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Narrative Inquiry: A Critical Examination of Its Theoretical Foundations and Methodological Applications

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Abstract

This review article offers an in-depth examination of narrative inquiry, a methodological approach dedicated to exploring individual stories to gain insights into their experiences. The article begins by introducing narrative inquiry, elucidating its origins, significance, and applicability across various disciplines. It then explores narrative inquiry as a research design, highlighting its capacity to facilitate an in-depth exploration of personal and social narratives. The review proceeds to outline the procedural steps involved in conducting narrative research, encompassing the formulation of research questions, data collection, and the interpretation of narrative data. Following this, the article details the methods for data analysis within narrative inquiry, emphasizing the critical roles of contextual and thematic analysis in revealing underlying meanings. The discussion concludes with an examination of ethical considerations pertinent to narrative inquiry, emphasizing the importance of maintaining confidentiality and privacy for participants. Through this comprehensive review, the article aims to furnish researchers and scholars with a robust understanding of narrative inquiry, including its methodological underpinnings and practical applications.

Keywords: Narrative research, conducting narrative research, analyzing narrative stories, narrative as research design

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Introduction

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (Spradley, 2016 p. 34)

Narrative inquiry is the method of exploring human experiences of a particular phenomenon from the point of view of the participants. Narrative inquiry is thinking about life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Similarly ,(Boase, 2008) mentions that stories attempt to explain, understand, and account for experience, experience does not automatically assume narrative form, but rather we construct stories through the process of reflection on experience. So narratives are composed of memories, experiences, knowledge and reflections of a person on a particular phenomenon. Similarly, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) note that the use of narrative research is to use the human as a storytelling organism who individually and socially leads storied lives. This means, every human being has a story about a particular phenomenon and a researcher has to elicit that story in a organized and meaningful way to the readers to understand that phenomenon from the perspective of story-teller (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Narrative inquiry is the method of research which changes the human experiences into a readable and sensible story about a particular event or action of a human being. In the similar context Polkinghorne (1995) pointed out that:

... narrative meaning is one type of meaning produced by the mental realm. It principally works to draw together human actions and the events that affect human beings, and not relationships among inanimate objects. Narrative creates its meaning by noting the contributions that actions and events make to a particular outcome and then configures these parts into a whole episode.(Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6)

In the above definition author focused on lived experiences of human being on a particular phenomenon. He further stated that human experiences can be narrated in the form of story which shows the life history of a person. Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) said that narrative inquiry is a distinct form of qualitative research that focuses on studying a single person collecting information through the stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing and interpreting the meaning of those experiences in a form of an organized story. In the similar context Barkhuizen et al. (2014, p. 3) stated, “ A fairy tale is a story and a person who tells a fairy tale is a storyteller, but fairy tales are not research”. He meant to say that all stories found in the universe cannot be a research output; in narrative inquiry a researcher is storyteller, he/she develops participants’ experiences into a readable story by reorganizing the experiences into a systematic structure. Talking about the narrative inquiry, Kim (2016) pointed out that; using narrative as a phenomenon to understand the society, culture, human actions,

and life from the multidimensional perspectives, it attempts to access participants' life experiences and engage in the process of telling a story. He further stated that narrative inquiry utilizes interdisciplinary interpretative lenses with theoretically, philosophically various approaches and methods, all moving around the experiences and stories of participants. Based on Kim's definition, narrative inquiry is the meaning making process in which researcher lenses the targeted phenomenon from the multiple perspectives and adds his/her interpretation in the story. Defining narrative inquiry, Webster and Mertova (2007) asserted that narrative inquiry records human experience by constructing and reconstructing the human stories, which is the best suited to addressing issues related to complexity, cultural and human centeredness because of its capacity to record and retell those experiences and events that have the significant influence on human being.

Narrative inquiry is used as a method of research when we try to explore the experiences of an individual on a particular event or action in a natural setting to construct a sensible story by maintaining a close bond with the research participant (Creswell, 2012). Narrative inquiry can be conducted in various disciplines such as language learning (Bell, 2002), language teaching (Phillion & He, 2007) curriculum (Bach, 1998), ethnic studies (Chan, 2002), school reform (Craig, 2003) and many other educational setting as well as social, cultural religious setting to understand human experiences related to different phenomenon. Although narrative inquiry is a new approach in the field of research, it has covered most of the areas of social science. It focuses on micro analytical pictures, individual stories rather than the broader picture of social, cultural norms, as in other qualitative research (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). the topics for narrative inquiry can be like lived experiences of struggling students to learn English language, English language teaching and students experiences, the effect of classroom culture students' achievement, language learning anxiety. Therefore, it can be said that narrative inquiry is used to understand the minor concept and problems related to teaching and learning in the academic setting.

At present, most of the people are attracted towards qualitative research mainly in social science and they encounter various types of procedural problem while conducting qualitative research (Mohajan, 2018). Some of the researchers even encounter with the selection of appropriate research design. In this article, the author tried to describe a complete procedure of conducting a narrative inquiry. The main objective of this paper is to acquaint readers with the various concepts of narrative inquiry.

This article aims to provide insights to the readers about narrative inquiry and the process of conducting a narrative inquiry. The readers who want to conduct qualitative research mainly narrative inquiry will be benefited from this article.

Research Methodology

This review paper employs a document analysis research design focusing on narrative inquiry as a methodological approach. Narrative inquiry, a form of qualitative research, involves the study of experiences as expressed in lived and told stories. This paper systematically examines existing literature to provide an overview of the key concepts, methods, and applications of narrative inquiry. A Comprehensive literature search was conducted using multiple academic sources including Google Scholar, PubMed, JSTOR, Z.library. The strategy of inclusion and exclusion was used to select literature and finally reviewed those selected e-books and journals and information were collected by extracting the key aspects of narrative inquiry such as definitions, methodological techniques, procedures of conducting narrative inquiry. From these key aspects themes were derived for the data analysis.

Results and Discussion

This section mainly contains basic concepts related to the narrative inquiry. Along with the thematic description of the concepts related to narrative inquiry, the ideas are discussed referring with various scholars' perception in this field.

When to Use Narrative Inquiry Design?

Individuals construct their own experiences and life stories, shaped by various events or circumstances. These occurrences often hold significant meaning, influencing and altering their life trajectories. Certain events may serve as profound lessons, marking turning points that catalyze meaningful change. In such contexts, researchers seek to explore and understand the narratives of individuals concerning specific issues (Barkhuizen et al., 2014). These narratives not only provide insights but also offer lessons that readers may find applicable to their own lives.

Narrative inquiry is particularly effective when researchers aim to analyze life experiences related to specific issues or events. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of how individuals create meaning in their lives through storytelling. As a research design, narrative inquiry is utilized to study participants' experiences and to construct narratives that encapsulate these experiences around a particular issue (Creswell, 2012). Mainly, when researcher wants to explore personal and social narratives on a particular issue he/she uses narrative inquiry as research design. For example, a researcher may use narrative inquiry to understand the lived experiences of struggling students to pass a particular course. In this issue participants may share their feelings and their stories. In the same way, narrative inquiry is used to study change and transformation in how life events, circumstances or experiences lead to significant change or transformation (Mohajan, 2018). Researcher chooses narrative inquiry when they seek to collect rich, detailed information about personal experience on the phenomenon.

Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method

In social science, narrative inquiry is increasingly recognized as a research method, particularly within qualitative studies. Emerging in the late 20th century, narrative inquiry gained prominence alongside the growing interest in qualitative research methodologies (Barrett & Stauffer, 2009). As such, narrative inquiry is considered a relatively recent addition to research designs in the social sciences. Initially, narratives were used primarily to capture individuals' stories related to specific issues. However, over time, narrative inquiry evolved into a robust research method, particularly within the fields of education and social science. Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) identified four significant "turns" in the development of narrative inquiry as a research method. These include a 'reshaping and shift' in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, a move towards using "words as data," a focus on the 'local and particular', and a 'blurring of traditional research genres' (p. 3). This means earlier numbers were taken in the form of data but at present people take words as form of data. In the same way, researches used to focus on more big issues which have much effect on society or people but now qualitative research give emphasis on individual experiences on the issue which may be implacable for the group of target people. There is change in pattern and procedure of conducting research. This evolution highlights the method's emphasis on collecting individuals' opinions and experiences in the form of words, which are then treated as valuable data for analysis.

Narrative inquiry, as a research method, collects stories through in-depth interviews, focusing on individuals' experiences with specific educational issues (Webster & Metrova, 2007). While this approach can yield rich, detailed accounts that provide insights into the personal and professional lives of educators and students, it also presents several challenges. One key limitation is the potential for bias, as participants may consciously or unconsciously shape their narratives to align with socially acceptable or expected responses. Additionally, the subjective nature of narrative inquiry can make it difficult to generalize findings beyond the specific context or individuals studied.

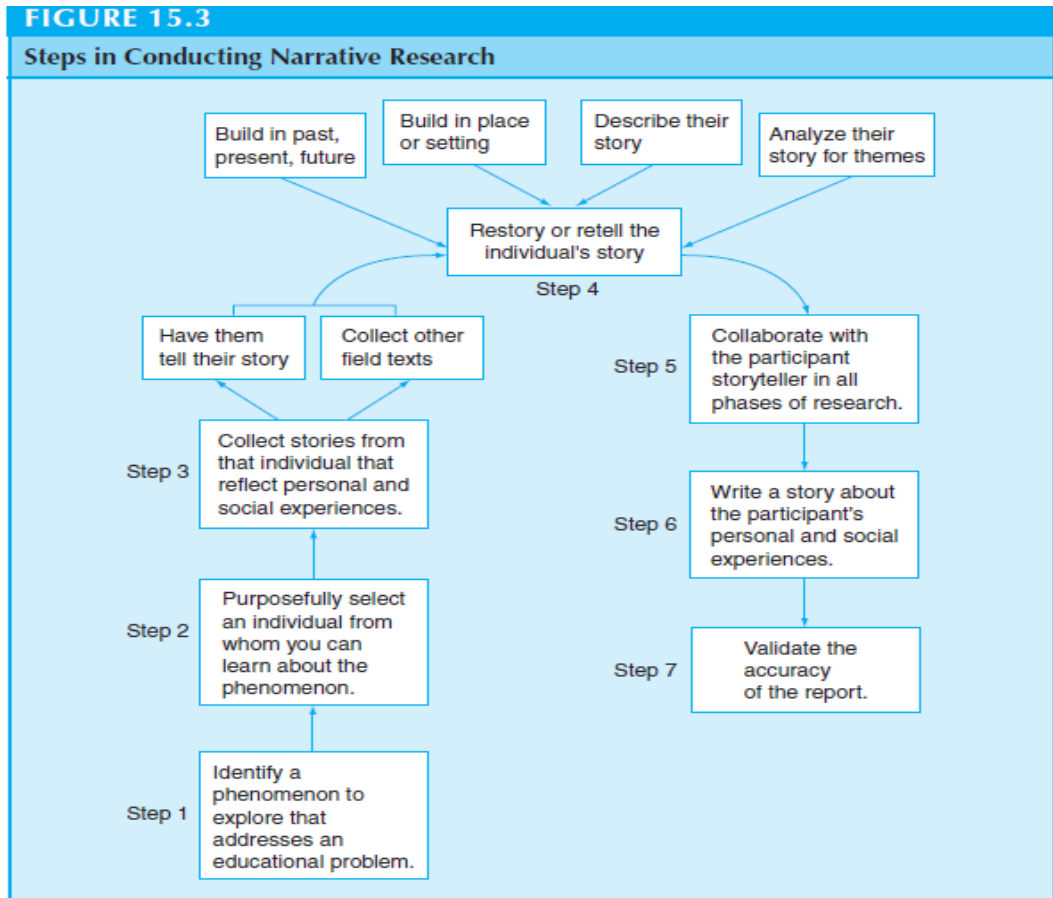
In the educational field, while narrative inquiry offers valuable perspectives on the emotions and hidden experiences of stakeholders, it also requires a critical approach to data interpretation. Researchers must be cautious not to overemphasize individual stories at the expense of broader systemic factors that influence educational experiences. Moreover, the method's reliance on storytelling may sometimes obscure the complex, multi-faceted realities of educational phenomena, leading to oversimplified conclusions. Despite its growing popularity, the use of narrative inquiry in education demands a careful balancing of individual narratives with a critical awareness of the method's limitations and potential biases.

Conducting Narrative Research

Similar to other qualitative research methodologies, narrative inquiry generally follows a comparable process for conducting research. However, it also involves specific activities that are unique to this approach. Creswell (2012) outlines seven distinct steps in the process of conducting narrative research, emphasizing the particular considerations and actions that researchers must undertake.

Figure 1

Steps in Conduction Narrative Research



Source: Creswell (2012)

The above figure is taken from Creswell which describes basic steps of conducting narrative inquiry. Each steps of conducting narrative inquiry are discussed below in detail.

Identify the Problem

A researcher must identify a researchable problem that warrants investigation. A research problem typically involves an issue, phenomenon, or area of interest in which

the researcher seeks to uncover new insights (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). In the context of narrative inquiry, the researcher focuses on understanding the experiences of participants related to a specific issue or phenomenon. For instance, a narrative researcher might explore the lived experiences of students who have struggled to pass a particular subject. When defining the research problem, it is essential for the researcher to consider both the social and individual dimensions of participants' experiences concerning the identified issue.

Select the Participant(s)

In addressing the research problem, the researcher must select participant(s) who have directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation. The number of participants chosen varies depending on the specific study and the researcher's objectives; some narrative inquiries may focus on a single participant, while others may involve multiple participants, contingent upon availability and the scope of the research. It is crucial for the researcher to carefully consider which participants can provide rich, detailed insights into the phenomenon. Priority should be given to those individuals who possess unique experiences and are critical to the study, particularly those who have directly encountered the issue in question (Creswell, 2012).

Collect the Stories

This phase of research involves data collection, where the researcher gathers the narratives of participant(s) through personal conversations and interviews. The researcher may ask participants to document their experiences related to the issue in writing or conduct formal interviews, ensuring to obtain recording permission from the participants (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). In addition to interviews, the researcher can employ various techniques to collect narratives, such as reviewing participants' journals or diaries, field notes, letters, interviews with family members, photographs, memos, personal, family, or social artifacts, and autobiographies (Kim, 2016). It is essential that the stories collected are rich in detail and provide comprehensive insights. Given the depth of information required, narratives typically cannot be collected in a single session; the researcher must remain in the field until data saturation is achieved.

Restorying or Retell the Individual Story

This step in narrative research involves reviewing and retelling the participants' stories. This process entails a thorough examination of the raw information, which is then organized chronologically to emphasize the core components of the narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The primary objective is to uncover new and unique experiences of the participants related to the phenomenon, thereby offering readers a deeper understanding of the issue. Narrative researchers utilize elements such as plot,

setting, time, and context to identify and highlight the key aspects of the story (Cortazzi, 1993). This process includes thematizing the raw information to convey an accurate and coherent narrative about the phenomenon. Additionally, narrative inquirers may analyze the setting, characters, actions, challenges, and resolutions to identify the fundamental elements of the story (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2000). Although there are various analytical techniques available for exploring and structuring a narrative, it is crucial for the researcher to ensure that the final story is both readable and comprehensible.

Collaborate with Storyteller

In this stage of the research process, it is imperative for the researcher to return to the participants or storytellers to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the narratives presented. This verification process is crucial because the researcher's interpretation of the participants' experiences may introduce personal biases or perspectives that differ from the participants' own experiences. To mitigate this risk and ensure the integrity of the narrative, the researcher should seek feedback from the participants on the accuracy of the reconstructed stories. This practice often referred to as member checking or participant validation constitutes an essential ethical component of qualitative research (Lune & Berg, 2017). It allows participants to review and confirm the fidelity of the representation of their experiences, thereby enhancing the credibility and validity of the research findings. Engaging participants in this review process not only upholds the ethical standards of research but also ensures that the final narrative accurately reflects their lived experiences.

Write a Story of About the Participant's Experience

The step discusses an important issue in narrative research, which involves writing the participant's story after conducting a member check. A member check is a process where the researcher shares the information and interpretations with the participants to ensure accuracy and that the findings genuinely reflect the participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This step is crucial because it lends credibility to the research because researcher may interpret the statements of the participants in a different way. If researcher goes back to the participants to show the interpretations of his/her statements made by the researcher, then the real intention of the participant may be represented by confirming the ideas of participants. Writing the participant's story is considered the most important part of narrative research because it encapsulates the essence of the participant's experiences. The researcher must aim to create a compelling and engaging narrative that faithfully conveys the participant's story. To achieve this, the researcher should highlight the key themes that emerge during the storytelling (Liu, & Xu, 2013). These themes serve to structure the narrative; draw the reader's attention to significant aspects of the participant's experiences; and provide insights into the broader context or

implications. The narrative report can be organized in various ways. It might be structured thematically, grouping related experiences or ideas into distinct themes. Alternatively, it could be organized chronologically, presenting the participant's story in the order that events occurred. Another approach could be to divide the story into chapters, each focusing on different phases or aspects of the participant's experience (Clandinin, et al. 2009). Regardless of the structure chosen, the narrative should be clear and coherent.

A critical element in composing the narrative report is the incorporation of direct quotes from participants. These quotes enhance the authenticity and vividness of the narrative, enabling readers to engage directly with the participants' voices. In addition to presenting these quotes, the researcher must provide interpretative analysis to contextualize the quotes, elucidate their significance, and relate them to broader themes or research questions (Lichtman, 2013). This interpretative work is crucial for elucidating the deeper meanings embedded in the participants' statements. As highlighted by Webster and Metrova (2007), identifying and emphasizing themes is fundamental for effectively engaging readers. Caine (2013) further underscores the importance of utilizing direct quotes and providing interpretation to enrich the narrative with depth and contextual understanding. Adhering to these practices allows the researcher to produce a narrative that faithfully represents the participants' experiences while also being informative and engaging for the audience.

Validate the Accuracy of the Report

There are various techniques of validating the accuracy of the research report but for the narrative inquiry Creswell (2012) suggested the following activities for validating the accuracy of narratives reports.

Member Checking. Member checking is a crucial validation practice where researchers take their data, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions back to the original participants for review (Barkhuizen, 2014). This process aims to confirm that the researchers have accurately captured and interpreted the participants' perspectives and experiences. By involving participants in reviewing drafts of the narrative account, researchers can gather feedback directly from the source, ensuring that the findings truly reflect the participants' views (Cortazzi, 1993). If participants find discrepancies or feel that their experiences have been misunderstood or misrepresented, they can provide corrections and additional insights. This iterative process of feedback and revision helps to refine the narrative, making it more accurate and trustworthy. Member checking not only enhances the credibility of the research but also fosters a sense of collaboration and trust between the researcher and participants, as it shows respect for their input and experiences.

Triangulating Among Data Sources. Triangulation is a method used to increase

the validity of a study by cross-verifying data through multiple sources, methods, investigators, or theoretical perspectives. By using various data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, researchers can compare and contrast the information to identify common themes and discrepancies (Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009). This cross-checking helps to confirm that the findings are not biased or limited to a single perspective. For instance, if an interview reveals a certain theme, researchers can look for evidence of this theme in other data sources like field notes or archival materials. By employing different methods, such as combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers can further ensure the robustness of their findings. Additionally, involving multiple investigators or diverse theoretical perspectives can help to identify and challenge any potential biases, leading to more comprehensive and credible conclusions (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation thus serves as a powerful tool to enhance the reliability and depth of narrative accounts.

Searching for Disconfirming Evidence. Another important validation practice is the search for disconfirming evidence. This involves actively looking for data that contradicts or challenges the emerging findings and interpretations. Instead of only focusing on data that supports the initial hypotheses or narratives, researchers deliberately seek out conflicting information to test the robustness of their conclusions (Kim, 2016). This process requires a thorough and critical examination of the data, questioning assumptions and exploring alternative explanations. By addressing and incorporating disconfirming evidence, researchers can refine their narratives to account for complexities and nuances, thus avoiding oversimplification or biased interpretations (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). This practice not only strengthens the credibility of the research but also demonstrates a commitment to an honest and rigorous exploration of the subject matter.

These validation practices—member checking, triangulation, and searching for disconfirming evidence—are essential for ensuring the accuracy and credibility of narrative accounts. By involving participants in the validation process, cross-verifying data through multiple sources and methods, and critically examining conflicting information, researchers can produce more reliable and trustworthy narratives that faithfully represent the complexities of human experience.

Analyzing Data in Narrative Research

Data analysis in qualitative research is fundamentally concerned with addressing the research questions and determining whether the study's objectives have been met (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). During this phase, researchers must identify new or unique insights shared by participants that are pertinent to the research questions, facilitating the development of thematic categories for analysis. The process of data analysis begins with an examination of segments or factors that respond to the research questions.

In qualitative research, data analysis generally follows a consistent approach across various methodologies. Creswell (2007) advocates for an initial stage where researchers sketch preliminary ideas from the raw information by annotating or highlighting key information directly on the documents. Additionally, researchers should take notes or memos during their review of the text, which will later assist in interpreting the information (Wolcott, 1994). Subsequently, researchers work with the text to identify and apply codes—symbols or labels that represent specific statements made by participants (Madison, 2005). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) describe coding as “assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (p. 174).

Typically, a document will contain numerous codes, which are then organized into broader categories to reduce complexity. When categorizing codes, researchers should consider their frequency; higher frequency codes are more likely to evolve into significant themes. From these broad categories, researchers derive themes that encapsulate the participants’ ideas comprehensively. Themes are overarching codes that integrate multiple codes and reflect the full range of participant perspectives (Kim, 2016). Finally, researchers must present their findings with a clear point of view, reflecting their positionality and how it influences the interpretation of the data. While these analytic strategies are broadly applicable to qualitative research as outlined by Creswell (2007), specific strategies for analyzing narrative data or stories may vary.

Transcription

The first step after data collection is transcription. Transcription means converting audio or visual data into written script. First of all, the researcher should transcribe all the audio or visuals before analyzing the narratives. In narrative inquiry, interview is a common tool for data collection; therefore interview transcription is very common in narrative inquiry. There are various types of transcriptions in qualitative research but commonly used transcription types as suggested by Kim (2016) are discussed below:

Verbatim Transcription. This method of transcription, often referred to as detailed or literal transcription, involves capturing every spoken word, as well as nonverbal elements such as pauses, stutters, and interjections (e.g., “um,” “uh,” “oh”) (Clandinin et al., 2010). While detailed transcription provides a comprehensive account of the verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication, offering valuable insights into language use, intonation, and nonverbal cues (Liu & Xu, 2011), it also has significant drawbacks. The meticulous nature of this approach means that it is time-consuming and labor-intensive. The process requires considerable effort to accurately record and represent all aspects of the conversation, which may not always contribute proportionately to the research goals. Thus, while detailed transcription can enhance the depth of analysis, researchers must

weigh its benefits against the practical challenges of its implementation.

Intelligent Verbatim Transcription. This transcription method, known as edited or clean verbatim transcription, involves transcribing the text while omitting gap fillers such as “um,” “uh,” and “oh” (Kim, 2016). By excluding these verbal fillers, the researcher produces a more streamlined and readable transcript without significantly compromising the substantive content of the conversation. This approach strikes a balance between the detailed accuracy of literal transcription and the readability of the final transcript (Davidson, 2009). Although edited transcription enhances clarity and readability, it is important to recognize that the removal of these filler words may also exclude subtle nuances of verbal communication that could be relevant for certain types of analysis. Consequently, while this method is widely adopted for its practical benefits and improved readability, researchers must consider whether the loss of these elements might affect the interpretative depth of the analysis. Thus, the choice of transcription method should align with the specific aims of the research and the nature of the data being analyzed.

Edited Transcription. This transcription method, commonly referred to as summarized transcription, involves condensing the original dialogue or speeches to focus on key information while omitting extraneous details (Kim, 2016). In this approach, the researcher distills the data to highlight significant points relevant to the research objectives or questions, selectively including only the most pertinent information (Davidson, 2009). While summarized transcription can facilitate a more focused and efficient analysis by reducing the volume of data, it introduces potential risks associated with researcher bias.

The process of summarizing inherently involves interpretation and selection, which may reflect the researcher’s subjective judgments about what constitutes “key” information. This selectivity can lead to the omission of potentially valuable but less immediately relevant details, potentially skewing the interpretation of the data. As such, the risk of researcher bias is heightened, as the researcher’s decisions about which information to include or exclude can influence the overall findings and conclusions. Therefore, while summarized transcription may enhance data manageability and relevance, researchers must be mindful of these biases and ensure that their selective processes do not undermine the integrity and comprehensiveness of the analysis.

Coding Narrative Data

Simply, coding means segmenting and labeling the words or sentences for deriving the broader themes. In other words coding is the process of categorizing the data in order to find themes and patterns. Coding helps researcher to have deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants. Before coding the transcribed text, the researcher should

read and reread the text multiple times to understand the text clearly. Like quantitative research, coding data makes qualitative data more rigorous to increase the validity of the research. Codes are the levels or signs which represent the idea of the participants. Codes can be different topics such as setting and context, perception of the participants, process, strategies, activities, relationship etc. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). If the participants' actual words are stated as code they are called in vivo code. If the participants' ideas are summarized and form a new code which captures all the content or ideas of the participants they are called descriptive codes. Basically, there are two types of coding approach: Inductive and deductive coding.

Inductive Coding. It is a type of coding approach in which researcher develops codes from the data. Therefore, this approach is also known as bottom up approach where researcher derives codes from the raw data and try to match them in line with objectives of the study.

Deductive Coding. In this type of coding, researcher sets the texts on the basis of preconceived codes. Researcher might have collected codes already based on the research objectives. This is also called top down approach of coding. The researcher selects codes from the codebook and use with the related statement.

Creswell (2007) outlines a structured approach to coding that involves several key steps, each essential for organizing qualitative data. However, while these steps provide a systematic framework, they also present potential challenges and limitations.

The initial step of reading and re-reading the transcription to understand the text is fundamental, yet it is inherently subjective. The researcher's interpretation during this phase can be influenced by personal biases or preconceptions, potentially affecting the understanding of the data. The subsequent identification of salient ideas or statements relevant to the research objectives necessitates careful consideration to avoid selective emphasis, which might skew the representation of the participant's perspectives.

The process of deriving codes—whether deductively or inductively—introduces another layer of complexity. Deductive coding relies on pre-existing theories or frameworks, which may constrain the discovery of novel insights. Conversely, inductive coding allows for more emergent findings but requires a meticulous approach to ensure that the codes are both comprehensive and relevant. Grouping similar codes to reduce redundancy is a practical step, but the reduction to 25 to 30 codes can be problematic. This reduction may oversimplify the data, potentially overlooking nuances and subtleties in the participants' experiences.

Cross-checking the new codes with the original texts is intended to verify the accuracy of the representation; however, this process can be labor-intensive and may still be subject to the researcher's interpretative biases. Finally, condensing codes into five to seven themes, while aiming to encapsulate the primary ideas, risks further simplification.

This thematic reduction must balance comprehensiveness with conciseness, ensuring that critical elements of the participants' narratives are not lost in the process.

Overall, while Creswell's steps offer a valuable framework for coding qualitative data, researchers must remain vigilant about the potential for bias and the risk of oversimplification. A nuanced approach that considers the complexities of the data and the interpretative nature of coding is essential to achieving a robust and accurate analysis.

Theme Formulation

Themes are the categories of the codes which incorporate the similar kinds of codes into one theme to make description or interpretation of the ideas. Developing theme means answering the major research questions and forming the in-depth understanding on the research problem or issue. Themes are the broad categories under which common themes or statements are included. Moreover, themes are the topics for the analysis of the texts. There are different types of themes, Creswell (2012) mentioned the following types of themes:

Ordinary Themes. These themes are the categories or codes which are expected by the researcher from the text based on the research questions. Such themes are also called common themes because they are expected by the researcher from the text.

Unexpected Themes. Sometimes participants may share the things which are not expected by the researcher and such ideas or statements surprises researcher. Such themes are called unexpected themes.

Hard- to- classify Themes. Similar to unexpected themes, sometimes ideas which are irrelevant to the themes may occur in the text but difficult to incorporate under a particular theme. In such case they need to be developed a separate theme.

Major and Minor Theme. major themes are those ideas which cover broader area of the phenomenon and minor themes are the part of the major themes. Minor themes are also called subthemes of the same theme.

Themes can also be developed deductively and inductively. If the researcher takes already existed themes relating to the issue and go for analyzing the ideas of the participants that is called deductive approach, such themes are also called global themes. On the other hand, if the researcher derives themes from the raw data or from the participants' statements become theme that is called inductive approach (Clandinin & Murphy, 2007). Such themes are also called open themes.

Writing Report

This is the final stage of narrative inquiry. After developing the themes from the stories, researcher needs to write the report by analyzing and interpreting the themes derived from the text. Reporting the information does not mean just describing the data collected from the text but also mean stating your positionality with arguments and claims

you have collected from the stories (Creswell & Brown, 1992). Researcher should include his/her arguments or claims with critical analysis of the statements or ideas shared by the participants. Do not just paraphrase the texts also view the statements or verbatim from different angle to make meaning of the statements' of the participants. Researcher should use verbatim to relate or interpret the data from different angles. The main part of narrative research is to incorporate the quotes of the participants and then analyze these quotes in reference to different ideas. While quoting we need to consider the ethical aspect of research such as anonymity (Lieblich et al. 1998). It means, researcher needs to use symbols or pseudo names of the participants while presenting their quotes. While writing report, researcher should interpret the story from multiple perspectives and maintain the chronological order of the story.

Ethical Issues in Narrative Inquiry

Simply talking, ethics means moral issue that governs human behavior. Ethics is different from society to society and even person to person. Our moral leads us to perform a particular task. There is no right and wrong principle in ethical issue; it depends on social norms and values. There are no universal principles for ethical dilemma. Regarding ethical dilemma Ellis (2007) shared that researchers should do no harm to the participants while conducting the research. A researcher needs to consider some ethical issues while conducting a research. A researcher encounters many ethical issues during the research process which might be different from context to context.

A narrative inquirer should be aware of ethical issue throughout the research process from data collection phase to data analysis or reporting phase (Calandinin & Connelly, 2000). During the data collection or interview, researcher need to be very close to the participants to get the real story of the participants, in that case be aware of the various social and personal relationship with the participants. The main job of the researcher is to elicit the hidden information of the participant on the particular issue; in such case research should consider the aspect of privacy. It means do not compel the participants those information which they want to keep secret.

The issue of anonymity and confidentiality should be given much value during data collection and report writing (Freeman, 2007). Disclosure of name of the participant may create a big problem in his/her life; therefore, researcher should take care of this issue very sensitively. Similarly, representation and interpretation is another aspect of ethics. While representing the ideas researcher should include all the ideas shared by the participants as well as interpret the ideas accurately.

Conclusion

Narrative inquiry, as a qualitative research method, offers a unique and powerful approach to exploring and understanding human experiences through the stories

individuals share. This method is particularly valuable for uncovering the nuanced and complex layers of meaning that individuals attribute to their lived experiences. The review of narrative inquiry has highlighted its emphasis on context and the temporal nature of human experiences, demonstrating its ability to reveal insights that may be overlooked by other research methods. The process of conducting narrative research involves a systematic approach, from identifying research questions to collecting and interpreting stories, which is crucial for ensuring the richness and integrity of the data. Data analysis in narrative inquiry demands more than just coding; it requires a deep engagement with the narratives, understanding their structures, and interpreting their meanings within broader contexts. This interpretive process enables researchers to construct narratives that faithfully represent participants' experiences and perspectives. Ethical considerations play a central role in narrative inquiry, necessitating rigorous practices such as obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting the participants' stories. Addressing challenges related to representation, anonymity, cultural sensitivity, and the emotional impact on participants is essential for upholding the ethical standards of research. The implications for researchers include the importance of contextual understanding, the necessity for in-depth analysis, and the need for ethical rigor. By adhering to these methodological and ethical guidelines, researchers can produce insightful and impactful studies that contribute significantly to our understanding of the human condition. As the field continues to evolve, narrative inquiry will remain a vital tool for capturing and interpreting the rich and diverse tapestry of human stories, provided that researchers maintain robust methodological practices and uphold high ethical standards.

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