

Challenges in conducting qualitative research among nurse educators

Israr Ahmad,¹ Kawsar Begum,² Asmat Shaheen³

Abstract

Objective: To explore the perspectives of nurse educators regarding challenges in conducting qualitative research.

Method: The qualitative descriptive study was conducted from August 2021 to January 2022 at three private nursing colleges of Peshawar, Pakistan, including the Rufaidah Nursing College, the North West Institute of Health Sciences, and the Rehman College of Nursing. Nurse educators of either gender with at least one year of experience who were able to speak Urdu and English and had a minimum qualification of bachelor's degree in nursing were Included. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews using an interview guide. Braun and Clark 6-step method was used for analysis.

Results: Of the 26 nurse educators, 13(50%) each were males and females. Three main themes were developed; concept of qualitative research, challenges in qualitative research, and suggestions to promote qualitative research. Participants reported that conducting qualitative research was a challenging task that needed resources and collaboration.

Conclusion: Qualitative research is a complex process which requires commitment, support and skills at individual and organisational levels.

Key Words: Research, Nurses, Perspectives, Challenges, Publication, Journals.

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Introduction

Updating the nursing profession for evidenced-based practice via conducting research is extremely crucial in the current complex healthcare systems.¹ Research is a structured process of knowledge-generation, which means to search again and again either to confirm the existing knowledge or generate new information². In healthcare systems, research is the foundation for enhancing the standards towards better care.³ There are mainly two branches of research; quantitative and qualitative.⁴ Quantitative research authenticates the data, while qualitative studies involve rich data, leading to findings in the form of codes, categories and themes. In addition, qualitative research is an inductive way of exploring in-depth understanding of the specific phenomena. This type of research involves data-collection methods, such as conducting interviews, observation, note writing and reflexive journal writing.⁵

The role of nurses as a researcher in qualitative studies is crucial in maintaining standards towards caring.⁶ Nurses have to conduct researches and motivate others for the same purpose.⁷ Like other healthcare workers, nurses are

an integral part of healthcare systems and aims at improving patient care outcomes and recognise themselves as an essential and vital member of medical team. Nurses have an important role both in theory and practice for which research is essential.⁸ As a researcher, nurses are facing numerous issues in terms of participating in clinical research such, as negative attitude toward their personal research skill, shortage of time, lack of interest, lack of tools and funds.⁹ A study showed that 45.7% nurses did not perform research due to work burden. Most of the nurses during their graduation (63.5%) are unable to receive research-related knowledge and copy others' work.¹⁰ In addition, poor institutional support, ignorance towards nurses' professional development, high charges by journals, experts' requirement and lack of literature are the factors affecting nurses' contribution as researchers.¹¹ There may be multiple challenges in qualitative research, such as determining the sample size, sampling techniques, methods for data collection, reporting the findings, ethical approval, data analysing software and dedication to give proper time.¹²⁻¹⁵

The current study was planned to explore the perspectives of nurse educators regarding the challenges in conducting qualitative research.

Subjects and Methods

The qualitative descriptive study was conducted from

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^{1,2}Department of Nursing, Rufaidah Nursing College, Riphah International University, Islamabad, ³Department of Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgery, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, Pakistan.

Correspondence: Israr Ahmad. Email: israrahmadd008@gmail.com

ORCID ID. 0000-0002-0882-1765

August 2021 to January 2022 at three private nursing colleges of Peshawar, Pakistan; the Rufaidah Nursing College, the North West Institute of Health Sciences, and the Rehman College of Nursing. Approval was obtained from the Prime Foundation Pakistan and permission was taken from the administration of each of the three institutions. Written informed consent was taken from each participant. Trustworthiness was ensured through guidelines in literature.¹⁶ The sample was raised using non-probability purposive sampling technique. Those included were individuals of either gender with at least one year of experience as a nurse educator, who were able to speak Urdu and English, had a minimum qualification of Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), were registered with the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) and who were willing to participate. Those who were on leave were excluded.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews in the light of an interview guide¹⁷ after approval from three experts and pilot-testing.

Bracketing and reflexive journal techniques were used for dependability, keeping researchers' thoughts aside. About 30-60 minutes were allocated for face-to-face one-on-one interview lasting about 45 minutes, ensuring transferability. Only researcher and participants were present at the time of interview. Non-verbal expressions and main statements were also noted. One interview was conducted after data saturation to ensure saturation in all respects.

The audio interviews were transcribed for generating codes, categories and themes for possible meaning and interpretation of the participants' perspectives in the form of words. Braun and Clark 6-step model was used for analysing data.¹⁸ Data was coded for triangulation. Outliers were excluded by negative analysis. Methods, transcription and findings were rechecked by two experts to ensure peer briefing for validity

Results

Of the 45 nurse educators approached, 26(58%) participated; 13(50%) males and 13(50%) females. Of them, 7(26.9%) had published research to their credit (Table 1).

Data led to the generation of 3 main themes and 8 categories (Table 2).

The first main theme was 'concept of qualitative research', which had 3 categories. The first category, 'basics of qualitative research', consisted of codes, such as experiences, challenging, shows subjective feelings, storytelling, noting non-verbal communication and data

Table-1: Demographic characteristics.

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	13	50 %
	Female	13	50 %
Educational Level			
PhD	Nursing	01	3.8 %
Master	Nursing	05	19.2 %
Bachelor	Nursing	20	76.9 %
Specialty	Post Basic	14	53.8 %
	Specialization		
Having Publications	Research Journals	07	26.9 %

Table-2: Emerging themes, categories and codes related to challenges faced by nurse educators in conducting qualitative research.

Theme	Categories
Concept of Qualitative Research	Basics of Qualitative Research Qualitative research and Nursing Ability to Conduct Qualitative Research
Challenges in Qualitative Research	Individual Problems Organizational Problems Problems as Type of Research
Suggestions to Promote Qualitative Research	Researcher's Errands Institutional Responsibilities

in audio or video form. Participant 10 described: '*I think qualitative researches are information in detail form about a problem which is very difficult to analyse.*' Participant 02 said: '*The information in qualitative research is subjective, it is what a person has something in his mind and the researchers record that information.*' The second category, 'qualitative research and nursing', revealed ideas; caring humans, always with patient, promotes evidence-based practice, learns from experiences, innovation theory and practice, in-depth understanding of phenomena, rich data, new knowledge, possible solutions, enhances quality of care, nurses' grooming, and accepting positive image of nurses. Participant 01 commented: '*Nurses care all the time for the patients and are aware of patients' problems.*' Participant 26 said: '*Doing research will increase nurses' value in Pakistan and they will provide standard care to the patients.*' The third category, 'ability to conduct qualitative research', included some characteristics of the researcher, such as highly interested, ability to prioritise, concept of the research, qualitative research expertise, committed and expert in computer. Participant 18 said: '*Computer skills and good English are very important for conducting qualitative research.*' Participant 22 said: '*It is all about commitment and hard work, qualitative research is very lengthy process.*'

The second main theme was 'challenges in qualitative research' in which the first category was 'individual problems' was based on codes lack of trust, lack of qualitative experience, poor concept about research, phobia about qualitative methods, shortage of time and

hesitation. Participant 20 stated: *'We are usually unaware of qualitative research steps and there is also no time to get information about it.'* Participant 07 said: *'Nurses should not hesitate to learn qualitative research; we must try for developing trust among the researchers.'* The second category, 'organisational problems', disclosed participants' opinions about institutional barriers towards qualitative research which were listed as; lack of resources, lack of research environment, data-collection problems, lack of motivation, permission issues, lack of qualified teachers, and ignoring nurses in research activities. Participant 05 maintained: *'Nurses are mostly ignored in the research process and funding; they consider us only administering medications to patients.'* Participant 13 said: *'Good mentors are really needed for qualitative research and institutions should allow for data-collection. This is very difficult to wait for permission. The resources for research are not satisfactory.'* The third category, 'problems as type of research', focussed on difficulties in qualitative research paradigm; cultural sensitivity for female, lengthy process, difficult than quantitative, language barrier, negative perception about qualitative research, rare qualitative experts, and problems in analysis. Participant 06 stressed: *'There is cultural issue in data-collection, and analysis is also very difficult which requires some one expert in qualitative methods.'*

The third main theme was 'suggestions to promote qualitative research' where the participants agreed on some suggestions that can help in conducting qualitative research. The category 'researcher's errands' was based on personal responsibilities of the researcher, such as awareness about research process, knowledge, qualitative background, participation in qualitative trainings, time management, show interest, supervisor's help, encouraging subordinates, staying updated, English proficiency, computer courses, peer review, theoretical concepts, relevant topic selection, literature search, being professional, dedicated, experienced, humble, accept challenges, creative topic, counselling skills for data-collection and continuous practice. Participant 08 said: *'A qualitative researcher should be dynamic and updated, also very collaborative, we cannot do it alone.'* Participant 09 said: *'The topic should be creative and you must search literature for exploring it and work hard as per deadlines.'* The second category, 'institutional responsibilities', notified organisational efforts required for promoting nurse educators in conducting qualitative research; continuous training, seminars, workshops, updating research curriculum, creative environment, data analysis and plagiarism-checking software, motivation and rewards, research team, deadlines for tasks, expert faculty, facilitation, cooperation, support, direction, promote evidence-based practice, funding, nurses in ethical approval team, simple ethical approval process, nursing research journal, counting publications for promotion and admission in higher education. Participant 24

commented: *'A good institution always conducts continuous education for research improvement and different technologies for plagiarism and analysis purpose.'* Participant 11 said: *'Qualified nursing teachers should be in research team, motivation is very important as well as a separate nursing journal and facilitation in ethical approval should be considered by authorities.'*

Discussion

In the initial theme, most of the participants expressed that qualitative research is a lengthy process having subjective data in detailed form. In addition, participants verbalised that qualitative research is extremely important in nursing field for patients' care and professional grooming. Furthermore, participants expressed that being dynamic, committed and having practical skills are key to success in conducting qualitative research. These findings are consistent with current studies.¹⁹⁻²²

The second theme gave a broad view of challenges in conducting qualitative research in the form of individual, organisational and research type based difficulties which have been reported earlier as well.¹⁹⁻²⁶

The last theme enlisted some possible suggestions from researchers' and institutional side that can promote qualitative research among nurse educators. Again, the findings were similar to those in contemporary literature.²⁷⁻²⁹

Conclusion

Qualitative research is a complex process that requires commitments, support and skills at individual and organisational levels. The authorities need to prioritise and address these complexities by empowering nurse educators and relevant institutions in the form of resources and research activities leading to professional grooming.

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