

Engaging Nursing Students in Qualitative Research Through Hands-On Participation

Undergraduate nursing students often view research as challenging and difficult to understand. Students appear to lack interest in learning the processes of qualitative and quantitative research compared with learning new clinical skills (Ayoola et al., 2017; Coyne, Kennedy, Self, & Bullock, 2018; Keib, Cailor, Kiersma, & Chen, 2017). To increase nursing students' interest in research, changing from traditional lectures to more active learning strategies can be used. Active learning uses creative strategies to improve critical thinking, which allows students to find the value in applying research to patient care. This Syllabus Selection shares an activity that uses a hands-on approach to coding and analyzing qualitative research data for students in a traditional undergraduate nursing research course.

Method

Initial Assignment. The week prior to the activity, students were provided a mini-lecture related to common designs and data collection methods used in qualitative research. At the end of the class, students were asked to participate in an activity that would assist them in the next phase of qualitative research, which includes the process of coding and analyzing data. The phenomenon to be explored was defined as the culture of the school of nursing (SON).

Students were randomly assigned to collect data. Half of the students were assigned to capture a photograph of an object, person, or place within the school that described a piece of the SON culture. The other half of the students were assigned to identify a student, faculty, or staff member from the SON and conduct a brief unstructured interview with the open-ended question, "What do you

feel is the culture of our nursing school?" Each student's photographs and transcriptions of interviews were submitted to the faculty before the next scheduled class.

Coding Scheme. At the beginning of the next class, students were assigned to teams of five to six individuals and asked to discuss their entries. Students then reported the major themes they identified on what they believed was the culture of the SON. This process demonstrated to the students how coding schemes emerge in qualitative research. Six themes were identified and would be used to further code the data.

Data Coding. The faculty then distributed the students' submitted photographs and transcriptions randomly among the teams, with each group viewing up to four photographs and up to four transcriptions. Students were asked to code the data within their group using the major themes identified in the coding scheme. If groups had difficulty properly coding the data, a discussion was held among the team members and also among the entire class.

During the discussions, new themes or grouping of multiple themes using a common term emerged, bringing the total number of themes to 10. With the update in themes, students were required to look back at their previous coding to make sure all data were coded appropriately.

Quality in Coding and Analysis. Along with coding schemes and coding data, additional qualitative research practices were demonstrated throughout this activity. Investigator and method triangulation were both modeled. Investigator triangulation was modeled as students coded their individual data first, followed by classmates' discussion of the assigned code. Method triangulation was modeled by using both transcripts from interviews and photographs.

Another practice used in qualitative research is negative case analysis, which provides more support when analyzing qualitative data. In this activity, students were asked to look for both the negative and the positive data to support the major themes.

Conclusion

Through the activity, students were engaged in learning the processes of qualitative research. During in-depth discussions, students worked together to fully analyze and code 83 pieces of data that they individually collected prior to the class. This active learning approach exposed students to the qualitative research process and sparked an interest in using these methods for future areas of interest.

References

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