

Article critique – ‘you have someone to trust’ (2012)



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Context and Policy

Qualitative Research Article Critique - ' You Have Someone To Trust' (2012).

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Mortimer, J North, K & Stead J. (2012). You Have Someone To Trust.

Outstanding safeguarding practise in primary schools . Unknown (Unknown),
pg1-74.

The purpose of this academic piece is to critically evaluate the article ' You Have Someone to Trust', it will begin with examining the literature and will discuss data analysis and findings and then will conclude by synthesising evidence as to whether it is a valued piece of work. The article of choice is qualitative. Qualitative research is a term used for research strategies that are aimed at how human beings understand, experience, interpret and produce the social world (Hammersley, 2013). The main strength of qualitative research is it generates an opportunity for great depth and information on the social process (Griffin, 2007). Quantitative data, on the other hand focus's on counting and classifying features and constructing statistics (Mangell, 2013). Mortimer utilizes the method of ethnography in her research, this largely relies on observation and interviews as an essential aspect of its methods, the researcher endeavours to become part of the

research, taking note of everything they see and hear (Saks and Allsop, 2007).

Validity, reliability, and objectivity are criteria used to evaluate the quality of research. As an explanatory method, the content of qualitative research analysis differs from quantitative data, from its assumptions, research purposes, and inference processes, therefore making the criteria unsuitable for qualitative research (Bradley, 1993). Early work conducted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four measures for evaluating qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For the purpose of this critical review, the author has chosen the McMaster critical appraisal tool Framework (1998, online). Following a full critical evaluation and checklist, it is apparent that Mortimer’s paper is an interesting but a problematic piece of research.

You Have Somebody to Trust (2012) was created with the notion that it would specify criteria for practice in relation to safeguarding children. Policy making relies heavily on the academic literature, from the research it is distinguished how severe a problem is, what actions are required and how to implement it into practice (Exblom, 2002). After school and services failed to recognise and understand former legislation, and a series of serious case reviews, a new framework ‘ Practical Tips for Schools’ was created in January 2012 (Mortimer et al, 2012). Mortimer’s study helped build the new framework with her research, this was through an evidence-based approach.

You have someone to trust was funded by the Children’s Commission, which was established by the Children’s Act 2004 (Mortimer et al, 2004). Due to the

nature of the funding, this research could be seen as one sided. It's the government's duty to ensure practitioners are following safeguarding procedures (GOV. UK [online]) so one might believe that the results may bias to fit their own aims. However, this has not affected the result or completion of the study.

It is essential that studies are clear and coherent due to the research being built on previous research (Dawson, Dawson & Overfield 2013) allowing the information to be transferred. Here Mortimer clearly discusses the purpose of study in the first section ‘ Executive Summary’. It is also explicitly stated in the second section, ‘ Object of the Study’ stating “ The research was in order to identify best professional practice in response to child protection and safeguarding concerns in primary schools’ (Mortimer et al, 2012). Although generalizability is disregarded in qualitative studies (Ali & Yusof, 2011) it is important the findings from this article are transferable. Although no two schools are the same, the general operation of a school and their approach to safeguarding should be.

In qualitative research it is essential to examine the appropriate literature on the issue of the study, this provides the reader with a rational background of the study (Fink & Arlene 2005). Mortimer does draw on a significant amount of literature to contextualize her research. In section four, there is a varied quantity of literature on the chosen subject, including ‘ Intervening early’ cited by Eason and Gee 2012 and ‘ A shared understanding of outstanding practice’ cited by Ofsted Safeguarding Schools (2011) this is predominantly valuable in that it provides evidence of the subject matter. Generally, there

is a clear discussion regarding the literature which in turn strengthens her study.

Mortimer has chosen to use purposive sampling, she has completed this by intentionally selecting participants who can contribute a deep understanding of the phenomenon that she is studying (Klenk, 2013). The procedure of sample selection was not highlighted in Mortimer's report, this could increase transferability. Without this a notion of bias may be questioned due to the deficiency of information. To strengthen her report Mortimer could have stated the sex, race, age and background of the participants.

Discarding this information the paper cannot be seen as a true representation of the population (Janson, 2010) which will decrease transferability. Although the sampling information is limited, one can clearly summarize that the type of sampling here is a Maximum Variation Sampling. This involves deliberately selected cases with a wide variation on dimensional interests as an effort to understand the context and created transferability (Polit & Beck, 2013).

In the executive summary section it states that ' the sample of the school, which were visited were specifically selected to ensure a variation in size, geographical location and demographic intake'(Mortimer et al, 2012). Here Mortimer has addressed the appropriate actions and increased her confirmability in relation to the school selection. There was no declaration as to whether all participants took part, allowing the reader to assume that all asked contributed to the study. Overall, the choice of sample selected for the research purposes is suitable as it does seem to offer a generous opportunity for research into the properties of safeguarding in education. Nevertheless,
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due to the lack of information provided the results lack confirmability and transferability.

Mortimer does not go into any substantial detail about the process of data collection, in section five there is a vague mention of it however, only basic information is provided. It states that semi structured interviews and survey's had taken place, but again examples are not specified. The reader was not able to critique the question's appropriability or comment if they were clearly understood. Survey respondents misunderstand questions more often than one might expect, and the collection process mistakes are difficult to discover and correct (Conrad & Schober 2005). To improve the validity of the research, Mortimer could of included member checks. Member checks involve sharing all of the findings with the participants, allowing them to question and comment on the authenticity of the work (Creswell, 2007) this would eliminate any misunderstandings. Forwarding that Mortimer could have piloted her study so she was able to recognise any gaps in her proposal method (Sampson, 2004).

The researcher has a clear responsibility to ensure that they protect the right and well being of their participants irrespective of the nature of their research, there are many guidelines that reinforce these principles and many aspects are legally enforceable (Eby, 1991). Mortimer does not discuss any ethical issues that she considered, or whether ethical approval was given. Participants who are subject in a research subject must be competent, have full disclosure of the subject field, understand the process and voluntarily participate (Emanuel, Abdoler& Stunkel 2006). This is not disclosed in

Mortimer study, therefore the reader is required to assume that the correct ethical procedures were adopted.

The data analysis of the study was satisfactory. Mortimer provided a clear breakdown of the data that she gathered. However, no coding was present, coding is an important aspect of a study, it allows studies to be repeated and validated, it makes methods transparent (Shenton, 2004). In Mortimer’s case the coding should of been finalized once the survey was completed and in the case of interviews after the data was collected (Bourque, 2004). She included several direct quotes from participants, which increase the credibility in her research. Quotations give an insight and meaning and illustrate the argument (Holloway & Wheeler, 2013) facilitating the reader to understand how the findings were presented. However, it ought to be recognized that her findings are clearly presented and concluded.

You have someone to trust (2012) can be seen as having an insignificant amount of credibility. Credibility can be defined as ‘ The plausibility of one’s study’ (Pitney & Parker 2009). This article is a recent document created in 2012, suggesting that the information is current and up to date, furthering that, credible sources have been researched through the paper such as the NSPCC & Safeguarding For Children. The investigators, background and qualification are unknown, Patton 1990 believes that the credibility of the researcher is especially important as it is the person who collects the data. It is believed that this is equally as important as the procedure credibility (Alkin, Daillak & White, 1979).

Beyond that, triangulation is a credible strategy that Mortimer does practice. Individual interviews, focus groups and surveys are used along with supporting data from documents. Other credible strategies include member checks and a prolonged study time (Munkhjargal, 2006). However, these were not applied throughout Mortimer's study. Through triangulation of data collection methods, interviewing and data analysis, Mortimer has enhanced the validity of her work. Alongside these methods of data collection Mortimer has kept her focus on the objectives of her study. Mortimer has created transferability in her research through referencing literature collected on similar topics and areas.

The research intentions are indeed found as a result of the work. That being stated, the subject field was very brief and a large amount of data could have been supplied to enhance the validity of the article. Without these any reader may believe that she has become too subjective in her decisions to understand her participants, reducing confirmability in her work.

Nevertheless, one can expect to ensure comparable results in similar settings from this study, making it clear that the researcher was dependable.

On a whole it is clear that the research was valuable, ‘Practical Tips For Schools’ was created and the objective of the study achieved.

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