**PART 1**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Research using qualitative methods offers a unique perspective on complex issues in health and public health (Luciani et al, 2019). Isaacs (2014) finds qualititative methods particularly useful for studying social and behavioural aspects of public health. Despite being underutilized, qualitative methods can complement quantitative research, allowing for a deeper understanding of health and health services (Hamilton & Finley, 2020). Public health research using qualitative and mixed methods requires careful consideration of study design, data collection, and ethical considerations (Padgett, 2011).

This essay describes qualitative research, emphasizing its characteristics, features, and methodological unity. This article examines the diversity of qualitative methodologies, emphasizing how they can complement quantitative methodologies. The following sections provide qualitative insights into obesity research, examining studies that employ different qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, grounded analysis, and ethnography. It provides a comprehensive understanding of qualitative research's value in unraveling the complexities of health and obesity through discussions of its strengths, methodologies, and potential limitations.

**2.0 NAVIGATING THE QUALITATIVE LANDSCAPE IN PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH RESEARCH**

In public health and health research, physical, social, cultural, and environmental factors are considered (Gatchel & Schultz, 2012). An interpretive exploration of human experiences is at the heart of qualitative research (Jackson *et al*., 2007). In psychological science, qualitative research includes observations that traditional quantitative methods can't adequately deal with (Willig, 2019). defines qualitative research as noncontrolling, holistic, and case-oriented, about processes, open and flexible, diverse in methods, humanistic, inductive, and scientific.

Among the unique characteristics of qualitative research in public health is its ability to explore complex social and behavioural issues (Isaacs, 2014). In addition to providing an understanding of the personal meaning of stress factors and illnesses, it also examines the social and biographical contexts of health (Ahlich *et al*., 2021). A qualitative research tradition has five distinct traditions, each of which has its own unique approach, making it applicable to different kinds of inquiry. For public health journals to remain relevant in the future, more qualitative research needs to be recognized and published (Stickley, 2022).

(Grim *et al*., 2015) and (Joshi *et al*., 2017) both highlight qualitative research's innovative and diverse nature. Camic emphasizes its ability to complement quantitative methods. With an emphasis on in-depth interviews and group discussions, Clare Kitchen (2013) provides a practical overview of qualitative data collection and analysis. As Joshi *et al*., (2017) emphasizes the importance of theory development, cultural understanding, and contextual analysis, he discusses the methodological principles of ethnography. Qualitative research can be applied across a wide range of fields and settings, as demonstrated by these studies.

There are differences between qualitative methodologies, but they are ultimately united by their common focus on understanding the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals (Slevitch, 2011). Consequently, they emphasize the importance of context and the researcher's role in interpreting the data (Clare Kitchen, 2013) in their inductive approach to data collection and analysis. In qualitative research, this shared focus is balanced with the need for consistency and coherence (Padgett, 2011). By considering the philosophical underpinnings of different approaches and being context sensitive (Ahlich *et al.,* 2021), this tension can be navigated. Ponizovsky-Bergelson *et al*., (2019) encourages methodological pluralism, since qualitative and quantitative methods are not as clear-cut as they seem.

**3.0** **QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS ON HEALTH BEHAVIORS**

The study by (Ali et al., 2020) explored weight management perspectives among 75 Emirati women at risk for type 2 diabetes in the UAE. Utilizing focus group interviews and qualitative research methods, the study identified barriers like low motivation and lack of culturally sensitive exercise facilities. Social support emerged as a key facilitator, with participants suggesting enhanced support, access to dietitians, and culturally appropriate exercise facilities. The findings contribute valuable insights for developing culturally congruent weight promotion programs in the UAE and offer implications for obesity interventions in other Arabian Gulf countries.

The qualitative study by da Silva and da Costa Maia (2012) delves into the perceptions of 30 morbidly obese individuals regarding obesity and bariatric surgery. Through individual interviews, participants expressed views on obesity as a stable and hereditary trait, emphasizing the difficulty in changing eating behavior. Bariatric surgery is seen as the sole solution, portraying it as a transformative moment where health professionals play a pivotal role. Participants view surgery as a miraculous event, requiring minimal personal involvement. The study underscores the need for validation through further research and emphasizes the importance of empowering patients in the weight loss process, both pre- and post-bariatric surgery.

**4.0 QUALITATIVE APPROACHES IN HEALTH RESEARCH: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES**

In this study, (Ali et al., 2010) used a qualitative methodology with a modified grounded theory approach to explore Emirati women's attitudes toward weight management when at risk of type 2 diabetes. A purposive sampling strategy was used to collect data from eight focus groups in primary healthcare centers in Al Ain, UAE. Data were collected by audiotaping sessions, transcription, and thematic analysis. Three broad questions were addressed in the study, including attitudes, perceptions, and interventions among the target population. Incorporating defined research questions while maintaining the key features of grounded theory, a modified grounded theory approach enabled participants' perspectives to be understood in greater depth. The data collected was enhanced by purposeful sampling, which ensured diversity within the target population.

The qualitative methodology, particularly the modified grounded theory approach, allowed for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, which was important in an environment with limited prior knowledge. In addition to facilitating a systematic and hypothesis-driven approach, iterative data collection and analysis facilitate the use of defined research questions. The focus of this research was on context and diversity within the target population, and the technique employed enhanced the richness of the study's insights by using purposive sampling. Furthermore, the data were more reliable due to a constant comparison method and multiple researchers participating.

There are many problems associated with the qualitative approach, including excessive resource consumption, subjectivity, and restricted generalizability, which inhibits insights' transferability. Small sample sizes and possible bias also threaten the results' representativeness. Although modified grounded theory facilitates systematic analysis, subjectivity in coding and interpretation is a concern, since it introduces bias into data interpretation, which could affect its reliability and objectivity. Due to the study's cultural focus, findings may not be universally applicable or understood due to cultural nuances.

As part of their study, Da Silva & da Costa Maia (2022) interviewed 30 patients undergoing bariatric surgery in a Portuguese obesity treatment center to explore their experiences, perceptions, and expectations. In this study, a grounded analysis method was employed, emphasizing emergent understanding through data analysis, as well as theoretical sampling and constant comparison. In-depth exploration of obesity and treatment was possible with grounded analysis, which captured nuanced patient perspectives. As a result of theoretical sampling, research questions were continuously refined.

An understanding of obesity is enhanced using open-ended questions and grounded analysis, which allows for nuanced interpretations. As a result, the study's findings are enhanced in validity and depth due to highlighting its multifaceted dimensions, including personal, social, and psychological aspects. By delving into the subjective realm, the research captures the complexities of participants' perspectives, shedding light on a variety of factors influencing their perspectives on obesity and bariatric surgery. As a result, the research outcome is shaped by an understanding of the phenomena explored in a comprehensive and nuanced manner.

In grounded analysis, data interpretation is subject to subjective interpretation, which may lead researchers inadvertently to project their preconceptions onto coding. Moreover, the smaller sample size used in this study also limits the generalizability of the findings because subjectivity influences the identification and categorization of themes. It is a strength that there are many perspectives, but it is also a challenge to manage and analyze all the data. As a result, this research has difficulty navigating the depths of qualitative data, which might result in the researchers overlooking crucial insights, or making the interpretation more susceptible to their biases.

**5.0 CONCLUSION**

Qualitative research methods offer a unique perspective on complex issues that is crucial to health and public health research. By examining individual subjective experiences and meanings, they provide a deeper understanding of health behaviours and their relationships with social, cultural, and environmental influences. By using qualitative research methodologies such as in-depth interviews and grounded analysis, nuanced perspectives are captured, offering valuable insights into health issues. Research conducted qualitatively can fill significant gaps in quantitative health/public health research by focusing on the "why" question and placing human emotion and behaviour at the center of the study. Qualitative approaches amplify the voice of the researched, allowing for a richer understanding of human emotion and behavior despite challenges such as resource consumption and complexity. Top of Form

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**PART 2**