

NURSE'S VOICE FROM THE FIELD

Navigating Paradigms and Perspectives as a PhD Student

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A researcher's journey is marked by an ongoing quest for knowledge, the discovery of facts, and the introduction of new paradigms and perspectives. The idea of reflexivity lies at the core of this undertaking, a broad technique that involves researchers critically assessing, evaluating, and self-critically critiquing how their subjectivity and circumstances affect the research processes. This paper delves into the different research paradigms and perspectives, their own set of challenges, and the significant influence they have had on my work and their significant effect on my future works.

An extensive understanding of each research paradigm is crucial before selecting one for any study. A research paradigm entails a hypothesis or hypotheses, or alternately, research questions, as well as the technique, epistemology, ontology, and axiology that offer thorough research directions. It is a fundamental set of beliefs or a worldview that directs research action or an investigation, according to leaders in the field Guba and Lincoln (1994). They provide direction and a framework for the study's accomplishment (Makombe, 2017). Scientist and researcher Kuhn (1962) coined the term "paradigm". A research paradigm is an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables, and problems attached with appropriate methodological approaches and tools, according to Kuhn. Positivism, constructivism, and pragmatism are the three paradigms that are seen frequently. Positivists are more likely to utilize scientific methods to quantify reality because they believe there is just one reality that can be measured and understood (Doan, 2013). They assume an objective reality that can be studied independently of the researcher. Positivism typically employs quantitative methods and aims for generalizable findings. On the other hand, constructivists recognize multiple subjective realities that are socially constructed (Makombe, 2017). Constructivists often employ qualitative methods, focusing on understanding the meanings

and interpretations of individuals. Lastly, in pragmatics, reality is dynamic and context-dependent. Pragmatism utilizes a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods based on what is most practical. The paradigm researchers choose has a substantial impact on several areas of their study, including the development of research questions, the choice of research methodologies, and the interpretation of findings (Legg et.al.,2021).

However, each research paradigm and perspective comes with its own set of challenges, reflecting the distinct ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions that guide the research process. Positivism often prioritizes objectivity, potentially leading researchers to overlook the subjectivity inherent in certain phenomena. This may result in a limited understanding of complex social realities. On the other hand, constructivist perspectives acknowledge the subjectivity of knowledge, which can make it challenging to establish generalizable findings. Interpretations may vary among researchers, leading to potential conflicts in understanding. Furthermore, pragmatism encourages diverse methods, but integrating these effectively can be challenging (Rashid, 2023). Researchers need to justify and articulate how different methods contribute to the research.

I was faced with the daunting task of deciding on the paradigm that would underpin my first research study during my master's days. I had no prior knowledge of paradigms, even their significance so, having to choose between positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism was both perplexing and illuminating. Nevertheless, I ended up recognizing the positivist paradigm in my study three years ago entitled Quality of Life of Persons Deprived of Liberty in the New Ilocos Sur Provincial Jail. This study served as my requirement for

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my Master of Arts in Nursing Degree. I approached my research from a positivist mindset and a quantitative viewpoint. My commitment to empirical inquiry and recent understanding of quantitative approaches served as the lenses through which I approached my previous research. In this quantitative study, I took on the role of an objective observer and evaluated the quality of life of persons deprived of liberty using established metrics. This study assessed and quantified the quality of life of persons deprived of liberty and identified factors that may impact their well-being. A cross-sectional design to capture a snapshot of the quality of life at a specific point in time was utilized. A random sampling of 490 incarcerated individuals from the prison, ensuring representation across different demographics served as the respondents of the study. A validated quantitative instrument measuring different domains of quality of life, including physical health, mental well-being, social relationships, and environmental factors was utilized. The findings of the research study were effectively communicated to diverse audiences through a Regional Research Congress held last June of 2022 at the University of Northern Philippines, Vigan City. The study adds value to the existing body of knowledge, thus as the researcher, I feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction.

On my next journey, I want to embark on a constructivist worldview and an ethnographic perspective. It is influenced by my belief that reality is socially produced, and I have the commitment to fully ingratiate myself in the cultural setting. This paradigm resonated because it corresponded with my modern belief that human experiences are subjective. This new journey will provide me with a deep contextual awareness of the community or cultural group. The passion for exploring one's culture and group has been burning inside of me as a budding researcher. I want to try and generate rich qualitative data, including narratives, observations, and interviews. I want to particularly explore and understand the issues, lived experiences, and cultural identity of immigrant groups in urban environments from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. I want to immerse myself in the daily lives and practices of the people in a particular ethnic group. However, I am afraid that my personal beliefs, experiences, and my preconceived notions may influence the interpretation of data. I might misinterpret non-verbal cues or gestures from participants belonging to a different cultural group. The insights of my professor in Advanced Research Design, helped me navigate those difficulties and challenges. Our professor mentors as really well, and exposes us, the Ph.D. students, to diverse research methodologies, research paradigms, and different theoretical frameworks which broadens our understanding of the research landscape. Indeed, a realization of what a good mentor can do

as she brings alive the concept of praxis while bringing in a wealth of knowledge and experience to the classroom. She often shares real-world examples and applications of academic concepts. All these things that I have ascertained from her deliberations could help me in the future in refining my research topics, ensuring that they are relevant, feasible, and contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Embarking on mixed method research as pragmatists do, is still not on my list. Assessing mixed methods research can provide a variety of obstacles. These difficulties can include things like the need for additional time, money, abilities, or knowledge to organize, carry out, and document the research, as well as problems with sampling, data gathering, analysis, and integration that are theoretical, practical, or ethical (George, 2023). Furthermore, incompatible assumptions, paradigms, or frameworks that support the qualitative and quantitative methodologies may arise. Mixed methods research often requires flexibility and adaptability during the research process. These are some of the reasons why I consider these methods challenging and do not plan to embark on this the soonest. I still have insufficient expertise in doing a mixed-method type of research and might end up having unsuccessful results. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, many researchers find that the benefits of mixed methods research, such as the ability to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena, outweigh the difficulties. Rich insights into the research phenomenon that cannot be fully comprehended by utilizing either qualitative or quantitative approaches are likely to be provided by a mixed method (Diwadi, 2021).

As researchers, it is our responsibility to constantly assess our awareness and where we are in the process. Adopting reflexivity in our work is a commitment to the depth and integrity of our study, not just a scholarly exercise. Think back for a moment on your experiences, including the presumptions, prejudices, and distinctive viewpoints you have to offer. The key is to recognize the significance of subjectivity rather than to minimize it. By engaging in reflexivity, we elevate our research, we transform potential blind spots into points of insight, ensuring our work stands on a foundation of self-awareness. This process isn't a critique but an opportunity for growth. We should support each other in undertaking introspective journeys and value the adaptability and flexibility that might expand the scope and significance of our study by sharing our introspective travels. Talk about your thoughts, doubts, and insights. By doing this, we not only improve our work but also advance the careful, open, and robust search of knowledge as a group.

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Throughout her years of clinical experience, she developed a deep interest in the intricacies of research methodologies and their influence on healthcare practices especially in the field of gerontology.

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