

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES: EXPLORING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY NEWLY HIRED FOREIGN NURSES IN SAUDI ARABIAN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE FACILITY

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ABSTRACT

The demand for healthcare professionals in Saudi Arabia has been steadily increasing over the years, leading to the recruitment of foreign nurses to fill in the workforce gap. While this may seem like a promising opportunity for both parties, it is crucial to investigate the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses to provide appropriate support and guidance. This exploratory study sheds light on the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabian Primary Health Care Facility and how they cope with these difficulties.

The study utilized a qualitative research design, using a semi-structured interviews with newly hired foreign nurses using a purposive sampling method. Interview recordings were transcribed by DKBLabs Transcribing Tool. Thematic analysis was conducted through the AILYZE tool to analyze the data, revealing three main themes: Cultural Adjustment and Integration, Professional Challenges and Support, and Emotional Well-being and Homesickness.

Healthcare organizations need to recognize these challenges and provide appropriate measures to facilitate the smooth integration of foreign nurses into the workforce. The findings emphasized the need for better support, training, and familiarization with the Saudi Arabian culture, language, and healthcare system.

It is recommended that healthcare facilities take proactive steps to create a supportive and inclusive work environment. This can be achieved by including cultural sensitivity and diversity training in the orientation process, establishing mentorship programs, providing language support, and promoting social events. These measures will not only help foreign nurses adapt to the local culture and customs, but also improve their communication and emotional well-being in the workplace.

Healthcare facilities need to provide proper orientation and cultural training to help these nurses transition smoothly into their new work environment. Furthermore, fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture can go a long way in helping these nurses overcome the challenges they face and thrive in their roles.

This study can be a valuable resource for healthcare policymakers and organizations to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for foreign nurses, ultimately improving the quality of healthcare services in the country. Also, the findings of this study can serve as a basis for other similar research projects in the future and contribute to the body of knowledge in this field.

Keywords: *Challenges, Newly Hired Foreign Nurses, Foreign Nurses, Primary Health Care, Saudi Arabia*

1. Introduction

“Great things never come from comfort zones.” This powerful quote by Roy T. Bennett aptly captures the essence of the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility.

Imagine being in a new country, far from your family and loved ones, facing a language barrier, cultural differences, and navigating an unfamiliar healthcare system. This is the reality for many foreign nurses who are hired to work in primary healthcare facilities in Saudi Arabia. While the country has been actively recruiting nurses from all over the world to address its shortage of healthcare workers, the challenges faced by these newly hired nurses are often overlooked.

In today's globalized world, the demand for foreign workers in various industries, including healthcare, has significantly increased. This trend is particularly evident in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the recruitment of foreign nurses has been a growing phenomenon over the years due to the growing demand for healthcare services in the country.

The number of nursing professionals in Saudi Arabia registered with Saudi Commission for Health Specialties has surpassed 235,000 in 2023. A report issued by Ministry of Health in celebration of International Nurses Day on May 12 indicates the overall count of male and female nurses has risen by over 23 percent from 2016 to 2023. The total number of registered and classified nursing personnel in Saudi healthcare system for year 2023 stands at 235, 461 (Saudi Ministry of Health, 2024). A previous report from the Ministry of Health in 2018 noted there were 184,565 registered nurses. This included 70,319 Saudi nationals. Foreign nurses account for approximately 70 percent of total nursing workforce. They predominantly hail from India, Philippines, and Malaysia (Saudi Gazette, 2024). These nurses from various countries, bringing with them their own cultural backgrounds and nursing practices. This diversity can present both benefits and challenges in the workplace.

This trend has also raised concerns about the challenges faced by these foreign nurses as they adjust to their new work environment. Nevertheless, with this increase comes the need to understand the challenges faced by these nurses, which may hinder their ability to provide quality care to patients.

The issues connected to this trend are diversified and multifaceted. From cultural differences, language barriers, and lack of proper orientation and training, to adjusting to different healthcare policies, these factors can significantly impact the performance and well-being of foreign nurses in a new work environment. The challenges of these nurses are crucial to understand and address, as they play a vital role in the delivery of quality healthcare services. Thus, with this in mind, this exploratory study entitled “Overcoming Obstacles: Exploring the Challenges Faced by Newly Hired Foreign Nurses in Saudi Arabian Primary Health Care Facility” sets out to shed light on this issue.

The objective of this study is to identify and explore the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility. By conducting interviews with newly hired foreign nurses, this research aims to provide insight into the challenges encountered by foreign nurses, the strategies used to overcome these challenges, and to determine potential solutions for these obstacles.

Through the application of relevant theories, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the integration of foreign nurses in the Saudi healthcare system. Furthermore, the findings of this research can be used to enhance policies, programs, and interventions that aim to improve the experiences of foreign nurses and magnify their contribution to the healthcare system.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical perspectives utilized in this study are the social cognitive theory and adaptation theory.

Social cognitive theory emphasizes the role of continuous learning and socio-cultural factors in shaping an individual's behavior and beliefs (Bandura, 1986). This theory is particularly relevant in the context of newly hired foreign nurses who are facing challenges in adapting to a new culture and healthcare system. It recognizes the interplay between personal factors, environmental factors, and behavior in influencing an individual's responses to certain stimuli. Through this lens, it can understand the obstacles faced by foreign nurses in their adaptation process and identify strategies to overcome these challenges.

To further guide this exploration and provide a robust theoretical foundation, we also utilized the Adaptation Theory by Sister Callista Roy. Roy's Adaptation Theory proposes that individuals are "adaptive systems" constantly seeking to maintain a state of balance and integrity, known as "adaptation" (Roy & Andrews, 2003). This adaptation process is influenced by stimuli, both internal and external, that can disrupt this equilibrium.

The qualitative exploratory study on challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility relates to the Adaptation Theory by Sister Callista Roy and the Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura. Roy's theory emphasizes the dynamic process of adaptation, where individuals continuously adjust to new environments and situations. The participants' experiences align with this theory, as they faced various challenges related to cultural differences, language barriers, and unfamiliar healthcare practices. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory focuses on the influence of beliefs, expectations, and social interactions on behavior. The study highlighted the role of self-efficacy, perceived support, and mentorships in shaping the participants' coping mechanisms and adaptation strategies. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study provided a

comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by foreign nurses and their efforts to adapt to a new healthcare system.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

One of the biggest challenges faced by many countries, including Saudi Arabia, is the shortage of nurses in their healthcare systems. To address this problem, these countries have opened their doors to foreign nurses to fill the gaps in the workforce. However, the adaptation and integration of these foreign nurses into the new work environment pose several challenges.

1.2.1. This study aimed to explore the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a specified primary healthcare facility in Saudi Arabia.

1.3. Research Questions

1.3.1. What are the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses working in a primary healthcare facility in Saudi Arabia?

1.3.2. How do they cope with the challenges?

1.3.3. How these challenges can be addressed for improvement?

1.4. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1.4.1. To identify the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses working in a primary healthcare facility in Saudi Arabia.

1.4.2. To explore the coping mechanisms adopted by foreign nurses to overcome these challenges.

1.4.3. To suggest recommendations for addressing the identified challenges to improve the work experience of foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it addresses a vital issue that has not been extensively researched before. While there has been research on the experiences of foreign healthcare workers in Saudi Arabia, very few studies focus specifically on the challenges faced by foreign nurses in primary health care facilities. This research study has the potential to highlight the unique and specific difficulties that this group of healthcare professionals face, which can inform policies and strategies to better support them.

In addition, this study has practical implications for both the nurses and the healthcare facility. For the nurses, it can provide them with a sense of empowerment and validation, knowing that their challenges are being recognized and addressed. It can also serve as a source of guidance and support for them to navigate the obstacles they face in their new work environment. For the healthcare facility, the findings of this study can inform the development of targeted training and support programs for foreign nurses, leading to improved work satisfaction and retention rates.

Moreover, this study has social significance as it can contribute to the overall understanding and appreciation of the experience of foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia. As the healthcare sector continues to rely on foreign nurses to fill the gap in the labor force, it is important to recognize and understand the unique challenges they face in order to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment. This study has the potential to promote a sense of cultural sensitivity and awareness among healthcare professionals and policy makers, leading to better integration and support for foreign nurses in the workplace.

For nursing administrators, this study sheds light on the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabian primary facilities. This knowledge will allow them to implement targeted strategies to address these issues.

The study's findings can inform the content and delivery of pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) for foreign nurses. PDOS is a critical component of the hiring process, providing new hires with essential information about their new workplace, roles and responsibilities, and cultural norms. The study's results can help PDOS planners tailor the content to address the specific challenges faced by foreign nurses, such as language barriers, cultural differences, and homesickness. By doing so, PDOS can better prepare foreign nurses for their new roles, reducing the likelihood of culture shock, burnout, and turnover.

Furthermore, the study has significant implications for human resource departments involved in the hiring and onboarding of foreign nurses. The results highlight the importance of providing comprehensive support and resources to newly hired foreign nurses, from pre-departure to post-arrival. Human resource departments can use the study's findings to develop targeted recruitment and onboarding programs that address the specific needs and challenges of foreign nurses.

On a larger scale, this study also holds academic significance as it can contribute to the body of knowledge on the challenges faced by foreign nurses in the Middle East. It can serve as a foundation for future research in this area and add to the existing literature on foreign nursing in other countries. By filling this gap in research, this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of the obstacles faced by foreign nurses in different cultural and organizational contexts.

Finally, this study holds personal significance for the researcher as it provides an opportunity to explore and understand the experiences of an underrepresented group in the healthcare sector. By giving a voice to these nurses and sharing their stories, this study can potentially create a positive impact on their lives and work experiences. It can also inspire future researchers to further delve into this topic and advocate for the welfare and rights of foreign healthcare workers.

2. Methodology

Methodology is a crucial component of any research study as it outlines the systematic plan and techniques used to gather, analyze, and interpret data. It serves as a roadmap for researchers to achieve their objectives and ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

2.1. Research Design

In this study, an exploratory research approach was utilized to investigate the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility. This approach is appropriate for exploring the challenges of the participant.

Participants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling method. They were also selected based on their eligibility and availability to participate in the study. The sample for this study were consisted of newly hired foreign nurses from a chosen primary health center in Saudi Arabia.

2.2. Data Gathering Procedure

The study gathered data through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, which focused on the challenges faced by the newly hired nurse working in the said selected primary healthcare center. The interview guide questions served as research instruments to guide the data collection process. The interview was conducted in person, depending on the availability of the participant.

The interviews were conducted inside the selected primary healthcare center. The venue provided a comfortable and private space for the participants to share their experiences without any distractions. Additionally, the interview venue was accessible, making it easier for the participants to attend the scheduled interview.

Furthermore, to guarantee the quality and validity of the gathered data, the duration of each interview was limited to no more than 20 minutes per participant. This helped in managing the time effectively and ensuring that the interviews did not take up too much of the participants' busy schedules. This was done to respect the participants' time and to ensure that the interview did not become overwhelming for them. The short duration also helped to maintain the participants' focus and attention throughout the interview.

Interview recordings were transcribed via DKBLabs transcribing tool.

2.3. Data Analysis Procedure

For the data analysis process, thematic analysis using the Allyze tool was employed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns, themes, and meanings within data. However, the traditional manual process of conducting thematic analysis can be time-consuming and prone to human error. This is where the Allyze Thematic Analysis Tool comes in to streamline and improve the process.

The Allyze Thematic Analysis Tool is a powerful software designed to help researchers and analysts easily identify, organize, and analyze themes in large datasets. It is a user-friendly and efficient tool that uses cutting-edge artificial intelligence algorithms to assist with the process of thematic analysis.

2.4. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles to ensure the protection and welfare of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were made aware of the purpose, procedures, and possible risks of the research. They were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Confidentiality was maintained by assigning pseudonyms to each participant instead of using their names in the research. The audio recordings and transcripts were kept securely, and only the researcher had access to them. It will be destroyed once the research is completed. Participants were also assured that their personal information would not be disclosed in any publications.

Furthermore, the proponent secured all necessary permits and approvals from the primary healthcare facility and the relevant authorities.

3. Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

No.	Theme Identified	Definition	Challenges	Coping Strategies	Example
1	Cultural Adjustment and Integration	Cultural adjustment and integration refer to the process of adapting to a new culture, customs, and work environment as a foreign nurse in Saudi Arabia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Gender segregation in the workplace, which was different from the participants' home countries. * Language barriers with patients and colleagues. * Differences in communication styles and cultural practices, such as patient preferences for same-gender healthcare providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Adapting and respecting cultural norms. * Learning basic Arabic phrases for communication. * Using non-verbal communication methods. * Seeking support from colleagues and mentors. * Engaging in cultural exchange activities. * Using translation devices and apps for effective communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nurse S faced challenges with gender segregation but adapted and respected cultural norms. * Nurse M overcame language barriers by studying Arabic and using translation tools. * Nurse R coped with cultural differences by learning about Saudi customs and interacting with colleagues.

<p>2</p>	<p>Professional Challenges and Support</p>	<p>Professional challenges and support encompass difficulties related to the healthcare system, language barriers, and the availability of resources and support for foreign nurses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Learning new protocols, procedures, and documentation processes. * Language barriers affecting quality of care. * Adapting to local work culture and practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Utilizing orientation and training programs provided by the facility. * Seeking support from colleagues, mentors, and management. * Studying the local language and using translation tools. * Engaging in continuous education and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nurse S managed professional challenges through facility-provided orientation and colleague support. * Nurse M found guidance from mentors and continuous education training beneficial. * Nurse R coped with language barriers by studying Arabic and relying on team members for communication assistance.
<p>3</p>	<p>Emotional Well-being and Homesickness</p>	<p>Emotional well-being and Social Support refer to the psychological impact of being away from home, family, and familiar surroundings while working as a foreign nurse in Saudi Arabia.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Feeling homesick due to being away from loved ones and facing cultural differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Staying connected with family and friends through technology. * Building strong relationships with colleagues for emotional support. * Engaging in social activities to unwind and relax. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Nurse S combated homesickness by staying connected with family through video calls and messages. * Nurse M found relaxation and support through social activities with colleagues. * Nurse R managed homesickness by reaching out to friends and colleagues for emotional support.

Table 1. Result of the thematic analysis conducted via Allyze Tool

Newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facilities face challenges related to cultural adjustment, professional integration, and emotional well-being. By employing coping strategies such as adapting to cultural norms, seeking support from colleagues, and staying connected with loved ones, these nurses navigate the complexities of working in a new environment. The themes identified highlight the importance of cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and support systems in enhancing the experience of foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia.

4. Discussion of Findings

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the demand for international nurses has risen in countries with rapidly growing healthcare systems, such as Saudi Arabia. However, despite the allure of better job opportunities and higher salaries, foreign nurses continue to face a myriad of challenges when transitioning to a new work environment. In particular, newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facilities encounter obstacles that not only test their professional skills, but also their ability to culturally adjust and integrate, receive support, and maintain their emotional well-being while far away from home. To shed light on these challenges, an exploratory study entitled “Overcoming Obstacles: Exploring the Challenges Faced by Newly Hired Foreign Nurses in a Saudi Arabian Primary Health Care Facility” was conducted, with a focus on understanding the identified significant themes: cultural adjustment and integration, professional challenges and support, and emotional well-being and homesickness. Through a thematic analysis using the AILYZE tool, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the struggles and triumphs of foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia, and contribute to the ongoing conversation on improving working conditions for these newly hired international healthcare professionals.

This study discussed the identified themes together with the existing theories and research on this topic, along with examples from the exploratory research, to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and coping strategies utilized by the newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary healthcare facility.

4.1. Cultural Adjustment and Integration

The process of cultural adjustment and integration into a new culture, customs, and work environment is complicated for foreign nurses working in Saudi Arabia. According to Zencare (2024), cultural adjustment also known as acculturation is a process in which an individual adopts, acquires and adjusts to a new cultural environment as a result of being placed into a new culture, or when another culture is brought to someone. This is important to happen so that people can be comfortable, well, and successful in their unfamiliar environment. Whereas, integration is defined as the process of becoming a part of a new cultural group while maintaining one's own cultural identity (Berry, 1997). For the newly hired foreign nurses working in Saudi Arabia, this means being able to adopt the culture, habits, and beliefs of the host country while still maintaining their own cultural identity.

One of the main challenges faced by foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia is the gender segregation in the workplace, which is different from their home countries. This is due to Saudi Arabia's previous rigorous laws requiring gender segregation mandate that men and women work in different facilities and have little to no interaction. Persistent

gender inequality and deeply rooted patriarchal norms, along with the long-standing state enforcement of gender segregation, greatly influence labor experience on Saudi society (Aldossari & Chaudhry, 2024). This poses a challenge for foreign nurses, as they are accustomed to working in a mixed-gender environment in their home country. This sudden change in the work environment can cause feelings of isolation, frustration, and discomfort, ultimately affecting their job performance and well-being.

Another significant challenge is the language barrier with patients and colleagues. The official language in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, and although English is widely spoken, there can still be communication gaps between patients and foreign nurses which can lead to misunderstandings, errors in patient care, and even cause frustration for the nurses. Additionally, the differences in communication styles and cultural practices, such as patient preferences for same-gender healthcare providers, can also create challenges for foreign nurses in effectively communicating and delivering care to their patients.

To cope with these challenges, foreign nurses have developed various strategies to adjust and integrate into the Saudi Arabian culture and work environment. Nurse S, one of the participants of this study, initially faced challenges with gender segregation in the workplace, as she was used to working alongside male colleagues in her home country. However, she adapted to this cultural norm by understanding and respecting the policies and finding ways to communicate and collaborate with her colleagues.

Secondly, they learn basic Arabic phrases for communication, enabling them to interact with patients and colleagues more effectively. Some nurses also use non-verbal communication methods such as gestures and facial expressions to overcome the language barrier. The advancement of technology and the use of Information and communication technologies (ICTs) by nurses can impact their practice (Rouleau & et.al, 2017). Additionally, they can also use translation devices and apps for effective communication with their patients and colleagues. For example, Nurse M, overcame language barriers by studying basic Arabic phrases and using translation apps to communicate with her patients.

Further coping strategies such as seeking help from colleagues and mentors helps the newly hired foreign nurses to be more aware of the cultural nuances and approach the challenges they face. Engaging in cultural exchange activities, such as attending local festivals and trying traditional foods, also help them to learn more about Saudi customs and develop a better understanding of the culture. For instance, Nurse R, coped with cultural differences by learning about Saudi customs and engaging in cultural exchange activities with her colleagues, which helped her to integrate into the new work environment.

Cultural adjustment and integration are crucial for the successful integration of foreign nurses into the Saudi Arabian healthcare system. The challenges faced by these nurses are diverse and highlight the need for support and coping strategies to facilitate their cultural adjustment process. By understanding the existing theories and recognizing the challenges faced by foreign nurses, policymakers and healthcare managers can implement strategies to promote a smooth transition for these nurses into the Saudi Arabian culture and work environment. These strategies can

ultimately enhance the quality of care provided by foreign nurses and improve their overall job satisfaction and well-being.

4.2. Professional Challenges and Support

Professional challenges and support can encompass a multitude of difficulties faced by foreign nurses in a new environment, including the healthcare system, language barriers, and the availability of resources and support. These challenges can significantly impact the quality of patient care, as well as the personal and professional well-being of foreign nurses.

One of the main challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia is the learning of new protocols, procedures, and documentation processes. According to Bandura's social learning theory, individuals learn through observation and imitation of others' behavior, especially those they consider role models (Bandura, 1977). In this context, foreign nurses learn by observing their colleagues and adopting their practices. The exploratory research found that Nurse S, who was able to navigate through these challenges successfully, benefitted from the orientation and training programs provided by the facility. She also sought guidance from her colleagues, who served as role models in adapting to the new protocols and procedures.

Language barriers also pose a significant challenge for foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia, often affecting the quality of care they provide. This issue is supported by the Communication Accommodation Theory, which states that individuals tend to adjust their communication style to match those of their interlocutors in an attempt to reduce barriers to effective communication (Giles & Ogay, 2007). It aims to explain and predict how individuals change their communicative behavior during social interactions and the social consequences of these changes (Giles, et.al, 2015). In this case, foreign nurses may experience difficulty in communicating with patients and colleagues due to language differences. As seen in the exploratory research, Nurse R coped with this challenge by studying the local language, Arabic, and relying on team members for communication assistance. This finding is also supported by the Social Support Theory, which suggests that people seek emotional, informational, and instrumental support from their social networks to cope with challenging situations (Cobb, 1976). Foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia can benefit from seeking support from their colleagues, who can provide language assistance and help with cultural adaptation.

Adapting to the local work culture and practices is another significant challenge faced by foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia. This challenge is supported by the Cultural Intelligence Theory, which states that individuals who possess the ability to understand and adapt to different cultures and work environments can effectively function in diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). For foreign nurses, cultural intelligence plays a crucial role in their ability to navigate through the challenges they face in the Saudi Arabian healthcare system. Nurse M, who successfully adapted to the local work culture and practices, sought guidance from her mentors and engaged in continuous education and training. This approach aligns with the Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals' behaviors are influenced by self-efficacy, which can be improved through learning and continuous education (Bandura, 1986).

4.3. Emotional Well-being and Homesickness

One of the most common challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in Saudi Arabia is the struggle with emotional well-being and homesickness.

Emotional well-being, according to the National Center for Emotional Wellness (NCEW), involves recognizing, comprehending, and embracing emotions, as well as effectively handling change or difficult situations. It pertains to an individual's mental and emotional well-being. This is important as it can impact individuals' ability to perform daily activities. This involves their capacity to deal with pressure, sustain healthy connections, and adjust to alterations in their surroundings (Sissons, 2024). Being away from home and loved ones can have a significant impact on a person's emotional well-being. When working as a foreign nurse in Saudi Arabia, these nurses are exposed to a different culture and may experience culture shock that can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and homesickness.

On the other hand, according to Cambridge Dictionary, homesickness is the feeling of being unhappy because of being away from home for a long period. Foreign nurses working in a Saudi Arabian primary health care facility may experience homesickness due to the drastic change in their environment and being away from their support system.

The challenges faced by foreign nurses in terms of emotional well-being and homesickness cannot be ignored. These challenges can impact their job performance and overall quality of life. It is important to explore how these nurses cope with these challenges to ensure their well-being and retention in their workplace. The interview conducted for this exploratory research revealed that a participants struggle with emotional well-being and homesickness. However, the coping strategies adopted by these nurses vary.

One of the coping strategies mentioned by the foreign nurses in the study was staying connected with family and friends through technology. This strategy aligns with the Social Support Theory, which posits that individuals seek support from their social networks in times of stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985). This theory suggests that having a strong support system can help individuals cope with homesickness and other emotional challenges. Nurse S, one of the participants in the study, mentioned how video calls and messages with her family helped her combat homesickness.

Another coping strategy mentioned was building strong relationships with colleagues for emotional support. The Theory of Social Identity proposes that individuals derive a sense of belonging and self-esteem from their social groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1985). In a new and unfamiliar environment, foreign nurses may feel a strong sense of isolation. Therefore, forming strong relationships with colleagues who may share similar experiences can provide emotional support and aid in coping with homesickness. Nurse M emphasized the importance of social activities with colleagues for relaxation and support.

Furthermore, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping suggests that an individual's response to stress is influenced by their perception of the stressor and their coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the context of this study, the stressor would be feeling homesick, and the coping resources would be the strategies adopted by the nurses. Nurse R, for instance, managed her homesickness by reaching out to friends and colleagues for emotional support, which reflects the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping.

The challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary health care facility, particularly in terms of emotional well-being and homesickness, are significant. However, the coping strategies mentioned by the foreign nurses in the study align with existing theories and can serve as a basis for further research and intervention programs aimed at supporting these nurses. It is crucial for healthcare organizations to acknowledge and address the emotional well-being of foreign nurses to ensure their optimal performance and retention in the workplace.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study explored the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a specific primary healthcare facility in Saudi Arabia. It provided significant insights into the multifaceted challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses in a Saudi Arabian primary health care facility. The themes that emerged highlighted the challenges faced by these nurses in cultural adjustment and integration, professional challenges and support, and emotional well-being and homesickness.

Cultural adjustment and integration emerged as a major theme as foreign nurses faced challenges in understanding the cultural norms and expectations of Saudi society. From language barriers to gender segregation, these nurses had to adapt and assimilate into a new culture while maintaining their own identity. This required high levels of resilience and open-mindedness, along with support from their colleagues and superiors.

The research also highlighted professional challenges faced by foreign nurses, including differences in nursing practices and protocols, which required them to undergo additional training and orientation. However, with proper support and guidance from the facility and their Saudi colleagues, these nurses were able to overcome these challenges and thrive in their roles.

Moreover, the research also sheds light on the emotional well-being and homesickness experienced by foreign nurses. Living and working in a new country can be emotionally overwhelming for these nurses, especially when separated from their families and loved ones. Loneliness, cultural shock, and homesickness were common challenges faced by the participants. However, with the help of technology, their support system, and coping mechanisms, these nurses were able to navigate through these feelings and create a work-life balance.

Despite these challenges, the research also revealed the resilience and determination of foreign nurses to overcome these obstacles with the support of their colleagues, the hospital administration, and the Saudi Arabian community. As the demand for qualified nurses continues to grow, it is essential to acknowledge and address the challenges faced by newly hired foreign nurses, ensuring their successful integration into the Saudi Arabian healthcare system.

Therefore, healthcare organizations need to recognize and address these challenges to create a positive and supportive work environment for them. Lastly, this study can serve as a valuable resource for healthcare facilities in Saudi Arabia in developing effective strategies to support newly hired foreign nurses. The findings of this study can

also serve as a basis for other similar research projects in the future and contribute to the body of knowledge in this field.

6. Recommendation

Based on the findings of the exploratory research entitled “Overcoming Obstacles: Exploring the Challenges Faced by Newly Hired Foreign Nurses in a Saudi Arabian Primary Health Care Facility”, it is recommended that healthcare facilities take proactive steps to address the significant themes identified in the study. The following recommendations are proposed.

Firstly, it is crucial to include cultural sensitivity and diversity training as part of the orientation and onboarding process. This will help foreign nurses understand and adapt to the local culture and customs, leading to better communication and work relationships.

Secondly, mentoring programs can be established to guide foreign nurses in their professional journey. This can include pairing them with experienced local nurses who can provide guidance and support in navigating the challenges faced in their new workplace.

Thirdly, healthcare facilities should prioritize providing language support to foreign nurses. This can be in the form of language classes or hiring interpreters to assist with communication. It will not only improve their communication with colleagues and patients but also instill confidence in their professional abilities.

Lastly, creating a supportive and inclusive work culture is essential for the emotional well-being of foreign nurses. Encouraging social events and team-building activities can help foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie in the workplace.

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