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The experiences of Saudi female nurses in workplace: Constructive grounded theory

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Over the last 50 years, the rapid population growth and significant expansion of health care services in Saudi Arabia have greatly challenged the Saudi Kingdom's ability to provide an adequate supply of nurses to meet the staffing needs of its hospitals. Today, Saudi nurses comprise less than 30% of the total nursing workforce despite recent reports on nursing education showing a significant increase in the number of Saudi nursing graduates. Based on Saudi workforce recent studies reporting rates of retention/attrition, the high turnover rate and early career attrition rate are the main reasons for shortage. Yet, there are no available studies exploring the experience of currently working Saudi nurses in their workplace and the challenges they face.

OBJECTIVES: This study aimed to exploring how Saudi registered nurses experience the workplace and its associated challenges.

METHODS/ CONTENTS : Constructivist Grounded Theory, with its emphasis on participants as individuals, has been used to construct a shared understanding that is reflective of the experiences of both the participants and the researcher. The analysis was informed by detailed readings of Symbolic interactionism (Mead), and understandings were extended by Stryker's articulation of identity as a larger sense of self.

Twenty-six semi-structured interviews were conducted with junior and senior Saudi female registered nurses working in a major governmental hospital in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Participants were recruited using a snowball technique. The final sample demonstrated a considerable and informative variation in characteristics such as marital status, age, length of nursing experience, and number of children. The initial round of data collection and its preliminary analysis revealed some important issues that needed further exploration, and a theoretical sampling approach was used for the second stage of data collection. The interviews were conducted and initially transcribed in Arabic and then translated into English to facilitate further analysis.

FINDING/ RESULTS: Symbolic interactionism has been used to assist in developing an understanding of how the participants perceive themselves as Saudi female nurses in the workplace and how they create a place for themselves as "me" at work. The following three categories have emerged from this analysis and reflect a developing conceptual understanding of the constituent subcategories:

- Creating a place at work
- Accommodating conditions of work
- Verifying identity

Workplace was identified as social contexts where participants were interacting daily so as to maintain their nursing roles. In this category, participants interacted as socialised "selves" with generalised and significant others such as co-workers. As socialised selves they were trying to make it possible to work, by negotiating multiple ways to be within social contexts that determined and required different sets of obligations and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION: "Workplace", as described here, is the second social context that participants have to interact with to pursue their work as nurses. The participants are therefore influenced by the cultural structure of the Saudi community in bringing their identity as Saudi nurses to this workplace, and being a Saudi nurse is an important component of each participant's identity as it includes the norms and traditions that direct the behaviour of all Saudi nurses. In other words, "me" in the social context of "workplace" is actively constructed by the demands of including the participant's Saudi identity within their construction of a nurse identity within their workplace. In this government hospital, they are not only "nurse" (as they would be if working in a Ministry of Health hospital) but also "Saudi nurses" whenever they engage with their work or their workplace. Data has described how participants see themselves, through their understanding of patients' language, religion

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and culture, as contributing to improving the care of Saudi patients. Their understanding of themselves as role models for other Saudi nurses and their high level of commitment to nursing and to being Saudi nurses within this workplace is also clear along with the difficulties they experience in attempting to develop their clinical confidence and a strong

nursing identity when working with foreign “expert” clinical nurses, who are not always supportive of their efforts. The challenges experienced as they attempt to accommodate the conditions of their work and the frequent and constant difficulties of their relationship with their foreign colleagues.

Biography

Sharifah Alsayed is working as an assistant professor in Nursing College of King Saud University of Health Affairs in Jeddah from 03/01/2016. She has completed PhD. Of Nursing ; 07/2011- 12/2015, from the University of Sydney, Australia , 2016. Thesis title is "Intending to Stay? The Experience of Saudi Female Nurses in Acute Care Practice". Master of Clinical Nursing ; 02/2010 - 06/2011, from the University of Sydney , Australia , June 2011. Bachelor of Nursing with excellent grade; 2000-2003, Faculty of Medicine and Allied Science in King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. Critical Care Diploma (10- Week Course), 27th of August - 29th of October, 2005. The course is 200 hrs. of Clinical Practice –inclusive of Completion of Case Studies and written examination with outstanding grade.

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