

COREQ Checklist

Topic	Item No.	Guide Questions/Description	Reported on Page No.
Domain 1: Research Team and Reflexivity			
Personal characteristics			
Interviewer/facilitator	1	The first author (Shahnaz Ghaseminangi), PhD candidate in medical education.	Pag (1), line 3-4
Credentials	2	First author: PhD candidate; Second author: Assistant Professor of Medical Education department; Third author: Full Professor of medical education department.	Pag (1), line 4-7
Occupation	3	First author: PhD candidate; Second author and Third authors: faculty member of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (IUMS). Third author chancellor of Medical Education of Research center and Second author vice chancellor of Medical Education of Research center.	-
Gender	4	First and second authors: Female; Third author: Male.	-
Experience and training	5	The first author PhD candidate in medical education, received formal training in qualitative research, NVivo software, and thematic analysis. The second and third authors have extensive experience in supervising doctoral dissertation & master of sciences theses and research and lecturer in qualitative research, publishing qualitative studies.	-
Relationship with participants			
Relationship established	6	Yes, the researcher received the study details and consent to conduct the interview via telephone call one week before the interview. Also, two or three days before the interview, she re-organized the preparation for the interview and coordinated the location and time of the interview.	Pag (4), line 13-19
Participant knowledge of the interviewer	7	The researcher, through a telephone call and at the beginning of the interview, fully introduced herself (the role of the researcher and the objectives of the research, the characteristics of the study, and the introduction of the supervisor).	Pag (4), line 13-19
Interviewer characteristics	8	Reflexive memos were maintained throughout data collection. The first author's positionality as a PhD candidate was acknowledged in the methodology section.	Pag (4), line 30-31

Domain 2: Study Design				
Theoretical framework				
Methodological orientation	9	Conventional content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman) was used to inductively derive themes from interview transcripts.	Pag(3), line 27-28	
Participant selection				
Sampling	10	Purposive sampling was applied based on inclusion and exclusion criteria relevant to PhD candidacy.	Pag(4), line 12-13	
Method of approach	11	face to face interviews conducted.	Pag(4), line 26	
Sample size	12	31 PhD candidates participated.	Pag(4), line12	
Non-participation	13	three candidates opted out due to time constraints.	Pag(4), line20-21	
Setting				
Setting of data collection	14	Interviews were conducted in quiet offices of Isfahan medical university sciences.	Pag(4), line26-27	
Presence of non-participants	15	No, non-participants were present during any interview session.	Pag(4), line27-28	
Description of sample	16	Participants varied in discipline and gender. To qualify, candidates needed to be enrolled in a medical PhD program and have completed at least two years of study.	Pag(4), line19-20 , Pag(5), line1	
Data collection				
Interview guide	17	A semi-structured interview guide was developed by the research team and pilot tested with two PhD students.	Pag(6), line12-13	
Repeat interviews	18	YES, repeat interviews were conducted. In order to clarify the role of gender in the doctoral thesis, 5 supplementary interviews were conducted.	Pag(4), line32-33	
Audio/visual recording	19	Yes, all interviews were audio-recorded according to prior informed consent.	Pag(5), line3-4	
Field notes	20	Field notes were taken during and immediately after each interview to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details.	Pag(4), line33-34	
Duration	21	Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes.	Pag(4), line27-	
Data saturation	22	Yes. The research team regularly and periodically discussed the results of the analysis. After no new subcategories or codes emerged, it was agreed that we had reached saturation. We determined that saturation was achieved after the 28th interview, and this was confirmed by the 31st,	Pag (4), line21-24	
Transcripts returned	23	Yes, To boost credibility, transcripts were returned to participants; incorporated member checking, peer	Pag(6), line24-26	

		debriefing, and maintained audit trails was conducted during analysis to validate interpretations	
Domain 3: analysis and findings			
Data analysis			
Number of data coders	24	Two coders (first and second authors) independently coded the data.	Pag(6), line15,16
Description of coding tree	25	Thematic Coding Tables Supplementary File 3 offering a comprehensive mapping of categories, subcategories, codes, multiple quotes and ecological levels.	Pag(6), line17-22
Derivation of themes	26	Themes were inductively derived from raw data using conventional content analysis principles.	Pag(6), line21-22
Software	27	No, Software was used to manage data	-
Participant checking	28	Yes	Pag(6), line24-25
Reporting			
Quotations presented	29	Yes, in result section we present participant quotations are included for each subcategory, with consistent participant IDs (e.g., S3, S14) and in Thematic Coding Tables Supplementary File 3	Pag(7-16)
Data and findings consistent	30	Findings are consistently supported by data and mapped to ecological levels using Bronfenbrenner's framework.	Pag(7) line8
Clarity of major themes	31	Yes, twelve major categories are clearly presented in Table 15 and discussed in the Results section. we've included detailed thematic coding tables in Supplementary File 3. These tables trace the analytical journey from raw data to a well-structured concept, highlighting ecological levels, representative quotes, initial codes, subcategories, and overarching categories.	Pag(15-16)
Clarity of minor themes	32	Forty-five subcategories are described with supporting quotes and thematic contrasts clearly presented in Table 15 and discussed in the Results section. we've included detailed thematic coding tables in Supplementary File 3. These tables trace the analytical journey from raw data to a well-structured concept, highlighting ecological levels, representative quotes, initial codes, subcategories, and overarching categories.	Pag(15-16)