Writing Qualitative Paper

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QR: Challenges Faced

• Qualitative research ➔ unstructured
• Develop argument that the study can contribute to theory, research, clinical practice or health policy
• Plan a study that is systematic, manageable, and flexible:
  ❖ Explicit details about design and methods
  ❖ Stressing the rigor of the study
  ❖ Justified why a particular qualitative method is chosen
• Most reviewers are aware of quantitative designs but not qualitative research

Qualitative Paper

• Background/Introduction
  – Statement of purpose, research questions/objectives & significance of study
• Literature review
• Research Design and Methods
  – Rationale of design and methods chosen – Why?
  – Sampling, data collection methods, data analysis
  – Trustworthiness/Validity
  – Ethical issues
• Results and/or Discussion
• Conclusions & Recommendations
• References & Appendices

Introduction/Background

• Identify the problem/issue
• Put the research into the context as to what the phenomena understudy is
• Rationale of the study
• Significance/Importance of study

Literature Review

• Critically analyzed the articles & be selective of the articles you present
• Build a case for what is known (existing), what is missing (gaps), and how your study fills the gap/s
• Literature is used to demonstrate openness to complexity of phenomenon, rather than funneling toward an a priori conceptualization
Methods

- Description of the particular method that will be used e.g. ethnography, phenomenology, case study, grounded theory or participatory action research
- Describe the theoretical framework, if any, that guides the study
- Rationale for qualitative research generally and for the specific method to be used
- Rigor is important

Sample

- Purposive or theoretical sampling
- Characteristics of types of persons, events or processes to be sampled
- How sampling decisions will be made
- Sample size estimates provided based on previous experience, clinical work, pilot work, etc.
- Accessibility and recruitment

Data Collection and Analysis

- Types of data collection e.g. individual interviews, participant observation, focus groups, life histories, personal and public documents, internet-based data, videos, photos, etc.
- Types of analysis e.g. constant comparison, themes, content analysis
- Describe fully how data will be gathered (fieldwork) and processed

Data Management & Analysis

- How are the data managed and retrieved?
- How will the researchers engage in reflexivity (e.g., be self-analytical)?
- Convince the reader that the researcher is sufficiently knowledgeable about qualitative analysis and has necessary skills
- Qualitative software used e.g. ATLAS, NVIVO, NUD*IST, ETHNOGRAPH, etc.

Trustworthiness / Validity

- Examples of strategies e.g. triangulation, or prolonged contact with informants, member check, detailed description (audit trail), reflexivity, expert consultants, etc
- Constant checking for representativeness of data (or concepts) e.g. theory based generalization

Limiting Bias in Interpretations

- Search and explain negative cases
- Describe how analysis will include a purposeful examination of alternative explanations
- Using members of the research team to critically question the analysis
- Audit trail of data collection and analytic strategies
Ethical Issues

- Institutional ethics approval
- Informed consent from participants
- Dealing with sensitive issues
- Confidentiality (protecting the rights of participants/informants)
- Debriefing

Findings & Discussion

- Different methods of reporting results
- Separate Findings & Discussion or Combined
- Present interpretations clearly and supported by evidence (vignettes or quotes – voices of participants)
- Data triangulation – multiple sources, member checks, audit trial, etc.
- Discussion sufficiently grounded in theory or in conceptual framework
- Limitations and strengths of study – described and discussed

Conclusions

- Summarized findings
- Implications of findings
- Does not allow for generalization to the population but to the theory
- Recommendations
- Future research directions

Abstract

- Written last once full paper is completed
- Background of study
- Research problem/study objectives
- Data collection techniques
- Sample
- Data analysis
- Major findings or summary of findings
- Conclusion & implications of findings

References