

Critique of an Ethnographic Study of Exploration of Empowerment to Improve Elderly Residents' Quality of Life

Dear Editor,

The above-mentioned article^[1] opens with a well-written introduction that gives insight into the topic with relevant information. The study used purposive sampling to recruit and interview 9 participants in total. Though the sample size is good, the study did not clarify if the saturation of data was adequately reached. It raises questions mainly because there is a lack of diversity among the participants.

Also, it is unclear why the authors chose the particular study setting, and how well the ethnographers were accepted by this community. Accurate reporting of this could guide other researchers in this field.

The study used participant observation, in-depth interviews, field notes, and review of related documents as methods of data collection. These are good sources of information in ethnographic studies. However, it is unclear how much time the researchers spent on each data collection method. Though a collective time frame was stated for the entire project, it would be more informative for readers if a breakdown of time spent on each method was reported. This would have further clarified an ambiguous statement made in the study which mentioned that 13 interviews were conducted with participants. This statement creates confusion because earlier in the methods section, in paragraph one, the authors stated that 9 participants were interviewed. Could it be that some participants were interviewed more than once, or there were some other separate interviews with other participants outside the 9 reported participants? The study also failed to indicate how auditability was achieved as it is not clear if interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. Procedure for the management and storage of data prior and post analysis is unclear. Ethnographic data may be stored manually or by the use of computer software.

The study identified three major themes from data analysis. Even though the themes were clearly outlined, the study could include some subthemes from which the major themes were generated, for purposes of clarity. The first theme centered its arguments on interviews and concluded without integrating observations made at the study site with interview results. It makes it difficult to understand what the occurrences really meant to the ethnographers. This deprived the section of multiple and diverse interpretations of reality. Observations, therefore, did not provide rich data. Furthermore, the study did not highlight the type of observations and the sense researchers made from it. Subsequent themes were well discussed, integrating some observations with interview results. The general impression about observations made by the ethnographers and discussed in the study is that they are shallow and do not provide readers with an in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences.

The study concludes by blending the major findings with some recommendations. This part, however, lacks fair justification as the study sidelined "ordinary" workers in the care home. The conclusion could be more comprehensive with recommendations encompassing both residents and their care providers if the study effectively engaged both.

In general, the study provided some replicable steps in conducting ethnographic studies which could be helpful to future researchers.

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Conflicts of interest

Nothing to declare.

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Reference

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