

# The Authenticity of Gatekeepers as Means of Data Collection in Research

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## ABSTRACT

Gatekeepers are middlemen that manage access to communities or groups that academics are interested in investigating. They can be found in a range of places, including hospitals, schools, community organizations, and places of worship. Researchers must be aware of the potential difficulties associated with using gatekeepers and take precautions to ensure the authenticity and reliability of the data collected, even though gatekeepers can be useful in facilitating access to populations that may be difficult to reach, such as marginalized or vulnerable groups. This paper tends to assess the extent to which gatekeepers influence the authenticity of data collected in research studies. The main objectives are: i. to examine literature review on the role of gatekeepers in research and their impact on data collection. ii. To identify and analyze different types of biases and limitations that may arise when gatekeepers serve as data collectors. The report examines the experiences of researchers who have utilized gatekeepers and identifies recommended practices for guaranteeing the validity and reliability of data obtained through gatekeepers using secondary sources of data collection from current literature reviews. However, in order to ensure that the data gathered is accurate, dependable, and representative of the population being studied, researchers must also be aware of the potential drawbacks of using gatekeepers. The recommendations made in this paper's conclusion are intended to guide future study on the use of gatekeepers in data collecting. These recommendations include the need for further studies that focus on the experiences of gatekeepers themselves and the likelihood that they would have biases or conflicts of interest.

**Keywords:** 1. Biases, 2. Drawn back, 3. Middlemen, 4. Organization, 5. Potential.

## INTRODUCTION

In research, data collection is a critical component that requires careful consideration to ensure that the information gathered is authentic, reliable, and valid. One method of data collection that is commonly used is through gatekeepers. Gatekeepers play a major role in research by acting as intermediaries who control access to information and resources Denscombe, (2014). For a long time the research literature has been interested in the employment of gatekeepers in the data gathering process. Gatekeepers are people or groups that manage access to a certain group or community, such as medical professionals, educational administrators, or local authorities Hammersley, M., Atkinson, P. (2007).

Gatekeepers can be used by researchers to get access to a certain community for research. Using gatekeepers to gather data can have a number of advantages. Gatekeepers, for instance, might guide researchers through challenging ethical dilemmas and cultural conventions that might influence data collecting. They may also guarantee that the study is carried out in a way that respects the subjects' confidentiality and privacy. Gatekeepers may have built ties and trust with participants because they are frequently fellow community members. This may make it simpler for researchers to establish trust with participants and get access.

Gatekeepers have been used in study on social and environmental concerns in India and this is well represented in Kumar et al. (2021) the researcher advised that in order to assure the authenticity and usefulness of the data gathered, a participatory strategy should be adopted when dealing with gatekeepers.

This involves including them in the study process and seeking out their views and advice. Researchers can build rapport and trust with participants by using gatekeepers. Gatekeepers may have built ties and trust with participants because they are frequently fellow community members Davis and Broome (2017).

This may make it simpler for researchers to establish trust with participants and get access. In Elzubeir and Rizk (2020) the researchers looked at the experiences of researchers who accessed healthcare providers in the United Arab Emirates by using gatekeepers. The researchers discovered that although gatekeepers were crucial in providing access to the target group, there were drawbacks to this strategy. It should be noted here, despite the usefulness of gatekeepers to collect data, there may be some drawbacks. For instance, gatekeepers may have biases and interests of their own that might affect the findings of the research Ioannidis, (2005). Researchers should take precautions to guarantee that the research is carried out objectively and ethically, and they should carefully assess any potential biases and interests of gatekeepers. This can entail collaborating with several gatekeepers to obtain various viewpoints and requesting feedback from other sources to confirm the data.

### **Aim of Study**

1. To assess the extent to which gatekeepers influence the authenticity of data collected in research studies.
2. To identify the specific biases and limitations that gatekeepers may introduce during the data collection process.
3. To propose strategies and recommendations for mitigating biases and enhancing the authenticity of data obtained through gatekeepers.

### **Objectives**

1. To examine literature review on the role of gatekeepers in research and their impact on data collection.
2. To identify and analyze different types of biases and limitations that may arise when gatekeepers serve as data collectors.
3. To showcase instances as evidence that demonstrate of biases or interference introduced by gatekeepers during data collection.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study is a qualitative research. The paper employs secondary data for analysis, such as: scholarly publications,

### **Ways Gatekeepers could be Biase**

1. Informed consent: this is an important ethical consideration in research involving gatekeepers. If gatekeepers are involved in obtaining consent from research participants, it is important to ensure that they are fully informed about the study and its purpose (Flick, 2018)
2. Cultural Sensitivity: Cultural sensitivity is another important consideration in research involving gatekeepers. Researchers must be aware of the cultural norms and expectations of gatekeepers and the research participants, and take steps to ensure that the data collection process is respectful and sensitive to these factors (Morse, 2015)
3. Selection bias: Gatekeepers may have their own biases and preferences that influence who they allow access to. This can lead to selection bias in the sample population, which can affect the reliability of the research data (Brannen, 2017)

4. Power dynamics: The power dynamics between the gatekeepers and the research participants can also affect the reliability and validity of the data collected. For example, gatekeepers may influence the research participants' decision to participate in the study, which can impact the representativeness of the sample (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017)
5. Data analysis: The reliability and validity of the data collected using gatekeepers can also be affected by the data analysis process. Researchers must ensure that they are using appropriate methods to analyze the data and account for any potential biases introduced by the gatekeeper (Maxwell, 2013)

It should be noted that while the use of gatekeepers can be an effective means of accessing hard-to-reach population and collecting data that may otherwise be difficult to obtain, it is impossible for researchers to be aware of the potential limitations and challenges associated with this method and take steps to address them in their research analysis.

## LIMITATIONS OF USING GATEKEEPERS IN RESEARCH

Gatekeepers in research refer to individuals or institutions that control access to data, resources, or opportunities for researchers. While gatekeepers can play a crucial role in ensuring the quality and integrity of research, they can also impose certain drawbacks. Here are some common drawbacks associated with gatekeepers in research. **Bias and Subjectivity:** Gatekeepers may introduce biases and subjectivity into the research process. Their decisions on granting or denying access to resources or data can be influenced by personal preferences, conflicts of interest, or preconceived notions, leading to potential distortions in research outcomes (Davies, 2010).

**Restriction of Access:** Gatekeepers can limit access to resources, samples, or data, hindering the ability of researchers to conduct comprehensive and diverse studies. This limitation may result in a narrow representation of the population under study, reducing the generalizability and validity of research findings (Sorokin & Böhm, 2018).

**Time and Cost Implications:** The involvement of gatekeepers in the research process can lead to delays and increased costs. Researchers may have to navigate bureaucratic processes, negotiate access agreements, or fulfill additional requirements imposed by gatekeepers, which can consume significant time and resources (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007).

**Lack of Transparency:** Gatekeeping practices often lack transparency, with decisions made behind closed doors and little accountability. This opacity can lead to suspicions of favoritism, unfair treatment, or selective granting of access, eroding the trustworthiness and credibility of the research process (Davies, 2010).

It is important to note that the impact of gatekeepers on research can vary across disciplines, contexts, and individual experiences. Researchers and gatekeepers should strive for transparent, accountable, and inclusive practices to mitigate these drawbacks and promote robust and ethical research.

Further insight into the activities of using gatekeepers in research has a number of drawbacks in addition to already mentioned facts above which include the followings:

The possibility for gatekeepers to bring bias into the study process cannot be overruled, Birks et al. (2019). The authors point out that gatekeeper could pick participants arbitrarily or hide some information, which might bias the study's findings. If the gatekeeper has a personal or professional stake in the study or has prior notions about what it should reveal, this might be very problematic.

In a similar vein, Feldman and associates (2020) point out that gatekeepers could have personal agendas or interests that could affect the study process. For instance, a gatekeeper may have a personal stake in promoting a certain item or intervention, which might skew their choice of research participants or their reading of the findings. The authors issue a warning, advising researchers to carefully evaluate the possibility of gatekeeper bias and take precautions to lessen it. Gatekeepers might not always have access to the entire spectrum of people that researchers are interested in investigating, which can further introduce bias. Gatekeepers could only be able to grant access to a certain demographic or group, Brown and Colleagues (2020), which could restrict the generalizability of the study's findings. To guarantee that they collect a varied and representative sample, researchers should take into account a variety of gatekeepers and tactics for reaching participants.

Additionally, gatekeepers might not always be trustworthy or dependable. Gatekeepers may have personal motives or interests that are in opposition to the objectives of the study, Camara and Colleagues' (2019). For instance, a gatekeeper could be motivated to grant access to participants who are likely to benefit them somehow, which could jeopardize the validity of the study. Thus it is advisable for researchers to thoroughly vet and pick gatekeepers to make sure they're dedicated to morally and respectfully conducting research. Last but not the least, gatekeepers might not always be able or ready to take part in the study process. Gatekeepers might not be able to grant access to participants or engage in the research process themselves due to other obligations or priorities, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019). In the event that gatekeepers are unable or unwilling to engage in the study, researchers should have back-up measures in place.

## **FINDINGS**

A number of variables, including the gatekeeper's biases, power imbalances, and cultural insensitivity, might affect the validity of data gathered by gatekeepers in qualitative research. As said, earlier Gatekeepers may lack requisites trainings in handling the hard and soft ware skills for effective dissemination of vital information.

In a similar vein, a study by Davis and Broome (2017) discovered that gatekeepers may ease access to study participants as well as aid in building rapport and trust with them. To ensure the authenticity and dependability of the data gathered, the authors stress the significance of developing precise criteria for choosing gatekeepers and cultivating close relationships with them. Gatekeepers are crucial in qualitative research, particularly when dealing with delicate or stigmatized subjects, as stressed by Willis et al. (2016). The authors contend that gatekeepers can aid in the selection of potential participants, build rapport and trust, and offer insightful information on the cultural and social circumstances of the research.

It is crucial to remember that choosing the right gatekeepers determines how authentic employing gatekeepers are. To make sure they are reliable, possess the necessary knowledge, and have access to the target market, the criteria for choosing gatekeepers should be well thought out. In addition, gatekeepers should be excited about taking part in the study and committed to using ethical and respectful research techniques.

As long as suitable criteria are employed to find and choose gatekeepers who are trustworthy, educated, and dedicated to ethical research standards, the use of gatekeepers in research may generally be a genuine and successful strategy for data collection.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, gatekeepers may be useful resources in research, particularly when trying to reach populations who are difficult to approach. However, there are drawbacks to using gatekeepers as well, including potential biases, conflicts of interest, and reduced sample representativeness. Therefore, when

using gatekeepers as data collectors, researchers must carefully consider their selection, training, and awareness of their limitations. In order to increase the validity and dependability of their study findings, it is advised that researchers look at a variety of gatekeepers and employ a variety of data collection techniques. To ensure the veracity and integrity of the study findings, a balanced and critical approach to deploying gatekeepers in research is required.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some suggestions for researchers using gatekeepers in research, based on the literature used:

1. Pick gatekeepers wisely: Gatekeepers who are regarded and trusted by the target community and who have the necessary training, experience, and understanding to collect data should be carefully identified and chosen by researchers.
2. Train gatekeepers: In order to guarantee that they gather high-quality data, gatekeepers should get training on the research's goals, data collection techniques, ethical issues, and potential biases.
3. Monitor gatekeepers: To ensure that they follow the research procedure and that the data obtained are genuine and trustworthy, researchers should periodically review the gatekeepers' performance and offer criticism.
4. Use a variety of gatekeepers: A variety of gatekeepers can serve to improve the representativeness of the sample and decrease potential biases.
5. Use a variety of data gathering techniques: To verify the information obtained via gatekeepers, researchers should make use of a variety of data collection techniques, including surveys, interviews, and observations.
6. Know the constraints: Researchers should be aware of the inherent biases, conflicts of interest, and limits in sample representativeness associated with utilizing gatekeepers in research.
7. Researchers should disclose the use of gatekeepers in their studies in order to increase transparency and provide other researchers the opportunity to assess the potential influence of gatekeepers on the accuracy and dependability of the study findings.

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