

Methods of Qualitative Nursing Research

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Abstract: *Qualitative research is one method of enquiry about truth and facts. It aims to get an in-depth view about human behavior. It is more close to nursing as nursing as a science is about human beings and their response to health and illness. It is well suited to nursing science as both have central concern to describing life experiences and their meanings. This article covers the elementary facts about qualitative research.*

Keywords: *Qualitative research, its base, limitation, credibility and methods, techniques, coding and presentation.*

I. Introduction

Definition: Qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behavior, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or life styles etc.

1.1 It is a study about human behavior.

1.2. It is very close to professional nursing because ANA has defined nursing as concern with human responses to actual or potential health problems.

II. Qualitative Research Is Concerned With '...Developing Explanations Of Social Phenomena...' It Focuses On

1. The world in which we live
2. Why things are the way they are
3. Concerned with social aspects of our world
4. Seeks to answer questions about
 - Why people behave the way they do
 - How opinions and attitudes are formed
 - How people are affected by the events that go on around them
 - How and why cultures have developed in the way they have
 - The differences between social groups
5. Qualitative questions:
 1. How
 2. Why
 3. What

III. Qualitative Research's Base/Roots Are

1. Anthropology
2. Philosophy
3. Sociology

IV. Limitations Of Qualitative Studies

1. No universal rules and methods for analyzing data.
2. The absence of standard procedure makes it difficult how to explain and present the findings and replicate it.
3. Enormous data must be organized to make sense of pages and pages of narrative information.
4. How to reduce the data to make a final report.
5. Fluency with language. (especially written)

V. For Credibility You Look For

For credibility of quantitative studies you look for:

- Validity
- Reliability

In qualitative research you look for:

- Credibility – Member checking, peer debriefing
- Transferability – Meaning to other similar situations
- Dependability – Triangulation
- Conformability – Auditable
(Lincoln and Guba 1985)

Recent – Pawson et al –TAPUAS for credibility analysis:

- T – Transparency
- A – Accuracy
- P – Purposivity
- U – Utility
- A – Accessibility
- S – Specificity

VI. Common Designs Used In Qualitative Research:

1. Phenomenology
2. Ethnography
3. Grounded theory
4. Narratives

Generally speaking, qualitative researchers....

1. spend a great deal of time in the settings being studied (fieldwork)
2. rely on themselves as the main instrument of data collection (subjectivity; inter subjectivity)
3. analyze data using interpretative lenses
4. employ expressive language and voice in descriptions and explanations
5. seek depth of perspective through ongoing analysis (i.e., “waves of data”)

VII. Method Of Data Collection:

Approaches for qualitative research usually involve:

1. Direct interaction with individuals on a one to one basis
2. Or direct interaction with individuals in a group setting

Qualitative research data collection methods are time consuming; therefore data is usually collected from a smaller sample

The main methods for collecting qualitative data are:

1. Individual interviews
2. Focus groups
3. Observations
4. Action Research

7.1 Interviews:

Interviews can be

1. Unstructured

1. Can be referred to as 'depth' or 'in depth' interviews
2. They have very little structure at all
3. The interviewer may just go with the aim of discussing a limited number of topics, sometimes as few as just one or two

2. Semi structured

1. Semi structured interviews are sometimes also called focused interviews
2. A series of open ended questions based on the topic areas the researcher wants to cover
3. A series of broad questions to ask and may have some prompts to help the interviewee
4. 'The open ended nature of the question defines the topic under investigation but provides opportunities for both interviewer and interviewee to discuss some topics in more detail'

Good quality interview involves:

1. Thought
2. Preparation
3. The development of the interview schedule
4. Conducting and analyzing the interview data with care and consideration

The use of focus groups is sometimes used when it is better to obtain information from a group rather than individuals.

7.2. Focus Group:

Group interviews can be used when:

1. Limited resources (time, manpower, finances)
2. The phenomena being researched requires a collective discussion in order to understand the circumstances, behavior or opinions
3. Greater insights may be developed of the group dynamic - or cause and consequence

Characteristics of a focus group:

1. Recommended size of the sample group is 6 - 10.
2. Several focus groups should be used in order to get a more objective and macro view of the investigation.
3. Members of the focus group should have something in common which is important to the investigation
4. Groups can either be put together or existing groups - it is always useful to be mindful of the group dynamics of both situations

The aim of the focus group is to make use of participants' feelings, perceptions and opinions

This method requires the researcher to use a range of skills:

1. group skills
2. facilitating
3. moderating
4. listening/observing
5. analysis

7.3. Observation:

Observation may take place in natural settings and involve the researcher taking lengthy and descriptive notes of what is happening.

It is argued that there are limits to the situations that can be observed in their 'natural' settings and that the presence of the research may lead to problems with validity.

Strengths of observation:

1. Can offer a flavor for what is happening
2. Can give an insight into the bigger picture
3. Can demonstrate sub-groups
4. Can be used to assist in the design of the rest of the research

Techniques for collecting data through observation

1. Written descriptions

1. The researcher makes written descriptions of the people, situations or environment
2. Limitations include
 1. Researcher might miss out on an observation as they are taking notes
 2. The researcher may be focused on a particular event or situation
 3. There is room for subjective interpretation of what is happening

2. Video recording

1. Allows the researcher to also record notes
2. Limitations may include people acting unnaturally towards the camera or others avoiding the camera
3. The camera may not always see everything

3. Photographs and artifacts

1. Useful when there is a need to collect observable information or phenomena such as buildings, neighborhoods, dress and appearance
2. Artifacts' include objects of significance - memorabilia, instruments, tools etc

VIII. Documentation

Any and all kinds of documentation may be used to provide information - a local paper, information on a notice board, administrative policies and procedures...etc previous research, even

Qualitative Data:

Data is generally collected from or in the form of...

- Field notes
- Interviews (recorded and transcribed)
- Focus groups
- Audio & video tapes (transcribed and described)
- Copies of documents
- Narrative descriptions
- Diaries
- Newspaper or magazine stories
- Web pages
- Photographs (described)

8.1 Coding Data

Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2007)

1. Get sense of the whole.
2. Pick one document and ask the question what is this person talking about?
3. Sentences and paragraphs that relate to a single code are called text segments.
4. Codes are labels used to describe a segment of text or an image.
5. Codes can address many different topics such as – a. setting /context b. Perspective held by participants. (Perspective – Ways of thinking about people and objects by participants.) c. Processes (description) d. Activities e. Strategies f. Relationships and social structure
6. After coding an entire text, make a list of all code words. Group them and reduce them to a small number of themes.
7. Go back data, try and check whether new codes emerge.
8. Reduce the codes to get 5-7 themes.
9. Themes Categories - are similar codes aggregated together to form a major idea in the data base.
10. Description - is a detailed rendering of people, places or events in a setting in qualitative research.
11. Describing and developing themes from the data consists of answering the major research questions and forming an in depth understanding of the central phenomena through description and thematic development.

IX. Representing Findings

Qualitative researchers display their findings by using figures or picture that argument the discussion. (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

X. Reporting Findings

A narrative discussion is a written passage in qualitative study in which authors summarize in detail the findings from their data analysis.

XI. Summarize Findings

The overall in text is to provide readers with the overview findings to complement the more details results in the description and theme passages.

XII. Convey Personal Reflection

You base your personal interpretation based on hunches, insights and intuition. Because you have been at it at greater lengths you are in a position to reflect and remark on the larger meaning of the data.

XIII. Conclusion

This article dealt with definition, idea, roots/ base, limitation, credibility, common designs and methods used in qualitative research.

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