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PERSPECTIVE

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ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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Unfortunately, many qualitative researchers have neglected to give adequate descriptions in their research reports of their assumptions and methods, especially regarding to data analysis. It has contributed to the criticisms of bias from the eyes of the number of believers. This article aims to discuss about the ways to ensure the trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Trustworthiness as Sandelowski (1993)¹ mentioned that it becomes a matter of persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those practices visible and therefore auditable. She also argued that validity in qualitative studies should be linked not to the truth or value as they are for the positivists. A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so. Trustworthiness has been further divided into *credibility*, which corresponds roughly

with the positivist concept of internal validity; *dependability*, which relates more to reliability; *transferability*, which is a form of external validity; and *confirmability*, which is largely an issue of presentation.¹

However, Sandelowski (1993)¹ regarded reliability/dependability as a threat to validity/credibility, and questioned many of the usual qualitative reliability tests, such as *member checking* (returning to the participants following data analysis), or *peer checking* (using a panel of experts or an experienced colleague to reanalyze some of the data) as ways of ensuring that the researcher has analyzed the data correctly. But, Guba and Lincoln (1989) regarded member checks as 'the single most critical technique for establishing credibility'.¹

Sandelowski (1993)¹ argued that if reality is assumed (as it generally is within

the qualitative paradigm) to be ‘multiple and constructed’, then ‘repeatability is not an essential (or necessary or sufficient) property of the things themselves’, and we should not expect either expert researchers or respondents to arrive at the same themes and categories as the researcher. Put simply, any attempt to increase reliability involves a forced or artificial consensus and conformity in the analysis of the data, which is usually at the expense of the validity or meaningfulness of the findings. Sandelowski, therefore, rejected reliability as a useful measure of quality in qualitative research in favor of validity or trustworthiness. However, she was skeptical of the positivist notion that validity can be achieved by the rigorous application of method or technique, agreeing with Mishler (1990) that ‘validation is less a technical problem than a deeply theoretical one’, and is ultimately ‘a matter of judgment’.² In this latter statement, she is approaching the third position on the issue of quality in qualitative research, that validity is achieved through consensus on each individual study rather than by the blanket application of predetermined criteria.³

On the other hand, to ensure the trustworthiness, the role of triangulation must again be emphasized, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias. Detail emerging methodological description enables the readers to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted. Additionally, the

utilization of detailed transcription techniques, schematic plan of systematic coding by means of computer programs, as well as counting in qualitative research are the modalities to ensure rigor and trustworthiness.

In conclusion, to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness, the qualitative researchers consider to do member checking, triangulation, detailed transcription, systematic plan and coding.

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This study is the original work of the corresponding author.

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