A Phenomenological Exploration of International Nurse's Motivation and Experiences in Pursuing a Master's Degree in Nursing In
The United States

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Objectives

- The learner will distinguish factors that influence international nursing students motivation to pursue graduate work in the United States.
- The learner will synthesize research findings for application to teaching and learning for international nursing students.
Purpose

- Educational preparation of nurse educators is crucial to advancement of the profession of nursing globally.
- Little is known about the experiences or motivation of nurses studying abroad.
Throughout the United States (U.S.) there has been an increased demand for attainment of university degrees by international students (IS). Despite the rise in admissions, there is growing concern that universities are not meeting the needs of these students.
Literature Review: Barriers to Learning

- Adaptation to the American teaching style
  - Evans & Stevenson (2009) study on learning experiences of international nursing students support this belief in stating, "The expectation of self-directed study and lack of structured input is often quite unexpected and can represent a dramatic cultural shift" (p. 244).

- Online and hybrid courses
  - Many are ill prepared to utilize e-mail, analyze typed responses, and limited directives in the online setting.
Cultural Acclimation

  - Findings of this study reported that international nursing students experience cultural differences that need addressed to best acclimate to their new environment.
- Mackay, et al (2011) revealed similar findings in their retrospective literature review.
  - Concerns with "social integration and connectedness" are momentous issues for the international student.
United States Expectations

- Tas (2013), findings from IS studying in the U.S. report ongoing inconsistencies between the students expectations and the reality of their educational experiences in the United States.
A phenomenological study completed by Abu-Saad & Kayser-Jones (1982) reported 50% of international nursing students desired to remain in the U.S. upon completion of their studies.

Christofii & Thompson (2007) also confirmed this finding in their phenomenological research on graduates returning to their respective home countries after studying abroad.

The authors reported that "Fifty percent of students who study abroad elect to return to their home country after their sojourn" (p. 53).
Return to the Homeland

- Not all IS plan to return to their home countries upon graduation from the university setting.
- A literature review conducted by Lee (2013), revealed that some international psychology students desired to remain in the U.S. primarily to gain professional experience in their chosen discipline prior to returning to their homeland.
Educational Strategies for Country of Origin Learning

- Multiple researchers have reported on the benefits for the international students country of origin in relation to new found knowledge and teaching pedagogies from their experiences abroad.

- Evans & Stevenson's (2009) research reported over time, the IS were able to acclimate to the U.S teaching styles and found "some students greatly valued the more critical approach" to learning (p. 245).
In an extensive review of the literature there was a limited number of research studies that had focused on the motivation and experiences of international students pursuing a Master's Degree in Nursing in the United States.

Our phenomenological investigation was related to the lived experiences and motivation of international nurses enrolled in a Master’s program of nursing at a south central University in the US.
Methods

- **Inclusion criteria:**
  - Participants must possess a Bachelor’s Degree in Nursing from a University in their country of origin;
  - Currently enrolled in a Master’s level graduate program in nursing in the United States
  - Able to communicate in English.

- **Exclusion criteria:**
  - Educational preparation outside of the parameters identified as inclusionary criteria.
Methods

- Purposive sampling used to recruit Master’s level graduate nursing students for a single session, 60 minute interview.
- Consenting participants audio-taped during the interview session.
- Interviews occurred at an agreed upon location between the researcher and the participant that ensured privacy.
- After each interview the researchers transcribed data verbatim and reviewed for correctness.
- Confidentiality was assured by assigning a pseudonym for each participant.
Participants

- Convenience sampling was utilized to recruit 10 Master’s level international graduate nursing students currently attending a south central U.S. private university.

- Selection criteria was inclusive of male (n = 2) and female (n = 8) students from Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Malaysia, and China.
Data Collection

- Eight interviews were completed face to face on campus at locations which ensured privacy.
- Two interviews conducted occurred via telephone to accommodate participant’s availability.
- Research participants were randomly assigned to interviewers by the principle investigator.
Giorgi’s approach to phenomenological analysis was completed. The following themes emerged:

1. Setting Sail
2. Innocents Abroad
3. Forging Onward
4. Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom
5. The Land of Far Beyond
Participant comments:

- "They (government) love us to study abroad."
- "One of my classmates she come to America first, and she told me good things about the learning in America."
- "So, we see Americans are the best educated people in the world, so I was looking for a place that, uh, give me, like uh, this level of education."
- “Getting your master or PhD or any certification from the U.S. is a dream of anyone from us."
Negotiating language in the community:

"If you speak very quickly, we cannot understand. Even it's like...even if you try, we may have time to understand and we may only think one to two words that we understand in all the sentence."

"Maybe it's like the language, the talk, the speaking it's like if you are to speak with the native Americans its really different than how we can start."

"We have different, uh... a lot of barriers. One of them is the language it’s really difficult some times to, to express yourself, to express your feelings or express your ideas in a different language. Culturally it's like coming from another planet."
Academic negotiation:

"They [educators] have to know what each student's abilities...and [pause] and accept all the assignments from the peoples life like translating like writing like some of us might write horrible, like sound or not speak very well,"

"I think the hardest thing is about the writing,"

"I mean it's all about the English as a second language, so if the professor can encourage foreign students to write and help them to, to explain all things like ideas."
Forging Onward

Cultural barriers included:

- "If the nursing school could help the new students to get in touch with the previous/old international nursing student (from same country), it might be helpful to reduce the new students' stress and anxiety."

- "The culture is different, everything different. It's like culture shock."

Nursing employment barriers:

- "I want to get work experience, not as a nurse educator, but as a nurse,"

- "In the clinical field your universities here asking for uh license, and this take long time process."

- "It’s really difficult for most of our people because they need a lot of preparations."
Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom

Pedagogical Differences:

- "I see how better communication is with my professors for each class."
- "Here we have much, I am more confident, um independent, I think my whole personality changes."
- "It's more respective um, the education in America is more respective than the education in China."
- "The way that they share ideas...about everything. respect for anyone, others opinion, respect each other's thoughts."
- "A huge gap between the study in the United States and in my country. Here you become self-dependent in study."
Global role building:

- "It is really an opportunity to come back to teach the people as students should."
- "I may take something from the United States, like what I learned, skills, knowledge and the way that they are teaching."
- "I think coming here was a big eye opener to see people proud of being a nurse and that people respect them, and so it's something I wanna bring back home,“
- "The sense of pride in the nursing profession over here, at home it's not a profession or career that is respected."
- "When I go back to my home country I think I'll be the type to push the profession forward."
Recommendations

- Educators need to evaluate the level of comprehension of the international students in regard to the spoken language, writing skills and educational styles employed in the United States.

- A teaching emphasis on curriculum development, and teaching/learning principles would benefit this cohort of students.

- Providing a peer mentor for new students with current international students, as well as American students may provide for a smoother transition not only for the educational rigors of graduate education, but also to assimilate into the culture of the university and the United States.
Recommendations

- Expectations of the international student studying abroad must be entertained to allow for improvements and student success in the educational process.
- Assist the international student in preparation for US Licensure
- Debriefing for the international students as they prepare to return to their homeland.
Conclusion

Results of this study indicate the need for improved collaboration between international students and faculty to best meet the needs of this unique student population.

With the continued rise in enrollment of international students to attain graduate nursing degrees within United States, collaboration with professional organizations and academic involvement is essential to assure we are preparing nurses globally to meet the needs of their respective countries.

Comparison of educational requirements and curriculum with other countries would provide valuable insight to best understand the needs for this student population enrolled in United States universities.
References


