



THE JOURNEY BEYOND BORDERS: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-TIME MIGRANT FILIPINO NURSES WORKING IN REHABILITATION HOSPITALS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Phuong-Anh Nguyen-Quach, Ma. Mae C. Shirazi, MayMary A. Alcantara, Mayla A. Beaty, Dr. MJ Flores*

College of Nursing, St. Bernadette of Lourdes College (SBLC), Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

*[*mjflores@sblc.edu.ph](mailto:mjflores@sblc.edu.ph)*

Abstract

Filipino nurses are essential for the U.S. healthcare system, without them, the system would face a significant shortage of nursing professionals. Due to the high demand for nursing professionals to fill shortages in other countries, the nursing sector has been a primary source of overseas Filipino workers. From 2004 to 2010, nurses comprised an average of 19% of all emigrating Filipino professional, medical, and technical workers. This study aimed to explore and better understand the lived experience of First-time Migrant Filipino Nurses, guided by the central question: How do the study participants describe their lived experiences of migration involving their cultural competencies and quality of care. The study used a qualitative descriptive phenomenology design and involved First-time Migrant Filipino Nurses working in rehabilitation hospitals in Northern California. Participants were selected using purposive sampling methods, which ensured that they met the specific criteria aligned with the research objectives. The study involved 10 participants who were interviewed via a face-to-face Zoom meeting with the help of an aide memoire. The data collected were analyzed using Collaizi's method, and verification procedures were performed through member checking. The study ensured the credibility of the research by observing reflexivity, bracketing, and resonance. The journey of Filipino nurses who migrate to other countries for better career opportunities is full of chances for professional growth and cultural enrichment. However, it can also present challenges in terms of cultural diversity among migrant nurses, which can affect their ability to understand and navigate the cultural nuances of their new environment.

Keywords: Rehabilitation Hospitals, Migrant Filipino Nurses, Lived Experiences

INTRODUCTION

In Western countries, particularly in the United States, the contribution of foreign-trained nurses to the healthcare industry cannot be overstated. Among these foreign-trained nurses, the Filipino nurses make up the largest number. This can be traced back to the colonization of the Philippines by the

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United States (US) in 1898, during which nursing schools were established to teach western medicine in English. With the onset of nursing shortages in the US post-World War I, the exchange visitor program was implemented, providing an opportunity for Filipino nurses to come and work in the US. (Wright K., 2019). Filipino nurses play in the U.S. healthcare system. In the absence of Filipino nurses, the healthcare system in the U.S. would face a severe shortage of nursing professionals. The nursing sector has been a significant source of overseas Filipino workers due to the high demand for nursing professionals to fill shortages in other countries. Nurses have comprised an average of 19% of all emigrating Filipino professional, medical, and technical workers from 2004 to 2010. (Jurado, 2021).

In California hospitals today, immigration has diversified not only the state's patient population, but the demographics of its caregivers as well. It is now commonplace to be cared for at the bedside by a Filipino immigrant nurse. According to the 2016 Survey of California Registered Nurses, Filipinos make up the second largest group of the state's active RN workforce, nearly 18 percent. Among younger nurses, they're even more predominant, with Filipino nurses representing nearly a quarter of nurses between ages 35 to 44 years and more than one-fifth of RNs 45 to 54 years old. (Spetz et al, 2017)

Research on how Filipinos cope with their new environment has been published in books and been studied. There are also studies on how Filipino Nurses can work abroad and its history. The demand for nurses from the Philippines was strengthened when former President Marcos promoted the migration of workers in the early 1970s. Wherein, the U.K. has approximately 18,500 Filipinos who work in its National Health Services; the United Arab Emirates has about 30,000 Filipino nurses; and with the rise of the global nursing shortages caused by the pandemic, European countries such as Spain and Germany had sought to recruit from the Philippines as well. Despite such an organized labor export that helps the legal recruitment of overseas Filipino nurses as well as many other similar programs, very few programs have supported to equip the overseas Filipino nurses with their cultural competence, which prepares for them the ability to give the best medical care to patients while demonstrating cultural awareness for their beliefs, race, and values and from then, to enhance the quality of care through empathizing, relating more to patients, and attending more deeply to their needs. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the lived experiences of First-time Filipino Migrant Nurses on the migration involving their cultural competencies and quality of care. Moreover, to propose an infographic material to better assist first-time migrant Filipino nurses working in Nursing Rehabilitation Hospitals regarding cultural competency leading to quality of care.

As a result, the essential findings of the study will significantly contribute to the practice, knowledge and awareness of not only nursing students and also nurses who are aiming to work abroad.

Moreover, it will help provide ideas to our future nurses on which area of competency and quality of care they should focus if they are aiming to work outside the country. Lastly, this may serve as a basis for developing the course design in promoting cultural competency of the future nurses. As the study seek to explore the lived experiences of First-time Filipino Migrant Nurses on the migration involving their cultural competencies and quality of care, this research aimed to answer the following questions: How do the First-time Filipino Migrant Nurses describe their lived experiences on the migration involving their cultural competencies and quality of care and Based on the findings, what infographic material could be developed to better assist first-time migrant Filipino nurses working in Nursing Rehabilitation Hospitals regarding cultural competency leading to quality of care?

METHODS

The researchers utilized a qualitative descriptive phenomenology design to to explore the Lived Experiences of First-time Migrant Filipino Nurses. Phenomenology delved into individual experiences, while descriptive phenomenology allowed them to uncover the essence of their Journey Beyond Borders.

The Rehabilitation Hospitals in Northern California was chosen as the research site due to its significance as a hub for migrant nurses, ensuring diverse participant experiences and insights. The researchers employed purposive sampling to select participants aligned with their objectives and supplemented it with snowball sampling to reach individuals not easily accessible through traditional methods. Triangulation and member checking validated our findings, involving multiple researchers to prevent bias and ensure thorough interpretations.

For data collection, the researchers developed an open-ended questionnaire based on the research objectives and obtained approval from SBLC & ERB to ensure ethical compliance. Post-qualification, informed consent was distributed and obtained from all participants. Interviews were done online and recordings were transcribed for data analysis. The data was analyzed using methods, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants throughout the process. The Colaizzi's seven-step approach was used to analyze data systematically, uncovering themes and validating interpretations through member checking. Trustworthiness was ensured through dependability, confirmability, and transferability, establishing credibility, transparency, and reliability in our study. Throughout the data collection process, ethical considerations were upheld, ensuring participant privacy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The researchers adhered to ethical guidelines and regulations to protect the welfare and rights of the participants. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly maintained, and ethical approval was sought from the relevant institutional review board or

ethics committee. Informed consents were administered to all participants in a vernacular manner to ensure their genuine participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 1: 3 E Model—Educate, Establish & Embrace

The Simuclarum presents the 3 Themes of the study of Cultural Competence:

1. **Education** and Practice lead to cultural competency: involves learning about different cultures, their histories, and their perspectives; also involves the practice in interacting with people from different cultures in order to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to communicate effectively and respectfully.
2. **Establishing** the Working Environment: involves creating a working environment that is inclusive and welcoming of people of people from all cultures; also involves providing opportunities for employees to learn about and interact with people from different cultures.
3. **Embracing** and Respecting Diversity: involves valuing and respecting the diversity of cultures and perspectives that exist in the world; also involves being open to new ideas and experiences, and being willing to learn from people of different backgrounds.

The research study delves into three significant themes that are crucial for building a culturally competent environment. The first theme focuses on the importance of education and practice in enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity. The second theme emphasizes the significance of establishing an inclusive and supportive working environment that fosters mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance of individual differences. Finally, the last theme highlights the critical

role of embracing and respecting diversity in creating a harmonious and culturally responsive workplace. The concept of cultural competence revolves around three major themes.

The first theme is centered on education and practice in enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity. It involves learning about different cultures, their histories, and perspectives. Practicing interacting with people from different cultures is also important to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to communicate effectively and respectfully. It also focuses on the importance of education and practice in enhancing cultural awareness and sensitivity to develop cultural competence. Education can help individuals learn about different cultures, their values, beliefs, and practices. Practice can help them acquire the skills and abilities needed to interact effectively with people from diverse cultures. In today's work environment, access to online programs for continued education is essential for healthcare professionals to safeguard patient safety. The research was aimed at measuring the job performance of immigrant nurses in Northern California and exploring the variables of cultural competency and their knowledge skills before migration. Nursing job performance reflects the quality of care provided and, therefore, influences patient outcomes. Poor job performance is considered detrimental to patient safety, work efficiency, care quality, hospital infection rates, and patient satisfaction. Various learning methods were introduced for migrant nurses, such as immersive online programs or in-house training provided by the company, lifelong learning that included their clinical work experience, and learning by practice to improve their skills and provide quality care to promote safety.

The second theme is about establishing a work environment that is inclusive and welcoming to people from all cultures or establishing an inclusive and supportive working environment. This includes providing opportunities for employees to learn about and interact with people from different cultures. Cultural competence in the workplace is vital to fostering an open, collaborative, and productive work environment. As companies become more diverse, they need policies and best practices to support varying backgrounds and points of view. To promote good outcomes, a safe and established working environment is essential for healthcare professionals and patients.

The final theme is embracing and respecting diversity. This involves valuing and respecting the diversity of cultures and perspectives present in the world. Being open to new ideas and experiences and being willing to learn from people from different backgrounds is also a crucial aspect of this theme, leading to creating a harmonious and culturally responsive workplace. California is well known for having a wide diversity of healthcare workers. According to our study participants working in Hospitals, skilled nursing facilities exposed them to different patients of different cultures. Being culturally competent in giving care is very important to every patient. "According to respondents, learning and respecting their cultural practice and beliefs will positively gain patients'

trust “. This theme includes *Respecting Cultural Health Beliefs, Language as a medium of communication for health, Culture Equity, and Equality*. A good way of practicing it is by listening to their stories and experiences without being critical or judgmental. Asking questions and taking a genuine interest in what it means to be from another culture. This will not only help to broaden our worldview but also help us to show respect for cultural differences when they arise. Embracing and affirming diversity starts with the language we use and how we communicate. Respectful, inclusive communication requires understanding and using preferred language. The Philippines is known for its diversity, with over a hundred dialects and many ethnic groups. This rich cultural heritage provides an advantage for Filipino nurses working with patients from different backgrounds. Through lifelong experiences, they enhance their clinical skills and understanding of different cultural practices. This predisposes them to understanding and embracing cultural diversity, allowing them to establish strong therapeutic relationships with patients from varying cultures.



Figure 2: Proposed Infographics Figure

Proposed infographic content is to guide Filipino migrant nurses to improve cultural competency and quality of care through “*Education and practice*”, essential components of developing cultural competence in nursing; through “*Embracing and respecting diversity*”, the practice of acknowledging and valuing individual differences in the delivery of healthcare services and through “**Establishing a positive working environment** for nurses for fostering open communication, providing adequate resources, recognizing and rewarding contributions, and addressing conflicts promptly.

Education and practice are essential components of developing cultural competence in nursing. Education provides nurses with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and interact with patients from different cultures. This includes learning about cultural norms, values, beliefs, and practices, as well as the impact of culture on health and illness. Practice involves applying this knowledge and skills in real-world settings, such as hospitals, clinics, and community health centers. Cultural competence in nursing is becoming increasingly important in the Philippines as the country’s population becomes more diverse. Cultural competence refers to the ability of healthcare professionals to understand and appreciate the cultural differences of their patients and to provide care that is sensitive to those differences. This includes understanding the patient’s values, beliefs, and customs, as well as being aware of any cultural barriers that may affect their health outcomes.

Embracing and respecting diversity in healthcare refers to the practice of acknowledging and valuing individual differences in the delivery of healthcare services. It involves recognizing and understanding the unique needs, preferences, and circumstances of each patient or individual seeking healthcare, and tailoring care accordingly. Diversity in healthcare can encompass various dimensions, including cultural, ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and language differences. Embracing and respecting diversity involves creating an inclusive environment where all individuals feel welcome, respected, and understood, regardless of their background or characteristics. Healthcare providers who embrace diversity strive to provide culturally sensitive care, which involves understanding the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of different patient populations. This can include accommodating specific dietary needs, religious observances, or communication preferences. It also involves being aware of potential biases or stereotypes that may affect the delivery of care and actively working to overcome them. Respecting diversity in healthcare also extends to recognizing and addressing health disparities that exist among different population groups. Healthcare providers should be aware of the social, economic, and environmental factors that can contribute to health inequalities and work to address these issues through advocacy, policy changes, and community outreach. Overall, embracing and respecting diversity in healthcare is essential for providing equitable, high-quality care to all individuals and promoting positive health outcomes for the entire population.

A positive workplace culture significantly influences employee relationships and interactions. A positive work culture fosters camaraderie and trust among employees. It encourages collaboration, open communication, and mutual respect, leading to stronger and more positive relationships among colleagues. A supportive work environment cultivates a sense of belonging and encourages employees to be more engaged. This, in turn, positively affects relationships, as engaged employees tend to be more proactive, supportive, and collaborative with their peers. **Increased Productivity:** When employees feel valued and supported, they tend to work more cohesively, leading to increased productivity. Positive workplace relationships fuel teamwork and create an environment where individuals support each other, contributing to higher performance levels. **Reduction of Conflicts:** A positive culture often minimizes conflicts as it encourages open dialogue, respect for diverse opinions, and a shared sense of purpose. Employees are more likely to find common ground and resolve differences constructively, which strengthens their relationships. **Improved Well-Being:** A positive work culture nurtures employee well-being, leading to better mental health and reduced stress levels. Happier employees are more inclined to build positive relationships, support their peers, and create a more pleasant work environment. In essence, a positive workplace culture significantly influences how employees relate to each other, fostering trust, collaboration, and mutual respect. Leadership holds a critical role in shaping and maintaining this culture by establishing values, demonstrating desired behaviors, and providing support to employees. *Creating a positive work environment for nurses* requires a commitment from healthcare organizations and leaders. It involves fostering open communication, providing adequate resources, recognizing and rewarding contributions, and addressing conflicts promptly. By investing in a positive work environment, healthcare organizations can improve patient care, retain valuable nurses, and enhance their overall reputation.

Cultural competence is recognized as an approach to work effectively across differing cultures to improve health care related to racial and ethnic group's health disparities (Moloi & Bam, 2014; Truong et al., 2014). Overall, the notion that cultural competence is necessary for improving patient outcomes, as well as the premise that it needs to be improved at the bedside, has been frequently noted in research (Alzadeh & Chavan, 2016; Gallaher & Polanin, 2015; Garrido et al., 2019; Kovner et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2019; Young & Guo, 2020). There is clearly an international need to pay attention to the cultural competence of healthcare professionals. The results of this study indicate that increasing awareness of one's own cultural features can be useful for easing cross-cultural encounters in a healthcare setting and improving the cultural competence of nurses. Participants expressed that the training was useful on many different levels, and they saw the small group size and inspiring lectures as important in facilitating discussion about cross-cultural care.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the journey of Filipino nurses who migrate to other countries for better career opportunities is full of chances for professional growth and cultural enrichment. However, cultural diversity can also present challenges for migrant nurses, which can affect their ability to understand and navigate the cultural nuances of their new environment. For Filipino migrant nurses, the "3 E Model-Educate, Embrace, and Establish is crucial in navigating the global healthcare landscape.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on this research, there is a need for researchers to continue exploring the multiple factors related to cultural competency. Recommendations based on the results include further research on other hospital quality measure outcomes. Future researchers could expand the scope of hospital quality measure outcomes to include other measures from surveys, such as the responsiveness of hospital staff, discharge information, and hospital recommendation. Increasing the number of hospital quality measures, for example including the recommendation of the hospital, would include an overall experience of patient care to better understand all of the aspects that may have influenced a patient's experience. Healthcare administrators with a more diverse patient population should consider support for enhancement for cultural competency training for their healthcare professionals. An additional recommendation for research would be to use star ratings to better represent the patient experience in the hospital. The ratings reveal an easier way to examine hospital performance at three various levels and can be compared to the national average in each of the seven domains.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests.

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