

## Peer Review Report

# Review Report on Using qualitative methods to understand the interconnections between cities and health: a methodological review

Review, Public Health Rev

Reviewer: Ignacio De Loyola González Salgado

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### EVALUATION

#### Q 1 Please summarize the main theme of the review.

I consider this piece of work is a necessary manuscript and it is written in a very pedagogical way. However, I believe that a lot of work needs to be done to improve it and there is a need to elaborate on some topics that are not treated with enough importance. I feel that there are some parts of the manuscript such as the discussion, which need to be restructured and some parts of the results need to be further explained and detailed. In its present form I would not recommend publication of this article, but I consider that it has room for improvement. If possible, I would like to revise this manuscript again. I leave the final decision in the hands of the handling editor in charge of revising the manuscript.

#### Q 2 Please highlight the limitations and strengths.

**Limitations:** Although the manuscript is written in a very pedagogical way, I think it lacks depth to be a proper review article. The introduction lacks more detail and more depth on foundational aspects of qualitative methodology. In addition, the tone of some sentences seems to be in line with the confrontation between quantitative and qualitative methodology, whereas the future should aim at reaching an understanding and complementation between the two methods in order to overcome old rivalries. Some sections of the results are missing details on the selection of methodologies, which would help the reader to understand them better. In its present form, I think there are aspects that rely on the interpretation of the authors and that readers may miss. The discussion is disconnected from the results, focusing almost entirely on generalization. The conclusions also need improvement since after discussing generalization there is no discussion of generalization.

**Strengths:** It seems to me to be a much-needed manuscript that can be very useful for future qualitative research in urban health, as it is written in a very pedagogical way and helps to understand the different methodologies. I think it could become a reference manuscript for reviewers and editors of scientific journals who want to be quickly introduced to qualitative methodology.

#### Q 3 Please provide your detailed review report to the authors, structured in major and minor comments.

Major:

Abstract: "This review has the purpose of discussing the value of qualitative methods for urban health". This sentence give me the impression that the validity of qualitative methods is being questioned? In the current scientific paradigm this question should not be considered. Perhaps you should consider reflecting on the subject, or perhaps rephrase it? "Then, we conducted searches for methodological articles and other documents about those methods. We also included some influential materials and examples of empirical studies using those methods for researching public health." It is not clear to me if authors are defining the narrative review. If so, please consider rewrite. "We defined the qualitative methods that could be more relevant, given the goals of our review." This phrase seems a bit ambitious considering the manuscript. Maybe authors should consider revise it and rewrite.

Minor:

Abstract: I would recommend not to put the word "hope" in the conclusion of the abstract. "These methods are flexible". Not all the methods described are flexible and authors stated it in the manuscript. This phrase should not be in the abstract.

Contribution to the field: "However, qualitative methods remain underused in this field of inquiry, and qualitative papers are often excluded from systematic reviews about the effects of the built environment on human health." Authors should elaborate on why this is happening. There are some very important issues behind it such as good scientific practices, quantitative vs. qualitative methodology, journals that do not accept qualitative papers, % of qualitative manuscripts rejected, evaluators with quantitative training evaluating qualitative manuscripts.

Introduction lacks more detail and more depth on foundational aspects of qualitative methodology. Authors should clearly state why "the study of the complicated connections between the urban environment and health is an issue of undeniable importance" Authors should state why it is important to include qualitative methods in urban health studies. In addition, the tone of some sentences seems to be in line with the confrontation between quantitative and qualitative methodology, whereas the future should aim at reaching an understanding and complementation between the two methods in order to overcome old rivalries.

Major:

Lines 36–38: In my opinion this sentence kind of continues the debate about which one is better, I think it is smarter to focus on complementation and equivalence.

Line 42: it is necessary to speak a bit (at least introduce) paradigms of science, of positivism of interpretivism, etc.

Line 43: there is a deeper debate here, the fact that qualitative papers are not accepted in scientific journals should also be mentioned.

Lines 45–47: authors should acknowledge that many qualitative results are interpretations and if they are not done properly or if the participants are not considered when writing the final report, they can be very far from being accurate or represent the reality of the participants.

Lines 50–52: I'd recommend not including such definition of qualitative methods.

Lines 53–55: elaborate on why not.

Line 58: please elaborate on why authors consider it in such way. How important is the authors criteria considering previous scholars.

Line 60: everything should be acknowledged. Authors should consider mentioning paradigms, ideology, philosophy, social class, socioeconomic position, etc.

Lines 71–73: way a better definition of qualitative methods than the previous one in line 50. I'd recommend keeping this one in the manuscript.

Line 71: add what are flexibles and why is it important to make such distinction.

Line 79: Authors should mention capturing changes that occur in the context where they take place and affect the people involved.

Line 80: who rejects causal analysis and why. Authors should elaborate on that because it may lead to another comparison between quanti vs quali.

Line 82: maybe qualitative generalization has something to do here.

Line 84: do all the people have the agency to change their environment with their actions? Authors should clarify that.

Minor:

please add the exact numbers (percentage) of people living in cities and the estimations in the next decades. Maybe differences between parts of the world should be acknowledged,

Line 62: replace students and scholars with readers.

Line 75: add perceptions.

Line 94: have authors considered discussion group as a keyword? Sometimes Spanish speakers use such word when conducting qualitative research. It is worth reading the evolution of the term in Spanish qualitative research tradition.

Results: Some sections of the results are missing details on the selection of methodologies, which would help the reader to understand them better. In its present form, I think there are aspects that rely on the interpretation of the authors and that readers may miss.

Results:

Major:

Line 108: authors should mention that observational methods can be used also with quantitative methods.

Line 114–115: who argues that?

Line: 137: I think it's fine, but I don't quite understand this idea of giving an example...it's good for the reader, but what is the basis for choosing this paper and not another? Authors should elaborate on that to clarify.

Line 172: authors should mention that not all people have the same opportunities to participate in qualitative studies and sometimes some collectives might be underrepresented.

Line 182: go-along interview was a novel method almost 15 years ago. Authors should state why is it important. I'd recommend authors to avoid the use of interesting as sometimes might be rather an empty word in scientific context.

Lines 194–199: these examples don't convince me. Authors should try to be more specific and include more examples in these paragraphs.

Line 214: in what sense? For what purpose? What if the expectations of change of the participants are not fulfilled?

Line 222: why is it worth to discuss this method and then authors only use 12 lines to talk about it.

Lines 244–247: in group perspectives have to be homogeneity and heterogeneity. Tensions among participants cause collective perceptions to emerge and such perceptions do not exist until they are shared in discussion groups or similar methodologies. Authors should elaborate on that.

Lines 259–261: maybe could be interesting to elaborate on similarities.

Lines 269–270: what happens to urban dwellers? It seems that authors are talking about key informants, but they do not mention regular participant neither key informant. Authors should elaborate on that.

Line 278: if you have talked before about combination of qualitative methods with GIS why do not include other methods in this epigraph.

Lines 294–297: I would put this as a weakness, the lack of consensus, the variability of the techniques, the excessive flexibility, is what has led to the comparison with the quantitative and qualitative.

303–304: elaborate on that.

305–306: justify why.

326: document analysis instead of a technique here refers to the fact that you are using the documents as material for analysis and for this you can use different approaches...

329: authors explain qualitative analysis briefly.

334: authors should state this before.

351: authors should include the most important sampling strategies in qualitative methodology.

353: I would elaborate on what does this mean for qualitative methodology and its credibility in science where everything has to be uniform?

365: but you can and should have a pre-defined size for estimating budget, planning projects, etc. That is what can be flexible.

369: what are those unimportant under some qualitative approaches?

Minor:

Lines 123–125: prolonged engagement is one of the ways to ensure the validity of a qualitative study, which are generally long-term studies.

Line 175: I'd use semi-structured interviews rather than in-depth.

Line 207: participants co-construct results.

Line 247: I'd not include this phrase it is a bit out of context.

287: seems fine, but I find it a bit disconnect from the LGBT+ collective reality.

Line 302: and the objective, gather perceptions, social constructions, etc.

311: some methods use qualitative computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (Atlas.ti and such softwares) and others don't. Authors should mention that.

311: not only words, expressions and meaning are contained in words. Authors should elaborate on that.

Discussion: I would develop a little more the epistemological part and how that influences the type of methodology that is used and what it is used for. the discussion is focused on generalization, when little is said about it... I would discuss more the goodness and shortcomings of what has been said in the results section of this manuscript.

Lines 384–385: this line should be in the introduction section.

393: I'd recommend citing scholars researching on what is behind qualitative research and articles rejection in scientific journals build on mainly quantitative research

403–404: elaborate on types, definitions and uses.

Conclusion: authors do not talk about generalization after dedicating the main part of the discussion section to such issue. I'd recommend to rewrite this section after changing results and discussion sections.

Table: in the table I would change visual methods for participation research, because it is not only based on the visual but also has group aspects.

I think the GIS is missing in the mapping section in the table.

#### PLEASE COMMENT

**Q 4** Does the reference list cover the relevant literature adequately and in an unbiased manner?

Yes. However I'd recommend citing more papers published in the last 5 years.

**Q 5** Does this manuscript refer only to published data? (unpublished data is not allowed for Reviews)

Yes.

**Q 6** Does the manuscript cover the issue in an objective and analytical manner

No.

**Q 7** Was a review on the issue published in the past 12 months?

No.

**Q 8** Does the review have international or global implications?

Yes, this manuscript has potential to be internationally and globally cited but authors have to improve it.

**Q 9** Is the title appropriate, concise, attractive?

Yes.

**Q 10** Are the keywords appropriate?

Yes

**Q 11** Is the English language of sufficient quality?

English is not my mother tongue. I found it easy to read and understand. However the handling editor should decide about the english quality.

**Q 12** Is the quality of the figures and tables satisfactory?

Yes.

#### QUALITY ASSESSMENT

<b>Q 13</b>	Quality of generalization and summary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q 14</b>	Significance to the field	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q 15</b>	Interest to a general audience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Q 16</b>	Quality of the writing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### REVISION LEVEL

**Q 17** Please take a decision based on your comments:

Major revisions.