

CRAFTING AN 'EPPiC' RESEARCH QUESTION

FINDING THE FIT BETWEEN THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, QUESTION, AND DESIGN

KEY MESSAGES

- A qualitative health research study should be designed to answer a clearly articulated overarching research question
- The “EPPiC” acronym can be used as a framework to guide researchers in developing a comprehensive research question

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A METHODOLOGICALLY CONGRUENT STUDY:

1

Clearly articulates the study purpose

2

Poses an overarching question that corresponds to the study purpose

Includes (coded) language in the research question that reflects purpose and design

3

Selects a qualitative health research design that allows the researcher to achieve study goals

4

Uses purposeful sampling strategies that reflect principles of selected design

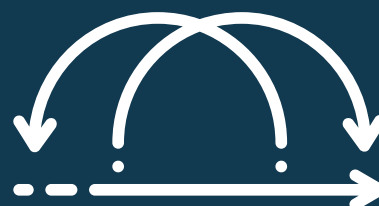
5

Uses data generation strategies that aid in meeting study purpose

6

Uses qualitative data analytic strategies specifically informed by “rules” or principles of the design and reflect design “rhetoric” or “language”

AN ITERATIVE PROCESS IS EMPLOYED WHILE REFINING THE STUDY PURPOSE, DRAFTING THE RESEARCH QUESTION, AND DETERMINING THE STUDY DESIGN.



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IF THE STUDY PURPOSE IS TO....

THEN CONSIDER THIS DESIGN

- Describe participants' experiences, values or beliefs related to the phenomenon under study
- Elicit participants' recommendations Identify factors that influence X (e.g. program implementation, access, delivery)
- Identify participants' needs Identify and describe the properties and dimensions of a practice "problem" or "success"

Qualitative description

- Develop disciplinary knowledge to understand and respond to complex experiential clinical or health phenomena
- Describe the various ways (patterns/trends) in which individuals experience a phenomena



Interpretive description

- Provide a comprehensive and holistic description (or explanation) of a case (e.g. an individual, program, process, event etc) or cases within a specific context.

Case study



- Describe the culture or shared values, beliefs, rituals and experiences of a group of people – and then explain or explore how culture influences behaviour, social relationships or interactions.
- May be focused to one specific health/illness condition

Ethnography

Focused ethnography

- Develop a substantive mid-range theory to explain a phenomenon or process
- Describe the theoretical constructs (process, context, antecedent factors, outcomes, strategies, conditions etc) of a social or human phenomenon

Grounded theory

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Researchers can use EPPiC to identify the components of a structured overarching research question

EMPHASIS

**PRPOSEFUL
SAMPLE**

**PHENOMENON
OF INTEREST**

CONTEXT

Words that reflect the purpose of the study:

- To describe: "What...?"
- To explore: "How...?"
- To explain: "Why...?"

EMPHASIS

Phrases commonly associated with qualitative health research designs:

- Qualitative description: "What are the factors that influence...?"
- Interpretive description: "What are the different ways in which [purposeful sample] experience [phenomenon of interest]...?"
"In what ways do [purposeful sample] explain their experiences with [phenomenon of interest] in [context]?"
- Focused ethnography: "What are the shared beliefs, values, and practice patterns of [sample / group]?"
- Grounded theory: "What is the basic social psychological problem...?"
"What is the basic social psychological process...?"
"What is the process of...?" or "How do...?"
- Interpretive phenomenology: "What is the meaning of...?"
- Descriptive phenomenology: "What is the lived experience of...?"



**PRPOSEFUL
SAMPLE**

Words that describe the participants who have experienced the phenomenon of interest.

Consider:

- The homogeneity or heterogeneity of the sample
- Is the phenomenon to be described from the perspective of a single data source or multiple data sources

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PHENOMENON OF INTEREST

Words that name the social or human phenomenon that your purposeful sample has experienced, is knowledgeable about, or can share their beliefs, assumptions, or values in relation to.

Examples:

- Caregiving for a spouse with dementia
- Grieving following a stillbirth
- Leaving an abusive relationship
- Access to programs offering HIV testing and post-exposure prophylaxis treatment
- Receiving feedback during undergraduate medical education clinical practicums
- Implementing a social media campaign to promote mask wearing



The environment, conditions or circumstances that influence how the purposeful sample perceives or experiences the phenomenon of interest under study.

CONTEXT

May include:

- Geography (e.g., Canada, Nova Scotia, rural, urban)
- Physical or organizational (e.g., oncology unit, public transportation, refugee camp)
- Developmental (e.g., adolescence, pregnancy, post-stroke)
- Social (e.g., recession, post-pandemic)
- Time (e.g., season, vacation, night-shift)

SAMPLE EPPiC QUESTIONS

In what ways do **post-menopausal women with breast cancer** explain their varied **experiences** in **implementing strategies to prevent the acquisition of respiratory infections** while **receiving chemotherapy in an Ontario cancer centre**?

(Suggested design: Interpretive description)

Within **regional cancer centres**, **how do the values, beliefs and experiences** of **health care professionals providing care to adult patients with cancer** influence their adoption and **utilization of infection mitigation strategies**? (Suggested design: Focused ethnography)

How was a **mandatory masking policy re-implemented** by **hospital administrators and clinical leaders** within **Hamilton Health Sciences and St. Joseph's Healthcare during Fall 2023**? (Suggested design: case study)

EMPHASIS

PURPOSEFUL SAMPLE

PHENOMENON OF INTEREST

CONTEXT