



Critical Appraisal Toolkit for Qualitative Research

Critical Appraisal Toolkit

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How to use this toolkit?

Three broad issues need to be considered when appraising the report of a systematic review:

- Rigour: has a thorough and appropriate approach been applied to key research methods in the study?
- Credibility: are the findings well presented and meaningful?
- Relevance: how useful are the findings to you and your organisation?

The 10 questions on the following pages are designed to help you think about these issues systematically.

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

Consider what the goal of the research was, why it is important and its relevance.

Yes No

2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?

Consider if the research seeks to interpret or illuminate the actions and/or subjective experiences of research participants.

Yes No

If you have answered "Yes" to questions 1 and 2, continue with the appraisal

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

Consider if the researcher has justified the research design (discussed how they decided which methods to use?)

Yes No

4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aim of the research studies?

Consider if the researcher has explained how the participants were selected and why they were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study.

Yes No

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

Is the setting and methods used for data collection justified and explicit? Is the form of data clear? Have they been modified during the study? Is saturation of data discussed?

Yes No

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

Consider whether it is clear if the researcher critically examined their own role, potential bias and influence during the formulation of the research question, data collection, data analysis and selection of data for presentation. How did the researcher respond to events during the study? Did they consider the implications of any changes in the research design?

7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?

Consider if 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. informed consent, confidentiality or how they have handled the effects of the study on the participants during and after the study? Has approval been sought from the ethics committee?

Yes No

8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

Is there an in-depth description of the analysis process. If thematic analysis is used, is it clear how the categories or themes were derived from the data? Has the researcher explained how the data was selected from the original sample to demonstrate the analysis process. Has sufficient data been presented? Has contradictory data been taken into account?

Yes No

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?

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

Yes No

10. How valuable is the research?

Consider whether the researcher discusses the contribution the study makes to existing knowledge or understanding (e.g. do they consider the findings in relation to current practice, policy or relevant research-based literature? Do they identify any 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 in which the research may be used?

For more information or assistance in using this toolkit, please contact the Knowledge and Informatics Trainer for the Knowledge and Information Service:
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