

USING QUALITATIVE APPROACH IN NURSING RESEARCH

Abstract

Qualitative research has a significant role in helping nurses to understand patient experiences of health and illness. The main aim of this study is to describe the role of qualitative research design in nursing so that cost effective and quality care can be provided. The use of qualitative approach is essential for expanding knowledge and understanding the phenomenon. Qualitative strategies are useful for exploring facts and developing concepts about the area of interest. It also contributes in connecting the social and cultural phenomenon to human experience. Therefore, it will be of value to the health institution and nursing practice.

Keywords: Qualitative nursing research; phenomenon; nursing care.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Research is one of the way by which knowledge can be updated and generated, and a discipline can maintain its professional value and status. The present period of complicated health problems makes interdisciplinary research an crucial characteristic of nursing research, because multiple aspects are required for the complex study of health and illness experiences of society. The types of qualitative research designs are narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research, historical research, action research and case study research. The essential strength of the qualitative research approach depends on the richness and depth of the healthcare exploration and description. In health research, these methodologies are accepted as the most humanistic and person-centered way of determining thoughts and activities of human beings.

It is rightly said that Evidence Based Practice make use of greatest integration of best evidence based research with clinical expertise, patient cultural belief, values and needs in the delivery of cost effective quality health care. Assessment tools are used on a periodic basis by health care professionals in clinical practice, and during research to increase quality patient care. Here, main components of qualitative research will be discussed to improve quality patient care

II. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry that guide disciplines in different subject matter. It includes an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern human behaviour. Here, the data is collected in descriptive form rather than numerical form and analyzed by descriptive coding, indexing, and narrations.

III. QUALITATIVE DESIGN AND NURSING RESEARCH

- 1. Narrative research:** Narrative research focuses on collecting and analyzing and exploring the life of an individual and is ideally suited to communicate the stories of individual experiences. The purpose of narrative research is to utilize 'story of an individual' in communicating to a larger audience. The roots of narrative investigation extend to humanities which include anthropology, literature, psychology, education, history, and sociology. Narrative research embraces the study of individual experiences and learning the importance of those experiences. The data is collected through various procedures include mainly interviews, field notes, photographs, diaries, and documents from one or more individuals. Data analysis and interpretation involves the analysis of the stories through “re-storying of stories” and developing themes usually in chronological order of occurrence. Rolls and Payne argued that narrative research is one of the valuable and essential approaches in health care research, to explore insight into patient's experiences. Example: Karlsson et al. conduct a narrative inquiry to “explore how people with Alzheimer's disease present their life story.” Nine participants with Alzheimer's disease were asked to describe about their life experiences from childhood to adulthood, and then to present life and their views of point about the future life.
- 2. Phenomenological Research:** Phenomenology is a philosophy that has been adapted by sociologist to raise an understanding of the relationship between states of individual

consciousness and social behaviour. Phenomenologist describes what all participator have in common as they experience and expose to a phenomenon for example grief, anger. The aim of phenomenology is to reduce the experiences of persons with a phenomenon to a description of the universal nature of human. This human experience or idea of perception may be phenomena like insomnia, exclusion, anger, or undergoing breast biopsy. Example: A phenomenological study was conducted by Cornelio et al. aimed at describing live “Experiences of Mothers on Parenting Children with Leukemia”. Data was collected from mothers of children between the age group of 1–16 years who are diagnosed with leukemia and undergoing chemotherapy. The method used for data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews and were analyzed using Husserl's method of phenomenology. The researchers revealed that the essence of the study as “chronic illness such as leukemia in children results in a negative influence on the child and the mother.”

Phenomenological research may create a question such as, “What is it like for a patient who is dying of cancer?” These findings would help a researcher to find out living experience of the patient. With this, the researcher identified the live experience of patient suffering from cancer. In nursing, understanding the individual consciousness and social behaviour help nurses to identify patients’ emotions and values.

- 3. Ethnographic Research:** Ethnography, associated with the field of anthropology, is a branch of human enquiry, which focuses on the cultural group of people with an effort to interpret their worldview. Ethnographic research studies are involved in the collection and analysis of data about cultural groups. Human science, assess the purposeful acts of people in various situations. As a qualitative method of inquiry, ethnography includes a systematic process of recognizing behavioral patterns and understanding the meaning of these patterns within certain contexts. More concretely, ethnography reveals the meaning of human behaviors within the context of culture and from a personal perspective.

In ethnographic research, the researcher regularly lives with the people and engages with them to study and assess their belief and culture. The investigator examines and analyzes ritual and custom of the people. Ethnographers interview people who are most knowledgeable and experienced about the culture. These people are called key informants. Ethnographers study peoples’ live experience and the way they interact with each other. In nursing research, application of ethnographic method began in the 1960s. Ethnography is beneficial in nursing because nurse researchers can understand the perspective of nursing and health care in the context in which it occurs.

Ethnographic study is useful to conduct in the beginning of a study as the purpose is to develop an early understanding of the actual aspects to support the future research design, such as the way of life from the native point of view by focusing on usual behaviors in daily living, patterns of a culture-sharing group, or the beliefs, language, behaviors.

- 4. Grounded Theory:** Grounded theory is an inductive method which is developed for health-related topics. The term grounded theory means that the theory developed from the research is ‘grounded’. Martin and Jurner (1986) have mentioned that ‘Grounded theory is an inductive theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop and

theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in the empirical observation or data.' Glaser's classical grounded theory highlight that the researcher should proceed towards the field exposure without any hypothesis.

According to Jacelon and O'Dell (2005), grounded theory is a useful technique for understanding the activities which help patients' to manage and control new and chronic health issues. Each and every person may perceive and manage the health related issues in a different way. For example a nurse researcher may be interested in how women deal with perimenopausal period. During a conversation with a group of these women, one woman might seem to be uncomfortable to talk about the changes in Perimenopausal period and not want to discuss it at all. A second woman might exhibit mental discomfort. However she is willing to enquire from researcher. Another woman might seem to be convenient about having conversation on Perimenopausal period. She is also agreed to share and communicate her experiences with the other women. Each of these women has different thoughts about the topic in a unique way.

Grounded theory helps nurses to comprehend, expand, and utilize real-world knowledge about health related issues. In nursing practice, grounded theories facilitate nurses to see process and changing pattern of health related concerns in groups, communities, and populations and prognosticate health and nursing care practice.

- 5. Historical Research Design:** Nurses are progressively interested in developing a body of nursing knowledge and defining the role of professional nurses in conducting research so that the findings can be used in understanding the social phenomenon. One means of achieving these aims is to conduct survey mainly to determine the roots of nursing through historical research. Historical studies help examine the evaluation and synthesis of data from the past. Historical research discovers the past events and compares it with the present events. This helps in describing the outcome of past events on future.

The systematic integration and critical evaluation and assessment of data relating to past occurrences or experiences of a specific phenomenon and is also depends on the qualitative data. Historical research is initiated to specifically answer questions concerning causes, effects or trends relating past events that may shed light on present behaviour or practices. Historical research is a critical investigation and exploration of events, their progress and evolution, past experiences, the careful strength of evidence of the validity of courses of information from the past, and the interpretation of the strength of evidence. The purpose is to gain a clear understanding of the influence of the past and future events related to life events. It involves detailed and accurate analysis of what has been written or done and is used to describe, explain, or interpret these events. The data of historical research are generall found in documents. These documents may be available in printed form. The documents are items of physical evidence. For example, you might examine the types of equipment used by midwives in past period. The data can also be acquired through oral reports. The material/data may be found in journals, archives or in personal collections. The sources of historical data are oftentimes referred to as primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are the immediate and firsthand information or direct evidence. Secondary sources are secondhand information. Oral histories, written records, eyewitnesses, pictorial sources, and physical evidence are examples of primary sources. Suppose a nurse researcher desires to explore and examine

the practices of nurse midwives anciently that is during 1980s. An oral history might be collected from a nurse who had worked as a nurse midwife during that time. The nurse researcher might also acquire some of the field notes. Finally, it might be possible for the researcher to obtain some information about the equipment used by nurse midwives during that period. Determining the interrelationship among the collected data related to health concerns of the past and future events, helps in discovering about past and how it is associated with future events which are essential to health care provider.

- 6. Action Research:** Action research is a form of applied research that tries to empower people through a process that constructs and uses knowledge. It makes an effort to find practical solutions to problems existing in framework of an organization. It increases understanding of how change in one's action practices can mutually benefit nurses within an organization. The disparities of health care can be measured by the utilization of action research is evident in addressing health discrepancy. The explorative and evidence based actions are planned, which can be applied in a particular organizational setup. Therefore, they are not universally applicable.

Participatory action research (PAR) is a kind of methodology that collaborate researcher and the community people to understand social issues and take necessary actions to bring a change in the community. There must be an involvement of both the study participants and the investigator in every step of research process: determining the research problem, use of research methodology, the data analysis, and how the research study results will be interpreted and utilized. According to Kelly (2005), Participatory action research (PAR) provides an opportunity for contribution of “a community in the process of health assessment program”.

It was started by Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, who was closely related to critical research. Action research is of particular importance to the nursing field, as its objectives are to collaborate with several disciplines for solving the problem and to solve a problem with application of a discipline.

- 7. Case Study:** Case studies are detailed examination of person, group, event or institutions. Case study is the development of comprehensive, in-depth knowledge about a single ‘case’ or a small number of related cases. In nursing, case study methodology is applied since a long time for detailed study of a single patient or a group of patients to generate and strengthening knowledge for solving nursing problems of patients diagnosed with specific disease. Case study data are collected by observation method or by personal interview. Complex phenomena can be studied by conducting case studies. A researcher explains how case studies elaborate and identify the case and also in-depth understanding of complex phenomena in the natural setting so that we can understand the changes in phenomena. Indeed, Sandelowski mentioned that using case study in research signifies the comprehensive nature of quality nursing care.

The data may be gathered through various methods like questionnaires, interviews, observations, or written document by the participant. A nurse researcher could be interested in understanding that how people with diabetes react to life style modification. A group of people diagnosed with hypertension could be studied for a time period to determine their responses to life style modification. The gathered information

can be recorded in the form of written document. The nurse researcher would then analyze and interpret these written reports. One should be careful in selection process of subjects to carry out a case study. In the previously discussed example, the researcher should avoid choosing only those clients who are expected to respond favorably or unfavorably to the life style modification. The findings of case study are implemented for providing patient care.

- 8. Triangulation (Mixed Methods):** Triangulation is the combination of two or more theories. Here, both qualitative and quantitative research design are used to conclude the research findings that can be utilize in patient are. The benefit of collaborating of qualitative and quantitative methods can increased confidence in study data, expand understanding of a phenomenon, the revelation of unique data.

Mixed methods are used to an increasing extent in nursing research to strengthen the in- depth understanding of nursing phenomena. The focus of research deemed to explore answers to research question by using different types of ways. Quantitative data can support qualitative research components by identifying representative patients or outlying cases, while qualitative data can throw light on quantitative components by helping with development of the conceptual model or instrument. In the process of data collection, quantitative data can provide baseline information to help researchers select patients to interview; while qualitative data can assist researchers understand the barriers and facilitators to patient recruitment and retention.

IV. CONCLUSION

Qualitative research not only results in development of evidence based knowledge but also can help nurses to determine patient care preferences. Qualitative research isn't generalizable, but it helps nurses to gain in-depth knowledge on different cultures and phenomenon. For example, nurses can safeguards patients' autonomy by understanding them. It has an important role in nursing science and is becoming progressively recognized and approved. In case of medical field, prevalence of chronic illness has been increased which affect live experiences of patient. Therefore, qualitative research assists health care professionals to find out how patients' are living with chronic illness. Hence, the importance of qualitative research is being accepted for understanding patients' thinking, value and cultures. This type of research can also help in improving the live experiences.

Table 1: Overview of the Research Designs of Qualitative Research

Content	Phenomenology	Ethnography	Grounded	Action research	Historical Method	Case Study
Sample	Individuals or groups	Groups or individuals in a culture	Individuals or groups	Community	Sources of historical significance	Single person or small group or institution
Example	Interviews and	Observati	Observat	In-depth	Historical	Intervie

of types of instruments/tools used	descriptions, observation.	on and documentation of daily life – the investigator or immerses themselves in the culture or group being studied .	ion, field notes, intensive interviews, review of documents, analysis of literature and research on the topic, memo-writing.	interview , Surveys, questionnaires.	material such as letters, memos, diaries, handwritten materials, old newspapers, books, audio or videotapes, government records, archives	ws, observation, records, historical documents and statements.
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