

*Is It Qualitative Enough?
Experience-Based Practices for
Data From Synchronous and
Asynchronous Physically
Distanced Contexts*

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Q1.1



Q1.2



KSU Student Wellness Survey (Follow Up)

This short survey is a follow up to a survey you completed about a month ago just as KSU was closing campus and moving to remote teaching for the remainder of the semester. We would like to get a sense of how our students have been doing since that time.

You may notice that some of the survey questions are the same as last time, this is intentional. Several questions should be new to you. It still should take you no more



Paper presentation topics

- Process used for making the most of these data
 - Unstructured versus qualitative
 - Trends in responses
 - Trends in how people responded
- Developing some strategies to improve *qualitative* data collection in online survey instrument
 - Focus on longitudinal processes
 - A few thoughts on virtual group interviews

Guiding descriptions

- **Unstructured** – text and/or numerical data, not entirely standardized but may be relatively easy to align with categories. May include specific things but not contexts, perceptions, values, judgments, etc. about those things
 - Examples – addresses; attributes; other nominal variables
- **Qualitative** – typically non numerical, text-based or visual information that has interpretable elements including expressions of context, perception, values, judgements, etc.

“What is your
#1 mental
health coping
strategy?”

- Unstructured, not qualitative – categorical, nominal, etc.
 - *Yoga*
 - *Connecting with friends and family*
- Unstructured and including evaluative or reflective content
 - *Kundalini yoga – Yoga, breath work and meditation in general but Kundalini is extremely fast acting and effective. I have been recommending [yoga] to everyone I know ... there are specific [techniques] for immunity, anything you may be struggling with*
 - *Reaching out to friends and family just to talk. It has been a really hard time not being able to go anywhere and my mental health feels at an all time low. Classes are much harder and my stress and anxiety is peaking*

- Not necessarily a direct response but instead someone taking advantage of the free response block; unstructured with individual (perceptions, values) information:
 - *My greatest coping mechanism was riding my horse but my barn is closed. I also love rock climbing but my gym is closed. I can't see my mom [due to COVID exposures at job]*
 - *My biggest stressor is that my stats class is now online.*
 - *To be honest, it's been a really big rollercoaster, sometimes I am OK and others I am not.*

“What is your #1 mental health coping strategy?”

Analysis of unstructured data

- 3,473 responses
- 14 coping response categories
 - Exercise and retaining social connections were most common
- 71 participants contributed detailed responses
 - Open coded to develop three themes:
 - *Experiencing academic overload*
 - *Controlling what I can control*
 - *Being strong for others*

Additional questions in later waves

- What would be especially helpful to you right now to help you maintain your mental wellness?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with regard to your experiences during the pandemic?
- Please share any information you would like about how your life has changed as a result of coronavirus
- What are you most looking forward to right now?
- If you like, please describe any coping, self-care, or wellness strategies you began using during the pandemic to maintain your mental wellness. Are you still doing these activities/strategies on a regular basis? [free response displays is answer is other than 'no']

Experience-based recommendations

- Ask free response questions wisely but sparingly
- For surveys in successive waves, develop strategies early
 - Model on an interview guide
 - Refer back to earlier questions
 - Ask explicitly worded “change over time” questions
- Factor in time, resources, and desired outcomes of analysis
- Ensure help resources are integrated in the survey itself
- Request contact information for a one-on-one
- If you ask for the information do your best to use it



A few
thoughts on
virtual/video
group
interviews

- Take advantage of the introduction to slip in a question
- Assume people will answer one at a time
- The best interaction may occur on the chat
- Have a plan to identify fake participants!!

Is it
qualitative
enough?

To publish as
qualitative
research – it
depends

To give you insights
about your
participants -
absolutely!

References

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- Saldaña, J. (2003). *Longitudinal qualitative research: Analyzing change through time*. AltaMira

Questions, comments, contact

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