

Some further comments regarding qualitative and quantitative research

In both cases sample size is important – but what is really crucial is sample composition. Sample composition follows from sample selection methods which are usually devised in the context of the study objectives. Even very large samples can yield misleading or distorted data if the sample composition does not contain all ‘relevant’ population groups.

‘Relevance’ here has different meanings for qual and quant research. Qual research is about identifying and understanding ‘points of view’/‘world views’/meanings/constructs etc; quant is about determining what proportions hold those ‘points of view’. Hence in qual research we try to ensure that we select respondents that represent all the possible ‘points of view’ out there (regardless of their proportions in the population). In quant research we need to ensure that all the different demographic etc groups in the population are represented in the sample in the same proportion that they exist in the population.

In this qual research, saturation may have been reached after 15 interviews because the sample was homogeneous with respect to characteristics related to those points of view. The self-selection nature, age and ‘mainstream’ nature of the sample indicates that that might have been the case. As the researchers acknowledge, CALD, Indigenous, gay men and younger men were not represented – and they may have additional points of view not covered in the existing interviews. Similarly, men reluctant to volunteer may have additional points of view. That has been acknowledged and we need to remind critics that it has been acknowledged. At the same time, given the internal logic of the themes that emerged – and the commonality with themes from female victims – the data appear very useful as indicative of the points of view of male victims (at least for older, mainstream male victims).

With respect to the quant sample – it is indeed a large proportion of service providers. However, we should not overstate the extent to which those data generalize to all service providers. However, what we can emphasise is that a large proportion of service providers were interested enough to respond (because the topic was relevant to them) and then frame the results as relevant to ‘service providers with an interest in/who are relevant to’ providing services to males experiencing violence. In that sense the results with respect to efficacy etc have even more import because these are self-selected, interested providers.

Overall, as noted by others, we do not want to overclaim on the generalisability of these results. Ironically, the overclaiming appears to be coming mainly from the critics.

Feel free to disseminate these points if you wish.

regards
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