Nursing in a New Land: Acculturation and Job Satisfaction Among Filipino Registered Nurses Working in Skilled Nursing Facilities

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Abstract
This study investigated the relationship between the level of acculturation and job satisfaction among Filipino immigrants working as registered nurses (RNs) in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) in the South San Francisco Bay Area (SSFBA). This research utilized a cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational, quantitative design to assess the two variables under investigation. Participants included 42 Filipino immigrant RNs, working in 13 SNFs, in SSFBA. Written surveys included: A Short Acculturation Scale for Filipino Americans (ASASFA) and Part B of the Index of Work Satisfaction Scale (IWS). The participants had an acculturation level closer to the American culture than the Filipino culture; however, their job satisfaction level was neutral and had no relationship to acculturation. The acculturation and job satisfaction levels of the participants might have been influenced by environmental factors that Filipino immigrants were exposed to in their home country and number of years in the United States.

Despite the current recession in the United States, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) reported that healthcare employment has been increasing. There has been an increase of 44,000 jobs in the ambulatory healthcare services and in hospitals, and, employment for registered nurses (RNs) is expected to increase by more than 581,500 new jobs by the year 2018 (Lacey & Wright, 2009). With this increase in available jobs, the healthcare industry might consider importing nurses from other countries to help resolve the nursing shortage. According to Brush (2010), the demand for nurses in different countries around the world, including the United States, has resulted in an increase in the exportation of nurses from the Philippines. The nursing curriculum taught in the Philippines resembles the nursing standard of practice in the United States, which is a factor that facilitated the exportation of the Filipino nurses to other developing countries.

Keywords
Filipino registered nurses, immigrants, job satisfaction, acculturation, skilled nursing facilities

increase, the rate of growth between the different industries of healthcare will vary. It is expected that by year 2018, physicians' offices will have the highest employment growth for RNs. Skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) will come in third, while hospitals, the largest of the healthcare industries, are expected to have the slowest growth. The reason for this is an increase in early discharge and outpatient services.

Filipino RNs consist of 20.8% of all ethnic minority groups with active nursing licenses in California (Spetz, Keane, & Hailer, 2011). Even though Filipino RNs constitute a large portion of ethnic minorities in California, little research has been conducted on this group, especially in the area of acculturation and job satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of acculturation and job satisfaction among Filipino immigrants working as RNs in the SNFs in the SSFBA, and to investigate the relationship between acculturation and job satisfaction among the sample.

**Background**

Acculturation and job satisfaction were the two variables assessed in this study because of the effects of these variables on a person’s physical health, professional growth, and success (Applebaum, Fowler, Fiedler, Osinubi, & Robinson, 2010).

**Acculturation**

Acculturation has been found to have both positive and negative consequences. Research documented that the effects of acculturation included depression (Choi, Miller, & Wilbur, 2009; Chou, Wong, & Chow, 2011), stress (Torres, 2010; Bhattacharya, 2011), and smoking cessation (Garcia, Romero, & Maxwell, 2010). However, little is known about the effects of acculturation on Filipino immigrant nurses, particularly the ones working in SNFs who are usually given the responsibility of taking care of a high number of patients (American Nurses Association, 2011).

A large number of Filipino immigrant nurses are recruited to work outside of their country every year (Brush, 2010). These nurses, just like other immigrants, go through acculturation as they try to adapt to a new culture. Miller (2010) found that Asian immigrants’ acculturation process was bilinear, meaning that the immigrants adopted both their culture of origin and their host culture. This was concluded after the study of two types of acculturation processes among Asian Americans (Miller, 2010). The sample group consisted of 306 Asian Americans who identified themselves as Korean, Chinese, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Taiwanese, Cambodian, biracial, multiracial, and other. Miller also examined which models of acculturation were common among Asian Americans, and noted that bilinear models were most prevalent. The linear model of acculturation suggests that when a person goes through the process of acculturation, they adopt the host culture and lose their culture of origin. The bilinear model of acculturation, on the other hand, states that the immigrant retains both their culture of origin and the host culture (Torres & Rollock, 2009).

It was also very important to a person’s health to identify with a certain culture or have a sense of belonging (Choi, Miller & Wilbur, 2009). Choi and his colleagues examined 200 Korean immigrant women who lived in two metropolitan areas in a Midwestern state, and noted a decrease in acculturation to both Korean and American culture in 46 of the women. These 46 women exhibited high levels of depression compared to the other women, who were acculturated to either their culture of origin or their host country. This study suggested that the acculturation process a person experiences has negative consequences on their health. When one’s level of acculturation increases after residing in the
United States for quite a while, only then will they experience satisfaction in their work (Ea, Griffin, Eplattenier & Fitzpatrick, 2008). Limited research has been done on the acculturation process of Filipino immigrants, especially nurses working in the United States.

Job Satisfaction

According to the American Mobile Nurses Healthcare’s (AMNH) Survey of RNs (2011), many RNs nationwide are planning a change in their career when the economy recovers from the current recession. From the nurses surveyed, 58% stated that they were satisfied with their current job; however, 34% stated that they often thought about resigning from their jobs. Thirty percent were thinking of looking for a new job a year from now, and 48% worried that their jobs were affecting their health. Furthermore, 45% of the nurses stated that they would switch to a less demanding position in the next one to four years. The statistics suggest that job dissatisfaction existed among nurses from different healthcare settings. These results, compared to the previous AMNH (2010) survey of RNs, showed that the job satisfaction of RNs is declining.

A number of factors could affect the level of satisfaction an employee can experience with their job. Factors such as: the availability of resources, skills for health and emotional needs of employees (Hayne, Gerhardt & Davis, 2009), a good work environment (Choi, Flynn & Aiken, 2011), and personal values, were found to affect an employee’s level of job satisfaction (Cabigao, 2009). Hayne, Gerhardt and Davis (2009) found in their study that Filipino nurses who were recruited to work in the United States were satisfied with their jobs when they had resources and skills that helped them enhance their health and emotional needs. For example, in the Filipino culture, asking too many questions is seen as a sign of being incompetent. Therefore, providing resources, such as a mentor or supervisor who can help clarify certain information, will aid in the nurses’ success and satisfaction in their job performance. Nurses who were brought up in another country have different values and traditions from the ones who grew up in the United States. According to Cabigao (2009), nurses who were satisfied with their jobs did not place much importance on values such as tradition, belief, and faith. This created a problem for Filipino nurses who were born and raised in the Philippines because of their strong association with the traditions of their home country.

The job design in long-term care, such as in SNFs, also had an effect on the satisfaction level of nurses (Tyler et al., 2006). A study of twenty long-term care (LTC) facilities in Eastern Massachusetts found that licensed nurses, which included licensed vocational nurses (LVNs) and RNs working in LTC facilities, differed in their level of satisfaction with certified nursing assistants (CNAs). This was due to the lack of interaction between the licensed nurses, their patients, and other employees. The licensed nurses reported feeling more isolated, which then affected their level of job satisfaction. The low job satisfaction level of licensed nurses in LTC facilities may also have been due to the fact that they experienced higher levels of burnout. One study by Hasson and Arnetz (2007), reported that the staff in nursing homes experienced significant physical and emotional strain from their work. Kennedy (2005) demonstrated in his study that RNs have the highest level of burnout compared to other nursing personnel. This was found in a study of 125 nurses working in a LTC facility. This may be due to the type of patients residing in nursing homes who are usually very dependent and cognitively impaired. Based on a nationwide survey conducted by Jones, Dwyer, Bercovotz and Strahan (2009), only 1.6% of the residents in nursing homes in
the United States had an independent functional status. This means that they required no assistance with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), which included toileting, bathing, dressing, and eating. However, more than 50% of nursing home residents in the United States required maximum assistance with their ADLs.

There have been a number of studies on acculturation and job satisfaction that were investigated in this research; however, limited research has been done on the relationship of these two variables and the effect of these factors on Filipino RNs working in SNFs. Ea, Griffin, Eplattenier & Fitzpatrick (2008) looked at the effect of these two variables on Filipino nurses; however, the nurses in the study were recruited at a Philippine Nurses Association of America (PNAA) conference, and were not working in SNFs.

Methods

A cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational, quantitative design was used to assess the two variables, acculturation and job satisfaction. Administrators and directors of nursing in 46 different SNFs in the SSFBA were invited to participate in the study. Letters of permission were obtained from 14 facilities. One facility declined to participate. The target population consisted of Filipino immigrant RNs employed in SNFs in the SSFBA. To be included in the study, the participants needed to be able to read and understand English, be over 18 years of age, have been born in the Philippines, and work as an RN in the United States at a SNF. Participants born in the United States were excluded from the study.

Approval from the institutional review board (IRB) was obtained for this study. The Filipino RNs from the 13 SNFs were recruited through two ways, depending on the preference of their respective facilities. The nurses were informed either through flyers posted around their facilities or through flyers given out by the directors of nursing and administrators. After the employees were informed of the research study, they were given two weeks before the packets of questionnaires were distributed. The directors of nursing, administrators, or designated employees distributed the packets to the participants. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary. The nurses received a packet, which included: an informed consent form, three kinds of questionnaires, a return stamped envelope, and a gift for participating in the study. The participants were given one month to fill out the questionnaires and to mail them back. The return stamped envelopes given to the 13 facili-

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<tr>
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<tr>
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Note: Percents do not sum to 100 due to missing data and/or rounding.
ties were addressed to the primary researcher. However, one facility was provided a different return address due to the affiliation of the primary researcher. This was done to prevent any conflict of interest.

From the 128 sets of questionnaires that were distributed, only 117 sets were actually given out to the nurses because facilities only gave an estimate of Filipino immigrant nurses during the recruitment process. A second round of flyers and questionnaires were given out to two facilities that had a poor response rate. For this study, there were 49 (38%) completed sets of questionnaires. However, seven sets were taken out from the analytic sample because three of the respondents were born in the United States, while four mailed back incomplete questionnaires. Thus, the final sample was 42 (33%) Filipino immigrant RNs working in SNFs (See Table 1).

**Instruments**

The data instruments that were used in this research were the Background Information survey, A Short Acculturation Scale for Filipino Americans (ASASFA) (De la Cruz, Padilla & Agustin, 2000), and Part B of the Index of Work Satisfaction (Stamps, 1997). The Background Information survey included age, gender, marital status, number of years residing in the United States and employed at their current job. Acculturation was assessed with ASASFA (De la Cruz, Padilla & Agustin, 2000), which is a 12-item self-report tool in either English or Tagalog, used to measure which culture, Filipino or American, with which the person identifies more strongly. In this study, the English version was utilized since the rest of the survey tools were in English. The response choices for the questions were on a Likert-type scale, which took two to three minutes to complete. The lowest possible score was 12, while the highest score was 60. A high score meant that the participants strongly identified with the American culture. Permission from Dr. Felicitas De la Cruz was obtained for the use of both the Background Information survey and ASASFA. Changes were made on some of the questions on the Background Information survey to better fit the target population. For instance, a question asking about the participants’ professional field was taken out from the Background Information survey because only RNs were asked to complete the questionnaires. In addition, the words “high school,” “elementary,” and “some college” were taken out as choices from a demographic question about the education level completed by the participants.

Job satisfaction was measured using the Part B of the Index of Work Satisfaction (IWS) (Stamps, 1997). This was a 44-item tool, written in English, which measured how satisfied a person was with his or her current nursing job. The response choices were on a 1 to 7 Likert-type scale, in which numbers 1 to 3 showed different levels of agreement, and numbers 5 to 7 pointed towards levels of disagreement. The number 4 as a response meant that the person was undecided.

**Findings**

The sample was made up of mostly women whose age of immigration ranged from 3 to 44 years old, and length of residence in the United States ranged from 1 to 32 years. Based on Table 1, 83.3% of the respondents were female and 61.9% were married. All of the respondents included in the analytic sample had listed the Philippines on the Background Information survey as their place of birth as well as their parents’. Furthermore, 71.4% finished a 4-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. Predictive Analytics Software 18 (PASW 18) was used for analysis, which included response frequencies, percentages, descriptive statistics, and Pearson’s correlation coefficient.
The participants’ overall acculturation mean was 2.71 out of a possible score of 5, which meant that the nurses had a stronger identification with the American culture rather than their original culture. For the job satisfaction score, the nurses had a Total Scale Score (TSS) of 185.3 from a total score of 308, which was in the lower end of the third quartile (Stamps, 1997). The mean score was 4.22 out of a scale of 7, indicating no large degree of agreement or disagreement. Therefore, the sample of nurses did not express strong satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs at the SNFs. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was generated from the individual means of ASASFA and TSS, which was the same process used in the Ea et al. (2008) article. There was no correlation found between acculturation and job satisfaction.

Limitations

This study was not without limitations. First, the sample involved a limited number of SNFs in SSFBA, and as a result, only reflected the acculturation and job satisfaction of this group. Second, some of the contact persons from each facility might have been unreliable in terms of distributing the packets of questionnaires to the nurses. Also, after the first round of questionnaires were mailed back, most of the facilities that had a poor response rate, refused to distribute the second round of questionnaires to their nurses. These factors may have contributed to the small sample size of the study. Third, the methodology used to collect the data inhibited direct access to the participants. Having direct access could have ensured that the nurses who fit the criteria of the study were the only ones who received the questionnaires. In addition, the staffing ratios in SNFs made it difficult to recruit nurses who would fit the criteria of the study because the licensed nurses who worked in these longterm care facilities were predominately licensed vocational nurses (LVNs). Last, the results were based on the Filipino immigrant nurses’ self-reported level of acculturation and job satisfaction. This limited the reliability of the results because of potential sources of bias from self-reported data, such as selective memory and exaggeration.

Discussion

In the sample, the representation of male nurses was very small, however, the percentage of male nurses in this study was very similar to the percentage of male nurses noted in the 2010 Survey of RNs in California (Spetz, Keane and Hailer, 2011). In 2010, 10.7% of RNs who worked and resided in California were males.

For the level of acculturation of the sample, the nurses were closer to the American culture rather than the Filipino culture. This is consistent with other research which showed that the Filipino nurses’ acculturation level usually leans towards the host culture (Ea, Izhaki, Ehrenfeld, & Fitzpatrick, 2010; Ea et al., 2008). The age of the participants when they arrived in the United States, as well as the social media in the Philippines, were factors that might have influenced the level of acculturation. The sample’s average age of immigration was 22 years old, and duration of stay in the United States was 11 years. According to Brown, Schale, and Nilsson (2010), female immigrants who have resided in the United States for a longer period of time and were younger at the time of arrival, are embracing certain aspects of the American culture to a larger extent, specifically the English language. Arriving in the United States at a younger age meant that they were more likely to have been exposed to the American education system and the English language. Moreover, Moon and Park (2007) found in their study of acculturation and biculturalism on Korean immigrants who were exposed to both American and Korean media,
were more Americanized rather than bicultural. The researchers stated that this may be due to the strong effects of the American media. In the Philippines, they have an equal share of English-language media; however, their print media is predominately in English (as cited in Dayag, 2004; Dayag, 2010). Since the Filipino nurses in the sample were exposed to the English language in their home country, this might have helped them to become proficient with the language, making them more connected to the American culture. Therefore, even though the nurses were born and raised in the Philippines and have strong ties with their home country, they were still able to acculturate to the customs of another country.

Research suggests that the staff in long-term care (LTC) facilities, (especially the RNs), experienced a high level of burnout, which could lead to a decrease in job satisfaction (Hasson & Arnetz, 2007; Kennedy, 2005) because of the relationship between these two variables (Alarcon, 2011). In this study’s sample, the nurses were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their jobs. The nurses’ level of job satisfaction is not consistent with the findings of other studies, which showed that when the nurses are closer to the American culture, their job satisfaction increases as well (Ea et al., 2008). This may have occurred for several reasons. Even though the sample was made up of RNs, who had been found to be at risk for burnout, especially when exposed to a work environment such as a nursing home (Kennedy, 2005), certain aspects of the Philippines could have caused the nurses to be neutral in terms of their job satisfaction. Life in the Philippines is hard for everyone (Geller, 2007). In 2007, nurses in the Philippines earned $150 to $250 a month, compared to nurses in the United States, who earned $4,000 a month. This might have affected the job satisfaction level of the nurses. The nurses in the sample had a neutral job satisfaction level because of how difficult life probably was for them in the Philippines. This explains that although research has shown that the job design of SNFs promoted isolation among RNs, which decreased the nurses’ level of satisfaction (Tyler et al., 2006), this could have been compensated by the kind of life Filipino nurses experienced in their home country. In addition, the recent scarcity of RN jobs for inexperienced nurses in acute care settings in California (Stokowski, 2011) could have influenced the sample’s job satisfaction level. While accepting employment in a SNF might not be the Filipino nurses’ first choice of setting, they may have felt grateful to at least have a job during these changing times. Contrary to a previous study by Ea et al. (2008), there was no correlation found between acculturation and job satisfaction in this study’s sample. This indicates that the level of acculturation of Filipino immigrant nurses working in SNFs did not have an affect on the level of job satisfaction and vice versa.

The findings of this study can be used in identifying factors which will help increase the job satisfaction of Filipino immigrant nurses working in LTC facilities in the United States. Conducting research in this area will broaden the knowledge about other elements in the work environment of LTC facilities which contribute to a decrease in the nurses’ level of satisfaction. Furthermore, a qualitative study, which will look at the experiences of Filipino nurses with the use of the English language and American customs, will aid in the exploration of the acculturation process Filipino immigrants go through. These studies should focus on the struggles the nurses might have with the connotations of certain words and phrases that may affect their communication and interaction with their patients.
Implications for Practice

Findings from this study can be used to inform administrators and directors of nursing in SNFs about Filipino immigrant RNs. Since it was found that Filipino nurses working in LTC facilities were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with their work, administrators could start developing ways to increase the satisfaction level of their Filipino nurses by assessing the group for ways to enhance their work environment and implementing a plan to ameliorate their perceived challenges. It is important that leaders in the healthcare industry become aware of the cultural needs of their immigrant nurses. When the nurses’ needs are met, they are able to better perform and provide quality patient care. Furthermore, problems regarding the turnover and retention of nurses are prominent among nursing homes and on the rise (Donoghue, 2010). Focusing on how to increase the level of job satisfaction of nurses in LTC will help address these problems.

Conclusions

The results of this study suggested that there is no relationship between acculturation and job satisfaction among Filipino immigrant nurses working in SNFs. The nurses in the sample had an acculturation level closer to the American culture, which might have been influenced by certain factors. For instance, the culture in the Philippines where the English language is used in most social media might have facilitated the acculturation process of the Filipino immigrant nurses. Furthermore, the way of life in the nurses’ home country might have made them satisfied with their jobs, despite flaws in the design of the environment in nursing homes. Nevertheless, the results of this research cannot be generalized to other groups of immigrants because of the differences that exist among cultures.

References


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