

# FUNDAMENTAL AND MANAGEMENT NURSING JOURNAL

Vol. 8, No. 2, October 2025

Laman jurnal: <https://e-journal.unair.ac.id/FMNI>  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.20473/fmnj.v8i2.71214>



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## Original Research

# The Perceived Facilitators and Barriers of Research Production among Members of an Online Research Community of Practice

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: March 24, 2025

Revised: August 1, 2025

Accepted: August 4, 2025

Available online: October 1,  
2025

## KEYWORDS

community of practice;  
nurses; nursing; online;  
qualitative research;  
research production

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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Nurses, a vast portion of the healthcare workforce, have made a low contribution to achieving healthcare organizational visions and strategies in producing research. The study aimed to identify the facilitators and barriers to research production among members of a community of practice (CoP).

**Method:** This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design, conducting a focus group discussion. Those members were provided with education, mentorship, and support over 12 months from January 2023 to January 2024. h a convenience sample of 21 members from the targeted CoP.

**Results:** The online CoP provided members with several opportunities to compensate for any deficit in the existing individual, social, and organizational support system. However, the study highlighted several barriers to research among the community members, including individual factors, i.e., time limitations and lack of member's knowledge and expertise, social factors, i.e., lack of collaboration among colleagues, and organizational factors, i.e., lack of organization and unit support, resources, and workload.

**Conclusion:** The study revealed satisfactory progress in the members' research projects and recommended extending their learning and training period. The study suggests extending the members' education and training period, including psychological preparation, and providing them with additional skills such as persuasion, negotiation, and interpersonal skills to overcome existing research barriers. Moreover, further studies are required to assess the long-term impact, for example, after one or two years of the online CoP on members' research productivity. Further research to explore the facilitators and barriers of research production among CoP members in various contexts.

## Cite this as:

Al Amiri, N., Al Qawasmeh, K., Johnson, S & Alayli, R. (2025). The Perceived Facilitators and Barriers of Research Production among Members of an Online Research Community of Practice. *Fundam Manaj. Nurs. J.* 8(2), 82-91. doi.org/10.20473/fmnj.v8i2.71214

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ghaffar & Khan (2014) found a positive correlation between research and development (R&D) and organizational performance. However, organizational research productivity

is low in many countries that expend less on research and development (R&D) (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). Van de Ven (2005) argued that academic research had fewer benefits for solving practical problems in organizations as these studies addressed

theoretical gaps rather than practical organizational problems.

In healthcare, Ellenbecker & Edward (2016) emphasized that nurse researchers play a crucial role in enhancing knowledge and providing evidence to inform and advance health policies, ultimately aimed at improving national health outcomes. Balay-odao et al. (2024) found that research culture among nurses influence their behavior and performance by helping in research information and learning, flexibility and adaptability, collaboration and communication, influence staff nurses' research participation, including leadership strategies, training and professional development, and affect hospital's adaptation to change, including organizational performance and success, employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Nevertheless, nurses in Arab countries produced less than 1% of global nursing and midwifery research output between 1950 and 2017 (Sweileh et al., 2019). Wehbe-Alamah et al. (2024) found in a systematic review that nursing research in Arab countries has evolved over the past decades but is low compared to other countries, and was mainly produced by academic scholars due to tenure and promotion requirements. However, Sweileh et al. (2019) claimed that nursing research is still in its infancy, lagging in quantity and quality compared to developed countries.

The study focused on identifying the barriers and facilitators of research utilization in clinical settings, as Abuhammad et al. (2020) in Jordan, González-García et al. (2020) in Spain, Wang et al. (2013) in China, and many others. However, few researchers explored the facilitators and barriers to research production. Al Amiri & Al Qawasmeh (2021) identified several individual variables that could affect research learning and productivity in non-academic organizations, including self-efficacy, i.e., people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce research and their beliefs about their influence over events and the self-determination, i.e., motivation, including orientation, sense of responsibility, sense of achievement, interest, and ambition, competence, autonomy, and psychological relatedness. Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that demonstrate their influence over events. Bandura (1977, 1994) emphasized that self-efficacy affects people's cognitive,

motivational, affective, and selection processes. Additionally, the self-determination theory examines how social contexts and individual differences facilitate different types of motivation, including autonomous motivation, which is related to specific self-values, and controlled motivation, which is related to external reward or punishment and, in turn, predicts the learning, performance, experience, and psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Moreover, the self-determination theory emphasizes that all human beings have three basic psychological needs, i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness, for effective functioning and wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2015).

On the other hand, the literature disclosed the critical role of social factors in learning. Bandura (1977) proposed the social learning theory, which assumes that modeling influences learning through its informative functions. It provides observers with symbolic representations of modeled activities rather than specific stimulus-response associations. Furthermore, Lave & Wenger (1991) introduced the situated learning theory, which demonstrates that learning is a process that occurs in a participation framework, the CoP, and is distributed among several active participants rather than individual minds. CoPs are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something, implying a shared practice through regular interaction, and can exist anywhere, including in the workplace (Wenger, 1998, 2004).

The literature disclosed several reasons associated with this limited contribution, including a lack of knowledge in research, training, funding, incentives, and poor motivation to conduct research (Brysiewicz & Oyegbile, 2021; González-García et al., 2020). Hendricks & Cope (2017) added that research language and terms are difficult to understand and apply. Mulkey (2021) pointed out that knowledge and attitudes play a significant role in nurse's contribution to clinical research. Increased research involvement and application of evidence-based practice inform high-standard care. Alternatively, the lack of research opportunities at the academic and clinical levels was identified as a challenging factor that influenced nurse's engagement in research (Bench et al., 2019). Preferably, to build research experiences by encouraging nursing students to engage in research during their training (Mulkey, 2021).

On the other hand, the literature emphasized the organization's role in enhancing research capacity. In healthcare, Gifford et al. (2018) stressed that organization leaders must appreciate the research process, offer the needed time and resources, and recognize and promote nurses involved in research. Moore & Tierney (2019) emphasized that organizations should remove hindering challenges. Waddell & Semciw (2019) highlighted that the lack of administrative, information technology, and managerial support negatively impacted the participation of healthcare professionals in research. Abuhammad et al., (2020) added that organization leaders must also support a research-oriented mindset of their nurses by offering related continuing development programs for current and newly engaged nursing staff. Ramón et al. (2022) claimed that nurse managers and nurse leaders should provide resources, such as time, financial incentives, promotions, technical support, and an adequate environment to facilitate the development of nursing research. Moreover, Lode et al. (2015) concluded that organizations must establish a research culture to construct a nursing research capacity that enhances the nurses' ability to conduct and apply research in their clinical practice.

Polit & Beck (2012) claimed that healthcare service providers should improve their research capacity to meet international standards regarding research activities and evidence-based nursing practice. Research capacity, as defined by Chen et al. (2019), is the non-individual level ability to conduct nursing research activities in an environment. Al Amiri & Al Qawasmeh (2021) argued that organizations should invest in research and development and prepare a capable workforce to meet the future needs of organizations and contribute to economic growth.

In summary, the literature highlighted the potential reasons for the shortage of research production among healthcare professionals, including nurses. Those reasons were classified into three main categories, i.e., individual, social, or contextual, and organizational factors. The study utilizes the self-efficacy theory, self-determination theory, social learning theory, situated learning theory, and the human relations management theory to understand the facilitators and barriers to research production among nurses who had unique characteristics, such as enthusiasm, eagerness to learn, and willingness to pay from their own time. Those

theories emphasize the interaction between individual factors, environmental influences, and organizational behavior in research production. Fig. 1 presents the interaction among the above-discussed theories.

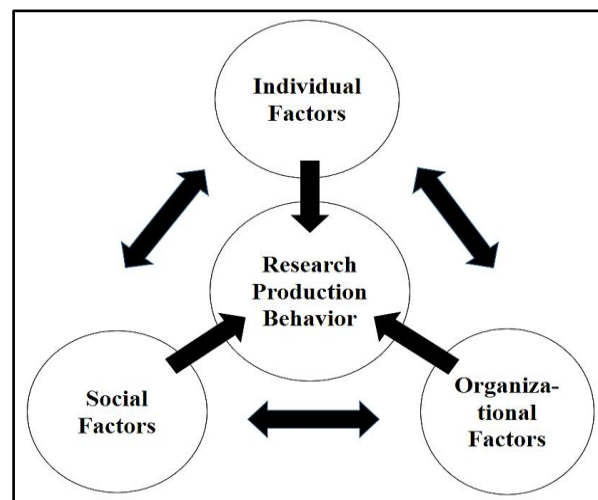


Figure 1. A model presenting interactions of individual, social, and organizational theories to enhance research production (Proposed by the authors)

In the UAE, the national strategy for nursing and midwifery roadmap for 2026 aims to qualify the nursing and midwifery staff in response to the national health priorities by improving the quality and innovation in education, professional development, scientific research, and evidence-based practice (Ministry of Health and Prevention, 2022).

However, nursing departments in many healthcare organizations have implemented several plans and strategies to enhance research production among nurses. Accordingly, one strategy is an online CoP initiated and implemented in January 2023 by a group of nurses in a large health service company that operates several hospitals and primary healthcare centers distributed across a wide geographical area in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE (Al Amiri & Al Qawasmeh, 2025). The study aimed to identify the facilitators and barriers to research production among nurses who are members of the targeted CoP.

The study is the first to examine the facilitators and barriers to research production among enthusiastic nurses who joined an online CoP to develop their knowledge, skills, and practice and produce scientific research.

## 2. METHODS

## 2.1 Research Design

The study adopted an inductive, descriptive, qualitative research design. This design is beneficial for exploring and understanding a phenomenon in depth.

## 2.2 Setting and Sample

The study population was 64 nurses who joined an online CoP established in January 2023 until the present. The CoP members participated in several research learning activities, such as seminars, group discussions, and selecting a research project to practice, and were provided with proper mentoring and support. The study used a convenience sample, consisting of active members of the online CoP, who were motivated to participate in research learning activities and practice. The authors targeted a sample size of 5 to 50 participants as suggested for the qualitative studies (Dworkin, 2012).

## 2.3 Data Collection

The SEHA Research Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the study. The authors adhered to the research ethics standards. The author started by explaining the aim of the study to participants and obtaining consent. Then, it was followed by collecting demographic information about participant's gender, positions, and education. The authors then shared with them data retrieved from the community records related to members' research projects and their progress.

The focus group discussion was facilitated by asking four open-ended, non-guiding questions. The questions were:

- 1) What are your views of your research progress during the last 12 months?
- 2) In your opinion, what are the facilitators you have received as a member of the online CoP to continue with your research project?
- 3) What are the barriers you faced in completing your research project?
- 4) What strategies do you suggest to overcome those barriers?

The discussion was conducted online over two hours in a peaceful and conducive environment in January 2024.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The authors used data thematic analysis to identify the common themes disclosed by participants. The thematic analysis was

conducted by two authors and reviewed by the others.

## 2.5 Trustworthiness/rigor

The researchers used pre-prepared, non-leading, open-ended questions to initiate discussions and encouraged all participants to share their input and thoughts. The researchers remained neutral and avoided influencing the participants' opinions. They frequently verified their interpretations with the participants. Finally, the researchers debriefed the participants with the findings.

## 2.6 Ethical Clearance

The study was reviewed and approved by the Tawam Hospital Research Ethics Committee (Ref. No.: KD/SH/1019). The researchers adhered to the ethical standards all the time.

## 3. RESULTS

The analysis of the demographic data disclosed that the number of participants was 21; most of them were females, and they hold a bachelor's degree. The sample included nine clinical resource nurses (CRNs), seven registered nurses (RNs), two midwives, two charge nurses, and one academic faculty providing academic support to the Online CoP (Table 1).

The focus group discussion started by presenting data about the progress of the member's research projects. Many motivated members have selected a research topic related to their work, guided by the CoP leadership and experts. The total number of selected research topics is 28. Some members worked individually, and others worked in teams on their research projects. The review of the CoP records revealed that eight were in the literature review stage, four were under review with the institute's research ethics review committees, one was in the data collection stage, three were in the data analysis stage, and three were under journal review. Moreover, five research projects were canceled due to member's resignation from their organizations, four did not show progress, and no research has been published until this moment (Figure 2).

Concerning the first question about the participants' view of their research progress, the majority agreed that they could not keep the deadlines and proceed as planned. They expressed that they faced some difficulties while conducting their research. For example, one member said that we needed more time to

Table 1. Demographic information of participants

Category	Sub-categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	3	14.3%
	Female	18	85.7%
Position	Academic Faculty	1	4.8%
	Clinical Resource Nurse	9	42.9%
	Midwife	2	9.5%
	Charge Nurse	2	9.5%
	Staff Nurse	7	33.3%
Education	Ph.D.	1	4.8%
	Master	5	23.8%
	Bachelor	15	71.4%
	Diploma	0	0

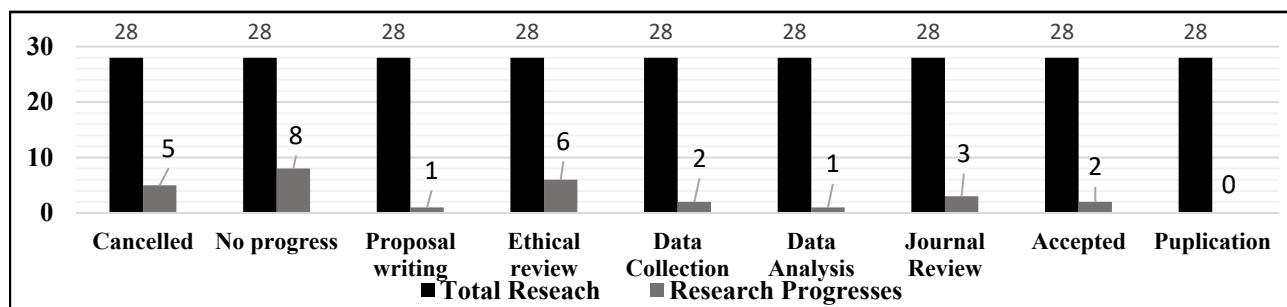


Figure 2. The progress of the CoP member's research

Table 2. Facilitators of research production perceived by the online CoP members

Facilitators	
1	Members have opportunities to attend free lectures and discussions to increase their knowledge and skills.
2	Members have opportunities to practice research.
3	The research CoP provided nurses with a platform to share knowledge among members, e.g., they prepare, and present different topics related to research to others.
4	Members become more confident by presenting topics to others and participating in the CoP discussions.
5	Members have opportunities to have mentorship.
6	Members have opportunities to speak at conferences.
7	Members collaborate with interested colleagues from various locations and expertise levels.
8	The research CoP provided nurses with opportunities to work in teams and enhance team spirit among members.
9	Members have opportunities to establish a research network.
10	Members can enhance patient care through research.
11	Members are proud of joining a highly knowledgeable group and being motivated.
12	Members feel supported and safe.

complete our research, and another said that it took me a long time to convince my manager to support my long-term research project that aims to implement a set of actions in my unit. However, participants agreed that they would show better progress with time.

Participants agreed on several facilitators of research production. For instance, they can get access to free lectures and presentations, practice research, share knowledge with other members, and develop their academic skills by repairing and presenting topics. Moreover, the facilitators include long-term mentorship relationships, opportunities to speak at

Table 3. Barriers to research production perceived by the online CoP members

<b>Category</b>		<b>Sub-category</b>
1	Time limitation	Family responsibilities Long working hours
2	Lack of organization and unit support	Colleagues are not cooperative with the researcher, particularly in action research. Managers are not supportive of research projects.
3	Lack of resources	Lack of access to a comprehensive online library. The number of free journals available is limited. The organizational cybersecurity policies and procedures limit staff access to certain databases.
4	Lack of knowledge and expertise	Most members have a Bachelor's degree, while only a few have Master's or Ph.D. degrees. Member's research knowledge and skills are limited.
5	Lack of collaboration	Members work alone on their research projects; they cannot find partners in the field. Some nurses in the field hide knowledge from the researcher.
6	Workload	Members are overwhelmed with their clinical work. Members always have other assignments related to their clinical work. Some members do mandatory overtime in critical units.

Table 4. Strategies proposed by the online CoP members to overcome research production barriers

<b>Barrier</b>		<b>Barrier's Overcoming Strategies</b>
1	Time limitations	Members should work in teams, i.e., 2-4 members on each research project. Members should divide the work among multiple researchers. Members should allocate time to work on their projects and not stop working on their research projects for any reason; they should keep small and continuously progressing. Members can ask for help from other community members or experts whenever they face a barrier.
2	Lack of organization and unit support	Members can ask for support from their direct managers and clinical resource nurses. They should be able to show the short and long-term benefits of their research projects for the nurses, patients, or the organization. Members can take advantage of the power of other connected members of the CoP or senior members.
3	Lack of resources	Members can ask for help from other members who have access to the databases. Members can ask for help from the community leadership and expert panel regarding statistical analysis. Members should register for social databases, such as Research Gate, Academia, and others, to access thousands of research articles.
4	Lack of research knowledge and expertise among members	Members should be transparent and share knowledge with internal and external people. Members should have no hesitation in asking for advice from other members. Members should attend the CoP meetings and participate in discussions. Establish a WhatsApp group for members to raise concerns and ask questions.

conferences, collaborate with others, work in teams, establish a network, improve nursing care, foster pride in membership, and ensure a feeling of support and safety (Table 2).

On the other hand, participants agreed about several barriers to their research progress. They mentioned time limitations, lack of organization and unit support, resources, members' knowledge and expertise in research, collaboration among colleagues, and workload (Table 3).

In the end, participants agreed on several strategies based on utilizing their membership in the online CoP to overcome the barriers to research production, specifically those related to time limitations, lack of organization and unit support, resources, and research knowledge and expertise among members (Table 4).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The study is unique as it aimed to identify the facilitators and barriers to research production among nurses who joined an online CoP to develop their knowledge and skills and practice scientific research. Those nurses had unique characteristics, including enthusiasm for learning research and practice. The author utilized several well-known theories, including self-efficacy theory, self-determination theory, social learning theory, situated learning theory, and the human relations management theory, to understand the facilitators and barriers to research production among the members of the online CoP.

The study results disclosed that members achieved some progress in their learning and practicing of research over 10 months. Although those members could not publish, some of them successfully submitted three articles to journals, and many others were in other stages, such as data analysis, data collection, getting ethical approvals, and writing proposals. However, the research process is usually time-consuming and takes a long time to get approvals, collect and analyze data, and get published. For beginners, such as the online CoP members, the progress was satisfactory and presented high motivation among members.

Participants also highlighted several facilitators of the online CoP. For instance, the online CoP provided members with many opportunities (Table 2) that could compensate for any deficit in their individual, social, and organizational support. However, the online CoP should focus on building the members'

persuasion, negotiating, and interpersonal skills through well-planned training activities.

The participants highlighted several barriers that explain some delays in the progress of the online CoP members. Those barriers are classified, similarly to the study model, into three groups: (1) individual factors, i.e., time limitations and lack of member's knowledge and expertise; (2) social factors, i.e., lack of collaboration among colleagues; and (3) organizational factors, i.e., lack of organization and unit support, resources, and workload. Those barriers identified among the online CoP members who received long-term education and training are similar to those identified by previous studies conducted among nurses working in the field, e.g., Brysiewicz & Oyegbile (2021), González-García et al. (2020), Waddell & Semciw (2019), and Hendricks & Cope (2017).

The above finding reflects that online CoP members were unfamiliar with the benefits of CoP membership and did not use effectively the CoP resources. Members also did not realize that research is a difficult task that consumes time and faces unexpected challenges. Accordingly, it requires a member to demonstrate a higher level of self-efficacy, such as being confident about their capabilities to produce research and influence over events (Al Amiri & Al Qawasmeh, 2021). Moreover, members should develop other critical skills, such as persuasion, negotiating, and communication, and demonstrate interpersonal skills, such as leadership, flexibility, and patience in managing research production barriers.

At last, the participants suggested several strategies to overcome the barriers to conducting research among nurses who joined a CoP. The above-suggested strategies (Table 4) are practical and depend primarily on utilizing the available resources of the online CoP, including proper time planning and management, getting benefits from the knowledge and skills of the panel of experts, getting support and advice from senior members, collaborating with other members, and get the maximum benefits from the learning and training opportunities.

Implementing those strategies requires two main factors, i.e., (1) the CoP leadership understanding of the member's psychological needs and working on building their confidence, persuasion, negotiating, and interpersonal skills, and (2) the members should understand that research is a difficult task that consumes time and could face several challenges and effectively



utilize the CoP available resources. However, members can request organizational support, such as dedicated research time, managerial assistance, and financial support. Members should present the problem they want to study, the significance of the study, determine the study methodology, and highlight the required resources in the research proposal. Then, meet managers to convince them about the benefits of the research for theory, patients, nurses, and the organization.

Additionally, the study significantly contributes to the theory of CoP by enhancing the reader's understanding of the facilitators and barriers that such communities may encounter in any specific context and domain. It emphasizes the importance of preparing members to utilize those facilitators and manage any barriers that arise. Failing to address CoP facilitators and barriers could reduce its overall value.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study provided evidence supporting the effect of the online CoP on members' achievements in producing research. The study highlighted several facilitators of nursing research membership and suggested several strategies to overcome the barriers by utilizing the resources and opportunities provided by the CoP. However, the study highlighted several barriers to research among the members of the CoP and identified several benefits. Those barriers are grouped into individual, social, and organizational factors.

The authors suggest extending the members' education and training period for two or three years, including psychological preparation, and providing them with additional skills such as persuasion, negotiation, and interpersonal skills to overcome existing research barriers. Effective utilization of the CoP requires understanding the psychological needs of members and considering building their confidence, persuasion, negotiating, and interpersonal skills. Moreover, further studies are recommended to assess the long-term impact, for example, after two or three years of the online CoP on members' research productivity.

On the other hand, the study recommends adopting the nurse-led online CoP by the international nursing communities to improve nursing research knowledge, skills, and production. Achieving this goal could require adapting the CoP activities to the unique needs of diverse nursing communities.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors extend their appreciation to the members of the online CoP for their participation and support of this study.

## 7. FUNDING SOURCE

No funds were provided for this paper.

## 8. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

All data underlying the findings are fully available.

## 9. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The authors confirm their contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Nabeel Al Amiri, Khaled Al Qawasmeh; literature review: Nabeel Al Amiri, Rania Alayli; data collection and the interview: Nabeel Al Amiri, Shimol Johnson. All authors contributed to the analysis and interpretation of results, drafted the manuscript, and approved the final version.

## 10. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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