

LINCOLN AND GUBA'S QUALITY CRITERIA FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

***Prof. Dr. Annie P. Alexander**

*Vice Principal & HOD of Mental Health Nursing, Upasana College of Nursing, Kollam

ABSTRACT

Lincoln and Guba's posit that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Trustworthiness refers to the assessment of the quality and worth of the complete study, while helping to determine how closely study findings reflect the aims of the study, according to the data provided by participants. These researchers suggested four criteria for developing the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry. The four criteria are Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability and Transferability. These criteria represent parallels to the positivists' criteria of internal validity, reliability, objectivity, and external validity, respectively. The Lincoln and Guba's criteria often viewed as the "gold standard" for qualitative research.

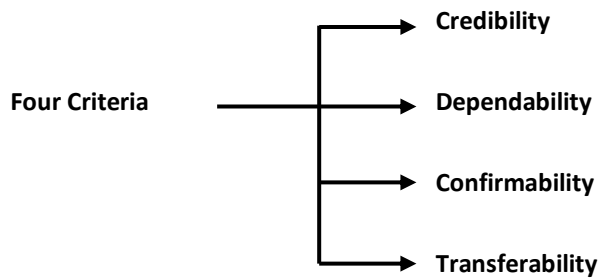
KEYWORDS: Trustworthiness, Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability, Transferability.

About Author



Prof. Dr. Annie P. Alexander did doctorate in Faculty of Nursing (Ph. D), specialized in Mental Health Nursing. She is a registered psychiatric nurse and has 20 years of teaching experience. Presently she is working as Vice Principal and HOD of Mental Health Nursing Department, Upasana College of Nursing, Kollam. She is a Research Guide for B.Sc, P.B.B.Sc, and PG Students. She has published papers in various National and International Journals and organized various workshops and conferences.

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- **Credibility**

- Refers to the confidence in the truth of the data and interpretations of them.
- Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out that credibility involves two aspects: first, carrying out the study in a way that enhances the believability of the findings, and second, taking steps to demonstrate credibility to external readers.
- Credibility is the equivalent of internal validity in quantitative research and is concerned with the aspect of truth-value.
- Credibility is a crucial criterion in qualitative research that has been proposed in several quality frameworks.

- **Dependability**

- Refers to the stability (reliability) of data over time and over conditions.
- Credibility cannot be attained in the absence of dependability, just as validity in quantitative research cannot be achieved in the absence of reliability.

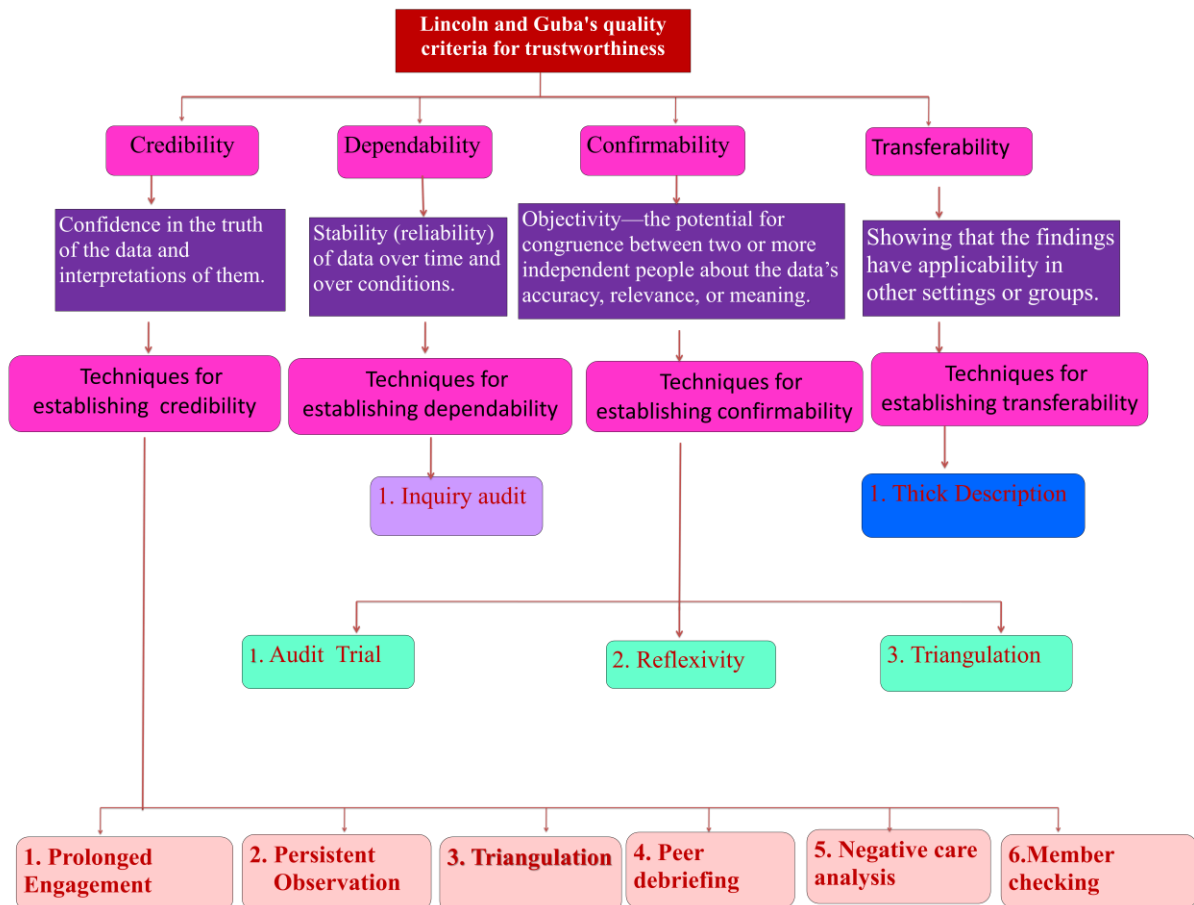
- **Confirmability**

- Refers to objectivity that is the potential for congruence between two or more independent people about the data's accuracy, relevance, or meaning.
- It is concerned with establishing that the data represent the information participants provided and that the interpretations of those data are not imagined by the inquirer.

- **Transferability**

- Analogous to generalizability
- The extent to which the qualitative findings can be transferred to or have applicability in other settings or groups.
- Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the investigator's responsibility is to provide sufficient descriptive data that readers can evaluate the applicability of the data to other contexts.

Lincoln and Guba describe a series of techniques that can be used to conduct qualitative research that achieves the criteria they outline.



Techniques for establishing credibility

1. Prolonged Engagement

Spending sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the culture, social setting, or phenomenon of interest.

Prolonged engagement is also important for building trust and rapport with informants, which in turn makes it more likely that useful and rich information will be obtained.

2. Persistent Observation

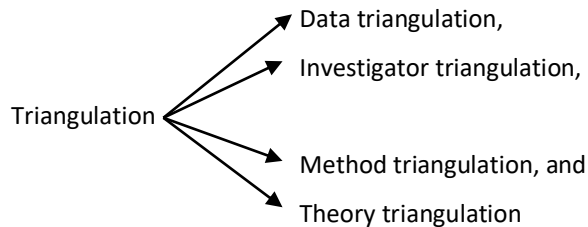
Researchers' focus on the characteristics or aspects of a situation that is relevant to the phenomena being studied.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that, "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth".

3. Triangulation

Use of multiple referents to draw conclusions about what constitutes truth.

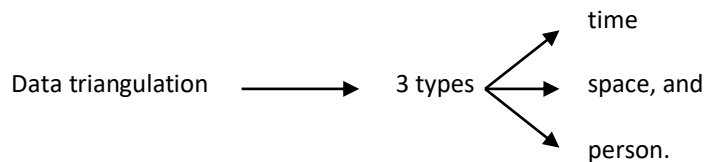
Denzin (1989) identified four types of triangulation



Data triangulation

Involves the use of multiple data sources for the purpose of validating conclusions.

There are of



a. Time triangulation

Involves collecting data on the same phenomenon or about the same people at different points in time (e.g., at different times of the year). This concept is similar to test–retest reliability assessment—the point is not to study a phenomenon longitudinally to assess change but to establish the congruence of the phenomenon across time.

b. Space triangulation

Involves collecting data on the same phenomenon in multiple sites to test for cross-site consistency.

c. Person triangulation

Involves collecting data from different types or levels of people (e.g., patients, health care staff) with the aim of validating data through multiple perspectives on the phenomenon.

Method triangulation

Involves using multiple methods of data collection about the same phenomenon.

In qualitative studies, researchers often use a rich blend of unstructured data collection methods (e.g., interviews, observations, documents) to develop a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon.

4. Peer debriefing

Involves sessions with peers to review and explore various aspects of the inquiry. In a peer - debriefing session, researchers might present written or oral summaries of data that

have been gathered, categories and themes that are emerging and researchers' interpretations of the data. Taped interviews might be played in some cases.

5. Negative case analysis (Deviant case analysis)

It is a process by which researchers search for cases that appears to disconfirm earlier diagnosis and then revise their interpretations as necessary. The goal of this procedure is to continuously refine a hypothesis or theory until it accounts for all cases.

6. Member-checking

Researchers provide feedback to participants about emerging interpretations and obtain participants' reactions.

Techniques for establishing dependability

1. Inquiry audit

Scrutiny of the data and relevant supporting documents by an external reviewer. Such an audit requires careful documentation of all aspects of the inquiry.

Once the audit trail materials are assembled, the inquiry auditor proceeds to audit, is similar to financial audit, the trustworthiness of the data and the meanings attached to them. Such audits are a good tool for persuading others that qualitative data are worthy of confidence.

Techniques for establishing Confirmability

1. Audit trail

Systematic collection of materials and documentation that would allow an independent auditor to come to conclusions about the data.

An adequate audit trail includes six classes of records

- i. The raw data (eg: interview transcripts)
- ii. Data reduction and analysis products (eg: theoretical notes and working hypothesis)
- iii. Process notes (eg : methodologic notes)
- iv. Materials relating to researchers' intentions and dispositions (eg: reflexive notes)
- v. Instrument development information (eg : pilot forms) and
- vi. Data reconstruction products (eg : drafts of the final report)

2. Triangulation

Use of multiple referents to draw conclusions about what constitutes truth.

3. Reflexivity

Involves attending systematically and continually to the context of knowledge construction -- the researcher's effect on the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The most widely used strategy for maintaining reflexivity and delimiting subjectivity is to maintain a reflexive journal or diary.

Techniques for establishing transferability

1. Thick description

Rich, thorough and vivid description of the research context, the people who participated in the study, and the experiences and processes observed during the inquiry.

Transferability cannot occur unless investigators provide sufficient information to permit judgements about contextual similarity.

Lucid and textured descriptions, with the judicious inclusion of verbatim quotes from study participants, also contribute to the authenticity of a qualitative study.

CONCLUSION

The Lincoln and Guba's criteria often viewed as the "gold standard" for qualitative research. These criteria represent parallels to the positivists' criteria of internal validity, reliability, objectivity, and external validity, respectively.

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