

A CRITICAL REVIEW OF GROUNDED THEORY USE IN INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Background: Grounded Theory (GT) is a research methodology predominantly used with qualitative data. The purpose of the present study is to critically evaluate the use of GT in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) studies.

Methods: A systematic literature review was performed using keywords *Grounded Theory* and *IBD* in Pubmed, EMBASE and Scopus with no time limits. Assessment of GT was performed using standard criteria suggested by Glaser [1] and Charmaz [2]. The application of the following basic principles was examined: simultaneous data collection and analysis; construction of analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses; use of constant comparative method; advancement of theory development during each step of data collection and analysis; memo-writing; sampling aimed toward theory construction (theoretical); Literature review after the core category emergence.

Results: Fifteen studies have used GT investigating patient education, quality of life, experiences with therapeutic strategies or coping mechanisms in IBD, providing theories based on emerging categories. About half of all studies have applied the basic principles of GT, with the remaining studies being unclear or having not applied them. The most reported principle was Glaserian selective coding and least reported were memoing, theoretical sampling and the achievement of theoretical completeness, while the identification of the core category was unclear in many instances (Figure 1). These weaknesses are attributed predominantly to methodological, verification and reporting bias.

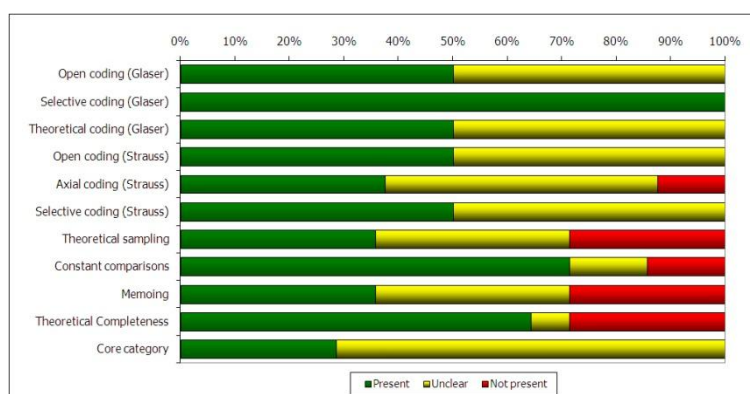


Figure 1. Summary of Methodological Risk

Conclusions: The main advantage of GT studies remains the generation of theory that can be applied in practice, reinforced by the presentation of conceptual prospects for testing new variables in quantitative studies. Overall, the contribution of Grounded Theory studies to IBD should be based on more rigorous methodology and aim to challenge rather than confirm existing conceptions with the purpose of advancing knowledge in the field.

REFERENCES

- [1] Glaser BG, (1998), *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*, Sociology Press, Mill Valley, CA
- [2] Charmaz K, (2006), *Constructing grounded theory: a practical guide through qualitative analysis*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.