

Audiovisual conference technology in qualitative research: Lessons learned from conducting a descriptive study during the COVID-19 pandemic

Adriana Caballero-Pérez¹

Abstract

Semi-structured interviews are a research method that allows the researcher to solicit narrative accounts of individual experiences. Researchers use online semi-structured interviews for data collection in qualitative studies, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. This article reflects on and contribute to the ongoing debate about the implementation of online semi-structured interviews. Drawing on the researcher's own experiences from conducting the study "*Voting Matters: An Analysis of the Use of Electoral-Assistive Devices through the Lens of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*";² she discusses four main aspects of online semi-structured interviews implementation: (a) using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) as an adaptation and methodological alternative to conducting interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic; (b) brief content-based literature recommendations for using VoIP in qualitative research; (c) use of the Zoom platform; and (d) key lessons learned from using Zoom for individual and focus group coordination and implementation. This article concludes that VoIP is a promising technology to host individual and focus group interviews for a qualitative study. Lessons learned might be helpful to researchers considering VoIP to collect individual and focus group data in qualitative research, mainly during the coordination phase.

Keywords: qualitative interviews; information and communication technology; audiovisual conference technology

Tecnologías de videoconferencia en la investigación cualitativa: Lecciones aprendidas de un estudio descriptivo en tiempos de la pandemia por COVID-19

Resumen

Las entrevistas semi estructuradas son un método de investigación cualitativa que permite recopilar datos sobre las experiencias de los participantes a partir de sus propias narraciones. En investigación cualitativa, y, particularmente, durante la pandemia por el virus del Covid-19, la realización de entrevistas semi estructuradas en modalidad virtual fue una estrategia adoptada por investigadores para la recolección de datos. Este artículo genera aportes reflexivos al debate actual sobre la realización de entrevistas en línea. Con base en su experiencia en el estudio "*Votar cuenta: una mirada al uso de dispositivos de asistencia tecnológica para*

¹ Abogada (Colombia). M.A. Sociología (Universidad Nacional de Colombia). LMM en Derecho Internacional de los Derechos Humanos (Lund University). Investigadora en DARE "Disability Advocacy Research in Europe". Estudiante de doctorado en la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad de Maastricht, Países Bajos. / Lawyer (Colombia). M.A. in Sociology (Universidad Nacional de Colombia). LLM in International Human Rights Law (Lund University). ESR in the DARE project 'Disability Advocacy Research in Europe'. PhD Researcher at the Faculty of Law, Maastricht University, The Netherlands. E-mail: accaballerop@gmail.com Orcid: 0000-0002-5618-3323

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votar a la luz de la Convención Internacional sobre los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad”,³ la autora reflexiona sobre los siguientes aspectos: (a) uso de ‘Voz sobre protocolo de Internet’ (VoIP) como una alternativa metodológica para la realización de entrevistas durante la pandemia; (b) algunas recomendaciones para el uso de VoIP en la investigación cualitativa con base en la revisión de literatura; (c) uso de la plataforma de videoconferencia Zoom; y (d) lecciones aprendidas para el uso de Zoom en la coordinación de entrevistas. Este artículo concluye que VoIP es un tipo de tecnología que resulta útil para la realización de entrevistas en investigación cualitativa. Las lecciones aprendidas que se comparten pueden ser útiles para otros investigadores que utilicen VoIP en investigación cualitativa a través de entrevistas semi estructuradas.

Palabras clave: entrevistas cualitativas; tecnologías de la información y comunicación; tecnologías de videoconferencia

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Introduction

Semi-structured interviews, in the form of focus groups and individual interviews, are a common research method used in qualitative research. A focus group is a cognitive-behaviour research method based on a discussion within a group of participants who share similar characteristics, but who might not know one another (Roulston, 2019). Morgan (2011) asserts that focus groups stimulate the interventions and participants' creativity, and can be used "to define manipulations of independent variables" (p. 28). In research with qualitative data, focus groups have gained popularity because of their open format and flexibility of implementation (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021). Individual interviews are defined as an encounter between the researcher and interviewees aimed at understanding the informant's perspectives on a particular topic or experiences in a particular situation, and in their own words (King et al., 2019). In the context of semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a general plan for the topic to be discussed in the interview but does not follow a fixed order of questions or word of these questions in a specific way (Packer, 2011). Facilitating semi-structured interviews for respondents with disabilities, and particularly intellectual disabilities is recommended by Høybråten & Garrels (2018) to provide the interviewees with a wide margin of discretion to answer questions, including the way they answer, length of their responses, and even topics that they can talk about. In short, the aim of a semi-structured interview in the form of focus group or individual interviews is to encourage research participants to speak 'in their own words' to obtain a first-person account.

In the ongoing study "Voting Matters: An Analysis of the Use of Electoral-Assistive Devices through the Lens of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" (hereinafter: "Voting Matters"), semi-structured interviews, in the form of focus groups and individual interviews, have been used by the author of this article for two reasons. Firstly, for both methods research participants (i.e., voters with disabilities and election officials from England and Spain) can provide narrative accounts of their own experiences in using electoral-assistive devices to vote, e.g., magnifiers, easy-to-read voter education materials, tactile ballot guides, or electronic voting machines using screen enlargement applications. Secondly, focus groups and individual interviews recognize individuals as "active partners" in the research process (Høybråten & Garrels, 2018). In the study "Voting Matters", persons with disabilities are not considered as "research objects" who share their experiences, but as active participants contributing social and political recommendations arising from this study.

Briefly, the study "Voting Matters" is current research carried out by the author of this article. It focuses on the *de facto* realization of the right to vote by persons with disabilities, or the 'opportunity' to enjoy this right on an equal basis with others, as endorsed in Article 29(a) United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD). It argues that making assistive technology devices available for use by persons with disabilities throughout the electoral process is an important positive measure for abolishing discrimination and the multiple barriers that persons with disabilities face when attempting to vote in elections. This is also a concrete positive (active) measure for achieving greater accessibility in the voting environment. The data collection through focus groups and individual interviews took place from September 2020 to March 2021. Of the (n=42) research participants who participated in the interviews, 47.6% (n=20) were from England, and 52.4% (n=22) were from Spain. Focus groups involved (n=28) persons with disabilities from England or Spain older than 18 years old, who were male or female, and who had voting experiences at European, national, or local levels. The impairment type of each research participant was not a criterion for recruitment. Rather, certain disability-related characteristics, such as having experience in using an assistive device and having available personal assistants were criteria for recruitment. Individual interviews were used to collect data from (n=14) election officials who had experience of making electoral-assistive devices available for voters with disabilities on election day. Individual interviews were also used in certain cases

with persons with disabilities who preferred to participate in the study individually and not within a group setting. Election officials interviewed in the study “Voting Matters” were men or women older than 18 years old from England or Spain who had performed, or preferably, still perform, duties such as official tasks for local electoral authorities, poll workers or election observers. Lastly, it is noteworthy that the semi-structured interviews preserved anonymity and provided for consent in line with the ethics clearance received for this study from the Ethical Review Committee Inner City Faculties (ERCIC) at Maastricht University (reference ERCIC_165_11_12_2019).

Noteworthy, the study “Voting Matters” has been conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, when countries, including England and Spain, adopted different measures to slow the spread of the virus. Countries limited travel possibilities, quarantined citizens and residents, and prohibited gatherings in response to the virus. These measures challenged the original modality of in-person interviews as proposed in the 2019 first ethics submission to the ERCIC. Face to face interaction, based on the physical presence of research participants and the researcher at the same location was no longer possible and the research required adaptation and an alternative methodology. Therefore, a second submission was made to the ERCIC in June 2020 regarding an amendment to the initial methodological approach. This submission outlined a move from in-person interviews to an online approach during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERCIC concluded that there were no ethical objections to the execution of the research project as amended. Accordingly, the researcher used Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology for data collection. Based on the empirical work carried out for the study “Voting Matters”, the objective of this article is to reflect on specific aspects of implementing online semi-structured interviews and lessons learned by the researcher. These lessons might be helpful to researchers considering VoIP to carry out individual and focus group data collection in qualitative research, mainly during the coordination phase.

This article is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, section 2 involves an explanation on the interaction with research participants of the interviews, which was conducted entirely through VoIP (or “virtual networking”). Section 2 briefly addresses recommendations for using VoIP in qualitative research based on a literature review. Section 3 discusses main lessons learned from using Zoom platform, primarily during the coordination and implementation stages. Section 4 provides a summary of the lessons learned as discussed in the previous section. Finally, Section 5 elicits some preliminary conclusions.

Discussion

Introduction to Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

In the study “Voting Matters,” VoIP technology was proposed as an adaptation to the methodology. VoIP is a method and group of technologies to delivery voice communications and multimedia sessions over Internet Protocol (IP) (VoIP.org, 2021, 1st November). It facilitates voice calls through a broadband Internet (or high speed) connection instead of a regular (or analogue) phone line (Gest, 2015). Elixmann et al., (2008) define VoIP as the delivery of voice services over networks based wholly or partly on IP. In short, VoIP services convert people’s voices into digital signals that travel through the Internet. It connects people through virtual networking. VoIP also takes the center stage of recent debates on the implementation of qualitative research in the context of infectious epidemics, where face to face interaction with research participants needs adaptation and methodological alternatives (Vindrola-Padros et al., 2020), as examined below.

Brief recommendations for using VoIP in qualitative research based on a literature review

VoIP technology has increasingly been recognized as a scientific process for research inquiries (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010; Weller, 2017). Weller (2017) identifies two main advantages of using VoIP in qualitative research. Firstly, VoIP facilitates convergence of voice, data, and video calls to landlines and mobile devices, which enables low-cost data collection in real time across the Internet. Secondly, VoIP allows recording video and voice calls. The voice recording function offers the same voice-to-text function as portable audio recorders, which is useful when analyzing the data with other software like Atlas Ti or NVivo (Weller, 2017).

According to introductory texts, the novelty of using VoIP in qualitative research results from five principal VoIP's features: (a) software with VoIP requires informed consent from users (Nehls et al., 2014). Usually, software with VoIP asks the interlocutor or research participant to consent to joining in the meeting and connecting computer video and audio; (b) VoIP gives the organizer or researcher the option to activate video and audio recording functions (Reid & Reid, 2005); (c) VoIP offers participants an opportunity to share information that they might not feel comfortable sharing in person (O'Connor & Madge, 2003) and to exit the virtual meeting-session whenever they want (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010); (d) VoIP has the potential to engage in research with hidden populations with the comfort of participating from a convenient location without the need to travel (Weller, 2017). In qualitative research, a population is known as "hidden" when no sampling frame exists and public acknowledgement of membership in the population is potentially threatening (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015); and (e) VoIP optimizes the use of the information contained in the video calls (Bertrand & Bourdeau, 2010), so non-verbal data are visible and do not depend on the researcher's sparse notes nor their memories. On the latter, Bertrand & Bourdeau (2010) assert that "The body movement's analysis offers, after the event, precious observations with the necessary condition that the exploitation of each case will be made with the same rigorous methodological protocol" (p.10).

In their studies, O'Connor & Madge (2003), Woodyatt et al., (2016), James & Busher (2016), and Nehls et al., (2014) used technologies, including VoIP software to conduct online focus groups and online interviews. O'Connor & Madge (2003) argue that online and face-to-face interviews are similar for the researcher, as both can be considered "conversations with a purpose" (p. 137). Similarly, Woodyatt et al., (2016), compare online focus groups to in-person focus groups concluding that online focus groups have the potential to produce a similar number of emerging themes and may be advantageous when discussing sensitive topics. There are, however, important limitations to consider when conducting online focus groups and interviews. One of them is the need for participants to have a device that can run VoIP, such as a computer, tablet, or mobile device (Vindrola-Padros, et al., 2020). Moreover, there are potential security and privacy risks (Stancanelli, 2010), potential interruptions (Reid & Reid, 2005) and, technological difficulties (Wettergren et al., 2016). Wettergren et al. (2016) suggest that these issues can be managed through solid research protocols, which must be in line with technical guidance of the software with VoIP to be used, such as Zoom Platform, as used in the study "Voting Matters."

Zoom is a video communication enterprise with a reliable cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, collaboration, chat, and webinars across mobile devices, desktops, telephones, and room systems. The researcher used Zoom to coordinate online focus groups and individual interviews. For present purposes, there are four main reasons for using Zoom. Firstly, Maastricht University (UM) offers its PhD researchers access to Zoom through a private subscription, which helps to reduce security and privacy risks. Secondly, Zoom data storage settings can be administered by the researcher of this study using her private account. Thirdly, Zoom

makes for easy conferencing even with users outside the company account and through computers, tablets, or mobile devices. Lastly, Zoom provides features such as multiple screen sharing to support web-based presentations, translation services, and interpreting services for persons with hearing impairments. Lesson learned by the researcher in using Zoom to conduct semi-structured interviews are described below.

Considerations

Based on the data collection process in the study “Voting Matters”, VoIP technology has offered the researcher a promising alternative means to carry out semi-structured interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online focus groups were used to collect information about experiences of voters with disabilities in using existing electoral-assistive tools in England and Spain. Online individual interviews were used to collect data from election officials’ experiences in making electoral-assistive devices available for use by voters with disabilities. In planning and implementing the interviews and focus groups with research participants, the researcher encountered several challenges. One challenge was that research participants were geographically dispersed. They were in two different European jurisdictions (England and Spain). Moreover, some participants with disabilities required different reasonable accommodations based on their individual needs and impairments. Accommodations for these participants included particular stimulus material used during focus group sessions to meet the learning and communicative processing abilities of the participants, such as computer-based PowerPoint presentations to provide pictorial memory aids. The researcher also provided participants with digital materials in alternative formats (e.g., large print, pictorial aids, and easy-to-read materials) and translated into Spanish for those participants from Spain. These combined individual-arrangement characteristics form an array of individual and focus groups scheduling challenges. From addressing these challenges, the following three main lessons were learned by the researcher.

Using several points of contact to build rapport with interviewees

In the study “Voting Matters”, participation of research informants was voluntary. Participants were not compensated for their time. Potential participants with disabilities were identified through collaborative work with Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs) and civil society networks from England and Spain. These key stakeholders were allies for recruitment purposes. DPOs were identified and selected by the researcher through the databases available on the websites of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Inclusion Europe, and European Disability Forum. The main representatives of the organizations received an invitation to contribute to recruitment through a written message (via the institutional email of the researcher). Wherever possible, potential participants were first approached by the organizations and then by the researcher, only on showing initial interest. Based on the responses, a list of potential participants was drafted. From the total of 28 participants with disabilities who took part in the focus groups, 13 were from England and 15 were from Spain. Depending on participants’ first choice, an initial contact via phone, Zoom call, or WhatsApp messaging took place with each potential interviewee who responded affirmatively to the invitation. This first point of contact was important for the researcher to explain the project’s objectives in more detail and ask potential participants about their individual needs and requests for accommodation.

Furthermore, the researcher learned that working collaboratively with DPOs for recruitment purposes was justified in two senses. Firstly, in terms of the composition of the groups. It was useful to work with preexisting groups, such as organization members, since individuals were already used to interacting in a group setting (Kroll et al., 2007). Secondly, when conducting the focus groups, some participants relied on certain assistive devices to receive information and communicate their ideas, such as speech-generation devices. Organizations working with persons with disabilities had already this technology available; thus, it was helpful to work with them to schedule the (online) interview session with the participants.

In the case of individual interviews, potential interviewees (election officials) were identified by looking for information sources in the web sites of domestic Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs). Selected potential interviewees received an invitation to participate in the project through a written message (via the institutional email of the researcher). Depending on participant's preference, an initial contact via phone, Zoom call, or WhatsApp messaging occurred with each potential interviewee who responded affirmatively to the invitation. This first point of contact was useful for the researcher to explain the project in more detail and confirm interviewee's participation by scheduling a second meeting. Based on the responses, a list of potential interviewees was drafted. From the total of 14 election officials who were interviewed for this study, 7 participants were from England and 7 from Spain.

As illustrated above, during the recruitment process several points of contact occurred between the researcher, DPOs, and each participant. The initial communication was via email. Other means of communication were also important for the researcher, including the phone, Zoom call, or WhatsApp messaging. These different points of contact allowed the researcher to achieve at least four goals: explaining her research in a more personal way to potential participants, give consideration to participants' needs and circumstances, confirm the participants' interest in participating in the research, and setting up the online interview session. This strategy helped the researcher building rapport with research participants, which was also important to adjust the interview protocols as explained below.

Adapting interview protocols

The researcher developed online-focus groups and interviews protocols with questions or issues to be explored with participants during the sessions. In designing and implementing these protocols, the researcher aimed to follow democratic, collaborative, and participant-led means (Morgan, 2011). Moreover, certain terms to be used during the discussions, e.g., "electoral-assistive device" or "technological aid" were prepared in lay language and digitally sent to participants in advance using format convenient for them. Two relevant amendments to the initial interview protocols were made by the researcher. For one, the researcher adapted the protocols to Zoom platform. These protocols were developed including electronic project's information letters, digital informed consent forms, Zoom functioning information, and guidelines to handle technological difficulties. Participants received in advance, for example, an easy-to-read 'getting started guide for new Zoom users' and a list of frequently asked questions, including common problems users come across. The guide included a description of the Zoom platform to be used in the sessions and the hardware required to participate (desktop or laptop computers, tablet, or mobile device). The user guide contained an individualized URL and instructions about how to join the individual or focus group interview. Other materials sent to some participants based on their needs included pictorial guide or visual support to understand how to enable/disable microphone and camera on Zoom for a better interviewee experience.

Furthermore, before using the Zoom platform to host individual or focus group interviews, the researcher carried out numerous practice sessions to gain an understanding of, and develop practical skills in, the use of the Zoom video conferencing software application. This enabled the researcher to schedule and launch Zoom Meetings properly, as well as to develop skills in using certain relevant Zoom's features, such as screen sharing, recording, and managing breakout rooms. These actions allowed the researcher to achieve greater control of potential security and privacy risks, as well as to manage potential technological difficulties while doing the interviews.

Secondly, the prior consideration given to participants' needs helped the researcher adapt her protocols to meet such needs. For example, at the beginning to each session (where necessary), the researcher asked participants with disabilities about the sound and video quality in Zoom to ensure they felt comfortable with the particular stimuli. She also encouraged participants to provide text-based responses where appropriate. To be consistent with conventional focus groups methods, the online focus groups comprised of small groups of people to create a comfortable setting encouraging participant interaction. Nevertheless, focus groups including persons with intellectual or mental disabilities were the smallest ones because more time was needed to present questions and for the participants to take part in the discussions. Extra time was assured for those participants who experienced fatigue or discomfort during the focus groups. Additionally, focus groups that included persons who had limited communication skills, included personal assistants and other proxy respondents, who served as 'translators' of the experiences of the individual with a disability. In implementing these focus groups, special attention was focused on minimizing the use of proxy respondents as much as possible, since the qualitative research relied on personal experience. The researcher learned that adapting protocols to meet the diverse needs of participants with disabilities might result in more effective participant in research for them.

Obtaining informed consent

Implementing continuous consent in qualitative research is an important key ethical standard to consider when conducting interviews with persons with disabilities (Klykken, 2021). In her study, the researcher adopted a continuous and relational consent approach to ensure that participants were able to understand what the research was about, the consequences of participating in it, and provide their consent freely. Accordingly, the researcher implemented the following actions. Firstly, to ensure potential participants have the capacity to provide informed consent, the researcher designed clearly digital worded recruitment posters and information sheets for the potential participants. These materials were sent to the DPOs by the researcher and distributed by the organizations at their discretion. This strategy avoided further contact from the researcher that could create unintended pressure. Accommodations were made based on participants' needs, including making all recruitment materials, such as information sheets on the project and consent documentation available in alternative formats. For the case of Spain, translation of these materials into Spanish was ensured. In addition, the researcher worked closely together with a designated staff member from each DPO to devise a way of recruiting those participants who show an initial interest in a manner both parties agreed to be non-coercive. She only contacted potential participants to provide further information and answer their questions, once initial interest was shown, and with the organization's permission.

Secondly, the researcher sent potential participants, who showed initial interest, an email with the information letter of the study “*Voting Matters*” and informed consent form attached. To set up the online interview session, participants were requested to consent by replying digitally this electronic message. Thirdly, as an additional control measure, upon entry to the session, interviewees were asked to read a pop-up notification on Zoom to state: (i) *‘I agree with the content of the information letter and informed consent form I previously received and read. Therefore, I will participate in the session’* or (ii) *‘I do not agree with the content of the information letter and informed consent form I previously received and read. Therefore, I will not participate more in the session’*. Participants consented to participate by replying digitally this notification. Moreover, throughout the session, the use of Zoom enabled the researcher to monitor participants’ non-verbal behavior to consider any potential discomfort. She also stressed the confidential nature of the discussion to the participants, who were also provided with explicit ways to withdraw from the discussion. As Zoom provides a ‘Leave Meeting’ (log-off) button, participants were allowed to exit the session at any time. Notably, the researcher inevitably became embedded in a continuous and relational approach to informed consent supported by Zoom platform. Using Zoom allowed participants to explicitly and implicitly (re)negotiated their consent throughout the session. Fourthly, in the case of focus groups with persons who had limited verbal communication skills and used personal assistants or other proxy respondents, before beginning with the sessions, personal assistants received an electronic message with an oath of confidentiality form attached. They were asked to reply to the message electronically to state whether they agree with the content of the oath of confidentiality.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that all research participants’ electronic replies (statements regarding the consent forms and the oath of confidentiality forms) were carefully stored electronically. Moreover, the audio recordings of the discussions in the focus groups and interviews were stored for as long as it was necessary to complete the transcriptions. The digital research data was archived in the project network drive set up by the Maastricht University ICT officer at the storage system of the Faculty of Law under the ‘L’ drive. Following the Research Data Management Code of Conduct of Maastricht University, research data will be stored for a period of at least 10 years after the final publication of the relevant data. After this time, the data will be deleted from the repository. Based on her experience, the researcher recommends using digital preservation of research data and software solutions, which might eventually be converted to a file format to be used by a data archive or repository after the end of the research phase.

Summary of the Lessons Learned

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted doing qualitative research, and primarily carrying out field observations and in-person interviews with research participants. In response, many researchers implemented some form of remote collection of qualitative data through the use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). The response of the researchers during the early phase of COVID-19 focused on implementing online meetings with research participants as an emergency response. These online meetings were intended to reach out to potential interviewees, as well as to address the particular research topic with the participants.

Online semi-structured interviews with persons with disabilities are likely to be challenging for both research participants and the researcher. The challenges for research participants include barriers to digital literacy, lack of personal interactions, slow Internet connections, security, and accessibility barriers. Likewise, the researcher faces recruitment and network connectivity issues, as well as difficulties in ensuring data reliability and validity. In the ongoing study “*Voting Matters*”, the author of this paper encountered

these challenges. When attempting to overcome such challenges, the author opted to start using Zoom video conferencing software to carry out semi-structured interviews with persons with disabilities from England and Spain. Zoom was a useful digital platform for conducting the interviews to collect data on participants' experiences in voting. It provided both research participants and the researcher with the opportunity to foster meaningful discussions. From her experience, the author addressed in this paper the following key lessons learned.

Effective communication skills are an important part of any online recruitment strategy of research participants with disabilities. The stronger the connection with potential participants, the more they are willing to participate in the research. Researchers can build rapport by using several points of contact with potential interviewees with disabilities. The communication tools that can be used include emails, phone calls, Zoom calls, and WhatsApp messaging. These communication tools allow the researcher to connect with potential participants, create a mutual understanding of the interview process, and empathy.

Developing the interview protocol is an iterative process. Indeed, each revision of the interview guide is driven by increasing familiarity with the video conferencing software, as well as the research participants. Therefore, the researcher can refine their protocol and questions in the process by reflecting on the application of the video conferencing software (i.e., how the software can be used) and the needs and expectations of the participants with disabilities. In that regard, flexibility and adaptability are key factors for achieving better data collection results.

Using video conferencing software applications in doing semi-structured interviews requires continuous consent by participants, and primarily those participants with disabilities. Continuous consent allows the researcher to follow up participants' understanding of their rights over time in a continuously changing online environment. In that regard, it is important for the researcher to endorse adaptive and flexible approaches to accommodate the features of the technologies and the needs of the participants based on their impairments. Moreover, participation in an online interview must be grounded on full and effective compliance with ethical, legal, and regulatory requirements by the researcher.

Conclusion

Using Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) expanded the options for participant recruitment and data collection methodology in the study "Voting Matters". It was possible to reach and include research participants during the Covid-19 pandemic. VoIP offered a suitable venue for online semi-structured interviews that supported research participants engagement and interaction in the data collection processes. VoIP provided a communication technology to host individual and focus group interviews for geographically dispersed groups of research participants from England and Spain. It also enabled the researcher to give prior consideration to participants with disabilities' needs and their circumstances, as well as to take action to respond to the potential disadvantage experience by them.

Available literature in this field confirms this positive evaluation of using VoIP for data collection in qualitative research. Furthermore, new knowledge emerged from lessons learned while using Zoom platform for data collection in this study, particularly during the coordination of individual and focus group interviews. Other researchers considering using VoIP to carry out online semi-structured interviews data collection in

qualitative research might find useful the following key lessons learned: (i) using several points of contact in the recruitment process, including email, phone, Zoom call, or WhatsApp messaging might be useful for researchers. Different points of contact enable researchers to explain their project's objectives in further detail to potential participants; confirm participants' interest in participating; and give consideration to participants' needs and requests for accommodation. As a result, the researcher would start building rapport with interviewees at an early stage of the interview process; (ii) making adaptations to the interview protocols based on features of the VoIP software to be used and participants' needs is necessary. Such adaptations might enable researchers to achieve greater control of potential security and privacy risks, to prevent technological difficulties, and to enhance the participation of interviewees; and (iii) adopting a continuous and relational consent approach is important to ensure that participants can explicitly or implicitly (re)negotiated their consent throughout the interview session. Such an approach might be backed by certain relevant Zoom's features, including video meeting and the 'Leave Meeting' (log-off) button, that safeguard participants' freedom to decide whether or not to continue to participate in the interview session.

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