

Dependability

This is the third standard for judging qualitative studies and refers to the stability or consistency of the inquiry processes used over time. To check the dependability of a qualitative study, one looks to see if the researcher has been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings and reporting results. The logic used for selecting people and events to observe, interview, and include in the study should be clearly presented. The more consistent the researcher has been in this research process, the more dependable are the results. A major technique for assessing dependability is the dependability audit in which an independent auditor reviews the activities of the researcher (as recorded in an audit trail in field notes, archives, and reports) to see how well the techniques for meeting the credibility and transferability standards have been followed. If the researcher does not maintain any kind of audit trail, the dependability cannot be assessed and dependability and trustworthiness of the study are diminished.



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