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Critical Analysis of Qualitative Method Used to Study the Impact of Counselling on Domestic Violence Survivors

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Abstract:

This article critically analyzes and explains the need of post modern methodology of qualitative research of studying sensitive issue like impact of counselling on domestic violence survivors. From psycho social and emotional perspective of the research participants a flexi methodology is preferred for collecting data in place of control and experimental design. This study has helped to establish the importance of using sensitive methodology like observation of the change in behaviour and coping mechanism of the research participants in their real situations. It also paves the way to connect research studies better to real life situations which increases usability value of findings. Counselling being an emerged stream of psychology research findings through this qualitative study will add value to existing theories.

Keywords: Post modern methodology, impact, counselling, domestic violence survivors

1. Introduction

This article will make a critical analysis of qualitative methodology used to study the impact of counselling on the survivors of domestic violence. The study was originally planned to have one experimental and control design. The experimental group will be given the counselling support as part of the mandatory support service and the control group will have no access to quality counselling. 20 cases from each conditions will be selected for the study and A self concept scale will be administered in the first interaction and again after three- six months to assess the improvement in the behaviour, coping skill and decision making skills. After six to one year's time, reasonable impact would be analysed.

With the backdrop of the above research design total 40 individuals were randomly selected to be followed up for the study purpose. Subjects were selected from the real life situation in a women crisis centre located in a Police Head Quarter that provides psycho social support to women survivors of gender based violence including domestic violence.

In course of intervention of sensitive issues like gender based violence that a woman goes through in Indian society and for that matter in the state of Odisha, following moral, ethical and sensitive challenges came up in applying the study design as it was planned initially:

- It was difficult to maintain the control condition
- It was not possible to administer any kind of self concept questionnaire

Considering the above practical and ethical challenges, the study focused on the interview, observation method and participant's view.

2. Observation as a Qualitative Method in Psychological Research

In psychology, qualitative methods have emerged in force during the last three decades. Qualitative research methodology primarily focuses on understanding of the sample studied, rather than generalizing from the sample to population. Qualitative methods may seem to be relatively new in psychology but they have a deep, complex history both in psychology and, importantly, in other disciplines. While it is possible to claim that the growth spurt of the embryo qualitative psychology can be clearly seen to have its origins in the 1980s, a qualitative tradition can be identified which harks back to the beginnings of modern psychology in the late nineteenth century and no doubt earlier. The scope of qualitative methods in psychology is quite broad and a range of intellectual traditions in psychology and other disciplines have made substantial contribution to the field. Thus there is a richness in the history of qualitative methods in psychology which belies many descriptions of the history of psychology.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) lists out major defining characteristics of qualitative research as following:

- Concern with the richness of description: Focuses on data collection by using in-depth interviewing methods, focus groups and the taking of detailed field notes
- Capturing the individual's perspective: Qualitative methods emphasise the perspective of the individual and their individuality

- The rejection of positivism and the use of post-modern perspectives: Qualitative researchers usually do not focus on 'positivist' approaches (i.e. those based on a conventional view of what science is – or *scientism*) though qualitative and quantitative researchers both rely on gathering empirical evidence which is an important aspect of positivism.
- Adherence to the postmodern sensibility: The *postmodern* sensibility, for example, reveals itself in the way that qualitative researchers are much more likely to use methods which get them close to the real-life experiences of people (in-depth interviews, for example) than quantitative researchers who are often content with a degree of artificiality such as that arising from the use of laboratory studies

Considering the sensitivity of the issue of gender based violence and impact of counselling, postmodern methodology was preferred for the purpose research. Data collection was done through interview, detailed discussion and observation.

3. Challenges in Applying Control and Experimental Condition with Research Participant like Women Survivors of Domestic Violence

In real life experience of dealing with domestic violence, a researcher who is also a developmental professional needs to be extra careful while interacting with a subject. It was not possible to create a control and experimental condition because of the sensitivity of the issue under consideration. Also, following any questionnaire format to assess the self concept would have an impact on the mental state of the subject. Particularly in a law enforcing set up every small gesture on the part of the counsellor who deals with the case is expected to affect the intervention process. The sample was from a heterogeneous socioeconomic and educational background. It was difficult to have standardised questionnaire for all the participants. Hence, the change was assessed basically through observation of the behaviour of the same sample group between pre and post counselling support.

4. Advantages and Disadvantages

A flexi and more interactive and observatory method of data collection was helpful in understanding and interpreting the impact of counselling. A structured format would have restricted the scope of collecting deep and rich data which have helped in better analysis. Also understanding the psychological state of mind in real life condition through more structured format would have chances of affecting their mental state in dealing with their life situations. The possible disadvantage would be subjectivity of understanding and interpreting data.

5. Conclusions

Considering the issue being studied in a qualitative study of psychological research, it is important to maintain the sensitivity of the topic being studied. The purpose of this research was more on studying the concept of counselling and adding value to the already established facts on the impact and usability of counselling which is an important applied component of psychology. The research was not intended to testing of hypothesis. Hence it is concluded that in the context of psycho-social subject of study a mix and match qualitative approach can be adapted for the best intent of re- searching something new.

6. References

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