

## ETHICS VERSUS THE NATURE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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*The whole is greater than the sum of its part.* This is what researchers say about the qualitative research. Understanding human problem in holistic picture, building a complex phenomena, analyzing words, and conducting the study in a natural setting are the nature of qualitative research.<sup>1</sup> We cannot even compare the qualitative world to another world, which is quantitative research. However, many ethical issues are rising regarding the nature of it. This paper is noted to discuss the issues to be a consideration.

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

Firstly, IRB members may argue that qualitative research is often used small

group focused than large samples. This one of issues 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 that nurses take care different humans with different characteristics.

Secondly, the subjectivity of qualitative research has always been compromised, means lack of objectivity. That is the true, qualitative researchers hold an interpretive perspective. However, it may lead misunderstanding. In fact,

researchers see the object reality based on the real data of the object. But the way they interpret the data 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 perspective, which we have a background of information before interpret the data, and then selectively choose the data that fit on your thought. It is unprofessional.

Thirdly, IRB members may think that qualitative research is not scientific method, such as interview and focus group. We may think again what kind of scientific method is scientific. We know that interview is flexible, unstructured, open, and unorganized. But, I may say it is misinterpretation. As <sup>2</sup> said that the qualitative researchers are very discipline, systematic, analytic; rigor as well as they sees the data critically in perspective. However, the researchers, before collecting data, do informed consent; clearly describe how the interview will be recorded and how to keep confidentiality.

Fourthly, qualitative researcher may difficult to justify sample size, especially when they do not know who will be the key informant. It may be more and more informants depending on saturation

of data. So, how to deal with that? The researchers may come back and see the research objective, research question, sampling criteria, and the approach of qualitative research. Case study and phenomenology should be different in sample size.

Finally, in concluding that there is nothing wrong with ethical issue in the nature of qualitative research if we have the same basic of the understanding, and we can confirm concisely how we design our research.

## REFERENCES

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