

Integrated case management team: did the Covid-19 pandemic build and strengthen our capacity for future data analysis?

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Following the impact of Covid-19 and the need to train researchers working on different [COUNTDOWN](#) projects across a number of countries, the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) decided to conduct virtual training on qualitative analysis and [NVivo-12 software](#) for researchers on the various projects. All participants were notified several days before the three-day virtual training to plan and prepare. The Microsoft Teams platform was utilised for the training, which proved very impactful, yet not without some challenges. This blog reflects on our experiences of navigating the “new normal” amidst the lockdown through virtual qualitative analysis training.

The 3-day training took place from 19th to 21st of May 2020. It consisted of three sessions with a more theoretical introduction to qualitative analysis and two practical sessions. The sessions lasted between two and six hours.

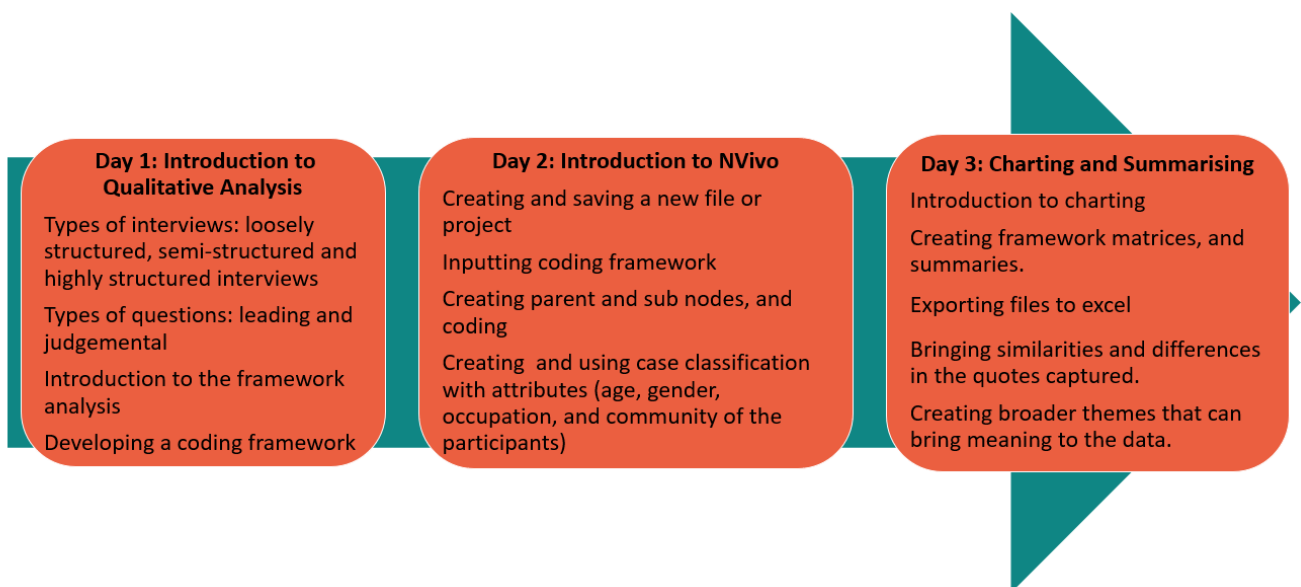


Fig. 1 Diagram of training day activities.

Navigating the shift from the traditional face to face training to virtual training

For some of us, this was our first experience with qualitative analysis as well as interacting with NVivo. Therefore, it was initially difficult to cope with the virtual training. However, with time, persistence, and efforts of the facilitators, we succeeded. The use of videos and PowerPoint presentations also facilitated the process of virtual learning. The second day of the training was cumbersome and technical, but with constant practice and support from the team, it became very interesting.

“The on-going lockdown which made it practically impossible for face to face meetings became an advantage because it exposed us to the possibilities of what can be done virtually, when explored. While the entire process can be time consuming, it requires commitment, and consistent practice for mastery of what was learnt.”
(Researcher 1 with no prior experience with NVivo)

Virtual Platforms and challenges

The use of Microsoft Teams for the consortium training proved to be invaluable in keeping parts of the desk-based research alive, despite the pandemic, the ability to share our screens, send queries via the chat function and raise “our hand to speak”, gave a near face to face interaction feeling. Interruptions during training were very minimal compared to other platforms and it accommodated many participants all at the same time. Some of the challenges encountered included erratic internet connectivity, power supply issues and interferences from family members since we were working from home. The internet was particularly very challenging on the second day of the training as some of the participants could not connect on time, thereby missing the early part of the training. Thanks to our course facilitators who took their time to respond to questions during and after the training, we were able to follow up on anything missed. Training materials such as PowerPoint presentations and videos to refer to were also useful to support online trainings, especially when there are connection issues. The training was very interactive with intervals to practise what was learnt.

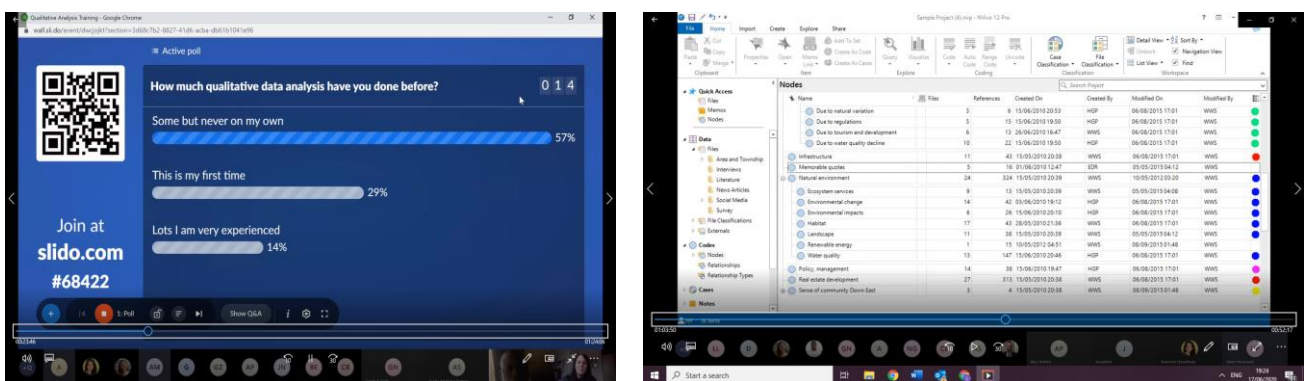


Fig. 2 opinion poll and nodes from the training

Communication, follow ups and practice is key in sustaining learning

Shortly after the training, our team scheduled a series of follow-up virtual meetings. We recreated our individual coding frameworks based on the shared transcripts from the training and later harmonised them as a team. Our main discussions included rearranging nodes the way they were initially created, rather than having them appear by default alphabetically. We also clarified the need to have cases classified for participants of interviews or focus group discussions. This led to our conclusion that this process identifies the exact speaker and differentiates viewpoints of interviewees from those of the interviewer. Our facilitators from LSTM were also consulted to clarify these and other issues we raised and discussed as a team. There was varied experience of qualitative analysis amongst us as a group. However, the training allowed us all to build our capacity in different ways, as illustrated by the quotes below. As a result of this training, we now feel more confident with data analysis and look forward to utilising NVivo in our studies.

“Overall, for me, it was a great capacity building amidst the pandemic and the lockdown as the lockdown did not stop my desire and determination to learn NVivo and I am so glad about this, a big thanks to LSTM and COUNTDOWN”. (Researchers 1 and 2 with no prior experience with NVivo)

“The saying that repetition is the act of learning has never become more alive than with this experience. As a regular user of NVivo with average experience, I have never become more confident at it than this encounter. To the other members of the team and the consortium who challenged my baseline knowledge and gave me the opportunity to up my game with this software, I look forward to a very smooth sail with the soon coming data analysis!” (Researcher 3 with prior experience with NVivo)

Despite the challenges around the pandemic, we have reflected at the past three months with mixed feelings. Sad about the fast spreading virus, yet glad that we could become more skilled at using this relevant software for our research. Consequently, we can collaboratively as a team say that we are more prepared to begin our data analysis with renewed knowledge, skills, and the assurance of producing more effective and efficient outputs, as a result of this opportunity.