

Preface

Qualitative research faces new opportunities in an increasingly complex and multi-dimensional social world where the particularly qualitative strengths of understanding context, diversity, nuance and process might potentially be very highly valued. It continues to represent a broad and pervasive set of challenges to more fixed ways of perceiving and understanding that world. It cannot be done by rote or by recipe. It requires a highly active engagement from its practitioners, and a great deal of effort – mind, body and soul.

However, it faces challenges to assemble and maintain its reputation and to compete for resources in multiple new environments where the idea of ‘evidence’ about the social world is very definitely flavour of the month. In the light of these contemporary theoretical debates about the state of qualitative research, which are at the same time fascinating but often abstract and inaccessible, this volume presented five papers which will be useful to those who want to get on with the job of doing qualitative research in a theoretically cognizant way, and who will be keen to champion the qualitative cause with confidence and energy. The goals of these articles are (a) to bolster this growing interest and (b) to inspire readers to learn more about these qualitative methods. The skills for understanding the human experience are found in the pages of the first three papers.

While an internship for a non-healthcare position is highly recommended, clinical experience for nurses is compulsory by virtue of it being a practice-based profession whereby clinical practice is an essential part of the nursing curriculum. However, the place of clinical experience in the development of nurses has not been well understood although the nursing discourse continues to value clinical experience highly. Using a qualitative approach, Lily’s study to assess the nursing students’ experiences of their clinical practice was able to consider a more expansive understanding of the place of clinical experience in nursing and the relevance of this perspective for the education of nurses. It is clear that all the themes elicited play an important role in student learning and nursing education in general.

Other than having well trained health care professionals, people experiencing non-life threatening illness or injury also depend on timely and efficient care. Time is an important factor in pre-hospital care and the length of time it takes to reach care, has a significant impact on patient outcomes. The second paper by Said explored the response time phenomenon from the perspectives of health care provision and health care administrative who directly provide, or are involved in the pre-hospital EMS care. The qualitative approach adopted captures and imparts insiders’ perspective by focusing on the practices that they experience, and provides a rich and genuine explanation of the phenomenon. Consequently, the rich information obtained from this naturalistic approach is considered as valuable information for the development of knowledge directly.

“What are the beliefs and personal values embedded in the Malay chefs in preparing traditional Malay foods at hotels?” was the research question proposed in the paper by Shahrin. One of the aspects of culture that is most important is food. Nearly every culture has its own foods and its own customs associated with the food preparation. Shahrin explores the knowledge and practices of Malay professional chefs with regard to traditional cooking and how these knowledge could be passed on to the younger generation of Malay chefs. The findings showed that the techniques of cooking traditional Malay foods have been tainted with modern culinary techniques due to a lack of exposure and knowledge in traditional Malay cuisine.

From the three papers, we can see that qualitative researching is a highly rewarding activity because it engages us with things that matter, in ways that matter. Through qualitative research we can

explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate.

This extraordinary set of strengths is sometimes forgotten in the face of criticisms that qualitative research is 'merely' anecdotal, and that it is practised in unscientific and unsystematic ways. While any piece of research – qualitative or quantitative – may be criticized for its shortcomings, the idea that qualitative research necessarily has these inherent weaknesses is based on a misunderstanding of the logic of qualitative enquiry. The challenge for those involved/contemplating undertaking qualitative research are not only to be aware of the criticisms typically made but they should also be cognizant of the provisions which can be made to address matters such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Prospective researchers can then assess the extent to which they are able to apply these generic strategies to their particular investigation.

The fourth paper attempted to highlight some of the challenges in analysing qualitative data. Strategies in promoting the credibility and trustworthiness are discussed. This is followed by our final paper entitled Rigour in Qualitative Research: Is there a panacea to it? by Ahmed and Mohammad who argued that a widespread use of a different standard for judging the quality of qualitative research consequential to its philosophical stance is the panacea for the unfair criticisms in the future. The quality of qualitative research rigour has to be redefined in order to reflect the multiple ways of establishing truth. I want to echo Willig (2008) by pointing out that "research methods are not recipes but ways of approaching questions, and the value of our research depends on the skill with which we manage to match our methods to our questions in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding" (Willig, 2008 pg 36).

As in prior years, I would like to thank the Editorial Board and all the reviewers for the dedication and the hard work you all provide to the qualitative research community via MJQR. Your dedicated service and outstanding support are mirrored in the achievements and continuous success of MJQR. We're honoured to have you on our review board and for the valuable contributions you provided to authors.

MJQR continues to welcome quality submissions on qualitative research related studies in all fields of research including (but certainly not limited to) arts, business, computer science, criminal justice, education, engineering, health, humanities, information technology, information systems, law, medicine, management, nursing, oceanography, psychology, sciences, accountancy and social studies. Book reviews on relevant issues related to qualitative research are also welcome.

We hope you will enjoy the articles found in this year's volume.

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CHIEF EDITOR
2017

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method* (2nd edition ed.). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.