
Caring Across Cultures: Exploring Holistic Approaches and Cultural Sensitivity in the Practice of Filipino Nurses in the UAE

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of Filipino nurses in the UAE as they provided culturally sensitive and holistic care in multicultural healthcare settings. Guided by Leininger's Culture Care Theory, Roy's Adaptation Theory, Watson's Theory of Human Caring, and the SEEK method, it used a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design. Eleven Filipino nurses were selected through purposive sampling, and data were collected using a structured, open-ended questionnaire and analyzed using Colaizzi's method. Findings showed that Filipino nurses practiced holistic care by addressing patients' physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and cultural needs. They demonstrated cultural sensitivity by respecting beliefs, religion, privacy, modesty, communication, and family involvement. Despite challenges such as language barriers, gender preferences, and differing expectations, they showed empathy, adaptability, resilience, and professional growth. The study concludes that culturally responsive and holistic care is essential in multicultural nursing practice

Keywords: *Filipino nurses, cultural sensitivity, holistic care, Roy's Adaptation Theory, SEEK method, phenomenology, UAE, transcultural nursing caring*

INTRODUCTION

Nursing combines clinical knowledge with compassion, cultural sensitivity, adaptation, and holistic care. In the UAE's multicultural healthcare setting, Filipino nurses contribute values such as malasakit, bayanihan, and pakikipagkapwa. Guided by Leininger, Watson, and Roy's theories, this study views culturally sensitive care as patient-centered, adaptive, and holistic. Since challenges related to language, religion, privacy, gender preferences, family involvement, and healthcare beliefs remain, this study explores how Filipino nurses in the UAE experience and integrate cultural sensitivity and holistic care in daily practice.

Statement of the Problem

The primary objective of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Filipino nurses in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as they integrate cultural sensitivity and holistic care into their nursing practice within a multicultural healthcare environment.

Grand Research Question

How do Filipino nurses in the UAE experience and integrate cultural sensitivity and holistic care in their nursing practice within a multicultural healthcare setting?

Scope and Delimitations

This study explores the lived experiences of licensed Filipino nurses in selected UAE healthcare institutions with at least two years of UAE nursing experience. It examines how they integrate cultural sensitivity and holistic care, guided by Filipino values and the SEEK method as a reflective guide. The findings are self-reported, context-bound, and not intended for generalization or causal conclusions.

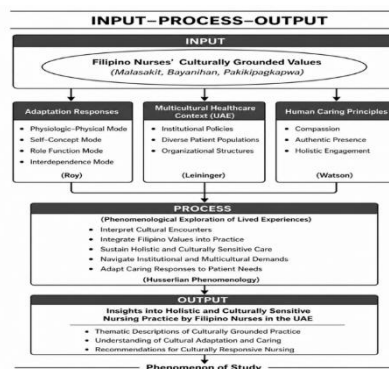
Review of Related Literature

Contemporary nursing literature emphasizes cultural sensitivity, adaptation, and holistic care as essential in multicultural healthcare settings. Roy's Adaptation Model explains adaptive responses to internal and external demands; Leininger's Culture Care Theory supports culturally congruent care; and Watson's Theory of Human Caring highlights compassionate and dignified nursing care (Roy & Andrews, 2009; McFarland & Wehbe-Alamah, 2018; Watson, 2022). These theories relate to Filipino values such as *malasakit*, *bayanihan*, and *pakikipagkapwa*, which shape compassionate and relational care. The SEEK method also serves as a reflective guide for holistic, empathetic, and culturally sensitive practice. Since limited studies focus on Filipino nurses in the UAE, qualitative descriptive phenomenology is appropriate for exploring their lived experiences.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Leininger's Culture Care Theory, Roy's Adaptation Model, and Watson's Theory of Human Caring. Together, these theories explain culturally congruent care, adaptive nursing responses, and compassionate holistic care in multicultural settings. Leininger emphasizes respect for patients' beliefs and values, Roy highlights nurses' adaptation to cultural and institutional demands, and Watson focuses on compassion, dignity, and caring relationships. The SEEK method supports these theories by guiding nurses to See the patient holistically, Explore cultural beliefs, Empathize through caring communication, and Know how to adapt care appropriately.

Conceptual Framework -



METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of Filipino nurses in integrating cultural sensitivity and holistic care within multicultural healthcare settings in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals interpret and construct meaning from their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Descriptive phenomenology, grounded in Husserlian philosophy, focuses on describing the essence of a shared phenomenon as experienced by participants (Moustakas, 2022).

Research Design

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of Filipino nurses in the UAE as they integrated cultural sensitivity and holistic care in multicultural healthcare settings. Using a qualitative descriptive phenomenological design, the study focused on understanding how participants interpreted and gave meaning to their experiences. Grounded in Husserlian phenomenology, it described the essence of their shared experiences rather than measuring cultural competence quantitatively. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to ensure rigor and preserve the authentic voices of the participants.

Research Steps

The research began by identifying licensed Filipino nurses in the UAE who met the inclusion criteria, including at least two years of experience and willingness to participate. After ethical clearance, purposive sampling was used, and a validated open-ended questionnaire with digital consent was distributed through Google Forms. Responses were securely stored, anonymized, and analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method, including theme clustering, essence identification, and member checking.

Data Collection and Sample Selection

The participants were licensed Filipino nurses at selected UAE healthcare institutions, selected through purposive sampling based on at least 2 years of UAE nursing experience and willingness to provide informed consent. After ethical clearance from the SBLC and the Ain Al Khaleej Hospital Research and Ethics Committee, data were collected using a validated open-ended Google Forms questionnaire. Responses were anonymized, securely stored, and prepared for phenomenological analysis while ensuring credibility, confidentiality, and trustworthiness.

Data Analysis Methods

Data were analyzed using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to extract significant statements, formulate meanings, cluster themes, and identify the essence of participants' experiences. Credibility was strengthened through member checking to ensure the

findings reflected Filipino nurses' experiences of cultural sensitivity and holistic care (Morrow et al., 2015; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Hypotheses and Validation

To ensure trustworthiness, the study followed the qualitative criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Flanagan & Beck, 2024). Credibility was supported through expert validation and member checking; dependability through proper documentation; confirmability through an audit trail and reflexive bracketing; and transferability through rich descriptions of the research context and participants' experiences (Moustakas, 2022).

Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was secured from SBLC and the Ain Al Khaleej Hospital Research and Ethics Committee before data collection, and participants provided digital informed consent after being informed of the study's purpose, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw. Their identities were protected through codes or pseudonyms; responses were securely stored; trustworthiness was supported through expert validation, member checking, reflexivity, and bracketing; and AI tools were used only for language refinement, not for data collection, analysis, or interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SOP 1. How do Filipino nurses in the UAE experience and integrate cultural sensitivity and holistic care in their nursing practice within a multicultural healthcare setting?

Filipino nurses in the UAE integrated cultural sensitivity and holistic care by addressing patients' physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and cultural needs while respecting beliefs, religion, privacy, modesty, gender preferences, family involvement, and communication needs. Despite challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and same-gender care preferences, they used empathy, clear communication, spiritual respect, family involvement, and adaptive strategies to provide patient-centered care, supporting Watson's Theory of Human Caring, Leininger's Culture Care Theory, and Roy's Adaptation Model (Watson, 2022; McFarland & Wehbe-Alamah, 2018; Roy, 2009)

Enhanced Engagement: Cultural sensitivity and holistic care strengthened nurse-patient relationships by making Filipino nurses more respectful, flexible, and responsive. Their Filipino values, such as *malasakit*, *bayanihan*, *pakikipagkapwa*, compassion, respect, and family-centeredness, helped build trust and meaningful relationships while enhancing their cultural awareness, resilience, adaptability, and professional growth.

SUMMARY

The findings revealed that Filipino nurses in the UAE view holistic care as a compassionate, whole-person practice addressing patients' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Care extends beyond treatment through reassurance, dignity, emotional

support, family involvement, and respect. Cultural sensitivity is shown by respecting beliefs, religion, privacy, modesty, communication styles, and family systems while maintaining safety and professionalism. Challenges included language barriers, same-gender care preferences, and family decision-making expectations, all of which required flexibility, teamwork, and communication support. Filipino values strengthened their practice, cultural competence, resilience, adaptability, communication skills, and professional growth in the UAE.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings showed that Filipino nurses in the UAE experienced holistic and culturally sensitive care as essential in multicultural nursing practice. Their care extended beyond physical treatment to include emotional support, respect for spiritual beliefs, privacy, dignity, family involvement, and cultural understanding. These findings support Watson's Theory of Human Caring and Leininger's Culture Care Theory, which emphasize compassionate, holistic, and culturally congruent care (McFarland & Wehbe-Alamah, 2018; Watson, 2022). The study also revealed that challenges such as language barriers, gender preferences, religious practices, privacy concerns, and cultural differences helped Filipino nurses develop adaptability, resilience, flexibility, communication skills, and professional growth. This supports Roy's Adaptation Model, which explains how nurses adapt to the demands of multicultural healthcare while providing respectful, patient-centered care (Roy & Andrews, 2009).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, healthcare institutions should strengthen policies and training that support holistic, culturally congruent, and adaptive nursing care. Hospitals should provide clear guidelines on privacy, modesty, same-gender care, family involvement, interpreter access, and religious accommodation. Nursing education should also emphasize cultural sensitivity, reflective practice, adaptation, and Filipino values such as *malasakit*, *bayanihan*, *pakikipagkapwa*, respect, hospitality, and spirituality. Future studies may explore Filipino nurses' experiences in other countries or patients' perceptions of culturally sensitive care.

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AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools were used only to assist with grammar, language refinement, and structure in preparing this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret the research data. All authors are fully credited for their academic contributions and remain responsible for the content, accuracy, and integrity of this work.

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