

Application of Qualitative Research

Name

Institution



The Use of Qualitative Research Methods in Decision-making

According to Power (2002), there are two broad categories of research methodologies including quantitative and qualitative research. Unlike quantitative research that emphasizes on quantifying the research data, qualitative research focuses on examining qualities including the behaviors and social phenomenon of the research subjects by using rich contextual data (Draper, 2004). Draper (2004) argues that qualitative research emphasizes on addressing “why”, “what” and “how” types of questions, as opposed to answering questions regarding quantities such as “how many” and “how much”. As such, qualitative research focuses on examining the qualities and experiences of the research subjects and interpreting the meaning of these phenomena to individuals. This paper focuses on discussing how qualitative research methods are utilized in decision making by describing specific qualitative methods that are used to gather data for research, evaluating the effectiveness of the identified qualitative research methods, and lastly describing the future of qualitative research within my field and in general.

Fundamentally, qualitative research methods have gained a tremendous acceptance in the healthcare sector where researchers utilize these methods in comprehending the complexity of behaviors, experiences and interactions between patients and various diseases (Draper, 2004). Therefore, qualitative research methods are indispensable research tools in my discipline of nursing because they enable researchers in this field to collect, analyze and interpret the data to understand common problems within the healthcare sector. There are various qualitative research methods that researchers in my discipline can utilize in gathering data. In particular, these qualitative research methods include semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus groups and ethnography (Power, 2002).

Essentially, researchers within my field may use semi-structured interviews to gather data for research studies. These interviews allow the researchers to use open-ended questions, which give the respondents opportunities to elaborate exhaustively on their attitudes and experiences. As a researcher, I prefer using probes when interviewing the respondents using semi-structured interviews. However, the structure and the sequencing of interview questions are usually predetermined to ensure that all research questions are covered during the interview. According to Power (2002), the respondent's answers to the interview questions should be recorded verbatim to avoid compromising the integrity of the gathered data.

For instance, semi-structured interviews are effectively utilized in my discipline to gather data about Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) knowledge. The effectiveness of semi-structured interviews in the research studies of STI knowledge lies on the capabilities of incorporating open-ended questions, which provide the respondents with opportunities to comprehensively elaborate their attitudes and experiences. Power (2002) argues that semi-structured interviews provide the interviewers with expansive answers that might subsequently be coded for use in large-scale quantitative research studies. Other organizations are also using semi-structured interviews to gather data. In 1994, the World Health Organization (WHO) utilized qualitative research methods to investigate heterosexual men's perceptions and attitudes toward female condoms in New York (Power, 2002).

The use of in-depth interviews is another qualitative research method that is used in my field to gather data. Essentially, the use of in-depth interviews involves creating a topic guide that plays a significant role in guiding the interviews (Power, 2002). As a researcher, I utilize in-depth interviews to enable the respondents to explore, elaborate and describe their thoughts and experiences while guiding and tailoring the interviews toward specific topics of interest.

According to Power (2002), in-depth interviews should be recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the field of nursing, in-depth interviews are used to gather detailed data about condom use, therefore identifying the phenomena of people engaging in unsafe protected sex. Power (2002) argues that most in-depth interviews are usually loosely structured to encourage and allow the study respondents to expound more on the topic in question. According to Power (2002), in-depth interviews were used in a research study in Morocco to unravel the conceptualization and stereotypic understanding of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) where most Moroccan Arabic people perceived STIs as just the cold.

Another qualitative research method includes the use of focus groups. Focus groups involve a committee of at most eight people whose motive is discussing the questions of interest in a research study. By so doing, the researcher obtains data from the answers provided by the focus groups. According to Power (2002), the optimal number of people in a single focus group should be eight members including the moderator. The rationale behind selecting focus groups is because they are applicable in different stages of the research including developing questions for interviews, gathering research data or exploring and expanding on issues or topic that may come up in the course of the research study. Focus groups may be used in nursing to understand the psychosocial factors that influence the compliance of STI patients with referral to hospital outpatient clinics. For instance, the Information Technology for Patient-Centered Health Care (INFOPAT) utilized focus groups in investigating and evaluating the effectiveness of an electronic personal health record for people living with chronic diseases to facilitate their participation in health care process (Tausch & Menold, 2016). According to Tausch and Menold (2016), the focus group commenced the research study with eliciting the advantages and demerits of an integrated electronic personal health record.

Ethnography or direct observation is another qualitative research tool that aids researchers in my field to collect data. According to Power (2002), ethnography involves gathering data by directly observing the behaviors and activities of the study participants. Ethnography is mostly utilized in nursing, especially in research studies that require the collection of detailed information regarding high-risk behaviors such as understanding the correlation between the spread of STIs/AIDs and behaviors such as commercial sex work and injecting drug abuse (Power, 2002). Furthermore, ethnography is used in nursing in cases where the researchers do not find the prospective respondents. For instance, commercial sex workers or injecting drug users are highly likely to conceal some information that the researcher might need, making the researcher to opt for the use of ethnography to gather data through just observation. Power (2002) argues that some governmental agencies in the United States including FBI use ethnography to identify the typologies and locations of shooting galleries that are most frequented by drug users in Chicago, USA.

In my opinion, the future of qualitative research is very promising and I believe that it will complement most quantitative approaches. In the field of nursing, quantitative research shall continue being the major research method for investigating complex social behavioral questions. Moreover, I speculate a tremendous rise in the utility of qualitative research in nursing because more social and medical phenomena are emerging every day, necessitating the pursuit of research studies to determine the appropriate interventions. Hence, researchers should explore the potential of qualitative research methodologies and adopt them fully to provide solutions to common psychosocial phenomena that need intervention.

References

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