Prospective research view on the methodological framework and protocol for social nursing components

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought the social aspect of the nursing profession into even sharper focus. Nursing discipline is a social virtue that extends beyond only delivering care. Historiography has been impacted by social change. The objectives are to assess how society views professional nurses and to assist in explaining nursing›s social component from the perspective of the relevant nurses. The methodology will be based on Grounded Theory, a design framework with sociological roots that is

commonly employed in qualitative research. Expected outcomes will help to shape the future of nursing education and profession by identifying variables that define the social component of nursing and determining barriers and other profession-related determinants.

__Keywords__: Social, aspects, nursing, research protocol, future perspective.

Introduction

Nursing discipline is more than just care; it is a social value, and the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized this aspect of the nursing profession even more (1, 2, 3). Various examples even during the pandemic show that the social aspect of nursing can evolve the healthcare landscape, especially in support of vulnerable groups (4, 5), but also the community as a whole (6).

The meaning of nursing care as a social practice and the value that social theories can have in health research, in particular in understanding health outcomes and the interventions taken (7), has been studied in limited research (8, 9), since the focus has always been on health care and not on the social dimension of caring for different pathologies.

Knowledge translation is viewed by a number of authors as an integral component of social constructivism in clinical healthcare practice. Because knowledge is not an immobile thing to be «sent» and «received,» but rather a fluid collection of understandings that are shaped by both those who create it and those who use it. Clinicians apply new knowledge by altering it based on prior experiences and conceptions, by connecting it to prior understandings, by giving it significance, and, frequently, by continuously checking their understanding (10). Studies show that nursing research is focused mostly on specific contexts of care delivery (11), even if nursing care has the capacity to strengthen social actions.

Despite the disagreements on this matter, research contends that it is not sound scientific practice to move further without taking the application of theory in knowledge translation into account. Without a theory, it will be challenging to comprehend the fundamental principles guiding interventions, to comprehend the effects that different interventions have on behavior change, and to make comparisons between researches (12).

The nursing profession grew out of a need within society and continues to evolve based on the needs of society. Almost everything in nursing has changed, but the main objective—taking care of patients—remains constant. In its earliest stages, nursing began in homes. The sick were cared for by their family members in their homes before hospitals were created to shelter them. A science of medicine

was not yet considered to exist. It was Florence Nightingale, in 1840–1845, who laid the practical foundations of nursing (13).

Meanwhile, the American doctor Joseph Warrington (14) wrote a book for nurses and midwives which was also the first example of a textbook for nurses. The present-day nursing profession is still evolving. History records the track of social change. Because to promote social justice (delivery of health care in an effective and ethical manner), a nurse must have key leadership skills and other competences (15).

Technology and education are two current nursing issues. The following components must be included in training programs for nurses who are in charge of general care, according European Union Standards for Nursing and Midwifery; 1) Theoretical instruction (a. Nursing; b. Basic Sciences; c. Social Sciences); and 2) Clinical instruction (16).While social and cultural factors influence the perception that nurses have about their status (17), for example, the phenomenon of nursing bullying that begins even before nursing education with the choice of the nursing profession and continues throughout the professional career, whether as a clinician (18) or as an academic (19).

To bring forth a change in culture, nurses should actively work in all dimensions and in collaboration with stakeholders and research. The academic significance of this research is closely related to the gaps in knowledge related to the topic, in particular for a Western Balkan country. The history of the evolution of the nursing profession in European countries, especially in countries like Albania with low resources, is not well studied compared to the history of nursing in America (20, 21, 22); Canada (23, 24) and Australia (25, 26).

Understanding the profession and reflecting on how nursing has changed over time can help one comprehend how to educate nurses and how to practice nursing in a socio-political environment. Knowledge of the pathway to licensure, regulations in their profession, the role of research, and how history and the current pandemic have affected nursing not only informs but also empowers today's students, helping to create a better future for nursing. Today, the image of nurses in technology is still stigmatized, in line with the still present trend of bullying (27, 28), despite the significant historical role the nursing profession has played in the reframing of women's roles in society and in the creation of new possibilities to reshape their sense of power and self-worth (29).

The profession that nursing students have chosen has a long history, a rich tradition, and is a strong pillar of society. This is still valuable in the context of the globalization of the labor market since it makes adaption easier to have ethical, cultural, language, and communication skills in addition to professional ones. This is especially crucial for nations like Albania, whose socioeconomic conditions and budget constraints have left the healthcare sector still in transition. The idea of

European integration has as one of its main objectives the improvement of life through cooperation and integration. Finally, it is important to inform nursing professionals on changes in laws and decisions that affect their field as well as potential effects of European integration on nursing care and science. The social component of nursing, a significant but largely ignored aspect of care, is intimately tied to the contribution made by this research in the field. According to the World Health Organization, the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) are a broad category of forces and systems that have an impact on people›s day-to-day living situations and include non-medical aspects such as a person›s birth, growth, employment, living situation, and aging. Political structures, social standards, welfare policies, economics guidelines and procedures, and development goals are some of these elements and systems. The most important influences of the SDH are related to health inequalities within and between countries (30). Additionally, it has been discovered that the postmodern education competences that are concentrated on integrating a literate society into nursing education can be integrated into nursing care curricula through a collaborative partnership between nursing educators and clinical nursing (31).

Nurses, by profession, play a critical role in reducing health care inequalities (32, 33), as studies have shown that social determinants of health can be more important than health care in determining health outcomes.

To reduce disparities in health care, it is imperative to integrate social aspects of health care into health programs and curriculums (34). The need to integrate elements of cultural competence into the nursing curriculum and education has been addressed by previous studies (35).

Social change has left its mark on history, and nurses who want to be leaders of change and the promotion of social health justice can benefit from advanced education (36). In addition, the clarification of social responsibility to nurses benefits patients, professional development, and the design of continuing education activities based on scientific evidence (37). Nurse education in the frame of European integration must follow European Union directive requirements highlighting the need for pedagogical qualifications of educators (38). According to studies on the future goals of Albanian nursing students, the majority of them have stated a desire to continue their professional careers overseas, primarily in Eurozone countries. In order to produce knowledge that is applicable, this necessitates the integration of social, cultural, and professional aspects as well as knowledge development in nursing education (39).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted even more the social aspect of nursing, while this aspect, especially after the eradication of infectious diseases, was slowly being left out of the attention of both educators and professionals themselves (40, 41).

Albania, as a country aspiring to integrate into the European Union, must have the contribution of all fields to achieve it. While nursing students have the potential to be a crucial part of this process because they are the first to offer their services in a variety of European countries, they know very little or nothing about it. They know very little about the history of European integration and policies related to their profession that may have been part of this integration agenda.

As a result, stating that it is a research protocol, the major goal of publication is to identify worldwide partners who will join the project and/or provide financial support for it, even though relevant data results are not presented. Taking into account what was cited above, the paper proceeds with the protocol, including the research methodology and conclusions section.

The Protocol

Objectives

The objectives of this research protocol will be:

- Evaluating how society perceives nurses as professionals, even in the face of a pandemic.
- Increasing understanding of the social dimension of nursing from the perspective of nurses.
- A literature review describing the history of nursing in Albania.
- Promoting ongoing communication and collaboration among nursing education, practice, and research on a national and international scale.

The methodological and theoretical framework

To achieve the objectives, the methodology for the data collection and analysis will be based on grounded theory (GT) (42), a design framework widely applied in qualitative research (43, 44) that has its roots in sociology and can be used successfully by novice researchers (45).

This research methodology was developed in 1960s by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L, Strauss, 1967) (46) and since then has gained a lot of popularity. An explanation of the primary concern of the population being studied, as well as how this concern is addressed or handled, is provided by the grounded theory, a comprehensive research methodology. The theory has been used previously in area of education research (47), as well as to explain the social aspect of nursing in different studies (48). Finding out what people know and how they understand their

world is the main goal of grounded theory. The goals of this proposal are thought to be achievable from both the social science and healthcare perspectives (49). Investigating social psychological characteristics and coming up with theoretical explanations for them are relevant uses of grounded theory. While in traditional research (Figure 1) the researcher starts from literature review to understand the researched problems, in grounded theory research the data collection, coding and analysis occur at the same time (50).

Traditional research methodology

Grounded theory

FIGURE 1. The proposed Methodology
(Grounded theory vs Traditional research methodology) Source: (51)
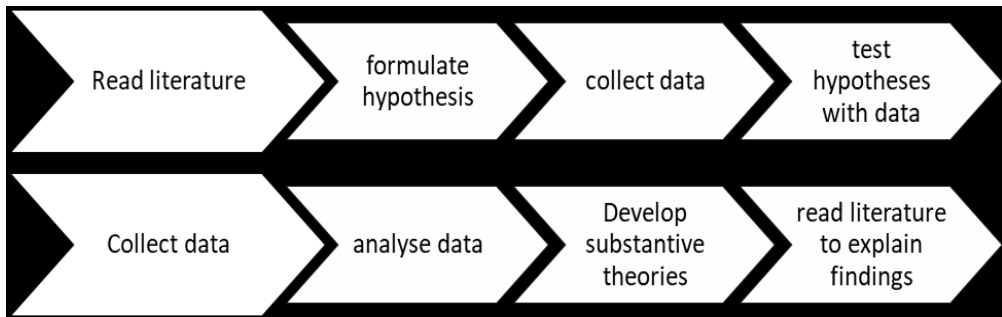
Based on the grounded theory process the area of interest identified for the proposed research is the public image of nurses in the community as well as among nursing students and professional nurses themselves, focusing only on the data. Data will be collected though mixed methods, such as open ended question interviews with participants, focus groups or collecting Texts and Artefacts (52). The data analysis will be based on line by line coding, followed by open coding, axial coding and selective coding which will represent the framework with a variable that includes all the collected data (53).

The methods for reviewing, including the inherent quality components, will be used for the objective related to the literature review outlining the history of nursing in Albania (54). The updated PRISMA reporting guidelines for systematic reviews will be used more (55). The flowchart of research protocol is presented in Figure 2.

Sample study

Participants will be from three different target groups. Adult people from different target groups of the population, nursing students and nursing professionals. The selection of the nursing students and professionals will be a convenient and intentional sample, while the selection of the adults from different target groups will be random. The study will first be conducted at a national level, and then it will be promoted to be conducted internationally. The tools and instruments for the data collection will include semi structured interviews with different focus-groups. Focus groups will typically have a sample size of 6 to 11 participants. Based on the situation, the data collection will be virtual or in person. The interviews will include general questions about the social aspect of nursing and move to more detailed questions as the interview advances. The interviews will be paper-based or recorded with the participants' permission. Utilizing conformability, the interviews› validity and reliability will be evaluated (discussion of preliminary findings with other researchers), dependability (detailed and descriptive data analysis), credibility (selecting the appropriate method for data collection) and transferability (coding process after consultation with relevant experts). The semi-structured interviews will only be conducted if participants have provided their consent forms to take part in the study.

Data analysis

Textual and conceptual analysis of the data will be divided into two layers. The textual level will consist of focus groups, codes, and text data. On a conceptual level, networks, categories, and key categories will be included. Descriptive statistics will be utilized for the analysis of sociodemographic data.

Ethical aspects

Every phase of the research proposal will be guided by all the Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects of the Declaration of Helsinki (56) and Ethics for researchers European Commission (57). The researcher applicant also ensures that for the realization of this project they will act in accordance to the Code of Conduct for Integrity in Scientific Research in the Republic of Albania (58). Potential individuals participating in the study will also be informed that they are free not to participate. Persons who decide to participate will be provided with privacy and confidentiality in accordance with national laws on personal data protection. Additionally, information about the types of data to be collected, the

purposes for which they will be used, the limitations on their use, disclosure, and retention, as well as any anticipated secondary uses of the data, will be provided to potential study participants. After the relevant Ethical Committee has approved the research protocol, the data collection will start.

The expected outcome(s) will have the following impacts on nursing education and the field›s future:

- A discussion of the social perception of nursing from the perspective of the native community, including the variables that determine the social aspect of nursing.
- An outline of how nursing is perceived in society from the perspective of nursing students identify obstacles and factors related to the chosen career.
- An assessment of the social perception of nursing as seen by nursing professionals identifying the profession-related barriers and determinants.
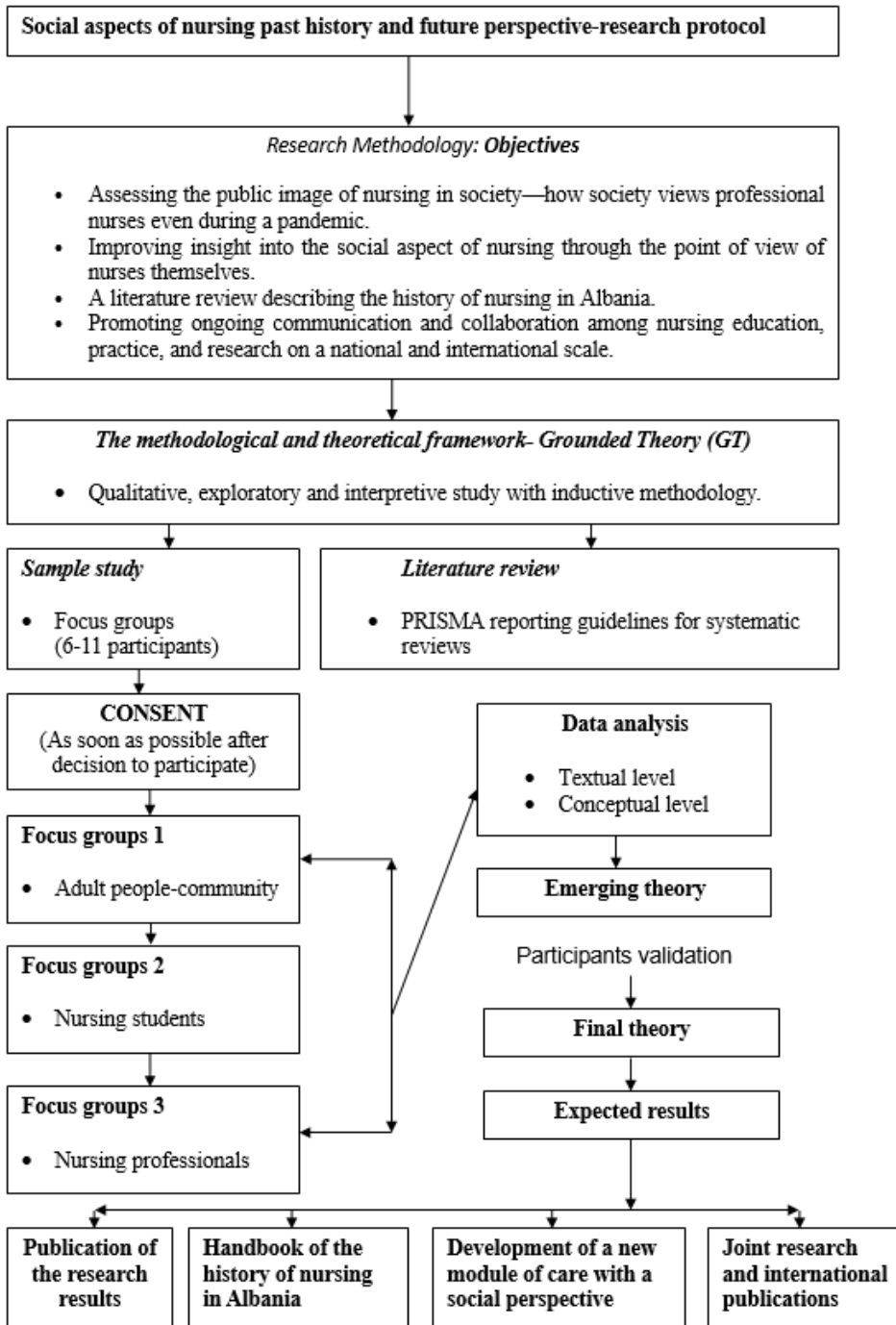
Expected products

- Publication of the research results as scholarly publications in international indexed scientific journals.
- A written summary that serves as a roadmap for the evolution of nursing in Albania and acts as a reference for future research on nursing education.
- The development of a new module of care with a social perspective to be introduced in the nursing curriculum.
- Joint research and international publications to maximize impact and visibility.

Conclusions

Researchers are expected to study research, policy, and implementation related to the social aspect of nursing and its integration by health professionals in daily practice during the next few years. The authors of this research protocol invite anyone with an interest in the nursing profession on a national or international level to join the research team with the potential to completely achieve the suggested objectives with a global impact on health education and care.

FIGURE 2. Research protocol flowchart

Social aspects of nursing past history and future perspective-research protocol

Research Methodology: *Objectives*

- Assessing the public image of nursing in society—how society views professional nurses even during a pandemic.
- Improving insight into the social aspect of nursing through the point of view of nurses themselves.
- A literature review describing the history of nursing in Albania.
- Promoting ongoing communication and collaboration among nursing education, practice, and research on a national and international scale.

The methodological and theoretical framework– Grounded Theory (GT)

- Qualitative, exploratory and interpretive study with inductive methodology.

Sample study

- Focus groups (6-11 participants)

Literature review

- PRISMA reporting guidelines for systematic reviews

CONSENT
(As soon as possible after decision to participate)

Data analysis

- Textual level
- Conceptual level

Focus groups 1

- Adult people-community

Emerging theory

Participants validation

Focus groups 2

- Nursing students

Final theory

Focus groups 3

- Nursing professionals

Expected results

| Publication of the research results | Handbook of the history of nursing in Albania | Development of a new module of care with a social perspective | Joint research and international publications |

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