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What Do Participants Think of My Work?: Member Checking as a Practice of Reflexivity and Co-Creation in Qualitative Inquiry

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This article explores the use of member checking in two qualitative analyses—reflexive thematic analysis and voices and I-positions analysis—within my doctoral research. Member checking is framed as a flexible methodological strategy to enhance credibility, support co-construction of knowledge, and promote ethical engagement with participants. In the thematic analysis, I used focus groups and visual materials to share preliminary findings, fostering collective discussion and reflection. This process allowed me to validate interpretations, add nuances, and address overlooked dimensions such as structural racism and intra-family caregiving dynamics. For the voices and I-positions analysis, I applied dialogical member checking interviews, enabling participants to engage with my interpretations of narrative fragments and voice relationships. The findings highlight member checking as a versatile methodological and ethical tool, balancing interpretive authority, promoting participatory analysis, and increasing accessibility of results. Member checking is most effective when adapted to the analysis type, research design, and participant characteristics.

Keywords: Member checking; co-construction of knowledge; participatory research; feminist research ethics.

Introduction

The term *member checking* was originally coined and defined by Yvonna Lincoln (1985). Although intellectual debate about ensuring reliability in qualitative research has been present since their seminal texts in the early 1980s, it is their 1985 work that is recognized as the primary source where this concept was formalized and popularized. Lincoln (1985) defined this technique as a process involving the submission of data, analytical categories, interpretations, and conclusions to the scrutiny of participants (or members of the relevant

group) from whom the information was originally collected. These authors aimed to develop methods of rigor and validity in qualitative research as an alternative to traditional positivist paradigms. Their goal was to center the credibility of the researcher in qualitative inquiry, attempting to ensure that the researcher had accurately captured the participant's worldview (Thomas, 2016). Member checking was initially described as a research phase in which a provisional report of the results is taken back to the study site so that the people who provided the information can determine whether the researcher has accurately reported their stories (Koelsh, 2013).

Since its conceptualization, member checking has become a standard in qualitative methodology literature, often used interchangeably with terms such as "respondent validation" or "participant validation," with the primary goal of ensuring the credibility, truthfulness, and reliability of study findings (Birt, 2016). Its popularity stems from its perception as an essential tool for establishing credibility and trust in findings (Carlson, 2010) and its recognition of the participant as an "expert." Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research often adopts a "bottom-up" approach, where the participant is seen as the expert and the researcher as the learner. Member checking reinforces this principle by giving participants the authority to confirm or contest the accuracy of interpretations, ensuring that their voices are faithfully represented (McKim, 2023). It also promotes the co-construction of knowledge, where meaning is not only extracted by the researcher but negotiated dialogically (Doyle, 2007). Moreover, member checking is not a fixed or systematic technique but rather a validation strategy or procedure, drawing on different methods such as interviews, focus groups, or transcript reviews to adapt to various qualitative research methodologies. Its versatility, flexibility, and participatory, emancipatory potential have made member checking one of the most widely used strategies in recent years (Urry et al., 2024). For this reason, many academic journals and research guidelines recommend or require it as a quality indicator (Harvey, 2014).

Nevertheless, although it is common to find member checking mentioned in qualitative research publications, detailed descriptions of how it has been applied are rare. Publications often dedicate only a single sentence to stating that the procedure was carried out, treating it as just another technical task on a "checklist" without delving into the process or results (Birt, 2016). Researchers rarely report response rates, the nature of participants' feedback, or whether that feedback led to meaningful changes in the final

interpretations. For example, Thomas (2016) notes that the lack of mention of changes suggests that the technique often has little or no real impact on findings. This lack of detail makes it difficult for readers and reviewers to judge whether member checking truly strengthened the study's credibility or was merely symbolic (Brear, 2018).

This article draws on my doctoral research (Anonymized reference) with seven African migrant women living in Seville, Spain, originating from Senegal, Nigeria, Guinea Conakry, and Kenya. The broader study explored women's care practices, caregiving challenges, and processes of identity reconstruction within the context of migration and diaspora.

Within this research, I implemented member checking strategies across two different qualitative analyses. The first was a reflexive thematic analysis focused on participants' care practices and the challenges they encountered in everyday caregiving. The second was a voices and I-positions analysis that explored identity reconstruction and the negotiation of multiple cultural and relational positions within participants' narratives. Rather than revisiting the substantive findings of these studies, the present article examines how different member checking techniques were incorporated into each analytical process and reflects on their methodological and ethical implications in the participatory construction of results.

Different Techniques Applied in Member Checking

As I have mentioned, member checking is not a single procedure but encompasses a range of activities adapted according to the research design, paradigm, and study objectives. These techniques vary from simple verification of words to deep co-construction of meanings. Some of the most commonly used techniques are transcript return, individual validation interviews, verification focus groups, collaborative reflection, and joint report creation. More recently, innovative techniques incorporating visual elements such as brochures or infographics, or the synthesized member checking method, have been developed.

The simplest and most common member checking technique is returning the interview transcripts to the interviewee, focusing on the factual accuracy of the collected data. In this case, the return may involve the literal transcript (Birt, 2016) or a polished

or partial transcript in which the researcher corrects grammatical errors or removes off-topic sections to facilitate reading and avoid participant embarrassment (Carlson, 2010).

Individual validation interviews, on the other hand, do not focus on the raw data provided by participants but on the researcher's interpretation of it. They may be dialogical interviews, based on a series of encounters in which the researcher develops analytical interpretations that the participant evaluates in the next session, allowing for continuous co-creation of meaning. Alternatively, they may focus on reconceptualizing impact, seeking not only to confirm truth but also to assess the therapeutic or transformative impact of the study's interpretation on the participant (Koelsh, 2013).

Verification focus groups bring together multiple participants to discuss emerging themes or drafts of research reports. This technique allows exploration of whether results resonate collectively and facilitates interaction among group members to validate shared experiences. It is often used to review study findings without including excessive personal details that could compromise confidentiality in a group setting (Birt, 2026; Thomas, 2016).

Synthesized member checking is an innovative and structured method that returns a summary of analyzed results for the entire sample, rather than individual data. The process includes preparing a concise report with themes illustrated by anonymous quotes, allowing participants to see whether their personal experiences are reflected in the general synthesis. It enables researchers to re-contact large groups efficiently and systematically seek "dissenting voices" (Birt et al., 2016; Erdmann & Potthoff, 2023).

It is worth noting that in cross-cultural contexts or with specific populations, more visual and accessible tools have been developed to apply member checking. For example, some researchers have used brochures written in local languages that combine photographs with brief summaries of research findings. These visual materials can serve as memory triggers and facilitate participation among individuals with low literacy levels (Caretta, 2016). Other approaches include role-playing activities in which participants enact situations related to the research or engage in collaborative tasks, such as sorting themes or debating statements, to confirm, refine, or challenge researchers' interpretations (Brear, 2018).

Contributions of Member Checking to Feminist Research Ethics

Member checking is an essential tool in feminist research due to its ability to align methodological practice with ethical principles of equity and social justice. Its ethical benefits focus on reconfiguring authority relationships and validating lived experiences. Member checking allows historically marginalized groups to shape their own representation in final reports. In feminist frameworks, this helps to materialize and question biases that could dominate the knowledge construction process (Caretta, 2016).

Rather than viewing data as something the researcher simply "extracts," member checking promotes a reflective dialogue in which meaning is negotiated. This process ensures participants recognize their own stories in the findings and feel ownership over them (Soysal & Türkmen, 2024). The researcher assumes greater ethical responsibility by returning results, ensuring their voice does not dominate the participants' or impose their own agenda. This act of transparency demonstrates respect and continued engagement with the studied community beyond simple data collection (Urry et al., 2024). A further ethical contribution of member checking relates to what Lather (1986) termed catalytic validity. Rather than evaluating research solely in terms of descriptive accuracy, catalytic validity refers to the extent to which the research process encourages participants to critically reflect upon their circumstances and potentially act upon that understanding. This perspective is particularly relevant within feminist research traditions, where knowledge production is often linked to broader commitments to empowerment, reflexivity, and social change. Member checking may contribute to such processes by creating opportunities for participants to revisit their experiences, engage with alternative interpretations, and reflect collectively on shared concerns. Feminist research often has an emancipatory aim, and member checking serves as a means to facilitate social change through the research act itself (Koelsh, 2013). In short, member checking in feminist research is not just a technical step to improve accuracy but an ethical imperative seeking epistemic justice and respect for human dignity.

Member Checking and Participatory Traditions

Although member checking is often described as a validation strategy, it also shares important concerns with broader participatory traditions in qualitative research. Approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR) and feminist participatory

methodologies research emphasize the active involvement of participants in knowledge production and challenge traditional distinctions between researcher and researched (Cornish, et.al, 2023; Gatenby, & Humphries, 2000).

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is based on the premise that individuals who experience the social issues under study should play a central role in the production of knowledge and in efforts to promote social transformation. Accordingly, participants are expected to be involved throughout the research process, contributing not only data but also to the design of the study, the interpretation of findings, and the development and dissemination of knowledge (Cornish, et.al, 2023).

Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) is a methodological and political framework that centers women's experiences and gender issues in the production of knowledge, both theoretically and practically. This methodology arises from the convergence of traditional Participatory Action Research (PAR)—characterized by its commitment to liberation movements and "genuine collaboration"—and feminist research, which seeks liberatory social change and the empowerment of women (Gatenby, & Humphries, 2000). Unlike conventional PAR, which often operates under a facade of gender neutrality, FPAR utilizes gender analysis to "trouble the boundaries" of oppression and challenge patriarchal structures. As a process of praxis, it is sustained by four fundamental pillars: feminisms, to analyze how patriarchy oppresses women; active participation of community members in all stages of research (from identifying the problem to data analysis); action, aimed at transforming the status quo and achieving structural change; and collective research, where the generated knowledge is owned by the community and used strategically for political advocacy (Chakma, 2016; Gatenby, & Humphries, 2000).

Member checking differs from fully participatory approaches because participants are usually involved after data collection has taken place and often do not participate in all stages of the research design. Nevertheless, the practice introduces an important participatory dimension by creating spaces in which participants can comment on, question, refine, or expand researchers' interpretations. In this sense, member checking can be understood as occupying an intermediate position between conventional qualitative research and more collaborative forms of inquiry.

This connection is particularly relevant within feminist research traditions, where the ethical imperative to reduce hierarchical relationships and acknowledge participants' epistemic authority has long been emphasized. From this perspective, member checking is not only a methodological tool but also a practice that supports reflexivity, accountability, and the co-construction of knowledge.

Application of Member Checking

Member Checking in a Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2021) have distinguished reflexive thematic analysis from coding reliability approaches and other more descriptive forms of thematic analysis methods. In reflexive thematic analysis, themes do not "emerge" automatically from the data; rather, they are constructed through an interpretive process in which the reflexivity of the researchers plays a central role.

Although the analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic approach, it was also informed by feminist epistemological principles. Feminist research has long emphasized that knowledge is situated, partial, and shaped by social positions and power relations. Consequently, themes were not treated as objective entities waiting to be discovered within the data, but as interpretive constructions developed through the interaction between participants' narratives, relevant theoretical frameworks, and my own position as a researcher. Member checking was therefore incorporated not to establish a single authoritative interpretation, but to create opportunities for reflexive dialogue about how meanings were being constructed throughout the analytical process.

Building on this approach, my thematic analysis aimed to involve participants in the reflexive process of theme construction. To achieve this, I integrated two member checking techniques within the analytical procedure. Below, I outline the phases of the analysis and the role of these techniques:

1. Initial Contact with the Data. Transcription phase, detailed reading, and annotation of initial comments on the interviews.
2. Initial Coding. I performed exhaustive coding, labeling the information in each excerpt and adding multiple labels when necessary. Labels were positioned close to the latent content of the analyzed fragments (e.g., "learning to care," "care for the elderly," "self-care").

3. Searching for Themes. At this stage, I began the interpretive reflection process on the data and developed a preliminary theme map. Unlike the procedure proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006), I incorporated a discussion via a focus group with participants as a member checking technique. The goal was to foster data triangulation, assess the relevance of my interpretations for the participant group, and promote collective knowledge construction. During the focus group, I shared the results of the first reading and coding of the data and opened space for collective discussion and reflection. The transcription of the focus group was then added to the dataset and analyzed by reapplying steps 1 and 2.
4. Reviewing Themes. I reflected on the expanded dataset (interviews and focus group), assessed the internal coherence of the themes, and developed a final theme map.
5. Defining Themes. I defined the meaning of each theme and subtheme and established their final labels. At this stage, I introduced a second member checking technique through the creation of a feedback brochure (Carretta, 2016) presenting the preliminary definitions of the themes.
6. Writing the Results Report. Finally, I selected representative extracts to illustrate each theme.

The focus group technique for member checking involves gathering a group of participants to discuss and collectively evaluate emerging themes, preliminary interpretations, or drafts of a research report (Goldblatt et al., 2011). Unlike individual review, this modality promotes interaction among participants and allows assessment of whether the findings resonate with their shared experiences (Klinger, 2005). This phase was planned from the outset of the research. When participants agreed to take part in the interviews, I informed them that a meeting would be organized six to eight months later to discuss the development of the research. At that time, I provided no additional details.

Once the preliminary analysis was completed and initial themes developed, I re-contacted participants to explain that the purpose of the meeting was to share these initial results. Since participants were not necessarily familiar with academic language or social research procedures, I framed the session as a conversation, emphasizing my interest in their opinions on how I had interpreted the interviews conducted months earlier.

Additionally, I took time to explain individually the objective of the meeting and clarified that the discussion would focus on the analysis rather than on personal details shared during the individual interviews. This clarification was important because some participants knew each other and had varying degrees of friendship and trust. Only one participant was unable to attend the session; consequently, her interview was excluded from the final analysis so that I worked solely with information validated through the member checking process.

The focus group was held in a community center easily accessible to the participants, where a room was reserved. Two volunteers engaged in activities with participants' children during the session in the same center. The session was recorded. During the focus group, I clearly presented some of the themes previously identified: the loss of support due to distance from extended family, lack of personal time, precarious employment, feelings of loneliness, and the experience of being an African migrant mother. Participants had the opportunity to discuss these themes collectively, contributing relevant examples and nuances. In particular, they offered detailed reflections on the role of the community and extended family, as shown in the following excerpt:

> *Mwangaza:* "What I wanted to say, like Awa said, like Becky said, I think that both in Africa and here, death hurts. What I mean, or maybe I misunderstood, regarding what Becky says, is that in Africa, if my father dies—and he is that pillar supporting everyone—it is more noticeable, but that doesn't mean it is more or less painful than here. If a grandfather dies here, that grandfather might not provide financial support to a family because it's not necessary, but it doesn't mean that person isn't missed. You cry, but in a different way."

Participants engaged actively in the discussion, and based on their explanations, I reformulated several final themes and subthemes. New themes also emerged that had not been identified in the initial analysis. For instance, what I initially conceptualized as "precarious employment" was reformulated during the discussion, as participants insisted that the lack of job opportunities should be understood in relation to structural racism.

> *Mariame:* "It's true because, yes, the world—like you said, technology, mentality has changed—but if you saw what happens in Libya, mistreatment of Black people continues. Really, things have changed a bit, but still, in work, when choosing between Becky and Cristina, they will choose Cristina—not a white person, but because of color—and many jobs we find are for survival: house care, elder care, cleaning. They don't give us opportunities."

In the individual interviews, no participant had explicitly addressed the impact of racism on employment opportunities. References to racism mainly appeared in relation to specific experiences, such as concern about racism their children might face at school or particular community or healthcare situations. However, during the focus group, participants elaborated on this topic more deeply. I interpret that the collective conversation format, rather than one-on-one interaction with me as a white researcher, facilitated participants' clearer expression of the pain associated with their experiences as Black women and highlighted the structural nature of racism. At various points, participants directly referenced my social position, explicitly noting that in certain work situations, I would have a greater chance of being selected than they would, simply for being white. This observation highlighted my position of privilege within the research process. From these discussions, I developed a new analytical theme focusing on racism and its impact on participants' care practices.

The focus group also clarified other issues that were less defined in individual interviews. For example, questions arose regarding care organization in polygamous families. Although none of the participants currently belonged to a polygamous family, some had grown up in such structures. For them, the central issue was not polygamy itself but the presence of support networks among women within the extended family. Their main concern was the economic infeasibility of maintaining such a family organization in a migratory context. Another extensively debated issue was the distribution of care tasks between participants and their husbands in the new migratory context. This topic occupied a significant part of the debate and sparked discussion about the use of the term *help* to describe men's participation in household tasks.

> *Cynthia:* "But you said you don't call it help, right? Many African men don't help their wives at all… even if the wife is sick… you have to… help with kids… cleaning…."
> *Mariame:* "Help? I don't agree with the word."
> *Cynthia:* "Okay, ah okay."
> *Researcher:* "She doesn't agree with the word help, right?"
> *Cynthia:* "Yes, for me, it's not help, but I call it help because I know many husbands who don't help their wives."
> *Mariame:* "But Cynthia, he goes to the bathroom, uses the bathroom… doesn't clean?"
> *Awa:* "Mariame, Mariame, we say help because in Africa, men do nothing… we have to call it help. It's a habit…"

This conversation opened a new analytical perspective on the everyday negotiation of care task distribution within couples. All participants acknowledged the importance of not assuming the totality of domestic work alone and defended their right to rest. However, significant nuances also emerged regarding how men's roles in these tasks were conceptualized. As observed in the excerpt, the debate around the term *help* related to prior experiences and gender socialization models. For some participants, using this term highlighted the exceptional nature of men participating in domestic tasks compared to gender norms in their contexts of origin. However, this did not imply that such tasks were not considered shared responsibilities.

Incorporating the focus group as a member checking technique within thematic analysis proved especially useful. It not only confirmed preliminary interpretations derived from the interviews but also clarified uncertainties arising during analysis. Additionally, the participant debate allowed assessment of whether findings achieved *transactional validity*, that is, whether there was consensus among participants regarding the accuracy of what was reported (Birt, 2016). In this case, although the sample was small, the group exhibited considerable heterogeneity in terms of country of origin, religion, and socioeconomic level. Differences and nuances that emerged during the collective discussion enriched the intersectional analysis of results and participants' reflection on their experiences. Moreover, such spaces can generate positive effects for

participants themselves. By hearing others' experiences, participants can recognize that certain experiences or feelings are shared, producing benefits similar to those observed in group support contexts. However, these benefits should not be assumed. Collective reflection may also generate disagreement, discomfort, or reluctance to discuss certain experiences in front of others, particularly when sensitive topics are involved. From a practical perspective, focus groups are relatively low-cost and require less time than conducting multiple individual validation interviews (Erdmann & Potthoff, 2023). However, this technique also has limitations. In this specific case, the focus group generated a substantial amount of new information. This observation raises an important methodological question regarding the status of data generated through member checking procedures. Rather than functioning solely as a validation strategy, the focus group became an additional source of empirical material that informed subsequent stages of analysis. Although this information emerged within discussions about preliminary results, it led to a significant reformulation of the initial analysis. For this reason, I decided to incorporate a second member checking technique aimed at gathering participants' feedback on a more developed and systematized version of the results.

Additionally, several authors have noted that focus groups require participants to reveal their identity to the group, which may be problematic when discussing sensitive or potentially stigmatizing experiences (Potthoff, 2023). Participants may feel vulnerable recognizing their own words or experiences in a collective space. Considering this risk, during the session I avoided any reference to particularly sensitive topics, such as episodes of violence or abuse experienced during migration. Due to the ethical and emotional complexity of these topics, I chose to exclude them from the validation process using member checking techniques.

At the same time, participant agreement should not be interpreted as definitive proof of analytical accuracy. Member checking may generate processes of collective affirmation in which participants recognize themselves in particular interpretations while alternative perspectives remain less visible. In group-based forms of member checking, there is also a possibility that dominant voices shape the discussion and influence the apparent consensus that emerges. For this reason, I approached participant feedback as an additional source of interpretation rather than as a mechanism for verifying an objective truth. The value of member checking lies less in confirming findings than in

opening a dialogical space where interpretations can be questioned, refined, expanded, or contested.

The use of brochures, pamphlets, or visual materials such as infographics in member checking is a relatively recent technique that can be particularly useful in cross-cultural research or studies involving populations with varying levels of literacy. These materials aim to present research findings in an accessible and participatory manner, moving away from traditional feedback formats based on lengthy transcripts or dense academic documents (Carretta, 2015).

As a final member checking step within the thematic analysis, participants received a brochure summarizing the preliminary findings. I shared with participants, via digital means, an infographic that included the research questions and a summary of the themes identified in the analysis. Some participants corroborated the content of the themes and added examples they considered representative of their experiences. Other participants confirmed the results after raising questions or requesting clarifications. However, the reception of the material was not uniform. Some participants found the infographic confusing, as the wording did not make it entirely clear whether they were expected to comment on the analysis results or respond again to the research questions (Image 1). Although I attempted to synthesize the results using accessible language, certain terms used in the description of the themes generated questions among participants. The infographic also included images and photographs obtained from freely available image banks. Based on this experience, I consider that in future applications of this technique it might be more effective to use photographs produced by the participants themselves during the research process, as suggested by Carretta (2015), since this type of visual material can facilitate greater identification with the results presented.

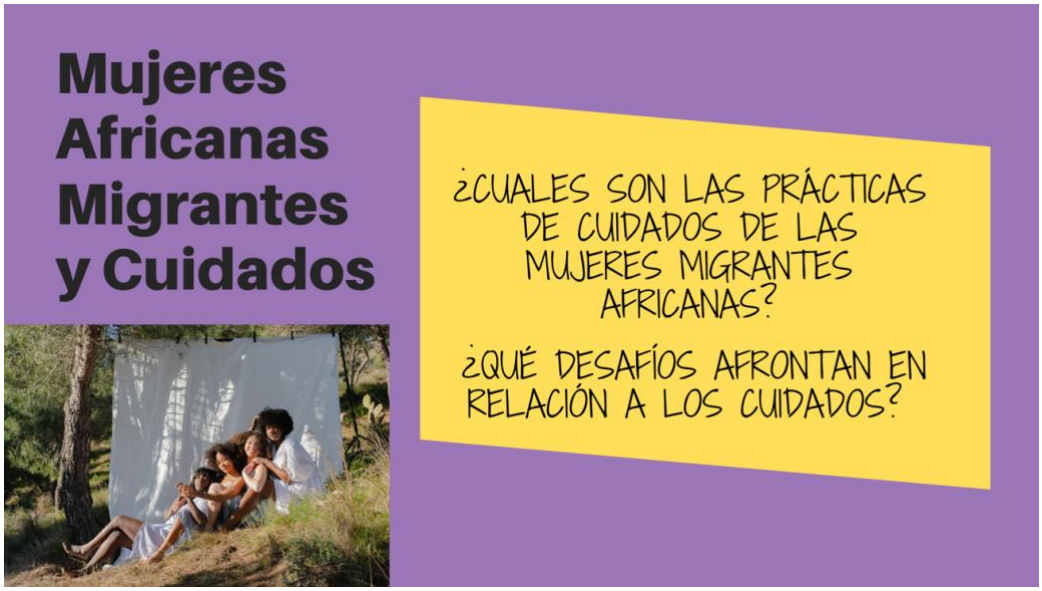


Image 1. Member checking pamphlets with research questions: What are the African migrant women´ care practices? Which threats they face related with care?

Compared to the focus group conducted in an earlier phase of the member checking process, this technique generated shorter responses and a lower volume of comments from participants. Nonetheless, in my view, it retains significant ethical value within the research process, as it allows participants to receive the final version of the thematic analysis and demonstrates an explicit commitment to returning results to the group involved in the study. In this case, the brochure functioned primarily as a strategy for final result feedback rather than as a space for collective co-interpretation, unlike the focus group conducted in earlier phases of the analysis.

Member Checking in a Voices and I-Positions Analysis

The voices and I-positions analysis was informed by Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans, 2003), which conceptualizes the self as composed of multiple, sometimes contradictory, positions that enter into dialogue with one another. Rather than assuming a unified and stable identity, this perspective focuses on how different voices, social expectations, and personal experiences interact within narrative accounts. The analysis therefore sought to identify the positions from which participants spoke, the voices they incorporated into their narratives, and the relationships established between them (anonymized reference).

Because this analytical approach relies heavily on interpretive work, member checking was particularly relevant. The objective was not to verify factual accuracy but

to explore whether participants recognized, questioned, or further elaborated the relationships between voices and positions that I had identified in their narratives.

For the analysis of voices and I-positions (Hermans, 2003), I selected three of the seven available interviews. This reduction responded to the intensive nature of the analysis, which requires working with a manageable volume of data to ensure consistent interpretations. The selected interviews also stood out for their narrative quality. I chose to work with the three participants from Senegal, as they shared a similar cultural context, which allowed the analysis to focus on the Senegalese diaspora in Seville. This decision was particularly relevant given that the literature on diasporic identity has highlighted the Senegalese diaspora as a notably representative case of transnational identity dynamics (Bathia, 2012). In the local context, the Senegalese community is also one of the largest and most collectively organized African groups, reflected in their associations, community celebrations, and mutual support practices (Moreno, 2013). This shared framework provided greater interpretive coherence for the voices and I-positions analysis.

For this analysis, I selected the member checking interview as the validation technique. This technique is applied as a phase in the research process in which provisional findings or preliminary results are returned to participants so that they can evaluate the accuracy of the interpretations made by the researcher. Unlike simple review of literal transcripts, this technique seeks participants' feedback on the veracity of themes, analytical categories, and conclusions derived from their accounts (Harvey, 2015). I considered this technique appropriate given the small sample size—three participants—and the complexity of the voices and I-positions analysis. The feedback was conducted through telephone interviews in a dialogical format. First, I explained to each participant which passages of their interview I had considered particularly relevant to the analysis. I then described how I had interpreted those fragments based on the analysis of the relationships between voices and positions. During the conversation, I also introduced my interpretation of the "role" that different people played within the narrative. Although I-positions are not conceptualized as roles in a strict sense, I used this metaphor as a communicative tool to facilitate dialogue with participants and allow them to evaluate, confirm, or question my interpretation.

One illustrative example emerged during the member checking interview with Awa (pseudonym), one of the three Senegalese women included in the voices and I-

positions analysis. The feedback conversations were documented through analytical notes rather than verbatim transcripts; therefore, the example presented here summarizes the issues discussed during the member checking process rather than reproducing participants' exact words.

In the initial analysis, I interpreted several fragments of Awa's narrative as reflecting a position oriented towards preserving forms of caregiving and child-rearing associated with her cultural background. For example, when discussing differences between Spain and Senegal, Awa explained that in her country of origin any adult could correct or guide a child, whereas in Spain such intervention might be perceived negatively by parents. I interpreted this contrast as reflecting a transition from a more community-oriented model of child-rearing to one centred on the nuclear family. I also connected this interpretation to her repeated identification as an "African mother," her desire to transmit aspects of her upbringing to her children, and her insistence on remaining closely involved in their care despite the challenges associated with migration.

During the member checking interview, Awa generally agreed with this interpretation but provided additional context that refined my understanding of her position. In particular, she explained that she did not view leaving street vending or rejecting full-time employment opportunities as sacrifices. Rather, she had consciously decided to have children and considered caring for them to be a responsibility that naturally followed from that decision. However, she expressed concern about situations in which people who appeared to be helping migrant mothers could eventually attempt to influence children against their parents or even seek custody arrangements. This clarification suggested that her insistence on keeping her children close was not only linked to cultural values surrounding motherhood and caregiving, but also to concerns about vulnerability, trust, and the perceived risks faced by migrant mothers in the host society.

Rather than contradicting the initial interpretation, Awa's comments expanded it by highlighting dimensions that had not been fully visible in the original analysis. The member checking interview therefore functioned as a space for interpretive refinement, allowing a more nuanced understanding of the positions and concerns present in her narrative. In this sense, the process helped strengthen the study's credibility and generate a sufficient level of trust to consider the analysis valid (Doyle, 2007). Furthermore, by

offering participants a degree of control over how their experiences were interpreted and represented, the technique contributes to balancing the power hierarchy inherent in the research process and recognizes participants as experts in their own lives (Candela, 2019).

The use of this technique also presented some challenges. One primary risk was that events experienced by participants between the initial interview and the member checking interview could generate discomfort when revisiting certain experiences, particularly those described as traumatic (Carlson, 2010). Since I maintained intermittent contact with participants during the period preceding this phase, I considered relevant life events when selecting interview fragments for feedback. For this reason, I decided to focus the discussion on passages that did not pose a risk of emotional discomfort or distress for participants. This decision also raises broader methodological and ethical questions. While avoiding potentially distressing topics may reduce the risk of harm, it can also limit opportunities for participants to revisit and reinterpret difficult experiences. From this perspective, there is an inherent tension between protecting participants from unnecessary distress and recognising their capacity to engage critically with challenging aspects of their own narratives. In the present study, I prioritised participants' well-being given the nature of the experiences discussed and the objectives of the member checking interviews. Nevertheless, different research contexts may justify alternative decisions, particularly when the aim is to explore processes of meaning-making surrounding difficult or traumatic experiences.

This decision reflected the need to maintain coherence with the ethical framework of the study. From my perspective, each researcher must evaluate, according to their theoretical framework and research objectives, whether to apply a specific member checking technique or resort to other validation strategies that minimally influence the analytical process. In conclusion, the member checking interview functioned as a space for interpretive dialogue in which participants could also position themselves regarding my analytical reading of their narratives, thus contributing to a more situated understanding of the voices and I-positions present in their accounts.

Conclusions

This article examined the application of different member checking techniques in two types of qualitative analysis—reflexive thematic analysis and voices and I-positions analysis—with the aim of exploring their potential as strategies for validation and interpretive reflection within the research process. Based on these experiences, the study demonstrates that member checking does not constitute a single or standardized technique, but rather a set of methodological practices that can take different forms depending on the type of analysis, research design, and characteristics of the participant group.

In the case of the focus group, its incorporation into the thematic analysis process created a space for collective discussion that promoted co-interpretation of preliminary results. Interaction among participants not only facilitated confirmation of some initial interpretations but also allowed the analysis to be expanded by introducing new nuances and analytical dimensions. In this way, the focus group functioned not only as a validation technique but also as an additional space for interpretive production.

The use of an infographic as a member checking technique highlighted the potential of visual materials to make results feedback more accessible, especially in cross-cultural research contexts. Such resources can facilitate understanding of findings and promote more inclusive participation by study participants. However, the experience also showed that designing these materials requires careful attention to language and presentation to avoid ambiguous interpretations.

The member checking interview proved particularly suitable for the voices and I-positions analysis, given the interpretive nature and complexity of this analytical approach. The dialogical format allowed specific narrative fragments to be discussed and enabled participants to engage with the relationships among the different voices and positions identified in the analysis.

Taken together, these experiences suggest that member checking should be understood as a flexible methodological practice that must be adapted to the type of research, analytical approach, and context of participant engagement. The diversity of available techniques constitutes a particularly rich methodological resource, allowing researchers to design feedback and validation strategies aligned with the characteristics of each study.

From my perspective, member checking can function as a space for shared reflection and participation in the research process. However, it is also important to recognize that the final interpretation of the analysis remains the researcher's responsibility. The complexity of some analytical procedures and the specialized training required by certain methodological approaches make it necessary to maintain this balance between participant involvement and interpretive responsibility. Rather than transferring analytical authority entirely to participants, member checking creates opportunities for dialogue in which interpretations may be challenged, refined, or expanded while remaining part of a broader analytical framework constructed by the researcher.

Furthermore, I consider these practices particularly consistent with feminist-oriented research, in which reflexivity and attention to the ethical dimensions of the research process occupy a central place. Incorporating member checking techniques forces continual reconsideration of how participants' experiences are represented and reflection on their well-being throughout all phases of the study. In this sense, these techniques also encourage researchers to make processes and results more accessible to those who have contributed to knowledge production.

Finally, regarding the catalytic validity, it is a potential key ethical benefit of member checking. Within feminist and participatory traditions, research is often expected not only to generate knowledge but also to create opportunities for participants to reflect on their experiences, social positions, and possibilities for action. Member checking may contribute to this process by encouraging participants to revisit their narratives, engage with alternative interpretations, and discuss shared experiences with others. However, catalytic validity should not be assumed automatically. Further research is needed to understand whether these moments of reflection generate lasting effects beyond the research encounter itself.

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