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Introduction

This report critically evaluates the research methodology and methods used in the study.

The paper by Chang, H. E. and Jeong, S. (2021), titled *Male Nurses' Experiences of Workplace Gender Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in South Korea: A Qualitative Study*, explores the experiences of male nurses in South Korea regarding gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. From the perspective of male nurses, a minority group, the study highlights the social prejudices and institutional challenges they face in a predominantly female nursing profession. According to the research, while the number of male nurses globally is increasing, the nursing profession is still strongly associated with the social stereotype of being a "female" job, which makes male nurses more prone to experiencing alienation and bias. This study contributes to future efforts to create gender-equal workplaces, build support systems for male nurses, and advance research in gender studies and workplace environment improvements. This

report will critically examine the methodology, methods, and ethics of the study.

Critical Evaluation of Methodology and Methods

Methodology

In this study, a phenomenological qualitative research methodology was employed to gain a deep understanding of the nature of gender discrimination and sexual harassment experienced by male nurses in the workplace.

According to Williams (2021), in recent years, qualitative researchers have increasingly characterized phenomenology as a method concerned with "what experiences are like." Williams (2021) also points out that phenomenological research relying solely on the simple description of lived experiences risks reducing phenomenology to merely describing "what it felt like." This highlights a concern that such an approach may overlook the deeper meanings and essences behind those experiences. In other words, phenomenology should not be limited to gathering superficial narratives but should involve deep reflection on the meaning and essence of the experience itself.

Given that the purpose of this study is to understand the essential nature of the experiences of gender discrimination and sexual harassment faced by male nurses, a

phenomenological approach—which focuses on the subjective essence of personal experiences—is considered appropriate.

Method

Data Collection

To recruit participants for data collection, advertisements were posted on online communities and social media platforms frequently accessed by nurses. Additionally, snowball sampling was conducted through referrals from nurses who were acquaintances of the researchers.

According to Nikolopoulou (2022), convenience sampling is considered appropriate for qualitative research, particularly when aiming to explore individuals' perceptions and attitudes. However, Mackey and Gass (2005) highlight a major limitation of convenience sampling—its susceptibility to bias. They argue that samples obtained through this method should not be regarded as representative of the general population. Similarly, Golzar, Noor, and Tajik (2022) point out inherent drawbacks, such as the inability to generalize the findings and the lack of control over variability.

Nevertheless, Naderifar, Goli, and Ghaljaie (2017) emphasize that the purpose of qualitative research is to achieve a deep understanding of phenomena, rather than to

generalize the findings. Furthermore, Golzar, Noor, and Tajik (2022) suggest that sample diversity can be enhanced by distributing surveys at different times and locations.

In the present study, participants were selected using convenience sampling and snowball sampling. These methods are considered valid in the context of this research, as they were effective in recruiting individuals who had directly experienced gender discrimination or sexual harassment in the workplace. However, it is also important to acknowledge the potential limitation that the study sample may be skewed due to being drawn from the same community.

Despite this, one of the main objectives of the study is to uncover the various forms of gender discrimination and sexual harassment experienced by male nurses in their workplaces. From this perspective, generalizability is not essential. Therefore, the use of convenience and snowball sampling is deemed appropriate for achieving the study's aim of gaining a deep understanding of the phenomenon.

Regarding the participants, according to Naderifar, *et al.* (2017), snowball sampling involves existing participants recruiting future participants from among their acquaintances, and the sampling process continues until data saturation is reached. In the present study, a total of 12 participants were ultimately recruited through social media and snowball sampling (Chang & Jeong, 2021). Although two additional nurses later

expressed interest in participating, the research team determined that data saturation had already been achieved, and therefore, no further interviews were conducted. Based on this, it can be considered that the data collected were sufficient, and the sample size was appropriate for the purpose of the study.

The following section discusses how data collection was specifically conducted in this study and evaluates the appropriateness of the methods used. According to Chang and Jeong (2021), in-depth interviews were conducted in a one-on-one format via mobile phone without video. Each interview was held only once per participant and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes.

Due to the non-face-to-face nature of the interviews, non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures could not be observed. To compensate for this limitation, the interviewers employed various techniques to elicit emotional responses and gain deeper insights. These included the use of open-ended questions, active listening, paraphrasing, and reflective responses throughout the interview process.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were utilized in this study, allowing for a balance between consistency across interviews and the flexibility to explore participants' unique experiences in depth.

According to Alshenqeeti (2014), there are four commonly used types of interviews: structured interviews, unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and focus group interviews. Semi-structured interviews are described by Alshenqeeti (2014) as a structured format with a certain degree of flexibility that allows for deeper exploration and understanding of participants' responses. This format strikes a balance between freely probing participant experiences and maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

In contrast, structured interviews are conducted based on a predetermined list of direct questions, which often limit responses to binary choices such as "yes" or "no" (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Berg (2007) also notes that both the interviewer and the interviewee have limited freedom in structured interviews, which restricts opportunities for participants to express themselves freely.

Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, are highly flexible and open-ended. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) describe them as allowing a high degree of freedom. According to Mueller and Segal (2015), such unstructured approaches are well-suited for richly capturing individual experiences. However, Mueller and Segal (2015) also caution that the lack of structure in this format may result in the omission of essential information.

Given that the present study focuses on workplace gender discrimination and sexual

harassment experienced by male nurses, an unstructured interview approach may risk deviating from the research aim due to its high degree of openness. As for focus group interviews, they are not considered in this study, as data were collected through one-on-one interviews.

Based on the above, the use of semi-structured interviews in this study can be considered appropriate, as it allows for both depth and direction in exploring sensitive and complex personal experiences while remaining aligned with the research objectives.

According to Ho (2006), interviews are a powerful tool for gaining an in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions, but they can also be effectively combined with other research methods. In this regard, Alshenqeeti (2014) suggests that incorporating observational methods as a supplement to interviews enables researchers to investigate both external behaviors and internal beliefs of participants.

In the current study, interviews were conducted remotely, which meant that non-verbal expressions such as facial expressions and gestures could not be observed. However, to compensate for this limitation, the researchers employed techniques such as open-ended questions, active listening, paraphrasing, and emotional reflection. These strategies were used to elicit deeper responses and to capture the emotional nuances of participants'

experiences.

Moreover, Kvale (1996; 2003) states that interviews have a stronger capacity to generate narrative data compared to questionnaires, enabling researchers to explore people's thoughts in greater depth. Berg (2007: 96) also emphasizes that interviews allow interviewees to “speak in their own voice” and express their thoughts and emotions freely.

Given these points, the use of open-ended questions and reflective listening techniques can be seen as effective in compensating for the limitations of not being able to observe non-verbal communication in remote interviews. Therefore, it can be concluded that the interviews in this study successfully facilitated a detailed exploration of the participants and their experiences.

According to Alshenqeeti (2014), Schostack (2002) suggests that interviewers should spend at least 30 minutes in order to effectively explore the phenomenon under investigation. In the present study, interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes (Chang and Jeong, 2021), indicating that an adequate amount of time was allocated for in-depth exploration. Therefore, the interview method employed in this study can be considered appropriate and well-suited to the research objectives.

Data analysis

In the present study, the participants' interview data were analyzed using the thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Alshenqeeti (2014), the process of analysis typically begins with coding, which broadly involves two key steps: first, identifying meaningful units of data, and second, organizing and categorizing them accordingly. In this study, the researchers followed a systematic process that included careful reading of the transcripts, coding, reviewing the data, constructing themes, and refining those themes. This indicates a consistent application of the principles of thematic analysis. Furthermore, the data analysis was conducted simultaneously by two researchers, and the process was carried out continuously until both reached agreement. This collaborative approach contributes to the reliability of the analysis.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, the study applied the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). According to Chang and Jeong (2021), the researchers conducted reflective analysis before each interview to ensure that the process was proceeding as planned. In addition, they used a process of mutual verification to enhance the validity of the results. Moreover, the analyzed data were returned to three participants for feedback, which was incorporated into the findings to enhance their

accuracy and credibility. However, considering that only three of the total ten participants were involved in this member-checking process, questions may remain about the extent to which this procedure contributed to the overall reliability of the study.

The study also reported that 497 meaningful and interesting statements were extracted from the transcribed data, from which codes were generated and organized into 32 sub-themes and 11 overarching themes. Nevertheless, the specific criteria and detailed process used for extracting these data and constructing themes were described only in abstract terms, and not clearly defined. Therefore, from the perspective of reliability and replicability, this aspect of the study appears somewhat insufficient.

Ethical considerations

According to Alshenqeeti (2014), strict adherence to ethical considerations is essential in research involving human participants. Cohen et al. (2007) further emphasize that interviews may intrude into respondents' private spheres, requiring a high level of ethical sensitivity. To protect participants' rights and prevent psychological or social harm, data collection must ensure anonymity (Alshenqeeti, 2014). A key ethical principle highlighted by Alshenqeeti (2014) is that participants must be clearly informed that their participation is entirely voluntary and that they can withdraw at any time.

In line with these ethical principles, Chang and Jeong (2021) reported that the study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the affiliated institution before data collection began. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and IRB guidelines. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and how the collected data would be used. Informed consent was obtained in writing, either via email or mobile phone. These procedures indicate that the researchers took a careful and ethically sound approach.

Furthermore, all interview content and transcripts were anonymized using codes to ensure participants could not be identified. Contact information was destroyed after distributing the compensation vouchers, thus preserving participants' privacy (Chang and Jeong, 2021). However, it is not clearly stated whether participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Given the sensitive nature of the study—dealing with issues such as gender discrimination and sexual harassment—this omission raises concerns about the adequacy of the ethical considerations related to voluntary participation.

Conclusion

The target study focused on gaining an essential understanding of the gender

discrimination and sexual harassment experienced by male nurses in the workplace. A phenomenological qualitative research methodology was employed, with semi-structured interviews serving as the primary data collection method. These interviews were designed to draw out the emotional depth and core essence of participants' experiences, focusing on the subjective nature of individual perspectives. However, in terms of data analysis, there are concerns regarding reliability and reproducibility. Only a few participants were involved in the feedback process, and the procedures for data extraction and code generation were not clearly outlined.

From an ethical standpoint, the study demonstrated appropriate considerations, including IRB approval and the use of informed consent. Nevertheless, there is some concern regarding the lack of clear explanation about participants' right to withdraw from the study.

Overall, the study's methodology and methods are generally well-suited to its research objectives, and the study can be considered valid as a piece of qualitative research.

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