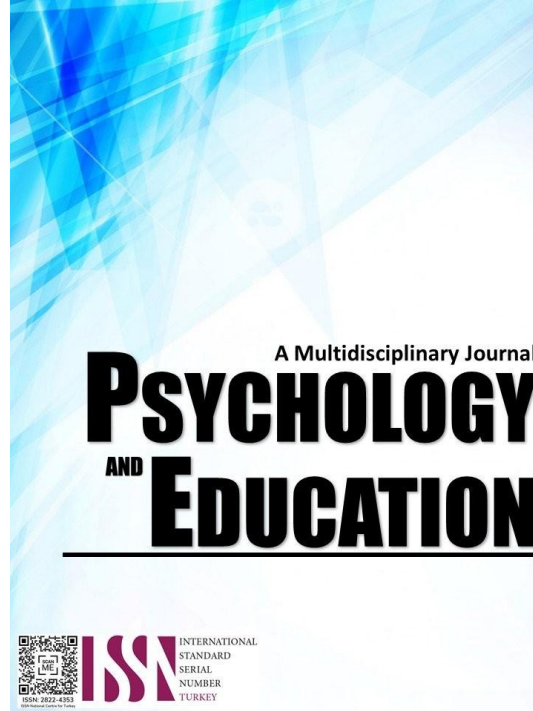


FROWNED ON: RAISING AN EYEBROW IN RESEARCH PARTICIPATION OF NURSES



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Frowned On: Raising an Eyebrow in Research Participation of Nurses

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Abstract

Not all nurses are averse to participating in a study. The primary purpose of this novel type of study is grounded in the two themes that emerged from this study on why nurses are reluctant to participate in studies. The themes are the following: opinions and reasons why nurses do not want to participate in a study, and motivating factors that might convince them to join the study. The study employed a qualitative research method, utilizing unstructured interviews grounded in Prospect Theory and Incentive Theory. Purposive and Convenience sampling were used to identify participants who used Facebook as a means of communication. The study included 10 participants from the provinces of La Union and Pangasinan, all of whom were nurses working in various fields and met the criteria to be research subjects. Their responses were analyzed through a Sartrean phenomenological-existential lens. The study revealed that there are various reasons why nurses would not like to become participants in studies such as lack of time, lack of benefits, concerns for privacy, ethics, confidentiality, improper explanation of the study's goals and how researchers should improve their ways in convincing would-be participants to join their study such as explaining the study's purpose, maintaining confidentiality and compensation. This study recommends further expansion of the research in the local context to explore other aspects of why participating in research is not a pressing matter for others.

Keywords: *reasons, refusal, research, convincing, motivation*

Introduction

Nurses are great researchers, and there is no doubt about it. However, nurses are adamant about becoming participants in the study, especially when their personal lives and experiences are involved. They are not keen on participating in a study when asked to share their thoughts about themselves.

Continuing research is essential for ensuring the safe delivery of high-quality nursing care (Scala et al., 2016). The practice of nurses engaging in research has a long-standing history. It is distinctive due to the unique perspectives gained from providing care that is both personal and often extended over significant periods (Albert, 2016). While nurses recognize the significance of evidence-based practice, various obstacles hinder individual nurses from participating in research activities (Scala et al., 2016; Albert, 2016; Hagan & Walden, 2017; Morrison et al., 2021).

Working as a nurse in the healthcare setting and concurrently engaging in research could be very challenging. Workload, organizational support, time, and research knowledge have been identified as influencing factors in research participation (Brown et al., 2009). Some nurses lack the skills to evaluate published research, which hinders their ability to conduct research and ultimately impairs the transformation of patient care (Bahadori et al., 2016).

The purpose of the study was to investigate how developmental research influences nurses' participation in research, given the increasing acknowledgment of its significance in achieving optimal practice outcomes. Identified barriers to comprehending nurses' engagement in studies include a lack of clarity regarding key topics, the unavailability of suitable tools, and the need to consider context. This research aims to gain insight into the experiences of clinical nurses, the nature of their involvement, and the contextual factors that may either hinder or encourage their participation in research (Chen et al., 2019).

A cross-sectional survey involving nurses and other healthcare professionals faced challenges in achieving an adequate response rate. The purpose of the study was to examine staffing levels, work conditions, and well-being in Italian hospitals, and to associate these results with patient outcomes. Despite implementing strategies suggested by Sammut et al. (2021), there was minimal improvement. Nurses reported that they were unable to spare additional time during their shifts to complete paperwork or participate in surveys, even if the task required only 10-20 minutes. They also felt that finishing these surveys outside of work hours would be unwelcome, as the study was considered "work."

Over 70% of participants acknowledged that factors such as time, incentive, reward, research education, financial backing, and access to research professionals significantly impeded their engagement in nursing research. Over 60% of respondents cited leadership backing and institutional research resources as obstacles. Over 40% disagreed with the notion that research is not part of their responsibilities. 93% strongly disagreed or disagreed with the notion that research lacks relevance to nursing practice.

Primary challenges identified included lack of time, financial resources, support, motivation, confidence, training, and opportunities. Participants also raised concerns about the importance of research and evidence application in professional practice. Positive influences supporting research included information, training, guidance, support, resources, time, engagement, and increased awareness (Kerr & Russo, 2022).

Literature Gap

There are published studies in the Philippines regarding problems in study development and other disciplines, but none specifically address nurses' refusal to participate in studies.

The aim of this novel type of study in a Philippine setting is to explore the reasons why nurses from various fields refuse to participate in studies. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the challenges participants face in being part of a study.

Research Objectives

This study focuses on the opinions of nurses regarding why they would not participate in the study and, if they did, what would motivate them to participate. The central question asked of these nurses is: "What might be the possible reasons why you would not want to be a participant in a study?"

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed Sartre's phenomenological-existential perspective, which provides theoretical-methodological support for qualitative change, ensuring that the study's design introduces a qualitative change that is not measurable, as per his 1947/2004 perspective. This study aims to understand the perspectives of nurses who refuse to participate in the study, which aligns with Sartre's philosophy of existence and existential psychology due to its focus on people's concrete experiences. Feijoo and Mattar (2014) argue that the first task involves philosophical reflection, while the second focuses on the materiality of existence in its concrete reality. Sartre's phenomenological study, as outlined by Benevides and Boris (2020), emphasizes the importance of understanding the human being within its contextual context.

Participants

Participants in this study include 10 nurses from various occupations in the provinces of La Union and Pangasinan. Participants who met the following criteria were chosen through a purposeful sample process and convenience sampling process: (1) should be working as a nurse regarding the type of occupation; (2) regardless of any educational attainment as a nurse; and (3) regardless of age and gender.

Instrument

This qualitative study employed unstructured online interviews with participants. Data was collected using an open-ended interview protocol, allowing participants to express their experiences freely. The researchers used probing questions that contained key questions aligned with the study's objectives. The open-ended questions were used to gather rich, descriptive data—an interview schedule with thematically grouped questions guided the conversations. Handwritten field notes and audio recordings were used to ensure accurate data collection during each face-to-face session. The study aimed to gain deeper insights from participants.

Procedure

The study received approval from the Ethics Review Board, and participants were invited to partake in interviews. The interviews took place throughout November 2024. Following the invitations, participants accepted to take part in the study, and the interviews commenced with verbal consent. Others provided their consent via messages on Facebook Messenger, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the collected information.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The interviews were conducted using Facebook Messenger, allowing participants to share their perspectives openly and ensuring professional confidentiality through video and audio calls.

The study employed informal discussions, observations, and an unstructured questionnaire to collect data from participants, providing evidence-based findings. Each interview lasted between 10 and 15 minutes, including probing questions to guarantee informed consent. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, types of interventions, selection criteria, protocols, potential risks, incentives, and confidentiality measures.

Minichiello et al. (1990) argue that unstructured interviews, unlike predetermined questions or response categories, are based on social interactions with informants, allowing for more nuanced and comprehensive research.

Punch (1998) and Patton (2002) emphasize the importance of unstructured interviews in data collection, stating that they provide a natural extension of participant observation and can provide insights into complex human behavior without restricting the research topic. Punch suggests that unstructured interviews can be employed in ongoing fieldwork, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.

Spiggle (1994) emphasizes the importance of iterative phases in research to avoid saturation. This proactive approach enables researchers to refine their research questions and methods based on preliminary findings, thereby allowing them to explore emerging patterns and themes. This approach, also known as adaptive research, enables researchers to remain receptive to new classifications as

data become available. Iteration emphasizes the need to review data and code again, improving and modifying them as new information becomes available. This iterative process ensures initial programs are based on the data and represent its subtleties.

Data Analysis

During the interviews, a phenomenological reduction was employed as a methodological tool, setting aside prior assumptions about the perspectives of nurses who declined to participate in the research and potential negative attitudes towards their experiences. According to Sartre (1936/2008), phenomenological reduction is crucial for this kind of research, as it facilitates the grasping of the meanings that participants assign to the phenomena they encounter, allowing researchers to step away from their natural attitudes—namely, perceiving the phenomenon through established concepts.

Phenomenological reduction also played a vital role in the analysis of the data obtained. The complete transcription of the interview audio was conducted, followed by a meticulous review to analyze the content and understand the experiences narrated by the research participants regarding their potential reasons for refusing to participate in the research. Sartre (1939/2013) posits that during the analysis of survey data, phenomenological reduction enables a comprehension of the investigated phenomenon and its connections with the context of human existence—specifically, the circumstances in which the phenomenon occurs—through its phenomenological description. At this stage, the researchers categorized the participants' responses into emerging themes to capture "what is presented, without altering it or neglecting the viewpoint, simply adhering to the vectors of what is revealed, following the structural mobility of the phenomenon" (Feijoo & Mattar, 2014).

By focusing on the emerging themes reflected in the participants' perspectives, the researchers subsequently documented their viewpoints in various ways. This approach starts from the phenomenon itself, which, for the researchers, "is what reveals itself, and being manifests itself to everyone in some way; thus, it has the capacity to articulate itself, allowing the researchers to achieve a level of understanding" (Sartre, 1943/2015). Consequently, the researchers organized the participants' narratives into units of meaning, tracing both the singular and universal expressions concerning their reasons for declining participation in the research. They intended to analyze and discuss these insights through a Sartrean phenomenological-existential perspective.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers employed a phenomenological approach to examine the perspectives of individuals, paying close attention to their emotions and discomfort during their narratives. The study aimed to investigate, inform, and enhance awareness, with participants providing consent and rescheduling without any pressure. Face-to-face interviews allowed for open dialogue and informed consent.

In alignment with the principles of beneficence, autonomy, and justice, the researchers selected participants fairly and established a trusting relationship. Professionalism was maintained throughout the entire process, and biases were consciously avoided to ensure equitable benefits for all participants, regardless of their levels of vulnerability.

In gathering data, the researchers prioritized anonymity by assigning participant numbers instead of using names, accurately transcribing the findings, and engaging with individuals transparently.

The study participants encountered no identifiable risks or dropout issues, and the data will be retained for five years before it is deleted. By consciously eliminating bias throughout the entire study—spanning design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation—and utilizing interviews exclusive to participants, the researchers maintained their professional integrity.

Results and Discussion

From the analyses of the data gathered from the verbalizations of the experience of the participants, two themes emerged: (1) reasons why they would not want to be participants in a study, and (2) motivations to become participants in a study.

Research is often frowned upon by many. There are reasons why nurses would not want to conduct their own study. Moreover, there are additional reasons why nurses may not want to participate in studies. This study examines the reasons why nurses from various fields do not participate in studies.

Theme 1: Avoidance (Reasons of Nurses of Their Non-Participation in Research)

This is the first theme to emerge in this study, highlighting the reasons nurses give for not wishing to participate in studies. These reasons are called "Avoidance," in which nurses tend to shy away from participating.

Lack of Time

Time is an integral part of both work and life, affecting most people. A lack of time for some activities can cause trouble, especially if a person is disorganized. For them, the nurses are always busy at work or in their personal time, which is not a luxury they can afford to give to researchers, and this is a reason for their non-participation. Protected time is also important for participants, as when they are scheduled to participate, they must dedicate themselves to being participants without any interruptions.

Participant 1 Shared:

"Time Consuming."

Participant 3 Shared:

"For me, it's time consuming and I am busy with other things."

Participant 4 Shared:

"Wala akong time."

I don't have time.

Participant 5 Shared:

"Waste of time. Mas may importanteng bagay besides research."

Waste of time. There are far more important things besides research.

Participant 6 Shared:

"Lack of time to entertain researchers."

Participant 8 Shared:

"Time consuming on my part."

Participant 9 Shared:

"I don't like to participate in research because it requires time and commitment that I am not able to afford. Busy schedules, work obligations, or personal responsibilities, these can lead to reluctance to join research studies. The researchers should acknowledge the time and effort included in participation."

Protected time is essential for hospitalists to engage in research, which can be dedicated to individual initiatives, administrative responsibilities, or divisional assistance. This structure begins with personal time and progresses through divisional, intramural, and extramural support. Advancing through this structure necessitates showcasing productivity and aligning projects with the objectives of funders. To secure extramural funding, individuals must develop specific skills, often acquired early in their careers, making it challenging for hospitalists not following an established research pathway (Elias, Sawatsky, & Ratelle, 2024).

Lack of Explanation on Research

A lack of explanation for the importance of the study to participants can be a downside for the researcher. The benefits of joining a study should be explained thoroughly to encourage participants to join. A lack of clarity may hinder the participant's willingness and interest in joining the study.

Participant 7 Shared:

"Not explaining the advantage and purpose of research and research does not have clear objectives."

Participant 1 Shared:

"It does not concern me."

Participant 2 Shared:

"Hindi ako interested sa topic ng research."

I am not interested on the topic of research.

Participant 3 Shared:

"Topic is irrelevant."

Participant 5 Shared:

"Not interested in the research. No benefit for us."

Participant 6 Shared:

"Not interested at all."

Participant 7 Shared:

"Lack of interest."

Chen et al. (2019) state that obstacles to understanding nurses' participation in studies include a lack of clarity on important topics, a shortage of relevant tools, and the need to consider context. A systematic review of research activities conducted by Lode et al. (2015) identified three main features of capacity building in clinical nursing practice: the inability to ensure research quality and standards, a lack of knowledge regarding how to enhance research capacity, culture, and teamwork, and the inability to improve and strategize the use of research.

Confidentiality Issues

Lack of confidentiality poses a significant risk when participating in a study, especially for individuals who are still employed. It might cause nurses to lose their jobs or issues arise if the confidentiality cause had been broken.

Participant 4 Shared:

"Syempre, takot ako sumali sa research lalo kapag privacy ko ang nakataya."

Of course, I'm afraid to participate in research, especially when my privacy is at stake.

Participant 6 Shared:

"Privacy."

Participant 7 Shared:

"Invasion of privacy and uncomfortable questions."

Participant 10 Shared:

"Although may issues of confidentiality kasi nurses ay nakatali sa company kaya mahirap sila i convince na sumali sa research. Buti resigned na ako. Even though there is confidentiality clause in research, mahirap talaga. Kaya mas maigi resigned na employees ang target kasi livelihood is on the line."

Although there are issues of confidentiality because nurses are tied to the company, it is difficult for me to convince them to participate in the research. It's good that I resigned. Even though there is a confidentiality clause in research, it is difficult. So, the targets are better resigned employees because their livelihood is on the line.

Participant 8 Shared:

"There are some information that I would not like to divulge."

Participant 3 Shared:

"Ayoko saguting yung ibang bagay sa research."

I don't like to answer other things in research.

Boruch and Cecil (2016) emphasize the importance of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity throughout the data gathering, analysis, and reporting processes. They emphasize the importance of removing or modifying personally identifiable information, a vital component of confidentiality, as outlined in their earlier research. Vainio (2013) emphasizes the importance of maintaining anonymity during data collection, particularly in quantitative research. While confidentiality is critical in qualitative research, maintaining the anonymity of participants is a common practice in quantitative studies. Both approaches ensure a high degree of privacy, allowing researchers to collect valuable insights from participants.

Theme 2: Ways to Motivate Participants to Join Research

This is the last theme to emerge in this study. Motivation has a significant impact on a person's decision-making process. Together with a proper explanation of the benefits of joining a study, nurses can be convinced to participate and overcome their hesitancy. A clear explanation of the study's benefits will enhance motivation among potential participants to join the research.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an integral part of research, in which participants are protected from risks and potential harm during the study. Assuring the participant of confidentiality means they are more likely to join the study.

Participant 6 Shared:

"The researcher should assume privacy in doing research."

Participant 10 Shared:

"Researchers must make other techniques in gathering participants kasi mahirap ang mag breach ng confidentiality ng property. You can be under disciplinary action."

Researchers must employ alternative techniques in gathering participants because it is difficult to maintain the confidentiality of personal information. You can be under disciplinary action.

Participant 8 Shared:

"Keep my identity anonymous.:

Participant 3 Shared:

"Hindi ilalabas ang pangalan ko lalo kung sensitive and topic."

My name will not appear, especially if it is a sensitive topic.

Avidan (2019) emphasizes the importance of adhering to ethical standards regarding anonymity and confidentiality in research. The quality of research is judged by the absence of bias and favoritism, which can be accomplished by implementing necessary measures for anonymity and confidentiality. Safeguarding participants' confidential information is advantageous for both the researchers and the participants involved. Inadequate measures for anonymity and confidentiality may result in harm to participants and affect the overall assessment of research outcomes. Grasping and applying principles of anonymity and confidentiality is essential for conducting significant research.

Nurses might face concerns about retaliation, backlash, and legal consequences from their colleagues or management. They may encounter pressure not to report incidents, fear accountability, or feel unsupported. Fears associated with management might include the risk of losing their job, receiving unfavorable performance evaluations, or encountering legal issues. Additionally, nurses may be apprehensive about reporting incidents, fearing penalties or low patient satisfaction scores. (Fu et al., 2021).

Explaining the Research Excellently

Researchers must be responsible and motivated enough to explain the details of the study to encourage participants to join. A lack of further explanation suggests that the study is not sufficiently interesting or is merely for compliance purposes. Explanation also entails the benefits of the results of the study.

Participant 7 Shared:

"Proper explanation of the benefits of the research."

Participant 6 Shared:

"Make the research quite interesting."

Participant 3 Shared:

"Explaining the topic and the benefits of the research."

Participant 4 Shared:

"The research should be beneficial. It should promote awareness, disseminate information, address concerns to society, and provide solutions."

Participant 5 Shared:

"It should be something that would benefit."

Participant 9 Shared:

"It should emphasize the objectives and benefits of the research in the society."

Participant 8 Shared:

"The research questions should be explained, brief and on point."

According to a study published in The Lancet (2009), 85% of research is either wasteful or ineffective, presenting shortcomings in the following areas: (1) Is the research topic meaningful to healthcare professionals or patients? (2) Are the design and methods used suitable? (3) Is the full report accessible? (4) Is it unbiased and relevant to clinical practice? These factors, regarding the importance, objectives, and impact of the research, should undoubtedly be considered throughout the study. Nevertheless, if the researchers lack motivation, the investigation might become unproductive, leading to a situation where the entire process is ultimately a futile endeavor (Lee, 2003).

Compensation

Compensation is also a relevant part of a study. By taking the time of the participants away from their duties, they must be duly compensated for their efforts. Not all compensations are monetary rewards. Some are in terms of food or tokens of gratitude.

Participant 9 Shared:

"Offering compensations but not totally financial is okay with me like flexibility in scheduling options before the interview."

Participant 2 Shared:

"Of course, I need compensation because I am always busy."

Luke Gelinas and colleagues (2018) developed a comprehensive approach for proposing and evaluating payment offers for study participants. They identify three ethically acceptable reasons for payment: reimbursement for personal expenses incurred, compensation for the time and difficulties associated with participation, and incentives to encourage participation and retention in research. Reimbursement should accurately reflect the participants' real out-of-pocket costs, while payment should provide fair compensation for the time-intensive and challenging efforts involved. Incentives may be necessary to ensure that studies achieve their recruitment and retention goals, and they should account for the actual out-of-pocket expenses faced by participants.

Conclusions

The study's findings suggest that several reasons may deter potential study participants from engaging in the study. Even with a thorough explanation of the study, offering compensation, and making the study appealing, the nurse's final decision to participate or decline remains a legitimate factor that must be acknowledged. Nonetheless, researchers need to be cautious regarding confidentiality and anonymity, as breaches can harm the participant's reputation or job, particularly for those who are employed, due to the risk of retaliation from their employer or complications related to non-disclosure agreements that could lead to difficulties for the participant.

The study provides the following suggestions: (1) adequately compensate participants, particularly those who are busy but took the time to contribute to the study, (2) researchers should develop alternative methods to encourage potential participants to engage in study, (3) researchers must thoroughly explain the possible outcomes of the study to attract potential participants, (4) researchers should inform participants not to mention or reveal the companies they are affiliated with or any company confidential information before the interview begins, (5) researchers need to tailor their invitations to participants, ensuring that footnotes are included, (6) although it may seem unethical, researchers should refrain from sending permission letters to the companies or employers of the potential participants to safeguard them from retaliation and breaches of non-disclosure agreements. Researchers prefer to directly invite potential participants to join the study and provide reassurances, particularly when dealing with minors. Assent should suffice as an alternative to seeking consent to protect participants and minimize the risk of harm. Additionally, (7) research organizations, ethics review boards in educational institutions or other relevant areas, and allied groups involved in research should further address these matters to promote a more organized and diverse approach to study participation.

The results of this novel type of study may serve as a baseline for future studies in the Philippine setting that are pertinent to those who plan to expand the coverage of this study. Furthermore, research enthusiasts will consider reshaping the current trends of research.

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