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**ASSIGNMENT TITLE: EXPLORING THE FACTORS THAT
INFLUENCE PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR OF
POSTGRADUATE PHSC STUDENTS IN A PUBLIC
UNIVERSITY: A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION**

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Introduction/Literature-Based Background to the Study

Establishing research topic

Health is an important aspect of living standards, which indirectly impacts the economic evaluation of the country. In respect to the existing research, the broader discussion focuses on “Public Health and Social Care,” or PHSC practices because of the growing development in the healthcare realm with people focusing on the well-being of certain populations (Steenkamer et al., 2020). The stated demography is an expanded form of social science relatable to the political, economic and ideological outlook of individuals. Public health in generic discussion outlines the well-being of overall people and community while social care measures improving the conditioning of human life by providing basic amenities (Nutbeam and Lloyd, 2021). There has been a great evolution in the field of healthcare principles that needs to be focused on for professional insight.

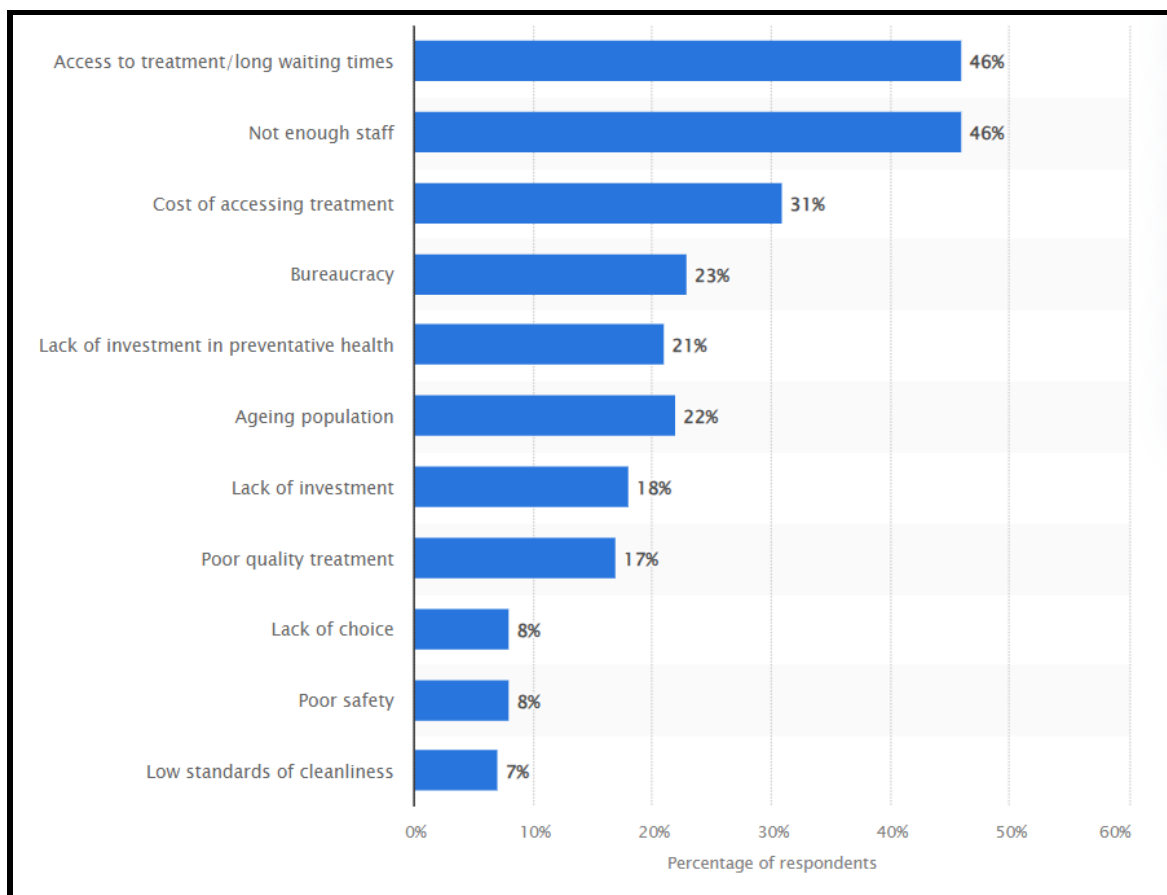


Figure 1: Leading issues related to public health and social care

(Source: Statista.com, 2023)

Referencing the aforementioned graph, it can be stated that there is a gap in access to PHSC resources. On the global front, there are a large number of vulnerable populations suffering due to poor access to health and social care facilities because of poor access to treatment 46%, 46%

of the population confronts the issue of staff shortage and 31% have been restricted due to cost access (Statista.com, 2023). There are several other causes of the global healthcare system, which need to be addressed thoroughly.

Narrow down the focus

As discussed in the broader perspective, PHSC is one of the most effective or core integrations of a country's financial, political and psychographic input. The following researcher has narrowed down the topic in terms of studying the implications of PHSC postgraduate students' professional behaviour within public universities. This is because the degree is relevant to care management practices, which assist the global public in times of uncertainty (Fitzgerald, 2020). The effectiveness of professional behaviour in public universities measures decision-making skills, navigating issues and in terms of public health and social care. At the same time, the stated context allows the students to engage in insights to deal with the increasing pressure in the system.

Overview of the research

The detailed study of a content or topic is recollected as research. It is important to present a research structure to evaluate the mindset of the researcher in a systematic and scientific way (Mishra and Alok, 2022). For an in-depth outlining of the qualitative research structure follow the below-presented flowchart.

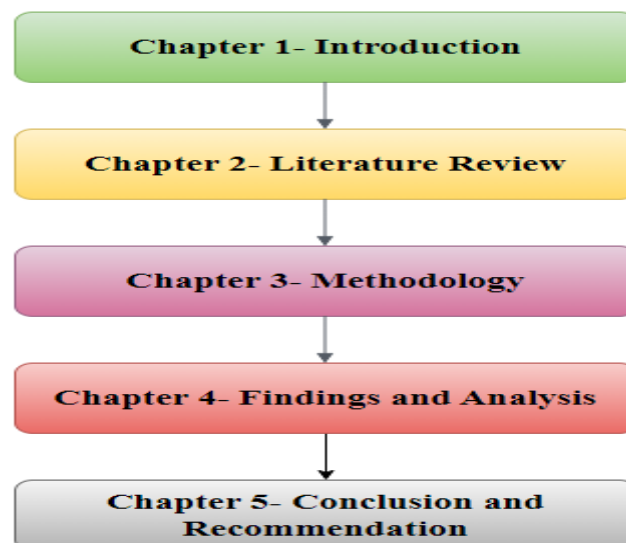


Figure 2: Research structure

(Source: Created by the scholar)

Chapter 1 Introduction: In terms of the research, this chapter aims to establish the background of the given topic while discussing the broader perspective and narrowing down the context.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: This section focuses on discussing the acquired knowledge and aligning the information to provide significance to the research.

Chapter 3 Methodology: The backbone of the existing research, methodological choices are the tool aiding the outlining of the research process and data collection procedure.

Chapter 4 Findings and analysis: This chapter discusses the overview of the focused group while analysing their responses as the practical relevance for the topic.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation: This is the last chapter of the research study, which gives an overall outlining of the findings from chapter 1 to 4 while providing recommendations for the acquired challenges in the subject area.

Rationale & Research Question/Aims/hypothesis

Rationale

This study focuses on the discussion mentioned. At this moment, the focused group is to be on Public Health and social care (PHSC) students within a public university. In addition to this, the discussion is to focus on factors regarding Health-promoting behaviours within their professional realm. The discussion intends to put forward the strategies to enhance the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students. The changing perspectives of lifestyle standards and tackling the ageing population on the global front are conventionally challenging. Surging the growing pressure on the system with long-term public health conditions seeks efficacy and efficiency in terms of professional behaviour among PHSC students in public universities.

Research aim:

This study aims to identify the influence of professional behaviour regarding postgraduate PHSC students within a public university.

Research Question

What variables impact postgraduate PHSC students' professional behaviour at a public university?

Research Objectives:

To understand the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students in a public university.
To identify the factors influencing the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students in a public university.

To analyse the impact of identified factors on the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students in a public university.

To recommend the strategy for enhancing the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students.

Research methodology (Research methods)

In the present study, employed the Primary Qualitative research technique, specifically using the focus group approach to gather insights from Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) students in a public university (Khoa et al., 2023). This method involves asking questions and fostering group conversation (Wojtecka et al., 2023). The interpretivism philosophy was applied to analyze societal occurrences in the context of the unique value system of the community or culture being studied (Savin-Baden and Major, 2023). The research adopted a cross-sectional technique, analyzing both the results and exposures of participants simultaneously (Hönekopp and Weigelt, 2023). Data collection involved four participants selected through convenient sampling, a non-probability method. Thematic analysis was used to identify and interpret prevalent themes (Ali, 2023). In line with ethical standards, the researcher considered the responsibility of applying results respectfully to avoid harm or stigma (Chapman et al., 2023). The study acknowledged the limitations and refrained from making broad generalizations unsupported by the data. Additionally, the research incorporated elements of ethnography, a method involving immersive observation and interaction within the studied community (Lahlou et al, 2015). Ethnography provides a rich understanding of cultural contexts and behaviors, complementing the focus group and thematic analysis employed in this investigation (Lahlou et al, 2015).

Research Design

An effective research design plays a crucial role in achieving the goals of a study promptly and ensuring optimal approaches to address challenges (Sarkar et al., 2023). Research designs generally fall into two categories: qualitative, which seeks to understand the significance of behavior, and quantitative, which involves the interpretation of numerical data subject to quantitative analysis (Park et al., 2023). In the context of this investigation, the utilization of a

cross-sectional research design proved invaluable, particularly in dealing with resource constraints (Park et al., 2023).

Cross-sectional studies involve collecting data from a diverse group of individuals at a specific point in time, allowing for a snapshot of various factors without directly influencing them (Hatch, 2023; Milton and Rodgers, 2023). This design is known for its efficiency and cost-effectiveness compared to other study types (Marlow, 2023). In the current study, the cross-sectional research design was employed to gain insights into the professional behaviour of postgraduate Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) candidates within a public institution. The cross-sectional approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of professional behaviour among postgraduate PHSC candidates, helping identify variables influencing their behaviour. Moreover, it enabled the analysis of how these identified factors impact the professional behaviour of the candidates. The study leveraged the strengths of cross-sectional research to efficiently explore and comprehend the intricacies of professional behaviour within the specified study setting (Hatch, 2023; Milton and Rodgers, 2023).

Recruitment, Sampling & Study Participants

Sampling is a crucial aspect of research, as it involves gathering representative data from a subset to draw conclusions about a larger population. While samples offer practicality, cost-effectiveness, and ease of control, they are simpler to collect information from (Bowes et al., 2023). In this research, the convenient sampling strategy, a non-probability sampling method, was employed. Convenience sampling is often chosen when other sampling procedures are impractical due to constraints like time or expense (Raifman et al., 2022). Despite its simplicity and quick data acquisition, it may introduce biases and limitations that affect accuracy and real-world applicability.

The study utilized convenient sampling by Focus group discussion (FGD) with six postgraduate Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) candidates from a public institution University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London. The selection of candidates for FGD was made at the respective public university, and the convenient sampling method was employed to identify suitable postgraduate PHSC candidates. Interview questions aligned with research objectives were prepared for the candidates. Responses from the Focus group discussion, collected in written and documented form, constitute the data used in addressing the research topic. It is essential to acknowledge the potential limitations associated with convenient sampling, as it may not fully represent the diversity within the population. Despite these considerations, the collected

responses provide valuable insights for discussing the research topic (Bowes et al., 2023; Raifman et al., 2022).

Materials/Data Collection Method(s)/procedure i.e.

Data collection for this study involved focus group discussion with postgraduate Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) students at a public institution, specifically the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). According to Wray and Barrett (2022), interviews are valuable for gathering qualitative data directly from individuals, offering insights into their knowledge, opinions, and views on the study's issue. The face-to-face interviews were conducted in a manner aligning with the research objectives, allowing an assessment of participants' reactions, experiences, and perceptions.

The focus group discussion, held in a quiet room at UWTSD, brought together PHSC students. The chairperson facilitated the discussion, emphasizing consent and informing participants about audio transcript procedures. Before initiating the discussion, participants were made aware that the audio transcript and its corresponding Word document would be securely stored on a personal computer, ensuring confidentiality and data security. This method was chosen to allow the person facilitating the discussion to guide and engage participants effectively, ensuring alignment with the study's goals (Siedlecki, 2022). The open-ended questions used in the focus group aimed to elicit detailed information, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

Data analysis technique

The chosen methodological approach underscores the centrality of data analysis, serving as the linchpin that enhances the research's overall value. Defined as the process of collecting raw data and transforming it for insightful decision-making, data analysis is fundamental to the research process (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). Its implications are particularly crucial in addressing research questions or testing hypotheses. Nayak and Singh (2021) argue that the metrics chosen for the methodology are instrumental in diagnosing the relationships between study variables and determining factors influencing the given context, such as the dynamics governing the professional behaviour of Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) students in a UWTSD university.

Two primary types of data analysis techniques are distinguished: qualitative, characterized by a focused approach, and quantitative, which is number-focused (Mukherjee, 2019). For this study, qualitative analysis with a focused approach will be employed, specifically thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a conventional choice for researchers, as it aids in evaluating, interpreting, and integrating gathered information into relevant research findings (Lochmiller, 2021). This technique is particularly relevant for the present research, given its focused examination of the professional behaviour of PHSC students. The research will closely examine FGD transcripts to identify common themes related to the study topic. Thematic analysis allows for a comprehensive exploration of issues, facilitating the summarization of findings effectively (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019). The process involves six steps: "drawing familiarity with the data," "generating initial codes," "setting or searching accurate theme," "reviewing theme," "validating theme," and "write-up" (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Following these steps ensures a well-defined and detailed thematic analysis, transforming the broad topic into a concise and meaningful one. The methodological choice prioritizes data analysis, specifically thematic analysis, to uncover insights into the professional behaviour of PHSC students in a UWTSD University. This systematic approach, guided by established steps, aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the study's focal points.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committees of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. The 2018 Data Protection Act played a crucial role in safeguarding the ethical integrity of the conducted study. Under its provisions, participants were shielded from emotional harm, and explicit consent was sought prior to the collection of their responses (Suri, 2020). Upholding ethical considerations, a primary focus was placed on ensuring the safety and confidentiality of participants' personal data and recorded audio, recognizing the moral imperative to refrain from manipulating or destroying such information, which could compromise the authenticity of real-time data (Husband, 2020). To mitigate risks, audio recordings were securely stored in a pen drive and the school software locker, limiting public access. Participants were assured that both the data and recordings would be responsibly destroyed on February 11, 2024, upon the study's completion. Additionally, the utilization of "AssemblyAI" software for converting audio to text was a strategic choice. This software, acknowledged for producing accurate transcripts (Haripriya et al., 2023), not only facilitated easy access to information but also preserved the nuances of participants' emotions and expressions.

Results

THEME 1- Definition of professional behaviour:

The participants highlighted the multifaceted nature of professional behaviour, emphasizing its relevance both in academic settings and the workplace. Their responses suggest a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond mere adherence to rules. Participants provided insights into their understanding of professional behaviour, emphasizing aspects such as integrity, respect, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards in both academic and workplace settings.

" Professional behaviours involve too many things. Like, involves integrity, respect, accountability, and ethical standards in the workplace." (Participant 5)

"According to me, professional behaviour means professional persons would be punctual." (Participant 2)

"Well, according to me, professionalism is having accountability of time management and doing everything in the era of respect and having good communication skills." (Participant 6)

THEME 2- difference between academic and workplace professional behaviour:

Participants shed light on the distinctions they perceive between professional conduct in academic environments, such as universities, and in professional workplaces. The theme illustrates the nuanced understanding of how expectations may vary across these contexts.

"Professional behaviour is totally different in the academic and work settings, yet they share qualities like respect and proper ethics." (Participant 3)

"In the workplace, professionalism is much more important, and in the university, time management is a major point." (Participant 6)

THEME 3- Generation variation in professional behaviour:

Participants recognized the potential influence of generational factors on professional behaviour, acknowledging variations in communication styles and work approaches. The theme highlights the importance of understanding and appreciating these differences for fostering a collaborative work environment.

"Professional behaviour can be similar or different between younger and older workers due to generational variation in work style and communication preferences." (Participant 1)

"For my experience, the younger generation prefers communication through email or social media, while I prefer face-to-face interaction." (Participant 4)

"Generation gap plays a role in professionalism because older ones have more experience and skills compared to the younger ones." (Participant 6)

Discussion

The findings from the focus group discussions with postgraduate Public Health and Social Care (PHSC) students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) reveal valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of professional behaviour. The participants emphasized the importance of integrity, respect, accountability, and adherence to ethical standards in both academic and workplace settings. Professional behaviour, according to the participants, extends beyond mere rule adherence; it encompasses a holistic approach to one's responsibilities (Costanza et al, 2012).

Furthermore, the participants highlighted distinctions between professional conduct in academic and workplace settings. While qualities like respect and proper ethics are shared between these environments, workplace professionalism was deemed more critical (Costanza et al, 2012). In contrast, academic settings place a stronger emphasis on time management. This distinction underscores the nuanced understanding of professional behaviour and the need for adaptability in different contexts (Costanza et al, 2012).

Generational factors emerged as a significant consideration in professional behaviour. Participants recognized variations in communication styles and work approaches between younger and older workers (Costanza et al, 2012). The impact of the generation gap on professionalism was acknowledged, with insights into how preferences for communication, such as email or social media versus face-to-face interaction, can differ across age groups (Costanza et al, 2012).

Limitations

The existing research will follow the primary qualitative data collection. As per the opinion of Allan (2020), qualitative research includes personal knowledge and opinion, which can manipulate the observation and conclusion. Thereby, the existing study can confront a gap in quantitative information as there will be a limitation of secondary interpretation.

RECCOMENDATIONS:

- 1. Integrating holistic professional development:** Academic institutions should adopt strategies that foster the holistic development of professional behaviour. This includes not only emphasizing adherence to rules but also promoting values such as integrity, respect, and accountability (Smith, and Gillespie, 2023).
- 2. Contextual training programs:** Recognizing the distinctions between academic and workplace professional behaviour, institutions and employers should implement contextual training programs. These programs can help individuals adapt to the specific expectations of different environments, ensuring a smooth transition from academia to the professional world (Hajj et al,2023).
- 3. Generational sensitivity training:** Organizations should consider implementing training programs that raise awareness about generational differences in the workplace. Understanding and appreciating diverse communication styles and work preferences can contribute to a more collaborative and inclusive work environment (Smith, and Gillespie, 2023).
- 4. Continuous learning opportunities:** Given the dynamic nature of professional behaviour, there should be continuous learning opportunities for individuals to update their skills and adapt to evolving workplace dynamics. This could include workshops, seminars, or online courses (Hajj et al,2023).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study explored the professional behaviour of postgraduate PHSC students at UWTSD, shedding light on its multifaceted nature and the impact of contextual factors. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in cultivating professional behaviour within the academic and professional realms. The distinctions between academic and workplace professionalism, as well as the influence of generational factors, underscore the need for a dynamic and adaptable approach to professional development. By implementing the recommendations outlined above, academic institutions and employers can play a proactive role in enhancing the professional behaviour of individuals, preparing them for success in diverse and evolving work environments.

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Appendix

FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

- (a) Introduction and Welcome
- (b) Instructions regarding the focus group
- (c) Questioning

- How would you define professional behaviour?
- What does professional behaviour look and feels like in practice?
- When you think about professional behaviour, which core characteristics you think about?
Which ones are represented at university? Which ones are represented in working practice?
- Do you think professional behaviour is displayed similarly or differently between younger and older workers and why (not)?
- Would you classify yourself as behaving professionally at the university or the workplace?
- How would you encourage classmates/peers to engage in professional behaviour?
- How do you define unprofessional behaviour and what can be reasons for this behaviour?
- Do you engage in unprofessional behaviour and why yes or no?
- How can you discourage unprofessional behaviour in the university?
- How can you discourage unprofessional behaviour in the workplace?
- How can PHSC students acquire professional behaviour?
- What kind of information do you need to learn more about professional behaviour?
- Where would you look for information about acquiring professional behaviour?
- What can your university do to promote professional behaviour?