

Editorial

Qualitative Research Methodology: Its Merit for Nursing Enquiries

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Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods may be used to carry out surveys. The selection of a qualitative research design in particular aims to record individual experiences, feelings and views on the research questions that are being explored by the researcher. Within this context, the principal investigator emphasizes on the attitudes, positions and opinions of the interviewees. Thus, qualitative methodologies offer the necessary flexibility to enable the researcher to amend the questions during an interview, which is appropriate for vulnerable groups such as oncology patients.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) the concept of qualitative research is not easily defined since "qualitative research does not have a specific theoretical background, nor does it have a distinct set of methods and practices that belong only to it". Hence, although there have been numerous attempts to clearly define the essence of "qualitative research?" Bryman (2008) made a significant contribution by stating that "Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantitative data collection and analysis." Sandelowski (2004) also elaborated further by proposing that "Qualitative research is a general term for a series of attitudes and strategies to conduct research aimed at discovering how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world.

Quantitative and qualitative methods are commonly referred to as two different world theories. In quantitative researchers the qualitative method is treated as a 'lighter form of research design', because it includes small samples which may not be considered representative. Moreover, many also consider

qualitative research to be non-objective, since results can be influenced by researchers' experiences and views; on the other hand, qualitative researchers reject quantitative research mainly due to the excessive simplification of individual experience (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

Although qualitative research has been traditionally the choice of investigation for the social sciences, such as psychology sociology and anthropology, it is now becoming the most common selected methodology in nursing enquiry globally and the number of researchers employing such methods is steadily increasing in the recent years. In addition, qualitative techniques are often chosen by nurse researchers either as a complementary or independent investigation approach, as the same research question can be explored in combination, or independently in order to obtain the most valid results. For example, when quantitative research studies the incidence of death or disease or the effectiveness of vaccines or various therapeutic interventions is evaluated, qualitative research can be simultaneously employed in order to account for human beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, experiences, opinions and knowledge thus adding valuable insights to the original quantitative results (Squires & Doren, 2018; Ingham-Broomfield, 2015).

It is widely accepted that through qualitative research we can understand, interpret the experiences and opinions of interviewees. However, in order to achieve the aims of one's study, the researcher must determine the perceptual profile in the first phase. And then he/she may formulate the questions of the study, followed by setting up the study

sample. Then, the exact qualitative method for collecting and analyzing the data can be selected. Finally, the researcher has to determine how the data will be presented. The above typology depicts a logical structure, a certain form, so that even the novice researcher can achieve the objectives of quality research (Mantzoukas, 2007).

The interview is perhaps the most important method in qualitative research (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). The interview (structured or unstructured), enables the researcher to acquire 'direct' data, which are derived from the interviewee's positions, experiences and personal references. The interview is actually a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee, with the purpose of this conversation learning from the interviewee per se (Mitchell, 2015). Quality interviews are categorized as unstructured, semi-structured and structured. In qualitative research the interview is a time-consuming and demanding process, not only by the way it will be conducted but also by the way it will be designed, but also by the data analysis. The researcher requires communication skills, flexibility, experience, but also sensitivity to ethical and ethical issues (Dearnley, 2005).

Sampling in qualitative research is related to the selection of participants from a wider overall population and is considered successful when this selection produces purposeful results. The sampling 'units' are not subjected to probability sampling but rather to representation sampling. In qualitative research, sampling without much stress on probability is used because the aim is to select participants who have closer the characteristics associated with the research case per se. hence, the most common methods in sampling in the qualitative investigation are Purposive Sampling; Convenience Sampling; Snowball Sampling and Theoretical Sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015).

With regards to analysis, there are many techniques available for qualitative investigations. Thematic analysis is one of the most frequently used ones in qualitative research (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The analysis of the data starts as soon as it has been all collected through interviews and observations. The investigator during the process, compares, interprets, concludes and

verifies. The process of analysis is a necessary part of the research, but it is also what gives true meaning to the study per se. Hence, the aim of the analysis is to interpret the real causes and concerns 'behind and under' the data and eventually to offer new insights and knowledge. In transcribing research interviews, conversations should be recorded verbatim, even pauses or any jokes. Once the interviews are recorded, the researcher reads the recorded data several times so that he/she can begin to understand it (Mantzoukas, 2007).

The analysis of quality research is divided into a production and inductive method. In the production method we have a specific context, which we follow for the analysis of the data. This method is used in surveys, which researchers know in advance the answers of interviewees. For example, a survey investigating the complaints of hospitalized patients is a survey which studies the usual complaints, insufficient material, staff, visiting or resting hours etc. By contrast, in the inductive method the analysis of data is carried out without the existence of any framework (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

Conclusions: Nursing research is generally agreed to be based on the generation of knowledge, and whilst this is a relevant aim in theory-based disciplines such as sociology, the primary concern of nursing is with practice. Using examples drawn mainly from the current field of international publishing in nursing, it can be argued that the application of generalizable, research-based knowledge to individual, unique, person-centered practice, the so-called 'research-based practice' advocated by the Department of Health, is one of the main causes of the theory-practice gap. Within this context, qualitative research can frequently provide a framework whereby the patients' 'voice' can be heard and their views can be explored in depth.

Overall, nursing requires a paradigm of clinical research which focuses on the individual therapeutic encounter in order to complement the existing sociological paradigm of theoretical research which is best suited to the generation of generalizable knowledge and theory. Yet, suggesting that such a clinically based research paradigm

must not only focus on the individual nurse-patient relationship, but that it must be carried out by the nurse herself. Clinical research, and qualitative approaches in particular, can contribute substantially to current practice, therefore ensuring more practitioner-based research.

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