

Using an Online Platform for Conducting Face-To-Face Interviews

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Abstract

Semi-structured interviews are useful for exploring participants experiences, understandings, and opinions on a particular issue. Traditionally, interviews have taken place in-person however, because of in-person restrictions with Covid-19, and with the changing landscape of online connection, opportunities have arisen for how to conduct interviews using an online platform. The purpose of this article is to highlight the first author's experiences with using an online platform to conduct face-to-face interviews and the valuable contribution that online interviewing could offer as a valid research tool that differs to that of in-person face-to-face interviews. Online semi-structured interviews were conducted with fourteen midwives and five pregnant people from New Zealand using Microsoft Teams. Interviews were videorecorded and conducted as part of a larger mixed methods multiphase study to explore participants experiences with how they use communication technology to connect with one another. The interviews took place between September 2022 – May 2023. Two key areas which highlight the benefits and challenges with online interviews were identified. These were around the potential to 'capture the essence of the person' and through the flexibility of the technology in enabling FTF connections. Challenges were also noted around connectivity issues. Videorecording online interviews offered an ability to capture the 'essence of the person' through visual and auditory cues. These same cues were shown to assist with lipreading when transcribing inaudible words which can assist in the analysis of data. There were disruptions to some interviews due to interviewing taking place in the person's home and connectivity issues, however, these were felt to be minimal. Online interviewing should not be considered a 'poor relation' to in-person face-to-face interviews, but instead, a valuable option that contributes towards the growing body of knowledge around online interviewing as a valid research tool that is different from face-to-face.

Keywords

online platform, co-presence, flexibility and convenience, video conferencing

Introduction

Interviews are a way to explore in greater detail with participants their experiences, understandings, and opinions of a particular issue than would otherwise be possible through a questionnaire or survey (Burns & Grove, 1993; Gillis & Jackson, 2002). Traditionally, interviews have taken place in-person however, due to the ubiquitous nature of communication technology, a variety of online methods and platforms have arisen such as podcast interviews (Jorgensen & Lindgren, 2022; Newman & Gallo, 2019), or asynchronous and synchronous online interviewing (Bampton et al., 2013; Lobe & Morgan, 2021; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019; O'Connor & Madge, 2017). Online interviews can take place either asynchronously through emailing

questions to participants and gathering responses that way (Bampton et al., 2013), or via synchronous (real-time) means such as using an online chat room, face-to-face (FTF) via video technology which mimic an in-person FTF interview (Lobe & Morgan, 2021).

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Online interviews are increasingly being used via online platforms such as Skype, Facetime, Google Hangouts and Zoom and enable people in different geographical locations to communicate in real-time (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Gray et al., 2020; Hanna & Mwale, 2017; Jenner & Myers, 2019; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019; Tucker & Parker, 2019). There are mixed responses within the literature regarding the advantages or disadvantages with online FTF interviews versus in-person FTF interviews. While online FTF interviews offer the opportunity to visually see the person and pick up on body language, the visual cues are limited due to only seeing the person from the shoulders up (Hanna & Mwale, 2017). 't Hart (2023) argues that the importance of being physically in the same space as someone else is necessary for an emotional connection that is 'fostered by the interviewer and participant sitting together in silence and communicating via the physicality of body cues' which is missing when moving to an online format (p. 23). Other studies have identified no differences between the two and found that participants are more likely to share when FTF online rather than in-person due to the space and distance with which the interview is taking place (Jenner & Myers, 2019; Self, 2021). For people who are socially awkward, or who feel uncomfortable interacting in-person, the online platform is possibly liberating as it enables connections to occur in a less confronting or intimidating manner than being in-person (Allred & Atkin, 2020). Online interviews have also been shown to be advantageous in enabling the participant to feel more comfortable without having to worry about inviting the researcher into their home or workplace (De Villiers et al., 2021).

Prior to the global Covid-19 pandemic, online FTF interviewing in comparison to in-person FTF interviewing was still considered relatively uncommon (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; O'Connor & Madge, 2017), however, in response to restrictions on in-person FTF interactions, researchers needed to adapt the way they collected interview data during this time ('t Hart, 2023; O'Sullivan et al., 2021; Self, 2021). Technology is continually evolving, and alongside this, developments, and improvements in infrastructure to ensure equity and access to the technology. In New Zealand for example, there is recognition around the need for equity and accessibility to technology which will result in 99.8% of the population expecting to have access to broadband and mobile coverage by 2023 (New Zealand Health and Disability System Review, 2019). Globally, the need for connectivity is recognised as a basic human right, with the need to "*develop the infrastructure for information and communication technologies...to promote equitable, affordable and universal access*" (World Health Organization, 2021, p. 4). With the move to promoting equitable and affordable access to digital technologies, there is likely less tolerance towards undertaking costly travel to attend in-person meetings/interviews, if these can instead be conducted in an online format, and especially when considering the impact travel has on climate change.

In November 2016, the legally binding international treaty on climate change known as the Paris Agreement came into force with the aim of limiting global warming to 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels by substantially reducing greenhouse gas emissions (United Nations Climate change, n.d.). As a result, New Zealand have set goals around reducing petrol and greenhouse gas emissions (Ministry for the Environment, 2022). So, moving qualitative data collection techniques to online forums has potential to contribute towards sustainability of our planet.

As people become more comfortable with accessing and using technology, they are potentially becoming less comfortable and more anxious with in-person FTF situations (Allred & Atkin, 2020; Rotondi et al., 2017). Further to this, society has become more familiar with using video technology to connect and communicate with one another as a result of Covid-19 restrictions on in-person contact both on a personal level and in the move to 'work from home' (Costa et al., 2022; Green et al., 2020). Use of video-technology has increasingly been used within healthcare through Telehealth which requires a video consultation between a health professional and health consumer (Lupton & Maslen, 2017; Ministry of Health, 2020). This could be considered not too dissimilar to interviews being conducted online by a researcher and participant.

The world is changing around how people are communicating with one another. Consideration is therefore needed on how to combine the best parts of in-person interviews with the best parts of communication technology to create valid and reliable ways of gathering data that not only captures the essence and benefits that comes with being 'in-person', but that are sustainable and economically beneficial for all concerned. There is a need therefore to open and develop further dialogue around how this might look when conducting qualitative FTF research. Is there a need for in-person interviews when they can just as easily be conducted in an online format? Can FTF interviews conducted in an online format still capture the 'essence' or 'nuances' of in-person connections, and if so, how can this be achieved? The implications are such, that problems with connectivity that were identified early on with technology may not be so prevalent in the 2020's given the improvements in infrastructure to create a more accessible and equitable service.

This paper reports on the experiences of the first author in conducting online FTF interviews with fourteen midwives and five pregnant women/people on how they use communication technology to connect with one another. It is important to note that asking participants about their experiences with being interviewed online did not form part of the interview schedule. Instead, the insights offered are based on the experiences with using an online platform to conduct the interviews. Any comments made by participants came up as part of the interview indirectly, however, they provide further insight into the overall discussions around how using an online format for conducting

interviews can be considered a valid research tool that is different from in-person FTF interviews.

Aim

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the first author's experiences with using an online platform to conduct FTF semi-structured interviews with midwives and pregnant women/people in New Zealand. The online FTF interviews provide insight into the valuable contribution that online interviews offer as a valid research tool that differs to that of in-person FTF interviews.

Methodology

A mixed methods multi-phase sequential transformative design was used to explore how communication technology is used between midwives and pregnant women/people in New Zealand. The theoretical framework guiding the research is the evidenced informed Quality Maternal and Newborn Care (QMNC) framework developed by leading midwifery researchers (Renfrew et al., 2014). The researchers undertook a meta-synthesis of qualitative studies which explored women's/people's perspectives and experiences of maternity care. A systematic review of studies reporting on workforce groups providing maternity care was also undertaken to identify effective and ineffective practices. The results from these analyses identified five essential characteristics that were needed to ensure high quality care that would meet the needs of women/people and their babies. The five categories informing the framework are (1) Identification of practice categories (aspects that were important to women); (2) organisation of care; (3) values; (4) philosophy; and (5) characteristics of the care providers. Their findings showed that when care was provided in an individualised and respectful manner, women felt strengthened and empowered (Renfrew et al., 2014). The framework therefore was ideal to explore how communication technology contributes towards quality maternal and newborn care through the identification of effective and ineffective communication technology practices used by midwives and pregnant women/people.

A transformative lens has also been taken throughout this mixed-methods research to 'give voice' to the participants in the study. A transformative lens "ensures improvement in human interests and society through addressing issues of power and social relationships" (Sweetman et al., 2010, p. 441). An opportunity to highlight a transformative approach is shown through identifying the potential contribution that FTF online interviews can make within the field of qualitative research. This is important, particularly within a culture of changing communication technology practices, where participants may not feel comfortable within an in-person setting (Biglbauer & Lauri Korajlija, 2023; Floridi, 2014).

Methods

Online semi-structured interviews were conducted with midwives and pregnant women/people during the second phase of a mixed method multi-phase sequential transformative study. In keeping with a sequential design, the findings from the online survey in phase one of the study informed questions for the semi-structured interviews in phase two of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Setting

The online FTF interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams with midwives and pregnant women/people in New Zealand from September 2022 – May 2023. The first author and participants were geographically dispersed around the country, and each connected online to the interview from their own homes.

Participants

In this second phase of the mixed methods multi-phase study, participants who had previously undertaken an online survey in phase one, had indicated they were happy to take part in an interview by clicking on the last question of the survey. This question took them to a separate window which asked them to provide contact details. Fourteen midwives and five pregnant women/people indicated they were interested in taking part in an online interview. The first author then emailed the participants inviting them to take part in an online interview. Once they had agreed to be interviewed, a participant information form and consent form were then emailed to participants and a time was then negotiated for the online interview. Online interviews took between 40-60 minutes.

Piloting the Online Interviews

Prior to commencing online interviews, a 'test run' using the Microsoft (MS) Teams platform was undertaken with a midwifery colleague who had not been involved in the online survey nor would be a participant in the online interview. Microsoft (MS) Teams was selected due to the first author's familiarity with using this platform. Despite this, there was still uncertainty around how conducting an online interview using the recording and transcription service would perform. Familiarity and comfort with the technology and interview guide are important prior to conducting interviews to identify any potential difficulties with the software (De Villiers et al., 2021; Gray et al., 2020; Hanna & Mwale, 2017; Tucker & Parker, 2019). Piloting the interview was beneficial as it enabled the first author to not only test the questions, but importantly, to identify if there were any issues with either the connectivity, recording or transcription function when using the platform.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. [Braun and Clarke \(2022\)](#) outline a six-step process which includes 1) familiarisation with data, 2) coding, 3) generation of initial themes, 4) developing and reviewing themes, 5) refining, defining, and naming themes, and 6) write up. The first author undertook the analysis of the data and met regularly with the other two authors to discuss the coding and development of themes.

Findings from the interviews are not included in this paper and are under review for publication in other journals. This paper however, reports on the experiences and insights gained from the first author in using an online platform to conduct FTF interviews. Ethical approval was obtained and granted by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (20/279).

Findings and Discussion

Two key areas were identified by the first author that could potentially contribute towards the value of online interviews within the field of qualitative research. These areas highlight the benefits and challenges with online interviews. There are benefits with conducting online interviews through the potential to 'capture the essence of the person' and through the flexibility of the technology in enabling FTF connections. Challenges were noted around connectivity and participants' preferences for in-person interviews. The following highlight how these contributions are made using online FTF interviews. It is important to reiterate, that the findings and discussions are presented as insights that were gathered from the first author when conducting online FTF interviews with midwives and pregnant women/people.

Benefits with Online Interviewing

Capturing the 'Essence of the Person'. Online platforms such as MS Teams which include videoconferencing as one of its features enables both the participant and the researcher to connect from different locations and to 'be seen' synchronously in real time. When conducting the online interview, participants could choose whether to have their video camera on or switched off and all participants were asked whether they were happy for the interview to be recorded. These choices are part of a person's right to self-determination and autonomy ([Borbasi & Jackson, 2016](#)). Only one participant chose to keep their video off, and for this interview, the recording was solely audio-recorded, though the researcher kept their video on so was visible to the participant. Being visible to participants has been shown to be important in enabling participants to respond to the researcher's non-verbal cues as well as contributing towards establishing rapport ([Archibald et al., 2019](#)). It is acknowledged however, that there was not an ability for the researcher to pick up on visual cues during this interview,

which could potentially impact on the quality of the interview, ([Novick, 2008](#)), however, the focus then became reliant on the intonations used with the participants voice, as would be the case if the interview was conducted over a telephone ([Novick, 2008](#)).

One of the main advantages with videorecording the online interview was being able to focus on what the participant was saying during the interview knowing that the visual cues and non-verbal/body language would be captured during the recording. Interviews with midwives and pregnant women/people were only conducted online, so it is not possible to make comparisons between in-person FTF or online FTF. However, there is evidence to suggest that when researchers have conducted both, there is little difference noted between the gathering of information between the two situations.

[Jenner and Myers \(2019\)](#) found that their Skype interviews closely resembled the in-person FTF interviews in terms of depth of data and information shared by participants. In a similar manner, [Sedgwick and Spiers \(2009\)](#) noted that their use of videoconferencing for interviews with students were conducted in a conversational type of manner due to the ability for participants to be FTF. This would suggest, that 'the essence' of being in the same space during the interview was able to be captured using an online format through the ability to visually respond to the participant's cues, maintain eye contact and conduct 'active listening' responses with umms and ahhs as would normally occur in an in-person FTF context. [De Villiers et al. \(2021\)](#) found that researchers use facial expressions and other forms of body language to build rapport when conducting interviews online via a videocall. This was the case for interviews with midwives and pregnant women/people. Maintaining eye-contact via a screen was enhanced by strategically placing the interview schedule in front of the laptop in an unobtrusive manner which encouraged asking and responding to questions in a more natural and conversational manner. This enabled eye contact to be maintained during the interview with just a quick glance to ensure areas were covered. Towards the end of the interview, the first author made a reference to the interview guide to ensure nothing had been missed.

Co-present, or absent presence are terms used to describe people being present but not physically in the same space ([Gergen, 2002](#); [Haddouk, 2015](#)). [Haddouk \(2015\)](#) discusses the notion of presence at a distance, and the emotional connection that is still made despite not physically being in the same space as a person. Each of the participants in our study had been asked about their comfort when using technology, to gauge if there was a connection between usage and comfort level. All participants responded to being comfortable with using a variety of platforms when connecting with others. There is evidence to suggest that the more a person uses technology, the more comfortable and satisfied they are with using this technology ([Swanson et al., 2018](#)). There is further evidence to suggest that the more people use communication technology, the less comfortable they feel when in in-person

situations (Biglbauer & Korajlija, 2023; Rotondi et al., 2017). Floridi (2014) suggests how we use communication technology is changing the way we communicate which may potentially impact on future generations' comfort with in-person interviews. Online FTF interviews may be beneficial in helping to connect people who otherwise feel uncomfortable when in an in-person situation. The benefits in using the technology to enable these connections to occur can be highlighted further through the flexibility and convenience of the technology when undertaking online FTF interviews.

Flexibility and Convenience in Enabling Face-To-Face Connection. One of the key findings in our study conducted with midwives and pregnant people on how they use communication technology to connect with one another, highlighted the flexibility and convenience of the technology in enabling these connections to happen (K. Wakelin et al., 2023; K. J. Wakelin et al., 2023). In a similar way, the flexibility and convenience with how the technology was used was noted when undertaking FTF interviews using an online platform.

There was flexibility offered for participants to connect via technology through a link emailed to them. They could then join the interview via a computer, lap-top or mobile phone. This was advantageous as it enabled the researcher and participant to 'be present' virtually without the associated costs required in time and travel that would be required to attend an in-person interview (Archibald et al., 2019; Gray et al., 2020; Lobe & Morgan, 2021; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019; Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). As well, as having potential environmental benefits such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions (Ministry for the Environment, 2022).

The flexibility with using communication technology for online interviews has occurred all the way through the process. This began with emailing participants the information and consent forms prior to the interview beginning, using the online platform screensharing facility, and using the video-recording and transcription functions that are then easily downloaded onto a password protected device. The screen sharing facility on MS Teams enabled the first author to go through the participant information form and consent form with the participant at the beginning of the interview (just as they would if the interview was being conducted in-person FTF). Advantages of screensharing has also been identified with other online interviews (Gray et al., 2020).

Having conducted a trial run interview with a colleague prior to the first interview provided the first author with an ability to trust the functionality of the online platform. This trust provided a sense of freedom during the interview knowing that there would be opportunity to review the interview in its entirety at a later stage and to observe again verbal and non-verbal body language. This ability to relive the interview has similarly been identified as an advantage over in-person or telephone interviews (Sedgwick & Spiers, 2009). Being able to relive the interview through watching the videorecording was invaluable during both the familiarisation

and coding phases as part of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The first author was able to be transported back to the interview and listen and observe the nuances, facial expressions, and body language of the participant during the interview.

Following the recording, the transcription was downloaded onto an electronic word document. The videorecording was then reviewed against the transcription. The video recording function enabled play forward 10 seconds, and play backwards 10 seconds along with pause, play and stop functions. It was convenient to be able to rewind by 10 seconds, as this was often all that was needed if there was a word that was slightly inaudible, or if the transcription had incorrectly scribed a word. In these situations, rewatching the video provided an ability to lipread while listening to what the participant was saying so that the correct word could be identified. Without this ability to view the recording, transcribing would have been more difficult and potentially more time-consuming while trying to play and replay to capture the inaudible word. For example, in the interview with pregnant woman/person, Jane (not her real name), the original transcript from the Teams recording was:

"I kind of said to her if it was ever an emergency or mastering that I wanted to know, I would call" (Jane).

The word 'mastering' didn't seem to be in context, however, when the recording was reviewed, the first author was able to lip-read while listening to Jane. In doing so, was able to correctly identify that what Jane said was:

"I kind of said to her if it was ever an emergency or a fast thing that I wanted to know, I would call" (Jane).

The term a 'fast thing' made sense, as Jane was discussing what she would need to do if she needed to contact her midwife quickly.

While reviewing the transcription still took time (approximately 3 hours for a 45-min interview), being able to capture both the video recording and transcription at the same time using the functions available on the computer was an efficient way to collect data. Further to this, having an ability to relive the interview by watching the recording gave the first author a sense of being back in the interview when transcribing and analysing the data. It was also convenient to make notes in a comment box using the 'review' tab on the word document alongside the transcriptions as various thoughts came to mind, adding to the convenience with using technology.

The convenience with attending an online interview which could be attended by the participant from their own home, meant all participants attended the interview. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) also found a similar finding in their study with all participants showing up to online interviews. The flexibility and convenience with using technology was further

highlighted when communicating with a participant who had been unable to attend their initial interview due to an adverse weather event which had cut electricity and internet. A follow-up email was sent to the participant by the researcher, and another day and time was negotiated. In another incident, a midwife was running late due to the on-call nature of midwifery practice and had texted the first author. The online interview was delayed by half an hour. In these situations, the challenges brought about in using communication technology could have impacted on the interview, however, the convenience with the technology meant it was easy to re-connect and re-schedule for a later time. The convenience with being able to communicate and reschedule appointments were similar findings reported by participants in our study when using communication technology to connect with one another (K. J. Wakelin et al., 2023).

Challenges with Online Interviewing

While online interviews were conducted with 19 participants, only one of the participants in our study indicated they would have preferred an 'in-person' interview rather than online due to an inability to fully get a sense of the person. As indicated earlier, participants weren't asked about their experiences with being interviewed online, however Alana (not her real name) offered this insight during the interview.

"I wanted to do it [interview] in person because there's a whole lot of nuances from you that I can't read. There's your body language that I can't read. I can see you like you see me from here up, but that's only a quarter of the picture. There's a whole lot of communication that's just not here. And to me, I'm only getting a little bit, I suppose, because I'm such a visual person with my complexities around reading and writing" (Alana).

't Hart (2023) suggests that the screen acts as a barrier as there is a lack of emotion when not physically present with another person and reduces the connection to a disembodied one, where the person is visualised from the shoulders up. Hanna and Mwale (2017), would agree with having identified the online video call as limiting the ability to pick up on the essence of the person. While Alana's preference would have been for an 'in-person' interview, she also accepted that due to the challenges and uncertainty around isolation requirements with Covid-19, online FTF interviews were the next best thing to being in-person, as you can still 'see the person'. De Villiers et al. (2021) also found a similar finding in their study, when in-person FTF interviews were unable to be conducted.

The initial uncertainties presented by Covid-19 and the potential for social distancing requirements, was potentially problematic with conducting in-person FTF interviews. However, it has highlighted how using an online format to conduct FTF interviews is not only a valid way to gather data but can be a preferable option for participants when given the choice. Once Covid-19 isolation restrictions were lifted,

participants were offered an opportunity for online or in-person interviews. These later participants chose to be interviewed online and negotiated for these interviews to take place when they were at home during the day. This would suggest that participants felt more comfortable and relaxed being interviewed in their own environment.

There is evidence to suggest that being interviewed at home via an online platform can be challenging if there are interruptions or distractions (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016). Brief interruptions were noted with some of the interviews taking place in the participants' homes. In one of the interviews, the participant's dog began barking (in another room), another participant responded to a phone call during the interview, and in a third situation, the participant was expecting a delivery. In the first situation, the recording continued while the participant attended to their dog. In the second situation, the researcher paused the recording during the phone call, out of respect for the private conversation between the midwife and their client. In the last situation, the participant asked for the interview to be stopped while they attended to the delivery matter and then reconnected afterwards. In each of these situations, the flow of the conversation was interrupted, and therefore there was potential for this interference to have impacted on the integrity of the interview. However, the participants seemed able to pick back up on the discussion with prompting from the researcher.

The first author when reflecting on the interviews noted, that in the first two situations, the participants didn't ask for the recording to be stopped or paused. It appears they had almost forgotten the recordings were taking place. It may be, that due to the 'Covid times', people had become use to connecting online with family and friends while continuing with their normal routines. Or possibly, because the interviews were not taking place in-person, the disruptions seemed less obvious to the participants. For example, had the phone call happened during an in-person interview, the participant may have excused themselves to another location to undertake the conversation, as the researcher would have been physically sitting in the same room as the participant. Lee (2004) noted in their review on the use of recording devices with interviews, that the unobtrusive nature of the tape recorder when used for interviews may serve to desensitize a participant's experience. This could be one explanation for why the participants seemed unaffected by the online videorecording of the interview, and why pausing of the recording was not asked for by the first two participants in the scenarios described above.

A potential challenge around the functionality of using video technology when conducting online FTF interviews, is the reliance on the connectivity or the internet. Poor internet connections can be problematic in that it can interfere with the flow of the interview and can therefore compromise the quality of the data collection (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Hanna & Mwale, 2017; Mirick & Wladkowski, 2019). However, in the online interviews conducted with midwives and pregnant people, this was only an issue in one of the interviews and

once the researcher became aware, was able to repeat the question. The video had frozen but not the audio connection. There didn't appear otherwise to have any disruption to the flow, and in fact, it provided the researcher with another opportunity to ask the question and the participant an opportunity to expand further on what they had initially been saying.

Limitations

A limitation of this paper is that the findings and discussion draw on the insights identified by the first author while interviewing participants in phase two of a larger mixed methods multi-phase study. This paper is unable to report actual findings around the participants experiences with being interviewed in an online format. However, they do highlight the potential for further research opportunities around using online platforms for conducting FTF interviews.

One participant chose not to have their video on during the interview. Further exploration around 'camera off' within the context of an interview, could be further explored.

Recommendations

There are two recommendations to be made which support using an online platform when conducting FTF interviews.

1. For participants who may not feel comfortable with in-person FTF interviews, online interviewing offers an opportunity for people to feel comfortable when connecting with a researcher. This is important, as it perhaps provides an explanation for why offering interviews using an online platform are a valid and beneficial way to gather data.
2. Using an online platform for conducting interviews should not be considered a 'poor relation' to in-person FTF interviews, but instead can help contribute towards the growing body of knowledge around online interviewing as a valid research tool that is different from FTF.

Recommendations for Further Research

This paper highlights the valuable role online platforms offer when conducting FTF interviews. Further research is needed to validate this method which could also help with achieving global environmental and climate goals through reducing the need for extensive travel. This could include:

1. Interviewing researchers on their experiences with using online platforms when conducting in-person interviews.
2. Interviewing participants on their experiences when interviewed by a researcher using an online platform.

Conclusion

The decision to undertake online interviews FTF via video technology with midwives and pregnant women/people was initially a pragmatic one due to the challenges with the global Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions around in-person contact. However, given the changing landscape with how communication technology is used to enable people to connect, the first author's experiences with conducting FTF interviews via an online platform, highlights the valuable contribution that online platforms offer as a valid research tool. They enable the essence of the person to be captured through responding to visual and auditory cues from the participant and to conduct the interview in a conversational type of manner. The ability to visually lip read what the participant is saying if there were missed words during the recording was valuable in contributing towards the analysis and interpretation of data that was used in phase two of the mixed methods multi-phase study with midwives and pregnant women/people. There is convenience in being able to conduct interviews online FTF from geographically dispersed locations which saves time and resources for both the researcher and participant and helps to contribute towards meeting global environmental goals. While connectivity and disruptions were identified in a few of the interviews, these appeared to have minimal impact.

This paper highlights the valuable contribution that online FTF interviewing can potentially offer when conducting interviews, and to be considered as a valuable option for data collection alongside in-person FTF interviews. There will always be some people who prefer the in-person experience, however, for others, having the ability to conduct interviews FTF via an online platform is just as effective and in fact may be preferable.

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Author Contributions

This manuscript is the first author's (Karen Wakelin) original work and will be included as part of her PhD thesis with publication. Karen Wakelin: Conceptualisation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing-Original draft. Judith McAra-Couper: Reviewing and Editing. Tania Fleming: Reviewing and Editing. The article has not received prior publication and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors have seen and approved the manuscript being submitted.

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