QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Practices and Challenges

EDITORS

ELIZABETH M. POPE
CATARINA BRANDÃO
KYLE BOWER
SONIA VERDUGO-CASTRO

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Editors

Elizabeth M. Pope
Catarina Brandão
Kyle Bower
Sonia Verdugo-Castro

Publishing Editor

Conceição Oliveira
Fábio Freitas
Sónia Mendes

Publisher

Ludomedia
Rua Centro Vidreiro, 405
São Roque
3720-626 Oliveira de Azeméis
Aveiro - PORTUGAL

e-mail // ntqr@ludomedia.org

web // www.ludomedia.org

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Editorial

Qualitative Research for Interdisciplinary Studies: Multiple Methodologies for Multiple Disciplines

The intent of research is to improve the lives of individuals and communities. Through qualitative research specifically, we can deepen our understanding of reality and investigate the nuances of how people experience and make meaning from it. Qualitative research, as a scientific approach, enables researchers to examine phenomena from the point of view of those who live it. Qualitative researchers seek to understand individuals' experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and emotions that are constructed through social rules, cultural patterns shaped by the communities and societies in which they live. Although research objectives differ, qualitative research is defined by a systematic process of researchers' identifying and interrogating their positionality, subjectivities, and influential paradigms. In this introduction readers will note similar methodologies; however, these are presented in the context of multiple disciplines. This volume demonstrates the evolving interdisciplinarity of qualitative research methods that engages scholars in innovative conversation. This editorial offers a peek at the interdisciplinary potential of qualitative research. Such interdisciplinary prowess is found in Volume 16 of *New Trends in Qualitative Research*.

Qualitative research methods is a complex, rich, and ever-developing discipline. While there are some commonalities across the methodological board, each methodology is unique in its own way. For example, grounded theory is a qualitative research design with the intent of developing theory directly from data (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1999). To do so, specific phases are followed in a scientifically accepted procedure (Birks & Mills, 2023; Levitt, 2021). Grounded theory, developed by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Barrios, 2015), has been widely used in social sciences, psychology, and health sciences (Vivar et al., 2010). Alternatively, ethnography originated in the field of anthropology. It is an approach fundamentally supported by fieldwork and the succinct method of participant observation adhered to by those in sociological and social science fields (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Spradley, 2016). As with grounded theory, ethnography follows a systematic process that seeks to describe and interpret a culture specific to groups of people or communities. This approach allows the researcher to elaborate life histories and trace social processes by understanding cultural norms and social expectations.

Ethnomethodology emerged from the contributions of Harold Garfinkel (1967) and Harvey Sacks (Urbano Gil, 2007). Garfinkel's work has been taken up by many other researchers leading to additional approaches such as conversation analysis (CA) (Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), applied CA (Lester & O'Reilly, 2018), and membership categorization analysis (Eglin & Hester, 1999). Anthropology and sociology play a relevant role in these methodological approaches, the purpose of which is to understand the social achievement of language and the social outcomes of talk-in-interaction. Ethnomethodology and its variants are used in the field of education to examine specific educational contexts such as music (Roulston, 2010), religion (Pope & Paulus, 2023), and classroom interactions (Gardner, 2013; Tubaro et al., 2016).

If a researcher wishes to learn about the in-depth, lived experiences of a participant, it would be prudent to follow the phenomenological method (Husserl, 2017). Phenomenology is a methodology which seeks to understand participant experiences in the moment of such an experience (Moustakas, 1994). In-depth interviews and focus groups, two eminently qualitative techniques, are most appropriate data generation methods for this approach. Phenomenology

is widely used in various fields such as education (Thornburn & Stolz, 2020; Verdugo-Castro, 2019; Verdugo-Castro et al., 2020), health sciences (Balogun et al., 2023; Mellado et al., 2020), psychology (Langdridge, 2018), and gender studies (Choi & Oh, 2021).

Case study research examines specific cases rather than a large, generalizable sample of a population. This case is examined in-depth, using a variety of data generation methods. The intent of case study research is to take a close look at a phenomenon using an individual or small group to more deeply understand unique nuances of the phenomenon. Case studies are carried out in a wide variety of fields such as education (Pope, 2020; Yazan, 2015), psychology (Sousa & Brandão, 2019), and healthcare research. In health sciences, case studies may be used for the in-depth study of a disease or disorder, or the needs of patients, their families, or professionals. Findings from case studies may help develop treatment plans or to inquire into the effectiveness of diagnostic procedures, such as for those with disabilities (Rothuizen-Lindenschot et al., 2023). In the field of exact sciences it is common to apply an experiment for the management of a product or service and subsequently evaluate the effectiveness, results, satisfaction and opinion. This information allows companies to improve the product or service and provide better resources to consumers (Gonzalez-Prieto et al., 2023). In the case of engineering, this type of study allows better prevention policies to be established (Steinmetz et al., 2023).

Regardless, like all research methods, qualitative research requires that researchers approach their examination of a particular phenomenon with a clear understanding of the literature. To complete a systematic literature review as a method, a researcher engages with published scientific knowledge on a topic as their study. It is a systematic method that has proliferated. For example, with the advent of COVID-19, several reviews on epidemiological processes were published (Pereira dos Santos & dos Santos Lopes, 2023). Expanding from health science, the systematic literature review is now a common research approach used in a multitude of academic disciplines, such as business (Fischer et al., 2023; Loose et al., 2023), nutrition (Lycett & Patel, 2023; Shoneye et al., 2023), and engineering (Daun et al., 2023; Dzhalila et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). In addition to systematic literature reviews, qualitative researchers may conduct meta-synetheses where they examine findings from published qualitative studies to answer new research questions. Meta-syntheses have been conducted in disciplines such as disability studies (Topcu et al., 2023), STEM education (Jaumot-Pascual et al., 2021), and psychology (Tonui et al., 2023).

In this sense, inductive knowledge cannot be optimized exclusively to the fields of education, social sciences, or health sciences. Qualitative research is at the service of phenomena. Qualitative approaches to research offer systematic processes by which researchers may come to know lived experiences. Topics vary greatly, from the industrial sector (Cárcel Carrasco & Roldán Porta, 2013) where researchers attempt to understand the position of employees in a company, the margin for improvement in a production process, or the satisfaction with the service or product provided to the profession of engineering (Vargas Cuadros, 2015). Or the construction industry (González Cumpa, 2014). With qualitative evaluation methods, researchers may attempt to examine the strengths and weaknesses of projects to inform outputs, outcomes, and discuss the broader impacts felt by society (Bower, 2021). In the health sector, evaluative research makes it possible to inquire into the usefulness and margins for improvement of health plans (Sánchez-Candamio, 1999). It is essential to know what the lines of work have been, what expected results have been achieved, and what shortcomings have been detected. All this can bring benefits to the target community and to public health (Jerpseth et al., 2023; van de Velde et al., 2023).

While qualitative research has had interdisciplinary success, it can be difficult to propose study designs in which different disciplines converge in an interdisciplinary manner. In research, disciplines may be biased toward a particular approach. However, convergent approaches are

continuously developed between fields such as health and education (Quraishi, 2023), technology and education (Klank et al., 2023; Snijders et al., 2018), and sociology and engineering (Steinmetz & Holt, 2023), as examples. Funding agencies seem to be aware of this need for interdisciplinarity - which best translates the complexity of human existence - encouraging the scientific community to think in an interdisciplinary way. However, we still have a long way to go in this direction.

The current issue of *New Trends in Qualitative Research,* holds such an interdisciplinary focus. The manuscripts found in Volume 16 herein show that qualitative methodology is not exclusive to a specific area; rather different qualitative methods are useful and effective for different fields of study. What defines the relevance of methodological choices are the objectives set by the researcher. In the same way that society is moving towards interdisciplinarity, it is necessary that similar progress is made in research designs. To this end, the scientific community can be nourished by the different methodological options offered by qualitative methodology and the wide range of existing techniques. The present volume of NTQR can contribute to thinking about and implementing this interdisciplinarity, by serving as a showcase for studies of various areas which complement each other.

August, 2023

Elizabeth M. Pope
University of West Georgia

Catarina Brandão
University of Porto

Kyle Bower
University of Georgia

Sonia Verdugo-Castro
University of Salamanca

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