JMU Libraries, Information Literacy Exercise for Social Work Research Methods (SOWK 305), Learning Outcome 9: Qualitative and Quantitative Research

After this session, SOWK 305 students will be able to identify qualitative and quantitative research by analyzing search results from various search systems (PubMed, PsycINFO, Social Work Abstracts) with a pass rate of X%.

Directions

1. Read the following 2 general descriptions about qualitative and quantitative research.
2. Working with your group members, evaluate the example results from various search systems:
   a. mark the examples as qualitative or quantitative
   b. mark those that seem to not quite fit either category with a question mark
   c. be ready to discuss your group’s findings
   d. be ready to discuss 1 disagreement you had about a decision in your group
   e. make notes about our discussion on the page provided
3. Turn your packet in as you leave. (Note this will not be graded. I’m using this to see how well I did in making this exercise and conveying information to you.)

Reading 1 of 2 -- Characteristics of Quantitative Research

The goal in conducting quantitative research study is to determine the relationship between one thing [an independent variable] and another [a dependent or outcome variable] within a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive [subjects usually measured once] or experimental [subjects measured before and after a treatment]. A descriptive study establishes only associations between variables; an experimental study establishes causality.

Quantitative research deals in numbers, logic, and an objective stance. Quantitative research focuses on numeric and unchanging data and detailed, convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning [i.e., the generation of a variety of ideas about a research problem in a spontaneous, free-flowing manner].

Its main characteristics are:

- The data is usually gathered using structured research instruments.
- The results are based on larger sample sizes that are representative of the population.
- The research study can usually be replicated or repeated, given its high reliability.
- Researcher has a clearly defined research question to which objective answers are sought.
- All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected.
- Data are in the form of numbers and statistics, often arranged in tables, charts, figures, or other non-textual forms.
- Project can be used to generalize concepts more widely, predict future results, or investigate causal relationships.
- Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or computer software, to collect numerical data.

The overarching aim of a quantitative research study is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed.

NOTE: When using pre-existing statistical data gathered and made available by anyone other than yourself [e.g., government agency], you still must report on the methods that were used to gather the data and describe any missing data that exists and, if there is any, provide a clear explanation why the missing data does not undermine the validity of your final analysis.
Reading 2 of 2 -- Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Below are the three key elements that define a qualitative research study and the applied forms each take in the investigation of a research problem.

The Design

- **Naturalistic** -- refers to studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative and non-controlling; the researcher is open to whatever emerges [i.e., there is a lack of predetermined constraints on findings].
- **Emergent** -- acceptance of adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change; the researcher avoids rigid designs that eliminate responding to opportunities to pursue new paths of discovery as they emerge.
- **Purposeful** -- cases for study [e.g., people, organizations, communities, cultures, events, critical incidences] are selected because they are “information rich” and illuminative. That is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest; sampling is aimed at insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization derived from a sample and applied to a population.

The Collection of Data

- **Data** -- observations yield a detailed, "thick description" [in-depth understanding]; interviews capture direct quotations about people’s personal perspectives and lived experiences; often derived from carefully conducted case studies and review of material culture.
- **Personal experience and engagement** -- researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the people, situation, and phenomenon under investigation; the researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.
- **Empathic neutrality** -- an empathic stance in working with study respondents seeks vicarious understanding without judgment [neutrality] by showing openness, sensitivity, respect, awareness, and responsiveness; in observation, it means being fully present [mindfulness].
- **Dynamic systems** -- there is attention to process; assumes change is ongoing, whether the focus is on an individual, an organization, a community, or an entire culture, therefore, the researcher is mindful of and attentive to system and situationational dynamics.

The Analysis

- **Unique case orientation** -- assumes that each case is special and unique; the first level of analysis is being true to, respecting, and capturing the details of the individual cases being studied; cross-case analysis follows from and depends upon the quality of individual case studies.
- **Inductive analysis** -- immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important patterns, themes, and inter-relationships; begins by exploring, then confirming findings, guided by analytical principles rather than rules.
• **Holistic perspective** -- the whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts; the focus is on complex interdependencies and system dynamics that cannot be reduced in any meaningful way to linear, cause and effect relationships and/or a few discrete variables.

• **Context sensitive** -- places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context; researcher is careful about [even dubious of] the possibility or meaningfulness of generalizations across time and space; emphasizes careful comparative case analyses and extrapolating patterns for possible transferability and adaptation in new settings.

• **Voice, perspective, and reflexivity** -- the qualitative methodologist owns and is reflective about her or his own voice and perspective; a credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness; complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher’s focus reflects a balance between understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity and of being self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness.

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(Taken from University of Southern California Libraries Research Guide on Qualitative Research Methods for SOWK 305)
Group Presentation Notes

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Group 4

Group 5

Group 6

Group 7
The class is divided into groups. Each group gets a different set of article search results from PubMed such as the below.

Group 1 – Article Abstracts


Employment hardships and single mothers' self-rated health: evidence from the panel study of income dynamics.

Wu CF¹, Wang MS, Eamon MK.

Author information

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Abstract

Using a national sample of single mothers from the 2007 and 2009 waves of the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, this study examined the effects of multiple employment statuses on the self-rated health of single mothers during the recent economic recession. Unlike other studies, the current study minimized selection bias by controlling for prior self-rated health, in addition to other predisposing factors, enabling factors, and need factors. We found that underemployment, but not unemployment, is associated with lower levels of self-rated health of single mothers. Results further indicate that the 25-39 age range (compared to the 18-24 age range), lower family income, prior lower self-rated health, more chronic diseases, and binge drinking place single mothers at an increased risk of lower levels of self-rated health. In contrast, strength-building physical activity is significantly associated with higher levels of self-rated health. Implications for health care policy and social work practice are drawn from the results.

KEYWORDS:

Andersen's Behavioral Model; Panel Study of Income Dynamics; employment hardships; self-rated health; single mothers

PMID: 24835091
DOI: 10.1080/00981389.2014.896846

[PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]
2. Finding safety: A pilot study of managed alcohol program participants’ perceptions of housing and quality of life.

Pauly, Bernadette (Bernie); Gray, Erin; Perkin, Kathleen; Chow, Clifton; Vallance, Kate; Krysowaty, Bonnie; Stockwell, Timothy


Abstract
Background: There is a higher prevalence of alcohol use and severe alcohol dependence among homeless populations. The combination of alcohol use and lack of housing contributes to increased vulnerability to the harms of substance use including stigma, injury, illness, and death. Managed alcohol programs (MAPs) administer prescribed doses of alcohol at regular intervals to people with severe and chronic alcohol dependence and homelessness. As a pilot for a larger national study of MAPs, we conducted an in-depth evaluation of one program in Ontario, Canada. In this paper, we report on housing and quality of life outcomes and experiences of the MAP participants and staff. Methods: We conducted a pilot study using mixed methods. The sample consisted of 38 people enrolled in or eligible for entry into a MAP who completed a structured quantitative survey that included measures related to their housing and quality of life. All of the participants self-identified as Indigenous. In addition, we conducted 11 in-depth qualitative interviews with seven MAP residents and four program staff and analyzed the interviews using constant comparative analysis. The qualitative analysis was informed by Rhodes’ risk environment framework. Results: When compared to controls, MAP participants were more likely to retain their housing and experienced increased safety and improved quality of life compared to life on the streets, in jails, shelters, or hospitals. They described the MAP as a safe place characterized by caring, respect, trust and a nonjudgmental approach with a sense of family and home as well as opportunities to reconnect with family members. Conclusions: The MAP was, as described by participants, a safer environment and a home with feelings of family and a sense of community that countered stigma, loss, and dislocation with potential for healing and recovery. The MAP environment characterized by caring, respect, trust, a sense of home, “feeling like family”, and the opportunities for family and cultural reconnections is consistent with First Nations principles for healing and recovery and principles of harm reduction. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)
Social Workers' Perceived Role Clarity as Members of an Interdisciplinary Team in Brain Injury Settings.

Vungkhanching M¹, Tonsing KN².

Abstract

This study investigated social workers' role clarity as members of an interdisciplinary team in traumatic and acquired brain injury treatment settings. A total of 37 social workers from 7 Western countries completed an anonymous online survey questionnaire. The majority of participants have more than 10 years of experience working in brain injury treatment settings (59.5%), and about 54% have been in their current employment for more than 10 years. Findings revealed that there were significant positive correlations between perceived respect, team collaboration, and perceived value of self for team with role clarity. Multiple regression analysis revealed that perceived value of self for team was a significant predictor of role clarity (p < .05).

KEYWORDS:

Brain injury; disability; interdisciplinary team; perceived respect; role clarity; social work; value of self for team; work stress

PMID: 27646459

DOI: 10.1080/1536710X.2016.1220887

[PubMed - as supplied by publisher]
4. *Bullying victimization among school-aged immigrant youth in the United States.*

Maynard, Brandy R.; Vaughn, Michael G.; Salas-Wright, Christopher P.; Vaughn, Sharon


Abstract

Purpose: Bullying is a serious sociodevelopmental issue associated with a range of short- and long-term problems among youth who are bullied. Although race and ethnicity have been studied, less attention has been paid to examining prevalence and correlates of bullying victimization among immigrant youth. Methods: Using data from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (N = 12,098), we examined prevalence and correlates of bullying victimization among U.S. immigrant youth. Results: After controlling for several demographic variables, findings indicate that immigrant youth are more likely to experience bullying victimization than native-born youth. Furthermore, immigrant youth who experience bullying victimization were more likely to report interpersonal, socioemotional, health, and substance use problems. Conclusions: Given the greater risk and unique challenges experienced by immigrant youth, prevention and intervention programs may need to be tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. Further research is needed to understand the specific factors and mechanisms involved in bullying victimization among immigrant youth. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)
5. **Mechanisms of familial influence on reentry among formerly incarcerated Latino men.**

Lee, Jane Jean-Hee; Guilamo-Ramos, Vincent; Muñoz-Laboy, Miguel; Lotz, Kevin; Bornheimer, Lindsay


Abstract

In the United States more than 10,000 people are released from state and federal prisons every week and often reenter the communities in which they were arrested. Formerly incarcerated individuals face considerable challenges to securing employment and housing. Subsequently, approximately two-thirds of former prisoners are rearrested within three years of their release. Latino men represent the fastest growing ethnic group of prisoners in the United States with unique cultural and social needs during the reentry process. The present study examined the role of the family in the reentry process through in-depth interviews (N = 16) with formerly incarcerated Latino men (FILM). The authors sought to identify familial processes specific to Latino men with potential to affect engagement and participation in reentry programs. Findings suggest that family mechanisms of social control and social support influence FILM’s reentry. Social work practitioners who work with this growing population can engage familial processes to prevent recidivism and promote desistance. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)