



SOCIAL ANXIETY AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Social anxiety is the constant excessive fear of social environment. It is becoming a major problem to healthcare profession. Its prevalence among younger people is increasing each year (Ghezelbash et al., 2015). Nursing is a profession that requires social interactions. Anecdotal evidences indicated that nursing students are experiencing social anxiety. There are, however, limited studies published on this issue in developing countries. Thus, this study was conducted to explore social anxiety among nursing students.

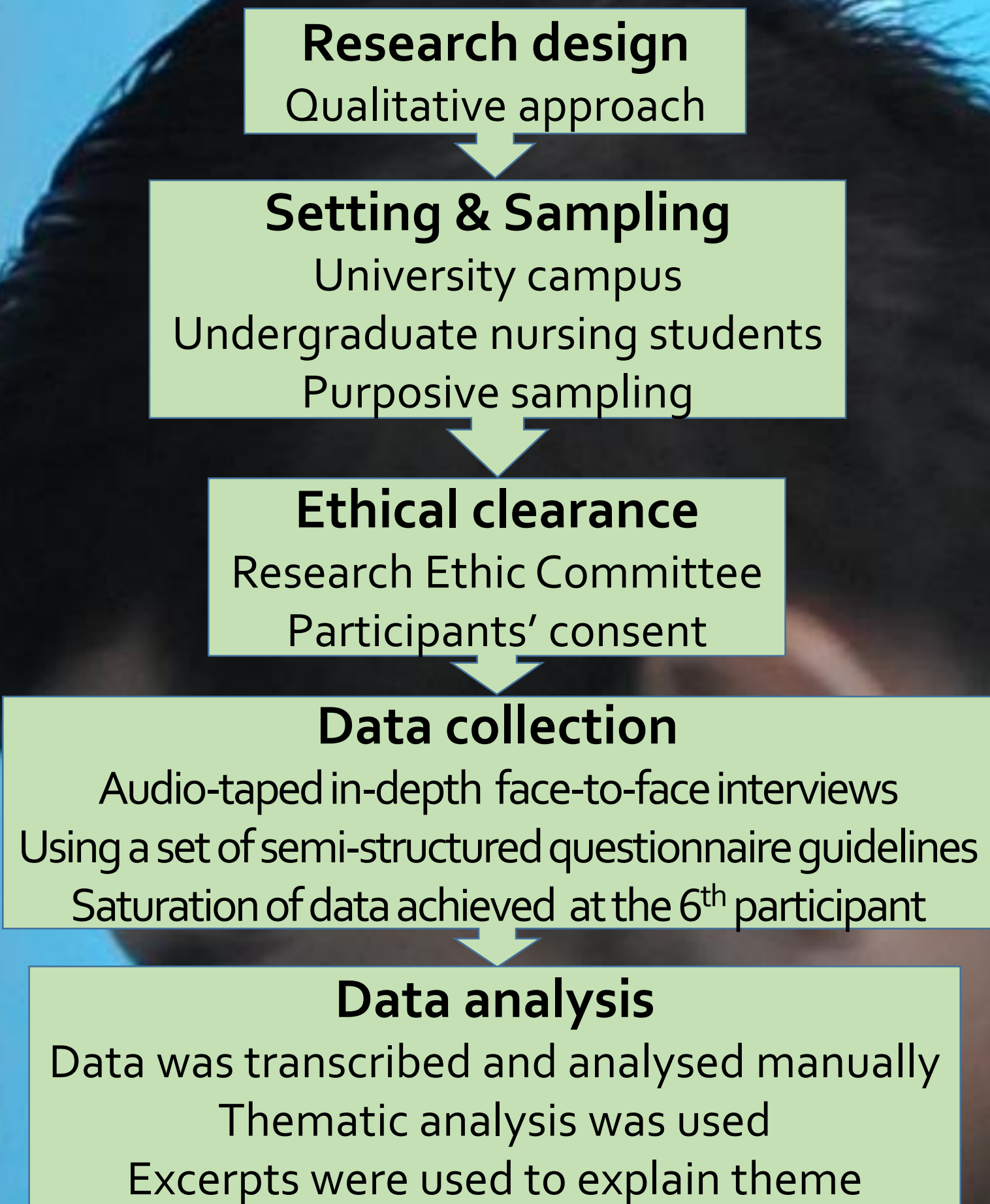
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the experiences of social anxiety among nursing students?
2. What are the factors that contribute to social anxiety among nursing students?
3. How did the nursing students coped with social anxiety?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the experiences of social anxiety among nursing students.
2. To identify the factors that contribute to social anxiety among nursing students.
3. To identify the nursing students’ coping strategies on social anxiety.

METHODOLOGY



FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

1. Experiences of social anxiety

1.1 Anxiety-producing events

Participants encountered social anxiety especially during their clinical practicum:

“... usually in the ward, the anxiety just come to me ... during ward round ... when being asked by doctors or nurses and when performing procedures, especially when people are observing ...” [Anne]

Some also stated having social anxiety during seminar presentation:

“... I don’t like presentation (sigh) ... I don’t really like crowds or when all eyes are on me ... watching me speaking in public ... I don’t feel comfortable with it ...” [Chester]

Al-Amarei (2011) consistently identified social anxiety as the fear and avoidance when one is performing or when simply being observed.

1.2 Manifestations of social anxiety

Study participants stated that they exhibit peculiar bodily effects preceding to having social anxiety:

“... my hand tremor and my heart pounds each time I get anxious or feeling stressed ...” [Corin]

Socially anxious people tend to exhibit hand and voice tremors as well as an increased heart and respiration rate (Varcarolis, 2006).

3. Coping with social anxiety

Participants reported that exercising is one of the coping method they used to alleviate social anxiety:

“... although exercising after clinical placement is very tiring, I find that it does help me. I am not as emotional when exercising ... It distractis my thought from the stressors and anxiety I've encountered earlier during clinical placement ...” [Anne]

They also reported turning to peers divert their mind:

“... my roommate is part of my coping, he is also one of my nursing colleagues ... he understands how it feels like to be nervous during clinical setting ... he is also very supportive ...” [Andy]

A study by Mlek (2011) similarly indicated that exercising is one of the most common coping methods used to overcome social anxiety and Gibbons, Dempster, and Moutray (2008) found that seeking social support from family and friends helps to overcome social anxiety.

2. Factors that contribute to social anxiety

2.1 Stressful or past life events

Participants experienced social anxiety caused by stressful or their past life event:

“... in the ward, there are so much things to complete at one time and people calling you here and there ... made me stressed ...” [Bryan]

“... I'd be nervous when I do procedures because I've been badly scolded in the past ...” [Anne]

Consistent with a study by Fitria et. al (2013), social anxiety is due to stressful or past life events.

2.2 Inability to adapt

Participants experienced social anxiety due to inability to adapt with the environment:

“... I have problem with socializing ... I could not blend fast with new friends in the ward as compared to my colleagues ...” [Bridget]

Reghuram and Mathias (2014) also revealed that social anxiety is due to inability to adapt which lead to stress.

2.3 Lack of knowledge & incompetence

Some participants asserted the feelings of inadequate knowledge and skills of the clinical setting that led to anxiety:

“... sometimes, I feel I do not know how to do those procedures ... I get nervous by it ...” [Bryan]

Ghezelbash et. al (2015) also indicated that social anxiety is due to doubt in their skills and feelings of incompetence in the clinical setting.

2.4 Relationships with clinical staff

Participants reported that some clinical staff are not welcoming:

“... there are staff who don't like having students in their wards ... I felt useless and feeling like I am in their way ...” [Andy]

A study by Melincavage (2008) similarly found that when nursing staff are not welcoming, it affect students’ feeling and made them feel anxious and useless.

2.5 Dealing with critically ill patient & emergency

Some participants experienced social anxiety when taking care of the critically ill patients:

“... sometimes I feel that my responsibility is so huge in which I often questioned myself ... what will happen if I do this and that? ... I feared the patients' condition worsen because of me ... to the extend that the death of a patient was because of me ...” [Bridget]

Ghezelbash et. al (2015) also highlighted that social anxiety is due to the fear of patients’ death.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted nursing students’ experience with regard to social anxiety as well as factors that could trigger them. The students used various strategies to cope with their social anxiety.

Limitations

- Being a novice researcher, there might be some important information that were missed.
- Small sample size, hence, the result could not be generalized.

Implications

- This study indicated that nursing institution and clinical settings need to collaborate to plan appropriate nursing students’ learning environment to reduce possible stressors.

Recommendations

- Further in-depth studies related to social anxiety on groups of people in various situation and environment would be useful to add to the existing body of knowledge.

Acknowledgement

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