**Introduction**

Public health and health research encompass a broad spectrum of factors that influence health outcomes, including physical, social, cultural, and environmental aspects (Gamble, 2021). Researchers employ various methodologies to achieve reliable results, with qualitative research emerging as one of the preferred choices. While some advocate for qualitative research as the most suitable research approach for public health research due to its inherent advantages (Morse et al., 2020), others question it robustness because of its limitations such as subjectivity and challenges in generalizability (Tracy, 2020). This essay aims to explore both perspectives, by x-raying the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research while also proposing strategies to maximize its benefits and mitigate its limitations in health research.

Qualitative research constitutes a methodology that investigates human experiences, striving to comprehend the reasons behind how and why humans think, feel, and act as they do (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which primarily involves numerical analysis, qualitative research focuses on exploring and interpreting details, often presenting human expressions and actions in written form. Its key features include holistic inquiry, emergent design, and the acquisition of rich and profound data.

Holistic inquiry, as outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (2020), involves a comprehensive examination of a subject, surpassing a narrow focus on individual components. This approach considers various elements such as context, emotions, and lived experiences, recognizing their collective influence on an individual's reality. Rather than isolating specific factors for analysis, holistic inquiry aims to understand the broader context of a phenomenon, acknowledging the interconnectedness of different aspects.

Emergent design, emphasized by Tracy (2020), represents a departure from the rigid formats typically associated with quantitative research methodologies. Unlike structured and predetermined approaches, qualitative research adopts a more flexible and adaptive stance. Researchers have the liberty to modify their methods and strategies as they engage with collected information. This flexibility allows for responsiveness to evolving study dynamics, enabling adjustments based on emerging insights.

Moreover, qualitative research excels in acquiring rich and profound data through diverse methods such as interviews, observations, and text analysis (Morse et al., 2018). These techniques enable researchers to delve deeply into the complexities of their subjects, capturing nuanced human experiences beyond quantifiable aspects. Qualitative research is distinguished by its capacity to yield rich and profound data, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of human experiences. This data is acquired through diverse methods, including interviews, observations, focus groups, and text analysis, as noted by Morse et al. (2018). By prioritizing these multifaceted and targeted data collection techniques, researchers can delve deeply into the intricacies of any subject under investigation. The richness of qualitative data resides in its ability to capture even the most intricate nuances of human experiences. It transcends mere quantifiable aspects, enabling researchers to uncover the concealed meanings, motivations, and cultural influences that shape individuals' perspectives.

Qualitative research employs various methodological approaches, including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and narrative inquiry. Phenomenology, as expounded by Creswell & Creswell (2018), investigates individuals' lived experiences regarding a specific phenomenon, emphasizing subjective interpretations. Grounded theory, developed by Charmaz and the Grounded Theory Research Institute (2014), involves building theories based on emerging patterns from data analysis, particularly suited for understanding social processes. Ethnography, advocated by Hammersley & Atkinson (2019), entails immersive participation in a cultural group to gain insights into their way of life. Narrative inquiry, as described by Lieblich et al. (2008), focuses on exploring individuals' stories to understand their experiences and identities.

In comparing qualitative and quantitative research, qualitative research prioritizes depth through non-numerical data, interpretive analysis, and context specificity, while quantitative research excels in numerical data analysis, statistical methods, and aims for broader applicability. Despite their differences, both approaches share a commitment to rigorous methods and ethical standards.

Rind and Jones (2018) conducted a comprehensive investigation into the dynamics of physical activity in former mining communities in the North-East of England. Their study, rooted in qualitative methodology, sought to unravel the intricate interplay between industrial decline, community transformations, and physical activity patterns.

The advantages and disadvantages of Qualitative methodologies/methods can be best illustrated by considering specific example. one study has been selected which uses the Narrative inquiry approach

Rind and Jones (2018) employed narrative inquiry to explore the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals residing in two coal mining communities. This research approach allowed for a deep understanding of the challenges these communities faced due to industrial decline, as chosen by the researchers (Rind & Jones, 2018). Focus group discussions with retired miners served as a platform for collective exploration of community norms and perceptions surrounding physical activity (Rind & Jones, 2018).

The findings of the study shed light on several critical aspects. Firstly, the direct impact of industrial decline was evident in the decline of physically demanding mining jobs and the subsequent loss of recreational facilities, leading to decreased levels of physical activity among residents. Participants expressed a sense of nostalgia for the active lifestyle prevalent during the mining era and lamented the decline in community activity(Rind & Jones, 2018)..

Environmental barriers emerged as significant obstacles to physical activity in these areas. Factors such as the lack of safe green spaces, inadequate public transport, and limited accessible facilities hindered residents' ability to engage in physical activities. Additionally, the decline of community spirit and social networks associated with mining exacerbated the challenge, as opportunities for collective physical activity dwindled(Rind & Jones, 2018).

In discussing the implications of their findings, Rind and Jones (2018) underscored the importance of tailored interventions that go beyond individual behaviors to address the broader social, cultural, and environmental context. They emphasized the need for interventions that acknowledge the unique history, values, and infrastructure of each community. By doing so, interventions can better resonate with residents and overcome the multifaceted barriers to physical activity.

Qualitative research offers valuable strengths in exploring complex phenomena such as the impact of industrial decline on physical activity within communities. It allows for in-depth exploration by delving into individual narratives and experiences, providing rich insights into multifaceted challenges and opportunities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through methods like focus groups, researchers can capture diverse perspectives and shared norms, fostering a comprehensive understanding of how attitudes towards physical activity evolve in response to societal changes (Morgan, 2019).

Moreover, qualitative research facilitates contextual understanding by analyzing socio-cultural and environmental factors that influence behavior. For instance, it can elucidate how the loss of recreational facilities and green spaces due to industrial decline affects patterns of physical activity (Sallis et al., 2016). This approach also contributes to theory development by uncovering underlying mechanisms and processes, informing the development of interventions to address these issues (Charmaz & Bryant, 2012).

However, qualitative research is not without its limitations, which merit further elaboration. One significant drawback is its susceptibility to subjectivity, which can introduce researcher bias and potentially compromise the reliability and validity of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This subjectivity stems from the interpretive nature of qualitative analysis, where researchers play an active role in shaping the data interpretation process. Their backgrounds, experiences, and personal biases can influence how they perceive and interpret the data, leading to potentially skewed conclusions.

Additionally, the findings derived from qualitative research may lack generalizability beyond the specific communities studied, thereby limiting their broader applicability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since qualitative studies often focus on a particular context or group, the findings may not be representative of other populations or settings. This lack of generalizability can constrain the extent to which the findings can be applied or extrapolated to inform policies, interventions, or practices in different contexts.

Furthermore, the time-consuming nature of qualitative methods poses practical challenges in resource allocation (Neuman, 2011). Qualitative research typically involves extensive data collection, transcription, and analysis processes, which demand significant time and effort from researchers. This time commitment can strain research budgets and timelines, particularly in settings with limited resources or tight deadlines. As a result, researchers may need to carefully balance the depth of qualitative inquiry with practical considerations regarding time and resource constraints.

Moreover, the qualitative approach's limited quantification presents challenges in measuring the prevalence or frequency of specific beliefs and attitudes (Teddlie & Teddlie, 2009). Unlike quantitative research, which utilizes numerical data for statistical analysis, qualitative research often relies on textual or narrative data. This qualitative data may not lend itself easily to quantification, making it difficult to draw precise comparisons or statistical conclusions. As a result, researchers may struggle to provide robust evidence or quantify the magnitude of observed phenomena, which can limit the comprehensiveness of their findings.

while qualitative research offers valuable insights into complex social phenomena, researchers must be mindful of its limitations. Recognizing both the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative methods can inform the interpretation of findings and guide decisions regarding research approaches in future studies. By addressing these considerations, researchers can strive for a more robust understanding of the relationship between industrial decline and physical activity within communities.

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**Part TWO**

**A critical appraisal of the research paper “Using participatory action research to examine barriers and facilitators to physical activity among rural adolescents with cerebral palsy”.(Ashley *et,al* 2020)**

**1.Is there a clear aim/research question(s) for the study?**

The study presents a clear aim and research questions this is seen in the aim identifying perceived facilitators and barriers to physical activity among adolescents with cerebral palsy in a rural community using Photovoice is clear and aligns well with contemporary qualitative research standards. The use of Photovoice as a participatory action research method is a strength of the study, as it allows participants to visually document their experiences and provide insights into their lived realities(Minkler & Participatory Health Research Group, 2011) . This approach promotes participant engagement, empowerment, and the generation of rich, context-specific data

Furthermore, the research questions were well-defined, focusing on perceived limitations and facilitators to physical activity as identified by both adolescents with cerebral palsy and their parents. This comprehensive approach ensures a holistic understanding of the factors influencing physical activity participation in this population (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Overall, the study's aim is clearly articulated, methodologically sound, and in line with contemporary qualitative research standards by incorporating a participatory approach, engaging participants in data collection, and addressing the research questions from multiple perspectives (Hergenrather et al., 2004).

**2. Is there congruity between the aims/research questions and the research methodology and approach?**

The study shows a robust congruity among its aims/research questions, chosen methodology, and overarching approach, signifying a coordinated and impactful research framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In alignment with the research aims, the investigation focused on investigating the impediments and enablers to physical activity among rural adolescents with cerebral palsy. This objective resonates directly with the application of Photovoice, a participatory research method renowned for empowering participants to chronicle their daily experiences and articulate their viewpoints through visual documentation (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2018). By the fact the study adopted this methodological approach, the study aligns itself with the principles of participatory action research (Hergenrather et al., 2009), thereby ensuring that the voices of the participants remain focal to the research process, thereby yielding valuable insights into their distinct perspectives on barriers to and facilitators of physical activity (Liebenberg, 2018).

The research inquiries explored the environmental factors influencing physical activity levels among these adolescents. The utilization of Photovoice directly addresses these questions by providing participants with a means to capture and share their experiences through imagery, offering visual data specific to their surroundings and challenges (Wang & Burris, 1997). By employing techniques such as distributing cameras and tablets over a designated period, the study facilitates the documentation of specific obstacles and facilitators encountered on a daily basis, thereby directly contributing to the elucidation of the research questions (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

The implementation of various methodological steps, including training sessions, obtaining informed consent, brainstorming sessions, and facilitated discussions surrounding the captured photographs, establishes a structured framework for participants to articulate their viewpoints, thus aligning with the aim of comprehending their experiences (Liebenberg, 2018).

Furthermore, the adoption of the SHOWeD Method for photo analysis, renowned for facilitating collaborative interpretation and contextualization of visual data, coupled with the organization of a community forum, fosters in-depth discussions and contextualization of the captured visual data, thereby enhancing the understanding of the research questions.

In summation, the chosen methodology and approach effectively serve the objectives and research inquiries of the study. By empowering participants through Photovoice, aligning with the principles of participatory action research, and directly addressing the research questions, the study demonstrates congruence across its elements, thus fortifying the research design and contributing to a more holistic comprehension of the research topic (Punch, 2018).

**3. Is there a specific recruitment and sampling/case selection strategy?**

The study explicitly outlines its recruitment and sampling/case selection strategy, adhering to the tenets of Photovoice methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997). The inclusion of 15 participants, including both adolescents with cerebral palsy and parents, aligns with recommended sample sizes for Photovoice studies (Hergenrather et al., 2009). Purposeful recruitment ensures diverse perspectives on physical activity barriers and facilitators in rural communities (Liebenberg, 2018). Identifying key stakeholders throughout the research process aligns with Photovoice principles, engaging decision-makers who can address identified issues (Wang & Burris, 1997). Including participants with varying functional levels enriches the data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of physical activity challenges (Hooper et al., 2023). Adherence to the nine-step Photovoice methodology ensures methodological rigor, leading to a purposeful, inclusive, and comprehensive exploration of physical activity barriers and facilitators in rural communities.

**4. Is there a clear description of how data was analysed and represented in the findings?**

The study clearly shows a clear description of data analysed and representation processes by employing a multifaceted approach encompassing Photovoice methodology, content analysis, and visual representation of themes (Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice empowered adolescents to capture 81 photos reflecting physical activity challenges and opportunities (Hergenrather et al., 2009). Through in-depth interviews and focus groups using the SHOWeD Method, these photos were explored in context, ensuring incorporation of both researcher and participant perspectives (Liebenberg, 2018). Content analysis of interview transcripts identified recurring themes, providing meaningful insights (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Visual representations, combined with verbal interpretations, enriched the findings, enhancing authenticity and consistency (Wang & Burris, 1997). The reduction of photos ensured a focused exploration of key themes, adhering to Photovoice methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997). In sum, this comprehensive approach, as demonstrated in the study, sheds light on the experiences of rural adolescents with cerebral palsy, offering valuable insights.

**5. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered? Is there a statement locating the researcher culturally or theoretically?**

The study effectively addresses the important aspect of researcher-participant relationships through its implementation of Photovoice methodology (Wang & Burris, 1997). The core strength lies in utilizing Photovoice, a participatory action research (PAR) method. PAR inherently promotes equitable researcher-participant relationships by empowering participants to actively capture their experiences, fostering collaboration and valuing their lived realities (Hergenrather et al., 2009).While the study doesn't explicitly mention the researchers' cultural background or theoretical framework, the choice of Photovoice itself embodies cultural sensitivity and a participatory approach (Liebenberg, 2018).

The research focus on rural adolescents with cerebral palsy within a specific community suggests a contextual awareness of cultural and environmental factors influencing physical activity barriers and facilitators (Punch, 2018).Though the researchers' cultural or theoretical positioning may not be explicitly stated, the emphasis on PAR principles indicates a commitment to shifting power dynamics toward participant voices and fostering a more inclusive and respectful relationship (Cornwall & IDS, 1996).

**6. Are participants, and their voices, adequately represented?**

The study demonstrated a strong commitment to adequately represent the voices of its participants through effective methodology and careful analysis The core strength lies in utilizing Photovoice, a participatory action research (PAR) method (Wang & Burris, 1997). By empowering participants to capture their experiences through photography and actively engage in discussions, Photovoice inherently prioritizes participant voices and perspectives (Hergenrather et al., 2009).

Participants actively selected the most significant photographs, ensuring their perspectives shaped the data and discussions (Liebenberg, 2018). The SHOWeD Method facilitated collaborative interpretation and contextualization of the photographs, further amplifying participant voices (Wang & Burris, 1997). In-depth interviews and focus groups provided additional opportunities for participants to elaborate on their experiences and contribute to theme identification (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

The chosen approach of content analysis allowed researchers to identify themes organically from participants' own words and photographs, minimizing researcher bias and ensuring participant perspectives guided the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The study consistently emphasizes that its findings stem directly from participants' narratives and experiences. This focus ensures accurate representation of their perspectives and lived realities (Tissink, 2003). Combining visual data from photographs with verbal data from interviews and focus groups provided a holistic and multifaceted representation of participants' experiences, enriching the portrayal of barriers and facilitators to physical activity (Liebenberg, 2018).

**7. Is the research ethical according to current criteria or, for recent studies, and is there evidence of ethical approval by an appropriate body?**

The emphasis on informed consent and the distribution of consent forms for photograph publication demonstrate respect for participants' autonomy and right to information (Declaration of Helsinki, 2013). This aligns with ethical principles outlined in international guidelines (WMA, 2013).The mention of ethical concerns surrounding photography suggests awareness of potential risks and a commitment to protecting participant privacy and dignity (National Institutes of Health, 2023).

However the absence of mention regarding ethical approval by an appropriate body, such as an Institutional Review Board (IRB), raises a critical concern. IRB approval is mandatory for research involving human participants to ensure adherence to ethical standards and participant well-being (National Institutes of Health, 2023). While the study demonstrates some ethical considerations in its participant interactions, the lack of explicit mention of IRB approval remains a significant limitation. The presence of IRB approval would assure readers that the research underwent a rigorous ethical review process, adhering to established guidelines and protecting participant welfare.

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