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QUALITY CRITERIA FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ARTICLES

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ABSTRACT. Through the non-systematic review of scientific literature on qualitative research, the authors describe its particularities and present quality criteria for qualitative articles used internationally. Initially, qualitative research was contextualized in terms of philosophical paradigms and designs. Then, different considerations on quality criteria for qualitative research were discussed, in particular, those derived from the quantitative approach and others specifically developed for the qualitative approach. Finally, quality criteria presented in three international papers and used worldwide were systematized. Such criteria were displayed for readers in a table that may be used by authors, editors, and reviewers in order to enhance the quality of Brazilian papers.

Keywords: Qualitative research; methodology; communication and scientific dissemination.

CRITÉRIOS DE QUALIDADE PARA ARTIGOS DE PESQUISA QUALITATIVA

RESUMO. A partir da revisão não sistemática de publicações científicas sobre pesquisa qualitativa, os autores descrevem as suas particularidades, bem como apresentam critérios de qualidade utilizados internacionalmente para artigos qualitativos. Inicialmente, a pesquisa qualitativa foi contextualizada em termos de paradigmas filosóficos e delineamentos. Em seguida, diferentes considerações sobre critérios de qualidade para pesquisa qualitativa foram discutidos, nomeadamente aqueles derivados da abordagem quantitativa e outros já desenvolvidos para a abordagem qualitativa. Por fim, foram sistematizados critérios de qualidade propostos em três publicações que vêm sendo utilizados internacionalmente. Tais critérios foram apresentados aos leitores em uma tabela que pode ser utilizada por autores, editores e revisores como um checklist de conferência visando o aprimoramento das publicações nacionais.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa qualitativa; metodologia; comunicação e divulgação científica.

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CRITERIOS DE CALIDAD PARA ARTÍCULOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN CUALITATIVA

RESUMEN. A partir de la revisión no sistemática de publicaciones científicas sobre la investigación cualitativa, los autores describen sus particularidades, así como presentan criterios de calidad utilizados internacionalmente para artículos cualitativos. Inicialmente, la investigación cualitativa fue contextualizada en términos de paradigmas filosóficos y diseños. A continuación, se discutieron diferentes consideraciones sobre los criterios de calidad para la investigación cualitativa, en particular, aquellos derivados del enfoque cuantitativo y otros ya desarrollados para el abordaje cualitativo. Por último, los criterios de calidad propuestos en tres publicaciones internacionales y que han sido utilizados internacionalmente fueron sistematizados. Esos criterios fueron presentados a los lectores en una tabla que puede ser utilizada por autores, editores y revisores para el perfeccionamiento de las publicaciones brasileñas.

Palabras clave: Investigación cualitativa; metodología; comunicación y difusión científica.

Introduction

For a long time and even today, qualitative research seems to be discredited compared to quantitative research. It is often 'accused' of being too flexible, vague, inaccurate, without rigor or proper methods, without possibility of replication and generalization (Gunther, 2006; Ollaik & Ziller, 2012; Sampieri, Collado, & Lucio, 2013). These criticisms are frequently based on or made by quantitative researchers who, as a rule, have a different view of what they consider scientific research. Based on this assumption, it is common for criticisms to be made, as the philosophical assumptions and paradigms of qualitative research are different when compared to quantitative research (Gunther, 2006).

A paradigm is related to different views, beliefs or thought patterns on four main aspects, namely: (a) Ontology: nature of reality; (b) Epistemology: what is valid as knowledge and how these statements are justified; (c) Axiology: role of values in research and, finally, (d) Methodology: the process of conducting research. Paradigms tend to guide the research approach and its method. These paradigms are built over time in a researcher's life, not only by their research experiences, but also as a subject with their personal views, beliefs, or thought patterns that interfere with this construction (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 2014; Saccol, 2009).

In the quantitative approach, reality is perceived as unique, objective and separate from the researcher (Ontology), being only approximated by statistical tests (Epistemology) so that the researcher must assume a neutral stance (Axiology). Thus, the research process assumes the deductive reasoning from which one begins with a general theory and seeks, through research, to test hypotheses derived from this theory (Methodology). These views may be associated with the positivist paradigm (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 2014; Newman & Benz, 1998; Saccol, 2009).

On the other hand, in qualitative research, reality is multiple and subjective (Ontology), and the experiences of individuals and their perceptions are useful and important aspects for research. Reality is constructed together between researcher and researched

through the individual experiences of each subject (Epistemology). Thus, researchers understand that there is no neutrality and that they are, in the research process, influencing and being influenced by what is being researched (Axiology). The reasoning or logic of qualitative research is inductive, starting from the specific to the general. It does not start from a specific theory, but it is produced from the perceptions of the subjects participating in the research (Methodology). These views are rooted in naturalistic philosophy and are generally associated with various paradigms such as social constructivism, interpretivism, post-positivism, the post-modern, ideological or critical perspective (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 2014; Morrow, 2005, Newman & Benz, 1998).

Thus, from the understanding that the logics, views of realities, knowledge and values tend to be different in each methodological approach, it is understood that no perspective is better than the other, but that different perceptions about reality and about the studied phenomenon usually imply in different methods to be employed by the researchers. Still, there are different purposes in each methodological approach and quantitative research seeks to generalize and replicate its results and qualitative research to understand and interpret it (Creswell, 2014; Gunther, 2006; Sampieri et al., 2013). Thus, understanding and reflection on the worldviews and knowledge construction that underlie the research are essential, since it is through them that it is possible to evaluate the quality, consistency and coherence of the adopted methodological strategy (Morrow, 2005; Saccol, 2009).

The consideration of quality criteria for qualitative research has been widely discussed, especially internationally. The debate is often centered on whether or not to use criteria for qualitative research taking into account different views, beliefs, or thought patterns at the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological levels. Thus, opposing and favorable positions to the adoption of quality criteria for qualitative research are found. Although there are different stances on quality criteria, there are some external needs and challenges that require reflection and also the conduction of higher quality research, such as: (a) researchers' interest in knowing how their research is good or insufficient; (b) the interest of funding agencies in assessing what should be or has already been funded; (c) editors' interest in academic publications in deciding what to publish and, ultimately, (d) readers' interest in guidelines on which research to trust and which not to trust (Flick, 2009; Morrow, 2005). Thus, in favor of the need for quality criteria, the authors of this article aimed to present a systematization of possible quality criteria for the assessment of qualitative research and articles from research of this nature. To this end, a non-systematized literature review, mainly international, was performed.

Integrating quality criteria for qualitative research and derived articles

Even among those researchers who advocate the use of quality criteria in qualitative research, one can perceive different positions. The first position rejects quality criteria, considering that, being different from quantitative research in terms of philosophical assumptions, objectives and purposes, it would not be necessary to adopt such criteria. The second stance argues for specific quality criteria of qualitative research, and finally the third stance attempts to adapt quality criteria from quantitative research to qualitative research (Flick, 2009; Gunther, 2006). By proposing the systematization of quality criteria, the authors of this article agree with the second and third positions. It is considered that both the specific quality criteria for qualitative research as well as those adapted from quantitative research may be useful for assessing the quality of qualitative research.

In addition to the different views found among researchers, there are difficulties in establishing criteria for qualitative research by their particularities, and it is not possible to just transpose quality concepts from quantitative to qualitative research. However, some authors propose diversified and specific criteria for qualitative research, which consider the singularities of this type of research (Dixon-Woods, Shaw, Agarwal, & Smith, 2004; Morrow, 2005; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001).

The first group of criteria would be those called parallel or extrinsic criteria, that is, criteria that derive from quantitative research. Thus, the criterion of internal validity (quantitative) corresponds to the criterion of credibility (qualitative), that of external validity (quantitative) to that of transferability (qualitative), that of reliability (quantitative) to dependability (qualitative) and that of objectivity. (quantitative) to confirmability (qualitative). Specific criteria for qualitative research, i.e. not derived from quantitative research, are called intrinsic criteria. These criteria vary according to the qualitative paradigm adopted - constructivist, constructionist, interpretive, post-modern, ideological (Morrow, 2005). The incompatibility of the nomenclatures given to the qualitative criteria derived from the quantitative approach and the expansion of qualitative research led to the proposition of specific criteria being (Whittemore et al., 2001) which may vary depending on the authors.

Specific criteria that can be applied to different paradigms and designs of qualitative research were described by Morrow (2005), namely: social validity, subjectivity and reflexivity, data adequacy, and interpretation adequacy. The social validity of qualitative research concerns its applicability and its impact on people's daily lives. For example, research on maternal reactions to the disclosure of sexual violence suffered by their daughters (Santos & Dell'Aglio, 2013) and on the perception of families in situations of sexual violence about the protective measures adopted by the services (Santos, Costa, & Silva, 2011) can support the planning of more contextualized interventions for family members and victims of sexual violence.

Qualitative research, in its essence, is based on subjectivity. Some paradigms, especially post-positivists, argue that some control of this subjectivity is necessary, while others (e.g., constructivists) indicate that there is no way to avoid or totally control subjectivity, and the researcher is a co-constructor of meanings with the researched individual(s). Morrow (2005) argues that total control of subjectivity is impossible given that researchers will always have some level of emotional involvement with the researched theme, as well as some prior knowledge coming from contact with the literature of the area and the contact with the subject interviewed. In this way, it is necessary that researchers are sincere about the presence of subjectivity in the research. To do so, they should use reflexivity (or self-reflection), that is, be aware of the biases that have and may interfere with the understanding and interpretation of data and research results. In addition, it is necessary that the implications of the researcher with the researched theme be explicit in the publications.

The management of subjectivity can be accomplished in several ways. Maintaining a field diary in which notes on the research process are made, specifying reactions and impressions of the researcher, can assist in analyzing the results and interpreting the results. The submission of data, results and interpretations to a group of researchers can reveal, through a critical discussion, the presence of biases of the researcher in the way the results are interpreted and the proposition of alternative interpretations. Such alternatives for the management of subjectivity have as one of their objectives the search for representativeness, that is, the verification of which reality is being represented by the research results - the reality of the researcher or the researched. Aiming to ensure the

representation of the research participants, the researcher may adopt a naive posture during data collection, requesting clarification and deepening of the contents reported by the research participants. It is also possible to request the opinion of the interviewees about the interpretations that the researcher made from the collected data, for example, a focus group could be performed (Morrow, 2005).

Frequently, when considering data adequacy in qualitative research, the tendency is to consider the number of participants or interviews (Morrow, 2005). Nevertheless, the number of participants in qualitative research will depend on the operational capacity of collection and analysis and the understanding and nature of the phenomenon under analysis (Sampieri et al., 2013). Thus, the number of participants is not fixed a priori, but while the researcher is collecting and analyzing data (Fontanella, Ricas, & Turato, 2008; Sampieri et al., 2013).

The need to define a priori the number of participants has been debated among qualitative researchers. Institutional Review Board (IRB) request that the number of participants be indicated in the research project. In addition, the definition of this number may be necessary for resource planning to carry out the research. However, the a priori definition of the number of participants meets the philosophical assumptions of qualitative research (Sim, Saunders, Waterfield, & Kingstone, 2018).

Four approaches to define the number of participants have been identified (Sim et al., 2018): 1) 'golden rules', which consist of recommendations regarding the number of participants based on similar previous studies in which the authors found that a certain number of interviews are sufficient to reach saturation, ranging from two to 60 participants; 2) conceptual models, that is, the number of participants is defined from the characteristics of the research (e.g., problem, objective, theoretical scope, design and analysis technique); 3) numerical guidelines from empirical studies to check the required number of participants to achieve theoretical saturation (see Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006); 4) statistical formula, which consists of using probability to estimate the sample size according to the desired level of statistical significance. Philosophical and methodological issues related to the approaches were discussed, concluding that the a priori definition of the number of participants is problematic. The alternative would be to meet the pragmatic need to indicate some number of participants, stressing that the real number of participants will be verified during the execution of the research. Therefore, the decisions taken to determine the number of participants should be justified. For example, this can be accomplished by describing the criteria used by the researcher to achieve theoretical saturation (Sim et al., 2018).

Besides the question regarding the number of participants, the procedure for choosing these participants should be considered, as well as the quality, duration and depth of the interviews and the data obtained from them. Often, the participant selection procedure is done intentionally or for convenience in qualitative research. Snowball and chain sampling in which one participant indicates another are commonly used (Morrow, 2005).

The quality, duration and depth of the interviews and the data obtained will depend on how the interview is conducted, if this is the technique used for data collection. Using open-ended questions and flexible interview scripts often results in the generation of more data as it allows more in-depth reporting by the interviewee. A flexible script with few open questions tends to be more effective than a structured script with many questions. However, conducting just the interview can be a limiting factor. Wherever possible, it is advisable to include different sources of evidence such as observations, field diaries and document analysis (i.e. data triangulation). Finally, in order to increase the adequacy of data, it is

recommended to search for discrepant cases and contrary evidence. Thus, the natural tendency that the researcher may have to confirm his/her assumptions regarding the investigated theme is diminished (Morrow, 2005)

Recently, the concept of 'power of information' has been proposed to guide researchers on the number of participants in qualitative research. The number of participants may not always be pre-designed and continuous assessment is required during data collection. The concept was operationalized through a model with five items: (a) objective of the study; (b) participant specificities; (c) use of established theory; (d) quality of dialogue; and (e) analysis strategy. From this, a study will require fewer participants when its objective is well defined, the combination of participants is highly specific, is supported by an established theory, if the interview dialogue is robust and if the data analysis includes an in-depth exploration of narrative or discourse details. On the other hand, a larger number of participants is needed when the objective of the study is broad, i.e., it seeks to cover broadly the variations of a given phenomenon, if the combination of participants is less specific in relation to the research problem, if theoretical background is not used, if the interview dialogue is poor and if the analysis is conducted in a cross way. This model is not intended to be a checklist for calculating the number of participants, but recommendations on what to consider when setting the number of participants (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016).

Data interpretation adequacy concerns the process of data analysis and communication of research results. It is essential to conduct an immersion in the data, since data collection, using the transcription of the collected material, repeated readings and review of the recorded audios, as well as notes in field diaries and review of other data sources. Next, it is necessary to choose an analytical structure that will be applied to the data (Morrow, 2005). That is, one should opt for a technique of analysis for the collected data. More than that, it is essential that, when writing the article resulting from the research, it is clear how the analysis technique was operationalized in the research in question. Braun and Clarke (2006), for example, propose six steps for conducting thematic analysis. By using a technique such as Braun and Clarke's, researchers need to indicate in their articles how the proposed steps were performed in the research in question rather than just mentioning which technique they used. When writing the results, it is also important to pay attention to the balance between the results and interpretation given to the results, that is, how the researcher understood the results. One way to ensure this balance is by using excerpts from participants' statements that support the interpretations presented by the researcher, making clear to readers the source of the researcher's interpretations (Morrow, 2005)

While Morrow (2005) proposed five quality criteria for different qualitative approaches, Whittemore et al. (2001) divided the criteria into primary and secondary. Primary criteria are considered essential and necessary for all qualitative approaches. Secondary criteria are used in addition to the primary criteria, applying to specific qualitative approaches (e.g., Grounded Theory). This proposition was made in order to synthesize different points of view about the validity of qualitative research, seeking to emancipate the criteria adapted from quantitative research.

Primary validity criteria are essential and necessary for all qualitative research, regardless of qualitative designs and paradigms. Secondary criteria are more flexible and applied to certain qualitative designs and paradigms. The four primary criteria are credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity. 'Credibility' and 'authenticity' refer to the researcher's effort to ensure that his/her interpretation of the data is in line with reality reflecting the participants' meanings and experiences. 'Criticality' refers to the researcher's reflection on

the entire research process in relation to possible biases. Finally, 'integrity' concerns ensuring that interpretation is based on data (Whittemore et al., 2001).

In addition to being more flexible, the six secondary criteria are specific to particular qualitative designs and paradigms (e.g., Grounded Theory). 'Explicitness' refers to the researcher's effort to clarify the entire process to arrive at results and interpretations. 'Vividness' refers to descriptions that are sufficiently faithful and detailed to interpret the meaning of the results and the context in which the research was conducted. 'Creativity' refers to the use of combination designs to answer specific research problems as well as creative means to organize, analyze and present data. 'Thoroughness' is related to the adequacy of the data to the number of participants, as well as the connection between the results in order to answer the research problem. 'Congruence' refers to the correspondence between the research problem, the method, the results, the data collection and the analysis. In addition, it refers to the applicability of results in practice. Finally, 'sensitivity' refers to the execution of research in line with the cultural, contextual and human nature, in order to consider that research serves to give visibility to the multiple realities that are reported.

Quality operational criteria for articles derived from qualitative research

The systematization of criteria has been proposed by different authors (Dixon-Woods et al., 2004; Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008; Tong, Sainsbury, & Graig, 2007; Whittemore et al., 2001). For example, Dixon-Woods et al. (2004) propose some questions that may help to reduce errors in research designs, researcher conduct and research reports (i.e., articles). Although not considered by the authors as quality criteria, the use of the questions when analyzing a qualitative study, regardless of specific methodological characteristics, may help to assess its quality. Therefore, the questions are general: (a) is the research problem clear? (b) are the interview questions appropriate for qualitative research? (c) are the items 'sampling', data collection and analysis clearly described and in accordance with the research problem? (d) are the statements supported by sufficient evidence? (e) are the data, interpretations and conclusions clearly integrated? (f) does the article make a useful contribution?

Seven criteria were proposed by Kitto et al. (2008): 1) clarification, that is, whether the research problem and its objectives are clearly defined; 2) justification, which consists in justifying why the qualitative method is the best option to answer the research problem and the reason for choosing the specific design; 3) procedural rigor consisting in detailing the techniques for data collection and analysis, omitting no detail; 4) representativeness refers to the explanation of which technique was used to define the number of participants and whether this technique supports conceptual generalization; 5) interpretation refers to the conceptual discussion of results related to the existing theory or the development of a new theory; 6) reflexivity and evaluative rigor in considering possible biases of the researcher in choosing the theme, method, relationship with research participants and interpretation of results, as well as approval of the Ethics Committee; 7) transferability, that is, if the results were critically evaluated about their application to similar contexts and the relevance of the results to the area of knowledge, public policies and practices.

Other authors report that for the quality criteria to be met, the use of techniques is necessary (Whittermore et al., 2001). They concern a set that involves everything from choosing a research design, generating data, analyzing it to presenting results. To this end, the authors refer to the need to highlight each step of the research, and it is important to describe them through four major axes: 1) considerations about the study design, which refers to the researcher being aware of the design decisions/study design; decisions related to research participants; the use of triangulation and the need to 'give voice' to participants; 2) data generation refers to the researcher articulating data collection decisions; demonstrate prolonged involvement in the research field; demonstrate persistent observation and provide transcription of texts; 3) analytical refers to data analysis, and the researcher should demonstrate how the theoretical saturation and decisions for data analysis were performed, if used; carry out verification by members, judges and experts; being able to perform 'quasi-statistical' procedures and test hypotheses in data analysis; use software for data analysis; construct tables with summary data; 4) data presentation should explore explanations for the phenomena; perform literature review; analyze negative cases;

'memoing'; have a reflective diary; write an interim report; have an attitude of placing oneself in parentheses, that is, in suspension of judgment and previous theories (Bracketing); provide an audit trail; provide evidence to support the interpretations; recognizing the researcher's perspective (reflexivity) and providing dense descriptions (Whittemore et al., 2001). For the authors, these techniques would be the basis of the criteria, that is, they would be aspects that give greater validity to qualitative research.

In 2007, a checklist with criteria for evaluating qualitative research reports using interviews and focus groups was proposed by Tong et al. (2007). The checklist, called the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ), consists of 32 items divided into three domains: 1) research and reflexivity team, consisting of items about the personal characteristics of the team members and the relationship between the team and the research participants; 2) study design, consisting of items on theoretical background, participant selection and context and data collection procedures; 3) data and results analysis, composed of items about data analysis procedures and results report. COREQ was developed from a comprehensive review of studies published in the Medline, CINAHL, Cochrane and Campbell Protocols databases, as well as systematic reviews of qualitative studies, guidelines for authors and peer reviewers, and reference lists of relevant publications.

More broadly, a set of 21 items has been proposed to ensure the transparency and completeness of qualitative articles. Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) includes items applicable to different qualitative approaches and methods. SRQR has items related to title, summary, problem formulation and research question, design and methods for data collection and analysis, results, interpretation, discussion and integration, as well as other information (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014).

Recently, the American Psychological Association (2018) published a new version of the Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS). JARS for qualitative research report indicates items that should be included in each section, i.e. title, abstract, introduction, method, results and discussion of qualitative articles. In addition to the items, APA included guidelines for authors and reviewers.

Next, Table 1 lists the quality criteria from COREQ, SRQR and JARS-Qual. In the left column are presented the detailed criteria, compiled according to each section of the text as usually published in Brazil. The three right columns indicate the sources from which the criteria are derived.

Table 1. Quality criteria for articles from qualitative research

Criterion	*COREQ*	*SRQR*	*JARS-Qual*
Title: Provides a concise description of the nature or theme of the study indicating whether it is qualitative research, or indicating design (e.g., ethnography, data-based theory) or method of data collection (e.g., interview, focus group).		x	x
Summary: summarizes the main elements of the study (problem, objective, design, method, main results and implications).		x	x
Keywords: includes, on average, five keywords, at least one referring to the design, one describing the type of participants or phenomenon investigated.			x
Introduction: includes description of the subject of study, with critical review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature, in order to justify the study		x	x

Method: identifies the qualitative design used in the study (e.g., case study, ethnography). In addition, one can explain the research paradigm that guided the study (e.g., constructivist, feminist) justifying the choice.	x	x	x
Participants: indicates the number of participants, documents, or events analyzed. Characterizes participants/documents/events from biosociodemographic, cultural, etc. data. Describing the reason for including/excluding participants.	x	x	x
Instruments: describes the instruments used for data collection (e.g., interview scripts, field diary), indicating the origin and possible adaptations, format of the questions (e.g., open or closed) and examples of questions.	x	x	x
Data Collection Procedures: provides all the details of data collection, including: start, stop and end dates, participant recruitment process (e.g., compensation, drop-outs or denials, convenience, exhaustion), if pilot study was performed, location, whether third parties were present, recording procedures (e.g., audio, video), iterative process covering specification of who conducted the data collection (academic background, gender, role within the research team, experience and training for research, relationship between the researcher and the participant), whether there were repeated interviews, triangulation, possible modifications of procedures, average duration of data collection, as well as interaction with participants, data archiving procedure, justification for collection completion (e.g., saturation), indicates how saturation was operationalized, transcripts were shared with comments and/or corrections.	x	x	x
Ethical procedures: indicates how data were handled and stored to ensure their security and the anonymity of participants. Indicates the relationships and interactions between researchers and participants that are relevant to the process and any impact arising from this relationship (e.g., if there is any pre-research relationship between researcher and researched). It describes compensation and provides assurance of relevant ethical processes in data collection and consent. Indicates whether there have been any methodological changes, their reasons and ethical implications.		x	x

Data Analysis Procedures: the section presents the entire analysis process in detail. Indicates how many researchers have transcribed and coded data, explicitly training for this. Indicates whether the transcribed data has been checked against the collected (i.e. data integrity). Identifies the units of analysis (e.g., total transcript, texts, units). The paradigm that guided the analysis was presented and its choice justified. It presents a description of the final coding scheme, indicating how the themes/categories were generated inductively or deductively. Where applicable, includes description of the software (e.g., NVivo, Atlas.ti) used for the analysis. Indicates whether results were discussed with participants. Indicates techniques to ensure the credibility and reliability of data analysis (e.g., member checking, auditing, triangulation).	x	x	x
Results: excerpts from participants' statements were used to illustrate themes/categories. Each excerpt was identified (e.g., participant's fictitious name or number). It presents consistency between excerpts and themes/categories. Describes the main themes/categories, demonstrating the researcher's understanding of the results. Results that do not fit the core themes/categories and/or non-core themes/categories are presented. Where relevant, diagrams, tables and models are used to illustrate the results.	x	x	x
Discussion: The main results are summarized and discussed according to a theory or model and previous research. Discusses the application and transferability of results. Indicates and problematizes the main limitations. Describes key contributions to the area or discipline as well as to public policy and practical application. Suggestions for further studies are presented.		x	x

What is expected after conducting a qualitative research considering the applicable quality criteria is the publication of articles in reputable journals. In order to increase the chances of successful article submissions derived from qualitative research, some tips are key. Although the following tips have been proposed for articles from qualitative research, articles derived from other methods can also be guided by these tips:

- the article should be written in a scientific language, that is, objective and clear, paying attention to the fluency of the paragraphs and the non-use of variations that may compromise the reader's understanding. For example, presenting the research problem in different ways throughout the article;

- place information where it should be, i.e., pay attention to the information that is essential in each subsection of the article, eliminating unnecessary content that can distract readers from the main message of the article (Staller & Krumer-Nevo, 2013);

- the article should contain a strong, clear and concise message about what was found with the results and why this is important (Clark & Thompson, 2016; Staller & Krumer-Nevo, 2013);

- the message of the article must be in line with the audience of the article, so it is necessary to know in advance the journal to which the article will be submitted and map its audience, i.e. the profile of its readers (Clark & Thompson, 2016; Staller & Krumer-Nevo, 2013);

- the article must fit the purpose and scope of the journal to which it will be submitted (Clark & Thompson, 2016; Staller & Krumer-Nevo, 2013), so it is necessary to thoroughly review the journal's guidelines, as well as consult articles already published and, in some cases, approaching the editors to check the adequacy of the article to the journal (Clark & Thompson, 2016);

- consider that by publishing an article in a reputable journal it is possible to connect with renowned researchers, i.e., be part of a joint working community on a research topic (Clark & Thompson, 2016);

- try, try and try again (Clark & Thompson, 2016);

- be humble in the response given to the opinions, not forgetting that it is possible to argue, with the proper theoretical/methodological basis, about the suggestions given by the reviewers (Staller & Krumer-Nevo, 2013).

One reason why few articles derived from qualitative research are published in reputable journals is the low frequency of submissions of these articles. Researchers may avoid submitting their articles to good journals for fear that they will be received with hostility because it is qualitative research and will be promptly rejected. However, after conducting the research and writing the article carefully, considering the tips mentioned, there is no way to know if the article has potential for publication other than submitting it to the journal. If a rejection occurs, it is always possible to reformulate the article and try, try and try again (Clark & Thompson, 2016).

Final considerations

The main objective of this paper was to present a systematization of possible quality criteria for the assessment of qualitative research and articles from such research. Different ways to evaluate the quality of articles from qualitative research are proposed. Still, some types of criteria are proposed: intrinsic versus extrinsic or parallel (Morrow, 2005); primary and secondary (Whittemore et al., 2001), showing the plurality of the field. Even in the face of such plurality, by consulting three proposals for systematizing quality criteria (APA, 2018; O`Brien et al., 2014; Tong et al., 2007) it is possible to find similarities. Such similarities, as well as complementary aspects between the proposals, were included in a table gathering the quality criteria according to typical sections of empirical articles. It is known that the possibilities of criteria were not exhausted, having been selected only three propositions.

The three proposals for systematizing quality criteria (APA, 2018; O`Brien et al., 2014; Tong et al., 2007) seem to be the most widely used internationally. Given this, the intention was to start a national discussion about possible quality criteria for articles from qualitative research from the article presented herein. It is expected that the systematization presented may help qualitative researchers to conduct their studies with greater methodological rigor

and with greater possibilities of acceptance in scientific journals. Furthermore, it is possible for this article to be used by journal editors and reviewers to improve their evaluations.

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