

Clinical Overseas Internship Experience among Nursing Students

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Abstract

This paper provides an in-depth phenomenological description and identification of Korean nursing students' short international internship experiences. Eight students were selected through theoretical sampling, and the data were collected from personal, in-depth interviews. Twelve theme clusters and five categories were identified from five categories: 1) Reliable hospital system, 2) Environments where nurses can demonstrate competence as professionals, 3) Hospital where nurses love to work, 4) Motivation for learning, and 5) The frog that came out of the well. These results show that short-term clinical overseas internship programs for nursing students have provided effective programs that can provide motivation and a broad perspective on competence as a nursing profession. Therefore, many students must experience various internship programs for nursing students.

Keywords: *Nursing, Student, Oversea, Internship, Qualitative, Research, Experience*

1. Introduction

1.1. Backgrounds

Internship abroad is an empirical [1] and a situational [2] study where students can apply what they have learned at school to the field and experience it. Also, the international internship program, designed to influence their career and strengthen their competitiveness in the job market, provides knowledge and techniques through field training related to their major and opportunities to improve their competitiveness in a new culture and language skills [3]. Therefore, many other departments of colleges in Korea are running such internships abroad.

In the case of an international internship, each college provides a different period of programs. The preliminary research related to the internship programs abroad for nursing students examined students who went through a four-month internship, which amounts to one semester. As its results showed different cases, including some saying positively [4] and others negatively [5], depending on research, follow-up studies are needed so that researchers can find out where they should find such differences. Also, it is unprecedented to research one-month international internship programs. Therefore, it is necessary to start empirical studies on a short-term clinical overseas internship for nursing students.

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1.2. Purpose of study

This paper aims to provide research materials for developing international clinical training programs by identifying the experience of short-term international internships among nursing students. To that end, the main agenda of this study should be “What do nursing students experience from a short-term clinical overseas internship?”

2. Methodology

2.1. Design

This study is qualitative research based on a phenomenological methodology to identify the experience of nursing students in short-term clinical overseas internships.

2.2. Participant

The participants of this study were selected based on intentional and convenience samplings. There are 19 students in total, and among them, seventeen were female students, consisting of students in their junior and senior years, who understood the purpose of this study and agreed to participate in it among those selected for internship programs at the hospital in the U.S., and experienced a four-week internship while majoring in nursing of S University.

2.3. Data collection

Before collecting data, researchers went through an IRB assessment of the organization to where they belong and received its approval. Two researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with each participant from October 2017 to January 2018 to collect data. Participants were recruited by posting a notice on a bulletin board of the nursing department of S University. They informed participants that the substance of the interviews would be used only for the study.

The interviews were conducted at a quiet time and place so that the participants could continue their conversation. All the interviews were recorded, and researchers repeatedly listened to the recorded files to transcribe the exact words the participants used. Also, they wrote down the non-verbal expressions, like the participants' facial expressions, their feelings, and what the researchers felt about the participants.

By asking, “Please tell me about the short-term international internship you had for four weeks,” during the interview, the researchers tried to communicate with the participants with consistent interest and encouragement in their experience.

2.4. Data analysis

This study analyzed nursing students' internship experience at a U.S. hospital using the phenomenological method, as Colaizzi [6] suggested. It is to extract significant sentences or phrases from what the participants stated, collect general and abstract statements based on them, find out meanings, categorize them by theme clusters, and describe the substantial structure of the experience. Then, the researchers again checked its validity with the participants. Since the themes reflect the meaning, the overall process helps embrace themes without prejudice.

2.5. Training process

The researchers completed the qualitative method at the graduate school as educational preparation for their study. They continued studying literature related to the theories and actuality and participated in workshops. There are papers they wrote by applying a qualitative method.

3. Results

As a result, from analyzing the meaning of the short-term international internship that nursing students completed, there were five categories, 12 clusters of themes, 24 themes, and 152 significant statements [Table 1].

Table 1. Categories, theme clusters, and themes of short-term international internship of nursing students

Categories	Theme clusters	Themes
Reliable hospital system	Nursing with rigorous administration	Using the barcode for medication administration
		Providing detailed information when administering medication
	Rigorous infection management	Using disposable products
		Using single-patient rooms
Environments where nurses can demonstrate competence as professionals	An environment without any suppression	Casual outfit
		Liberal and unsupervised working environments
	Being able to provide comprehensive nursing care	Having a small number of patients to be responsible for
		Having time on their side
	Nurses working with high self-esteem.	Being trusted by patients
Having a level playing field with other medical teams		
Hospital where nurses love to work	A hospital where everyone is respected	Respected patients
		Respected nurses
		Respected nursing students
	The bright and liberal atmosphere	Having a smiling face all the time
		Greeting people you have just met.
		No hazing practice, called "taewoom."
Motivation for learning	Being motivated to study nursing	The more you know, the more you can see
		Importance of medical terms
	Being motivated to study English	Being frustrated by uneasy communication
		Being satisfied when talking to foreigners
	Experience during the internship serves as a steppingstone.	Being proud
Wishing to recommend to juniors		
The frog that came out of the well	Realizing that there's more about being a nurse than for nurses in Korea	Witnessing ideal nurses in the U.S.
		Being able to compare clinical practice in Korea to that in the U.S. based on an internship abroad
	Having the confidence in my dream to be a nurse	Being proud of being a nurse
		Dream of being a nurse in the U.S.

This chapter aims to identify the relevance among the themes of short-term clinical overseas internship nursing students experienced and enhance their understanding of the context based on their interviews.

3.1. First category: Reliable hospital system

3.1.1. Theme cluster: Nursing with rigorous administration

You can scan the barcode of medication carts and check their information in advance. If you scan the medication's barcode without making any error, the system will give you the exact medicines you want so that you can pick them up (Participant 1).

Nurses in the U.S. have more time on their side than nurses in Korea. So they provide a better explanation for patients. In many cases of oral medication, we said, "Take it," and left. But, nurses in the U.S. explained all the medications one by one (Participant 3).

3.1.2. Theme cluster: Rigorous infection management

Although there were many consumables, as nurses used disposable products, even for kits, I thought it was good to manage infection (Participant 5).

Rooms are single-patient rooms. So, I thought because of that, there was no infection. Hospital bills were expensive, though (Participant 4).

3.2. Second category: Environments where nurses can demonstrate competence as professionals

3.2.1. Theme cluster: Environment without any suppression

We care much about how we appear, while they seem to (Interruption) focus only on nursing without caring about their external style (Participant 8).

I felt more comfortable working there. Compared to working in a suffocated environment, it is a better atmosphere where I can freely communicate with others (Participant 2).

3.2.2. Theme cluster: Being able to provide comprehensive nursing care

You can focus on one or two patients you are in charge of all day, know what they want, and be very close to them (Participant 8).

3.2.3. Theme cluster: Nurses working with high self-esteem

Not just patients but also other highly trusted nurses (Participant 8).

Doctors and nurses treated each other equally. I heard Korea has a duty concept for many cases, such as interns or residents on duty. But the U.S. does not. Instead, nurses are the ones who stay all the time (Participant 8).

3.3. Third category: Hospital where nurses love to work

3.3.1. Theme cluster: Hospital where everyone is respected

In Korea, the hospital system comes first, followed by patients. However, in the U.S., patients come first, and then, the system was facilitated for the patients (Participant 5).

It was good to see that they mostly freely communicate with one another and give a little more respect to nursing students without ignoring them (Participant 2).

3.3.2. Theme cluster: Bright and liberal atmosphere

Since I attended every day, I found something different from Korea: first, they always greeted people and smiled at them once their eyes met. (Participant 7).

When talking to a preceptor, I saw a newly joined nurse leaning on one foot with her arms folded. It was like a cultural shock to us (Participant 2).

3.4. Fourth category: Motivation for learning

3.4.1. Theme cluster: Being motivated to study nursing

You will learn much if you study more before the internship (Participant 1).

When it comes to the kidney, for example, it was more helpful as I understood it all together with kidney dialysis in the U.S. and Korea... (Participant 2).

You can understand the work in the hospital at some levels if you study medical terms before (Participant 5).

3.4.2. Theme cluster: Being motivated to study English

It was sad that I could not communicate well (Participant 3).

I initially felt interested in speaking English, and in the end, I could understand a lot when listening (Participant 2).

3.4.3. Theme cluster: Experience during the internship serves as a steppingstone

It seems like I am always proud of myself (Participant 2).

I always talk to my juniors, who hesitate over internships they must attend. Therefore, many love to do internships. I did need an apparent reason to go. But it helped me realize, learn, and reorganize my thoughts (Participant 5).

3.5. Fifth category: The frog that came out of the well

3.5.1. Theme cluster: Realizing that there's more about being a nurse except for nurses in Korea

I witnessed the accurate picture of being a nurse, which I want. She always smiled and worked truly for the patients. It could be more enjoyable to sterilize others frequently. But, that nurse sincerely cared for her patient while saying, "No, sterilization is important even if the patient is unconscious. It stinks a lot, isn't it? But, it's OK." (Interruption)... That is precisely what I want (Participant 4).

I could compare the two cases in the U.S. to Korea as I once went abroad after clinical training in Korea (Participant 1).

3.5.2. Theme cluster: Having confidence in my dream to be a nurse

After graduating from nursing college, I had thought I would be a nurse in Korea. But, after the internship, I realized that I could work like this overseas (Participant 3).

Anyway, I did an internship. So, it gave me a favorable position in the nursing profession. (Interruption) I thought that this is what they do for the patient. With that, I thought it would

be good to be a nurse just like the ones I saw in the U.S., who listens carefully to patients and communicates with them well (Participant 5).

4. Discussion

This study is designed to have an in-depth understanding of short-term clinical overseas internships of nursing students in the U.S. to analyze their substance and meaning. As a result, the researchers found 152 themes, 24 theme clusters, and five categories.

The first category is the “reliable hospital system,” which is fully computerized and helps nurses use the barcode to administer medication and care for only a few patients during their working hours. Therefore, the participants strictly followed the principles when nursing the patients with the system [4]. Also, on the one hand, they were surprised when seeing medical consumables, which were primarily disposable products, single patient rooms, and rigorous infection management systems. On the other hand, they also hope to see such a system in Korea.

The second category is the “environments where nurses can demonstrate competence as professionals.” Under such a free atmosphere, nurses wore casual outfits, and each nurse cared for fewer than four hospital patients. Therefore, they could perform easy but holistic nursing to care for patients' physical, mental, and other aspects. The same has been shown in other research [5][6]. The participants witnessed that nurses working in such environments received unwavering trust from patients and doctors. However, in Korea, the working environment in the hospital could be better. Hospitals in the first grade of nursing, calculated by the number of nurses per patient, account for less than 10 percent in Korea [7]. However, even at such first-grade hospitals, nurses cannot address physiological functions and skip their meals when they have unexpected emergent patients, not to mention their daily routine work to be performed within their working hours [8]. In that case, holistic nursing is impossible in reality.

Moreover, nurses face more exhaustion amid conflict with patients or doctors [9]. That is another important factor behind the high turnover rates of nurses [10]. Therefore, the researchers believe that creating an environment where nurses can show their ability as professionals would be a key to solving the issue of lack of clinical nurses, as the participants felt during their internship in the U.S. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the medical fees and facilitate a liberal hospital environment by phase so that nurses can show their capability as a professional.

The third category is “Hospital environment to work.” Participants who were familiar with the hazing practice called “taewoom” in Korea felt a huge cultural gap and were shocked when experiencing the hospital environment where nurses treated newly joined nurses or nursing students as human beings and respected them. Most of the newly joined nurses selected the “taewoom” practice of their seniors and “inhumane treatment” as the essential reason behind their turnover [10]. Therefore, even before starting clinical training as a professional nurse, students become depressed and have low confidence and self-esteem as a nurse during the clinical training [9]. Even the “taewoom” practice is considered to be inappropriate and addressed in the field of clinical practice [10]. Therefore, it is imperative to improve its organizational culture so nursing students can have high self-esteem and practice clinical training.

The fourth category is the “motivation for learning.” Participants built their attitude to more actively engage in the training while being respected and experiencing clinical training in an excellent environment [4]. While doing so, they felt sad that they could not learn more

due to a lack of knowledge and English skills [5]. To foster talented nurses, simple cramming and Spartan education have limitations [11]. Instead, such overseas internship programs motivate nursing students to learn and provide a significant opportunity to improve themselves based on their experience [12][13].

The fifth category is “the frog that came out of the well.” The participants have experienced international internships after going through clinical training in Korea. Most of them were able to expand their vision while experiencing a different hospital atmosphere from the field in Korea, its system, and nursing style through the internship [8][9]. Such changes are considered one of the most significant outcomes of the short-term international internship. As other papers conducted on other professions showed, international internships provided the participants with an opportunity to have a bigger vision and dream [14][15], and it is considered that such experience provides significant relevance.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted on college students majoring in nursing who have experienced a four-month internship abroad to examine the meaning and substance of their international internship and have an in-depth understanding. As a result of analyzing its meaning, five categories were found. The concept identified by this study is to improve the internship process and satisfaction level and, going further, lay the foundation for quality improvement in nursing education.

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