



Harmony in Diversity: Exploring Transcultural Nursing Practices in the Philippines

Calaranan, Jacqui Lyn P; Criste, Rosemarie; Fajardo, Rachelle Ann; Iumin, Glaiza; Jover, Marie Delanie; Uddin, Tadmahal S; Dr. Erwin M. Faller

St. Bernadette of Lourdes College, Quezon City, Philippines

Background

Nurses, as highlighted in the State of the World's Nursing Report (2020), play a pivotal role in global healthcare equity. Transcultural nursing, navigating the intersection of healthcare, culture, and diversity, proves essential in today's interconnected world, offering a framework for culturally sensitive and effective care. In the Philippines, with its rich cultural heritage, achieving such care is complex due to historical, cultural, and systemic factors stemming from colonization.

The Philippines' healthcare landscape reflects the interplay between indigenous healing practices and Western medical methods introduced during periods of colonization by the Spanish and Americans. Post-independence efforts in 1946 aimed at establishing a healthcare system have led to a diverse spectrum of healthcare delivery, ranging from grassroots centers in rural areas to advanced urban hospitals. However, regional disparities persist, compounded by challenges in retaining healthcare professionals, notably nurses, seeking opportunities abroad.

Recognizing the significance of cultural sensitivity, the 2019 Universal Health Care Act lays a foundation for culturally responsive care in the Philippines. Government initiatives and academic institutions contribute to this by promoting cultural competence in nursing education through transcultural nursing programs.

In an ideal transcultural nursing environment, nurses play a crucial role in acknowledging and respecting the diverse cultural beliefs of patients. This setting prioritizes accessible training and education, fostering collaboration among healthcare professionals, community workers, and cultural brokers. Embracing a holistic approach, it incorporates traditional healing practices when appropriate, ensuring culturally congruent care. The emphasis on continuous learning and adaptation reinforces nurses' ability to provide high-quality, culturally sensitive care, ultimately leading to improved healthcare outcomes. This study aims to address gaps in transcultural nursing practice in the Philippines, exploring challenges, strategies, and recommending interventions for enhanced care delivery.

Objectives

This study seeks to understand the perspectives of Filipino staff nurses regarding transcultural practices by delving into their day-to-day interactions, challenges, and strategies within the workplace. Its objectives include pinpointing the cultural hurdles encountered by nurses while delivering care to a diverse patient population. Additionally, the study aims to acknowledge and highlight strategies and practices that contribute to fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in patient care. Going beyond observations, the research endeavors to offer qualitative insights that form the basis for valuable recommendations aimed at improving transcultural nursing care in the Philippines.

Methods

To gain insights, a qualitative descriptive approach was employed, involving interviews with 28 seasoned nurses from various regions in the Philippines. These key informant interviews were conducted remotely through Facebook Messenger allowing for a comprehensive exploration of transcultural practices. Through qualitative descriptive data analysis, the study delved into the cultural frameworks that mold nursing and examined their impact on patient care.

Results

The findings from the study on transcultural practices of nurses in the Philippines underscore the profound influence of cultural frameworks and values on nursing practices in the country. The commitment to Family-Centered Care, respect for elders, holistic patient care, and the integration of spirituality

and faith all reflect the rich cultural tapestry shaping the nursing profession. The Bayanihan Spirit, adaptability, resilience, and a strong work ethic further contribute to the unique approach to patient care in the Philippines. However, amidst these strengths, the study reveals challenges in achieving cultural sensitivity within the nursing context. Notably, 11 out of 28 respondents expressed a lack of preparedness to work with diverse populations, indicating a gap in transcultural nursing training. Insufficient emphasis on cultural competence and diversity in nursing programs, coupled with a lack of continuing education, contributes to this challenge. Bridging this gap is crucial for providing effective and patient-centered care, especially in a country as culturally diverse as the Philippines. The healthcare challenges presented, particularly for indigenous communities, indigent patients, and marginalized groups, highlight the need for a nuanced and culturally sensitive approach. Issues such as limited accessibility to healthcare centers, disparities in hospital care, and societal acceptance further emphasize the multifaceted nature of these challenges. The findings highlight the necessity for healthcare professionals to delicately address cultural beliefs and practices, ensuring patient trust and effective communication.

Conclusion

This study illuminates the intricate relationship between cultural values and nursing practices in the Philippines. The positive aspects, like the commitment to family-centered care and the Bayanihan Spirit, contribute to a unique and culturally rich approach to patient care. However, challenges in cultural sensitivity training and gaps in education highlight areas for improvement within the system. The success stories shared by nurses indicate that strategic interventions, such as transcultural nursing education programs, community immersions, and visual aids and demonstrations, have yielded positive outcomes. These interventions have not only improved patient care but have also fostered inclusivity and cultural sensitivity among healthcare professionals. The recommendations moving forward are the need for more immersions and applied practice for nursing students as well as continuous training and policy making. The researchers ultimately advocate for a comprehensive and culturally sensitive healthcare system that respects and prioritizes the diverse needs of the Filipino people.

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