



Original Article

From Nurse to OSH Practitioner: A feminist phenomenology of role transition in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Introduction. This novel type of a single case research attempts to explore the lived experiences of a nurse that had transitioned to becoming an OSH practitioner. An investigation was taken on the reasons on advancing to becoming an OSH practitioner, the positives of the job, the challenges encountered, the fears, realizations, and opinions in recommending nurses to become OSH practitioners.

Methods. The study used a qualitative research method specifically a single case research method using unstructured interview anchored on Super's Career Development Theory and Lent et al.'s Social Cognitive Career Theory. The responses were analyzed with a combination of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, Hermeneutics and Idiography using the Feminist Phenomenology by Fielding and Stawarska.

Results. The study revealed that the participant is fulfilled in her current role despite taking in more responsibilities and recommends that more nurses, specifically occupational health nurses become OSH practitioners.

Conclusions. The study gives enlightenment and crucial information to future nurses venturing in advancing their careers of becoming OSH practitioners and the importance of expanding this type of research.

Keywords: Feminist Phenomenology; Occupational Health Nurse; Occupational Health and Safety; Occupational Health and Safety Practitioner; Transition.

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Introduction

It is common that most OSH practitioners are engineers, but little does the public know that there are practitioners that come from the medical field. Occupational health nurses or otherwise known as company nurses are examples of a medical profession that can advance in the hierarchy of Occupational Safety and Health.

“Occupational Professional” and “OSH Practitioner” are often used interchangeably (Hale 2019). In addition to ensuring that businesses adhere to safety standards and regulations, OSH experts oversee protecting workers' health and safety at work (Stockwell et al. 2022).

Hale et al. (2020) explored the evolution of general OHS professionals and their role in managing OHS. They compared specialist professionals in the health sector to General Practitioners (GPs), who cover various OHS topics. OHS professionals provide strategic advice and decision-making, reporting directly to senior management. Technicians are active at the workplace or process level, advising on prevention strategies and integrating them into workplace design, monitoring, and administrative functions. Both roles require lower-level training and education. However, there is a lack of clarity about the OHS role and agreed educational requirements for both OHS professionals and practitioners. Many OHS professionals operate at both levels, with the distinction often made in large organizations. Many practitioners may not have formal OHS education, making the attainment of professional status by OHSP professionals a work in progress.

Walters et. al (2020) highlight the crucial role of policy discourse in OSH, highlighting the need for strategies that address uncertainty and address workers' concerns. These strategies, based on rule-based uncertainty reduction, documentation-based liability management, and behavioral safety norms, are often criticized for failing to address the known effects of work on health.

James and Walters (2022) emphasize the significance of understanding the impact of work on health, arguing that risks and workers' concerns stem from the structured, organized, and controlled nature of work, production, and labor processes. They argue that corporate business strategies often interfere with these matters.

The Accreditation of Practitioners, Consultants and Organizations on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) is a requirement under Rule 1030 of the Occupational Safety and Health Standards, as amended by Department Order No. 16, Series of 2001. This accreditation is issued to OSH Personnel and Training Organizations to assist the Department in instituting new and updating existing programs to ensure safe and healthful working conditions in all places of employment.

Qualifications for practitioners who are qualified to practice OSH in the Philippines include completion of the prescribed 40-hour Basic Occupational Safety and Health Training Course from DOLE accredited or recognized organizations, relevant experience in occupational safety and health, Espinoza ER. From Nurse to OSH Practitioner: A feminist phenomenology of role transition in the Philippines. *Eur J Occ Health Nurs*. 2025; 4 (3): 74-100. DOI:10.70324/ejohn.v4i3.74

and three years of experience if the applicant is duly licensed, four years if a graduate of any 4 or 5 years college course without license, and ten years if a college undergraduate. Relevant experience includes actual work experience on OSH or a combination of actual work experience and attendance in various trainings, seminars, and related learning processes.

For new applications, applicants must submit a duly accomplished Application Form (DOLE-BWC-AF-CHK-PCN-A1), two recent 1"x1" ID pictures in red background, an original Certificate of Employment indicating the date of appointment at present position, photocopies of Actual Duties and Responsibilities at present position, certificates of completion of BWC prescribed training on OSH (40 hours) for practitioners and advanced training on OSH (80 hours) for consultants, certificates of completion/attendance in other OSH related trainings/seminars, a college diploma and Transcript of Records or Board Exam Certificate/PRC license if applicable, proof of accomplishment or participation in OSH, and other supporting documents as proof of OSH practice.

For renewals, applicants must submit an updated resume with recent pictures, a summary of accomplishments on OSH, proof of accomplishments or participation in OSH, a certificate of accreditation, and a certificate of attendance on additional OSH related training. The accreditation fee for certificates, renewals, and replacements is P150.00, with a validity period of three years and renewable every three years.

Despite these clear guidelines, little is known about how nurses navigate the transition from clinical or hospital-based roles to becoming accredited OSH practitioners. Understanding their experiences can provide insights into professional mobility, role adaptation, and the potential for nurses to contribute to a safer and healthier workforce. Moreover, this case may inspire broader studies on interdisciplinary integration within occupational health and inform both policy and educational frameworks for preparing nurses for expanded roles in workplace safety and health management.

Gap Analysis of Literature

Few recent studies have been conducted on the lived experiences of OSH practitioners, and the majority of those that have been conducted are older than five years. Additionally, there are no studies on nurses who have progressed to become OSH practitioners; however, there are no studies on OSH practitioners in the Philippines. Exploring the lived experiences of a nurse who made the transition to become an OSH practitioner is the goal of this novel type of study design. Additionally, the current research gap on this subject can help with the development of regulations and recommendations, as well as by emphasizing the importance of nurses in this field and provide insight into their experiences pursuing this job.

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Theoretical Lens

Super's (1990) theory of career development emphasizes the importance of self-concept in shaping one's career choice. Super's framework includes life stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement, guiding career development throughout one's chronological age. The concept of "career maturity" represents the extent to which an individual can achieve vocational tasks during each stage.

Lent et.al (2002) Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) outlines three segments of career development: personal goals, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations. Personal goals involve intentional engagement in activities to achieve a specific outcome, while self-efficacy is a dynamic set of beliefs linked to performance domains and activities. Outcome expectations are personal beliefs about the consequences of performing particular behaviors. The theory suggests that career goals and choices are the functions of the interface among interest, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations over time. The career choice model demonstrates the interaction between the person and the environment, with compromise in personal interests required due to factors such as contextual, social, and cultural barriers.

Objectives of the Study

This study explores the lived experiences of a nurse who transitioned to become an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practitioner in a cement industry. Guided by the central question, "What are your lived experiences as a nurse turned OSH practitioner?", the study seeks to uncover how a nurse experiences and interprets this professional shift within the male-dominated industrial setting. Using a feminist phenomenological lens, the study examines how gender, work environment, and personal agency influence the participant's sense of identity and empowerment in her new role.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Describe the motivations and factors that influenced the nurse's transition from clinical practice to occupational safety and health work;
2. Explore the challenges and adjustments encountered during the process of role transition;
3. Interpret how gendered experiences and feminist perspectives shape the nurse's understanding of her new professional identity; and
4. Identify emerging themes that reflect empowerment, adaptation, and transformation within the context of occupational health practice in the Philippines.

These objectives correspond closely with the emerging themes that surfaced from the participant's narrative. The theme "Reasons for Becoming an OSH Practitioner" aligns with the Espinoza ER. From Nurse to OSH Practitioner: A feminist phenomenology of role transition in the Philippines. *Eur J Occ Health Nurs*. 2025; 4 (3): 74-100. DOI:10.70324/ejohn.v4i3.74

motivation and decision to shift careers, while “Positives of the Job” captures the rewarding aspects and opportunities for growth in the OSH field. The themes “Challenges of the Occupation” and “Fears Encountered” reflect the struggles and uncertainties experienced during role adaptation. Meanwhile, “Realizations on the Current Role” illustrates the nurse’s reflective understanding of her identity as an OSH practitioner, and “Recommending the Role to Other Nurses” conveys empowerment and advocacy arising from her transition experience.

Together, these objectives and themes provide a framework for understanding how a nurse navigates professional transformation, reconstructs her identity, and exercises empowerment within the occupational safety and health arena. By focusing on a unique case within the Philippine context, this study contributes to a deeper appreciation of nurses’ potential to expand their roles beyond traditional healthcare settings and to advance within interdisciplinary occupational health practice.

Methods

This section outlines the research design, participants, data gathering tools, procedures, and data management used in the study.

Research Design

Feminist phenomenology prioritizes women's lived experiences and integrates phenomenological principles into feminist theory (Fielding, 2017; Stawarska, 2018). Husserl's (1913/1982) plea to "return to the things themselves" embodies the core concept of phenomenology, which examines "how an experience is perceived as something" (Schues, 2018). Drawing from Husserl's foundations, phenomenology differentiates between the lived body (Leib) and the physical body (Körper) (Romdenh-Romluc, 2011).

Participant of the Study

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach focusing on a single participant who embodies the phenomenon under investigation—a nurse who transitioned to become an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practitioner in a cement industry. A single case was deemed sufficient because phenomenological research emphasizes the depth and richness of lived experience rather than numerical generalization. The intent is not to compare multiple cases but to illuminate the essence of a particular lived phenomenon—in this instance, the unique experience of a nurse navigating the transition from clinical nursing to occupational health practice. In phenomenology, the individual participant serves as the “carrier of meaning” (van Manen, 1990),

and a single in-depth account can yield significant insights into the structures of experience that may resonate with others in similar contexts.

The choice of a single participant aligns with the principles of feminist phenomenology, which values personal voice, reflexivity, and the contextual understanding of lived realities. This design allows for a nuanced exploration of the intersection between gender, profession, and power relations in occupational health practice. Engaging deeply with one participant's narrative enables the researcher to uncover layers of meaning that might be diluted in a larger sample. Furthermore, following the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016), a single participant is sufficient when the research aim is specific, the participant is highly experienced, and the analysis is theory-informed. The participant's rare experience of transitioning from nursing to OSH work in a male-dominated industrial setting provides substantial informational value.

The participant in this study was a female OSH practitioner employed in a cement industry located in Sison, Pangasinan. She met the following inclusion criteria and was selected through a convenience sampling process: (1) must be a registered nurse; (2) must be female; (3) must have served as a safety officer for at least three years; (4) must have passed the OSH practitioner test; and (5) must have had at least one year of experience practicing as an OSH practitioner.

Data collection occurred in June 2025 through iterative and flexible phases based on the availability of the participant and the researcher. This approach ensured adequate depth and allowed the researcher to explore new themes and patterns as they emerged. Consistent with Spiggle's (1994) concept of adaptive qualitative research, the iterative design enabled modification of questions and interpretive focus as the inquiry progressed. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews to ensure ethical compliance and the protection of participant rights. Through this method, the study achieved a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of the participant's lived experience.

Data Gathering Tool Procedure

Potential participants who were reachable by the researcher received a formal invitation, and after reviewing it and agreeing to participate, they were set up for interviews with Ethics Review Board approval from Perpetual Help College of Pangasinan. Participants received permission papers that complied with institutional requirements and information about the experiment. Through respect, attentive listening, and clarification of any ambiguities, the researcher established relationship with the participants.

A variety of techniques, including an unstructured questionnaire, field notes, observations, and casual discussions, were used to gather data from research participants. According to Espinoza ER. From Nurse to OSH Practitioner: A feminist phenomenology of role transition in the Philippines. *Eur J Occ Health Nurs*. 2025; 4 (3): 74-100. DOI:10.70324/ejohn.v4i3.74

Minichiello et al. (1990), unstructured interviews promote social interaction between researchers and informants rather than following a preset set of questions and answers. Punch (1998) emphasizes that without restricting the research's scope, unstructured interviews might disclose complex human behavior. Although unstructured interviews are frequently used in continuing research because they entail asking questions that come up naturally during discussions, Patton (2002) adds that they also naturally expand participant observation.

The interviewer utilized Feminist Phenomenology method to convey participants' narratives, intentionally setting aside personal assumptions and biases. Interviews lasted between 15 to 20 minutes, including probing questions based on participants' responses to ensure consistency and compliance with informed consent. Participants were encouraged to ask questions regarding the research objectives, types of interventions, selection criteria, protocols, risks, incentives, and confidentiality prior to consenting to the interview. To prevent saturation, the researcher conducted data collection in iterative phases, contingent on the availability of both participants and the researcher. This proactive strategy facilitates the investigation of emergent patterns and themes as they develop. Adaptive research enables researchers to modify their questions and techniques in accordance with preliminary findings.

With participants' consent, the interview was recorded, allowing interviewers to focus on the conversation rather than note-taking. The recorded interview was logged, and the researcher listened to the audio multiple times before transcribing and coding it to accurately reflect the shared information. The study was executed through in-person interviews at various sites, taking careful measures for participant comfort to ensure privacy and prevent eavesdropping.

Ethical Considerations

The research employed a phenomenological method to collect narratives from participants regarding their experiences. Ethical considerations were made, ensuring participants were informed about the elements and techniques of the study. Consent was obtained through chat, allowing participants the flexibility to rearrange interview times without any pressure. Before participating, the objectives of the research were outlined to the participants.

The researcher prioritized beneficence, justice, and autonomy, which influenced the selection of volunteers and helped build trust in the study. By setting aside pre-existing beliefs, the researcher aimed to concentrate on the responses of the participants and reassured them of the study's support, recognizing their vulnerability.

Confidentiality was upheld during the data collection process, as participants' names were substituted with numbers to safeguard their identities. Results were meticulously transcribed to prevent misrepresentation of information. The researcher honored agreements, treated participants with honesty, and provided meals following the interviews.

Data will be retained for five years before being deleted, and participants were informed that there were no associated risks; however, nine potential participants chose to withdraw. The study followed measures to prevent bias by conducting interviews solely with individuals and ensuring their financial and personal interests remained confidential, in line with ethical principles.

Data Management

In phenomenological studies, the main technique for collecting data involves conducting in-depth interviews with participants to uncover the flow of consciousness. The questions utilized during the interview process were open-ended and presented in an informal way. However, this approach can be enhanced by incorporating additional methods such as document analysis, participatory observation, and others. This methodology is used to analyze and illustrate social phenomena through the lens of the Feminist Phenomenology.

Transcript Digest and Level of Analysis

Feminist phenomenology recognizes four ontological aspects of lived experiences pertinent to women's studies: situatedness, intersubjectivity, intentionality, and temporality.

Regarding situatedness, Heidegger (1927/1962) asserted that humans exist within a realm of individuals, things, culture, history, language, and significance, which he referred to as "Being-in-the-World." Feminist phenomenology contends that situatedness extends beyond merely being involved in contexts (de Beauvoir, 1949/2009; Moi, 1999).

In her study of women's intersubjectivity, de Beauvoir (1949/2009) redefined the subject-object relationship by highlighting its intrinsic ambiguity. A person holds the combined position of both subject and object (Heinämaa, 2017). In situations of subordination, the capitalized term "Other" signifies an entity viewed only as an object, without acknowledgment as a self-determined subject (de Beauvoir, 1949/2009).

Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962) described intentionality as "I am able to". Olkowski (2017) describes it as the ability of the body to engage with its environment and generate chances for specific experiences. Likewise, "habit" (or motor intentionality) denotes the unconscious embodied understanding that enables an individual to perform a task without reflection.

Temporality pertains to the body's positioning in time and space (Ahmed, 2006; Husserl, 1952/1989) for the purpose of moving into the future (Fielding, 2017).

Regarding the processes of data analysis that align with feminist phenomenology, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis follows a phenomenological approach in qualitative research (Abebrese, 2014; Berglund, 2015; Raco and Tanod, 2014; Rajasingh et al., 2021). It combines phenomenology (i.e. the examination of experience), hermeneutics (i.e. the theory of interpretation), and idiography (i.e. the analysis of particular cases) (Smith et al., 2022; Zhao & Thompson, 2023). Smith et. al (2022) proposed a flexible heuristic framework for examining IPA data, which was adjusted for this research.

Individual experiences are fundamentally subjective readings of social reality, which IPA recognizes by embracing hermeneutics (Rajasinghe et al., 2021; Tomkins and Eatough, 2013). These observations are considered and expressed through language (Heidegger, 1927/1962), emphasizing the role that language plays in understanding events. (Smith et al., 2022) (a topic that will be discussed in further detail in the section that follows). The body serves as an interpreter and mediator of the lifeworld and its meanings in feminist phenomenology. This viewpoint highlights how important perception, the senses, and thought are to creating and understanding experiences (Fisher, 2011). The IPA Data Analysis Process, which was adapted from Smith et al. (2022) and Larkin (2021), is as follows. Below is the Figure 1 for the data analysis of the study.

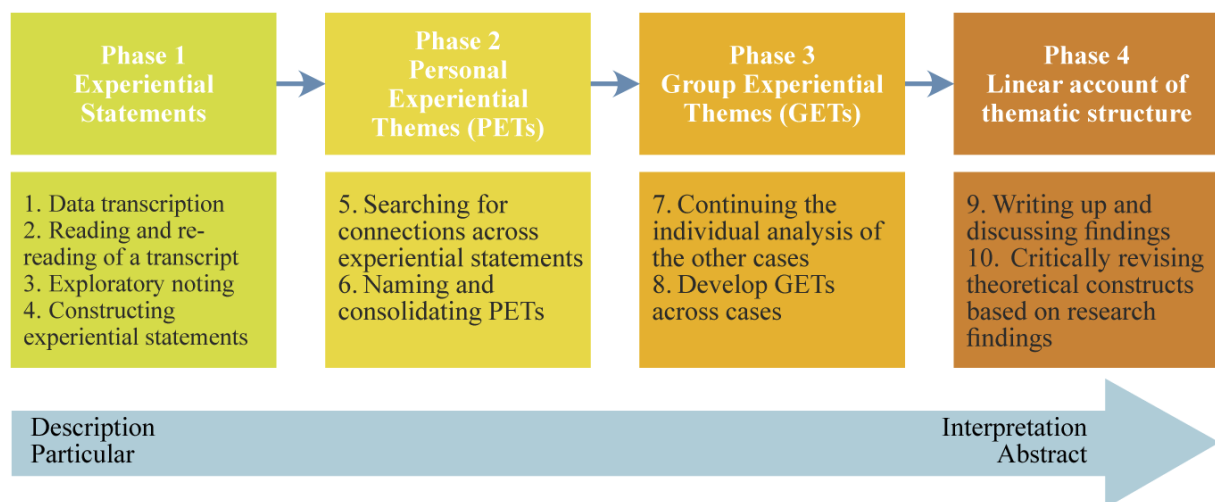


Figure 1. Phases of the study

Establishing Trustworthiness of Data

Credibility in qualitative research is a subjective issue influenced by individual judgments and constructions by the reporter and reader. To enhance credibility, triangulation, a process involving multiple sources of information or procedures, can be used, including methodological, data, investigator, theoretical, and environmental triangulation, to establish identifiable patterns.

By assigning participants to various roles within a study, member checking is a technique to confirm researchers' interpretations after the fact. This could be a fruitful study approach. Non-involved responses to preliminary research methods and findings can be obtained through peer debriefing with coresearchers and coworkers. Practice and perceptions can be shaped by institutional checking with direct superiors or supervisory staff. Long-term involvement, introspective self-analysis, and persistent questioning of results are elements that affect the credibility of qualitative research. When assessing dependability, professional experience is essential.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlight the importance of transferability in qualitative research, asserting that insights and findings from one situation can be relevant to another. This is vital because the influence of the original research is constrained if its findings cannot be useful for future applications. Transferability occurs when a comprehensive description presents a vivid representation of the context, frequently sacrificing the specific details of local elements. Various factors such as organizations, time periods, and the length of the field study also affect how applicable the research is to different locations or contexts.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), reliability is crucial in qualitative research. They recommend that researchers use techniques like bracketing, peer examination, and peer debriefing to foster trust. While bracketing divides data into observations and interpretations, peer debriefing validates the researcher's conclusions. It is not desirable to restrict researchers' biases and presumptions; they must be acknowledged. Researchers' values and enthusiasm are necessary for qualitative research, which also keeps an eye on their impact. Reflexive auditing is necessary for a dissertation, research publication, or financed technical report to be accepted, and it builds trust when researchers immerse themselves in their work with their ideals.

Bogdan and Biklen's (2003) emergent design positivism emphasizes confirmability, aiming for objective reality in qualitative research. This perspective is limited to certain forms, such as emergent design positivism, where researchers focus on precision, accuracy, and non-involvement to minimize contamination and maintain pristine environments.

Results and Discussions

From the analyses of the data gathered from the verbalizations of the experience of the participants, there were six themes that emerged: (1) the reasons why the participant became an OSH practitioner, (2) the positives of being an OSH practitioner, (3) the challenges, (4) the fears, (5) realizations, and (6) the opinions of recommending the to be an OSH practitioner.

An OSH practitioner is a qualified individual responsible for ensuring workplace safety and health, assessing hazards, developing safety programs, conducting training, and investigating incidents to improve the working environment.

Theme 1: Reasons of Becoming an OSH Practitioner

In the Philippines, many occupational health nurses (OHNs) experience stagnation in their career trajectories despite certifications and advanced training. This reflects what Super (1990) describes as the challenge of achieving “career maturity,” where individuals reassess their self-concept and seek new roles aligned with evolving identities. From the perspective of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 2002), nurses’ transitions are shaped by perceived self-efficacy and outcome expectations — that assuming safety roles may yield better recognition and advancement. A feminist phenomenological lens further situates this transition within gendered work structures that privilege safety officers, often male, over nurses, often female, thus shaping how women embody and negotiate professional agency.

“Kailangan ko i develop ang sarili ko kaya nag OSH practitioner ako. Para na rin sa career development ko since ang item ko sa trabaho is as safety officer. Nagkaroon kasi ng changes sa management noon, kami na nasa medical section linipat kasi tinanggal na mga regular nurses. Kaya ako nalipat sa safety department.”

I need to develop myself, so I became an OSH practitioner." Also, for my career development since my position at work is as a safety officer. There were changes in management back then, and those of us in the medical section were transferred because the regular nurses were removed. That's why I was transferred to the safety department.

Investing in career advancement is essential for employees' development since it helps them achieve stability, contentment, and a feeling of achievement in their work. This procedure, which includes title changes, learning new skills, and pay increases, provides a career development path that fosters employee loyalty and a sense of purpose (Personio, 2024). Career development includes

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moving up the corporate ladder and taking on increasingly challenging duties, as well as moving towards better credentials, job titles, or roles (Bigelow, 2024; Cambridge University Press, n.d.; Vicente, 2020).

Theme 2: Positives of the Job

A positive workplace environment greatly influences career growth and personal fulfillment. Through Super's theory of career development (Super, 1990), organizational support helps individuals—such as nurses transitioning into occupational safety and health roles—build confidence, clarify their self-concept, and progress through stages of career maturity. Similarly, Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994) explains that when employees feel supported, their self-efficacy and belief in achieving meaningful outcomes increase, encouraging engagement and loyalty. From a Feminist Phenomenological perspective (Beauvoir, 1949; Butler, 1990), fulfillment also stems from being respected, valued, and empowered, especially for women navigating traditionally male-dominated fields like occupational safety and health. Ultimately, a supportive and inclusive work environment strengthens one's professional identity, fosters purpose, and promotes both satisfaction and retention.

“Nagkaroon ako ng fulfillment kasi related naman ang trabaho sa pagiging nurse ko. Unlike before na ang role ko is company nurse na limited lang siya into health coverage, ngayon, lumaki ang coverage, nagkaroon ng more challenging roles na pati safety is nasasakupan mo na. Mas naging deeper ang understanding ko sa mga tao, sa kapaligiran mo as a whole. Pati process and system matututo ka”.

I felt fulfilled because the job is related to my work as a nurse. Unlike before when my role was just a company nurse limited to health coverage, now the coverage has expanded, and I've taken on more challenging roles that also include safety. My understanding of people and the environment as a whole has deepened. Even the process and system, you'll learn.

Perks and benefits have an impact on job satisfaction. These factors can influence a positive behavior and motivation on an employee to work in a job position which provides the employees the best incentives they can have (Espinoza, 2025). The willingness as well as openness of employees to fulfill their work determines their performance. Furthermore, if employees are enthusiastic and motivated to accomplish their jobs, their performance is likely to improve, contributing to increased productivity (Leitao et. al, 2022).

Theme 3: Challenges of the Occupation

Transitioning from nursing to a safety practitioner role presents unique challenges, as it requires nurses to step beyond their medically oriented training and acquire technical competencies related to engineering and industrial safety. From Super's Theory of Career Development (Super, 1990), this stage represents a critical point in the establishment phase, where individuals must reconstruct their professional self-concept to adapt to new vocational demands. The process of redefining one's identity from a caregiver to a safety enforcer can lead to inner conflict but also provides an opportunity for growth and career maturity. In light of Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002), this transition is influenced by self-efficacy and outcome expectations—nurses who believe in their ability to learn new technical skills and foresee positive outcomes, such as professional advancement or recognition, are more likely to persist despite initial difficulties. However, self-efficacy may be tested when working in male-dominated environments, where gendered expectations can undermine confidence and perceived competence. From a Feminist Phenomenological standpoint (Fielding, 2017; Stawarska, 2018), these experiences are deeply embodied; women navigating such spaces must contend not only with the cognitive challenge of mastering technical skills but also with the lived reality of asserting authority and legitimacy in a culture that often privileges male expertise. Yet, this struggle also enables a deeper awareness of one's agency and resilience, as women redefine what it means to be both a nurse and a safety practitioner within an industrial setting.

Subtheme 1: Technicalities

“Ang challenge kasi, nurse by profession ka, pagdating sa technicalities, dehado tayo dun. Medyo hindi tayo knowledgeable sa mga machines, equipment and methods. Pero nakikita ko naman na hindi limitation and nursing, parang in time matututunan din naman ang skills at mga dapat malaman sa technicalities. Advantage sa atin na mga nurses, na dahil nurse tayo, may mga alam tayo na hindi nila basta matututunan, kumbaga sayo lang yun and mas advanced tayo kasi may medical background tayo na wala sila”.

The challenge is, since you're a nurse by profession, when it comes to technicalities, we're at a disadvantage there. We're not very knowledgeable about the machines, equipment, and methods. But I see that nursing is not a limitation; over time, the skills and technicalities will also be learned. It's an advantage for us nurses, because as nurses, we know things that they can't easily learn, it's unique to us, and we are more advanced because we have a medical background that they don't have.

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Technical ability is obviously no longer sufficient, but different OSH techniques will be needed for each venue (and culture) to make headway. Organizational and relational skills, a tripartite (government, employees, and employers) approach to problems, a dedication to lifelong learning, and a comprehensive view of worker health and well-being (the Total Worker Health concept) are all necessary to develop professional technical proficiency. “The new OHS managerial capability benchmark we need to work toward is the ability to assimilate a lot of complex data and information under rapidly changing circumstances in order to identify enterprise risk priorities and opportunities and then act on them” (Laszcz-Davis, 2019).

Subtheme 2: As A Female

“First female ako sa safety department. Nung una parang pakiramdam mo, di mo kaya kasi masculine ang majority ng population. Medyo may doubt ka rin kung ma fulfill mo ba yung pagiging safety officer bilang isang female employee. Tapos syempre lalake kasi ang namumuno na naging nakagawian. Yung mutuak respect, nung nuna, nag da doubt ka, syempre kung papakinggan ka nila, kung paano yung treatment sayo kung fair ba”.

I was the first female in the safety department. At first, it felt like you couldn't do it because the majority of the population was masculine. You also have some doubts if you can fulfill the role of a safety officer as a female employee. And of course, the leaders are male, which has become the norm. The mutual respect, at first, you had doubts, of course, if they would listen to you, how the treatment towards you would be if it was fair.

Because the participants were women and members of a minority group, the effort they put out was seen as both a tremendous pressure and a crucial factor in their professional success. This suggests that the work of people in a gender minority is especially demanding due to gendered work outside of the official responsibilities of a job. This view of gender at work as work is crucial for comprehending how workplace efforts to promote gender equity must go beyond policy and quotas to confront embodied gendered cultures (Smith, 2013).

Subtheme 3: Effect of Behavior in Safety

“Dealing with people kasi more on uncontrolled ang environment. Ang tao kasi, nasa kanila ang control sa trabaho. Yan ang problema kasi kung maka encounter ka ng mga hindi masyado safety conscious”.

Dealing with people because the environment is more uncontrolled. People, because they have control over their work. That's the problem because if you encounter those who are not very safety conscious.

Along with other risky actions and behaviors, horseplaying is a major contributing factor to workplace accidents. A safety officer's responsibility is to enforce rules and regulations while providing proper guidance. One of the most important trainings a safety officer can give staff members, particularly in high-risk industries, is behavior-based safety (Espinoza, 2025).

Research indicates that Building Based Safety Systems (BBS) can outperform standard safety committee activities and be just as effective as engineering controls (Guastello, 1993). Even though engineering controls are more effective at eliminating a particular hazard, behavioral interventions (BBS) are the most empirically supported approach for managing injuries in workplace settings, addressing a wider range of risks, and reducing different types of injuries, as repeatedly shown by Hagge et al. (2017) and Myers et al. (2010).

Theme 4: Fears Encountered

Occupational safety and health (OSH) workers must remain vigilant in implementing health and safety measures, especially in high-risk industries. From the perspective of Super's Theory of Career Development (Super, 1990), effective safety practice reflects the professional self-concept of the OSH practitioner, who must integrate their knowledge, skills, and values to achieve mastery and career maturity in this specialized role. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) emphasizes that an OSH worker's confidence in their ability to enforce safety regulations (self-efficacy) and their expectation that these actions will prevent accidents and save lives (outcome expectations) are critical in ensuring compliance among employees. Moreover, Feminist Phenomenology (Fielding, 2017; Stawarska, 2018) highlights the embodied experience of practitioners, particularly women, who navigate high-pressure and often male-dominated safety environments. The cooperative relationship between leaders and workers is not only procedural but also experiential, as the safety officer's presence, guidance, and authority shape how employees perceive and enact safety practices. In this way, fulfilling safety responsibilities involves both technical competence and the lived, relational experience of guiding others toward a culture of prevention and accountability.

Subtheme 1: Committing Mistakes

“Ang fear ko is may ma encounter ako na situation na di ko alam. Kumbaga bago at mahirap desisyonan. Mahirap magkamali dito sa trabaho. Bawal magkamali”.

My fear is that I will encounter a situation that I don't know. In other words, it's new and difficult to decide. It's hard to make mistakes here at work. No mistakes allowed.

Van Knippenberg & Van Kleef (2016) and Lindebaum et al. (2014) investigate the function of anxieties in the workplace with the goal of assisting managers and staff in creating plans to lessen adverse consequences and abnormal conduct. They examine the detrimental and beneficial impacts of fear on performance, taking into account both objective antecedents like as accident rates and staff safety practices, as well as subjective antecedents such as employees' well-being and perceived likelihood of making mistakes. One important factor that is connected to performance and fears is well-being.

Subtheme 2: Accidents

“Kasi sa amin, ang accidents, preventable so mas natatakot ako kapag wala ako ginagawa. Hindi naman maiiwasan ang accidents kasi may factors naman yan bakit nangyayari”.

Because for us, accidents are preventable, so I get more scared when I'm not doing anything. Accidents can't be avoided because there are factors that cause them to happen.

Beck's (2006) notion of "risk is ambivalence" emphasizes the significance of ambivalent feelings in making decisions. McDonald and Hrymak's (2002) research revealed that employees in Ireland's construction industry largely endorse positive attitudes toward safety while expressing mixed feelings about risk-taking. They discovered no notable connection between attitudinal factors (safety attitudes, perception, risk, and safety climate) and safety outcome factors (compliance, safety behaviors). Overall safety attitudes were elevated, yet views on risk were more mixed. The safety climate assessment indicated a favorable view of management's dedication to safety, whereas particular risk perception assessments reflected precise risk awareness. Nonetheless, these perspectives did not affect safety conduct and adherence. This implies that the challenge of attaining uniform and elevated safety compliance standards could stem more from systemic issues, like the presence of reporting mechanisms for hazards, addressing hazard reports and audits, and making sure that hazard reports and audits lead to effective adherence to safety regulations.

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Subtheme 3: Failed Safety Program

“Isa pa sa mga fear, kahit anong effort mo, may mangyayari na accidents na guguhong ang mundo ng safety. Yung pananaw mo, na ginawa mo ang lahat pero may mangyayari pa rin. Kaya ang pumapasok sa isip ko is kung saan ak nagkulang. Bumababa ang self-esteem ko kasi hindi effective ang program.”

Another fear is that no matter how much effort you put in, accidents will happen that will shatter the world of safety. Your perspective, that you did everything, but something still happened. So, what's going through my mind is where I fell short. My self-esteem is decreasing because the program is not effective.

Organizations often fail to prevent accidents due to a lack of clear health and safety objectives. Many businesses view workplace safety as a regulatory problem rather than a tactical priority, and lack clear financial reasoning to motivate leadership. To change this perspective, organizations should present health and safety as a financial necessity, highlighting the financial consequences of failure. Leadership involvement is another major issue, as leaders often assign responsibility to others without clear direction or dedication, leading to unreliable compliance and increased accountability. To address this, leaders must clearly define safety objectives, engage with employees on safety issues, led by example, and perform regular evaluations. Failure to learn from past incidents is another issue, as organizations often fail to analyze and address them, increasing the likelihood of repeat incidents. Organizations should conduct thorough investigations to identify systemic issues and implement action plans to address underlying causes, ensuring that lessons learned from past incidents lead to significant, organization-wide safety improvements (Hyseni, 2025).

Theme 5: Realizations on the Current Role

Occupational safety and health (OSH) workers must remain vigilant in implementing health and safety measures, especially in high-risk industries. From the perspective of Super's Theory of Career Development (Super, 1990), effective safety practice reflects the professional self-concept of the OSH practitioner, who must integrate their knowledge, skills, and values to achieve mastery and career maturity in this specialized role. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) emphasizes that an OSH worker's confidence in their ability to enforce safety regulations (self-efficacy) and their expectation that these actions will prevent accidents and save

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lives (outcome expectations) are critical in ensuring compliance among employees. Moreover, Feminist Phenomenology (Fielding, 2017; Stawarska, 2018) highlights the embodied experience of practitioners, particularly women, who navigate high-pressure and often male-dominated safety environments. The cooperative relationship between leaders and workers is not only procedural but also experiential, as the safety officer's presence, guidance, and authority shape how employees perceive and enact safety practices. In this way, fulfilling safety responsibilities involves both technical competence and the lived, relational experience of guiding others toward a culture of prevention and accountability.

"Na realize ko na mas minahal ko yung job ko kasi I am dealing with people and di lang siya limited sa ospital. Kasi sa ospital, kapag na meet mo yung patient and nagawa mo na yung care na kailangan niya, tapos na. dito kasi, from the beginning na ma-meet mo yung empleyado hanggang mag exit siya, mas na fulfill mo yung trabaho mo as a nurse at the same time napangalagaan mo yung tao."

I realized that I love my job more because I am dealing with people, and it's not just limited to the hospital. Because in the hospital, once you meet the patient and provide the care they need, it's done. Here, from the moment you meet the employee until they exit, you fulfill your job as a nurse and at the same time, you take care of the person.

Being able to form a partnership with employees to advance their health and safety puts occupational health nurses in a unique position within the occupational and environmental health and safety team. Occupational health nurses' ability to build sympathetic relationships and approaches is crucial to their work. To advance the knowledge, abilities, and conduct of occupational health nurses, education and training are crucial (Rasteiro, 2000).

Early nursing practice was influenced by Florence Nightingale's ideas on environmental health concepts, which changed the nursing profession. In order to promote worker safety and pollution avoidance, occupational health nurses nowadays are essential in incorporating environmental health principles into their practices (McPhaul & Lipscomb, 2005).

Multidisciplinary practice, instruction, and research in environmental and occupational health are becoming more and more the responsibility of nurses. To find solutions for the workforce, families, communities, and the global community, they work with governments, employers, workers, and stakeholders. In order to achieve optimal well-being, nurses must educate many disciplines about their value (Garrett, 2005).

Theme 6: Recommending the Role to Other Nurses

To advance in the field of occupational safety and health, company nurses must acquire the necessary qualifications to become certified OSH practitioners. From the perspective of Super's Theory of Career Development (Super, 1990), obtaining certification represents a critical step in the establishment stage, where nurses actively shape their professional self-concept and pursue career maturity by expanding their roles and responsibilities. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002) highlights that nurses' self-efficacy and outcome expectations drive this pursuit; those who believe in their ability to master new skills and anticipate positive outcomes, such as career advancement and recognition, are more likely to engage in ongoing learning. Furthermore, Feminist Phenomenology (Fielding, 2017; Stawarska, 2018) frames this professional development as an embodied experience, particularly for women navigating male-dominated safety environments. Advancing one's knowledge and skills not only enhances competence but also affirms agency, empowering nurses to claim a visible and authoritative presence within occupational health and safety practice.

“Yes of course. Encourage ko yung mga nurse na i practice nila ang occupational safety and health kasi mas lalawak ang kaalaman nila sa practice at yung scope nila pagdating sa safety and health kaya maigi na maging safety practitioners sila.”

Yes of course. I encourage the nurses to practice occupational safety and health because their knowledge and scope in safety and health will expand, so it's better for them to become safety practitioners.

Getting a job and encouraging others to try a new professional path also involve recommending the field of work to others. Some people, on the other hand, are hesitant to suggest their field of employment for fear of being accused of the job's unsuitability. Others who had the suggested job are now content with their current position. Given that they would be extremely beneficial to the patient, nurses' decisions and choices are ultimately the most valuable to the patient (Espinoza, 2025).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study reveal that the transition of a nurse into an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practitioner is a multifaceted journey shaped by personal ambition, professional development, and structural factors within the workplace. The participant's decision to pursue the OSH practitioner role was driven by a desire for self-improvement, career advancement, and the need to navigate organizational changes that limited traditional nursing trajectories. This progression reflects the stages where the individual actively redefines her professional self-concept, attains career maturity, and expands her competencies beyond conventional nursing roles. Self-efficacy, personal goals, and outcome expectations guided her persistence in mastering technical skills, assuming greater responsibilities, and navigating challenges in a male-dominated work environment. The participant's lived experience demonstrates how gendered workplace dynamics intersect with professional growth, requiring women to assert agency, negotiate authority, and embody competence in spaces traditionally dominated by men.

The qualitative findings indicate that the participant experienced both professional fulfillment and considerable challenges. Fulfillment arose from an expanded scope of responsibilities, meaningful engagement with employees, and opportunities for continuous learning. Challenges included acquiring technical knowledge in engineering-related safety tasks, negotiating authority in male-dominated contexts, and managing the psychological demands of enforcing compliance and ensuring workplace safety. Fears of making mistakes, encountering accidents, and dealing with ineffective safety programs further underscore the emotional and cognitive dimensions of this professional role. Despite these challenges, the participant's resilience, commitment to learning, and proactive pursuit of certification facilitated her progression along the career pathway.

Overall, the study highlights that becoming an OSH practitioner represents not merely a change in job title, but a holistic transformation encompassing identity, skill acquisition, and professional agency. The participant's journey exemplifies how career development, self-efficacy, and embodied experience intersect to enable growth, satisfaction, and competence in occupational safety and health practice. These insights underscore the importance of organizational support, targeted training, and recognition of women's contributions in shaping the success of nurses transitioning into safety roles, providing a framework for encouraging other nurses to pursue similar career pathways.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that nurses aspiring to become OSH practitioners pursue the necessary certifications and formal qualifications to ensure professional competence, career progression, and recognition within their organizations. They should be open to expanding their roles and responsibilities, embracing both technical and managerial tasks, and

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engaging in continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and on-the-job training to strengthen their skills and professional self-efficacy. Staying updated with current nursing and occupational health trends is essential for maintaining relevance and providing holistic care to employees while fulfilling organizational safety objectives. Organizations, in turn, should offer structured support, mentorship, and recognition for nurses transitioning into OSH roles to enhance professional fulfillment, confidence, and retention, particularly in male-dominated work environments. Additionally, incorporating occupational safety and health as a specialization or elective track within nursing education can equip nurses with the foundational knowledge and skills needed to pursue these roles. Finally, further research is encouraged to explore the experiences of nurses in OSH roles across diverse industries, which can inform policies, training programs, and workplace practices to better support their professional growth and contributions to occupational safety and health.

Synthesis of the Study

This study provides a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of a nurse transitioning into an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) practitioner role, organized around six interrelated themes. Theme 1: Reasons for Becoming an OSH Practitioner highlighted career stagnation, organizational changes, and the desire for self-development as key motivators, illustrating how personal ambition and professional self-efficacy drive career transitions. Theme 2: Positives of the Job showed that workplace support, expanded responsibilities, and meaningful engagement with employees foster professional fulfillment, job satisfaction, and retention. Theme 3: Challenges of the Occupation, including Subthemes 1–3 on technical competencies, gendered dynamics, and behavior-based safety management, revealed the complexity of the role and the need for ongoing learning, resilience, and relational skills. Theme 4: Fears Encountered demonstrated the psychological and practical pressures associated with safety responsibilities, emphasizing vigilance, accountability, and adaptive decision-making. Theme 5: Realizations on the Current Role reflected the participant's growing professional identity, continuity of care, and expanded impact on employee well-being, while Theme 6: Recommending the Role to Other Nurses illustrated how the participant's experience can inspire and guide other nurses seeking similar career advancement.

Synthesizing these themes, the study contributes to knowledge by illuminating how career development, self-efficacy, and gendered workplace experiences intersect in the transition from nursing to OSH practice. It highlights that professional growth in this field requires not only technical proficiency but also relational and managerial competencies. The findings have clear implications for

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practice, suggesting that organizations should provide structured support, mentorship, and opportunities for skill development. For policy, results indicate the need for formal pathways and recognition for nurses in OSH roles, promoting equity and career progression. In terms of training, the study underscores the importance of integrating OSH principles into nursing curricula and continuing professional development programs to prepare nurses for multidisciplinary, safety-focused roles.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited by its reliance on a single participant, which constrains the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of nurses transitioning into Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) roles. Phenomenological research emphasizes depth and rich understanding of lived experiences rather than producing statistically generalizable results (van Manen, 1990). While this study provides valuable insights into one nurse's journey from a company nurse to an OSH practitioner, the experiences, perceptions, and challenges captured may not fully represent the diversity of experiences encountered by other nurses in similar roles or organizational contexts.

Despite this limitation, the findings offer important contributions to understanding career development, gender dynamics in male-dominated workplaces, technical and professional challenges, and the lived experience of occupational health nursing within the Philippine context. These insights can inform organizational practices, nursing education, and policy development, even if they are not universally applicable. Moreover, the researcher is undertaking a follow-up study using a comparative qualitative and duoethnographic approach. This subsequent study will include both the participant from the current research and a nurse who has advanced to the role of an OSH consultant. By incorporating multiple perspectives and comparing the experiences of nurses at different stages of professional development in OSH, the upcoming study aims to expand the scope of understanding, enhance the robustness of findings, and provide insights that may be more widely applicable (van Manen, 2016).

In essence, while the current study is inherently limited by its single-case design, it lays the groundwork for broader, comparative research that has the potential to inform practice, policy, and training for occupational health nursing in diverse organizational and cultural contexts.

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