

Qualitative or Quantitative- An Enigma?

Sir,

We read with interest the article by Rasool and associates.¹

We have some concerns regarding the study design which should be highlighted in the general interest of authors and readers of Journal of the College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (JCPSP).

The authors penned down 'Qualitative study, KAP study' in the study design, which in our opinion, needs further elaboration.

According to Crotty, research methodology is the overall plan 'that shapes our choice and use of particular methods, and links them to the desired outcomes.'² Qualitative research methodology is considered to be suitable when the researcher or the investigator either explores new field of study or aims to identify and conceptualize prominent issues.³ There are many qualitative methods which are developed to have an in-depth and broad understanding of the issues by means of their textual analysis.³ In contrast to qualitative methods, quantitative methods encompass the collection of data under standardized criteria for the accurate measurement of specific variables by means of either a questionnaire or an observation protocol.⁴ Surveys are thought to be a system of collection of information in order to depict, contrast, or explain knowledge, attitude and behaviour.⁵ They are considered to be general methodology of research as they allow the gathering of information in the form of data from a sizeable population.³ Surveys can also be used to evaluate the needs, explore the demand and assess the impact.⁵ In some instances, in order to evaluate the research objectives both in its magnitude and depth, mixed-method research employs both qualitative and quantitative methods.⁶ There may be an array of diverse opinions, views and qualitative findings which serve as appendages to quantitative results. Both research

methodologies are thought to be well-crafted foil for one another rather than diametrically opposed entities.

It is up to the authors to decide about the study design of their study.¹

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Author's reply:

Thank you very much for your query. Our research published in the June 2010 issue, was a truly qualitative study design (KAP study). Here incidental disease findings for oral mucosal pathology were recorded among a student's population. Structured questions with affirmation/negation were queried. Qualitative or quantitative researches are difficult to single out as they substantive from one another in our findings.

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