

How to use this worksheet

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising qualitative research:

- Are the results of the review valid?
- What are the results?
- Will the results help locally?

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically. The first two questions are screening questions and can be answered quickly. If the answer to both is “yes”, it is worth proceeding with the remaining questions.

1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?

HINT: What was the goal of the research? Why it was thought important? What is its relevance?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

HINT: Does the research seek to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants? Is qualitative research the right methodology for addressing the research goal?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?

HINT: Has the researcher has justified the research design (e.g. have they discussed how they decided which method to use)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?

HINT: Has the researcher explained how the participants were selected? Have they explained why the participants they selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study? Are there are any discussions around recruitment (e.g. why some people chose not to take part)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?

HINT: Is the setting for data collection was justified? Is it clear how data were collected (e.g. focus group, semi-structured interview etc.)? Has the researcher justified the methods chosen? Has the researcher has made the methods explicit (e.g. for interview method, is there an indication of how interviews were conducted, or did they use a topic guide)? Were methods modified during the study? If so, has the researcher explained how and why? Is the form of data is clear (e.g. tape recordings, video material, notes etc.)? Has the researcher discussed saturation of data?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Can't tell
- ☐ No

6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?

HINT: Has the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during the formulation of the research questions, and data collection, including sample recruitment and choice of location? How has the researcher responded to events during the study and have they considered the implications of any changes in the research design?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?

HINT: Are there are sufficient details of how the research was explained to participants for the reader to assess whether ethical standards were maintained?

Has the researcher discussed issues raised by the study (e.g. issues around informed consent or confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study)? Has approval been sought from an ethics committee?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

HINT: Is there an in-depth description of the analysis process? Is thematic analysis is used? If so, is it clear how the categories/themes were derived from the data? Has the researcher explained how the data presented were selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process? Is sufficient data presented to support the findings? To what extent have contradictory data been taken into account? Has the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during analysis and selection of data for presentation?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

HINT: Are the findings explicit? Is there adequate discussion of the evidence both for and against the researcher's arguments? Has the researcher discussed the credibility of their findings (e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, more than one analyst)? Are the findings discussed in relation to the original research question?

☐ Yes

☐ Can't tell

☐ No

10. How valuable is the research?

HINT: Does the researcher discuss the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice or policy? Or relevant research-based literature? Did they identify new areas where research is necessary? Have the researchers discussed whether or how the findings can be transferred to other populations or considered other ways the research may be used?



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