

Experiences of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Nurses in Migration and Workforce Integration in King Khalid Hospital, Saudia Arabia

Rema M. Ampuan¹, Ashley A. Bangcola²

¹Postgraduate Student, College of Health Sciences, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, 9700 Lanao del Sur, Philippines

²Professor, College of Health Sciences, Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City, 9700 Lanao del Sur, Philippines

Corresponding Author: [Dr. Ashley A. Bangcola](#)

Abstract

Background: Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses face unique migration experiences and integration challenges in foreign healthcare systems. This study explores the experiences of OFW nurses working at King Khalid Hospital in Najran, Saudi Arabia, focusing on their migration, workforce integration, and adaptation strategies. **Objectives:** The study aims to investigate the migration experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and the impact of integration into the healthcare system on the professional and personal lives of OFW nurses. **Methods:** This qualitative study uses phenomenological methodology. Twelve OFW nurses, with employment durations ranging from six months to five years at King Khalid Hospital, were purposively selected. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. **Results:** Four themes emerged from the data: (1) Migration Experience: Financial incentives, professional development opportunities, and expedited processing were key motivators, despite challenges like cultural differences and legal issues. (2) Workplace Integration: Structured orientation and professional resources facilitated adaptation, with many nurses reporting improved workplace culture. (3) Coping Strategies: Social support, engagement in local activities, self-care practices, and technology use were vital for cultural adjustment. (4) Long-term Impact: Nurses experienced professional growth, enhanced cultural competence, and improved confidence, despite occasional language barriers. **Conclusion:** Tailored support programs are essential for OFW nurses' successful migration and integration. This study highlights the importance of structured support to facilitate their adaptation, improve cultural competence, and enhance their professional growth.

Keywords: Overseas Filipino Workers, cultural adaptation, migration challenges, nursing integration, support systems, Philippines

Introduction

Overseas migration for employment has become increasingly prevalent, particularly among healthcare professionals seeking better opportunities abroad. Filipino nurses, as one of the largest groups of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), migrate primarily for better career prospects and higher wages (Lorenzo et al., 2007). According to Alibudbud (2022), this trend is particularly noticeable among Filipino nurses. However, despite the economic benefits, OFW nurses face numerous challenges related to workforce integration and cultural adaptation (Dahl et al., 2021). The Philippines remains a major supplier of nurses globally, with many working in countries such as Saudi Arabia (Lorenzo et al., 2007). King Khalid Hospital (KKH), one of the largest hospitals in Saudi Arabia, employs a significant number of Filipino nurses.

Despite the growing number of OFW nurses working at KKH, there is a lack of research on their migration experiences and the challenges they face in workforce integration. This research addresses not only the motivations for migration but also the obstacles these nurses encounter in adapting to the work environment and culture of a foreign country. Previous studies have highlighted the general challenges faced by Filipino nurses abroad, such as cultural shock, language barriers, and difficulties adjusting to new work environments (Dahl et al., 2021; Jurado, 2018; Montayre et al., 2017). Zakaria and Yusuf (2022) found that Filipino nurses in Saudi Arabia faced challenges in communication, teamwork, and patient care.

While studies on the general experiences of OFW nurses exist (Hall et al., 2019), research focused on specific healthcare institutions, such as KKH, remains limited. The literature lacks comprehensive understanding of the integration processes, workplace dynamics, and retention issues faced by OFW nurses in specific healthcare settings. Understanding these challenges in a specific institutional context is crucial to developing strategies for improving their integration and support. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of OFW nurses regarding their migration and workforce integration at King Khalid Hospital. By focusing on the specific challenges these nurses face, the research can provide insights to inform policies and practices that improve their migration and integration experiences.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological qualitative design to explore the lived experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses regarding migration and workforce integration at King Khalid Hospital (KKH). Phenomenology was chosen for its focus on understanding individuals' subjective experiences related to a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2017). This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of the challenges, adaptations, and social, cultural, and professional dynamics faced by OFW nurses in a foreign workforce context.

Locale and Setting

This study was conducted at King Khalid Hospital (KKH) in Najran, Saudi Arabia which is a key public healthcare facility in the region. KKH plays a crucial role in Najran's healthcare system, offering a wide range of medical services such as emergency pediatrics, cardiology, and surgery. The hospital is equipped with advanced medical

technology, supporting high-quality care for a diverse patient population, including a large expatriate community (Moussa et al., 2022). KKH prioritizes the professional development of its healthcare workforce through training programs that promote continuous education and adherence to best practices. This focus on workforce empowerment reflects KKH's commitment to providing excellent patient-centered care and supporting the healthcare system's growth and transformation.

Population and Sampling Method

Twelve (12) OFW nurses were selected based on their employment tenure at KKH, ranging from six months to five years. This criterion ensured participants had sufficient experience to offer meaningful insights into migration and workforce integration challenges. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to achieve data saturation, ensuring a diverse representation of participants' experiences.

Instrument and Instrument Validity

This study utilized a semi-structured interview protocol as the primary data collection instrument, focusing on the migration and workforce integration experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses at King Khalid Hospital (KKH). The protocol was divided into five sections: Demographic Information, Migration Experience, Integration into KKH, Coping Strategies, and Long-term Impact, designed to capture key aspects of the nurses' journeys, including their motivations, challenges, coping mechanisms, and the impact of their migration on their personal and professional lives.

To ensure reliability and validity, the interview protocol was piloted, refined, and guided by standardized procedures. Content validity was established through expert review and literature alignment, while construct validity was supported by grounded theory analysis and theoretical frameworks. Criterion validity was confirmed through comparisons with prior OFW nurse research. Results showed strong validity, with a content validity index (CVI) of 0.92 and significant correlations ($r = 0.85$, $r = 0.78$). Measures to minimize researcher bias further enhanced the instrument's rigor.

Data Collection Methods

Formal permission to conduct the study was obtained from KKH, and ethics clearance was secured from the authors' institution to ensure adherence to ethical standards, including informed consent, participant confidentiality, and institutional policies. After initial participants were identified, they were encouraged to recommend others, broadening the diversity of perspectives. Recruitment was conducted via email, with invitations explaining the study's purpose, significance, and confidentiality measures. Interested participants responded voluntarily, agreeing to participate.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of data collection, conducted online using a secure video platform to accommodate participants' schedules. Open-ended questions facilitated an in-depth exploration of topics such as migration challenges, cultural adaptation, and professional relationships within KKH. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, ensuring that no new themes or insights emerged. This rigorous approach, completed over a one-month period.

Methods of Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study adhered to a Heidegger's phenomenological qualitative approach (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021) to explore the lived experiences of OFW nurses regarding migration and workforce integration at King Khalid Hospital (KKH). Analysis began with a thorough reading and re-reading of interview transcripts. Transcripts were then systematically coded using a coding scheme aligned with the study's research questions and objectives. This coding process captured detailed descriptions of the participants' migration and integration experiences.

A bracketing technique was employed to set aside the researcher's personal biases, ensuring the analysis remained grounded in the participants' accounts. Additionally, memoing was used to document observations, reflections, and questions, facilitating a deeper engagement with the data and aiding in theme development.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical standards based on WHO guidelines and the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) (Tong et al., 2007). Written informed consent was obtained from participants after they were fully briefed on the study's purpose, procedures, and implications. Participation was strictly voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any stage emphasized. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by assigning pseudonyms and omitting identifiable information in the findings. Cultural sensitivity and respect were upheld by recognizing participants' cultural contexts and avoiding any potentially insensitive language or behavior.

The research protocol underwent approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the authors' Institution to ensure compliance with ethical standards. These measures upheld participants' dignity, autonomy, and well-being throughout the study.

Result

Demographics of the Participants

The table below summarizes the demographic profiles of the participants, all of whom are college graduates. Participants are categorized by age, sex, place of origin in the Philippines, and their current department assignment at KKH. For anonymity, the participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms.

Table 1
Summary of the Demographic Profile of Participants

ID	Participants	Age	Sex	Place of Origin in the Philippines	Department
P1	Lavender	35	Female	Tarlac	Surgical Ward
P2	Lilac	33	Female	Cavite	Operating Room
P3	Wisteria	28	Female	Bocaue, Bulacan	Intensive Care Unit
P4	Plum	28	Male	Watu, Balindong	Emergency/Trauma
P5	Purple	27	Female	Illigan City	Emergency/Trauma
P6	Violet	32	Female	Cotabato City	Emergency/Trauma

P7	Amethyst	27	Female	Illigan City	Medical Ward
P8	Magenta	27	Male	Cebu City	Intensive Care Unit
P9	Periwinkle	33	Female	Marawi City	Oncology
P10	Jam	35	Female	Zamboanga City	Stroke Unit
P11	Mauve	38	Female	Zamboanga City	Outpatient
P12	Sangria	31	Female	Tacloban Leyte	Operating Room

The participants, all college-educated nurses, ranged in age from 27 to 38 years and were assigned to various departments at King Khalid Hospital (KKH), including the Surgical Ward, Operating Room, Intensive Care Unit, Emergency Department, and Oncology. Their nursing experience spanned 4 to 12 years, with 1 to 6 years at KKH and a mix of domestic and international experience.

Emergent Themes and Sub-themes

This section presents the key themes and sub-themes derived from the qualitative analysis of interviews with participants. The findings highlight common patterns and unique perspectives that deepen understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by overseas Filipino nurses in healthcare settings.

Table 2
Summary of the Generated Themes and Sub-themes

Main Themes	Subthemes
Migration Experience of Overseas Filipino Nurses to Saudi Arabia	- Ease of the Migration Process
	- Motivations for Migration
	- Cultural Adjustment
	- Living and Working Conditions
	- Legal and Administrative Hurdles
Integration into King Khalid Hospital Healthcare System	- Orientation Programs and Support
	- Professional Support and Resources
	- Workplace Culture and Inclusion
	- Adjustment Challenges and Successes
Coping Strategies for Cultural Adjustment in Saudi Arabia	- Social Connections and Support Systems
	- Active Engagement in Activities
	- Self-Care and Well-Being Practices
	- Use of Technology and Leisure Activities as Coping Mechanisms for Isolation and Homesickness
Long-Term Impact of Experiences at King Khalid Hospital	- Professional Skill Development
	- Cultural and Interpersonal Growth
	- Personal Development and Confidence
	- Career Perspectives and Future Goals
	- Recognition of Nursing's Value

Main Theme 1: Migration Experience of Overseas Filipino Nurses to Saudi Arabia

The migration experience of Overseas Filipino Nurses (OFWs) to Saudi Arabia is shaped by factors such as the ease of migration, motivations for moving, cultural adjustment, and legal challenges. The migration process is often swift, facilitated by recruitment agencies and job offers, which streamline the visa and documentation procedures. Participants reported minimal challenges during migration, with many highlighting the efficiency of the process. Lavender shared, "For me, it was swift and uncomplicated. The place I chose to work at already had a ready visa" while Amethyst added, "It was fast, one to two months."

Sub-theme 1. Ease of the Migration Process

The ease of the migration process for Overseas Filipino Nurses to Saudi Arabia plays a critical role in facilitating their transition to work abroad. Participants emphasized the role of recruitment agencies in making the migration process easier. Lilac noted, "Migration to Saudi Arabia is much faster because most agencies already have visas and permits ready." This support, coupled with pre-arranged job offers, reduces the bureaucratic burden and aids in smoother transitions.

Participants also highlighted the significance of job offers in easing the migration process. As Wisteria articulated:

"The procedure is rather simple as it must be completed in a large percentage by the employer. So, you must first secure a job offer and contract with a Saudi company which must start the hiring procedure with the Ministry of Labor by searching a good recruitment agency." – Wisteria

The above statement highlights the pivotal role employers play in simplifying bureaucratic responsibilities. When recruitment agencies and employers work collaboratively, they can effectively streamline the migration process for nurses, thereby reducing the anxiety and uncertainties often associated with international employment.

Sub-theme 2: Motivations for Migration

Financial incentives were a dominant factor in migration decisions, with participants citing significantly higher salaries in Saudi Arabia. Violet stated, "The salary offered was the only reason I wanted to migrate," while Lavender emphasized, "The salary in KSA is bigger than in the Philippines."

In addition to financial factors, professional development and family influence were also strong motivators. Amethyst shared, "To enhance my skills and knowledge because Saudi Arabia is more advanced in technology."

Periwinkle further expanded on the notion of professional development, stating, "Better work opportunities, greater security, and access to adequate healthcare and education." This indicates that, alongside financial incentives, the potential for career advancement and skill enhancement in a more technologically advanced environment plays a crucial role in motivating nurses to migrate.

Family influence also emerged as a notable theme, particularly among participants with ties to existing OFWs or nurses abroad. Wisteria shared:

“From filing and applying via recruitment agency, as a former child of a nurse abroad, and was born and raised, it motivated me to come back and work back here abroad.” - Wisteria

This familial connection underscores the emotional and social dimensions of migration motivations, emphasizing how personal backgrounds can influence career trajectories.

Sub-theme 3. Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustment varied among participants. Those with prior experience in Saudi Arabia, like Wisteria, reported minimal challenges. She shared, “I did not face significant cultural challenges because I was born and raised here.” However, newcomers, such as Magenta, found adapting to local customs, like modest dress and social interactions, more difficult. She noted, “I had to lower my gaze when Muslim women passed by and not touch them without their consent.” Language also posed a challenge, with Amethyst saying, “Language was really hard. I felt like I was behind just because I couldn’t understand.”

These findings illustrate the multifaceted nature of migration, with personal preparation and cultural understanding playing significant roles in easing the transition for Filipino nurses in Saudi Arabia.

Sub-theme 4. Living and Working Conditions

The living and working conditions provided for Overseas Filipino Nurses in Saudi Arabia significantly impact their overall experience and job satisfaction. Participants noted that their employers provided housing and transportation, which eased their relocation and integration into the new environment. Wisteria mentioned, “There were no issues regarding housing and transportation as the hospital provided them,” which was echoed by other participants, such as Plum and Mauve, who also appreciated the employer's support in this regard.

Sub-theme 5: Legal and Administrative Hurdles

The migration of OFW nurses to King Khalid Hospital involved significant legal and administrative challenges. Many participants cited difficulties with securing necessary legal documents, requiring extensive travel and time. Violet shared, “Not easy, I need to travel to Manila and stay there for 2 weeks just to finish processing the papers,”. Mauve noted, “It was challenging... due to the prerequisite of completing legal documents and medical checkups,” highlighting the emotional and financial toll. Despite these hurdles, access to support such as liaison officers or recruitment agencies alleviated some difficulties. Violet remarked, “It was easy processing the papers as long as you have the budget,” while Plum emphasized, “The challenge is finding the funds for medical processes and notarizing documents.” These financial burdens were seen as manageable due to the potential salary benefits, with participants viewing them as investments for long-term gains.

Main Theme 2: Integration into King Khalid Hospital Healthcare System

The successful integration of Overseas Filipino Nurses into the King Khalid Hospital (KKH) healthcare system is vital for ensuring effective job performance and smooth transitions. This theme explores how orientation, support programs, professional resources, and a collaborative environment contribute to nurses' adaptation to new roles. It also examines the workplace culture and challenges faced by the nurses.

Sub-theme 1: Orientation Programs and Support

Orientation programs are essential in helping nurses transition into their roles. Participants emphasized the importance of structured orientations and pre-deployment preparation. Lilac shared:

“Yes! They have this Education department where all new hired nurses and nursing assistants were oriented for weeks.” – Lilac

Amethyst also noted, “Yes, we had an orientation before deployment and when I arrived,” highlighting the significance of preparation before starting work.” These programs, such as the General Nursing and Arabic Culture orientations, help nurses understand hospital protocols and cultural nuances.

Additionally, the mentorship provided by preceptors was crucial for adapting to new work environments. Wisteria reflected, “Upon starting my work, a preceptor was assigned to guide me for 12 days before I began working independently.” Such mentorship fosters a sense of belonging, helping nurses adjust culturally and professionally.

Sub-theme 2: Professional Support and Resources

Support from senior staff, mentors, and co-workers plays a crucial role in easing the integration process. Lavender highlighted,

“The doctors gave me time to adjust and learn everything.” –
Lavender

Mentorship was also vital, with Lilac stating, “We have mentors also to guide us.” This personalized support helps newcomers navigate their roles effectively.

A collaborative environment, particularly among Filipino colleagues, further enhances integration. Wisteria noted, “The staff, especially other Filipino staff, welcomed me and helped me adjust to the new workplace.” This sense of community, supported by mentors and colleagues, is key to successful professional integration and retention (McCarthy et al., 2019).

Sub-theme 3: Workplace Culture and Inclusion

The workplace culture at KKH is generally seen as friendly and supportive. Lavender expressed:

“The workplace is very professional, the place is always clean and full of staff ready to cater to patients. The staff are also very friendly.”–
Lavender

However, some participants, like Lilac, noted that local staff sometimes received preferential treatment, which could impact OFW nurses' sense of inclusion. Lilac stated, “The workplace is good, but the work benefits are more favored to locals.”

Despite this, the overall positive, inclusive environment supports effective integration and job satisfaction, aligning with the Cultural Care Diversity and Universality Theory, which emphasizes culturally congruent care.

Sub-theme 4: Adjustment Challenges and Successes

Adjusting to new procedures and regulations is a common challenge. Lavender remarked, “I’m still getting used to their operating procedures.” However, mentorship and cultural sensitivity are key to overcoming these obstacles.

“Integrating into the healthcare system involves understanding regulations, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and adopting a patient-centered approach.” – Periwinkle

Many nurses also reported a strong sense of belonging, with Magenta noting, “Everyone is helping, especially if you’re kababayan.” This supportive environment, where staff feel welcomed and valued, aids in their professional development and enhances their sense of belonging.

Main Theme 3: Coping Strategies for Cultural Adjustment in Saudi Arabia

Overseas Filipino Nurses (OFWs) in Saudi Arabia adopt several strategies to manage cultural adjustment, resilience, and homesickness. These include building social connections, engaging in activities, practicing self-care, and utilizing technology and leisure activities to maintain emotional well-being.

Sub-theme 1: Social Connections and Support Systems

The importance of social support in adjusting to life in Saudi Arabia was emphasized by many participants. Wisteria shared: “I have to seek out communities, groups, or friends that share our cultural background”, highlighting the emotional support these relationships provide. Regular communication with family via technology helps ease feelings of homesickness, with Plum noting:

“There were times that I feel homesick but due to the technology today, I can communicate with my family via video calling and messaging them online.” – Plum

These connections foster emotional resilience and a sense of belonging.

Sub-theme 2: Active Engagement in Activities

Engaging in social and cultural activities helps mitigate isolation and aids in adapting to local culture. Lilac said: “Going out with friends, traveling, and calling family” as essential for feeling supported. Purple reflected: “I have a basic idea about their culture, so I can relate”, indicating how shared cultural understanding contributes to integration.

Sub-theme 3: Self-Care and Well-Being Practices

Maintaining physical and mental health is crucial for coping with the stress of cultural adjustment. Lilac shared: “I exercise, walk, and run, and talk to friends”. Violet also

emphasized: “I eat good food and have a good night’s sleep”. These self-care practices help maintain resilience and well-being, contributing to smoother adaptation.

Sub-theme 4: Technology and Leisure Activities as Coping Mechanisms

Technology and leisure activities play a critical role in easing homesickness and isolation. Wisteria highlighted: “Because of technology, I can communicate with my family via video call or message”, illustrating how digital communication fosters emotional connections. Violet added: “Social media helps me,” emphasizing the role of online platforms in maintaining relationships. Lavender also mentioned: “I watch movies, read, and talk to family since it’s easier now because of the internet”. Leisure activities like shopping and massages, as shared by Periwinkle and Jam, provide relaxation and personal motivation, helping nurses manage stress.

Main Theme 4: Long-Term Impact of Experiences at King Khalid Hospital

The experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses at King Khalid Hospital (KKH) have a profound long-term impact on their professional and personal development. These include skill acquisition, cultural growth, enhanced communication, and increased resilience, all of which shape their future career trajectories and perspectives on nursing.

Sub-theme 1: Professional Skill Development

At KKH, OFW nurses gain substantial professional competencies that enhance their nursing practice. A common theme among participants was the emphasis on specific skills and competencies acquired during their tenure at KKH. Lilac articulated this, stating:

“Yes! Especially in our field, we possess a wide range of competencies in operating all types of machines used during surgical procedures, including some new innovations.”– Lilac

Participants also highlighted certifications like Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS), which are essential to advanced nursing practice. Amethyst shared, “I barely inserted IV cannulas in the Philippines, but here, I learned various techniques.” The exposure to diverse medical cases and the structured annual competencies contribute to the nurses’ professional growth, increasing their employability and advancing their careers.

Sub-theme 2: Cultural and Interpersonal Growth

Working in a multicultural healthcare environment at KKH has enhanced the nurses’ cultural competency and communication skills. Periwinkle noted, “The more you engage with different healthcare practices, the more effective your communication becomes.” Nurses like Sangria also made efforts to learn Arabic to improve communication with Arab patients, highlighting their proactive approach. Jam shared, “Working in a multidisciplinary environment fosters better understanding of patient needs and empathy.”

This cultural exposure enriches their ability to deliver personalized care and adapt to diverse patient populations, which is crucial for improving patient outcomes and advancing health equity.

Sub-theme 3: Personal Development and Confidence

The experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses at King Khalid Hospital (KKH) reveal significant insights into their personal development and the enhancement of confidence as they adapt to a new professional environment. Participants reported increased self-awareness, resilience, and adaptability as defining aspects of their personal and professional growth.

One participant, Lilac, described this shift in self-perception:

“Yes! And both personally and professionally taking me to a higher level of quality of life I deserve.” – Lilac

Lavender also spoke about how this transformation increased her courage and self-esteem:

“It gave me more courage and confidence on myself, it also taught me how to work and communicate with other nationalities not just Saudi natives but also Indians, Egyptians etc.” – Lavender

Participants also highlighted resilience as a vital quality fostered by their experiences. Periwinkle explained:

“Exposure to diverse medical cases improves clinical competencies and decision-making abilities.” – Periwinkle

Sub-theme 4: Career Perspectives and Future Goals

The experiences of OFW nurses at KKH also significantly influenced their career perspectives and aspirations. Many participants reported a broadened understanding of career opportunities within nursing, which reshaped their immediate and long-term goals. Working in Saudi Arabia revealed career paths they had not previously considered. Lavender shared:

“Working here in Saudi as nurse made me realize that there could be other job or career that a nurse could do. It is also nice to get paid as much as you work” – Lavender

This newfound clarity on career opportunities demonstrates the transformative nature of international experiences and their role in shaping professional aspirations.

As they gained exposure to specialized roles, many nurses expressed aspirations for higher compensation and career advancement. Purple noted: "Being independent and career advancement." This reflects a broader trend where nurses are not only seeking employment but meaningful careers that align with their professional growth and aspirations.

Furthermore, some participants articulated structured approaches to their future goals. Amethyst emphasized, "For professional growth, by attending professional trainings/seminars as much as possible. Personal growth, by setting realistic goals." This desire highlights the importance of leadership development in nursing, which has been linked to improved patient care outcomes and job satisfaction.

Sub-theme 5: Recognition of Nursing's Value

The experiences at KKH also led to a profound recognition of the value of the nursing profession among the OFW nurses. Many participants expressed that the improved working conditions, stronger recognition, and better compensation at KKH led them

to appreciate nursing more deeply. Mauve, for example, said: "I learned to appreciate my profession more."

This reflects a deeper recognition of nursing's complexities and challenges, which was facilitated by working in a supportive and well-compensated environment. Magenta echoed this sentiment, emphasizing: "Nursing is a profession that is exhausting, depending on your workplace and salary."

This underscores the crucial role that work environments and compensation play in shaping nurses' perceptions of their professional value.

Sangria added a broader context to this appreciation, reflecting on the cultural and professional insights gained through working in Saudi Arabia: "Living and working in Saudi Arabia offers a unique perspective on nursing, particularly regarding cultural, ethical, and professional aspects of healthcare. These factors can broaden a nurse's worldview, strengthening skills in cultural competency and flexibility."

Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses at King Khalid Hospital, particularly in terms of personal development, career aspirations, recognition of nursing's value, and the legal and administrative challenges they faced. These findings both align with and differ from existing literature on the migration experiences of healthcare workers, offering a deeper understanding of the complexities and opportunities that characterize the migration journey of OFW nurses.

The study revealed that migration to Saudi Arabia facilitated significant personal and professional growth among OFW nurses. Many participants reported an increase in self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience, which is consistent with existing research. Studies by Racine et al. (2021) and Jansen et al. (2021) emphasize that international work placements can enhance nurses' personal development by exposing them to new challenges and diverse cultural settings. These experiences allow migrant nurses to reflect on their skills and abilities, contributing to a greater sense of professional competence and identity. However, while many studies highlight the growth of migrant workers in technical areas, this study extends the conversation by also underscoring the emotional and psychological growth nurses undergo in response to the challenges of migration.

A central theme in the study was the broadening of career aspirations among OFW nurses. Exposure to advanced healthcare practices, coupled with the desire for better career opportunities, motivated many nurses to aspire for higher positions or further specialization. This finding is consistent with research by Oriol et al. (2015) and Sherrod (2014), who found that migration often leads to greater career aspirations and encourages nurses to pursue leadership roles.

Nurses working abroad, especially in high-demand environments like KKH, are exposed to advanced medical technologies, diverse patient populations, and new healthcare practices, all of which foster a desire for professional growth. This study reinforces the idea that migration serves as a catalyst for career advancement, not only by offering higher salaries but also by expanding professional networks and development opportunities (Becker, 2022; Huan et al., 2022; Merga&Debela, 2019). Furthermore, the financial rewards associated with migration, which were recognized by participants, align with findings by Choudhury et al. (2022) that migrant workers

often view initial financial investments, such as documentation costs, as necessary sacrifices for long-term professional and financial gains.

One of the most significant challenges faced by the OFW nurses in this study was navigating the legal and administrative processes required for migration. Participants reported difficulties in securing the necessary documents and undergoing medical check-ups, often incurring financial and emotional costs. This finding is consistent with Galvan et al. (2021), who noted that the bureaucratic hurdles faced by migrant workers, such as extensive travel and lengthy processing times for documents, are a common challenge. This aligns with the findings of Xiong (2023), who noted that while the initial financial investment in migration can be burdensome, it is often perceived as a necessary sacrifice for the long-term benefits associated with better career prospects and financial stability.

While the emotional and financial costs of migration have been well-documented, this study contributes to the understanding of how these challenges are navigated by nurses through resourcefulness, support systems, and long-term career goals. The findings suggest that proactive strategies, such as the use of recruitment agencies and liaison officers, significantly ease the burden of migration-related documentation, which can often be overwhelming (Smith et al., 2022). This insight provides a deeper understanding of how institutional support mechanisms can mitigate some of the most significant challenges faced by migrant nurses.

The study underscores the importance of recognizing the broader professional and personal growth that nurses experience when migrating abroad. By focusing on both the challenges and the opportunities presented by migration, this study expands the conversation beyond the typical focus on financial or job-related outcomes, highlighting the psychological and emotional growth that can result from working in a foreign healthcare system (Efendi et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This study highlights the multifaceted experiences of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses at King Khalid Hospital, shedding light on the significant personal, professional, and logistical challenges they face. The findings underscore the importance of migration in fostering personal growth, enhancing career aspirations, and gaining recognition for nursing's value, while also acknowledging the substantial legal, administrative, and financial hurdles encountered. By emphasizing the crucial role of support systems, such as recruitment agencies and liaison officers, this research contributes valuable insights into the migration process and its impact on healthcare workers. Ultimately, this study not only enriches the existing literature on migrant nurses but also offers a foundation for further exploration into how these challenges and opportunities can be better navigated to enhance the global nursing workforce.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses who generously shared their valuable experiences for this study. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to King Khalid Hospital for their support and collaboration in facilitating this research.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

References

1. Ahmed, A., El-Sayed, K., & El Demerdash, S. (2023). Registered nurses' perception regarding shared governance and its relation to their job satisfaction. *Tanta Scientific Nursing Journal*, 29(2), 255–271.
2. Alibudbud, R. (2023). Addressing the burnout and shortage of nurses in the Philippines. *SAGE Open Nursing*, 9.
3. Alsaigh, R., & Coyne, I. (2021). Doing a hermeneutic phenomenology research underpinned by Gadamer's philosophy: A framework to facilitate data analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 20.
4. Becker, R. (2023). Does it pay off? Understanding subjective employment mobility of European physicians in Germany. *International Migration Review*, 57(3), 1099–1131.
5. Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2017). *Qualitative research: Designing a qualitative study*. Sage Publications.
6. Dahl, K., Bjørnnes, A. K., Lohne, V., & Nortvedt, L. (2021). Motivation, education, and expectations: Experiences of Philippine immigrant nurses. *Sage Open*, 11(2).
7. Efendi, F., McKenna, L., Reisenhofer, S., Kurniati, A., & Has, E. M. M. (2021). Experiences of healthcare worker returnees in their home countries: A scoping review. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 14, 2217–2227.
8. Galvan, T., Lill, S., & Garcini, L. M. (2021). Another brick in the wall: Healthcare access difficulties and their implications for undocumented Latino/a immigrants. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 23, 885–894.
9. Hall, B. J., Garabiles, M. R., & Latkin, C. A. (2019). Work life, relationship, and policy determinants of health and well-being among Filipino domestic workers in China: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health*, 19, 229.
10. Hejazi, M. M., Al-Rubaki, S. S., Bawajeeh, O. M., Nakshabandi, Z., Alsaywid, B., Almutairi, E. M., Lytras, M. D., Almehdar, M. H., Abuzenada, M., & Badawood, H. (2022). Attitudes and perceptions of health leaders for the quality enhancement of workforce in Saudi Arabia. *Healthcare*, 10(5), 891.
11. Huan, D. M., Binh, P. T. T., Duc, D. A., Hoi, L. Q., & Thu, N. T. H. (2022). The role of internal migration in poverty reduction of Vietnam. *Journal of Social Economics Research*, 9(1), 52–60.
12. Jansen, M. B., Lund, D. W., Baume, K., Lillyman, S., Rooney, K., & Nielsen, D. S. (2021). International clinical placement – Experiences of nursing students' cultural, personal and professional development; a qualitative study. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 51, 102987.
13. Jurado, L. F. (2018). Case study: Recruitment of Philippine-educated nurses to the United States. In M. Douglas, D. Pacquiao, & L. Purnell (Eds.), *Global applications of culturally competent health care: Guidelines for practice* (pp. 569–588). Springer.
14. Lorenzo, F. M., Galvez-Tan, J., Icamina, K., & Javier, L. (2007). Nurse migration from a source country perspective: Philippine country case study. *Health Services Research*, 42(3 Pt 2), 1406–1418.

15. Racine, S., Fowler-Kerry, S., & Palmer-Clarke, Y. (2021). A qualitative examination of othering processes within international nursing placements. *Nurse Education Today*, 103, 104946.
16. Merga, H., & Fufa, T. (2019). Impacts of working environment and benefits packages on health professionals' job satisfaction in selected public health facilities in eastern Ethiopia: Using principal component analysis. *BMC Health Services Research*, 19, 494.
17. Montayre, J., Montayre, J., & Holroyd, E. (2018). The global Filipino nurse: An integrative review of Filipino nurses' work experiences. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 26, 338–347.
18. Moussa, F. L., Moussa, M., Sofyani, H. A., Alblowi, B. H., Oqdi, Y. A., Khallaf, S., Alharbi, H. S., & Albarqi, A. (2022). Attitudes of critical care nurses towards teamwork and patient safety in Saudi Arabia: A descriptive cross-sectional assessment. *Healthcare*, 10(10), 1866.
19. Oriol, M. D., Brannagan, K., Ferguson, L. A., & Pearce, P. F. (2015). Understanding career trajectory: A degree alone is not enough. *International Journal of Nursing Clinical Practice*, 2, 153.
20. Palmer, W., & Piper, N. (2023). Regulatory (mal)integration: Its implications for migrant workers' ability to access employment rights in Indonesia. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 203–216.
21. Prithwiraj, C., Khanna, T., & Sevchenko, V. (2022). Firm-induced migration paths and strategic human-capital outcomes. *Management Science*, 69(1), 419–445.
22. Sadler, G. R., Lee, H.-C., Lim, R. S.-H., & Fullerton, J. (2010). Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, 12, 369–374.
23. Sherrod, D. R. (2014). A call for continued education. *Nursing Management (Springhouse)*, 45(11), 9–10.
24. Smith, J. B., Herinek, D., Woodward-Kron, R., & Ewers, M. (2022). Nurse migration in Australia, Germany, and the UK: A rapid evidence assessment of empirical research involving migrant nurses. *Policy, Politics, & Nursing Practice*, 23(3), 175–194.
25. Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal of Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357.