
Title

Revisiting longitudinal qualitative studies in social work: considerations for design and methodological insights

Abstract

This paper undertakes an analysis and discussion of the methodological challenges and insights derived from three longitudinal qualitative studies, all conducted in Chile during the COVID-19 pandemic and subject to comprehensive theoretical-methodological reflection processes centred on their respective designs. This analysis makes a significant contribution to interdisciplinary discussions within social research, with a particular emphasis on longitudinal trajectories. First, we present a comparative analysis of three studies in social work, utilising Saldaña's questions addressing changes and learning in longitudinal studies. The first study explores the labour trajectories of researchers, the second focuses on the educational trajectories of students, and the last examines therapeutic alliance trajectories between social workers and families within the child protection system. Following this, we delve into the methodological decisions made by the research group during the execution of these longitudinal studies. This encompasses an examination of participant involvement, temporal definitions of the adopted designs, and the most suitable methodological tools for analysing change processes over time. The outcomes of this comparative analysis reveal the distinctive characteristics of the three longitudinal studies, providing insights into how the time dimension is explored within them. We highlight key criteria essential for consideration in longitudinal qualitative research, particularly regarding participants and methodology. In conclusion, we advocate for an expanded reflection within the realm of longitudinal qualitative methodology, encompassing aspects such as design choices, approaches to data analysis, integration of technology in information processing, and strategies for maintaining participant engagement.

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