

SPORTS SCIENCE GRADUATE STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE WITH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH LEARNING AND APPLICATION PROCESS

ABSTRACT

Recently, we have been observing that there is a paradigm shift in Sports Sciences, and the representation of science, which is reflected by a particular positivist epistemology, has been replaced with multi-representations of science. It is known that there is a dramatic increase in qualitative research albeit there are serious problems with the quality of this research. Therefore, in this study, we aimed to explain/interpret how Sports Science graduate students perceive, define and explain qualitative research in the process of learning and application the qualitative research. While the criteria were being determined for this phenomenological study, to which purposive sampling methodology is applied, we paid attention to include 21 people who are at different levels of qualitative research (learning, application), at different levels of their education (Ph.D. candidate, master student) from different areas of sport sciences (sport psychology, physical education and sport etc.). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. Data were analysed through content analysis. Results were discussed under 4 themes: (1) Dominant structure of sports sciences and academy, (2) Challenges experienced in learning qualitative research and solution strategies, (3) Challenges experienced in the application of qualitative research and solution strategies, and (4) Qualitative research achievements. In conclusion, this research reveals how researchers, who have experience with qualitative research learning and application process in Sports Sciences, perceive a qualitative research learning and application process, and give the meaning to this process, and also what are the challenges and solutions for these challenges. We think this research will shed light on the teaching process of a qualitative research and to the quality of a qualitative research model.

Keywords: Paradigmatic shift, qualitative research, graduate students, sport sciences, phenomenology

SPOR BİLİMLERİNDE ÖĞRENİM GÖREN LİSANSÜSTÜ ÖĞRENCİLERİN NİTEL ARAŞTIRMAYI ÖĞRENME VE UYGULAMA SÜRECİNDEKİ DENEYİMLERİ

ÖZET

Son yıllarda Spor Bilimlerinde bir paradigma değişiminin yaşandığını ve belli bir pozitivist epistemolojinin yansıttığı bilim temsili yerini çoklu bilimsel temsillere bıraktığını görüyoruz. Nitel araştırma yaklaşımıyla gerçekleştirilen araştırma projelerinde önemli bir artış olmakla birlikte gerçekleştirilen nitel araştırmaların niteliğinde önemli sorunların var olduğunu gözlemlemekteyiz. Bu doğrultuda bu araştırmada lisansüstü eğitim gören öğrencilerin nitel araştırma öğrenimlerinde ve uygulamalarında karşılaştıkları zorlukları ve geliştirdikleri çözüm yollarını ortaya koymayı amaçlıyoruz. Amaçlı örneklem yöntemi kullandığımız bu fenomenolojik araştırmamızda ölçütlerimizi belirlerken nitel araştırmanın farklı aşamalarında (öğrenme, uygulama), lisansüstü öğrenimin farklı düzeylerinde (doktora ya da yüksek lisans öğrencisi) ve spor bilimlerinin farklı alanlarında (spor psikolojisi, beden eğitimi ve spor vb.) yer alan 21 kişinin araştırmaya dâhil edilmesine dikkat ettik. Veriler, bireysel görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde içerik analizi yöntemi uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, Spor bilimlerinin yapısı, nitel araştırma öğrenme kaynaklarıyla ilişkili deneyimlenen zorluklar, nitel araştırma pratiğinde deneyimlenen zorluklar ve nitel araştırmanın kazanımları olmak üzere 4 tema altında tartışılmıştır. Sonuç olarak, spor bilimlerinde nitel araştırma öğrenme ve uygulama deneyimine sahip araştırmacıların gerek nitel araştırmayı öğrenme sürecini, gerekse uygulama süreçlerini nasıl algıladıklarını, anlamlandırdıklarını, yaşanan zorlukların neler olduğunu ve nasıl çözümler üretebildiklerini ortaya koyan bu araştırmanın, nitel araştırmanın öğretilmesi sürecine de ışık tutması ve nitel araştırmaların niteliğini artırması açısından önemli katkıları olacağını düşünüyoruz.

Anahtar kelimeler: Paradigmatik değişim, nitel araştırma, lisansüstü öğrenciler, spor bilimleri, fenomenoloji

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, we have been observing that there is a paradigm shift in Sports Sciences, and the representation of science, which is reflected by a particular positivist epistemology, has been replaced with multi-representations of science. As a result of questioning, which started in the 1980s, to point out that quantitative paradigm is not satisfactorily useful to understand the different context and meanings of sport, qualitative research approach has gradually gained more importance¹³. Excluding reviews, there are 542 articles in the field of sport and social issues published by five international academic journals (Journal of Sport and Social Issues, Sociology of Sport Journal, Sport in Society, Soccer & Society, and Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health) from 2010 to 2015; 467 articles out of 542 are qualitative, 44 of them are quantitative, and 31 of them are mixed model research²⁰. For the celebration of the 20th Anniversary, Sport Management Review published the special issue on "Contemporary Qualitative Research Methods in Sport Management" edited by Larena Hoerber and Sally Shaw. In this special volume, Hoerber and Shaw (2017) also claim that over the past 10 years, qualitative research methods have become more commonplace in sport management scholarship. Singer, Shaw, Hoerber, Walker, Rich and Agyemang (2017) also argue that there is a greater interest in and acceptance of qualitative research in the field of sport management and this is evidenced by an increase in the overall number of journal articles, conference presentations, and book projects. An important reason for the increase is that qualitative research has significant contributions to the understanding multiverse of the different, dense, rich, complex, processes and context of the sports field.

It is known that there is a dramatic increase in qualitative research albeit there are serious problems with the quality

of this research and one of the important reasons for these problems is related to the challenges in learning and application of the qualitative research. Challenges experienced by researchers, who apply qualitative research methodology to the body of literature and research, are often mentioned in this field. Researchers' challenges are usually listed as follows: limiting one's study with research group only¹², research on risky topics^{8,1}, not to know where and how to use institutional guiding²¹, and expressing self-reflexivity¹⁹. As for research on graduate students, who are new to qualitative research, it is stated that these students have challenges in learning how to conduct a qualitative research, how to analyse data, how to write a report, and transition from quantitative epistemological position to the qualitative one^{4,6,10,26,33}. For example, Wang (2013) expressed that Ph.D. candidates, who are new to qualitative research, have challenges in qualitative research paradigm in particular in understanding of credibility and subjectivity topics, and also there is a low level of understanding of how to conduct a systematic data analysis, and again in challenges in presenting qualitative research findings. This research also demonstrates that Ph.D. candidates have challenges in observation process. Some other research focused on new beginner researchers' experience with qualitative research writing^{3,9,30,41}. Findings of the research revealed that qualitative research writing is a challenging process resulted from its oral nature, "unclear type" of research reports, and diverse and complex research approaches.

On the one hand, many challenges in learning qualitative research are stated in the body of literature and on the other hand some other research that highlights solutions to these problems^{21,10,25,29}. This research often underlines that qualitative research can be learned through practice on the ground and as a result it is necessary that qualitative research course design should include the following

components; data collection, discussing these data in the course²⁹, exercises to analyse and interpret these data with a lecturer²⁵, and students' self-reflexivity skills need to be improved so that students can create their own qualitative researcher identity¹⁰. Researcher identity is important for qualitative research approach, accordingly; learning practices, such as reflexive logs, are applied to qualitative research learning to create this identity. Ersoy (2015) tries to understand Ph.D. candidates' first qualitative research process experience and process to create their own qualitative researcher identity by means of the reflexive logs. According to the research results; Ph.D. candidates explain their qualitative researcher identity in their following words: "I learned from my experience", "I discovered my researcher identity", and "I discovered myself".

An international body of literature has important research about qualitative research teaching and learning yet only a limited number of research has been done in our country. In this regard, it is believed that revealing graduate students' challenges in learning and application of a qualitative research, which is new in Sports Sciences, will make significant contributions to the teaching and learning of the qualitative research.

Situated Learning Theory

Situated learning approach²³ which is dealt with within the scope of constructivist theory, provides a strong framework for this research with regard to graduate students' difficulties in learning and application of a qualitative research, and solutions strategies. Situated learning theory underlines that learning occurs in context, learning is, in fact, a social process, and learning through social

interaction (apprenticeship) within societies is important. According to this theory one of the main elements of learning is interaction and student must be involved in this practice. Situated learning thinks about how one acquires knowledge in daily life and considers learning a socio-cultural phenomenon. This approach, also, highlights the importance of learning in the context of apprenticeship system structure and real life situations, practices.

In the literature, there are many studies using situated learning theory on teaching students qualitative research methods^{14,17,24}. These studies indicated that integrating authentic learning into courses helps students to understand different epistemologies and ontologies³⁵ and provide students to increase their engagement with activities and enhance students' enjoyment³⁶.

The key recommendation of the situated learning is that learning should be accomplished through a cognitive apprenticeship. Lave and Wenger (1991) defines learning as "transition from newcomer to full participant" in situated learning model. In other words, the experience of "newcomer" (apprentice) who enter into qualitative learning atmosphere, and begin to acquired knowledge and experience, for the transition period to "full participant" can be defined as learning in this study. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the experience of "newcomer", who are involved in different phases (learning/application) and levels (Ph.D. candidates, master of science students) for the time in their graduate education, for the transition- in accordance with socio-cultural practices required by their learning atmosphere- to "full participant" level.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Any phenomenology research requires a methodology that defines, explain and interpret how people perceive, define and explain a phenomenon in a careful and comprehensive way, and also what/how they think about the phenomenon in question, and how these people talk to others about this issue³². Accordingly, the phenomenology research is applied to this study as a method to explain/interpret how Sports Science graduate students perceive, define and explain qualitative research in the process of learning and application the qualitative research.

Sample

A phenomenology design has participants, who are a few but can present rich/thick experience since it aims to explain a phenomenon in a deeper way through actor's lens. While the criteria were being determined for this study, to which purposive sampling methodology is applied, we paid attention to include 21 people who are at different levels of qualitative research (learning, application), at different levels of their education (Ph.D. candidates, master of science student) from different areas of sport sciences (sport psychology, sociology of sport, and physical education and sports) (Table 1). 11 of these participants who were on learning level were either participated a qualitative research method course at master of science level or attended qualitative research workshops/seminars. This group had no experience on conducting a qualitative research. 10 of the participants who were on the application level were either have publications with qualitative research design or experienced on conducting qualitative research on Ph.D. level. These people were selected to get answers to the research question and because they have the capacity to increase "rich and thick" data production skills. With regard to data saturation, we attempted to obtain rich and thick data rather than sample size¹¹. As

Glaser and Straus (1967) indicate if data repeat themselves and collected data do not present new openings to the research topic, it means there is data satisfaction and collection process is ended.

Data Collection Techniques

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data^{37,42}. Questions were classified according to qualitative research learning resources, challenges/facilities in qualitative research learning, and challenges/facilities in qualitative research application.

In this study e-interview and face-to-face interviews were used complementarily since they both have advantages for the study. As Bampton, Cowton and Downs (2013) argue that e-interview and face-to-face interview can be used complementarily. Some interviewees might be interviewed face-to-face while others might be interviewed electronically. According to Bampton, Cowton and Downs (2013) and Meho (2006), advantages of the e-interview: 1) it offers significant savings in terms of time and financial resources, particularly in relation to the elimination the need to travel or to transcribe tapes, 2) it has advantages in terms of convenience, eliminating the need for researcher and interviewee to be in the same pre-arranged place at the same pre-arranged time, 3) it facilitates an extended period of communication, 4) the interviewee has a greater degree of control as they do not have to reply on the spot, 5) e-format require little editing before the analysis, 6) it provides follow-up exchanges between the researcher and participants. In the current study, researchers strived to maximize the richness of e-interviews, and therefore the trustworthiness of the study by employing follow-up e-mails and motivating the participants to respond to following probes, inviting the participants from different cities, employing certain linguistic methods, such as the use of abbreviations, making questions to be asked are clear enough to avoid misinterpretations and

motivate participants to express their experiences.

Some of the interview questions were like: "What was the most effective learning source for you? and Why?" "What was the most challenging when learning about qualitative research? Why?" "What was not a challenge for you when learning qualitative research? Why?" "When/If you are conducting a qualitative research what was most challenging for you when you try to determine the qualitative research problem? And how did you solve this problem?".² pilot interviews were conducted before the interview form was finalised. 13 interviews were conducted in

face to face interview. The average duration of face-to-face individual interviews is 45 minutes. 8 of the interviews were conducted via e-mail in open-ended interview form. E-mail interviews were conducted in two rounds so that additional questions based on answers were sent to interviewees. Moreover, a personal information form was used to obtain information about participants' demographic profile such as education, and academic field/level, and about their qualitative research experience (research design, data collection technique, and publications, etc.) in this research.

Table 1: Demographics of sample

Name	Levels of their education	Areas of sport sciences	Levels of qualitative research	
			Learning qual. research	Applying qual. research
Özge	Ph.D candidate	Physical education and sports		+
Esin	Ph.D. candidate	Sociology of sport		+
Serhan	Ph.D. candidate	Physical education and sports		+
Gönül	Ph.D. candidate	sociology of sport		+
Salih	Ph.D. candidate	Sports psychology		+
Hale	Ph.D. candidate	Sport psychology		+
Ferda	Ph.D. candidate	Recreation / sports management		+
Mehmet	Master of science student	Sociology of sport		+
Pelin	Ph.D. candidate	Sociology of sport		+
Mete	Ph.D. candidate	Sociology of sport		+
Ali	Ph.D. candidate	Sports management	+	
Derya	Ph.D. candidate	Sport psychology	+	
Merve	Ph.D. candidate	Sports management	+	
Betül	Ph.D. candidate	Physical education and sports	+	
Kerem	Ph.D. candidate	Physical education and sports	+	
Nail	Ph.D. candidate	Sport psychology	+	
Semih			+	
Atakan	Master of science student	Recreation	+	
Emre	Ph.D. candidate	Physical education and sports	+	
Gamze	Ph.D. candidate	Sport psychology	+	

Data analysis

Content analysis method was used to explain raw data, to define resemblance and meanings, and to reach conceptual relationships³². Data were analysed through inductive method. We independently read the transcription of interviews and first of all coded answers to the questions. We discussed our codes, took our notes and read transcriptions once more. While we were determining categories based on codes, we benefited from constant comparative analysis method³² and, lastly; correlated them with themes determined according to research questions.

The interrater reliability is a method that aims to ensure results are reliable in the sense of being reproducible and consistent by employing intercoder reliability and intercoder agreement⁵. On the other hand, the inter-rater reliability is about two or more researchers independently coding data and coming to an agreement over the codes to check that coding is replicable²⁸. In the current study, firstly two researchers who are equally qualified and knowledgeable coders developed coding scheme independently and 92 percent of reliability was obtained for the coding schemes. After this, the researchers coded each transcript independently and they reviewed and adjusted the coded transcripts using the negotiated agreement method and then calculated intercoder agreement. They had reached 88 percent intercoder agreement and after negotiating discrepancies, they reached 98 percent intercoder agreement. We used the procedure to calculate intercoder reliability and agreement based on the number of coding agreements achieved after coders tried to reconcile their differences. An acceptable level of intercoder reliability varies considerably from 70 percent to 100 percent²².

There is not much guidance in the literature for researchers concerned with establishing reliable coding of in-depth

semi-structured interview transcripts⁵. Furthermore, for some researchers the inter-rater reliability is ineffective for helping to ensure reliable qualitative research³⁹ because of the problem involving utilization⁵, not producing theory-free knowledge by the researchers¹⁵, no agreement on acceptable level of inter-coder reality in the literature⁷ and rejecting reliability as an appropriate criterion for judging the rigor of qualitative research. Despite all of these arguments and debates, in the present study, the researchers chose to use interrater reliability since they are equally capable coders, they have been working with the interpretative paradigm for more than 5 years and to minimize all challenges by using all opportunities when they were in the same location to meet and work through transcripts and discussing the code definitions.

Trustworthiness/credibility

Guba and Lincoln (1982) posit that trustworthiness practice rather than currency and credibility should be applied to qualitative research. This study applies the following strategies: detailed/thick description, purposive sampling, prolonged engagement, member checking, and researcher triangulation. Approval was obtained for the study from Hacettepe University Ethical Commission. Participants were asked to fill consent form. We used nicknames, rather than their real names, for the participants to protect their identity.

Our researcher self-reflexivity

Self-reflexivity refers to the careful consideration of the ways in which researchers' past experiences, points of view, and roles impact these same researchers' interactions with, and interpretations of, the research scene⁴⁰. We, as the two researchers who teach qualitative research course at the university and work as instructors in qualitative research workshops, are aware of the fact that our self-reflexivity is significant while we conduct our research.

For example, some of the participants were our students either

in our classes or workshops. We logged our self-reflexivity throughout the research process in order to recognise this fact's potential impacts on our research and to be able to take necessary measures to prevent these impacts if necessary. We highlighted our researcher identity while tried to exclude our lecturer identity in

sciences, we adopted yin-yang metaphor. We do not have a perspective that absolutely excludes qualitative and

these interviews. We underlined that the research aims to learn experiences and challenges rather than to assess the level of knowledge, and to find solutions to them in our interviews and voluntary participant form. Moreover, considering existing positivist resistance to the qualitative research in sports

quantitative research approaches from each other yet considers their advantages.

FINDINGS

We present findings, which were obtained from data analysis, under four themes: (1) Dominant structure of sports sciences and academy, (2) Challenges experienced in learning qualitative research and solution strategies: books and articles, qualitative course/class/workshop, learning groups/friends, qualitative research

expert/supervisor, (3) Challenges experienced in the application of qualitative research and solution strategies: research question, data collection, using a theory, research design, data analysis, research report, researcher's role and (4) qualitative research achievements (Table 2).

Table 2: Table of themes obtained from data analysis

4 themes emerged from data			
1.Dominant structure of sports sciences and academy,	2.Challenges experienced in learning qualitative research and solution strategies - books and articles - qualitative course/class/workshop - learning groups/friends, - qualitative research expert/supervisor	3.Challenges experienced in the application of qualitative research and solution strategies - research question - data collection - using a theory - research design - data analysis - research report - researcher's role	4.Qualitative research achievements

Theme 1: Dominant structure of sports sciences and academy

Findings show that dominant structure of positivist paradigm in sports sciences and quantitative approach have a negative role in qualitative research learning. Sports Sciences undergraduate education is

mostly based on a positivist paradigm, as a result; almost all graduate students become positivist that fact may lead many participants to experience various challenges. Participants' common comment about the qualitative research is that they, as a researcher/student with a quantitative research approach, have

challenges in understanding qualitative research mentality. This difficulty means having problems in understanding the philosophy of qualitative research for Ali, a Ph.D. candidate in sports management programme while it is related to integrate the more visible theory of qualitative research into research in the case of Özge who completed her Ph.D. in physical education and sports:

Understanding the philosophy of qualitative research is difficult for someone from quantitative tradition. (Ali)

First of all, we do not have such a background. We are not used to having a theoretical framework in our articles. Of course, a theoretical framework can be used yet I have no experience in integrating the framework into the article. I think the integration is a difficult task. (Özge)

The comment of Esin, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport, on a difference in the qualitative and quantitative way of thinking points also to the reason for challenges that participants experienced: *Probably, my thinking is too much influenced by quantitative way of thinking. There is a qualitative way of thinking since it has its own philosophy and I had, still, have difficulties in having comprehensive knowledge of it. What I mean by quantitative way of thinking is that thinking too much statistics and not delving into reasons for a problem. We had a scientific research style, which is in harmony with this way of thinking, and as a result, we asked superficial research questions. Thus, I had challenges in questioning qualitative research problem in a deeper way.*

Given the multidisciplinary structure of sports sciences, graduate programmes have students from other academic fields. The five participants of this study completed their under/graduate education in other departments of humanities (psychology, sociology, philosophy etc.), for example; Derya, a Ph.D. candidate in sport psychology and graduated in

philosophy department, notes qualitative research learning is relatively easy for them since they had experience with different paradigms and qualitative approaches in their undergraduate education: *It seemed relatively familiar to me maybe for my philosophy background and I felt I was swimming in a known zone. No, there was no such moment. I have been always interested in these approaches. I already knew these names. I built this knowledge through them.*

One of the main arguments of situated learning is about learning is built upon previous learnings. Moreover, learning takes place in context. The context of students that completed and/or continue their graduate education in sports sciences is surrounded with a positivist approach. This context can be the explanation for students' challenges in learning qualitative research. In fact, Serhan, a Ph.D. candidate, says he easily learned the part on similarities between qualitative and quantitative research approaches: *The parts that I easily learned are choosing the working group and data collection tools because these parts are similar to quantitative research, and our previous learnings support this learning. These are relatively concrete parts and easier to learn than abstract concepts.*

Another reflection of the dominant structure of sports sciences and academy, which is quantitative, is observed in platforms that participants present their studies. Gönül, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport, expresses she is told, in scientific events, that statistics are more valuable in this field and she should use these statistics. She also explains the reason as follows: *Based on all academic events such as seminars, congress, workshop etc., which I attended, and all publications, which I read; I observe that the quantitative research is the dominant method in our country.* Furthermore, as Salih, a Ph.D. candidate in sports psychology, foregrounds that there are a few researchers who value qualitative

research method, consider it a scientific method. Thus, the following case may occur as İzel, a Ph.D. candidate in sports management, experienced: *It is unpleasant to defend methodology rather than thesis itself since supervisors or committee members do not have knowledge and experience with it.*

We see that the dominant positivist structure in sports sciences constitutes an important background knowledge on understanding challenges that graduate students, whom we interviewed, experience in qualitative research learning. Therefore, we decided to build on challenges experienced in learning qualitative research and solution strategies, which is the following theme, we have presented in under this theme.

Theme 2: Challenges experienced in learning qualitative research and solution strategies

Analysis results demonstrate that there is a close relationship between participants' challenges in learning qualitative research and their learning resources. While challenges and solution strategies in learning qualitative research may vary according to participants' fields, opportunities and experience, main learning resources include articles and books about qualitative research, supervisors, friends with qualitative research experience, learning groups for qualitative research learning, qualitative research expert, qualitative research courses, and relevant workshops. It is observed that there is a relationship between these learning resources' positive impacts on students' learning providing and their quality, and easy access to them. In this regard, students whom we interviewed state that they have experienced serious challenges in learning resources.

Books and articles

Books and articles are learning resources for qualitative research learning but the following facts are about the difficulties in

this field: limited resources and low-quality Turkish materials, lack of qualitative research books about sports sciences, and existing materials include mainly theory. The main problem that participants, especially who completed their undergraduate and graduate education in Turkish and have no abroad experience, qualified materials are in foreign languages. According to Esin and Serhan, this difficulty increases when it is a field that has a strong philosophical background and thick theory, in this case, qualitative research:

I had sometimes difficulties in understanding while reading materials in other languages because learning qualitative research, which is already difficult, in another language is more difficult. (Esin)

Qualitative research involves philosophy due to its nature. Therefore, theories, paradigms, positivist and post-positivist schools are difficult topics even when we read them in Turkish. These topics become more difficult when we read them in a foreign language and try to understand. (Serhan)

Many important books about qualitative research were translated into Turkish now. However, some participants say translation problems in these materials may cause challenges resulted from the importance of the use of language in qualitative research: *I am trying to understand theoretical knowledge, which is already difficult, from a translated book that has translation problems (Mehmet); having no satisfactory Turkish version of terms in qualitative research, where the use of language is very important, is a serious problem. (Ali)*

As students underline qualitative research is not a topic that can be learned without applied exercises. In this regard, having no example and/or exercise for the applied phase of the qualitative research in books about this methodology is another difficulty that students experience: *having no example and/or exercise but the only*

explanation about the process is a weak aspect. (İzel) According to the situated learning how knowledge is acquired or built in a daily life is significant and having no examples and/or exercise for qualitative research application is a serious weak aspect particularly for those who have no chance to learn this methodology from a course or an expert. Another challenge, which is closely related to this weak aspect, is having no specific book about this field: limited qualitative research materials that are specific to our field. I think this resource should be made available in our field without any delay. (Gönül); My field is sports and I want to see how it is applied in my field. A book that explains and discusses how it is applied to the sports field would be really useful. (Derya)

As Pelin, a Ph.D. candidate in the sociology of sport notes articles about qualitative research are also often used as learning resources: *It is one of the easiest tools that I learn both theory and methodology. While understanding a 300 pages-book [requires too much], it [an article] provides both methodology and theory at the same time.* On the other hand, challenges related to the books about qualitative research are relevant also to articles. While articles are very useful for understanding theory and methodology, for learning writing style, lack of a common writing style and limited materials in Turkish and not satisfactory methodology parts in available articles are challenges in this regard.

Qualitative course/class/workshop

There is an increase in qualitative research course at the graduate level in Turkey. However, qualitative research courses in sports sciences graduate education are too limited and only some of the participants had a chance to attend these courses. Besides, there are classes and workshops organised by lecturers from different academic disciplines. Particularly, courses are an important learning resource for graduate students in

this study. The advantages of courses include qualitative research philosophy, language, terms and research designs.

Students express that they benefit from courses with thick exercises and qualitative research workshops more than other methods. Mete, a Ph.D. candidate in the sociology of sport, a chance to test and experience the theory in the application is one of the most efficient ways of learning: *We have been determining a research design at the beginning of the course, and a methodology to collect data and analysis in further phases of the course. For example, having finished data analysis we moved to the application of individual interview data analysis that we had collected after the relevant week. All these learnings and a chance to apply right after the week gave us an opportunity to discuss potential problems and questions, and to answer them. Therefore, I found a chance to listen, understand and apply all phases of planning research through the qualitative research design. (Mete)*

The importance of applied parts in a learning process, which Mete draws attention, is underlined by students who answer our question about how a qualitative research should be. Almost all of these students indicate that the course should be mainly an applied course and be in two semesters. With regard to the reason for this recommendation, Mehmet and Merve say that theoretical knowledge can be acquired from various resources at any time, as result, courses with applied exercises under the guidance of an expert become more important.

I would do more applied exercises in this course, which is designed in two parts namely theory for 4 months and applied exercises for 4 months because 4 months might be too short a qualitative research. Theoretical knowledge can be accessed at any time. If problems that could occur in the application part are superficially are studied the methodologic knowledge loses its importance, too. (Mehmet)

I think it will be more useful for students if the course is given in two semesters. It will be more useful because we can access to knowledge related to the theory in books about qualitative research yet, in my opinion, the real valuable part, which we cannot learn from books, a lecturer's experience and knowledge. I think a lecturer can make more contributions to student's study in its analysis, interpretation and reporting phases through his/her experience and applied parts will be strengthened. (Merve)

The comments of Mehmet and particularly of Merve on the need for a lecturer to share his/her experience demonstrate that situated learning occurs in context, learning is, in fact, a social process, and learning through social interaction (apprenticeship) within societies are important. The student must join applied exercises. This means the guidance of a full participant as underlined by many of the participants. Particularly data analysis part, which many participants such as Mete and Betül experience challenges, must be discussed through the guidance of an experienced full participant:

Because particularly data analysis part is confusing and a more difficult phase. I think the lecturer's rich experience, who is the expert on his/her topic, will be useful to students who have no experience in this phase that they most probably experience difficulties. Because it will provide an opportunity for application and discussion. (Mete)

I would prepare a course pack that will teach and support applied exercises. ... I would ask students to submit a term project that has analysis only. (Betül)

Learning groups/friends

Some of the participants are a member of social media and internet based qualitative research groups. These tools have some advantages such as acquire knowledge in a short period, learning from experience, and arousing curiosity: *Social media is efficient to share or acquire pop-*

knowledge. It might be useful also for realising the need for more knowledge or arousing curiosity. (Mete); It [digital platforms] indicates that other people have similar or totally different experiences and ideas, and gives an idea about potential problems in learning, and sheds light on solutions. (Gönül)

Participants, who have a qualitative researcher in their circle, post solution based messages to instant questions. A limited number of qualitative researchers, however, shows this learning tool is applicable to limited people only. Friends can be an important support in such challenging learning process: *It was not only me but everyone has similar problems, yes we realised this fact when we (to some extent like in a therapy) confessed that "it is a protracted process."; I share my analysis questions, works on the ground, in other words, everything with my friend and ask an advice. I say, for example, "I cannot do it and how should I do it?" my 15-year-old interviewee does not speak talk to and what can I do now. (Pelin)*

Qualitative research expert/supervisor

While participants whose supervisors are qualitative research experts state the most efficient learning resource for them is their supervisors, other participants indicate that they get support of their lecturers/friends in examining other materials about their own research: *They are like 112 that is emergency call centres because it is a research method that experience is very important, as a result, there is need to call them in every urgent case. (Esin); When an academic or a supervisor with such experience talks and advises for five minutes, s/he solves a problem that is in my mind for hours. (Mete)*

As expressed by Esin, a Ph.D. candidate in gender and sports, entering into this field with a supervisor's guidance is an efficient method to gain knowledge and improve skills as in the case of an newcomer-full participant relationship: *For*

me the most efficient learning tool was entering into the field and exchanging point of views with my supervisor because things do not follow a path as explained in books. You may reach a totally different destination or point than your original plan and the main direction of your research needs to be changed. Having a supervisor's eye on your research and guidance is an efficient method to know where you are. (Esin)

In summary; findings demonstrate that the most efficient learning resource is a supervisor or a qualitative research expert while all participants whether they are experienced or inexperienced underline that the most efficient way to learn the qualitative research is entering into the field (application). As Esin, Hale and İzel highlight the qualitative research is learned through experience: *A qualitative research is learned through experience, I did experience it. (Esin); I learn while I apply it. (Hale); The most efficient way for me is to learn and apply it on the ground... (İzel)*. Students mean sports field, which is the common field for all students in this interviews when they say field. Sports include physical education, trainings, stadiums, tribune and sports halls. Students mean to be part of these fields with a research identity and to experience it as a researcher when they underline field and application. Mehmet, a graduate student in sociology of sport, describes being involved in field's practice in an efficient way: *It is a process that cannot be completely learned without extra effort as in the case of swimming and cycling, which may seem simple in theory but cannot be learned with no effort. (Mehmet)* The following theme presents challenges experienced in the application of qualitative research and solution strategies, in other words, is about involving in field's practice.

Theme 3: Challenges experienced in the application of qualitative research and solution strategies

All graduate students with a qualitative research practice in the past, whom we interviewed, state that they experienced various challenges in the past and still experience challenges in the application phase of the qualitative research. Some of these challenges are listed as follows: not being able to formulate a qualitative research problem/question, not being able to collect thick and rich data, not being able to benefit from theory in research process, not being able to determine a research design, not being able to adopt a path in qualitative data analysis, not being able to build a structure in writing process, and not being able to act in accordance with a qualitative researcher role.

Research question

Reasons for experiencing challenges related to the research question, as we gave details under theme 1, result from participants' quantitative background has a negative effect and potential negative effects of knowing the field too much (e.g. guessing what an answer is without obtaining the answer). Participants experience these challenges because they think that writing a right research question/problem highly affects a research process and can change the course of a process: *I spend too much time and energy until I determine my research question/problem well. If the beginning is correct, following phases advance in an easier way since they depend on the question/problem. (Mehmet); A research question/problem sentence becomes totally different at the beginning, on the ground and in an analysis. My beginning question was "how power is produced, how gender roles are produced" -and they are still in the background of my research-but it would not be one of my questions. (Pelin)*. Participants' solution strategies include using a theory as the beginning point of their research, support of a supervisor, better internalisation of the qualitative research, an attempt to adopt the qualitative research method as a philosophy of life, and reading books and relevant articles.

Data collection

Participants point out that they have challenges with access to interviewees of their research, in convincing the interviewees to talk, in planning their interviews, and in following their theme: *I had difficulty in finding a research group to collect data. If I convince them to talk, they were not happy with tape recording. When I record our interview, they were not comfortable to talk by saying "are you recording also this".* (Esin); *Conducting individual interviews is difficult. This difficulty is relatively related to the interviewee because people live in a political climate that even simple words can be used against people and produces a culture of fear, as a result, they do not want to talk.* (Gönül); *The most serious difficulty is access to people. They do not want to participate. Because they consider these interviews waste of time. Their time is important and they have a very tight schedule. Even their 15 minutes are important. They want to finish an interview immediately and to leave.* (Hale); *To get people talk to me there is a need for a plenty of time. Finding a suitable time and place for an interviewee is tiresome.* (Serhan); *Creating a focus group with students is a risk. You get lost in a topic in a minute. While the topic is physical education, the discussion may move to clothing. On the one hand, you do not want to stop them because you think I will move them back to the original topic so let them talk any issue that they feel comfortable.* (Özge). The challenges stated by the participants are basically related to the fact of talking to individuals in their natural atmosphere and asking their opinion about a phenomenon for a qualitative research while it is understood that these challenges may change according to interviewee's age, profession and social culture. Participants' solution strategies include sending transcription of interviews for interviewees' approval (member checking), informing people that they can put an end to the interview at any time they wish, being aware of their position as a

researcher and gaining experience to maintain this position, getting support of an expert, practice, and leaving it to time.

Using a theory

The challenge with using theory in different phases of a qualitative research is very often stated in our interviews. These challenges include integrating theory into data collection process, the relationship between theory and questions, and inexperience in combining theory with the research: *At the beginning, I thought about the phase of theory. I had challenges with integrating theory into the research and getting findings specifically related to the theory while I was collecting data.* (Esin); *At the beginning, it seemed that my questions had no ground. I got no smell of theory.* (Salih); *At the beginning, I had difficulty in collating data and theoretical framework. Because I inclined to think these two as separate [concepts].* (Mete) Quotations shows that participants are aware of the significance of theory for a qualitative research, therefore, they adopt important solution strategies: support of a supervisor, more reading/writing about the theory they need, pilot interviews so that theory can be added to the research in data collection process, and learning the framework well before go to the field.

Research design

The research design is the most serious challenge that participants experience. They do not know criteria and time for determining a design. As Gönül, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport, draws attention *a research design is like a roadmap and when you choose a wrong path, you do not reach the point that you plan.* Mete, another Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport, makes comments on the importance of choosing a right path in the context of a process: *When I started my first qualitative research, determining the research design was difficult. Because a research design changes all planning and phases. For example, individual interview questions should be based on a different ground than a case study*

research. Solution strategies include support of a supervisor, reading books about methodology and approaches in similar research.

Data analysis

Interviews reveal that data analysis is one of the most difficult phases of learning and application of a qualitative research. Coding and determining themes, limitations of analysis within the framework of a theory, a transcription that takes time are some of the challenges listed by the participants. The transcription of data, which is the first phase of data analysis, is the first challenge experienced by students because it takes too much time as expressed by Salih: *It takes too much time. At the beginning, the transcription of an approximately 40 minutes-interview took 7-8 hours.*

In the interviews, some of the participants, such as Serhan and Özge, very often indicate the difficulty in reaching a systematic whole from thick data: *Reaching a whole form an immense data store is really difficult. (Serhan); I still have serious problems with the analysis. For me, it is not clear. There is a theoretical knowledge yet no example. I experience serious difficulties in combining these two in my mind. After the separation part, synthesising of them is difficult for me. (Özge)* One of the reasons for this challenge is the lack of an understandable instruction that covers also data analysis in learning resources that students benefit from. As Özge and Salih state that there is an ambiguous instruction on data analysis: *For me, it is not clear enough. There is a theoretical knowledge yet no example. I experience serious difficulties in combining these two in my mind. (Özge); It was like a puzzle. (Salih).* Another reason for the challenge in data analysis is that data analysis has a difficulty that is specific to itself and has a thick data set: *Data are speeches, which are in page after page, in a qualitative research not in figures as in a quantitative research. There is no computer and all data need to be*

read one by one. It takes too much time and requires too much concentration (Mete). Solution strategies include approaching to analysis from a theoretical perspective, carrying out the first analysis with a supervisor, starting the transcription of data while they are being collected so that framework can be determined earlier.

Research report

Participants' challenges with the research report are listed as follows: not being able to use writing in an efficient way, not being able to build a style to present findings, not knowing how to elaborate themes, not being able to synthesise findings and a theory. In addition to Esin and Özge, other participants underline the importance of having an excellent command of writing style and of building a style since the qualitative research has a different language and style: *I think the qualitative research as a more literary and philosophical writing style. Sometimes, it is like writing a story. There is a need for a style for the whole research structure. It is like working hard to find the best literary work to meet the expectation of this structure through writing style. Therefore, I experience difficulties with thinking too much to find the most efficient writing style for my data (Esin).* *I think you should have a very influential writing style to write a qualitative research article. You should be able to use Turkish very well and build an efficient structure. When I build a structure I always feel as if something is missing in my research and say I should add this or that. Determining the borders of research is too difficult. (Özge).* With regard, the solution strategies, support of a supervisor, reading a qualified article and writing in a constant manner are used very often.

Researcher's role

Participants, state that they experience challenges with a researcher role. For example, they, as Mehmet a graduate student in sociology of sport, do not know where to stop while they collect data and analyse these data. Similarly, they, as

Özge a Ph.D. candidate in physical education, cannot act in accordance with a researcher's objectivity. This difficulty becomes more important with regard to a researcher's relationship with his/her field, actors and topic. Mehmet and Özge may experience challenges with their researcher identities in the field since they are writing their thesis on topics which were part of their identity in the past (fan groups and physical education teachers' group):

I try to keep a balance between my identity as a researcher and my individual/personal identity while I conduct interviews with people in the field. When I talk to a fan s/he may say "you already know it" due to my identity as a fan. As a result, I may get unsatisfactory answers and experience challenges. (Mehmet)

Participants in my thesis were physical education teachers. I had 8 years of experience in this sector since I worked for a private school. I knew what can be done and what cannot be done there. Given this experience, I was thinking "it can be done but why was not this teacher doing it", I knew s/he could over a problem when it occurred because it was something within a teacher's capacity. Yet, the teacher does not want to overcome it. Knowing this fact and not intervening was incredibly difficult for me. In other words, being an outsider looking in this issue. (Özge)

With regard to these challenges, while Mehmet was trying to keep a balance between his identities, Özge adopted a strategy of talking to experienced lecturers and teachers: *In the process of time, I accepted that s/he is a teacher and this is his/her attitude of mind. I need to represent the attitude of mind in question and his/her process. In other words, there is no ideal situation here. This is his/her lifestyle, teaching and professional attitude. I accepted this fact after a tough struggle. Yet, in order to overcome this challenge, I talked to experienced lecturers in a qualitative research. I was also in dialogue with other teachers who conduct and apply*

a qualitative research. I shared my experience with them and said I faced this and that, and what should I do now. Talking to them was really helpful for me. (Özge)

Another challenge experienced by participants is that drawing borders between an interviewee and themselves in individual interviews. Özge, a Ph.D. candidate, describes her experience in this regard well: *For example, a female boxer with whom I was conducting an interview told that she could attend higher education for her husband's pressure. She wanted to attend physical education department but her husband did not allow her. She regrets that she could not attend education. She started to crying. I did not know whether I should say something to console her or to take a stance that asks her to turn back to the interview. On the one hand, there was an absolutely human situation, but on the other hand, there was the interview. I remained silent. At that moment, I thought my stance towards this research. Esin's solution is controlling her stance through a secret control mechanism in the course of an interview: I started to think that if this or similar problem occur I should keep a balanced attitude neither too intimate nor too distant. In other words, it should be kept in proportion. Otherwise, an interview may turn into a chat or an employment interview. A secret control mechanism to have an absolute control over the situation but without making it too visible becomes highly important.*

In summary; all participants, who are from different graduate education programmes in sports sciences, experience various challenges in different phases of a qualitative research. Data collection takes too much time in a qualitative research and the quality of relationship with actors in the field are important determinants of these challenges. Most of the solution strategies to overcome these challenges are same with the strategies presented in the previous theme. Participants use same mostly strategies in this regard. The main

reason for continuing with the qualitative research learning is explained under the achievements of a qualitative research that is the topic of the following theme.

Theme 4: Qualitative research achievements

In addition to challenges experienced in learning and application of a qualitative research, it has also special achievements. Its achievements include being a critical/questioning researcher, understanding the importance of field, experience and theory. For example, Mete, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport, says that his researcher identity is shaped in the context of his position in his life: *I can say that my researcher identity equipped me with the following skills and achievements; my sport branch, my own position in this sport branch, my place in and contribution to gender, investigating, examining and questioning power relations-once again-from a different perspective, and a critical approach. Of course, my researcher identity is a result of the qualitative research.* Serhan, a Ph.D. candidate in physical education, makes a similar comment in the context of a basic feature of the qualitative research: *I had a chance to accomplish both prolonged engagement and acquire a deeper knowledge through a qualitative research. I was free from population-sample concerns and tried to focus on the facts of my working group. As a result, I felt as a real researcher. Yes, it was more challenging but I felt that I was really conducting research rather than a quasi-research. It was the most important achievement. ... When the following question was asked: "What was a data collection tool?". The answer was: the tool is the researcher himself/herself. In fact, this answer reflects a qualitative research's achievement. It enabled me to feel as a real researcher in my research.*

It seems that the achievements of learning and application of a qualitative research are closely related to the qualitative research's basic features and also

participants' researcher mind shaped by the qualitative paradigm. Students, who get a chance to be in the field and to enter into people's daily life, begin to consider the qualitative research as a way to understand life rather than a research approach only: *When I started to learn the qualitative research, it was a scientific research method only. However, in the process of time, it has changed: it was not only a research method but a perspective and a way to understand the world now. The qualitative research method turned into a tool to understand, evaluate, interpret, and have a critical approach to the world, the society or community that I am living, and myself as an actor/agent. All these achievements are inextricably linked with the theoretical knowledge and the questioning approach of a qualitative research and particularly of humanities. Thus, I can say that the qualitative research method is a worldview, which constantly moves and changes, for me.* (Mete). The qualitative research's approach to knowledge building and a holistic approach to perceiving whole human life are part of İzel and Serhan's reasons for being a way to understand and give meaning to the world:

Planning a qualitative research is similar to listening to people's stories. While I am listening to these stories, I try to understand people and it gives happiness. In other words, it was an approach in the past but became the most pleasant way to understand and to give meaning to the world for me now. (İzel)

For me, the qualitative research, in fact, is a point of view to build knowledge, a way to understand the world since knowledge cannot be thought without an individual's culture, society, and personal qualities. (Serhan)

Another achievement of the qualitative research is that participants get a chance

to learn and discover their research fields as a whole. The reasons for this learning and discovery include making differences visible as stated by İzel, and ability to see more than what is expected as Salih expresses: *It is not the world where only I am in the centre but I can interact with other people. Sometimes it makes me happy. Sometimes, it makes me sad. Making their experience more visible is very important.* (İzel); *I think the most important achievement is that I can see the life of individuals is much more than I wondered and predicted, and I can meet with them in this line.* (Salih). As Mete underlines; ability to see and notice differences, what is unseen can be accomplished through qualitative research data collection techniques and theory: *For example, a qualitative research helps you to see and notice different perspectives and how knowledge is perceived by other people through its data collection tools and theory even if you conduct your research about topic that is not new to you but a familiar one. Similarly, it helps a researcher to discover a field once again though s/he thinks that s/he knows it.*

DISCUSSION

A qualitative research is a never-ending adventure. I am still learning and have still challenges in all phases. (Pelin)

As Pelin, a Ph.D. candidate in sociology of sport and experienced with the qualitative research states that a qualitative research process is a learning adventure full with challenges for experienced or inexperienced graduate students in sports sciences. We think that the first and the fourth theme can constitute background knowledge about understanding students' challenges and solution strategies. It seems that there is a close relationship between challenges in learning, application process of a qualitative research and students' researcher mind that is shaped by the dominant quantitative research paradigm in sports sciences, and also conflict between qualitative and quantitative paradigms in many academic events. Students experience many

challenges in learning and application exercises of a qualitative research when they conduct their research with a quantitative mind. Because, unlike a quantitative research process, the qualitative research process does not have a unified methodology of which borders are pre-determined. On the other hand, students become aware of these challenges and experience them with this fact in their mind due to an achievement of a qualitative research process. This achievement becomes more meaningful in this context. Students begin to consider themselves a real researcher through a qualitative research process. They take a path to understanding their life through a qualitative researcher identity and accept this path with great pleasure.

Main learning resources of the participants of this research include articles and books about qualitative research, supervisors, friends with qualitative research experience, learning groups for qualitative research learning, qualitative research expert, qualitative research courses, and relevant workshops. While participants, whose supervisor is a qualitative research expert, note that the most efficient learning resource is their supervisors, other participants state reading relevant materials and support of their friends/lecturers. As Lave and Wenger, in the situated learning theory, explain that participants -who are at the level of "apprenticeship" in a qualitative research model- state the most efficient way to acquire knowledge is cognitive apprenticeship method that is getting the support of friends/lecturers with experience in this process, "full participant". Similarly, Wang (2013) highlights that when Ph.D. candidates receive feedbacks from their supervisors and talk to their supervisors on a regular basis, they get to benefit from the process. Wang, in the same work, indicates that the more materials about qualitative research model students read, the more motivation they get to understand the qualitative research discourse and more knowledge

about the qualitative research they acquire.

In addition, participants express that they get to benefit from courses with thick exercises and qualitative research workshops. Levit et al (2013) aim to establish a research team composed of students who are expected to design and apply a research through a qualitative method. Their aim is based on a hypothesis that a qualitative research can be learned only through experience. According to the results of their study; students learn the qualitative research method in a better way when they actively participate in a research, their critical thinking skills are more encouraged through self-reflexivity, and they take responsibility for their own learning. Another important finding of this research is that while participants indicate that the support of a supervisor or a qualitative research expert is the most efficient way to learn, they (experienced or inexperienced participants) underline that entering into the field (application phase) is also efficient. In this regard, Ersoy's work (2015) sheds light on this aspect. Ersoy (2015) thinks that when Ph.D. students learn a qualitative research method even though in an incorrect way they gain a unique experience. Ersoy also states that students' reflexive log gives detailed information about how they experience and learn a qualitative research process. All graduate students with a qualitative research practice, whom we interviewed, point out that they experience various challenges in the course of the research process. Some of these challenges are listed as follows: not being able to formulate a qualitative research problem/question, not being able to collect thick and rich data, not being able to benefit from theory in research process, not being able to determine a research design, not being able to adopt a path in qualitative data analysis, not being able to build a structure in writing process, and not being able to act in accordance with a qualitative researcher role. While some

works present similar results, some other works^{26,41,34} underline also solutions. The works about these issues draw attention to the importance of a suitable atmosphere that lecturers and students can understand epistemological changes, can reflect researchers' prejudice, and can have trustworthy and cooperative dialogues about social power and othering process^{4,27}. On the other hand, Levit et al (2013) write that qualitative research courses should begin with epistemology discussion since students are not aware of the fact that how their epistemological choice affects their research method. Maypole and Davis (2001) highlight that students' autonomous perception increases and researcher identity are improved when they participate in research process and discussion about these topics in class.

Another important finding of this research is that in addition to the challenges experienced in learning and application of a qualitative research, it has also special achievements. Experience with a qualitative research enables participants to be a critical/questioning researcher and to understand the importance of field, experience and theory. Ersoy (2015) highlights that a researcher log contributes to students' learning from their experience, to discover their researcher identity and themselves. Students discover their personal skills and also get a chance to realise their prejudice, to be a self-critical and to realise the borders of personal skills.

CONCLUSION

One of the most efficient methods, which facilitates learning of students and involving students in a qualitative research, is to follow a systematic research (which is also a pedagogy) without ignoring their positivist lens. Yet, to some extent, this systematic research can shape this lens according to some measures. A systematic research with measures, in other words, facilitates learning with guidance and application. Another important solution for challenges

experienced in a qualitative research is time. Researchers need plenty of time to be able to use theory, to be able to present in the field, to be able to realise a problem in the field, to be able to collective credible data, and to be able to analyse rich data. Therefore, it seems that in order to have a qualified qualitative research and thesis, there is need for a satisfactorily long time period for learning and efficient learning resources should be used by students. Furthermore, including qualitative paradigm in undergraduate education is an important recommendation. In the light of these findings, we think that there is a teacher-student/newcomer- full participant relationship based on a situated learning model and a learning group composed of researchers with different experience levels with a

qualitative research can be a learning resource. As the participants, in the context of their experience, underline that a qualitative research is a way of understanding accompanied by a learning adventure which gets support of- particularly- supervisors and experienced experts rather than a technical process. In conclusion, this research reveals how researchers, who have experience with qualitative research learning and application process in Sports Sciences, perceive a qualitative research learning and application process, and give the meaning to this process, and also what are the challenges and solutions for these challenges. We think this research will shed light on the teaching process of a qualitative research and to the quality of a qualitative research model.

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