

From Preparation to Presentation: Student Nurses' Transformative Research Dissemination Journeys at Off-Campus Academic Conferences

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Abstract. Academic conferences play a crucial role in enhancing undergraduate research productivity, yet more research is needed on student nurses' experiences during the dissemination phase of their research. This study employed qualitative content analysis to examine 33 learning journals from 25 student nurses, focusing on their experiences from the preparation stage to the presentation of their group research at off-campus academic conferences. The analysis revealed two main themes: Transformative Pathways to Research Presentation and Transformative Power of Research Presentation. The first theme encompasses categories such as Psychological Preparedness Challenges, Logistical Challenges, Supportive and Collaborative Networks, and Mastery through Practice. The second theme includes categories like Unleashing Confidence, Learning through Observation and Adaptation, Interactive Presentation Experiences, and Nurturing Growth through Research. The findings highlight the challenges faced by student nurses and the transformative experiences they encountered from preparation to presentation at off-campus academic conferences. Despite these challenges, student nurses showed significant personal and professional growth, overcoming psychological preparedness issues and logistical hurdles while seeking mastery through practice. The transformative power of research presentations was evident as they gained confidence and refined their presentation skills.

Keywords: Research dissemination; Academic conferences; Student nurses; Nursing research.

1.0 Introduction

Nursing research encompasses various stages, from conception to dissemination, each crucial in conducting thorough and impactful studies. Recent studies have focused on the experiences of undergraduate student nurses, shedding light on different aspects of their research journey. Tupall et al. (2022) explored student nurses with undergraduate research supervision in the Philippines. They found that good supervision of undergraduate nursing research involves sharing new ideas between students and supervisors, learning together as a group, and active participation by students. In Indonesia, Riastini et al. (2020) found that typographical errors, difficulty finding relevant literature, and lengthy research permit processes are among the challenges that final-semester student nurses face in writing their final research output. Grønning (2022) highlighted the positive impact of research projects on enhancing student nurses' understanding and practical application of evidence-based care in Norway. However, it is worth noting that none of these studies specifically explored student nurses' experiences during conference presentations, which is an essential component of the dissemination phase in the nursing research process.

Presenting research at academic conferences is known to enhance undergraduate student research productivity. Little (2020) found that participation in undergraduate academic conferences can positively impact the development of communication skills, self-authorship, and increased engagement with extracurricular activities among non-nursing students. Polit and Beck (2018) added that disseminating research findings signifies the culmination of the researcher's efforts and is vital for supporting nursing practice. Academic conferences provide valuable opportunities for researchers to present their findings as podium or poster presenters. These conferences serve as dynamic platforms for exchanging research findings, soliciting input, fostering meaningful dialogues, and fostering collaborations among experts in the field. In line with the importance of joining academic conferences, article 1 of the CHED Memorandum Order (CMO) No. 63 Series of 2017 in the Philippines emphasizes the importance of higher education institutions ensuring that students engage in off-campus extracurricular activities to enrich their overall learning experience, in addition to regular classroom instruction. Ultimately, disseminating research findings through academic conferences contributes to advancing nursing practice and knowledge.

This study can address the knowledge gap by examining student nurses' experiences while disseminating completed research, focusing on their challenges, insights, and perspectives in presenting research findings at academic conferences. The findings can improve development and educational strategies and enhance student research productivity by providing insights into their specific needs in communicating their research. Moreover, the study's findings can contribute to cultivating a culture of effective communication and sharing in research, offering valuable guidance for tailoring support to students and creating a more enriching research experience. Additionally, the study can help develop policies supporting research dissemination, encouraging integration into the curriculum, and establishing best practices for organizing research symposiums in nursing education institutions. Lastly, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how research dissemination influences subsequent nursing practice, ensuring that research outputs are generated, effectively communicated, and integrated into the clinical setting.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

To answer the research question, the researchers used a qualitative content analysis, which is well-suited for examining data collected from the student nurses' learning journals.

2.2. Research Participants

To ensure a focused collection of perspectives, a homogenous purposive sample of 25 student nurses served as the sources of learning journals. These student nurses experienced presenting their group research, once or twice, at off-campus academic conferences organized at local, regional, national, or international levels. These conferences included local and regional events without any competition. Moreover, two national and one international conference involved research dissemination and competitions. The organizers of these conferences determined whether the student nurses would participate as oral or poster presenters based on their discretion.

2.3. Research Instrument

The institution's Research Development and Extension Officer (RDEO) collected learning journals from each student nurse after a research presentation at an off-campus academic conference to ensure adherence to the policies and guidelines in the conduct of off-campus activities as outlined in Section 12 of CMO No. 63 Series of 2017. These journals documented student nurses' experiences from the preparation stage to the presentation of their group research at off-campus academic conferences. The researchers utilized these learning journals as the research instrument for their content analysis. Among the 25 student nurses, eight had the opportunity to present their group research twice at different conferences, leading the researcher to analyze 33 learning journals.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedures and Analysis

After securing endorsement from the Dean of the Department of Nursing, the researchers submitted a request letter to the college president to secure approval to conduct the study. Following this, the researchers obtained a list of students who had experienced joining off-campus extracurricular academic conferences from the RDEO. To proceed, they secured informed consent from these students to ensure their awareness of how the researchers would utilize their learning journals.

To facilitate analysis, the researchers converted the hard copies of the learning journals to a digital format using Google Lens. Subsequently, they uploaded the digital copies to Google Docs, enabling easier collaboration and restricting access to only the researchers. Each learning journal underwent multiple thorough readings to understand the entire context comprehensively.

During the data analysis, the researchers followed the practical guidance outlined by Erlingsson and Bysiewicz (2017). They started by getting familiar with the whole data set through multiple readings of each learning journal while maintaining awareness of their preconceived ideas, beliefs, and biases on the phenomenon of interest. Subsequently, they broke down the text into smaller, meaningful parts and summarized them. They created 21 descriptive codes to capture the main ideas of each part. The researchers then grouped these codes and formed eight categories that addressed critical aspects of each data. They identified two themes from these categories that captured the meanings present in the information. The researchers also ensured that they coded the data from this study similarly by following Tracy's steps on engaging in inter-coder reliability by percentage agreement. They reached an agreement rate of 96%, indicating consistency in their analysis.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The researchers assured the students that their identities and learning journals would remain anonymous and confidential throughout the research process, participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw at any time. After obtaining informed consent from the student nurses, the researchers requested anonymized and de-identified hard copies of their learning journals from the RDE officer.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The content analysis of student nurses' learning journals yielded two themes, each with four categories: The Transformative Pathways to Research Presentation and The Transformative Power of Research Presentation.

Theme 1: The Transformative Pathways to Research Presentation

This theme captures the challenges and growth opportunities the student nurses encounter as they prepare for their research presentations at academic conferences. It includes the following categories: Psychological Preparedness Challenges, Logistical Challenges, Supportive Collaborative Networks, and Mastery through Practice.

Psychological Preparedness Challenges

Student nurses experienced mixed emotions upon receiving notification to present their research at a conference. They felt excited yet nervous, creating a rollercoaster of anticipation and anxiety as they prepared for the event. One poster presenter at the national level shared,

"When this research congress accepted our paper, I got excited yet nervous, especially since it was my first time attending an event like this."

Another poster presenter at the national level expressed,

"As the designated spokesperson and group leader, things happened in my personal life that affected my academic life, particularly research, throughout the research process. In addition to being grateful and inspired while designing the poster, I also doubted and asked why I was doing these things."

The findings of Vecardo et al. (2019), who explored the experiences of Filipino faculty researchers in writing and disseminating their research, support the psychological preparedness challenges reported by the student nurses in this study. The authors observed similar emotional fluctuations, noting that the anticipation and anxiety experienced by researchers can significantly impact their performance and motivation.

Logistical Challenges

Student nurses also faced various logistical challenges during the preparation process for research presentations. They needed assistance in creating engaging and visually appealing research presentations. Balancing

responsibilities and managing time effectively added to the complexity. As one poster presenter at the international level shared,

"We needed help with doing our template and the designs. Having less opportunity in graphic design, we raised the idea of hiring someone outside the institution to do ours with the group, but we are still waiting to receive a response."

Another poster presenter at the national level described,

"As we walked home, I felt like something needed improvement that I could not recall until one of my groupmates messaged me about the format. Adrenaline surged through my veins. I rushed to modify the document format as I stood in front of the ER. Thankfully, I could send the abstract to the allotted email two minutes before midnight."

The need for travel and the absence of accommodation for other students further compounded the challenges, making the preparation more demanding. Another poster presenter at the national level described,

"Another disappointment was the lack of accommodation, which felt overwhelming, especially with the pressure of the forthcoming research congress."

Additionally, ensuring active involvement and collaboration among their research team members was a hurdle. An oral presenter at the local level mentioned,

"As we geared up for our presentation, some of our group members could not attend to assist in creating our video presentation."

These logistical challenges in creating engaging preparations and managing time further emphasize the complexities of preparing for research presentations, as supported by the findings of Vecardo et al. (2019). The authors noted that faculty researchers faced similar logistical hurdles in preparing for research presentations. The logistical challenges faced by student nurses in this study are also consistent with the findings of Riastini et al. (2020), who examined student nurses' experiences conducting research in Indonesia. The authors identified challenges such as typographical errors, difficulty finding relevant literature, and lengthy permit processes, which mirror the logistical issues encountered by the student nurses in the current study.

Supportive and Collaborative Networks

Mentors and peers played a crucial role in providing guidance and fostering collaboration. Student nurses received valuable assistance, advice, and encouragement from these supportive individuals, boosting their confidence as they refined their presentations. As one poster presenter at the national level shared,

"Kudos to our research instructors who inspired and pushed all of us to join even though we were unsure and doubting ourselves."

Another poster presenter at the national level expressed,

"My group mates and I worked diligently to create an informative poster to support our research."

The critical role of mentors and peers in guiding and motivating student nurses is consistent with the findings of Vecardo et al. (2019). The authors highlighted the significance of supportive networks in the research dissemination process. Tupall et al. (2022), which emphasized the importance of sharing new ideas among student nurses and mentors, learning as a group, and active participation as essential components of supervision in undergraduate nursing research, also mirrors the supportive and collaborative networks described in the present study.

Mastery through Practice

Despite the student nurses' busy schedules, student nurses dedicated themselves to enhancing their presentation and communication skills through intensive practice. As one poster presenter at the national level noted,

"Aside from preparing our poster, I also had to read and review our manuscript because I already needed to remember some of its contents."

An oral presenter at the national level added,

"My preparation makes me busy. At the end of each class, I needed to reread our research paper to recall our study, even on the day we travelled to Manila."

The commitment of student nurses to intensive practice underscores the importance of skill development in disseminating research, as the study conducted by Rushton et al. (2019) reflects. The authors examined the experiences of each active participation in academic conferences for high school science students. They found that the students experienced growth in self-confidence and research confidence through dedicated practice. This finding is also consistent with the study of Grønning (2022), which highlighted the positive impact of research projects on enhancing student nurses' understanding and practical applications of evidence-based care in Norway. The current study's findings on the importance of mastery through practice align with Grønning's observation on the benefits of research engagement for student nurses.

Theme 2: The Transformative Power of Research Presentation

This theme illustrates the impact of the research presentations on student nurses, highlighting their personal and professional growth. It consists of the following categories: Unleashing Confidence, Learning through Observation and Adaptation, Interactive Presentation Experiences, and Nurturing Growth through Research.

Unleashing Confidence

Through the transformative journey, student nurses conquered performance anxiety and unleashed their confidence as presenters throughout their transformative journey. They overcame their nerves and delivered presentations with conviction, gaining confidence through the experience. As one poster presenter at the international level shared,

"...so I was anxious about attending the event. However, as they say, everyone has a first time, so I gathered all my courage and confidence to finish the two-day event, and no matter the outcome, I know I did my best."

Similarly, an oral presenter at the regional level expressed,

"But there's more—the question-and-answer portion. I wished, jokingly, that sana lamunin nalang ako ng lupa (I wish the ground could swallow me), but happily, I answered the question."

This statement highlights the impact of facing and overcoming challenges, ultimately resulting in a sense of confidence. As another oral presenter at the regional level proudly wrote,

"I stepped down that stage with a sense of accomplishment for accepting challenges and conquering fears."

This category aligns with Vecardo et al.'s (2019) findings on the impact of conferences on personal and academic development, where the authors observed a similar transformation in faculty researchers' confidence and competence.

Learning through Observation and Adaptation

Student nurses acquired valuable skills by actively observing effective presenters and adapting techniques. They adjusted their approach to meet the audience's and panelists' expectations, enhancing their presentation abilities through this process. As one poster presenter at the international level noted,

"As I look at them presenting their studies, I envy their confidence; every word they speak is convincing, which can convince you to listen more."

Another poster at the national level shared,

"Upon arrival at the venue, unexpected challenges arose. The presentation format differed from what I had anticipated, with limited time for poster viewing and no opportunity for further explanation. This disappointment, however, transformed into surprise and joy as people showed genuine interest in our research poster."

This category is consistent with the study by Campbell et al. (2021), who examined graduate student learning at academic and professional conferences. The authors found that conferences enhance students' communication and presentation skills through observation and adaptation. Similarly, Little's (2020) study supports the notion that conferences provide valuable opportunities for learning through observation and adaptation.

Interactive Presentation Experiences

Engaging in the dynamic nature of research presentations, student nurses actively interacted with the audience, skillfully handled questions, and received feedback. This interactive experience allowed them to refine their skills and embrace the challenges of presenting at academic conferences. An oral presenter at the national level recounted,

"A moment that remains etched in my memory is when, after concluding our research presentation, an older adult approached me and sincerely remarked, 'Ang ganda ng study niyo (Your study is beautiful). Congratulations!'"

Another oral presenter at the regional level shared,

"During the Q&A session, I addressed a panelist's query about the potential impact of my research on families and communities, drawing from our recommendations."

A poster presenter at the international level added,

"It was nice that the other panel asked questions about our research study and suggested how to enhance it so we could join conferences like this in the future and different countries."

Buckley and Lee's (2021) study, which explored the impact of extracurricular activities on the student experience, supports the dynamic nature of research presentations and interactive experiences of the student nurses in the current study. The authors found that conferences enhance college students' skills, including communication and research competencies.

Nurturing Growth through Research

Presenting research had a profound impact on student nurses. They gained a better understanding of research methodologies by delivering research presentations. Sharing their findings at conferences fostered a sense of accomplishment and pride. A poster presenter at the national level expressed,

"It is not about the outfits or the use of vocabulary words when presenting; it is about your knowledge and desire to share and contribute your output to the congress. A key takeaway from the conference experience is that the essence of presenting research lies in the depth of knowledge and the passion to disseminate findings rather than superficial aspects like appearance or vocabulary."

Another poster presenter at the national level expressed,

"Presenting our study allowed me to refine my communication skills and acquire the ability to express the contents of our research effectively and concisely."

Additionally, they recognized the significance of networking and establishing meaningful connections within the research community, paving the way for future collaborations and projects. A poster presenter at the national level narrated,

"The most memorable phrase that he told me, though, was, Kung mag master ka, pwede mong ituloy 'tong research na ito. Palawakin natin yung population 'tsaka location, para hindi lang Baguio. ('If you pursue a master's degree, you can continue

this research. Let's expand the population and location, not just in Baguio.'). When he said that, I was taken aback because I did not expect him to see our research as promising to the point that he wanted us to continue it. He continued, 'Kung balak niyong ituloy, iapproach niyo ako sa, Tutulungan ko kayo.' ('If you plan to continue, approach me, and I will help you.')

The transformative journey of student nurses' future academic and career paths, highlighting the long-term impact of experiential learning in nursing, supports Campbell et al.'s (2021) study on the growth of graduate students through conferences.

4.0 Conclusion

Research presentations at academic conferences could lead to growth for student nurses as they overcome challenges, gain confidence, and refine their presentation skills through practice, observation, and adaptation. The supportive networks and interactive experiences encountered during these conferences also contribute to developing their passion for research and potential collaborations. Academic institutions can provide psychological and logistical support services and foster a supportive educational environment. Nursing research mentors can implement structured mentorship programs and promote practice and feedback sessions. Student nurses themselves can engage in deliberate practice, leverage learning opportunities, and network and collaborate with peers and professionals. Conference organizers and research offices can create platforms for student presenters, offer workshops and seminars, and facilitate networking opportunities. Future researchers should consider expanding the geographical scope, recruiting more student nurses, and diversifying data sources. Broadening these aspects will not only address the limitations of this study but also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Jayson M. Bimuyag, the first author, is primarily responsible for publishing this research manuscript. He conceptualized the study, wrote the manuscript with input from the coauthor, and handled submission correspondence and archival data. Christopher Ian N. Gaerlan, the coauthor, wrote the significance of the study and sought external expert advice during the conceptualization of the paper, which contributed to the study's aim, provided input for data analysis and interpretation, and reviewed each draft of the manuscript. Both authors collected the learning journals from the RDEO and converted each document to soft copies, which they analyzed in this study.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

Both authors confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest.

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