

Letter to the Editor

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Response to Article by Hideko Sato et al. Psychosocial Consequences Among Nurses in the Affected Area of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and the Fukushima Complex Disaster: A Qualitative Study

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Recently, a paper was published by Hideko Sato et al. in the *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* journal, titled “Psychosocial Consequences Among Nurses in the Affected Area of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 and the Fukushima Complex Disaster,” which addresses important aspects of disaster management. Using the ethnography method, the authors explained psychosocial consequences among nurses who experienced a complex disaster in Fukushima, Japan. The participants of this study were nurses from a selected hospital. Data gathering was done through 27 in-depth interviews, and 5 focus groups extracted 4 themes, 32 conceptual codes, and 8 categories. In this study, authors used the Japanese version of the Impact of Events Scale – Revised (IES-R) for assessing the subjective distress caused by traumatic events in participants. With regard to the objectives of research and selected qualitative method, the use of IES-R and its role on achieving the objectives of the study are not clear.

The use of ethnography is the best choice for providing detailed and comprehensive description for different social phenomena. Such complexity, such as time study periods and the active and prolonged engagement of the ethnographers with the local society, makes ethnographic research more difficult to apply as needed.¹ Accordingly, 4 months of working by the author as an interviewer to build good relationships and trust, as well as collect useful data by careful observation, seem to be insufficient. Typically, this time can range from 6 to 18 months, or longer, to achieve the research goals.²

On the other hand, the collection of observational data, in-depth interviews, life histories, or documents can be used in the ethnographic methodology,³ and there are different types of observations in ethnography (eg, complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer)⁴; however, it should be made clear as to the type of ethnography and the method used to analyze the results.

Achieving the criteria of trustworthiness (eg, credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and authenticity) is considered one of the most important factors to ensure the highest quality of all qualitative research.⁵ We think this article requires a full explanation of trustworthiness criteria and the methods used to improve them.

Coding is a major and essential part of qualitative research, in sorting and organizing data. Data can be categorized when the researcher discovers that the same codes or codes that are relatively similar extract from the data. By developing categories, a conceptual coding structure can be formulated. In this article, in some cases, a theme consists of 1 category and the label of a category is the same as the code. This generally occurs in situations in which the research is not saturated. Finally, the authors need to mention the language applied for interviews.

We believe that this article, with the use of ethnography, provides useful insights about the psychosocial consequences in disasters. Paying attention to the principles of ethnography and using them in disaster risk management studies can lead to increased social resilience and effective rehabilitation in disasters.

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