Carrying out a phenomenological research study as a contextual outsider: from establishing the project to interpreting translated interview data

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Background to the study:

- This study is focused on the experiences of foster parents who care for children with disabilities in one region of Bulgaria
- The population of these foster parents is very small (< 15)
- Foster care is one aspect of the national Care Reforms occurring in Bulgaria which is still very underdeveloped for children with special needs and/or disabilities

Research aims:

- To better understand the experiences of these foster parents in order to:
- 1) Find ways to encourage more foster parents to foster children with disabilities.
- 2) Improve support and training for foster parents who care for children with disabilities.
- 3) Expand and develop foster care services for children with disabilities in Bulgaria.

Research Design:

- In-depth, semi-structured interviews with 5-10 foster parents
- Use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
- Use of Committee Approach (CA) to translation and aspects of interpretation

2) Researcher not being a fluent speaker of the local language

Issues:

1) Researcher not being from the research context

- Identify experts in research and practice through existing networks
- •Establish online contacts & form partnerships
- •Gather informal knowledge to inform research aims and questions

- •Learning the language to a conversational level
- Use the Committee Approach (CA) to translation – multiple perspectives

My Solutions:

Outcomes:

Research questions are informed by work 'on the ground' & the literature; **Increased interest** in the research and potential avenues for dissemination; Findings of the study will reach their intended

audience.

 Researcher can establish a relationship with participants and be less distant; • In CA, translations are compared by native speakers with knowledge and experience in the research field; • Linguistic and cultural nuances are included



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Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA):

- Participants make sense of their own experiences
- Double hermeneutic researcher interprets participants' interpretations of their experiences
- Transcripts analysed inductively, case-by-case, then across cases

Why is contextual relevance **important in IPA?**

- In order to be able to understand people's experiences behind the way they express themselves, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the language and culture
- Every piece of qualitative research has linguistic and cultural barriers: this should be a starting point not a reason to give up

Summary:

Phenomenological research in a different culture/language is possible but needs careful consideration.

Using these solutions, validity and relevance of the research is increased.

Key References for further reading: Furukawa R., Driessnack, M. and Colclough, Y. (2014) A committee approach maintaining cultural originality in translation. Applied Nursing Research. 27:2. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2013.11.011. Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E. (2006). Giving voice and making sense in interpretative phenomenological analysis. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 102–120. <u>https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp062o</u>