

■ Qualitative research review guidelines – RATS

ASK THIS OF THE MANUSCRIPT	THIS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE MANUSCRIPT	✓
<p>R Relevance of study question</p> <p>Is the research question interesting?</p> <p>Is the research question relevant to clinical practice, public health, or policy?</p>	<p>Research question explicitly stated</p> <p>Research question justified and linked to the existing knowledge base (empirical research, theory, policy)</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>✗</p>
<p>A Appropriateness of qualitative method</p> <p>Is qualitative methodology the best approach for the study aims?</p> <p><i>Interviews:</i> experience, perceptions, behaviour, practice, process</p> <p><i>Focus groups:</i> group dynamics, convenience, non-sensitive topics</p> <p><i>Ethnography:</i> culture, organizational behaviour, interaction</p> <p><i>Textual analysis:</i> documents, art, representations, conversations</p>	<p>Study design described and justified e.g., why was a particular method (i.e., interviews) chosen?</p>	<p>✗</p>
<p>T Transparency of procedures</p> <p><i>Sampling</i></p> <p>Are the participants selected the most appropriate to provide access to type of knowledge sought by the study?</p> <p>Is the sampling strategy appropriate?</p>	<p>Criteria for selecting the study sample justified and explained</p> <p><i>theoretical:</i> based on pre conceived or emergent theory</p> <p><i>purposive:</i> diversity of opinion</p> <p><i>volunteer:</i> feasibility, hard-to-reach groups</p>	<p>✗</p>
<p><i>Recruitment</i></p> <p>Was recruitment conducted using appropriate methods?</p> <p>Is the sampling strategy appropriate?</p> <p>Could there be selection bias?</p>	<p>Details of how recruitment was conducted and by whom</p> <p>Details of who chose not to participate and why</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>✗</p>
<p><i>Data collection</i></p> <p>Was collection of data systematic and comprehensive?</p> <p>Are characteristics of the study group and setting clear?</p> <p>Why and when was data collection stopped, and is this reasonable?</p>	<p>Method (s) outlined and examples given (e.g., interview questions)</p> <p>Study group and setting clearly described</p> <p>End of data collection justified and described</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>✗</p> <p>✗</p>
<p><i>Role of researchers</i></p> <p>Is the researcher (s) appropriate? How might they bias (good and bad) the conduct of the study and results?</p>	<p>Do the researchers occupy dual roles (clinician and researcher)?</p> <p>Are the ethics of this discussed? Do the researcher(s) critically examine their own influence on the formulation of the research question, data collection, and interpretation?</p>	<p>✗</p> <p>✗</p>

<p><i>Ethics</i></p> <p>Was informed consent sought and granted?</p> <p>Were participants' anonymity and confidentiality ensured?</p> <p>Was approval from an appropriate ethics committee received?</p>	<p>Informed consent process explicitly and clearly detailed</p> <p>Anonymity and confidentiality discussed</p> <p>Ethics approval cited</p>	<p>✘</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✘</p>
<p>S Soundness of interpretive approach</p> <p><i>Analysis</i></p> <p>Is the type of analysis appropriate for the type of study? <i>thematic: exploratory, descriptive, hypothesis generating framework: e.g., policy</i> <i>constant comparison/grounded theory: theory generating, analytical</i></p> <p>Are the interpretations clearly presented and adequately supported by the evidence?</p> <p>Are quotes used and are these appropriate and effective?</p> <p>Was trustworthiness/reliability of the data and interpretations checked?</p>	<p>Analytic approach described in depth and justified</p> <p><i>Indicators of quality: Description of how themes were derived from the data (inductive or deductive)</i> Evidence of alternative explanations being sought Analysis and presentation of negative or deviant cases Description of the basis on which quotes were chosen Semi-quantification when appropriate Illumination of context and/or meaning, richly detailed</p> <p>Method of reliability check described and justified e.g., was an audit trail, triangulation, or member checking employed? Did an independent analyst review data and contest themes? How were disagreements resolved?</p>	<p>✘</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✘</p>
<p><i>Discussion and presentation</i></p> <p>Are findings sufficiently grounded in a theoretical or conceptual framework?</p> <p>Is adequate account taken of previous knowledge and how the findings add?</p> <p>Are the limitations thoughtfully considered?</p> <p>Is the manuscript well written and accessible?</p>	<p>Findings presented with reference to existing theoretical and empirical literature, and how they contribute</p> <p>Strengths and limitations explicitly described and discussed</p> <p>Evidence of following guidelines (format, word count) Detail of methods or additional quotes contained in appendix Written for a health sciences audience</p>	<p>✘</p> <p>✘</p> <p>✘</p>
		?
<p>Are <u>red flags</u> present? these are common features of ill conceived or poorly executed qualitative studies, are a cause for concern, and must be viewed critically. They might be fatal flaws, or they may result from lack of detail or clarity.</p>	<p><i>Grounded theory: not a simple content analysis but a complex, sociological, theory generating approach</i> <i>Jargon: descriptions that are trite, pat, or jargon filled should be viewed sceptically</i> <i>Over interpretation: interpretation must be grounded in "accounts" and semi-quantified if possible or appropriate</i> <i>Seems anecdotal, self evident: may be a</i></p>	<p>✘</p>

superficial analysis, not rooted in conceptual framework or linked to previous knowledge, and lacking depth

Consent process thinly discussed: may not have met ethics requirements

Doctor-researcher: consider the ethical implications for patients and the bias in data collection and interpretation

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