

Living The Research Experience: A Phenomenological Inquiry into Teacher Educators' Becoming And being Researchers

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ABSTRACT:

Research has become an integral part of the work of teacher educators, although the process of becoming a researcher is sometimes fraught with problems that are more than technical. This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of teacher educators in the development and maintenance of their positions as researchers. In particular, it explored their experiences of the research process, challenges and opportunities, personal and institutional influences on their engagement, strategies for overcoming challenges, and how this experience influenced their confidence, scholarly identity and professional development. Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology guided the study. The study participants were about 15 full-time teacher educators from the nine campuses of Cagayan State University who were purposively recruited for their research experience. Data collection was conducted through in-depth semi-structured interviews accompanied by field notes and reflective memoranda and analysed based on Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological processes, such as epoche, horizontalization, grouping of meaning units, and construction of textural and structural descriptions. The findings showed that the study journeys of the participants were defined by a process of continuing learning, adaptation and personal transformation. Many encountered uncertainties, especially in framing research and making methodological choices right away. But with experience, mentorship, collaboration, institutional support, and continuous involvement in research, their confidence grew, and their sense of scholarly identity increased. Participants began to see research as more than a professional obligation, but a meaningful engagement, tightly interwoven with teaching, reflective inquiry and continuing professional development. The study shows that the process of becoming a researcher is a fluid and continuous experience, determined by personal dedication and the support offered by the institution. These findings emphasize the relevance of persistent mentoring, research capacity development efforts and supportive institutional contexts in facilitating prolonged research engagement of teacher educators.

Keywords: transcendental phenomenology, teacher educators, lived

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Introduction

Research is becoming a vital aspect of academic life for teacher educators in higher education. Universities have increased expectations that academics will not only teach and provide community service but also produce new knowledge through research, disseminating their results, and contribute to the development of evidence-based educational practice. This role is even more pronounced for teacher educators who not only create knowledge but also equip future teachers to be reflective practitioners and lifelong learners. They are thus engaged in research that affects institutional development and the quality of teacher education.

Research productivity has grown to be an ever more expected feature in recent years. Universities today value research output such as scholarly publications, externally sponsored projects and conference presentations as measures of institutional quality and academic performance. These expectations are reinforced by the criteria of accreditation, promotion systems of professors, and government policies promoting a better culture of research in higher education institutions. These advances have raised the importance of research, but they have also increased the obligations on teacher educators to do research in addition to their teaching, extension work and administrative tasks.

Many teacher educators still have problems in maintaining active research participation despite these requirements. Researching is not only methodological knowledge, but time, institutional support, financial resources and sustainable motivation. Faculty members have many challenges in identifying worthwhile research problems, selecting acceptable procedures, analyzing data, preparing manuscripts, and publishing their work while juggling numerous professional responsibilities. Research is sometimes one of the most difficult

parts of academic life due to competing institutional duties and heavy teaching loads.

Research from a range of educational institutions shows that these difficulties are not exclusive to a single institution or country. For example, Charles et al. (2024) found that academics in higher education institutions in Tanzania were hampered in their research productivity by a lack of financing, heavy workloads, limited mentoring, and limited access to scholarly resources. Similarly, Kyaw (2021) showed that teacher educators in Myanmar identified leadership support, institutional culture and opportunity for professional growth as key influencers on their research engagement. Taken together, the results demonstrate that the success of research involvement is not only a function of individual skill, but also of the context in which educators carry out their professional obligations.

Recent scholarship has also been sensitive to the personal dimensions of research interaction. A growing body of evidence argues that research is driven not only by technical expertise but also by confidence, motivation and views about their own potential. Supportive work settings improve university teachers' research productivity by improving research motivation and research self-efficacy (Li & Zhang, 2022). They found that instructors who were confident that they could do research well were more likely to persist despite setbacks.

Li et al. (2024) showed in this view that research self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and institutional support simultaneously influence teachers' desire to participate in research. Faculty who are mentored, have access to training opportunities, and are encouraged by their organization are more likely to have confidence in their talents and to continue their scholarly work. These results corroborate the view that research participation is the result of the interaction of individual determination and institutional conditions and not only of technical

competence.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory also emphasizes the importance of self-belief, stating that people's views about their talents affect the objectives they set, the effort they put in, and how hard they are prepared to work when faced with obstacles. This approach is especially pertinent for teacher educators whose responses to the obstacles of methodology, the pressures of publication, and the unavoidable ambiguities of scholarly investigation may be shaped by the confidence they have in doing research. Experience leads to more confidence in successful educators and recurrent involvement increases their desire to conduct research in the future. At the same time, research is not done in a vacuum. Institutional regulations, leadership practices, research culture, workload distribution, funding possibilities, and mentoring systems affect teacher educators' capacity to meaningfully engage in scholarly activity. Where universities invest in supportive research settings, there is typically encouragement of more engagement; where institutional support is lacking, even highly driven faculty members may be discouraged. Therefore, it is important to understand the relationship between personal and organizational effects so as to explain the ways in which teacher educators experience research during the course of their professional life. The literature on research productivity, research self-efficacy, and faculty engagement has grown, but the bulk of this work has focused on quantifiable outcomes such as publications, grant awards, and research competency. In a recent systematic scoping review in the *International Journal of Educational Research Open* (2024), it was found that relatively little emphasis has been paid to understanding how teacher educators themselves experience the research process. Therefore, the human aspect of becoming and being a researcher is not fully examined.

What is also missing in existing scholarship are the voices of teacher educators which are significant. Most studies use quantitative methodologies that explain research involvement through numerical indicators, but

they provide little insight into how educators make sense of their research trips. Less is known about how they negotiate uncertainty, respond to institutional expectations, overcome setbacks, acquire confidence, and slowly form identities as researchers. The lived experiences provide a better insight of research participation than productivity measures alone.

In order to fill in these gaps, the present study implements a phenomenological research approach to examine the experience of educators as researchers. It does not look into the success of educators as researchers but rather seeks to understand what being a researcher is for them. This study examines their perceptions of research, challenges and opportunities they face, factors influencing their engagement in research (i.e., personal and institutional), their strategies of research execution, and the impact of research experience on their self-esteem as researchers and their professional identity.

The purpose of this project is to study the lived experience of the educators when they are engaged in research under the principles of Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology. The experiences point to the essence of being involved in research, its problems, strategies to cope with them, and the context of research engagement.

Objectives Of The Study

This study explored the lived experiences of teacher educators in becoming and being researchers.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. How do teacher educators describe their lived experiences in becoming and being researchers?
2. What challenges and opportunities do teacher educators encounter as they conceptualize and conduct research?
3. How do personal and institutional factors shape their experiences of becoming and being researchers?

4. What strategies do teacher educators employ in navigating research-related challenges and sustaining their engagement in research?
5. How do teacher educators perceive the role of research knowledge and understanding in their development as researchers?
6. How do teacher educators experience confidence, uncertainty, and growth throughout their research journeys?
7. How do teacher educators describe the influence of their research experiences on their scholarly accomplishments, professional identity, and career development?
8. What is the essence of teacher educators' lived experiences in becoming and being researchers?

Conceptual Framework

The study is rooted on Transcendental Phenomenology as propounded by Moustakas (1994). Phenomenology aims to understand how people comprehend their lived experience and to discover the essential structures of a phenomenon. The philosophical basis of the study is the assumption that reality is known via conscious experience and that meaning is constructed by reflection on lived realities. The phenomenon being studied is the

experience of teacher educators in becoming and being researchers. The study does not aim to measure variables or causal links, but rather to explore how teacher educators make sense of their journeys as researchers, how they negotiate challenges, build confidence, develop knowledge of research, respond to institutional expectations and construct their identities as researchers. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides a sensitizing framework to comprehend participants' experiences of confidence, agency, persistence and self-beliefs in completing research. Institutional Theory offers insight into how organizational structures, regulations, research cultures, mentoring systems, workload expectations and institutional support shape participants experiences. These ideas are conceptual lenses for interpretation, not variables that need to be examined.

The study considers the being and being of a researcher as a dynamic and evolving process that is influenced by life experiences. It is predicted that phenomenological inquiry will generate meanings connected to research knowledge, research problems, institutional influences, coping methods, confidence development, scholarly accomplishments, and researcher identity. Seen in relation to each other, these experiences help illuminate what it means to be a teacher educator as researcher.

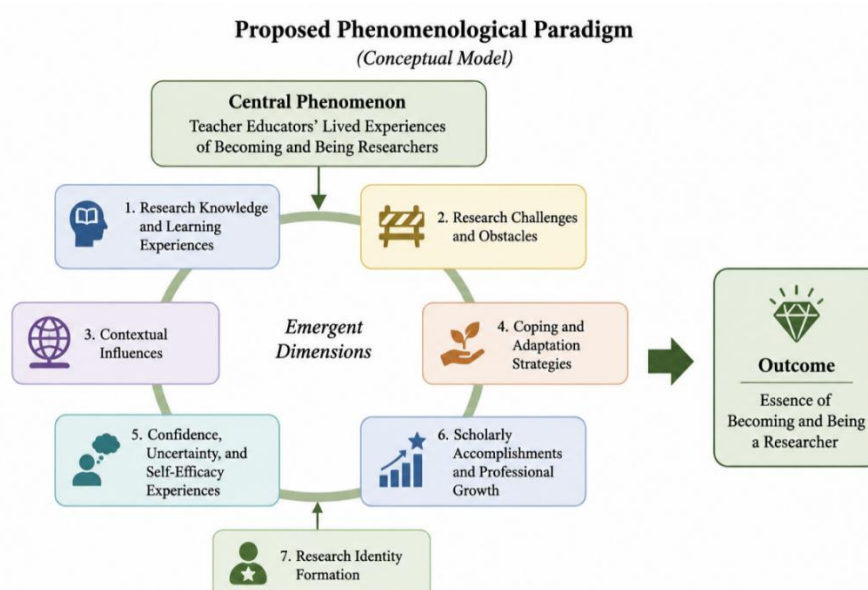


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study

II. Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology, namely Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology, to investigate the lived experiences of teacher educators in their development and practice as researchers. The design was chosen to explore how participants interpreted their research journeys and the significance they attributed to those experiences. Transcendental phenomenology prioritizes the description of a phenomenon's essence as experienced by those who have encountered it, rather than measuring specified variables or testing hypotheses. The study aimed to elucidate the shared meanings, viewpoints, and experiences that define teacher educators' evolution as researchers through comprehensive discussions.

Locale of the Study

The research was carried out at the nine campuses of Cagayan State University, one of the largest state colleges in Northern Philippines. The university was deemed a suitable environment as research constitutes a fundamental aspect of faculty duties and institutional efficacy. The many campuses facilitated access to teacher educators from diverse academic disciplines and professional contexts, enabling the study to encompass a wide array of lived experiences pertaining to research participation.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved approximately 15 full-time teacher educators that had been purposefully recruited using the criteria sampling technique that is commonly used in phenomenological studies. The teacher educators were asked some criteria to share rich and relevant experiences. First, they should have been full-time teacher educators for at least 3 years in the field of higher education and completed or supervised at least one research project. Moreover, they must have had practical experience of both positive and negative aspects of the research as well as

willingness to communicate their thoughts and ideas during in-depth interviews.

Data Collection

The technique employed to gather data in this study was semi-structured, detailed interviews, which resulted in the acquisition of the main information required for this research. This interview technique allowed the respondents to express their experiences while still being focused on the purpose of the research. The questions asked during the interviews were related to respondents' experience in planning and executing research, obstacles experienced, contributing factors, and overcoming approaches.

The process of gathering data involved taking field notes and reflective memos in order to capture contextual observations, emerging insights, and personal considerations. In addition, member checking method was used to make sure participants were able to validate their interview responses, which added to the credibility of the results.

Analysis of Data

The transcripts of interviews were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological method of transcendental phenomenology. The journey of analysis began with epoche where the investigator consciously reflected on and suspended their own assumptions and experiences allowing them to access the stories of the participants without any biases. This method minimized the influence of preconceived ideas during interpretation.

After conducting epoche, the researcher initiated the process of horizontalization where all relevant comments in the transcripts were treated equally. Significant comments that encapsulated the experiences of the participants were discovered and scrutinized. Comments with similar meanings were then grouped together into clusters forming meaning units that depicted the common features of the phenomenon.

The meaning units were combined to create textural descriptions giving an account of

participants' experiences and structural description that demonstrated how these experiences happened wherever they happened in their personal lives or in the setting of the institution. Eventually, the textural and structural descriptions were merged to obtain the essence of the lived experiences of educators in teaching and research.

Trustworthiness of the Study

There were many techniques used to promote the reliability of the research. Among these techniques are persistent involvement with the subjects, member checking, and peer debriefing. At the same time, transferability was made possible through proper description of the context, participants, and the procedure of the study to allow the audience to apply the results to other similar settings. Dependability was also improved through the audits of the research process and methods, while confirmability was obtained through practicing reflexive journaling and bracketing the preconceptions.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to the initiation of data collection, ethical permission was obtained from the Research

Ethics Board of the University. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary participation of individuals in the research process, their right to withdraw from participation without incurring any negative consequences and measures to ensure that anonymity is maintained. Consent was obtained from participants before the start of the interviews. In order to protect the names of the participants, the research has been conducted under the use of pseudonyms or codes and the information gained through the interviews has been rigorously protected.

Expected Contribution of the Study

By providing valuable insights into the experiences of teacher educators in their roles as researchers, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in this area of research. The present findings have implications for the faculty development programs, mentoring programs, and other initiatives meant to build research capacity and create research-friendly institutional climates in the field of higher education. More importantly, the study describes the experiences of teacher educators.

III. Results and Discussion

1. How do teacher educators describe their lived experiences in becoming and being researchers?

Table 1. Thematic Analysis of Teacher Educators' Lived Experiences in Becoming and Being Researchers

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"Becoming a researcher was not an immediate or easy process..." (P1)	Research development is gradual and demanding.	Research as an Evolving Journey
"Continuous learning, perseverance..." (P2)	Research requires sustained growth and persistence.	
"A journey of continuous learning..." (P7)	Research identity develops over time.	
"Initially viewed research as a requirement..." (P4)	Perceptions of research change through experience.	
"Research was an expansion of my teaching practice..." (P3, P10)	Teaching experiences motivate inquiry.	Research as an Extension of Teaching Practice
"Noticing problems in the classroom and	Classroom issues become	

investigating them systematically." (P3, P10)	research opportunities.	Research as Meaning-Making and Knowledge Construction
"Understanding and improving educational practices." (P4)	Research informs teaching improvement.	
"Real issues encountered in the classroom..." (P4)	Research addresses authentic educational concerns.	
"Process of curiosity and discovery." (P1)	Inquiry is driven by curiosity.	
"Pursuit of meaningful knowledge." (P2)	Research seeks deeper understanding.	
"Trying to make sense of real-world problems..." (P1)	Research helps interpret complex realities.	Navigating Challenges and Fulfillment
"Evidence says what works rather than intuition." (P3, P10)	Evidence guides professional decisions.	
"Both challenging and rewarding..." (P1)	Research involves mixed emotions.	
"Challenging and rewarding." (P5)	Difficulties coexist with satisfaction.	
"Pressured, challenged, and yet optimistic." (P11)	Emotional tensions accompany research work.	
"Fulfilling because it taught me lessons." (P8)	Research brings personal fulfillment.	Institutional Support and Validation
"Satisfied partly due to funding." (P6)	Institutional resources influence experiences.	
"Satisfied because the university supports me." (P9)	Organizational support enhances engagement.	

The experiences shared by the interviewees highlight that the journey of acquiring research skills is a long-lasting process instead of an instantaneous event. While some of the participants first regarded research as a challenging task that was scary and remained a further obligation to fulfill as part of their work responsibilities, they changed their minds once they started completing research assignments. Since they faced various problems while working on the projects and analyzing the outcomes, they started viewing research as something significant, gaining recognition as a result. It implies that the process of becoming a professional researcher is not only a constant process of accumulation of knowledge and experience, but also an opportunity for development and growth. This explains why Brew's (2010) thesis that one obtains the status

of a researcher through continuous participation appears to be true.

The research carried out by the participants has been perceived as an extension of their teaching practice rather than research in its own right. Many of the mentioned that the research issue emerged from their experience in the classroom, from students' learning needs and problems they encountered while teaching. By exploring these matters they improved their teaching practice, and were able to identify evidence-based approaches that could contribute to better learning. For the participants, research was presented as an effective means to address real educational problems rather than an academic requirement. The finding resonates with the ideas of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) who stated that inquiry is an integral part of teaching

and practice enabling teachers to learn from their own experiences.

Another crucial element of how participants perceived their lives is the role of research in contributing to their understanding of their professional life. Participants perceived research as a tool for making sense of their educational problems through systematic investigations and critical thinking. This enhanced curiosity led them to reflect on issues in a more critical way and the research process enabled them to question their assumptions. With the growing understanding of research, practitioners turned into reflective practitioners who appreciate research projects as the means of improving their teaching practice.

Even though the participants reported many positive outcomes during their research activities, the authors mentioned that undertaking research can oftentimes lead to very ambiguous situations, an internal struggle and sometimes doubts regarding their professional competence. The participants pointed out how they had to deal with difficulties related to forming the concept of their research ideas, applying the correct methodology, performing

multiple tasks at once and meeting demands coming from their institution. The participants indicated that still they did not stop their research activities. In fact, overcoming the challenges made them more confident and devoted to academic work. The authors have noted the important role of institutional support, most importantly, mentorship and cooperation, research funding (Salazar-Cleme, 2021; Morales, 2022; Ulla, 2023). The results of this research are very similar to previous studies done by Salazar-Cleme, Morales and Ulla. It shows that the process of development of a researcher throughout their life can be viewed as a development journey.

Their experiences indicate that research encompasses more than an academic task, but it is rather a vital activity influencing their knowledge, teaching and becoming teachers. In this way of ongoing learning, reflecting, relating and engaging they gradually formed a better identity as researchers. This perception means that research is more than an achievement of academic goals; the researchers should acquire a good understanding of education practice and provide useful information for the improvement of teaching and education in general.

2. What challenges and opportunities do you encounter as they conceptualize and conduct research?

Table 2. Thematic Analysis of Teacher Educators' Challenges and Opportunities in Conceptualizing and Conducting Research

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"One of the biggest challenges I face is narrowing down a topic..." (P1) "Limited resources and time..." (P2) "Finding enough time to conduct research..." (P4) "Balancing teaching responsibilities with research demands..." (P7)	Difficulty identifying feasible research topics; competing responsibilities; limited time and resources constrain research activities.	Resource and Workload Constraints
"Navigating research paradigms and paradigmatic frameworks..." (P3, P10) "Determining appropriate content analysis methodologies..." (P3, P10) "Organizing ideas logically..." (P1)	Uncertainty in selecting methodologies and research approaches; conceptual and analytical difficulties during the research process.	Methodological and Conceptual Challenges

"Distance between the different CSU campuses..." (P5) "Insufficient fund to finance the conduct of the study..." (P8) "Limited funding." (P6) "Securing funds from the university." (P9)	Financial limitations and logistical barriers hinder the conduct of research.	Financial and Logistical Barriers
"I am not techno savvy..." (P11) "I strive to join seminars on the use of AI..." (P11) "I lack the necessary team-comrade..." (P11)	Limited technological competence and insufficient collaborative support create additional difficulties.	Technological and Collaborative Limitations
"These challenges force me to think more critically..." (P1) "Develop discipline, patience, and analytical thinking." (P1) "Learn new skills..." (P4) "Strengthen my communication and organizational skills..." (P5)	Research challenges facilitate the development of professional and personal competencies.	Research as Professional Learning and Growth
"Opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and impact." (P2) "Professional network... connects me with experienced researchers..." (P3, P10) "Opens opportunities for collaboration and professional growth." (P7) "Contribute to improving educational programs..." (P5)	Research provides avenues for mentorship, collaboration, innovation, and meaningful contribution to educational practice.	Collaboration and Scholarly Opportunities

Participants felt that conducting research was rewarding but hard work, requiring determination, adaptability, and openness to further experience. Their responses indicated that they were facing difficulties at the conceptual stage of research but had a hard time framing specific research questions and selecting appropriate methods, as well as organizing their ideas coherently. Such difficulties were compounded by heavy teaching duties, administrative obligations, and lack of time for research. For many of our participants, conducting research was like walking a thin line between teaching and other professional duties. Their experiences reveal that research is far from being a purely technical endeavor but a complex process that is influenced by conditions of academic life.

Conceptual, methodological, institutional and logistical problems also faced by participants impacted their engagement with study. Lack of

financing, lack of research resources, geographical remoteness of university campuses and lack of technology capabilities often delayed or complicated the execution of their job. Other interviewees also mentioned the absence of reliable research collaborators and mentors which added complexity to the research process. The findings demonstrate that successful research is not only about individual talent, but also about institutional support and chances for collaboration. Similar results have been documented by Salazar-Cleme (2021), Morales (2022) and Ulla (2023) who found workload, restricted resources and lack of sufficient mentoring as common impediments to faculty research production. Participants viewed their experiences as possibilities for personal and professional growth despite these challenges. Dealing with research problems promoted their critical thinking, patience, discipline, and problem-solving skills and gradually increased their confidence as researchers. Many also noted

that research provided opportunities for collaboration, professional networking, and ongoing learning through seminars, training programs, and partnerships with more experienced researchers. The challenges did not discourage them but motivated them to improve their research skills and broaden their perspectives.

These experiences are consistent with Bandura's (1997) assertion that mastery experiences and continued engagement build confidence, and also reflect Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) idea that collaborative inquiry enhances professional learning.

These experiences show that the research process is full of challenges and opportunities

that are deeply connected. The challenges the participants encountered were not obstacles to doing research but rather valuable learning experiences that made them more resilient, improved their research skills, and increased their dedication to academic work. Through perseverance, constant learning, teamwork, and backing, these individuals eventually turned problems into chances for personal growth and their professional improvement. From the viewpoint of phenomenology, these experiences show that being a researcher means much more than producing scholarly results, being a permanent journey of discovering your potential, enhancing your professional activities, and producing knowledge that makes a difference in the field of education and society.

3. How do personal and institutional factors shape your experiences of becoming and being researchers?

Table 3. Thematic Analysis of Personal and Institutional Factors Shaping Teacher Educators' Experiences of Becoming and Being Researchers

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"My motivation, curiosity, and persistence play a big role..." (P1) "Personal passion... influences the direction and sustainability of my research." (P2) "My strong interests... make research feel personally meaningful instead of obligatory." (P3, P10) "My passion for teaching and my desire to help students succeed motivate me..." (P4) "My commitment and research skills..." (P5) "My motivation to improve as an educator..." (P7) "It made me more motivated..." (P8)	Personal interests, intrinsic motivation, persistence, and commitment influence research engagement and sustain involvement in scholarly work.	Personal Motivation and Passion as Drivers of Research Engagement
"My educational background... offers foundational knowledge..." (P3, P10) "Research skills... played important roles..." (P5) "It made me more knowledgeable to conduct more research." (P8)	Prior educational experiences and acquired competencies shape confidence and readiness for research.	Research Competence and Educational Preparation

"Guidance of instructors, availability of resources..." (P1) "Supportive mentors make the process easier..." (P1) "Support provided by the university through trainings, research programs, and mentoring..." (P4) "Institutional support greatly influences my engagement..." (P7) "It molded me to become active." (P9)	Mentoring, trainings, institutional programs, and resource availability encourage research participation and development.	Institutional Support and Capacity Building
"Academic requirements strongly influence my experience..." (P1) "The culture of the university... influences what research topics are supported." (P3, P10) "I finance my own expenses and even publication." (P6)	Institutional expectations, policies, organizational culture, and financial support shape research experiences and opportunities.	Institutional Structures and Constraints
"I am willing but the social support... is lacking." (P11) "I strive to reach out to those who can be my teammates..." (P11) "I wish I could attend training/workshops..." (P11) "The research office... could be institutional support." (P11)	Collegial relationships, teamwork, professional networks, and continuous learning opportunities influence research engagement and persistence.	Social Support and Professional Connectedness

As shown in Table 3, teacher educators' experiences in their development and practice as researchers are shaped by personal resolve and their working surroundings. The participants reported that despite obstacles, they retained motivation, curiosity, enthusiasm, and persistence. According to Bandura (1997), these personal qualities acted as a very powerful source of strength and resilience, supporting his assertion that having confidence and intrinsic motivation allows people to persist in difficult tasks.

The participants were well aware of the importance of educational preparation and competence in research for boosting their confidence as researchers. Their background knowledge and research experience served as a foundation for them to cope with academic difficulties. Brew (2010) claims that a researcher's identity is formed through ongoing education and engagement in research actions.

The support from the institutions played a vital role in sustaining their research involvement. Mentoring, training, availability of resources, and institutional programs created the necessary incentives for the participants to continue with their academic career. At the same time, some of the institutional barriers such as high expectations, lack of financing, and costs of publishing negatively affected their research engagement like the findings of the research done in the Philippines show (Morales, 2022; Salazar-Cleme, 2021). Participants emphasized the significance of supportive relationships. The presence of colleagues, mentors, and professional groups enhanced research experiences, while their absence often resulted in isolation. The data suggest that the path to becoming a researcher is not a solitary endeavor but a process shaped by personal commitment, institutional support, and essential professional relationships.

4. What strategies do you employ in navigating research-related challenges and sustaining your engagement in research?

Table 4. Thematic Analysis of Strategies Employed in Navigating Research-Related Challenges and Sustaining Engagement in Research

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"I usually start by breaking tasks into smaller steps..." (P1) "Time management..." (P2) "Plan my tasks carefully and allocate specific time..." (P4) "Leveraging Google Drive... engaging in research during brief administrative intervals..." (P3) "Managing my time effectively..." (P7)	Participants intentionally organize and prioritize research tasks, set goals, and utilize productivity techniques to balance multiple responsibilities.	Strategic Planning and Time Management
"Consultations with my instructor or peers..." (P1) "Collaboration..." (P2) "Seek guidance from experienced colleagues..." (P4) "Collaboration with stakeholders..." (P5) "Collaborating with colleagues..." (P7) "Joined a pool of experts and tried to have research collaboration..." (P8)	Seeking assistance from peers, mentors, stakeholders, and research experts provides support in overcoming research-related difficulties.	Collaboration and Seeking Support
"Make use of online resources and academic journals..." (P1) "Participate in research seminars to improve my knowledge and skills." (P4) "Seeking continuous learning opportunities." (P7) "Leveraging Google Drive for efficient document management..." (P3)	Participants actively seek new knowledge, utilize available technologies, and engage in professional development to strengthen research competence.	Continuous Learning and Resource Utilization
"I remind myself of the purpose of the research..." (P1) "Meaningful purpose of the work." (P3) "Research is a means of improving educational practices..." (P4) "Inner drive, intrinsic motivation, eagerness and willingness to seek new knowledge..." (P10) "Very confident because I have the knowledge..." (P6)	Internal motivation, confidence, and recognition of research's value sustain participants' commitment despite challenges.	Intrinsic Motivation and Purpose-Driven Engagement

"The research proposal must be aligned with the university research agenda..." (P9) "Deans or heads should take the lead to innovate multidisciplinary team research..." (P10)	Participants adapt to institutional expectations and seek organizational support to facilitate research engagement and access available opportunities.	Navigating Institutional Structures and Opportunities
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5. How do you perceive the role of research knowledge and understanding in your development as researchers?

The participants' accounts illustrate that maintaining research involvement necessitates intentional effort and flexibility. Instead of permitting obstacles to impede their advancement, they devised pragmatic techniques that facilitated ongoing research despite conflicting obligations. Through careful planning, effective time management, and breaking down complex projects, the participants were able to successfully manage the various tasks related to research, teaching, extension work, and administration. These outcomes clearly indicate that the participants gradually learned how to perform their functions and thus continue conducting research even in challenging academic environments.

One of the major lessons learned by the participants is the importance of being willing to ask for help and collaborate with others. Many of the participants indicated that when encountering difficulties with research approaches or concepts, they should always ask for assistance from their supervisors, work in collaboration with peers, and communicate with more experienced scholars. These meetings provided the participants with technical guidance and encouragement, as well as moral support at the difficult phases of their research projects. The participants also pointed out how

important it is to improve their research skills through attending conferences, reading literature on research, and using various digital technologies to gain more knowledge and skills.

The participants sourced their strength from their commitment to research. They remained motivated due to believe that research can not only improve their teaching practice but also address educational issues and serve the wider academic community. This motivation enabled them to continue despite difficulties and uncertainties. At the same time, learners learned to align their research interests with institutions' priorities and to use different opportunities available to them, such as university research projects and cooperative initiatives. The participants' experiences illustrate that continued engagement in research depends on external support and internal motivation for continuous learning and skills enhancement. The participants' experiences confirm the fact that successful overcoming of research obstacles is facilitated by personal initiative, collaboration with partners, and supportive environment. Their solutions offered them more than simply resulting in the execution of their projects: they proved their commitment to professional development. From the perspective of a phenomenological approach, their experiences showed that learning engagement is an ongoing process influenced both by resilience and active behavior, as well as by personal relations and contacts.

Table 5. Thematic Analysis of Teacher Educators' Perceptions of the Role of Research Knowledge and Understanding in Their Development as Researchers

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"Research knowledge is very important because it helps me understand how to properly gather, analyze, and interpret information." (P1) "Research knowledge equips me with the competence and confidence needed to conduct meaningful scholarly work." (P7) "Knowing the rigor in conducting research made me more active..." (P8)	Research knowledge provides the skills and competencies necessary for conducting rigorous and meaningful inquiry.	Research Knowledge as a Foundation for Research Competence
"Research knowledge deepens my critical thinking..." (P2) "It has helped me develop critical thinking and a more structured way of solving problems." (P1) "Become more critical, reflective, and systematic..." (P4) "Think more critically and appreciate how data can be used..." (P5)	Understanding research fosters analytical thinking, reflection, evidence appraisal, and systematic problem-solving.	Development of Critical and Reflective Thinking
"I become more confident in handling academic tasks." (P1) "Strengthens my identity as a scholar." (P2) "Gives me confidence to engage in academic conversations..." (P10) "I acted as the study leader." (P9)	Research knowledge enhances confidence, leadership capacity, and the development of a scholarly identity.	Research Knowledge and Researcher Identity Formation
"Research knowledge is the link between my practical teaching experience and theoretical understanding..." (P3) "Make informed decisions based on evidence..." (P4) "Teaching experiences generate research questions and research knowledge enhances my teaching effectiveness." (P10)	Research understanding bridges theory and practice and informs evidence-based educational decision-making.	Bridging Theory, Practice, and Evidence-Based Action
"Foundation of crafting, developing, conducting, and publishing research..." (P11) "It should not end there. What is its essence and contribution to humanity?" (P11) "Conducting studies that are relevant and beneficial to my profession." (P4)	Research knowledge extends beyond technical competence toward creating meaningful contributions to society and the	Research Knowledge as a Vehicle for Professional and Social Contribution

	profession.	
"I worked as a member in collaborative research but my effort was not given much credit." (P6)	Recognition and acknowledgment influence how individuals value and experience their contributions as researchers.	Recognition and Validation in Research Engagement

The participants considered research knowledge as a starting point for their development as researchers. Their stories demonstrate that the acquisition of research knowledge was not only about acquiring knowledge of theories, procedures or analytical approaches, but about building confidence, competence and a richer understanding of academic inquiry. With greater experience in the research process, students believed they were increasingly able to create studies, understand data collected, analyze findings, and relay their work.

The students' stories demonstrate how research expertise is gained through continuous experience and practice, not just formal education. This gradual development helped participants to tackle research with a greater degree of confidence and determination, supporting Brew's (2010) claim that scholarly knowledge is generated through continuous involvement in research.

According to the participants, knowledge of research transformed their perception of educational issues and their practice. Their skills in technology developed, and they became more thoughtful, analytical, and purposeful in their decision-making.

Evidence is utilized for understanding classroom reality and tackling issues in education instead of relying solely on assumptions. This has resulted in a new way of thinking about challenges and understanding the significance of informed inquiry for teaching and learning processes. Their feedback indicates

that they have used their research knowledge in their professional thinking and performed inquiry as part of their day-to-day work as teacher educators. The results obtained are in agreement with the concept of inquiry proposed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009).

The participants mentioned that the newly acquired knowledge of research improved their abilities to help their institutions and the academic community.

With the increase in knowledge, they became confident enough to share their work and collaborate with others. Their experiences confirm Bandura's (1997) affirmation that self-efficacy grows with competence and that the person begins to be involved in increasingly challenging professional activities and to contribute more to the area.

The participants' experiences indicate that research knowledge is not only about acquiring technical abilities, but is a catalyst for professional development, reflective practice and valuable scholarly contribution.

Participants' understanding of research grew and they eventually established stronger identities as educators and researchers able to confidently generate, utilize and share information. From a phenomenological perspective, research knowledge is valuable for enhancing research capacity, influencing how teacher educators conceptualize their professional roles, engage with educational issues, and affect the ongoing development of education and society.

6. How do you experience confidence, uncertainty, and growth throughout your research journeys?

Table 6. Thematic Analysis of Teacher Educators' Experiences of Confidence, Uncertainty, and Growth Throughout Their Research Journeys

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"At the beginning, I often feel uncertain..." (P1) "Uncertainty in complex phases..." (P2) "Questions that make me uncertain..." (P3) "Experience uncertainty when dealing with complex research problems..." (P4) "Moments of uncertainty..." (P5) "I often experience uncertainty during the research process..." (P7) "Endless doubts because of lack of mentoring..." (P10)	Participants commonly experience self-doubt, methodological uncertainty, and concerns about the adequacy of their research decisions and capabilities.	Navigating Uncertainty and Self-Doubt
"As I continue working and receive feedback, my confidence gradually increases." (P1) "Confidence when achieving milestones..." (P2) "I feel confident in my ability..." (P3) "I feel confident... when my findings contribute to solving concerns." (P4) "Challenges helped build my confidence..." (P5) "I am confident that I can produce a research output." (P6)	Confidence develops through successful experiences, accomplishments, positive feedback, and recognition of one's abilities and contributions.	Building Confidence Through Experience and Achievement
"Every challenge I overcome contributes to my growth..." (P1) "Growth through reflection and persistence." (P2) "These experiences taught me to be patient, adaptable, and open to continuous learning." (P4) "Broaden my understanding... leading to personal and professional growth." (P5) "Each experience strengthens my confidence and resilience." (P7)	Overcoming difficulties fosters resilience, adaptability, reflection, and continuous professional development.	Growth Through Challenges and Resilience
"Students and I grow through the cycle between knowing and not knowing." (P3) "Research process is not linear..." (P1)	Research development is viewed as an ongoing, cyclical process characterized by continual learning and evolving understanding.	Embracing the Nonlinear Nature of Research Learning
"Research collaboration with experts made me more confident..." (P8) "Through mentorship, I gained ideas and became more confident." (P9) "Lack of mentoring... team research should help	Mentorship, collaboration, and supportive professional relationships influence confidence and	The Role of Mentorship and Collaboration in Research Development

one another." (P10)	facilitate researcher growth.	
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The stories told by the participants indicated that confidence, doubt, and development were intertwined. People puzzled over the outcomes of their work and their research methods at the very beginning of the process. One participant admitted, "I often find myself being uncertain at the very beginning" (P1); another participant stated, "I am often filled with doubts due to the absence of the mentor" (P10). These stories confirm that doubts are a normal part of conducting research and cannot be interpreted as a sign of lower ability. They faced problems that were difficult and unpleasant alike, and they had to develop skills that would allow them to cope with it. Their experience corresponds to Moustakas' (1994) observation that the meaning of life comes from living and that doubts always accompany the process of personal and cognitive development.

Although the participants expressed some amount of anxiety during the research process, the fact that they were constantly achieving important goals boosted their confidence. They achieved their goals, got feedback about their work, and presented their findings. One participant claimed, "I gain confidence as I work more and get feedback on my progress" (P1). Someone else noted, "I was confident thanks to the challenges that I coped with" (P5). Thus, the findings indicate that courage is derived from persistence and not by accident, which helps to support Bandura's (1997) idea of self-efficacy as mastery experiences are one of the most effective sources of self-confidence and motivation.

The difficulties faced during the challenges were also viewed as ways to help participants with both personal and professional growth.

Resilience was built during the tough times, with people having a positive approach towards obstacles and using them for their further development. According to one of the participants, "personal growth comes from every single challenge that has to be dealt with." Another participant mentioned that the study was able to teach them how to have "patience, adaptability, and willingness to learn." There were participants who understood that research is not always linear, therefore they were familiar with the cycle of knowing and not knowing. Such thoughts show that not only uncertainty brings the development, but also brings uncertainty when it becomes obvious that further development of people depends on their ability to accept mentoring of their skilled and experienced colleagues and cooperation with them.

The experiences of the participants indicate that confidence, uncertainty, and development are interdependent aspects of the process of becoming and being a researcher. Their development was not a straightforward move from uncertainty to confidence. The process involved the cycle of inquiry, learning, and growth. Every research experience presented an opportunity for improvement in terms of resilience, abilities, and dedication to research. From a phenomenological point of view, the narratives illustrate that the essence of becoming a researcher lies not in eliminating uncertainty but rather in learning to live with it and use it in a constructive way to advance professionally along with further education. With constant efforts and the right support, the participants formed a stronger image of themselves as accomplished scientists.

7. How do you describe the influence of your research experiences on your scholarly accomplishments, professional identity, and career development?

Table 7. Thematic Analysis of the Influence of Research Experiences on Scholarly Accomplishments, Professional Identity, and Career Development

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"Research experiences have significantly improved my academic performance..." (P1) "Research experiences enhance my scholarly output..." (P2) "Research assistantship experience... yielded content analysis outputs..." (P3) "Opportunities to share my work through presentations, publications..." (P4) "It made me more productive." (P8)	Research engagement contributes to increased productivity, scholarly outputs, dissemination activities, and academic accomplishments.	Enhancing Scholarly Productivity and Achievement
"They shape my identity as someone who can analyze problems systematically..." (P1) "Reinforce my professional identity..." (P2) "Strengthened my identity as a teacher committed to lifelong learning..." (P4) "Enhanced my scholarly identity..." (P7) "Shifted my professional identity from being just an English educator to a practitioner and researcher." (P10)	Research experiences reshape how participants perceive themselves as educators, scholars, and contributors to knowledge.	Formation and Transformation of Professional Identity
"Research has encouraged me to become more reflective and evidence-oriented..." (P4) "Strengthened my academic skills..." (P5) "I gained more research skills." (P9) "Instructional material development now incorporates research-based practices." (P3)	Research experiences improve competencies, reflective practice, and evidence-based approaches to professional work.	Professional Growth and Competency Development
"Research skills are valuable in many fields..." (P1) "Open doors for career advancement." (P2) "Prepares me for higher academic roles..." (P10) "Inspired me to continuously pursue learning and improvement..." (P5)	Research experiences create opportunities for advancement, leadership, specialization, and expanded professional roles.	Career Advancement and Future Opportunities
"Dissatisfied due to less recognition despite efforts done." (P6)	Recognition and acknowledgment influence satisfaction with scholarly accomplishments and professional contributions.	Recognition and Validation of Scholarly Contributions

"I do not know what is its antecedent." (P11)	Some participants expressed difficulty articulating the long-term influence of research experiences on their professional trajectories.	Uncertainty in Attributing Professional Outcomes to Research Experiences
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The process of engaging in research transformed the way participants viewed themselves as educators. Their stories show that research has an impact on participants' perception of themselves as teachers and professionals. People reported that research made them better at writing articles, developing studies, and creating instructional materials based on evidence. One participant stated, "My educational success increased thanks to research" (P1), whereas another one commented, "I became more productive" (P8). It can be inferred from these examples that research was not merely a requirement of the educational institution, but rather, an effective means of improving research skills. This finding is consistent with Bland et al (2005) who suggested that continuous research involvement has a positive correlation with academic productivity and academic accomplishment.

In addition to the academic achievements, participants reported the impact of research to be deep in their professional identities. Doing research helped them to be more contemplative, analytical and evidence-based in their approach. One participant reported, "Research reinforce[s] my professional identity..." (P2). Another noted, "It strengthened my identity as a teacher committed to lifelong learning" (P4). Participant 10 also reported a profound psychological change: "research shifted my professional identity from being an English educator to a practitioner and researcher." These reports imply that research was woven into the participants' conception of their professional job. Instead of defining themselves just as classroom teachers, they slowly adopted the identity of academics who develop information to further educational practice. This result is consistent with Brew (2010) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) who claimed that ongoing

inquiry is involved in the ongoing construction of professional identity.

Participants also saw research as a way of improving their career prospects. For many, their research experiences had prepared them for leadership, academic progression, and expanded professional responsibilities. Research "opens doors for career advancement," as Participant 2 said. Research "prepares me for higher academic roles," as Participant 10 said. Others reported how their teaching was enhanced and they were motivated to engage in continued professional development because of the knowledge and abilities they had gained from their research. Meanwhile, some of the participants confessed that they did not always feel recognized equally for their scientific efforts. Another participant shared that "dissatisfied due to less recognition despite efforts done" (P6). One participant said that it is difficult to measure the long-term influence of research on their career: "I do not know what is its antecedent" (P11). The various perceptions indicate that while research provides significant chances for advancement, the level to which these contributions are acknowledged may be contingent on individual and institutional contexts.

Participants' experiences demonstrated that research is a strong influence on scholarly accomplishment, professional identity and career growth. Their stories show that research increased their academic output and changed their perceptions of themselves as educators, researchers and knowledge creators. Though not without hurdles and uncertainty, the participants' sustained engagement in research helped them to identify new chances, improve their professional skills and find greater purpose in their academic job. The phenomenological

experience of doing research became a transforming experience both personally and professionally as teacher educators were able to shed the role of knowledge consumers and

embrace their identities as scholars committed to advancing education through meaningful inquiry.

8. What is the essence of your lived experiences in becoming and being researcher?

Table 8. Thematic Analysis of the Essence of Teacher Educators' Lived Experiences in Becoming and Being Researchers

Significant Statements	Meaning Units	Emergent Themes
"Growth through struggle..." (P1) "Resilience, curiosity, and commitment..." (P2) "Constant becoming..." (P3) "Journey of discovering better ways..." (P4)	Research is experienced as a continuous process of development shaped by struggle, persistence, curiosity, and ongoing transformation.	Research as Continuous Growth and Becoming
"Integration where research is not separate from my life..." (P3) "Approaching roles with systematic inquiry..." (P3) "Research is how I make meaning from my work..." (P10)	Research is deeply embedded in teaching practice and professional life, serving as a lens for understanding and improving educational work.	Research as Integrated Professional Practice and Meaning-Making
"Commitment to contribute knowledge that matters..." (P2) "Make meaningful contributions to education..." (P4) "Contribute knowledge that can make a positive difference..." (P5)	Research is viewed as a purposeful endeavor aimed at generating knowledge that improves education and society.	Research as Purposeful Contribution to Education and Society
"Desire to understand, learn..." (P4) "It teaches me more lessons and skills..." (P9) "Experience is the best teacher..." (P11)	Research fosters continuous learning, reflection, and self-awareness through lived experience and inquiry.	Research as Lifelong Learning and Self-Discovery
"It gave me self-worth and fulfillment." (P8) "Professional development..." (P6) "Enhanced my scholarly identity..." (P7)	Research contributes to personal fulfillment, professional growth, and the strengthening of scholarly identity.	Research as Fulfillment and Identity Formation

The participants' narratives suggest that being and being a researcher is best viewed as a lifelong process of growth, discovery and transformation. Instead of viewing research as a succession of finished tasks or academic requisites, they considered it an experience that constantly influenced their personal and

professional life. "Growth through struggle" (P1) was how one participant characterized the journey, whereas for another, the experience was defined by "resilience, curiosity and commitment" (P2). Participant 3 described research as a process of 'constant becoming' meaning that a researcher's identity is never

complete but always in a state of becoming with new experiences and better understanding.

These narratives illustrate how inquiry became an authentic process of ongoing refinement of perspectives, strengthening of capabilities, and deepening of appreciation for inquiry. This interpretation is in line with Moustakas' (1994) perspective that the core of a phenomena is derived from the lived experiences of individuals and the meaning ascribed to those experiences.

Furthermore, participants described research as an essential element of their professional practice, not as a responsibility distinct from teaching. Participant 3 noted that "research is not separate from my life" and Participant 10 explained that "research is how I make meaning from my work". These insights exemplify how research was interwoven in their daily work as teacher educators, affecting the manner in which they approached instruction, dealt with educational issues and reflected on their practice. Participants also acknowledged that research provided an opportunity to offer knowledge that would be useful to learners, colleagues and the wider educational community. Participant 2 described research as "a commitment to contribute knowledge that matters" while Participant 5 spoke of the ability to "make a positive difference". Their experiences affirm Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) view that inquiry is a professional disposition through which educators produce valuable information and continually refine their practice.

The participants' experiences show that the core of becoming and being a researcher is not in the production of academic outputs but in the continual transformation by inquiry. Research brought learning and fulfillment, and a greater understanding of themselves and their work. Participant 8 remarked that research "gave me self-worth and fulfillment," while Participant 9 admitted that it "teaches me more lessons and skills. From a phenomenological perspective, these stories illustrate how the path to becoming a researcher is an ongoing one of embracing challenges, experiential learning, and meaning-

making of the pursuit of knowledge. In the end, research was more than a professional duty. It became a meaningful way of comprehending educational realities, contributing to society, and continuing becoming the educators and scholars they wanted to be.

Conclusion

Findings from this phenomenological study indicate that the process of being and being a researcher is a continual process of learning, reflecting, and transforming for teacher educators.

Participants faced challenges such as uncertainty, scarcity of resources, and competing demands in their professional lives. However, their experiences helped build confidence, research abilities, and appreciation for inquiry. Over time, research became not just a task for institutions but something meaningful for participants in their professional and personal growth. The study results suggest that the process of transforming teacher educators into researchers is dependent on personal commitment and institutional support. Personal traits of participants, such as curiosity, persistence, and determination, as well as mentoring, cooperation, professional development opportunities, and research culture in their institutions to overcome difficulties and become scholars. The meaning of becoming and being a researcher lies in continuous development and growth through experience. Research is not only producing formal outcomes; it impacts participants' professional lives, teaching methodologies, and attempts to bring the useful knowledge to the society.

Recommendations

The study results indicate that strengthening research support systems through sufficient funding, available resources and effective research and publication procedures is necessary for higher education. Apart from financial support, higher education institutions need to develop mentoring programs and stimulate collaboration in research so instructors can work with either their peers, specialists or interdisciplinary teams. This is important for

decreasing isolation, increasing self-confidence and enhancing methodological competence.

It is essential to implement ongoing training programs focusing on study design, data analysis, academic writing and usage of modern digital resources. Moreover, HEIs should consider the possibility of distributing load or providing free research time for academics to

help them combine teaching, administrative work and research activities.

Finally, teacher educators need to be supported and encouraged to conduct research in their working life so that research becomes a frequent element of teaching improvement and curriculum development.

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