

The collection of articles in this Special Issue were presented at the Symposium “Data, methods and results: Qualitative research in Work and Organizational Psychology.” The Symposium was organized in September 2018 at the LUMSA University in Rome, during the Annual National Congress of the Italian Association of Psychology – Division of Work and Organizational Psychology.

It is not so common to come across a Special Issue (SI) dedicated to qualitative research in a scientific journal within the area of Work and Organizational Psychology (WOP). From memory, we remember only SI published in 2000 in the *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* (Symon et al., 2000). In psychology, and in WOP, quantitative research dominates the scene. However, the authors who participated in the symposium and associated SI are convinced that in order to be innovative, both in the production of knowledge and in organizational practices, it is necessary that journals and research education should give voice to a wide range of approaches. Different approaches can sustain new ways of analyzing, interpreting, and intervening in organizations and the workplace. The articles presented in these pages are the testimony that qualitative methods, sustained by different onto-epistemological traditions, can offer unusual and relevant views for the area of WOP.

The first article addresses this point explicitly; here Scaratti, Benozzo, and Ripamonti (2021) present a reflection on the importance of qualitative research for the development of knowledge in the field of WOP. The article underlines how qualitative research in WOP can sustain the development of a deeper comprehension of the topic.

Converso, Hindrichs, Bruno, Dell’Aversana, and Viotti (2021) used grounded theory methodology to investigate the concept of cultural competence. The authors have explored how some Italian midwives represent the childbirth culture of foreign/migrant women. The results highlight the widespread belief that maternity, childbirth, and breastfeeding have recurrent characteristics, as these cultural practices are linked to core characteristics of the female body. However, and unfortunately, these representations lead to an under appreciation of the need for services able to address cultural diversity in childbirth cultures.

Cortini, Giordano, Benevene, Cervai, Galanti, Fantinelli, and Di Fiore (2021) highlight how the debate related to quantitative methods versus qualitative methods can be overcome through the approach of mixed-methods. In particular, they present a mixed-methods study on pester power of children and focus on triangulation.

Dal Corso, De Carlo, Carluccio, Piccirelli, Scarcella, Ghersetti, and Falco (2021) describe the methodological aspects and the usefulness of the appreciative inquiry (AI), a methodology aimed to generate new knowledge and to produce change. The paper de-

scribes the activities of an action-research project which used the AI 4D model (Discovery, Dream, Design, Destiny) in a residential care setting.

The fifth article, written by Dell'Aversana and Bruno (2021), presents a case study that analyses the cultural competences of managers and workers of a health service who were involved in diversity management training activities. In particular, the research, carried out through interviews and focus groups, focuses on organizational practices able to support organizational actions that respect and value cultural differences.

Distinto and Priola (2021) present some ethnographic data from a study carried out to investigate practices and discourses of integration in two refugee reception centers. In particular, the article focuses on how changes in the socio-historical context of researchers (the COVID-19 emergency) have consequences on the re-analysis of the empirical material. This re-analysis explores how the knowledge production process evolves through the encounter with data, theories, experiences, and methods used by researchers and the changes in space and time that occurred in the context.

Decent work is the phenomenon studied by Magnano, Zammitti, and Santisi (2021). Decent work is conceptualized as the possibility for women and men to work in organizational context which respects human rights. The article presents the results of a research carried out through focus groups with people who live in situations of social vulnerability to investigate perceptions of their future and of decent work. The implications for professional counseling practices are also discussed and the possibilities of designing actions that support decent work are highlighted.

The article by Manuti and Giancaspro (2021) analyzes language and in particular the metaphors used by some organizational actors. Metaphors are interpreted as one of the most useful tools for capturing, describing, and shaping organizational identity. The study presented is an action research aimed at collecting data to support the HR managers of a medium-sized company, in the management of a change connected to the process of commercial expansion.

The qualitative research presented by Ripamonti, Benozzo, Watson, Scaratti, and Galuppo (2021) focuses on how unions are redefining their organizational identity in response to some changes that have influenced the labour market and are conditioned by neo-liberal ideologies. The study is based on interviews with the managers of one of the biggest Italian trade unions organization, and uses critical discourse analysis to identify four discursive variations and possible evolutions of the organizational identity of the unions.

The last article is dedicated to the method of interview. Vecchio and Velasco (2021) argue that this qualitative research technique is a privileged device for studying the experience of people, especially when scholars aim to investigate the subjectivity and the meaning that the organizational actors give to their work experience. In conclusion, a comparison with other research techniques for studying work experience (experience sampling methods) is also presented.

We want to conclude the presentations of the articles of this SI with two observations. Firstly, these articles highlight how in qualitative research, as Silverman (2007) sug-

gests, qualitative data are not interpreted as windows of an underlying cognitive process, but as actions in which the conversation, from an initial way of expressing thoughts, becomes experience. Through sense-making processes connected to “real” problems, the organizational realities investigated are constantly under construction. The context is not something defined once and for all, but a construction that is constituted through the participation of individuals in research.

Secondly, these articles highlight how qualitative research in WOP privileges interviews as research technique for collecting empirical material, consequently research is mainly focused on language. The interview technique is still certainly the method most frequently used in qualitative research in WOP and reflects trends at a wider level in psychology (Montali et al., 2019; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). This observation convinces us of the need to explore new methodological possibilities in WOP as a priority.

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