

Learning Lab

Qualitative Data Handling in Nutrition Research Focus Group Discussions



Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Learning outcomes



Understand the Fundamentals of FGDs

Participants will be able to define what FGDs are, identify their key characteristics, and differentiate FGDs from other qualitative research methods.



Develop Skills for Effective Moderation

Participants will learn how to design discussion guides, facilitate group discussions, manage group dynamics, and apply probing techniques to gather comprehensive data.



Analyze and Interpret FGD Data

Participants will acquire the ability to synthesize data from FGDs, identify themes and patterns, and present findings effectively to inform research or decision-making processes.

Session 1: Introduction to Focus Group Discussions

Overview and Applications

Renuka Silva

Department of Applied Nutrition

Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

What is a Focus Group Discussion (FGD)?

“...an interactive discussion between 6-8 pre-selected participants, led by a trained moderator and focussing on a specific set of issues. **The aim** of a focus group discussion is **to gain a broad range of views on the research topic** over a 60-90 minute period, and to create an environment where participants feel comfortable to express their **views**” (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011, p. 136).

Unique Features of FGDs

Interactive discussions generating unique insights.



Diverse viewpoints from participants.



Moderators facilitate breadth and depth in responses.



Types of FGDs



Face-to-Face
Discussions.



Virtual FGDs:
Telephone and
Online.



Mixed-Methods
Applications.

Academic vs. Market Research vs. Public/non-profit vs. Participatory approach FGDs

Academic FGDs

Focus on generating scientific data.

Market FGDs

Emphasize consumer preferences and fast results.

Public/non-profit FGDs

To design, improve, or evaluate a public service

Participatory FGDs

Involves community members in research

Focus on community needs and sustainability

Research applications of FGDs



To explore topics about which little is known or where the issues are unclear.



To explain specific behaviors or beliefs and the circumstances in which they occur.



To evaluate a service, program, or intervention and understand reasons for its success or failure.



To design a survey or experimental study by identifying the issues, terminology, or components to include.



To gain diversity of experiences and perspectives on the study topic.



To understand context, culture, or social norms surrounding the research issues



To understand group processes (i.e., decision-making

When Not to use FGDs

When aiming specifically to collect personal experiences from participants.

For eliciting individual narratives from each participant (use in-depth interviews).

Not suitable for sensitive topics (e.g. sexual behaviour, hunger at family level, mental illness).

Less suited to reaching a consensus on the research issues.

May not be fruitful to include participants with highly confrontational views

Focus Group vs. In-Depth Interviews

FGDs: Broad perspectives, group interactions.

In-Depth Interviews: Individual narratives, personal insights.

Choice depends on research goals.

Use Focus Group Discussions

- To capture a range of views and experiences
- To discuss or explain issues
- To explore new issues
- To identify social and community norms
- To seek broad community-level information
- To observe group interaction

Use In-Depth Interviews

- To seek individual perspectives
- To identify individual narratives
- To seek personal and sensitive information
- To collect detailed, in-depth information
- To describe complex issues or processes
- For geographically dispersed participants

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- Large data volume.
- Interaction-driven insights.
- Effective for community

Weaknesses:

- Less control over discussion.
- Potential dominance by some participants.
- Non-confidential.

Advantages of FGDs

Reflect real-world social interactions.

Generate diverse and rich data efficiently.

Flexible for different research purposes.

Challenges and Limitations

- Managing group dynamics.



- Dependence on skilled moderators.



- Time-consuming data analysis.

Summary

FGDs are versatile and impactful qualitative methods.

Require careful planning and skilled moderation.

Effective for exploring diverse perspectives and group dynamics.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in Qualitative Research

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Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Objectives

- To get understanding on;
 - planning and implementation of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).
 - skills required in conducting FGDs.
- Demonstrate the basics of data analysis steps using NVivo software.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

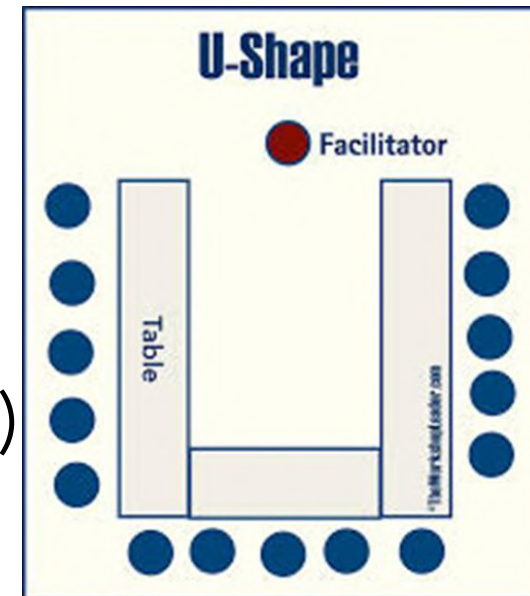


FGDs

- Discussion with a selected **group of people (8 -12)**
- Purposely selected individuals : different socioeconomic status
- Facilitated by a professional, **external moderator**
 - Person who asks questions
 - Should facilitate the discussion
- **Note taker/s**
 - Participants' answers : using specific template, flip charts
 - Participants are given numbers
 - Non-verbal expression

FGDs cont...

#	Notes	Note-taker comments
02	ප්‍රාග්ධන හා වෛ, හෘදය හා නිව්‍යාන වෙනම පුර්වල වේ, ප්‍රතිශතය ↓ ලෙඩරියෝමයට සාපේක්ෂව	
03	cholesterol, පීශනකාරී	
01	වෙනම වෛ කලින් කරනවාට හෘදය හා නිව්‍යාන, හෘද දෙසේ කරන බව වෙනම	
06	පුස්තක පුර්වල වේ, ලෙඩරියෝම වැඩි වෙනම පුර්වල වේ. පීශනකාරී Pressure, cholesterol	
07	පුස්තකයේ ↓, කලින් කරන, හෘදය හා නිව්‍යාන, Diabetes	
05	Heart attack, පුස්තකයේ ↓, පීශනකාරී	
04	පීශනකාරී pressure, පුස්තක පුර්වල වේ පුස්තකයේ ↓, කලින් කරන, වෙනම හෘදය ↓	



- Audio record the discussion (if possible, video recording)
- "U" shaped seating arrangements

FGDs cont..

- Develop **Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGDG)**
- Questions are based on **specific frame-work**
- Themes and sub-themes are included
- Probing questions
- Maximum of 45 minutes - 1 hr

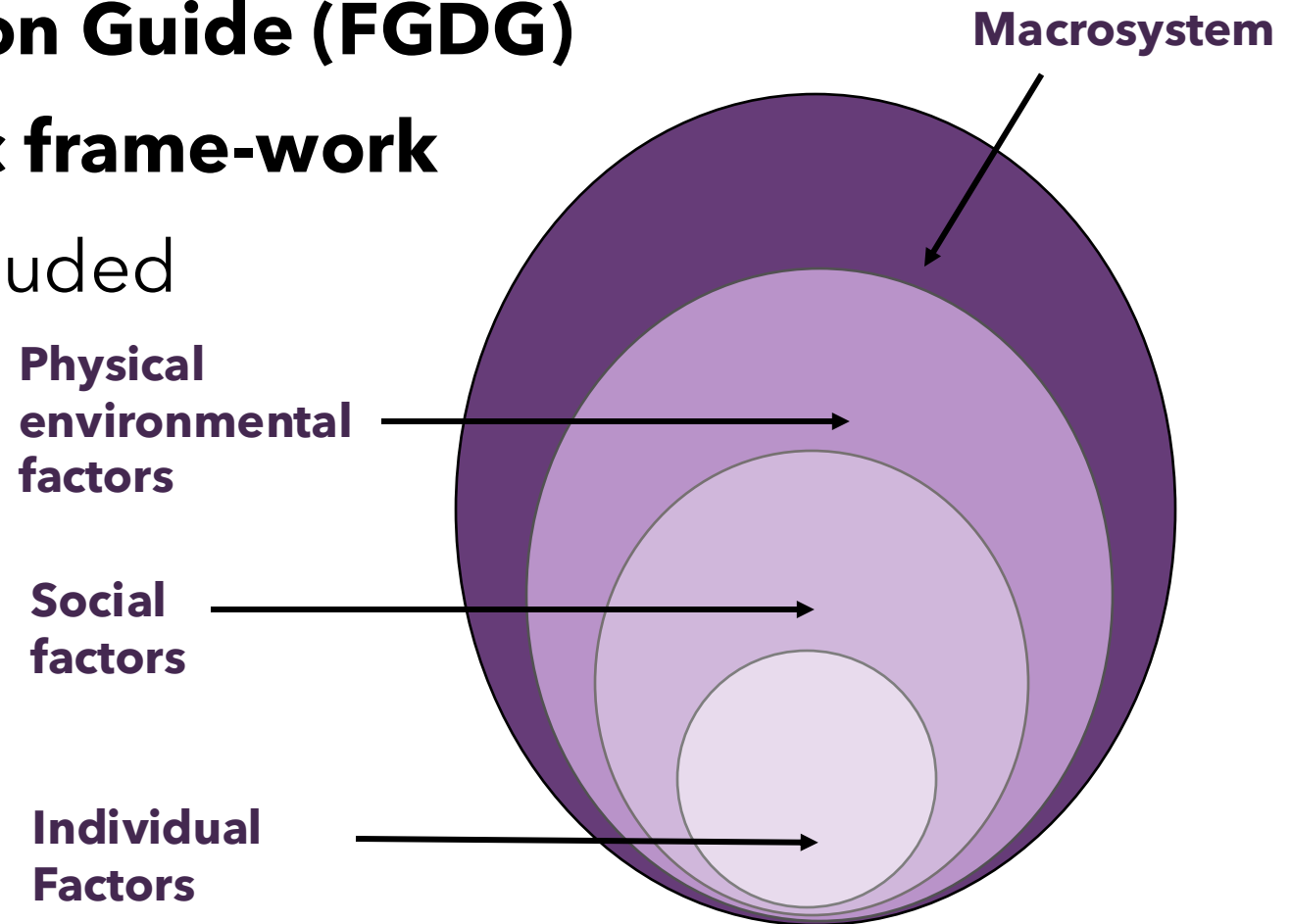


Fig 1 : Conceptual framework of fruit and vegetable consumption (Story et al., 2002)

Example : FGDG

- **Introduction**
- “**Good morning and welcome** to our discussion. My **name is.....** and we are researchers **from** Thank you for taking the time to join us today. The main **purpose** of our discussion is to understand your ideas and perceptions about your fruit and vegetable consumption. There are **no right or wrong** answers. So, please feel free to share your thoughts, even if they differ from what others have said. You might have noticed the **recorder**. We are recording this session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. We assure your **names will not be used** in any of our reports.”

Example : FGDG cont...

- **Opening question**

- What types of fruits and vegetables (F&V) did you eat yesterday?

- **Key questions**

- **Q 1**: Why do you include F&V in your diet?

Probing Q : What do you think will happen if you don't eat F & V?

- **Q2** : What influences your choices of F&V?

Probing Q : How do your friends influence your F&V consumption?

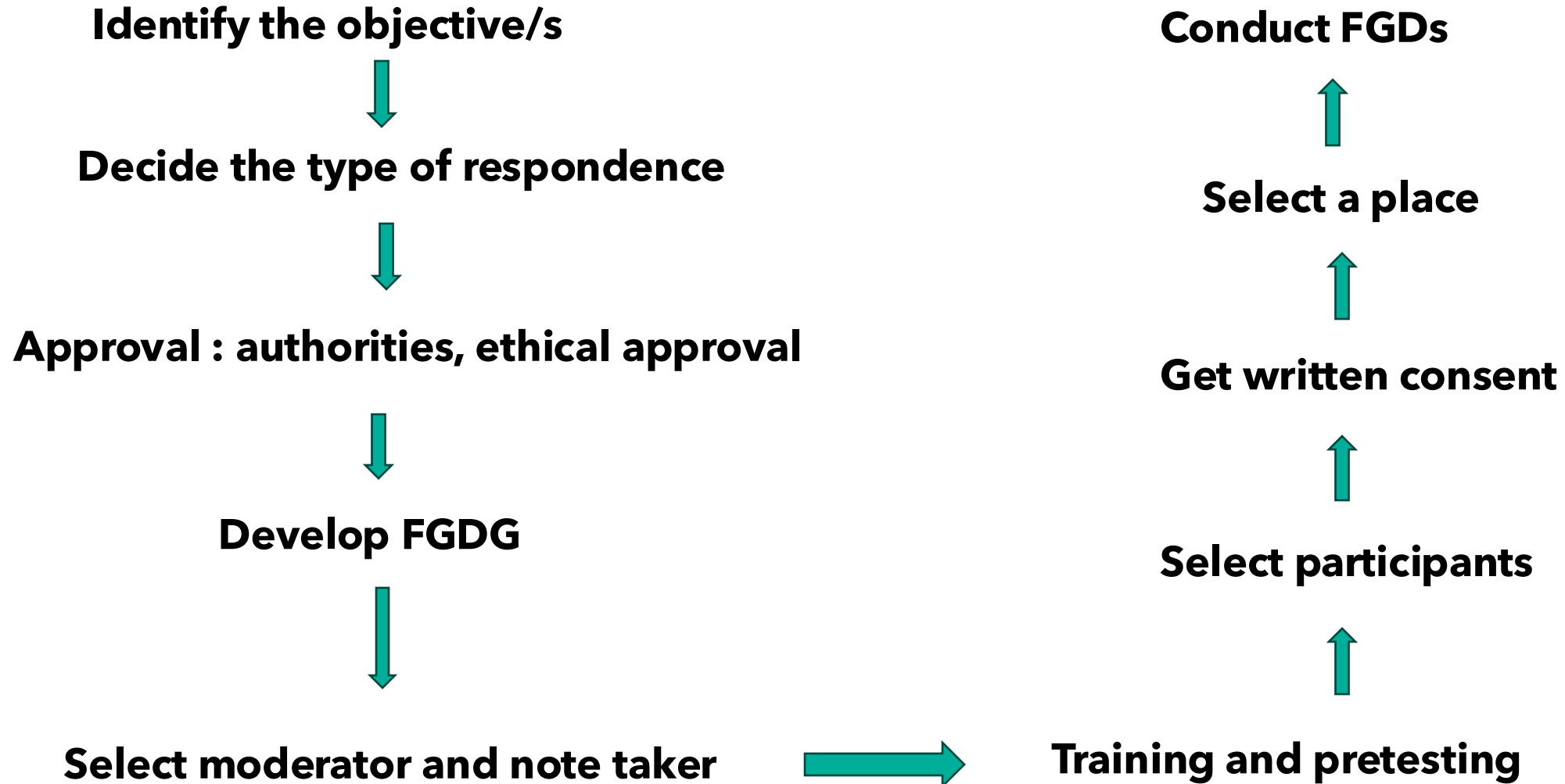
- **Q9** : What are barriers you face in eating F&V?

- **Ending question**

- **Q10** : Is there any other important information about F&V that we haven't discussed?



Planning tips : FGDs



Data managing : Transcription & translation

Transcription

- Written account of spoken words
- Use audio recorded data
- Identify moderator's statements : bolded letters
- Laughter, loud voices, shouting, silence.... Have to be recorded

Translation

- Translate into English
- To feed into NVivo software

Data quality control

- Appropriate environment
 - *Easy to reach and comfortable, no external people, less noise*
- Skillful moderator
 - *Good listener, group integration, keen memory, verbal and non-verbal expression, consistency in asking questions*
- Careful data handling
 - *Transcription, translation, good note taker, good recorder*
- Supervision
 - Consistency, omissions, recording

Thank you!

Skills for Focus Group Discussions

Thushanthi Perera
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka



Learning Outcomes

01

To know the characteristics of a good moderator/ interviewer

02

To identify key concepts in moderating discussions

03

To familiarize with some common scenarios in FGDs



**What makes you an
effective moderator?**



An Effective Moderator...

- Skillful in group discussions
- Uses pre-determined questions
- Establishes permissive environment



Moderator Skills

Mentally prepared & competent about the topic

Able to use small talk

Make smooth & concise introduction

Use pauses & probes

Control participant reactions

Use subtle group control

Control the flow & timing of the discussion

Use appropriate conclusion/s



How does this really work?

Before you begin the FGD

- Make sure you know about your FGD well
- Try and get to know your audience – will help build the initial rapport
- Check your venue before the FGD day
- On the day of the interview wear something that is comfortable yet professional
- Check if you have everything you need (a copy of your FGD, your notes, notebooks, recorders)

During the FGD

- Greet, smile and get ready
- Introduce yourself/your team, purpose/background of the study and ethical considerations/ ground rules
- Maintain your composure / Mind your non verbal cues (facial expressions, hand gestures, body

PAUSE & PROBE

- Maintain a pleasant environment / avoid any distractions/ conflicts
- Clearly establish how your discussion/interview would flow (the time that will take, the expectations)
- Make sure you check timing (note taking) & balance group dynamics (ramblers vs quite ones)
- Maintain the enthusiasm and interest throughout

Ending the FGD

- Use a few minutes to wrap up
- Thank the participant/s
- You may have some refreshments with you for the FGDs, let participants enjoy





Role of the Note taker

Facilitate the moderator

You will play a passive role mainly

You will not interfere the flow of the discussion

Make sure you have your note taking gears ready (flip charts, note books, pens)

Have a note taking **template** ready

Listening skills, quick thinking and recording down notes, legible writing

Things to Consider in Interpersonal Communication

When communicating ideas to someone, you should always consider the following to be an effective communicator

Tone of Voice

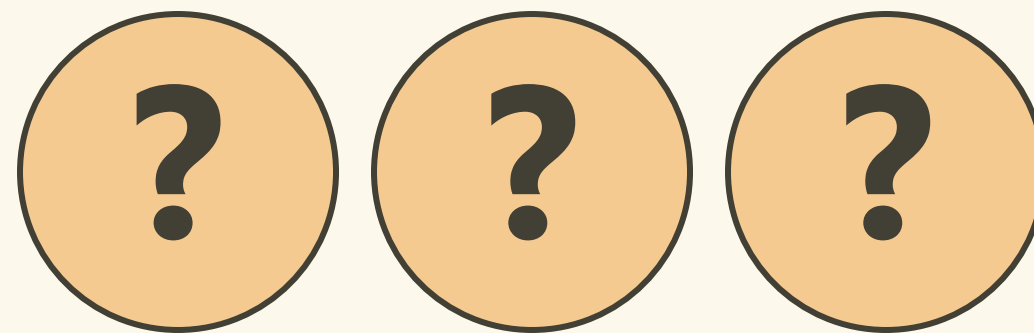
Body Language

Active Listening

Expressions

You will need **PRACTICE** and self skill development to a certain extent before you head out for discussions/ interviews





Now Let's Brainstorm!
Some Scenarios...

Participants not speaking

Annoyed participants

Participant walks away during the interview

Sensitive questions/ areas

Inappropriate participant behavior



Final Notes



- Make sure you're confident enough

- Rapport building is crucial

- Keep a neutral stance

- Be professional

- Be polite yet firm

- Probing is your friend in most instances (only when needed)

- You're the captain, so make sure your crew will help you sail smoothly



Thank You

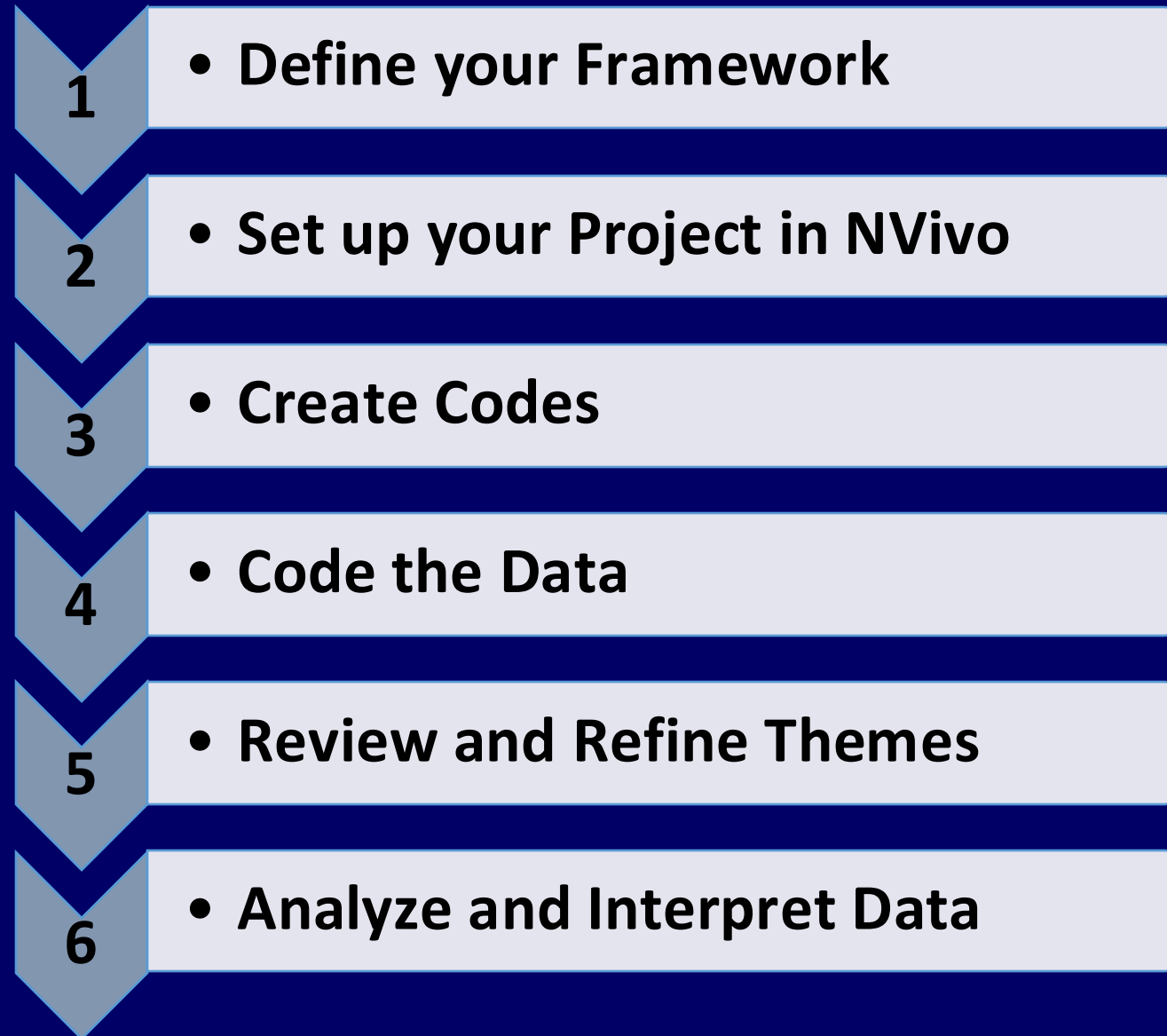
Next: Data Analysis for FGDs



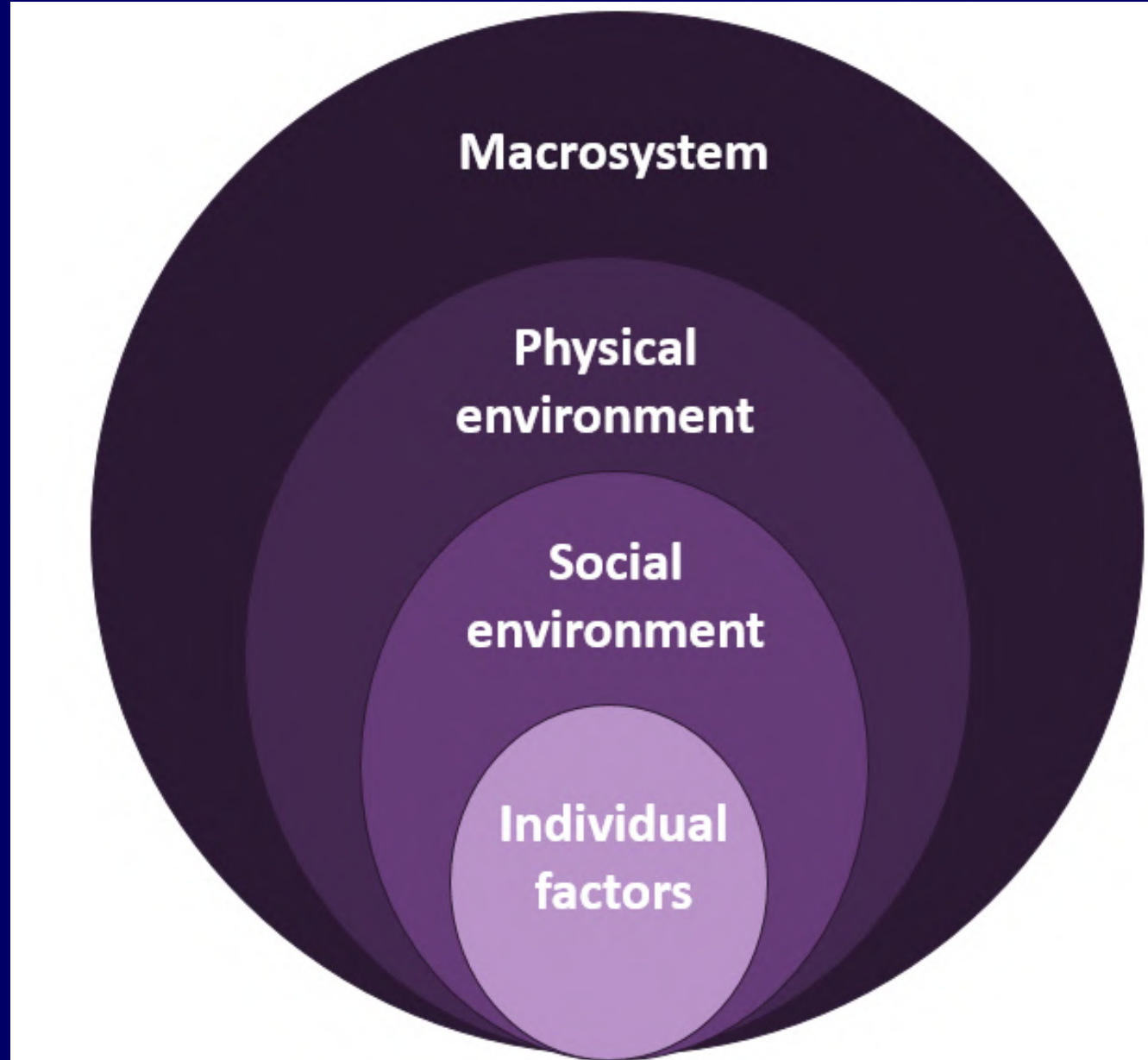
Data Analysis in FGDs

Hasara Sitisekara
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Steps for Thematic Analysis using NVivo



1. Define your Framework



2. Set up your Project in NVivo

FILE Welcome: Renuka Silva

New Project

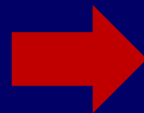
Account

Logged in as:
Renuka Silva

Account Name
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

Manage Account

Log out



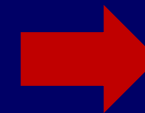
File Home **Import** Create Explore

Project NCapture **Files** Survey Classifications

Files

Import data files into the project - documents, text files, PDFs, audio, video and images.

KD 0 Items



File Home Import Create Explore

Project NCapture Files Survey Classifications

Files

Name	Codes	References
P1	0	0
P2	0	0
P3	0	0
P4	0	0
P5	0	0

KD 5 Items

NVIVO

School food environment.nvp (Edited)

Quick Access

IMPORT

- Data
 - Files
 - File Classifications
 - Externals

ORGANIZE

- Coding
 - Codes
 - Sentiment
 - Relationships
 - Relationship Types
- Cases
- Notes
- Sets

EXPLORE

- Queries

File Home Import Create Explore Share Modules Document

Annotations See-Also Links Relationships Coding Stripes Highlight Code In Vivo Autocode Range Code Uncode New Annotation Word Cloud Chart Compare With Explore Diagram

Files Search Project

Name	Codes	References
P1	0	0
P2	0	0
P3	0	0
P4	0	0
P5	0	0

P1 P2 P3 P4 P5

Edit Code Panel

1. What benefits does your school expect to achieve from running a school garden?

Children learn to love plants. They are happy to see their length, width and color, the reason is that they do not have a home garden due to urbanization.

2. What problems does the school face in running the school garden?

There is a small plot for a garden. There are about 3120 children in the school. Then there are buildings everywhere in this school. The distance between the buildings is 10 feet.

We don't have an agriculture teacher. Agriculture subject available up to A/L. The former teacher has gone abroad. At this time, there is a shortage of teachers in the country, and new ones are not assigned.

3. What kind of support does the school need to run the school garden successfully?

Agricultural extension is needed.

Good seeds should be found. Seeds are sold in this area for 20 and 30 per packet. Even though we wait, it doesn't sprout. Therefore, it is better to give seeds from a good company that has good seeds.

In Codes Code to Enter code name (CTRL+Q)

KD 5 Items Codes: 0 References: 0 Read-Only Line: 1 Column: 0

Activate Windows Go to Settings to activate Windows.

100%

3. Create your Codes in NVivo

The 'New Code' dialog box is shown with the following details:

- Name:** Individual Factors
- Description:** (Empty text area)
- Nickname:** (Empty text field)
- Hierarchical name:** Codes\\Individual Factors
- Aggregate coding from children
- Color:** None

Name	Files	References
Individual factors	0	0
Macro environment	0	0
Physical environment	0	0
Social environment	0	0

Drag selection here to code to a new code

4. Code your Data in NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The top menu bar includes File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, Modules, and Document. The Document menu is open, showing options like Code Selection..., Code to Recent Codes, Code In Vivo, Uncode..., and New Annotation. The main workspace shows a document with the following text:

b. Food and nutrition related policies and programs

1. What are the school's current policies or programs related to food?

There is a **green porridge project** for the primary section of our school. Children are given some kind of nutritious food, green porridge, other things, done with the support of parents. School meal program is functioning in the primary section. It also a circular introduced by the government.

We work according to the health promotion circular issued by the government. THIS are coming and involve for the health promotion program activities such as vaccination, measuring height and weight of students and dengue prevention activities.

For children with low economic level, more food packets were brought by the teachers and distributed through the class teachers.

2. What are your thoughts regarding the implementation of the school canteen policy in the school?

There are about 3000 children in the school. Therefore, the space in the canteen is not enough. There is no opportunity for children to sit and eat. There are few tables with chairs for teachers

The interface also shows a 'Codes' panel on the left with a search bar and a table of codes:

Name	Files	References
Individu	0	0
Macro e	0	0
Physical	0	0
Social e	0	0

At the bottom, there is a 'Code to' field with the placeholder text 'Enter code name (CTRL+Q)'. An 'Activate Windows' watermark is visible in the bottom right corner.

4. Code your Data in NVivo

File Home Import Create Explore Share Modules Document

Annotations Autocode Range Code Uncode

Memo Link See-Also Link

Codes Search Project

Select Code Items

Search (CTRL+F)

Codes

- Individual factors
- Macro environment**
- Physical environment
- Social environment
- Sentiment
- Relationships
- Cases

Create New: Child Code under 'Macro environ...'

Code Selection to 'Macro environme...'

File Home Import Create Explore Share Modules Doc

Annotations See-Also Links Relationships Coding Stripes Highlight Code Code In Vivo

Memo Link See-Also Link

Codes Search Project

Name	Files	References
Individual factors	0	0
Macro environment	1	1
Physical environme	0	0
Social environment	0	0

Drag selection here to code to a new code

Code Selection to 'Macro environment (Codes)'

4. Code your Data in NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. The top ribbon includes tabs for File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, and Modules. The Home tab is active, showing various tool icons. On the left, the 'Codes' panel is visible, containing a search bar and a table of codes. The table has three columns: Name, Files, and References. The codes listed are Individual fa, Macro envir, Physical envi, and Social enviro. The 'Social enviro' code is selected. Below the table, there is a prompt: 'Drag selection here to code to a new code'. The main workspace shows a text document with several paragraphs. The first paragraph is partially visible. The second paragraph discusses economic levels and school fees. The third paragraph discusses children from different family backgrounds. The fourth paragraph discusses food advertising. The fifth paragraph is a question: '5. In your opinion, what changes should be made in the school and in the environment around the school in order to develop food related knowledge and skills among children?'. The sixth paragraph discusses food advertising. The bottom status bar shows 'In Codes' and 'Code to Social environment (Codes)'. There is also a watermark for 'Activate Windows' in the bottom right corner.

Name	Files	References
Individual fa	1	2
Macro envir	1	6
Physical envi	1	4
Social enviro	1	4

Drag selection here to code to a new code

for elective subjects which cover nutrition related topics.

Economic level: With the current economic background, we cannot influence for parents to prepare nutritious food and send to school. School fees have been increased. With that burden, it is impossible to get the support of the parents to enhance children's nutrition statu

Children from different family backgrounds come to this school. This means that children from economically strong families and children from families who did not eat properly come to this school. Even if some parents have the financial ability, they do not get up in the morning and prepare a nutritious meal for the children. Mothers are lazy and food like shot-eats sending to school. Another thing is the lack of awareness of the parents to educate children to eat nutritious foods.

Then in countries like Sri Lanka, they tend to eat foods from outside/food outlets. There are many night shops on the roadside. Children are addicted to it. It is not an easy task to change the taste of children's tongue. Once you get used to that taste, it's hard to change.

5. In your opinion, what changes should be made in the school and in the environment around the school in order to develop food related knowledge and skills among children?

The main thing is food advertising. Advertisements do not show nutrition values of the food. A

5. Review and Refine Themes in NVivo

The screenshot displays the NVivo software interface. On the left, the 'Codes' pane shows a list of codes with their respective file counts and reference counts. The 'Macro envir' code is selected. On the right, the main workspace shows a list of references for the selected code, including their coverage percentages and the text of each reference. The interface includes a search bar, a code list, a reference list, and a text editor.

Name	Files	References
Individual fa	1	2
Macro envir	1	6
Physical envi	1	4
Social enviro	1	4

Drag selection here to code to a new code

P5 Social environment Physical environment Macro environment

<Files\P3> - 5 6 references coded [11.19% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1.16% Coverage

School meal program is functioning for students in the primary section.

Reference 2 - 1.24% Coverage

We work according to the health promotion circular issued by the government.

Reference 3 - 2.74% Coverage

PHIs are coming and involve for the health promotion program activities such as vaccination measuring height and weight of students and dengue prevention activities.

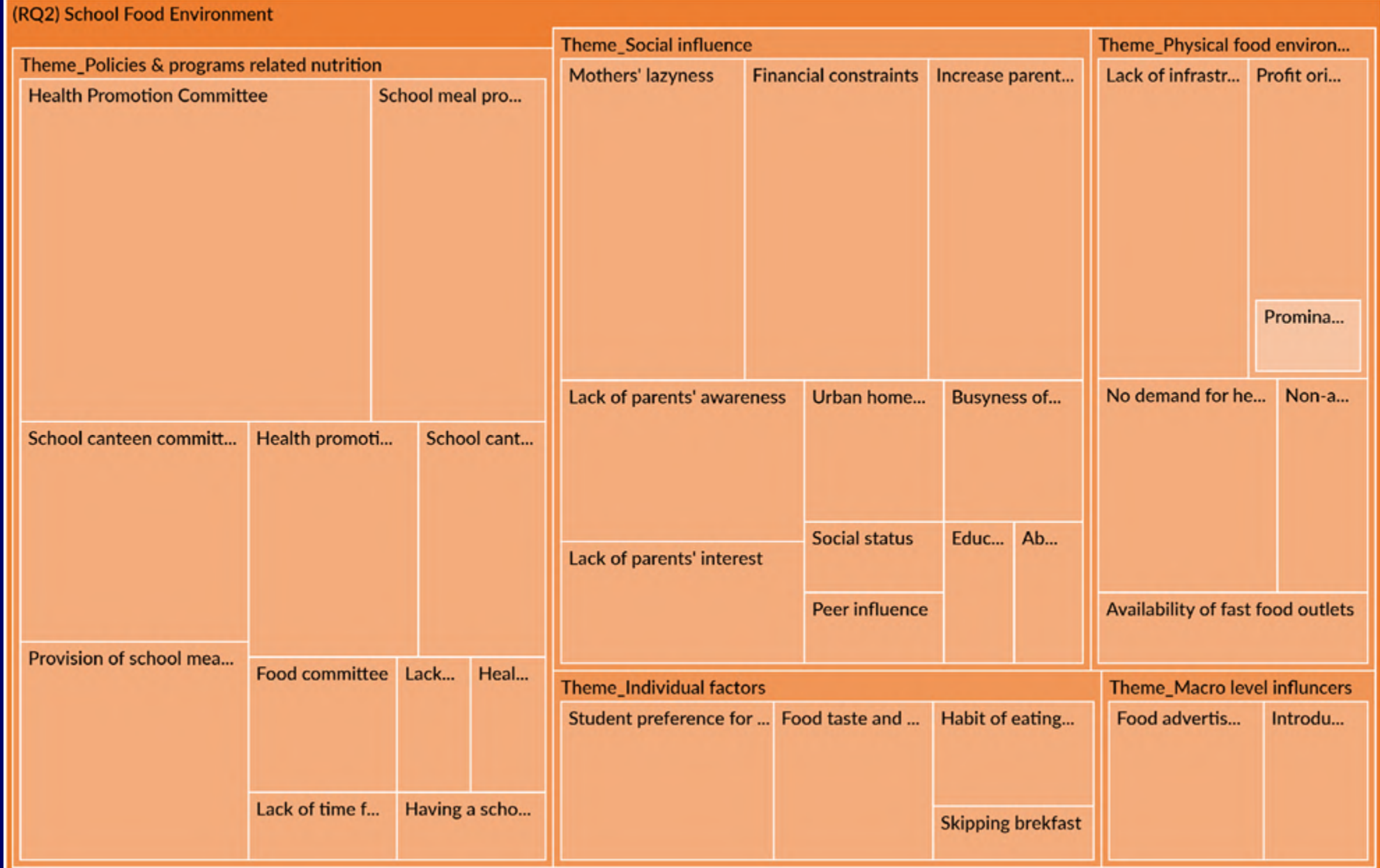
Reference 4 - 2.20% Coverage

Canteen Committee: Check what kind of foods sold in the canteen and the hygiene of the products available in the school canteen.

6. Analyse and Interpret Data

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
+	29	(RQ2) School Food Environment	15	131	5/17/2024 10:19 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 12:55 PM	MMSK	
-	37	Theme_Individual factors	7	10	5/19/2024 1:03 PM	MMSK	5/19/2024 1:04 PM	MMSK	
·	38	Food taste and preference	3	3	5/17/2024 11:28 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:54 AM	MMSK	
·	39	Habit of eating outside	2	2	5/17/2024 11:24 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:58 AM	MMSK	
·	40	Skipping breakfast	1	1	5/18/2024 12:36 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 12:36 PM	MMSK	
·	41	Student preference for unhealthy food	4	4	5/18/2024 8:31 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 4:05 PM	MMSK	
-	42	Theme_Macro level influencers	4	5	5/19/2024 1:29 PM	MMSK	5/19/2024 1:29 PM	MMSK	
·	43	Food advertisements	3	3	5/17/2024 11:19 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:54 AM	MMSK	
·	44	Introduce new policy decisions against selling	2	2	5/17/2024 11:32 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 8:37 AM	MMSK	
-	45	Theme_Physical food environment	10	16	5/19/2024 1:04 PM	MMSK	5/19/2024 1:05 PM	MMSK	
·	46	Availability of fast food outlets	2	2	5/17/2024 11:26 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:08 AM	MMSK	
·	47	Lack of infrastructure facilities in canteen	5	5	5/18/2024 8:46 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 4:07 PM	MMSK	
·	48	No demand for healthy food in school canteen	4	4	5/18/2024 8:59 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 4:05 PM	MMSK	
·	49	Profit oriented school canteen	3	3	5/18/2024 9:00 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 4:06 PM	MMSK	
·	50	Student preference for unhealthy food	2	2	5/17/2024 11:11 PM	MMSK	5/22/2024 2:03 PM	MMSK	
-	51	Theme_Policies & programs related nutrition	13	41	5/19/2024 1:30 PM	MMSK	5/19/2024 1:30 PM	MMSK	
·	52	Food committee	2	2	5/18/2024 11:26 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 3:53 PM	MMSK	
·	53	Having a school canteen committee	1	1	5/17/2024 11:21 PM	MMSK	5/17/2024 11:22 PM	MMSK	
·	54	Health Promotion Committee	10	12	5/18/2024 8:33 AM	MMSK	5/19/2024 10:59 AM	MMSK	
·	55	Health promotion program	4	4	5/17/2024 11:06 PM	MMSK	5/18/2024 12:13 PM	MMSK	
·	56	Healthy food festivals for schools	1	1	5/18/2024 11:11 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:12 AM	MMSK	
·	57	Lack of practical exposure i existing curriculum	1	1	5/18/2024 11:13 AM	MMSK	5/18/2024 11:14 AM	MMSK	

6. Analyse and Interpret Data



6. Analyse and Interpret Data



Real-life scenarios and challenges



Non - responsive participants



Irrelevant responses



Overlapping answers





Thank you!

Team

1. Prof. Renuka Silva; renuka.silva@wyb.ac.lk
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6. Ms. Nilmini Karunarathna; karunarathnahmnj@wyb.ac.lk
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