

ADJUSTING TO GLOBAL HEALTHCARE: UNDERSTANDING THE PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-TIME NURSES WORKING OVERSEAS IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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Abstract

Background

The increasing demand for healthcare professionals resulted in increased migration, and the UAE became a crucial destination for the Filipino nurses based on their skills and adaptability. The Filipino nurses greatly contribute to helping address the country's staffing problems, but first-time expatriates who go abroad find it very difficult to adapt to new healthcare systems, cultural differences, and financial burdens from supporting their families back home. These challenges have a direct impact on their job satisfaction, performance, and retention, which are critical to sustaining quality care in the rapidly changing UAE healthcare sector. Nevertheless, much of the existing research concentrates on pre-departure experiences rather than adaptation in host countries, thus missing a critical area of understanding in their unique struggle. The study explores how the first-time Filipino nurses adapt to the UAE healthcare system, which be of interest in improving institutional support, enhancing nurse retention, and contributing to the broader understanding of the Philippine nursing industry's role in global healthcare.

Result: The data reveals that most respondents were female, aged 32-38, with 1-5 years of experience. Cultural adjustment challenges were most notable in understanding local communication styles, which respondents found moderately difficult. Significant differences in clinical protocols between the UAE and home countries were observed, but perceptions of professional practices and leadership support were neutral. Mentorship was highlighted as a key factor in cultural adaptation, emphasizing the importance of support systems in easing the transition for first-time nurses.

Conclusion: The study concludes that improving the experiences of nurses in the UAE requires addressing challenges through cultural training, language support, mentorship programs, and continuous professional development. Additionally, fostering supportive management, empathetic communication, and a collaborative work environment with recognition and feedback can enhance nurse satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ensure high-quality patient care.

Keywords: Global Healthcare, Experiences, First-Time Nurses, OFW, United Arab Emirates.

Introduction

The global demand for healthcare professionals, especially nurses, has led to an increase in migration to countries with growing healthcare sectors. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the healthcare industry is expanding widely, attracting a significant number of expatriate nurses especially Filipinos. The Philippines, being one of the largest exporters of healthcare professionals globally, plays a crucial role in meeting the staffing needs of countries like the UAE. Filipino nurses, known for their high level of skill and adaptability, are a preferred choice for international employers. However, first-time nurses working overseas face numerous challenges that affect both their personal and professional lives. Adapting to a new healthcare system, particularly in a country with distinct cultural and linguistic differences, can be overwhelming.

Nurses must navigate new protocols, organizational cultures, and patient expectations, all while managing the stress of being far from home. These pressures are further compounded by the need to send remittances back to their families, which can create additional financial and emotional burdens. These challenges can have implications for their job performance, satisfaction, and long-term retention in their roles. For the UAE, where healthcare is evolving quickly, retaining skilled nurses is vital to maintaining high-quality care.

Filipino nurses migrating abroad; however, these studies often highlight only pre-departure training and family separation, without delving deeply into adaptation in host countries like the UAE. This gap is critical, as failing to address their unique challenges could lead to high turnover rates and affect patient care quality.

This explores first-time expatriate nurses perceive their work and adjustment to the UAE healthcare system. Understanding these perceptions can help healthcare institutions design better support systems. Improved support would likely enhance nurse retention, job satisfaction, and the overall quality of care. Furthermore, the study contributes to bridging the international and local research gap, highlighting the interconnected challenges faced by

Filipino nurses abroad and their long-term implications for the Philippine nursing industry. By addressing this research gap, the study seeks to provide insights that can benefit healthcare providers and policymakers alike.

Methods

Research Design

This study will employ a descriptive research design to the perception of first time nurses working in United Arab of Emirates.

Respondents of the Study

The central focus of this study is on first-time nurses in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), specifically examining their perceptions and experiences as they transition from their home countries to work in the UAE healthcare system. The primary unit of analysis is the perception of these first-time overseas nurses as they adjust to a new cultural environment in the UAE.

Instruments of the Study

An expert has validated the self-structured questionnaires in the survey after undergoing content validation. The outcome demonstrated that the modified-structured questionnaire is appropriate and was approved for use as a research instrument. Additionally, a reliability test employing the internal consistency technique is performed on the research instrument. A test's internal consistency evaluates the relationship between several items meant to measure the same concept (Middleton, 2022).

Result

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The data shows the demographic profile of the respondents the majority of the respondents were female. The largest age group was 32-38 years old. The most common experience level was 1-5 years.

Culture Adjustment Challenges

The data shows the culture adjustment challenges faced by the first-time nurses in UAE. Understanding local communication styles was the most challenging aspect. This suggests that many respondents found it somewhat difficult to understand how people communicate in the UAE. The data was interpreted responds were in neutral level of difficulty.

A study similar to this revealed a finding that expatriate nurses working in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) face significant challenges in cross-cultural communication and acculturation. Language barriers and differing cultural expectations can compromise their ability to provide appropriate care, particularly in complex situations such as end-of-life discussions (Thirlwall et al., 2021; Kuzemski et al., 2021).

Perception of Professional Practices

The respondents perceived significant variations in clinical protocols between the UAE and their home countries. This suggests that many found these differences noticeable. The result was interpreted respondents report a neutral level of perception regarding in professional practices in the UAE.

A study also revealed that despite of challenges, nurses' job performance remains unaffected by demographic factors, and they manage to accomplish their tasks regardless of job demands (Al Badi et al., 2023). To overcome communication barriers, nurses often rely on non-verbal cues, empathetic touch, and spiritual care practices (Oakley et al., 2020). However, the temporary nature of expatriate work and limited acculturation can hinder the development of strong nurse-patient relationships (Thirlwall et al., 2021; Oakley et al., 2020). To address these issues, healthcare organizations should consider increasing the employment of Arabic-speaking nurses and providing additional language and cultural orientation support for expatriate nurses (Kuzemski et al., 2021).

Impact of Leadership and Support System

The majority of respondents found that mentorship played a significant role in their cultural adaptation process. Verbal interpretation regarding to the impact of leadership and support system in the UAE reported in a neutral level. This study also stated that support systems play a vital role in the adjustment of first-time nurses.

According to Farahani et al. (2022), mentorship programs and peer support significantly impact the integration process for foreign nurses. The presence of a supportive network can help alleviate feelings of isolation and enhance the overall experience of nurses who are new to the UAE healthcare system.

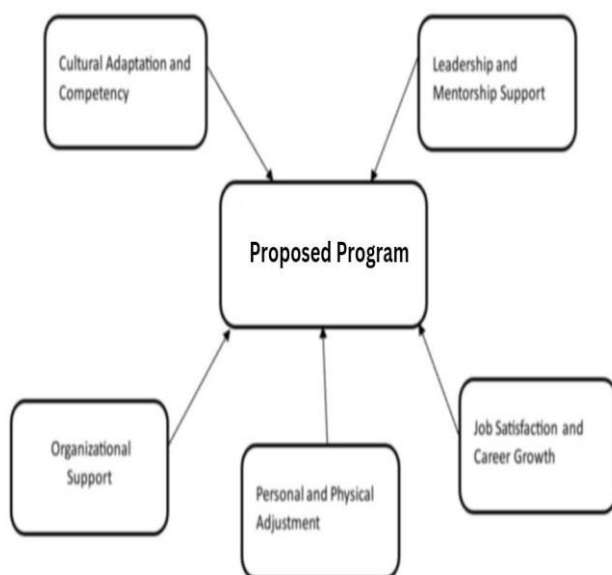
Proposed Program Developed

The framework focuses on the key influencing factors that alter how nurses change when adapting to the UAE health care system. The core idea of the theme is adapting to global health, which points to the challenges as well as the opportunities for personal growth in foreign countries where the practice of nursing is undertaken. Nurses are to provide quality service while at the same time they were dealing with cultural, organizational, and individual differences from the home country.

Several important factors play a role in this adjustment process. Cultural adaptation is essential, as nurses must understand and respect the UAE's cultural norms and communication styles to effectively interact with patients and other colleagues and patients. Strong leadership and

mentorship support are also crucial in their adaptation, as experienced leaders can offer guidance and emotional support to new nurses. A supportive organizational culture, which provides necessary resources, training, and opportunities for growth, is equally important. On a personal level, adjusting to a new lifestyle and maintaining physical health is key to ensuring nurses feel comfortable in their new environment.

Overall, successful adjustment leads to better job satisfaction and career growth not only for nurses but other overseas worker, which is necessary for motivation and fulfillment. Long-term commitment and integration depend on a work-life balance, manageable workload, and opportunities for career advancement. These interdependent factors can be addressed by the healthcare organizations of the UAE in order to build an environment supporting nurses' easy transition, professional development, and retention in the global healthcare setting.



Conclusion

It concluded, that by improving their experiences through enhancing patient care by addressing these challenges and opportunities facing nurses within the UAE, thus improving it within the healthcare context. It recommends toward the healthcare providers are: developing cultural training support and language service; structured programs of mentorship; and continuing professional development among other recommendations which include effective management that is facilitative and respectful and empathetic communication. Additionally, fostering a collaborative and supportive work environment with recognition and open feedback mechanisms can help nurses feel

valued and engaged. By focusing on these areas, organizations can improve nurse satisfaction, reduce turnover, and ensure high-quality care delivery.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in this manuscript. Results have been deduced objectively; nothing influenced this result by any individual, monetary, or institutional interests. In effect, utmost endeavors were in order to conduct a bias-free operation of gathering and analyzing the data into interpretation and producing a study based on merit, away from research inconsistencies.

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