

FEATURE ARTICLE

Reflection of My Identity, Values, Motivations, and Aspirations as a Researcher

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Introduction

Reflecting on one's identity as a researcher involves interrogating not only skills and competencies but also the values, motivations, and aspirations to produce a scientifically sound and relevant studies. Reflexivity, as Finlay (2002) describes, is the continuous process of examining how the researcher's background, assumptions, and positionality shape the research process and outcomes (Berger, 2015; Sibbald et al., 2024). In my case, two decades of engagement with research, beginning with my master's thesis and continuing through my doctoral studies, have shaped a dynamic and evolving research identity (McIntosh, 2023).

My identity as a researcher has been forged through exposure to quantitative and qualitative methodologies, mentorship from professors and advisers, participation in research groups, and the lived challenges of balancing academic, professional, and personal roles. As Berger (2015) notes, researchers are never neutral observers; they bring their histories and motivations into their inquiries. Thus, my reflection acknowledges not only technical competencies but also the values of passion, integrity, and social responsibility that underpin my aspiration to contribute to nursing science (Trent, 2025).

Early Encounters with Research: Foundations of Integrity

My appreciation for research began during my master's degree program in nursing, where I completed a quantitative thesis. The rigor of that experience, from proposal development to data gathering, analysis, and dissemination, impressed upon me the importance of ethics and integrity. My professors and adviser emphasized that research results must be true, accurate, and free from bias. This instilled in me a conviction that research is not merely an academic requirement but a moral responsibility to ensure validity and usefulness (Polit & Beck, 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative methodology appealed to me because of its structured nature, clear designs, and statistical rigor. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasized, quantitative research enables the testing of hypotheses, the measurement of variables, and the comparison of groups, producing findings that can be generalized and evaluated for their effectiveness. My training reinforced the necessity of aligning research design, sampling, statistical treatment, and theoretical framework to ensure coherence and rigor. These foundations became part of my researcher identity: valuing precision, objectivity, and accountability.

Expanding Horizons: Exploring Qualitative Research

While quantitative research grounded my early experiences, my doctoral training expanded my appreciation for qualitative methodologies. Exposure to narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study designs broadened my understanding of how knowledge can be constructed differently.

Each approach, I realized, carries its unique strength. Phenomenology enables the exploration of lived experience; grounded theory facilitates theory development from data; ethnography provides cultural insights into group practices; and case studies allow in-depth inquiry into particular contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). More importantly, Yip, 2024; McIntosh, 2023, reiterates the nature of qualitative research' emphasis on reflexivity and bracketing, ensuring that the researcher critically manages personal biases so findings remain authentic to participants' voices.

This was not only intellectually stimulating but also personally transformative. I came to appreciate that trustworthiness, expressed through credibility, transferability, dependability,

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and confirmability, is as essential to qualitative inquiry as validity and reliability are in quantitative work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My doctoral coursework provided opportunities to practice coding, theme generation, and data categorization, which at first seemed daunting but later became tools for uncovering rich insights (Birnbaum, 2025).

A recent qualitative paper I completed for a PhD requirement further strengthened my appreciation of qualitative inquiry. The findings illuminated previously unexamined aspects of nursing practice, underscoring the responsibility of dissemination so that results can inform evidence-based approaches. This reinforced my motivation to pursue qualitative studies in the future while integrating them with quantitative traditions (Sibbald et al., 2024).

Values and Motivations in Research

Throughout my journey, several values have consistently shaped my researcher identity:

Integrity and Ethics. Ethical considerations are not add-ons but integral to the entire research process, from design to dissemination. Upholding honesty, accuracy, and fairness ensures that research outcomes benefit the discipline and the populations served.

Passion and Dedication. Conducting research is neither easy nor linear. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches demand time, patience, and rigor. My passion for nursing and evidence-based practice sustains my commitment through these challenges.

Compassion and Social Responsibility. Nursing research is not abstract; it directly affects patient care, education, and policy. I am motivated by the belief that findings should address gaps in practice, advance health equity, and improve quality of life (Trent, 2025; Mbalinda et al., 2024).

Commitment to Lifelong Learning. The dynamic landscape of nursing research requires continuous learning, unlearning, and relearning. Exposure to new methodologies and theories keeps me adaptable and motivated (Birnbaum, 2025).

Research as Evidence for Practice

My reflection has deepened my conviction that both quantitative and qualitative methods are essential to nursing science. While quantitative research employs probability sampling and produces generalizable findings, qualitative

research uses non-probability sampling and focuses on saturation, yielding deep insights into phenomena. Both, however, contribute evidence that informs education, service, and policy (Polit & Beck, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

This complementarity reinforces the idea that methodological pluralism enriches nursing research. As a researcher, I no longer see myself as confined to one paradigm but as someone who can navigate across approaches depending on the research problem. This flexibility is itself a value — ensuring that the research question dictates the method, not the other way around (Sibbald et al., 2024).

Moreover, I recognize the crucial role of results dissemination. Findings must not remain within academic archives but should be shared widely so they can guide practice innovations, policy reforms, and educational strategies. In this sense, research becomes truly impactful when translated into action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; McIntosh, 2023).

Aspirations as a Researcher

Looking ahead, my aspirations reflect both personal growth and disciplinary contribution:

Publishing in peer-reviewed journals to share findings more widely and participate in scholarly dialogues.

Mentoring young nurse researchers by sharing my experiences and fostering their passion for evidence-based practice.

Pursuing mixed-methods studies that integrate quantitative rigor with qualitative depth, offering comprehensive insights into nursing phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Sibbald et al., 2024).

Addressing real-world gaps in nursing education, clinical practice, and policy through research that is scientifically sound yet socially relevant (Mbalinda et al., 2024; Trent, 2025).

Conclusion

Reflecting on my identity, values, motivations, and aspirations, I see myself as a researcher shaped by the rigor of quantitative methods, inspired by the richness of qualitative inquiry, and anchored in values of integrity, passion, compassion, and lifelong learning. My motivation is not only personal advancement but also the advancement of nursing science through evidence-based contributions.

As I continue my doctoral journey, I aspire to produce research that is not only methodologically sound but also socially impactful, bridging gaps in nursing education and clinical practice. In doing so, I hope to inspire future generations of nurse researchers to pursue inquiry with the same passion and commitment (Sibbald et al., 2024; McIntosh, 2023).

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Her professional expertise spans infection prevention and control, perioperative nursing, and critical care, reflecting her strong foundation in both practice and teaching. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Our Lady of Lourdes College Foundation and her Master of Arts in Nursing from Manila Central University. To further advance her specialization, she completed a Certificate in Infection Prevention and Control at American Sentinel University. She is presently pursuing her Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing at the University of the Philippines.

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“When research informs practice, and practice challenges research, the profession advances.”