

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME: CAPTURING THE EXPERIENCES OF FILIPINO NURSES WHO OPTED TO STAY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

In the recent years, there have been a considerable number of nurses who left the country to work on places which offers better working conditions. Despite this trend, there are still significant number of Filipino nurses who decide upon staying in the Philippines to work. However, it is disappointing that nurses are often unrecognized and unappreciated not only by members of the society, but more by their own families. Hence, the proponents explored the experiences of Filipino nurses who opted to stay in the Philippines rather than migrating to other countries. Husserl's phenomenological was utilized coupled with Collaizi's data analysis. Sixteen informants were interviewed one-by-one using a researcher-made pilot-tested interview guide. There were 82 significant statements, 25 formulated meanings, 10 themes and 4 clustered themes. The emerging themes are (1) there's no place like home: My Family, my Priority; (2) My Work, my Satisfaction; (3) My Home- My Service and (4) Hindrances of Going abroad.

Keywords: *Experiences, Family, Culture, Priority, Humble service, Satisfaction, Hindrances*

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has been producing large numbers of nurses per year, but despite these, International migration has become an important feature of globalized labor markets in health care. Several industrialized countries have opened their doors to highly skilled health professionals, a great number of which come from the Philippines (Lorenzo *et al.*, 2007).

In the recent years, there have been a considerable number of nurses who left the country to work on places which offers better working conditions. The interplay of various factors intrinsic to the country serves as pushing forces for our Filipino nurses to go out and leave the country (Dimaya, 2012). Unstable economic and socio-political work environment is highly evident that with limited nursing job availabilities, low wage income for nurses, work overload, slow promotion and decreased national health budget has greatly affected the current status of our nurses (Lorenzo *et al.*, 2007). Despite this trend, there are still a considerable number of Filipino nurses who have decided to stay in the Philippines to

work. Some, overseas recruitment brought challenges for the profession that is why many nurses returned home but others opted to stay (Baeton & Walsh, 2010). Experience can be emotionally draining and tormenting as experienced by some of the researchers themselves.

Thus, the proponents would like to explore the lived experiences of Filipino nurses who opted to stay in the Philippines rather than migrating to other countries. Their experiences would be developed into meanings to better understand and appreciate these nurses.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized Husserl's phenomenology design, wherein its approach was used to discover the meaning of experiences of the nurses has gone through. This design required high level of analytical skills during the interpretation of the data collected (Giorgi, 2009). It emphasizes on the world as lived by a person, not the world or reality as something separate from the person Valle & Halling, (1989). This inquiry asks, "What is this experience like?" as it attempts to unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence

(Polkinghorne, 1989) identified this focus as trying to understand or comprehend meanings of human experience as it is lived. The 'life world' is understood as what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense (Husserl, 1980).

Research Informants

Filipino registered nurses who have stayed for more than 10 years in the Philippines, with no history and even intention of working abroad will be asked to be the research informants. There were 16 informants when the data saturation was achieved. The informants were selected regardless of age, gender, nature and area of employment, and socio-economic status.

Research Instrument

The researchers utilized a researcher-made, semi-structured interview guide with English and Visayan translations as presented in Appendix F and G respectively. The Visayan Version was then translated by a language expert. Reinforcement or follow-up questions were also used. In order to test the reliability and validity of the tool, Pilot testing was made among respondents who were then later on excluded in the study.

Research Sampling

Selective Purposive Sampling Method was used in gathering probable responses. This type of sampling is used to access a subset of people when needed which started with a purpose in mind and the sample was selected to include people of interest and exclude those who do not suit the purpose. Criterion of choosing the respondents includes: Filipino registered nurses who have stayed for more than 10 years in the Philippines. All in all, a total of 16 informants were interviewed.

Research Data Gathering Procedures

In-depth one-on-one interviews were conducted which lasted for an hour to gather the data. Interviews were conducted on a place and time which they were most convenient with. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed afterwards. Prior to the conduction of the interview, the informants were thoroughly informed of the scope of the study, their rights and the possible consequences of their involvement in the study. Nevertheless, they were assured that their rights are

preserved and that all data gathered were treated with utmost confidentiality. A debriefing session was made ready when needed.

Significant statements were then extracted which were used later in formulating meanings. The formulated meanings were organized to form themes. From these themes, the researchers determined data saturation if similar themes arise from five respondents. The themes and theme clusters will be integrated to form exhaustive description.

Data Analysis

Licensed Nvivo 11 Pro qualitative data analysis software was utilized in this study. Interpretation of data was categorized according to their responses using Colaizzi's method of data analysis. The researchers listened to the recorded interview several times before they transcribed. Transcriptions were done within 24-48 hours. After transcription, the important phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon were extracted as significant statements (SS). After extraction, the researchers explored the meaning of each significant statement then the formulated meanings (FM) were stated. The researchers organized the formulated meanings into themes, which later was formed into clustered themes. The clusters themes are integrated to form the description. The formulated meanings, significant statements, and the original descriptions were also revisited. Lastly, the validation of findings was done through verification. The researchers made the participants verify if the thematic clusters which really described their experiences.

Thematic Analysis

The final, purposive sample consisted of 16 people who are Filipino nurses who opted to stay in the Philippines. After analysis, 82 significant statements (SS) of nurses' experiences were identified and given corresponding 25 formulated meanings (FMs). The formulated meanings were then clustered around ten (10) themes (T) and then four (4) clustered themes (CTs).

Expected Outcome

The findings of this research added to the pool of knowledge regarding the lives of Filipino nurses who work in the Philippines. This will encourage future nurses to also stay and serve in the country. Additionally,

Clustered Theme 1: There's No Place Like Home: My Family, My Priority

Majority of the respondents verbalized that they decided to work and stay in the country and be with their respective families since their utmost priority is being with their family whom they recognize as their inspiration, source of strength, happiness and contentment in life. Consultant (Wison, 2013) mentioned in his work that, close family ties and relationships contribute to an upright, productive society and community.

Informants verbalized that spending quality time with family is the priority (Fm2). This can be attributed to the fact that the family is a versatile cradle of happiness and contentment and those interpersonal relationships respond to a universal need of intimacy and closeness which provide delight and pleasure that address basic human needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Subtheme 1. Family and Friends is the Priority

Informants verbalized that their respective family and friends is their priority and the only reason for their decision to work and stay here in the country instead of going abroad. This is illustrated by the following significant statements:

SS2. *"I prefer to stay here in the Philippines because I don't want to work abroad. I want to spend more quality time with my wife especially that we are newly married."*

SS3. *"Being with my wife, we will enjoy together since we have all that we need here in the country."*

SS7. *"Being with my parents and family is fulfilling."*

SS12. *"Family is my priority."*

Some respondents cited personal reasons that affected family members, thus decided to stay and work in the country.

SS16. *"Due to personal reasons, I decided to stay, and I eventually liked the idea of teaching here, plus the advises from other family members to stay and work here."*

SS21. *"Because of my daughter, because they did not meet, they did not agree to go back to the nail and my husband was seized."*

SS29. *"Because of my family and I am satisfied of my work here."*

Clustered Theme 2: My Work, My Satisfaction

Almost all the informants verbalized that they decided to stay in the Philippines for they are satisfied and content with their work here. In a recent study focusing on the Professional Quality of Life of Staff Nurses in a local tertiary hospital, it was found that majority of the Filipino nurses are highly satisfied with themselves in providing quality care to their patients and maintaining harmonious nurse-patient relationships (Patrick *et al.*, 2007).

Subtheme 1: Work Satisfaction and Contentment

Informants verbalized that they are satisfied because they are currently working on their field of specialization and that they are at the same time with their family (Fm1). This is illustrated by the following significant statements:

SS1: *"It feels great especially I am working on my field of specialization."*

SS11: *"Tiring yet accomplished since I was able to pursue my profession."*

SS25: *"Enjoyed and satisfied."*

SS29: *"I am satisfied of my work here (in the Philippines)."*

Some others expressed that they are contented in staying in the country to take care of the parents who are sick and some others stay since they have stable jobs (Fm5). This is illustrated by the following significant statements:

SS6: *"Contented because both of my parents are sick and I am willing to care for them and give them special attention, because I am adopted"*.

SS13: *"I'm contented already especially that I'm given the opportunity to have a stable job."*

SS74: *"I am happy and secured here (Philippines) with my family especially with the kids."*

Two informants admitted that staying in the Philippines is advantageous (Fm25). This is illustrated by the following significant statements:

SS68: *"There are advantages of staying here such as salary, standard of living, taking care of parents and*

family, constant doing and early retirement activity like farming, can give extra financial support to family and relatives.”

Subtheme 2: Going abroad just for vacation, not for work.

Fourteen out of sixteen informants wanted to go abroad just for a vacation and not for good (Fm3). The following sample verbatim support the findings:

SS2: “I prefer to stay here in the Philippines because I don't want to work abroad. Though I love to travel, I prefer sightseeing than live there to work. I want to spend more quality time & my wife especially that we're newly married.”

SS3: “Yes, for travel vacation but that should be with my wife, we will enjoy together, but of course at the end of the day we will come back to the Philippines since we have all that we need in here.”

SS8, SS10, SS24, SS27, SS37: “...only for leisure and to see places only.”

Three of the informants stated that going abroad is never easy as reflected in (Fm6). Some of the significant verbatim are as follows:

SS7: “...because when I started to process the paper it's a lot of hard work, so I opted to stay.”

SS53: “Financial obligation for application abroad is high.”

SS54: “Other pertinent requirements prior to working abroad especially IELTS exam.”

Clustered Theme 3: My Home, My Service: Serving to our own Country is Noble.

Filipino nurses still opted to serve the country for variety of reasons. Some would love to contribute to the improvement of the country; others are contented here since being with the family can't be paid by any forms of financial availability (Marcelo, 2014). Some others believe that the culture abroad is far different from ours.

Subtheme 1: Staying in the country is serving to humanity in need

As seen in FM 24, nurses who serve the country is really noble despite the under-compensation, understaffing and at times patient overloading. Some nurses stated that:

SS77: “It is great to serve my own country, even though it's a big responsibility to share my expertise. I love Philippines. I will make this world a greater.”

SS78: “Feeling contented being at home to touch others' lives.”

SS15: “I feel exploited due to not well compensated work but the feeling is better since I am with my family and kana kay dili kabayran og sapi.”

Subtheme 2: Culture abroad is different.

Four informants verbalized that there's a big disparity between the cultures abroad compared here and hence they preferred to just stay here. This is illustrated by the following significant statements:

SS14: “Culture shock”

SS22: “There is no place like home gyud”

SS39: Yes. I am afraid of the so called "culture shock" and it is difficult to live in a foreign area

SS79: “culture is different”

Clustered Theme 4: Hindrances to go Abroad

We heard about some of the Filipinos especially nurses who wanted to leave the country, even though they already have a better life here, but some of them still opted to stay here in the Philippines due to different reasons. These reasons are their strong-willed motivation. Some of them were able to state the various hindrances of going abroad.

Subtheme 1: High salary could only be a motivation for working abroad

One of the main reasons why Filipinos are willing to go abroad for work is the low average salary and benefits offered by local employers in the Philippines. Jobs that are in-demand and should have a fair compensation such as nurses, engineers, accountants, and other professionals are inadequately paid compare with the compensation that are waiting for them abroad (Natividad, 2012). According to Kingma, 2007, thousands of nurses migrate each year in search of better pay and working conditions, career mobility, professional development, a better quality of life, personal safety, or sometimes just novelty and adventure. For some the highly monetary payment can be a great motivation (Furnham, 2012). But for these nurses, working here in the Philippines is still the same especially if one can provide the necessities of his/her

family. For them, money can't buy their happiness. Some of these can be gleaned in the following significant statement.

SS 38: "Well, perhaps working abroad is greatly satisfying in terms of salary, compensation and benefits but for me working here in the Philippines."

SS 4 "I am really not interested. But perhaps salary wise its greatly high in there compared here in the Philippines."

SS 9: "... Abroad –salary compensation only but the work is still the same..."

SS 18 "Salary compensation, home sickness of big City and far from family"

SS 30 "Disappointing financially because we are underpaid but happy to be home and with the family."

Aside from which, others also claimed that even though working her in the Philippines is not well compensated, they are still contented since they are having a good time with their friends not only at work but basically in the society that they are into. Like for example,

SS 14: "... friends, though you can gain friends there too...."

SS 26 "Maybe my family and friends –It is not my passion to work abroad; I guess I don't need to since I can still buy the things that I want even though, I am just here in the Philippines. I am just contented maybe because I am single as well."

Though for some, the pressure of going abroad especially if they are not from a wealthy family is also a big factor of leaving the country, they also consider family as their priority for not leaving as well. Some of these nurse respondents as well are family-oriented. They are not into the thought of leaving their families behind, some states that:

SS 2 "I prefer to stay here in the Philippines because I don't want to work abroad. Though, I love to travel, I prefer to have sightseeing than live there to work. I want to spend more quality time & my wife especially that were newly married."

SS 5 "Yes. still stay in the country. I want to build my own family here and of course my parents and love ones are here so definitely stay in the Philippines."

SS 12: "FAMILY (PRIORITY)"

SS 21: "Because of my daughter" kay dili nami magkita" dili musugot mubalik and my husband giatake."

SS 26: "Maybe my family and friends –It is not my passion to work abroad; I guess I don't need to since I can still buy the things that I want even though, I am just here in the Phils. I am just contented maybe because I am single as well."

SS 70: "Contented. Staying with the family especially children seeing them secure. It gives me honor to be able to serve our countrymen."

Subtheme 2: Prefer to stay in the country due to old age

In other countries, working abroad requires age limit. If you're over 30, and dream of working in another country, your visa options may be limited. Perhaps, the desire of going abroad is mainly for vacation and sightseeing. That is why one of the informants quoted that:

SS 8: "No. Just give the chance to younger ones if ever" And some stated that....

SS 2: "I prefer to stay here in the Philippines because I don't want to work abroad. Though, I love to travel, I prefer to have sightseeing than live there to work...."

SS 3: "Yes, for travel vacation but that should be and my wife we will enjoy together, but of course and the end of the day we will come back to the Philippines since we have all that we need in here."

SS 37: "Yes, but only for vacation."

Subtheme 3: Reasons of Opting to stay in the Philippines

The hardships of doling out in working abroad could only be one of the various reasons of these informants' as to why they opted to stay here in the Philippines rather than going out or working abroad. Alongside with the reality and another sad fact that applying abroad have to deal with the long months of processing and big amount of money needed in order to comply all the necessary documents and requirements.

SS 6: "Contented, because both of my parents are sick, to care and give for them especially, because I am adapted."

SS 7...*Parents and family: though tempted by a classmates, but God doesn't finest because when I started to process the paper there lot's of hard work...*

SS 53...*Budget for application abroad.*

SS 54...*Other pertinent requirements prior to working abroad especially IELTS exam...*

Informants were not also open for the ideas of working abroad and then few months later find their selves experiencing the so called "culture shock".

SS 14: "... *Culture can't be practice abroad "culture shock" ...*

SS 18: "..., *home sickness of Big City and far from family. And given, Saudi has limited time of leisure activity.*"

SS 33: "*A different work condition in terms of Environment setting....*"

SS 39: "*I am afraid of the so called "culture shock" and it is difficult to live in a foreign area....*"

SS 63: "*Yes, it's not the same feeling, at home, security, safety when you're in own place.*"

SS 79: "*Abroad-culture, income, people, relationship, technology, working environment.*"

For some informants, serving the Philippines is a great honor. According to them, the service to ones country cannot be exchange with any amount of money.

SS 67: "*Rather stay in the Philippines – Because there's no other place like home. Serving our own country is a great honor which could not be exchanged with money.*"

SS 70: "*Contented. It gives me honor to be able*

to serve our countrymen. Maybe they have many dollars but not so happy and the family..."

SS 77: "*Great- serve my country, no choice, big responsibility to share my expertise, sole responsibility to make this world a great way. Love the Philippines. Yes!*"

SS 78: "*Feeling contented of being "HOME." Touch other's life, familiarity and working environment.*"

There are many other reasons why many Filipinos and nurses opted to stay in the country rather than to work abroad. Although working abroad is very rewarding, there are also several disadvantages in working in the foreign lands, such as the loneliness of being away from your family, discrimination from overseas employers, and the high cost of living abroad (Natividad, 2012).

CONCLUSION

It can be gleaned that nurses who opted to stay in the Philippines prioritized spending more quality time with their families and friends rather than monetary gains. The Filipino culture is one of the main factors on why they have qualms in working away from their home. However, living here also means challenges in terms of compensation. Despite this, true blooded Filipinos are willing to sacrifice for the family.

RECOMMENDATION

As the proponent of this study, we strongly recommend that the government should investigate these problems and be able to provide better opportunity to nurses in order to increase their living status thus preventing the fast turnover of nurses among the Philippines' local hospitals.

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