted research interview (whether done online or face-to-face) may be a rare and enriching experience for the subject, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation'.

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