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FOR AUTHORS

SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT - No submission fee

Guidelines for reports using qualitative methodology

The journal appreciates studies using qualitative methodology. Write in line with the chosen qualitative method, so that your writing reflects the scientific roots of the qualitative method. Different qualitative approaches have different aims; for instance to provide illustration, to deepen the understanding or to generate theory. For example; if you have used a Grounded Theory approach, you are supposed to develop concepts, construct theoretical models and to hypothesize. It is then important that the author(s) move from a descriptive style of writing towards an analytical style. If instead you have used a phenomenological or a content analysis approach, it is of importance to present a detailed description of the phenomenon under study. Focus groups are used to gather information about perceptions and ideas on norms, values and attitudes in groups or sub-group cultures. They can e.g. supplement other methods to compare individual experience with group experience. They also allow access to research participants who may find individual interviews “scary” or “intimidating”.

General advice

- The report should be easy to understand and clearly contextualized
- Keep short
- Be clear in presenting methods
- Avoid too much detailed descriptions of the results
- Relate your findings with existing knowledge and theory
- Provide a discussion of the applicability for theory development and practice of the research field

Introduction

This section should be written in present tense and include a short presentation of the research topic and state of the art so far. Here a justification of the chosen research question(s) is presented and what is lacking in terms of knowledge in the field of study. If a theoretical framework is used, it should be presented here and then followed up under Discussion. This section usually ends with a clearly formulated aim of the study.

Methods

The method section is usually written in past tense. Reasons for using the chosen qualitative method can be stated. Present data collection strategies such as selection of informants or participants, methods and techniques of data collection, and type of data. Was a purposive sample used? Sometimes it is appropriate to use a probabilistic sample in qualitative studies, but that should then be justified and discussed. Was an emergent research design used? Justify the sampling procedure and technique. The relationship of the researcher to subjects/settings should be presented. Describe how the data analysis was done in relation to the methodological approach with clear definitions of concepts and categories/themes and how these were developed and how they relate to data. Ethical clearance for the study should be declared here; autonomy, beneficence, no harm and justice. Ethical considerations have to be taken into account during the whole research procedure and discussed specifically in relation to informed consent, confidentiality and consequences. The collected data is reported in such way that persons could not be identified. Agreements on who have access to the data and how to deal with the transcripts of data sources must be stated and developed. It is important that the interviewer or moderator is well skilled. Interviews are interventions and affect people. They affect people being interviewed and leave them knowing things about themselves that they did not know before being interviewed. You must be aware that interviews can cause potential harm by increasing psychological distress when discussing sensitive issues and encouraging self-disclosure.

Results

The findings should be relevant with respect to the aim of the study and provide new insights. The description of the material should be accurate and unexaggerated. The way of presenting the findings should be well organized and the best suited to ensure that findings are drawn from systematic analysis of material, rather than from preconceptions. The reader should be able to distinguish data from interpretation. Have a clear structure in your presentation of the results, a description of what are codes and what are categories should be clearly legible. Use tables and figures to illustrate, to give an overview and an explanation of the results when it is appropriate. The process of how data became the result should be carefully described without too many details. Quotes are "raw data" and should be compiled and analyzed, not just listed. There is a tendency for authors to overuse quotes and manuscripts to be dominated by a series of long quotes with little analyses or discussion, this should be avoided. The quotes should support and enrich the researcher's summary of the patterns identified by systematic analysis. Application of numbers to qualitative data should be done with caution and the process for doing this should be clearly articulated.

Discussion

Discuss the findings and relate them to existing knowledge, and theory. If you have used and presented a theoretical framework, then link your findings with that framework. Do not repeat findings. The findings should be presented in the context of any similar research and/or theories. A discussion of the existing literature and how this present research contributes to the area should be included. A consideration must be made about how transferrable the research would be to other settings. Although qualitative research usually focuses on understanding a single setting or a small number of people, one cannot give up on developing a [sampling](#) strategy that would allow the researcher to consider the investigation's relevance in other settings. Particular strengths and limitations of the research should be discussed. The authors should also reflect on their own influence on the data, the design and the development of the research as well as on data collection and interpretation on data. Describe techniques that have been used in order to increase trustworthiness. The theoretical and practical importance and how the study contributes to the body of knowledge on the topic should be discussed.

Summary

Present quality and validity of data and analysis as strategies to enhance quality of data, e.g. triangulation, respondent validation, application of critical thinking to analysis as attention to the influence of the researcher on data collection and on analysis, and critical approach to the status of data collected.

Literature

Lincoln YS and Guba EG. Naturalistic Inquiry. London: Sage publications, 1985.

Knaff KA, Howard MJ. Interpreting and reporting qualitative research. Res Nurs Health, 1984; 7: 17–24.

David J Clarke. Using qualitative observational methods in rehabilitation research: Part one. Int J Ther Rehabil 2009; 16: 362–369.

Creswell J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions. London: Sage Publications, 1998.

<http://www.equator-network.org/resource-centre/library-of-health-research-reporting/reporting-guidelines/qualitative-research/>

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