

Reimagining Team-Based Evaluation Using MAXQDA Teams

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Introduction

Program evaluation can require teams to collaborate on complex qualitative datasets, yet traditional team-based workflows often rely on isolated coding, manual file sharing, and inconsistent documentation practices. Research on qualitative teamwork highlights both the benefits, such as improved analytic quality, enhanced validity, and richer interpretation, and the challenges, including the time-intensive coordination required, the need to reconcile differing perspectives, and the resource demands of managing multiple coders (Barry et al., 1999).

MAXQDA Teams represents a meaningful innovation for team-based qualitative analysis. Unlike many mainstream qualitative software programs, such as NVivo or ATLAS.ti, which often require manual project merging, local file management, or external collaboration platforms, MAXQDA Teams provides a centralized, cloud-supported collaboration model designed specifically for synchronized teamwork. The platform automatically manages version control, tracks coder activity, and documents analytic decisions. It also integrates tools that directly support high-quality team-based evaluation, including intercoder agreement statistics, visual analytic dashboards, and real-time team activity logs (MAXQDA, 2024).

This project applies MAXQDA Teams across four program evaluations to determine if cloud-based collaboration can streamline qualitative workflows. As first-time users, our team documented what aspects of the platform supported effective collaboration and where challenges emerged to share practical insights for others adopting similar tools.

Program Phases

Our team implemented MAXQDA Teams through a structured, cyclical workflow. We began by creating a shared project in the online MAXQDA TeamCloud environment, which served as the centralized workspace for all evaluation activities. The project lead then added team members and assigned individualized tasks within each project cycle. During the first project cycle, team members were assigned audio files to transcribe. Members imported their assigned audio files directly into MAXQDA and used the platform's built-in transcription tools to complete their tasks. At the end of the cycle, all materials were returned to the project lead, who closed the cycle and consolidated the uploaded files.

The project lead then initiated a second project cycle where a team member was assigned coding tasks. The coder applied thematic codes to transcripts within the shared environment, and upon completion, the cycle was again closed, and all coded materials were returned to the principal investigator (PI). A third project cycle focused on refining the code system. Team members reviewed coded segments, adjusted code definitions, and made recommendations for consolidating or expanding thematic categories. As with prior cycles, all updates were returned to the PI at cycle completion.

Throughout this process, team members primarily used MAXQDA for transcription, coding, and code refinement. Although the software offers a wide range of analytic tools, the

team made limited use of additional features. One exception was the word cloud tool, which was used to identify frequently occurring terms and emerging patterns across transcripts.

To better understand our team's experience with MAXQDA Teams, we distributed a brief survey to evaluator participants at the conclusion of the project cycles. The survey asked team members to reflect on the usability of the platform, the clarity of task assignments, the efficiency of the cloud-based workflow, and the helpfulness of specific features.

Implications

Survey responses from undergraduate and graduate evaluators, a research technician, and the project lead indicate several implications for future use of MAXQDA Teams. Participants reported that having all materials in one place was convenient; however, the software requires a lot of processing power and can sometimes overload computers with limited processing capacity. Evaluators generally appreciated the coding tools but reports varied on how intuitive the platform felt across users. Several respondents found the cloud/desktop workflow difficult to navigate. Overall, team members described the tools as helpful, with three of four recommending MAXQDA Teams for future evaluations and one indicating "maybe."

A second set of implications relates to software glitches encountered during the evaluation process. Some evaluators accidentally saved files locally, which prevented changes from being shared with the team. In other cases, files were lost during the merging process, prompting the team to back up all materials in a separate secure cloud folder. This ensured data security but reduced the benefit of maintaining a centralized system.

Future Plans/Advice to Others

Looking ahead, our team plans to make fuller use of the analytic tools available within MAXQDA, especially for both qualitative and quantitative analysis by using the software's mixed-methods capabilities to link codes, variables, and descriptive statistics within the same project environment. We also intend to refine our workflow to better integrate the online and desktop environments and reduce the risk of data-loss events. For teams considering MAXQDA Teams, we recommend establishing a clear save-and-sync protocol before beginning coding, designating a single "merge day" per cycle to minimize version conflicts, and building in a brief onboarding session so all coders understand the cloud/desktop distinction from the outset. With additional training and more intentional use of these advanced features, we anticipate that MAXQDA Teams can support even more rigorous, efficient, and integrated evaluation work.

Resources Needed

Implementing MAXQDA Teams requires only a few core components. Teams need a MAXQDA Analytics Pro or Standard license, an active TeamCloud subscription, and computers with moderate processing capacity to run both the desktop and online environments smoothly.

References

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