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USE OF GROUNDED THEORY: ITS BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT
Grounded theory is commonly discussed in graduate studies but deeper understanding and use of this theory has not given premium emphasis. Grounded Theory (GT) is a qualitative research methodology which primarily aims to generate theory and is very useful among disciplines such as social sciences and education. This study employed quantitative method specifically descriptive research design where it aimed to describe the benefits and challenges encountered by teachers in using Grounded Theory. The study used random sampling technique and selected the participation of 200 teachers among selected public elementary schools in the Philippines. Researcher-made survey questionnaire is used as the main research instrument. The study concludes that benefits of Grounded Theory include practical theory development, participant-centric, empirical scrutiny and precise analysis. However, there are challenges encountered by teachers as they use Grounded Theory which include complexity of implementation, confusing and misappropriated the theory aspect. The study proposed a training program which may provide practical activities for teachers to comprehensively absorb the benefits or advantages of GT and eventually address the challenges they encountered when using GT in educational researches. The study recommends to examine the factors that may cause teachers' difficulty in using and applying Grounded Theory (GT) in educational researches.

Keywords:
Grounded Theory, benefits, challenges, teachers, researches, training program

INTRODUCTION

Writing a research is one of the most difficult tasks encountered by students, teachers and professionals in their various fields. The scientific requirement in writing research becomes a critical task for scholars because of the processes and procedures needed to be undertaken. Aside from the scientific requirement which researchers need to consider, testing of theories and construction of models from the findings also become progressive trends in writing a research. In this regard, common researches which are administered in the field of education are quantitative and qualitative researches. Teachers in the field are commonly inclined in the use of quantitative researches where they are founded with the use of quantitative method specifically descriptive research. As teachers pursue their professional development studies or graduate studies, they are critically exposed to the different forms and nature of writing researches. They learned the different research methods, types and data analysis technique. However, one of the most less emphasized research design that has been considered also as less used research method is the Grounded Theory (GT). As defined by Noble and Mitchell (2016), Grounded Theory is a research method concerned with the generation of theory which is grounded in data that has been systematically collected and analyzed. In addition, similar study discussed that Grounded Theory uncover social

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relationships and behaviors of groups known as social processes. The use of grounded theory in research enabled researchers to generate or formulate theories based on their findings. This contravene the common use of teachers in the graduate level that they merely test theory rather than developed one. In this regard, Grounded Theory may not have been mostly used as the difficulty and critical aspect of developing theory is treated to be meticulous and tedious. Based on the collective observations of the researchers, most teachers in the field are not highly acquainted or possess knowledge in the concept and use of Grounded Theory in education-related researches. In this, lessen theoretical development in line with education becomes an apparent concern. In addition, as teachers are less inclined with the theoretical development based on their findings, they only tested or validated theories based on the prevailing conditions from which they are implicated or exposed.

Potentials and challenges arise from using a grounded theory methodology. It focuses on the emergent character whereas researchers are likely to meet contradictions which seem to result from different logics (Rupp, 2016). Practical strategies are found from using grounded theory as it lays importance for generating practically relevant theories that helped scholars and researchers improve the practices and systems in their field of interests. Also, use of grounded theory enabled researchers to capture the essence of the processes and phenomena being studied (Costa & Schoales, 2022). The Grounded Theory method is widely applied yet frequently misunderstood. The shared core of Grounded Theory is articulated as the principles of taking the word grounded seriously, capturing and explaining context-related social processes and pursuing theory through engagement with data and pursuing theory through theoretical sampling (Timonen et al., 2018). The belief that grounded theory research is easy to learn and to do and that anyone can do it without any training or minimally. A methodological text cannot teach how to identify inferences or how to perform processes and abstraction and conceptualization (Morse et al., 2021). Further, the constructivists approach to Grounded Theory methodology allows for the investigation of understudied phenomena and valued the construction of a theory taking into consideration with higher level of scientific value (Bobblink et al., 2024).

There is a strong knowledge gap based from the collective readings of the researchers on the challenges and benefits of using Grounded Theory in educational researches. The researchers examined there are less studies published relating to the use of Grounded Theory among education-related researches. With this, they found that this study is great significance in describing the benefits and challenges of Grounded Theory to education-related researches. Also, this study supported the SDG4 (Quality Education) as the study may provided significant baseline which can be used to develop teachers' understanding in using Grounded Theory in their researches.

OBJECTIVES

This study described the benefits and challenges of using Grounded Theory in education-related researches as perceived by teachers. Specifically, following questions were answered in the study:

1. How may the benefits of using Grounded Theory in education-related researches as perceived by teachers, be described in terms of:
    1.1 practical theory development;
    1.2 participant-centric;
    1.3 empirical scrutiny; and
    1.4 precise analysis?
2. How may the challenges in using Grounded Theory in conducting education-related researches be described in terms of:
    2.1 complexity of implementation;
    2.2 structure; and
    2.3 theoretical aspect?
3. Based from the findings, what training program may be proposed in order to develop or sustain teachers' understanding in using Grounded Theory in education-related researches?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive research in order to describe the benefits and challenges of using Grounded Theory in education-related researches. The study also used random sampling technique which selected the participation of 200 pubic school teachers from the selected elementary schools in the Philippines. On the other

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hand, the researchers used a researcher-made survey-questionnaire which was subjected to validation and internal consistency measure. Also, as to the construction of the researcher-made survey-questionnaire, the researchers formulated the same using two (2) parts. For part 1, it contained items relating to the benefits of using Grounded Theory in conducting education-related researches while part 2, contained items pertaining to the challenges encountered by teachers in using Grounded Theory. To note, the researchers selected the respondents who have already experienced conducting education-related studies using Grounded Theory. Thus, the validation was done through the expertise of three (3) professors of a graduate school who held Doctorate degree in Educational Management and Instruction. Thereafter, the researcher conducted a pilot test to the non-included respondents. Apparently, items under part 1 gained a Cronbach Alpha result of .819 while items under part 2 obtained a Cronbach Alpha result of .718, both described as acceptable. In the process of collecting the data, the researchers used a Google Form which was sent to the personal email addresses of the respondents. After all the data have been collected, the researchers carefully organized the collected raw data using MS Excel, then subjected to statistical computation. As to the data analysis technique used, the researchers used frequency, mean and overall mean in order to describe the benefits and challenges encountered by the respondents in using Grounded Theory in administering education-related researches. Highest ethical standards were followed through the distribution of informed consent and administration of short orientation among the respondents where the researchers discussed and presented the intent and nature of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers used Grounded Theory where they were able to formulate their theories based on the findings of their researches. Using Grounded Theory in education-related research offered significant benefits particularly in the development of theory which could be utilized as alternative input to develop or sustain education systems including instruction, assessment, classroom management and the like. Such theoretical framework or theory being developed from Grounded Theory-based research, enabled teachers to practically and scientifically unveil the conditions which they encounter representing the diverse conditions circulating within the system of education in the country.

1. **Benefits of Using Grounded Theory in Education-Related Researches.** The results showed that practical theory development variable obtained a highest mean score of 3.87, described as highly perceived. On one hand, other variables such as participant centric gained a mean score of 3.72, participant-centric gained a mean score of 3.63 and precise analysis gained a mean score of 3.57, being the lowest mean score. These three variables were described as highly perceived. Using Grounded Theory in education-related researches in terms of practical theory development suggested that the respondents highly perceived the benefits of Grounded Theory as a valuable methodology for generating theories that are directly applicable to real-world educational situations. In addition, emphasis on practical theory development implicated the need for higher academic discourse and informed effective teaching practices and policy-making. On the other hand, on participant-centric, the result indicated that respondents highly perceived that Grounded Theory when used in education-related researches was strongly aligned with a certain research participants' views and philosophies. This also indicated that using Grounded Theory as highly perceived by the respondents would enable researchers to actively engage their participants emphasizing relevance and positive implication to the educational outcomes to be contributed by Grounded Theory-based educational research. Meanwhile, on precise analysis, the results showed that the respondents highly perceived Grounded Theory posed precise analysis process. This meant that the respondents gain benefits by using Grounded Theory because they were able to formulate theories that could practically guide them to improve certain educational systems locally in their respective schools. The results revealed that Grounded Theory as used in education-related researches fostered relevance and practicality. Thus, the study implicated that further support and training may advance teachers' ability to conduct researches using Grounded Theory. Results of the study supported the study of Hussein et al. (2014) which revealed that Grounded Theory emphasized the utilization of a variety of data sources that were grounded in particular context.
2. **Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Using Grounded Theory in Conducting Education-Related Researches.** The results showed that complexity of implementation obtained the highest mean score of 3.78, described as always encountered while structure and theoretical aspect both gained 3.56, also described as always encountered. The highest mean score indicated that the respondents frequently

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experienced significant challenges related to the complexity of implementing grounded theory whereas such complexity arise on iterative data collection and analysis. The result also showed that the respondents experienced an overwhelming data collection and analysis processes. In addition, part of complexity of implementation, the result also revealed that respondents always encountered limited time for the conduct of an extensive data collection surrounding Grounded Theory methodology. On the other hand, the results revealed that the respondents frequently encountered significant challenges in line with the structure of Grounded Theory. The results further implied that the respondents found lack of clear guidelines or rigid structures in Grounded Theory, leading to confusion. In addition, the respondents frequently encountered that organizing and categorizing the data into meaningful codes and themes inflict their solidified scientific analysis contributing to structural challenges. Lastly, the result on theoretical aspect showed that respondents also frequently struggled in understanding the theoretical foundation and integration of theory and practice. The results also revealed that respondents theoretical underpinnings are not readily embraced as they proposed theories emanating from their grounded theory-based researches. The study implicated that teachers experienced significant barriers in conducting education-related researches using Grounded Theory. Also, proper training and consistent mentoring on the proper implementation and use of Grounded Theory may reduce these barriers. Hence, results of the study supported the study of Marky et al. (2014) which concluded that novice ground theory researchers needed to understand the different philosophical assumptions that influenced the various grounded theory approaches before choosing one particular approach.

3. **Proposed Training Program.** This study proposed a training program which aims to instill proper understanding on the principles, concepts and procedures about Grounded Theory research. Also, this training program aims to equip teachers as participants with the skills to design and implement research using Grounded Theory. The proposed training program contained three (3) important component. For component 1, it contained an interactive discussion relating to the history, concepts and importance of Grounded Theory. On one hand, component 2, contained discussions through interactive lecture sessions relative to the research design using Grounded Theory. Under this component, the training would discuss principles in formulating research question, participant selectin and ethical considerations in the conduct of Grounded Theory. Lastly, under component 3, it contained practical activities which would discuss the coding schemes in Grounded Theory specifically emphasizing open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Teachers as participants in this training program would participate on lecture discussion, hands-on writing activities and presentation.

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CONCLUSION

Grounded theory is commonly discussed in graduate studies but deeper understanding and use of this theory has not given premium emphasis. Grounded Theory (GT) is a qualitative research methodology which primarily aims to generate theory and is very useful among disciplines such as social sciences and education. This study employed quantitative method specifically descriptive research design where it aimed to describe the benefits and challenges encountered by teachers in using Grounded Theory. The study used random sampling technique and selected the participation of 200 teachers among selected public elementary schools in the Philippines. Researcher-made survey questionnaire is used as the main research instrument. The study concludes that benefits of Grounded Theory include practical theory development, participant-centric, empirical scrutiny and precise analysis. However, there are challenges encountered by teachers as they use Grounded Theory which include complexity of implementation, confusing and misappropriated the theory aspect. The study proposed a training program which may provide practical activities for teachers to comprehensively absorb the benefits or advantages of GT and eventually address the challenges they encountered when using GT in educational

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