



Does being involved in a research project enhance the postgraduate taught student experience: A qualitative research case study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Postgraduate taught nursing students face many challenges, including lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills which might create anxiety and impact on the development of research expertise. Therefore, to address and support the development and acquisition of student understanding it is important to explore and be cognizant of the student's experience. This will facilitate enhancement of the curriculum, whilst improving future career aspirations and the provision of evidence-based care in practice.

Aim: To evaluate the participation of a postgraduate taught nursing student in a research project.

Design: Case study methodology was used to explore the lived experience of participating in a research project.

Methods: Mixed qualitative methods were used which included a semi-structured interview and photo-elicitation whereby the participant provided a significant photograph for discussion during the semi-structured interview.

Results: Analysis revealed 2 superordinate themes which focused on 1) The Impact of learning and 2) The Workplace Environment.

Conclusions: The participation in living research, as part of a collaborative team has the potential to nurture the confidence of the student in their own abilities to generate new knowledge which can inform the provision of care. The workplace needs to be invested in this journey with leadership valuing the contribution that participation in research can make to the delivery of care. Leaders of postgraduate taught programmes should consider ways which would benefit students to reflect participation in ongoing research.

1. Introduction

To enable the provision of quality care, health care practitioners require in-depth knowledge and skills. To facilitate this objective, it is important that these practitioners undertake additional development and training (Panucci et al., 2023). However, in the UK, students on postgraduate taught programmes face many challenges when returning to study. These include lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills which may create anxiety (Bamber, Choudhary, Hislop and Lane, 2017). These may have a negative impact on their learning experience (Coneyworth, Jessop, Maden and White, 2020). Tobbell et al. (2010) argue that there is often an assumption that the postgraduate student possesses expert knowledge due to prior experiences which may contrast with the perceptions of the student. Therefore, to support the development and acquisition of student knowledge it is important to explore and understand the student experience. This will enable the curriculum to be enhanced and improved. This is particularly relevant when providing research education to postgraduate taught students as this will enhance future career aspirations (Daniel, Kumar and Omar, 2018) and improve

the provision of evidence-based care in practice.

2. Background literature review

In the literature, research has been undertaken which examines how postgraduate taught education supports the development of the health care practitioner. Madi et al. (2019) completed a systematic review which explored the impact of postgraduate education on the health care professional. In the 35 studies that were reviewed by Madi et al. (2019) the importance of the evolution of critical thinking skills, clinical reasoning skills, and confidence and motivation to practice these skills were all recognised. However, barriers to the implementation of the acquired knowledge and skills in the workplace were also highlighted (Brekemans et al., 2016). These barriers included unsupportive attitudes from leaders and managers in the health care services (Fry and Attawet, 2018) and the lack of a clear path in terms of career progression (Zahran, 2013). The literature that was reviewed, emphasized that encouraging postgraduate taught students to enhance their research knowledge and skills is a global concern (Alamdari et al., 2012; Anunobi

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and Emerole, 2008). Here, the challenges for the postgraduate student involved lack of understanding of the impact that research can have on the provision of care which influenced the motivation of the student (Morales et al., 2016). The literature that was reviewed focused predominantly on the experiences of post graduate medical students where the discussion was on the duty to support students to meet their full potential (Poobalan, Barrow and Cleland, 2021). Green et al. (2010) suggested that participation in research projects can help to foster an interest in medical research, whilst Zimmerman (2013) argued that such activities can help the student to develop critical thinking skills which enhance the provision of evidence-based medicine. Hart et al. (2022) found that it was important to support the development of research skills and promote medical research but reported that limited time and lack of support from senior researchers when participating in research projects hindered this opportunity.

However, whilst this should be an aspiration for all health care professional postgraduate taught courses and students there is limited published literature which examines how this can be achieved particularly in the nursing profession. O'Grady and Cottle (2016) suggest that it may be beneficial to explore the student experience; whilst Dimitra et al. (2016) maintained that "project-based learning" has the potential to be effective in terms of student learning. In the post-graduate nursing education sphere, there is a need for experiential learning which enables the student to develop knowledge and understanding which can be used in and beyond their workplace setting (Starr et al., 2016). This is approach was employed in this case study to explore the impact that such a strategy might have on the postgraduate taught nursing student experience, which might sequentially inform the future curriculum, thereby supporting the provision of quality care.

3. Aim

The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact on the acquisition of research knowledge and skills on a postgraduate taught nursing student as a consequence of participating in a research project.

4. Methods

A case study methodology was considered appropriate for this study as it attempted to explain how the participation in a research study impacted on the development of knowledge and skills. Yin (2018) maintains that case study research enables the researcher to explore a current multifaceted social phenomenon through having an in-depth focus on a real-world perspective. The research included an interpretivist approach which was considered applicable as it enabled a focus on understanding subjective interpretations by using qualitative data collection methods (Rehman and Alharthi, 2016).

The researcher who collected and analysed the data was an experienced researcher who had been a principal investigator for several research studies in the field of qualitative healthcare research. The researcher is a registered nurse and educator with many years of experience, whose aim in terms of research is to examine the impact of educational strategies on the provision of care provided by nurses. The researcher recognises that being a registered nurse educator might lead to bias in terms of data interpretation. This enabled a nuanced understanding of the challenges that are associated with quality care provision. This awareness was important when conducting the case study. Additionally, the researcher took care and was reflective when collecting and analysing the data in an attempt to mitigate bias.

The case study data were collected using both a semi structured interview which lasted approximately 90 minutes and a creative methodology approach. The semi-structured interview was audio recorded and transcribed. The rationale for using these 2 approaches was to gain a nuanced understanding of the participant perceptions of their involvement in the research project and how this can be developed for other students in the future. The study employed semi – structured interview

methodology which enables the participant the time to discuss their views and opinions in a safe and confidential space (Kallio et al., 2016). During the interview the participant was able to provide their views and opinions without influence from the researcher who used a semi-structured interview schedule to aid the collection of rich data. This method of inquiry enabled the participant to provide insider views on their perspective regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Blumer, 1969). Bryman, (2021) suggests that examining the "lived experience" of the participant facilitates the emergence of unanticipated insights in the collected data. A schedule for the semi-structured interview was employed (Fig. 1).

The additional data collection strategy in this study involved a creative methodology approach. Moxley, Washington and Crystal (2015) assert that through using arts-based methods, which is borrowed from the humanities, this can portray the lived experience of the participant in a form that other forms of social sciences research inquiry cannot. This is because arts-based methods illustrate and illuminate individual stories in terms of how that one experience can represent and contribute understanding of the concept under examination (Feen-Callagan et al., 2010). A core aspect of the study was to use the creative method of photovoice (Luo, 2017). The participant was asked to submit a photograph which represented their experience and perceptions of participating in a research study. The photograph was explored with the participant during the semi-structured interview to help inform the emergent conversation. The photograph was key in illustrating the participant experience and provided further rich data for the study. Additionally, photovoice and elicitation enabled the participant to have reflective time before their semi-structured interview (van Hees et al., 2017) which they found beneficial. This photograph did not contain any identifying information to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. The participant gave their informed consent for the photograph to be included in the final report of the research project and any subsequent publications or conference presentations.

4.1. Participant

The participant for this study was a postgraduate nursing student who was on a taught Masters course. The participant was a female between the age of 35–50 years old. The participant had successfully completed the final dissertation module as part of their Masters programme. In this case study the participant had been a member of a research team which took place over a 2-year period, and which was funded by a national organisation. The research examined the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders who had worked with a group of nurses in the clinical setting. During the 2-year research study the case study participant was supported by other members of the team both during the data collection process, data analysis processes and the writing of the final report. The case study participant attended the research team meetings on a regular basis throughout the research project and was supported by the principal investigator and other research team members. The case study participant had also worked in the clinical setting with the group of nurses who were being studied. The case study participant had conducted a literature review for their dissertation module as part of the Masters programme which met the inclusion criteria for the case study. The inclusion criteria included that the participant had taken part in a research project which was aligned to the student Masters dissertation research module topic. Other post-graduate nursing students who had completed the Masters research modules were considered for the case study but did not meet the inclusion criteria for the case study.

4.2. Data Analysis

The data were transcribed following the semi-structured interview and photo elicitation element of the data collection. Once the data had been transcribed it was authenticated by the participant (Lincoln and

Loose schedule of questions used during the semi structured interview

The Grand Tour Question

- What have been your experiences, expectations, and perceptions of participating in an ongoing research project?

Recursive Questions

- How does what you are describing relate to your expectations?
- How does your photograph represent your experiences and expectations?

Open Ended Questions

- How has participating in this project helped you to understand the research process?
- How has this helped you in your current clinical role in practice?
- Can you provide examples that demonstrate how participating in this research project has influenced your practice?
- Was there anything else that could have further enhanced your understanding of the research process as a result of participating in this project?

Summary question – after a brief oral summary

- Is this an adequate summary?

Final Question – After reviewing the purpose of the study ask

- Have I missed anything?

Fig. 1. Loose schedule of questions used during the semi structured interview.

Guba, 1985). Birt et al. (2016) suggest that this enables the provision of co-constructed knowledge as the participant can engage with and add to data following the semi-structured interview. Following this process, the researcher employed an inductive approach to explore the data without biased notions, and this permitted themes and patterns to emerge from the participants experience (Bowling, 2014). As part of this process the responses were coded and categorised to determine the main ideas that emerged from the participants responses. In this study thematic analysis was used and therefore coding was an important part of this process as it permitted the researcher the ability to deconstruct and find the links between the data and identify the themes in the data (Galletta, 2013). Once the data had been coded, themes were organised and validated by the participant against the original transcript. These themes were condensed into conceptual themes by the researcher, thereby producing a synthesised interpretation of the perceptions of the participant. Silverman (2020) maintains that the themes that are generated in the data are an essential aspect of the analytical process as it can facilitate an appreciation of the discussion and creative methodology data. This in turn may verify or test the views and opinions of the individual and

produce a more detailed understanding of the data. Additionally respondent validation was achieved using member checking of the themes (Birt et al., 2016). This enabled verification from the participant that the data represented their views and experiences.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this case study was applied for and granted through the Higher Education Institute ethics approval processes where the student was studying. The participant was recruited following participation in a research project and the successful completion of the final dissertation module which formed part of the Master's degree programme. As the student had successfully completed their studies and had not been taught by the researcher prior to being recruited to and participating in the case study the potential for coercion due to a power imbalance between the researcher and the student as a participant was reduced. The individual was given a 'Participant Information Sheet' prior to participating and was asked to sign a consent form to confirm that they agreed to participate, which indicated that they had read the

participant information sheet and had the opportunity to ask questions. This was completed prior to the participant signing the consent form and indicated that they willingly participated in the semi-structured interview and the significant photograph discussion. The semi-structured interview was recorded and transcribed and therefore the participant was informed that any personal information that was provided to the researcher would be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the [Data Protection Act, \(2018\)](#), General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and the Higher Education Institute Research Governance and Ethics procedures where the principal investigator was based and where the ethics approval was granted. After the collection of the data, the transcript from the semi-structured interview was anonymised ensuring that the participant was not identifiable.

4.4. Findings

The data from the semi-structured interview transcript and significant photograph was compared and categorised using thematic analysis (Evans and Lewis, 2018). To validate the themes and to reduce bias, a member of the original research team reviewed the data and confirmed the themes independent of the researcher involved in the case study. The aim of the research was to evaluate the impact on the acquisition of research knowledge and skills on a postgraduate taught nursing student as a consequence of participating in a research project. Consequently, the following superordinate and subordinate themes were identified which aligned with the aim of the research by the researcher (Fig. 2):

Theme 1: The Impact of learning: Subthemes were: Intellectual Wellbeing and The Provision of Care.

Theme 2: The Workplace Environment: Subthemes were: Opportunities and Leadership Expectations: self and others.

These themes will be outlined in the following section and illustrated with quotations.

5. Theme 1: The Impact of learning

At the centre of the participant responses throughout the semi-structured interview and the photo-elicitation discussion was the determination by the participant, who was a postgraduate nursing student, to develop research knowledge and skills which could enhance the provision of care. In this case study the participant encapsulated theme one by commenting:

“I based my dissertation on my current working role and being part of the project...being able to participate in the research firsthand has supported my practice and my thinking...research skills [to me] demonstrates the importance of developing evidence-based practice, which is what we need to do, apply that knowledge and the skills in practice...”

This was further developed in the 2 subthemes related to the superordinate theme 1 which will be discussed below. These subthemes were: Intellectual Wellbeing and the Provision of Quality Care.

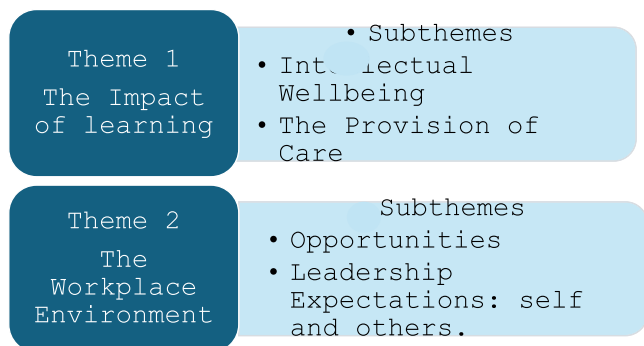


Fig. 2. Themes identified in the data.

6. Intellectual Wellbeing

In the data the participant discussed the opportunities that they had experienced as a postgraduate taught nursing student as a result of participating in a research project, which supported their intellectual wellbeing and commented:

“I’ve been able to look at research in a different way and rather than being frightened of it...its quite exciting because you’re doing that investigationyou’re looking a bit more in depth at the topic...” And

“being involved in the research project, I felt a real sense of achievement... it’s going to be published...who would have thought that when I was sitting in school...”

In these comments the participant indicates that they felt that participation in the research project which was aligned to their own area of nursing practice provided them with confidence which they had not previously felt.

In addition, the participant considered how being part of the research team had an impact on their intellectual development and made the following remarks:

“Undertaking the Masters and being part of the research project validated my intelligence....you can have discussions with other members of the research team and know that they are looking forward to hearing that discussion...” And

“it [research skills] provides you with confidence to support student nurses... I was able to share my knowledge and experience, which helped them understand the importance of research...”

In these quotes the participant highlights the positive impact both on themselves and the students they are supporting in practice as a result of being part of the research team.

When discussing the significant photograph (Figure 3), the participant indicated that it represented their academic and career achievements and commented:

“...its got little graduation hats on it...I left school with no qualifications... when I look at those little hats I think of my journey...each little hat gave me confidence....to develop more knowledge and skills...”

Here the participant describes and reflects on their educational journey. The comment encapsulates their thoughts, feelings, understanding, and opportunities of developing knowledge and skills which occurred through undertaking postgraduate education and being involved in the research study.

However, the participant also discussed the challenges they had experienced when attempting to share the knowledge they had gained with colleagues in practice and commented:

“Unless I shout about it it’s very silent...there hasn’t been any interest in the knowledge and skills I have gained... it’s sad it’s not recognised...” And

“I work in education and workforce development...and there has been no recognition...in terms of the development of my research skills which could help students...”

In these quotes the participant articulated that they had experienced a lack of acknowledgement which generated feelings of dissatisfaction. This highlights that the limited recognition of the value of education and the development of knowledge and skills can have a negative impact on the postgraduate taught nursing student.

7. Enhancing the Provision of care

In the data another consistent theme that was aligned to the aim of the research was that of the provision of quality patient care that could be provided through the development of improved skills and knowledge.

The participant considered how being involved in a research project had an impact on their skills as a clinician and commented:

“...being able to participate in the research...how it supports practice..... to develop evidence-based practice....it offers quality assurance, that there are nurses working with an increased level of knowledge and skills...”

The participant developed this when discussing the significant photograph by stating:

“The little hats represent how I have developed and underpinned my knowledge and skills...which has helped me in my nursing role in practice...”

In this quote the participant links the development of research skills they have acquired, by participating as a postgraduate nursing student in a research project, to the ability to provide enhanced care to patients in the clinical setting.

8. Theme 2: The Workplace environment

The second theme that was identified in the data was the workplace environment and the influence that this setting had on their development whilst studying as a postgraduate taught nursing student. This theme will be discussed below:

The participant as a postgraduate taught nursing student was undertaking and completing their studies whilst employed in the clinical setting. During the interview the participant explored their experiences of being a student whilst working in practice and remarked:

“In your journey you have some great support... some great debates with other practitioners...so there's always that peer support...however studying... maybe it does get lost in the workplace.... I can remember when I first started my Master's I was doing a module... the manager said, “you've got to do your study in your own time, not work time”. And I thought... that's interesting... that's a mixed message as the manager had agreed to me doing the course and work paid for the module...”

In this quote the participant discusses both the positive and negative experiences they had as a postgraduate taught nursing student in the workplace. This was further developed in the 2 subthemes which were related to the superordinate theme 2. These 2 sub themes were Opportunities and Leadership Expectations: Self & Others and will be discussed below.

9. Opportunities

In this subtheme the participant explored their experiences of being a postgraduate nursing student who was part of a research team exploring a topic which was aligned to their clinical setting. In the interview the participant made the following comments:

“I had great support form the University and module tutors...particularly the research modules...which helped me develop my knowledge of research...” And

“I was thrilled to be [chosen to be] part of the research team...I'm looking forward to some of the openings that it might create for myself...”

This was echoed in the significant photograph discussion where the participant stated:

“The glass hat represents the support that I had.... I don't think I would have taken part in the research if I hadn't that support...”

In these quotes the support that was provided to the participant enabled them to develop research knowledge. This in turn empowered them to access the opportunity to be part of the research team, which further enhanced their understanding of research and provided them with opportunities that they had not previously considered.

However, the participant also stated that they had experienced limited opportunities to share their knowledge as a postgraduate taught nursing student in the workplace and noted:

“...each module brought knowledge that I was then able to use to support my practice...but those skills weren't shared widelyand it's just like you complete the programme and that's the end...” And

“...there hasn't been an opportunity to disseminate my knowledgeI'm not sure whether I'm alone in that as a post grad student...its an area that needs to be worked on...”

The participant suggests in the following comment that this experience is one which might be mirrored by other postgraduate taught healthcare students:

“speaking to another postgraduate,they had the same issues in another practice site, and they left their post.... because.... the Masters and the research was not recognized....there was no development opportunities following it.”

In these quotes there emerges an apparent conflict in relation to how additional education qualifications might be perceived in the workplace and the impact that this has on the postgraduate taught student when working in practice.

10. Leadership Expectations: self & others

The second subtheme to be identified in the data was that of leadership expectations. In this subtheme two concepts emerged in the data which related to the participants acquisition of knowledge and skills in the practice setting particularly in relation to being a member of a research team which was aligned to the participants area of clinical practice. In the data the participant discussed their own expectations of leadership and their expectations of leadership from others whilst completing the postgraduate taught nursing studies and being part of a research team. These concepts are self and others and will be discussed below.

10.1. Self

In the context of their own leadership the participant articulated that completing postgraduate taught studies and participating in a research study enabled them to enhance their leadership skills and made the following comments:

“being able to look, below the surface and see what is there...not accepting things...looking at yourself and how you promote your practice to others, students, nurses....I'm always asking them have you looked at this? Have you done that?” And

“being part of the research team... has supported me...being part of this project... has helped me to help others...when some of the undergraduate students were coming up towards the research part of their studies, I was able to share my experiences with these students and provide them with some guidance that they could use in practice which was helpful...”

In the discussion about the significant photograph the participant confirmed these thoughts and remarked:

“when I'm looking at my reflection or combing my hair I think of those little hats and reflect on the research knowledge I have gained which they represent... which I can use to help others...”

In these quotes the participant recognizes the value that enhanced knowledge provides in terms of their role in the clinical setting, particularly in the context of research. The participant through the development of research knowledge was able to provide leadership to student nurses and junior colleagues which would benefit them and the care they provided to patients.

10.2. Others

In the subtheme of leadership the participant considered the attitude of others who were in leadership roles in practice and made the following comments:

".....ultimately you're just seen as a cog in the wheel...but not a cog with some extra knowledge that can be used."

And:

".....so rather than acknowledging the skills I have by working together to develop best practice, they choose to ignore the skills because people might ask them.... do you also have a Master's or not.... which might make them feel threatened if they haven't got a Masters...."

These points were reiterated in the significant photograph discussion where the participant noted:

"The hats help to remind me of all the ups and downs particularly in practice that I experienced when doing the research modules and being part of the research team...but that I was able to achieve my goal..."

In these quotes the participant highlights challenges that they faced as a postgraduate taught nursing student in practice. In the data the leadership by some senior colleagues appears to create an environment where the enhanced knowledge particularly in terms of research skills of the postgraduate nursing student is disregarded by those who have management responsibilities towards them.

11. Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of a registered nurse who was also a postgraduate taught student who participated in a research study, which was related to their own dissertation topic. The themes that were generated in the data will be synthesized in this section to provide a broader understanding of the postgraduate nursing student research educational journey. House, (2020) acknowledges that completing additional education and training is important as it enhances the provision of care. Evidence additionally demonstrates that postgraduate students benefit from being taught by active researchers and being involved directly in the research process (Healey et al., 2010; Jenkins and Healey, 2009). However, this literature relates predominately to postgraduate medical students and does not specifically refer to how the postgraduate nursing student can acquire research knowledge and skills. Green et al. (2010) maintain that experiential learning through the involvement in research projects enables postgraduate medical students to develop research knowledge and skills. As the literature is limited in terms of the postgraduate nursing student, it was therefore decided that involvement in a research study would enable an examination of the postgraduate nursing student experience. This case study would therefore facilitate understanding of whether the experience of the participant was consistent with the literature and evidence, whilst providing additional new insights in relation to the postgraduate nursing student experience.

In the literature Bamber, Choudhary, Hislop and Lane (2017) maintain that postgraduate students may lack confidence in their own knowledge at the onset of their educational journey which might increase stress and negatively impact on their educational experience (Coneyworth, Jessop, Maden and White, 2020). Nevertheless, as the postgraduate taught student continues to engage with learning, the sense of intellectual wellbeing may be increased particularly when the student accomplishes educational targets (Diener and Ryan, 2009). Starr et al., (2016) suggest that the development of knowledge can enhance competence which may be used in the workplace. In the current case study, the postgraduate nursing student participant felt positive emotions as a consequence of their involvement in education and the research study, which they wanted to employ in the practice setting. However, this positivity was tempered by a sense of disappointment as

there appeared to be a lack of interest in the clinical setting, which had the potential to negatively impact on the participant and their studies. However the participant managed these feelings through reflection and self-awareness. Hobbs (2012) suggests that this process of reflection can enable the individual to exist in the clinical environment and can permit a positive restructuring in terms of their role and provision of care. Whilst Hobbs (2012) discusses reflection in the context of the newly qualified midwife, this may equally be applied to postgraduate nursing students and the patients in their care.

The development of competence and critical thinking which may be employed in the workplace was also highlighted as being important in the literature that was reviewed. Here, the focus was once again predominately on postgraduate medical students where the value of developing critical reasoning skills was recognised (Madi et al., 2019). There is some additional evidence that demonstrates that this could also be applied to the nursing workforce (Clark et al., 2015). Glen and Wilkie (2000) suggest that the growth of critical thinking may be deemed to a transferable skill which can enhance care across a range of health care professions. In this case study the importance of developing critical thinking skills through participating in a research project was expressed. In this research study the participant who was postgraduate nursing student, articulated that their own development of critical thinking skills through involvement in the research project enabled them to support colleagues and students to improve the quality of care provided to patients in practice. This provides a valuable insight in terms of what is known and understood about the importance of critical thinking skills particularly for nurses in the health care setting.

In the data barriers were also recognised which included the lack of support from those in leadership roles in practice. Spencer (2006) reported that conflicts with those in a leadership role occurred when there was a lack of management vision, which produced frustration about the limits that were placed on the postgraduate taught student and their scope of practice. In this current case study, the participant also felt that the development of their knowledge and skills that they had acquired from participating in the research project was ignored and overlooked. This therefore demonstrates that this remains a current challenge in health care and adds to Spencer's (2006) findings. This case study highlights the importance of accessible, strong, and constructive support from senior nursing clinicians which would help the registered nurse as a postgraduate student to feel that the development of research skills is valued by those in management roles. This finding is supported by both Shields and Ward (2001) and Buchan et al. (2019) who argue that authentic leadership and career progression in the nursing profession enhance role satisfaction and attrition rates in the NHS. This is important as it is estimated that there will be a global shortage of nurse until 2030 (Scheffler and Arnold, 2019). Career development pathways, including involvement in research and the production of evidence-based practice, might help to lessen the impact that nursing shortages and attrition rates has on the provision of care.

12. Limitations of the Study

Case study research may involve the collection of data from a variety of different methods (Yin, 2018). Only two sources of data were used in this small case study and therefore is a limitation of this study. The research explored the lived experience of the participant who had been involved in a research project. This may also be considered a limitation of the research as it cannot be claimed that the view of one participant is representative of other postgraduate nursing students who may be involved in research projects. Nevertheless, as there is limited research which explores the experience of the postgraduate nursing students who have participated in research projects, the data does make an important contribution and provides important insights of how the registered nurse who is a postgraduate taught student viewed the development of knowledge and skills. In the case study, dependability was demonstrated by the researcher consistently analysing the data using a systematic

approach, which helped to validate the themes and conclusions drawn (Barbour, 2001).

13. Conclusion

This small case study facilitated a nuanced understanding of the postgraduate taught nursing students' experience of participating in a research study which can be used to inform practice and the curriculum in the future. This study demonstrates that participation in living research, as part of a collaborative team, has the potential to nurture the postgraduate nursing student's confidence in their own abilities to generate new knowledge which can inform the development of care (House, 2020). The workplace therefore needs to be invested in this journey with a leadership style which values the contribution that participation can make to care delivery (Spencer, 2006), whilst providing a platform for dissemination to the wider clinical team and opportunities for career development.

This case study has demonstrated that it is important for postgraduate taught nursing programmes to consider ways they can enhance students' collaborative working in their research modules and consider innovative assessment opportunities to reflect this. This case study demonstrates the importance of postgraduate nursing students being involved and supported by research teams and provides an example of how study programmes can assist students to develop their research knowledge and skills. As the participant in this study had recently completed Masters level research training the ability to participate in a research project provides an additional example of how the postgraduate nursing students research skills can be further enhanced through such partnership approaches.

Equally this partnership working should extend to the practice setting where experiential skills can be acquired. Collaboration in the health care setting should also include teamworking with those in leadership roles in practice. This would help service managers to be cognisant of the importance of career development strategies and create constructive support mechanisms for individual nurses who aspire to complete postgraduate taught education programmes. This would further establish that this model of education is valued as it improves knowledge and critical thinking skills which will enhance the nursing workforce and the provision of care (Buchan et al., 2019).

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Jacqueline Wier: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at [doi:10.1016/j.nepr.2024.104146](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2024.104146).

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