

Narrative Analysis Example

Study Focus and Research Question

This narrative analysis explores a student's transition experience during the first semester of university. The key research question guiding the analysis is: How does the student construct meaning and identity through challenges faced during the university transition? Narrative analysis is appropriate because it allows the researcher to examine the sequence of events, emotions, and identity development within an individual narrative, providing a holistic understanding of lived experience.

Narrative Summary (Participant Story)

The participant, "Amina" (pseudonym), described arriving at university feeling uncertain and disconnected. She explained that she stayed quiet in class due to fear of judgment and often compared herself to other students who appeared confident and prepared. Amina reported that after failing her first quiz, she considered leaving the program because she felt she did not belong. However, she identified a turning point when a lecturer encouraged her to attend academic support sessions and reminded her that early setbacks are part of learning. Over time, Amina began using study groups, improved her time management, and rebuilt confidence. She concluded her story by stating that she still struggles sometimes, but now views herself as capable and resilient.

Narrative Structure and Arc

The narrative follows a clear structure that reflects a progression from struggle to growth. The beginning of the story emphasizes uncertainty and isolation, the middle presents a crisis moment (academic failure), and the later sections highlight support and adaptation. The

narrative arc moves from fear and withdrawal toward belonging and persistence, suggesting that the participant's identity shifts from "outsider" to "emerging learner."

Coding and Key Themes

The narrative was coded inductively by identifying recurring meaning units and grouping them into patterns or themes. Key codes included: *fear of embarrassment, silence in class, academic shock, self-doubt, turning point, external encouragement, help-seeking behavior, peer support, confidence rebuilding, and resilience*. These codes were categorized into three main themes:

1. **Academic insecurity and self-doubt:** Amina's fear of appearing unprepared shaped her early behavior, resulting in silence, avoidance, and reduced participation.
2. **Support as a turning point:** Encouragement from a lecturer and access to structured support services created a shift in how the participant interpreted failure.
3. **Identity formation through persistence:** The participant reconstructed identity through coping strategies, peer learning, and improved self-efficacy, leading to a more stable sense of belonging.

Interpretation and Meaning-Making

The analysis shows that the participant's experience was not defined solely by academic difficulty, but by how she interpreted that difficulty. Initially, failure was framed as evidence of not belonging. After receiving support, failure was reframed as part of development, enabling adaptive behavior and confidence growth. The narrative indicates that identity formation is shaped through meaning-making, where internal beliefs and external validation influence decisions and persistence. Overall, the participant's story demonstrates that resilience

is not simply an individual trait but emerges through supportive relationships, academic resources, and a shifting interpretation of personal capability.

Conclusion

This narrative analysis suggests that student transition challenges can trigger identity disruption, but structured support may promote positive identity reconstruction and persistence. The participant's narrative highlights the importance of belonging cues, mentorship, and help-seeking opportunities in shaping academic confidence. These findings provide insight into how institutions can support students facing adjustment difficulties through early academic intervention and peer-based learning environments.