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TABLE OF CONTENT

QUALITATIVE ONLINE INTERVIEW IN NURSING: CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS
Joko Gunawan
(pp 1-3)

CONCERNS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND NURSING SCIENCE
Joko Gunawan, Nur Asni Wahab, Elmiati Elmiati
(pp 4-7)

ETHICS VERSUS THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Joko Gunawan
(pp 8-9)

ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH
Joko Gunawan
(pp 10-11)
QUALITATIVE ONLINE INTERVIEW IN NURSING: CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

Joko Gunawan*

Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang, Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Joko Gunawan, RN
Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang
Jl. Melati Kabupaten Belitung, Kepulauan Bangka Belitung 33684, Indonesia
E-mail: joe_gunawan@ymail.com

INTRODUCTION
The use of Internet nowadays has been influencing the nature of qualitative research. Online interview in nursing research has been adopted by most of nurses and nursing students, particularly in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Videoconference, email, and messenger interview are very common in qualitative study. However, there are some issues regarding the online interview. This article is noted to discuss the qualitative online interview, and then some concerns and questions are raised for consideration.

ONLINE INTERVIEW
Interview is an essential component of qualitative research. Although Interview has been argued that this method is not scientific or only explorative, qualitative studies may be accepted as relevant in the first exploratory phases of research. In a scientific investigation, the preparatory qualitative steps should lead to more precise hypothesis and theory, which can be experimentally tested.¹

Interview is traditionally conducted by face-to-face. Many nurses are familiar with the process of interviewing, which nurses always do in their practice environment, particularly in nurse-patient relationship. However, technology, especially the growth of the Internet has been influencing the forms of data collection in qualitative research. Therefore, the Interview nowadays consists of both face-to-face interview and online interview.

Online interview has been proposed due to the barriers of distance, cost, and time consuming while having face-to-face interview. Online interview is considered to provide the solutions instead of those barriers. Email, text-based chat rooms, instant messenger protocol and videoconference are the most commonly
used methods for online interviewing. In fact, there are some benefits of online interview, such as the researchers do not need to tape and transcribe, because the online chat program automatically generate interview transcripts, and allows the researchers to analyze data quickly. It was also found that respondents also reveal more personal information in computer-mediated communication than in traditional face-to-face discussions. Furthermore, respondents are more likely to express their deeper feelings and their opinion in an online environment than traditional interview environment. It can be concluded that online interview is so much better than face-to-face interview.

SOME CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

Just because there are so many benefits of online interview, it does not mean we forget the essence of qualitative research, which has an important place in nursing science. There are some issues need to be considered in online interview, such as:

Firstly, qualitative research is not only about qualitative methodology. It seeks to understand an individual in holistic view as well as nursing science, aims to gather in-depth understanding of human behavior. During interview, nurses are not only asking the question, but also observing the situation and the way the participants answer including their body language. However, in online interview, such as email, messenger, or phone interviews, we do not see or know what kind of our object reality. It may be misleading of the meaning of qualitative research.

Secondly, to ensure trustworthiness, interviews are coupled with other forms of data collection that is called triangulation, which the researchers emerge interview, observation, and study documentation in order to provide a well-rounded collection of information for analyses. If the reason of conducting online interview is a distance, then there is a big question of how we do triangulation of data and ensure the trustworthiness.

Thirdly, in qualitative study, we need to do an inform consent before doing interview. In face-to-face interview, we can ask the participants directly to sign their name, or we can record their voice by tape recorder if the participants cannot read or write. However, in online interview, the inform consent is questionable, especially email or messenger interview.

Fourthly, despite the reported benefits of online interview, we could consider the high speed of Internet, which is the antecedent of online interview. On the other hand, we need to confirm that subjects are familiar with online communication.

In conclusion, qualitative online interview is a part of other techniques of collecting data, but it cannot be used as a single technique in qualitative study.

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CONCERNS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH AND NURSING SCIENCE

Joko Gunawan*, Nur Asni Wahab, Elmiati

Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang, Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

*Corresponding author:
Joko Gunawan, RN
Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang
Jl. Melati Kabupaten Belitung, Kepulauan Bangka Belitung 33684, Indonesia
E-mail: joe_gunawan@ymail.com

ABSTRACT

Qualitative research methods become increasingly popular in nursing. However, most of nursing students have argued and debated about issues and meanings of the qualitative research in nursing science. This article is noted to discuss the qualitative aspects and concerns.

Keywords: qualitative research, nursing, nursing science

INTRODUCTION

An enormous proliferation of nursing studies using qualitative research method is very common in recent years, which is a part of undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The quality of research based on such methods is a great value for nursing that addresses individual holistically. This kind of research will be a basis for nursing science – ‘the standpoint’, which will also provide the informative data about the uniqueness of human beings for the best nursing care. The purpose of this paper is to begin that discussion by primarily focusing on the standpoint. First, key aspects of qualitative study are presented, then concerns are raised for discussion.

KEY ASPECT OF QUALITATIVE STUDY

The need of qualitative study has been increased to answer the need of human being. Qualitative study seeks to
understand an individual’s perspective, experience, and uniqueness that seems to have an important place in nursing science. While nurses also take an account on an individual’s preference, respect and promotion of the patient’s rights and decisions. Patient-centered care is kind of the principle of both. On the other hand, qualitative researchers also argue that nursing could be applied to their research approaches.\textsuperscript{1} Porter (2000)\textsuperscript{2} also mentioned that it could be even be that the use of qualitative research will come to distinguish nursing knowledge from the sort of knowledge that other, more mechanistically orientated, health professionals aspire to.

To understand the root of knowledge of qualitative study, there are some philosophies underpinning. \textit{Ontological assumption} poses the question “What is the nature of being, reality, existence? What can be known about it?” Qualitative researchers will answer that nature of being is multiple realities, which are very subjective. Concerning with what constitutes reality or what is, researchers need to take a position related to the perspectives of how things really are and how things really work. In \textit{epistemology}, which concerns with the nature and forms of knowledge. Epistemological assumption poses the question “What is truth? What is real knowledge? What is the relationship between the researcher and what is being studied?” qualitative researchers will answer that there is no one truth, but multiple truths/realities. Truth is subjective to each person. The other paradigm underpinning qualitative study is \textit{axiology}, which its assumption poses the question “What is the role of values?” Qualitative researchers will answer that facts cannot be separated from values. Things cannot be described as they really are, but only how we perceive them. There is no such a thing as absolute objectivity.

Values are entrenched with everything. Related to nursing, the philosophy underpinnings qualitative research is the same with philosophy in nursing, which there is no one truth, but multiple truths or realities. The way to describe things is not based on they really are, but how we perceive them.

To understand individual or phenomenon in a holistic view, the qualitative researchers use an emergent design of data collection or triangulation. It does not mean lack of attention or focus. Rather, the researchers want to base their enquiries on realities and viewpoints of those being studied, and these might not be apparent at the outset of the study. The most common data collections used in qualitative study are interview and focus group. The basic principle in data collection of qualitative study is investigating in natural setting; the place or the environment that individual is used to be. There is no control and manipulation. The investigation is understanding complex relationship rather than explaining a single relationship.

The finding of qualitative study is narrative-descriptive, which is based on the rhetorical that its philosophical assumption poses the question “What is the language of research?” The qualitative researchers will describe that the language of research is to write narratively. However, the qualitative study is flexible and context sensitive.

**CONCERNS IN QUALITATIVE STUDY**

The standing point that the qualitative research is a basis having an important place in nursing science could not be ignored. The understanding of the uniqueness of each individual with the patient-centered principle is an art of nursing, which is expressed by the individual nurse through creativity.
However, nursing is widely considered as an art and science. It could not be separated. Science in qualitative study has been argued and debated among philosophers and researchers. It is argued that science is concerned with rigor, and by definition; good rigorous research must be reliable and valid. If qualitative research is unreliable and invalid, then it must not be a science. On the other hand, science consists of systematized knowledge, which is organized, classified and more, rather than less and exact. An intrinsic dynamic of science is to achieve higher levels of abstraction, increasingly powerful axioms generalizable to more and more of the universe.

However, it is argued that the characteristics of qualitative research as scientific or unscientific would then depend upon which definition of science is used. The concept of methodical, standard procedure of fixed steps, systematic and knowledge are complex. While qualitative research method is flexible, open, unstructured, or unstandardized, context-sensitive, and depend on the personal interaction of between subject and object. A rejection of qualitative research as unscientific reflects a specific limited conception of science, rather than the meaning of science in the topic of continual clarification and discussion. Therefore, Polkinghorne argued and advocated an understanding of science, which is “science is not seen as an activity of following methodological recipes that yield acceptable results. Science becomes the creative search to understand better, and it uses whatever approaches are responsive to the particular questions and subject matters addressed. Those methods are acceptable which produce results that convince the community that the new understanding is deeper, fuller, and more useful than the previous understanding.”

Secondly, collecting data by interview is considered not objective, but subjective, which different interpreters find different meanings. It is all dependent on the interpreters. It tends to be bias. However, we may differentiate between a biased subjectivity and a perspectival subjectivity. A biased subjectivity is unprofessional work, selectively interpreting and reporting statements justifying their own conclusions; readers only notice evidence that supports their own opinions. Otherwise, a perspectival subjectivity is appearing when readers adapt different perspectives and pose different questions to the same text come out with different interpretations of the meaning. It could be said that subjectivity in this sense of multiple perspectives interpretations is one of the strengths of the interview. Moreover, philosophy of qualitative research indicated that there is no absolute truth because we cannot judge the other interpretations are right or wrong.

Thirdly, the findings are not generalizable; there are too few subjects. It is considered to be the weakness of qualitative study. Most of people like to see the results of research can be generalized, as a universal knowledge. However, Sandelowski distinguishes between the generalizability of quantitative findings and that of qualitative findings. Generalization in quantitative findings is characterized by establishing universal laws for populations based on information from samples deemed to be similar to those populations, and it cannot be achieved with qualitative findings. Otherwise, qualitative findings are not generalizable in the prevalent sense of the word; they do not provide laws or relationships that can be taken from a single sample and applied to entire populations. But, rather, they are generalizable in a way that is particularly pertinent to nursing practice, in which there is an expectation that scientific
findings, and nursing care itself, be tailored to unique individuals in their distinct contexts. It provides idiographic knowledge about human experiences to readers, who can apply the findings to the care of individuals who are in situations similar to the situations that the findings came.

Fourthly, attention to reliability and validity of qualitative study has been directed. Generally, reliability is defined as the extent to which the results of a study or a measure are repeatable in different circumstances, and validity is the degree to which a study accurately reflects the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure. Some argue that validity and reliability are important in qualitative research. However, the terms reliability and validity seems no essential criteria in qualitative study, rather the terms credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability. The examination of trustworthiness is crucial to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative research. It also states that establishing the trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability, which is also a central to any conceptions of quality in qualitative research.

In conclusion, a qualitative study is appropriate for nursing, both art and science. Understanding the individual in a holistic view is essence for nursing, which will lead the creativity of nurses to give a best nursing care. The findings in qualitative study may not be generalized, but rather to provide knowledge based on the distinct context of the uniqueness of human beings.

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The whole is greater than the sum of its part. This is what researchers say about qualitative research. Understanding human problem in a holistic picture, building a complex phenomenon, analyzing words, and conducting a study in a natural setting are the nature of qualitative research. We cannot even compare the qualitative world to another world, which is quantitative research. However, many ethical issues are raised regarding the nature of it. This paper is noted to discuss the issues for consideration.

We cannot deny that most of the ethics board members are only familiar with quantitative research. Therefore, they tend to argue and debate about qualitative based on quantitative perspectives. However, the debate will never end until they have the same understanding.

Firstly, the ethics board members may argue that the qualitative research is often used a small group of samples than large samples. This is one of issues that has always been asked. It seems that few samples will not be useful, in terms of generality. It may be the weakness of qualitative research. But we may distinguish between qualitative and quantitative world, which quantitative has the principle to achieve the universal knowledge. Otherwise, qualitative cannot do that. Qualitative research tends to generalize in the way of providing knowledge of human experiences with the uniqueness. The findings can be used for others having the similar situation with the study, particularly in nursing practice, which nurses take care different humans with different characteristics.

Secondly, the subjectivity of qualitative research has always been
compromised, in terms of lack of objectivity. This is true that qualitative researchers hold an interpretive perspective, however, it may lead to misunderstanding. In fact, researchers see the object reality based on the real data of the object, but the way they interpret the data is based on their perspective, background, and their belief. It could be said that “we judge the data with our glasses”, surely different from one another. It is different from bias, which we have the background of information before interpreting the data, and then selectively choosing the data that fit your thought, which is considered unprofessional.

Thirdly, the ethics board members may think that the qualitative research is not using scientific methods, such as interview and focus group. We may think again what kind of the scientific method is actually scientific. We know that the interview is flexible, unstructured, open, and unorganized. But it could be misinterpretation. The qualitative researchers are very discipline, systematic, and analytic, and they sees the data critically in perspective. In addition, before collecting data, they do an informed consent, clearly describe how the interview will be recorded and how to keep confidentiality.

Fourthly, the qualitative researchers may difficult to justify sample size, especially when they do not know who will be the key informants. It may be more and more informants depending on saturation of the data. To deal with the situation, the researchers may come back and see the research objectives and questions, sampling criteria, and study approaches. For instance, case study and phenomenology should be different in sample size.

Finally, there is nothing wrong with the ethical issues in the nature of qualitative research if we have the same basic of the understanding and are able to confirm concisely how we design our research.

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ENSURING TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Joko Gunawan*

Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang, Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

*Corresponding author:
Joko Gunawan, RN
Diploma Nursing Study Program, Politeknik Kesehatan Kementrian Kesehatan Pangkal Pinang
Jl. Melati Kabupaten Belitung, Kepulauan Bangka Belitung 33684, Indonesia
E-mail: joe_gunawan@ymail.com

Unfortunately, many qualitative researchers have neglected to give adequate descriptions in their research reports of their assumptions and methods, especially regarding to data analysis. It has contributed to the criticisms of bias from the eyes of the number of believers. This article aims to discuss about the ways to ensure the trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Trustworthiness as Sandelowski (1993)1 mentioned that it becomes a matter of persuasion whereby the scientist is viewed as having made those practices visible and therefore auditable. She also argued that validity in qualitative studies should be linked not to the truth or value as they are for the positivists. A study is trustworthy if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so. Trustworthiness has been further divided into credibility, which corresponds roughly with the positivist concept of internal validity; dependability, which relates more to reliability; transferability, which is a form of external validity; and confirmability, which is largely an issue of presentation.1

However, Sandelowski (1993)1 regarded reliability/dependability as a threat to validity/credibility, and questioned many of the usual qualitative reliability tests, such as member checking (returning to the participants following data analysis), or peer checking (using a panel of experts or an experienced colleague to reanalyze some of the data) as ways of ensuring that the researcher has analyzed the data correctly. But, Guba and Lincoln (1989) regarded member checks as ‘the single most critical technique for establishing credibility’.1

Sandelowski (1993)1 argued that if reality is assumed (as it generally is within
the qualitative paradigm) to be ‘multiple and constructed’, then ‘repeatability is not an essential (or necessary or sufficient) property of the things themselves’, and we should not expect either expert researchers or respondents to arrive at the same themes and categories as the researcher. Put simply, any attempt to increase reliability involves a forced or artificial consensus and conformity in the analysis of the data, which is usually at the expense of the validity or meaningfulness of the findings. Sandelowski, therefore, rejected reliability as a useful measure of quality in qualitative research in favor of validity or trustworthiness. However, she was skeptical of the positivist notion that validity can be achieved by the rigorous application of method or technique, agreeing with Mishler (1990) that ‘validation is less a technical problem than a deeply theoretical one’, and is ultimately ‘a matter of judgment’. In this latter statement, she is approaching the third position on the issue of quality in qualitative research, that validity is achieved through consensus on each individual study rather than by the blanket application of predetermined criteria.

On the other hand, to ensure the trustworthiness, the role of triangulation must again be emphasized, in this context to reduce the effect of investigator bias. Detail emerging methodological description enables the readers to determine how far the data and constructs emerging from it may be accepted. Additionally, the utilization of detailed transcription techniques, schematic plan of systematic coding by means of computer programs, as well as counting in qualitative research are the modalities to ensure rigor and trustworthiness.

In conclusion, to ensure the rigor and trustworthiness, the qualitative researchers consider to do member checking, triangulation, detailed transcription, systematic plan and coding.