



Internationally recruited nurses' experiences in England: A survey approach

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ABSTRACT

Background: Over the past few years, there has been an impetus to recruit internationally registered nurses to work in the National Health Service (NHS) to avert the labor shortage inherent in the United Kingdom.

Purpose: To determine internationally registered nurses' perception of discrimination, support, and their adjustment to a new environment in the NHS in England.

Methods: A descriptive survey was used. Data were collected from 188 internationally recruited nurses using a questionnaire approach from 15 National Health Service hospitals in England. Data were analyzed using chi-square, Fisher exact, or Kruskal-Wallis tests.

Results: The study had a 21% response rate. There were 81.9% females and 18.1% males who participated in the survey. A mean score of 7.55 and standard deviation of 6.82 were calculated for the number of years of experience of working in the NHS. The findings revealed many statistical differences between the different ethnic groups used in the study. Generally, internationally recruited nurses from Africa, in particular, perceived discrimination to be evident in the workplace, the support they received was limited, and their adjustment to a new environment was the weakest in comparison with the other internationally recruited nurses from the different data sets.

Conclusion: Although the needs of all internationally recruited nurses should be considered, it would appear that the needs of African nurses are the greatest because the study found that they experienced challenges in the working environment in the NHS.

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Introduction

Figures from the United Nation show that in 2000 approximately 175 million individuals or 2.9% of the world's population were living outside of their country of origin in comparison with 100 million or 1.8% of the total population in 1995 (United Nations, 2002). Of these figures, highly skilled professionals have

migrated and continue to do so. There are several reasons identified including to seek employment in countries where there are better health care systems and there are more opportunities for skill development as well as advancement. It is not surprising that nurses are included in this, and it is estimated that a large number of nurses have migrated to work in a number of developed countries including the United Kingdom. Historically, the recruitment of international nurses to

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work in the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom is not a new phenomenon. Since the inception of the NHS in 1948, the United Kingdom has recruited international nurses to fill the labor gap.

Background

There is an abundance of literature outlining the experiences of internationally recruited nurses (IRNs) in the United Kingdom (Alexis, 2013; Buchan, 2003; Cummins, 2009) as well as their experiences in both developed (Ea, Griffin, L'Eplattenier, & Fitzpatrick, 2008; Humphries, Brugh, & McGee, 2009; Singh & Sochan, 2010; Troy, Wyness, & McAuliffe, 2007; Woodbridge & Bland, 2010) and developing countries (Thomas, 2006). These studies have provided both positive and negative experiences of IRNs.

In the United Kingdom, a number of studies have identified the support or the lack of it in the NHS; for example, Daniel, Chamberlain, and Gordon's (2001) qualitative study found that British nurses were supportive of Filipino nurses. Similarly, Withers and Snowball's (2003) mixed-method study using both qualitative and quantitative approaches revealed that Filipino nurses received support from their managers. Matiti and Taylor's (2005) qualitative work showed that there was general support from indigenous nurses, international coordinators, and other health care workers for IRNs.

On the other hand, Alexis and Vydellingum's (2005) study pointed out that IRNs did not receive the support that they had hoped for, and, as a consequence, they found adapting and navigating their way through the British health care system to be difficult. Similarly, Allan and Larsen's (2003) earlier study found that IRNs were not always supported in the working environment, and this created some challenges when adapting to the clinical setting in the United Kingdom.

In another study, the Market and Opinion Research International (2002) poll in England examined the experiences of IRNs on behalf of the Royal College of Nursing and found that international nurses experienced inadequate support, poor working conditions, lack of recognition for their hard work, and unfriendly and unaccommodating staff. An integrative review by Kawi and Xu (2009) showed that many IRNs felt there was a lack of support from staff, work colleagues, and supervisors in their adjustment to a new environment.

Although some studies described IRNs as feeling positively valued and welcomed (Matiti & Taylor, 2005; Withers & Snowball, 2003), others described experiences of discrimination and racism as dominant features overshadowing their experiences (Alexis & Vydellingum, 2004; Allan, Larsen, Bryan, & Smith, 2004; Larsen, 2007). In another study, Henry (2007) found that African nurses were disadvantaged, particularly when it came to career progression. Similarly, Taylor (2005) attempted to address this by considering the views of IRNs. A qualitative approach

was adopted, and the findings revealed that IRNs were discriminated by both patients and staff. Similarly, in the United States, Wheeler, Foster, and Hepburn (2014) found that discrimination was rife and suggested that health care organizations should strengthen policies to effectively address this issue. Pittman, Davis, Shaffer, Herrera, and Bennett (2014) echoed this view and advocated that health care environments should strive to create positive work places for IRNs.

Winkelmann-Gleed and Seeley (2005) used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the experiences of internationally recruited qualified migrant nurses with the aim of understanding aspects of their work-related identities. They found that discrimination and a lack of promotion were apparent and emphasized the need to treat IRNs as individuals. These findings are similar to that of other studies (Allan et al., 2004; Buchan, 2003; Larsen, 2007; Likupe, 2006) in that discrimination and equity issues were challenges facing IRNs in the NHS.

Although these aforementioned studies painted both positive and negative pictures of IRNs' experiences in the NHS, there are no studies that examine the experiences of different ethnic groups and their perception of discrimination, support, and adapting to a new environment from a quantitative perspective. With this in mind, this study sought to address this gap in the literature.

Aims

The aims of the study were to answer the following questions:

- How do IRNs perceive discrimination and support in the workplace in the NHS?
- How do IRNs perceive the way in which they are treated by their peers in the NHS?
- How do IRNs perceive their adjustment to a new environment?

Design

A descriptive survey design was used to capture IRNs' perception of discrimination, support, and their adjustment to a new environment.

Data Collection

Data were collected over a 10-month period using a questionnaire constructed following the emergent themes from the qualitative data analysis. Fifty directors of nursing within 50 acute NHS trust

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