

Critical appraisal of rigor in interpretive phenomenological nursing research.

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Abstract

Aim. This paper reports a critical review of published nursing research for expressions of rigour in interpretive phenomenology, and a new framework of rigour specific to this methodology is proposed.

Background. The rigour of interpretive phenomenology is an important nursing research methods issue that has direct implications for the legitimacy of nursing science. The use of a generic set of qualitative criteria of rigour for interpretive phenomenological studies is problematic because it is philosophically inconsistent with the methodology and creates obstacles to full expressions of rigour in such studies.

Methods. A critical review was conducted of the published theoretical interpretive phenomenological nursing literature from 1994 to 2004 and the expressions of rigour in this literature identified. We used three sources to inform the derivation of a proposed framework of expressions of rigour for interpretive phenomenology: the phenomenological scholar van Manen, the theoretical interpretive phenomenological nursing literature, and Madison's criteria of rigour for hermeneutic phenomenology.

Findings. The nursing literature reveals a broad range of criteria for judging the rigour of interpretive phenomenological research. The proposed framework for evaluating rigour in this kind of research contains the following five expressions: balanced integration, openness, concreteness, resonance, and actualization. Balanced integration refers to the intertwining of philosophical concepts in the study methods and findings and a balance between the choices of study participants and the philosophical explanation. Openness is related to a systematic, explicit process of accounting for the multiple decisions made throughout the study process. Concreteness relates to usefulness for practice of study findings. Resonance encompasses the experiential or felt effect of reading study findings upon the reader. Finally, actualization refers to the future realization of the resonance of study findings.

Conclusion. Adoption of this or similar frameworks of expressions of rigour could help to preserve the integrity and legitimacy of interpretive phenomenological nursing research.

Keywords: critical thinking, literature review, nursing, phenomenology, qualitative research approaches, research methodology