

**Contributing Factors to Render Highly Competent Care and Communication Competencies Among Overseas Filipino Nurses**

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**Abstract.** Nurse competence became a relevant topic for discussion among nurse practitioners and nurse researchers. However, the factors connected with nurse competence need deeper exploring. The current solution for the ongoing nursing shortage focuses on increasing the number of registered nurses rather than placing emphasis on the competency of those nurses in providing quality nursing care and ensuring safe nursing practice (Bartels & Bednash, 2005). Seventy-one (71) Filipino staff nurses who are presently working as overseas Filipino Nurses served as participants. The descriptive survey was used to gather information to describe and interpret the care and communication competencies of Filipino nurses working in Libya. Findings aptly indicate therefore that the knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the care of patients were properly handled by highly competent nurses. The overseas Filipino nurses are highly skilled in caring professionals and communicate well to their colleagues and clienteles. Their levels of care and communication competencies are not linked to their profile variables. There is a strong relationship on communication and skills and attitudes of nurses towards nursing care. A lot of factors may contribute to the care and communication competencies of Filipino nurses.

**Key Words:** Knowledge, Skills, Attitude, Caring, Competency, Overseas Filipino Nurses

**Introduction**

Most health care providers begin their health profession education expecting to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care. However, as they advance through their education and begin their careers, they discover that health care systems are exceedingly complex, with a myriad of system issues that often make the provision of high-quality care difficult.

Klein (2006) described the nursing competency as a set of proficiencies required of professional nurses to meet their assigned job roles and responsibilities in completion of tasks efficiently. Klein indicated that the model includes the necessary clinical competencies as practice standards to assess nursing performance in a specific situation or role. Klein said that this should be an ongoing process throughout the education and training programs. In this way Klein said the healthcare industry would ensure that they were producing to become highly competent nurses who delivered safe efficient care to the patient.

The current solution for the ongoing nursing shortage focuses on increasing the number of registered nurses rather than placing emphasis on the competency of those nurses in providing quality nursing care and ensuring safe nursing practice (Bartels & Bednash, 2005). Without a well-structured nursing competency program, nursing leaders and nurse managers could face difficulties in protecting the public from malpractice, errors, and sustaining the credibility of nursing as a profession (Axley, 2008).

Arcand and Neumann (2005) stated that the development of a competency assessment program is essential to meeting regulatory bodies' standards and providing quality nursing care. Arcand and Neumann said that the American Nurses Association (ANA) and JCAHO standards state that healthcare organizations must ensure their healthcare providers are both qualified and competent to meet the licensure and accreditation requirements. Arcand and Neumann added that the regulatory bodies request healthcare organizations to develop an ongoing competency assessment process that integrates within the organization's structure, culture, and internal operational processes. Arcand and Neumann commented that the ongoing competency assessment is vital to measure nursing knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors and to identify areas for performance improvement in which appropriate training be provided. Arcand and Neumann elaborated that the competency program is a dynamic component to improve nursing performance by being competent to perform safe and quality nursing care.

Axley (2008) said that nursing competency has a significant impact on the quality of nursing care and patient safety and becomes a standard requirement for accreditations, licensures, and hiring criteria. The assessment of nursing competence is important to improve the quality of nursing care and promote patient safety. Axley indicated that the successful outcomes of nursing care are closely linked to the competence of nurses in performing their assigned jobs. Nursing competency interprets nursing assessment results for developing the continuous performance improvement plans based on established standards to provide safe patient care, protect the public from malpractice, and sustain the nursing credibility. Axley commented that nursing competency promotes collaborative relationships with other multidisciplinary healthcare teams to integrate new patient care modalities to improve the quality of healthcare.

Nurse competence became a relevant topic for discussion among nurse practitioners and nurse researchers. However, the factors connected with nurse competence need deeper exploring.

This is significant for the researchers to develop the interest to examine the care and communication competencies of the Filipino nurses working in Libya. It is believed that through this study, the administration in general, would become more aware and conscious of the present status of its personnel and therefore could devise measures to improve its human resource programs, more particularly in the aspect of hiring people and in retaining employees.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The researchers employed descriptive research design in gathering the necessary information in the study. The descriptive survey was used to gather information to describe and interpret the care and communication competencies of Filipino nurses working in Libya.

### **Respondents of the Study**

The subjects of the study were the seventy one (71) Filipino staff nurses who are presently working in Tobruk Medical Center, Tobruk City, Libya. The respondents were completely enumerated for the best purpose of the study. The researcher requested the Human Resource Personnel of the institution to provide him the list of Filipino nursing personnel per area.

### Research Instrument

The indicators of care competencies were taken from the study of Camero (2011) while the instrument identifying the communication competencies were adopted from instruments being used in North Seattle College.

### Statistical Treatment of Data

The care and communication competencies of the respondents were determined using the weighted average point (WAP).

### Ethical Consideration

Ethical guidelines were followed for the whole research period. The researcher submitted the study for review and approval of the Ethics Review Board of the university. It followed the National Ethical Guidelines for Health and Health-Related Research 2017 prepared by the Philippine Health Research Ethics Board.

### Results

**Table 1a. Care competencies of Filipino nurses in terms of knowledge (n=71)**

Indicators	Assessed by Self	
	WM	DE
1. The care of patient requires quality medical care, but also entails services that are family and community based to address.	4.45	HC
2. The care of patient is best managed by an interdisciplinary team whose members communicate regularly with each other in order to best address the complex problems frequently faced during end of life.	4.48	HC
3. Giving care to patient is a worthwhile experience.	4.56	HC
4. The care of patient requires a team approach that includes patient and family as integral and essential members of the care team.	4.60	HC
5. Patient and family is tailored with technical information necessary for making decisions.	4.38	HC
6. The care rendered to patients should be extended to his/her family and significant others.	4.58	HC
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.51</b>	<b>HC</b>

#### Legend:

Mean Scale Range	Descriptive Equivalent	Transmuted Equivalent
4.21-5.00	Highly Knowledgeable (HK)	Highly Competent (HC)
3.41-4.20	Knowledgeable (K)	Competent (C)
2.61-3.40	Moderately Knowledgeable (MK)	Moderately Competent (MC)
1.81-2.60	Slightly Knowledgeable (SK)	Fairly Competent (FC)
1.00-1.80	Not Knowledgeable (NK)	Not Competent (NC)

The Filipino Nurses rated themselves as highly knowledgeable in the care of patients in Tobruk Medical Center which involves the combined team approach with the patient's family and the healthcare team.

Kovacs et al. (2006) supported this approach to improve the quality and safety of a patient's care by helping to foster communication between families and health care professionals. Furthermore, by taking family/patient input and concerns into account, the family feels comfortable working with professionals on a plan of care, and professionals are "on board" in terms of what families expect with medical interventions and health outcomes.

These approaches to health care intervention also generally lead to wiser allocation of health care resources, as well as greater patient and family satisfaction.

This finding implies that Filipino nurses working in Tobruk Medical Center are well knowledgeable in taking care of their patients incorporating the ideals of interdisciplinary team approach and other techniques in rendering patient care.

**Table 1b. Care competencies of Filipino nurses in terms of skill (n=71)**

Indicators	Assessed by Self	
	WM	DE
1. Assesses and manage psychological social and spiritual problems.	4.38	HC
2. Identifies existing or new physical symptoms and needs and discuss among the care team members.	4.53	HC
3. Assists the client in performing the activities of daily living (e.g. oral care)	4.49	HC
4. Ensures the alleviation of pain and management of other physical symptoms.	4.45	HC
5. Advocate access to therapies which are reasonably expected to improve the patient's quality of life.	4.48	HC
6. Initiate measures to ensure adequate dietary intake without adding stress to the patient at mealtimes.	4.42	HC
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>HC</b>

This implies that Filipino nurses in Tobruk Medical Center are highly skilled in identifying existing or new physical symptoms and assisting them in performing the activities of daily living and they are also good advocate on measures that improves patient quality of life.

However, they rated the item “Assesses and manage psychological social and spiritual problems” as the least indicator in the skills competency of nurses with 4.38 weighted mean. This shows that Filipino nurses are not so particular with the psychological and spiritual problems of their patients since their main focus is on the curative and physiological aspects of their health.

The data proves that Filipino nurses in Tobruk Medical Center are less competent in initiating measures to ensure adequate dietary intake and assessing and managing the psychological, social and spiritual problems of patients since these measures are less likely to perform in the institution. Gender sensitivity, cultural practices and traditions are viewed as attributing factors to the findings given that most of the nurses are Catholics. The data signifies that Filipino nurses possess the specialized skills in the care of their patients.

The Republic Act 9173, Section 28 stipulates that a nurse or in collaboration with another, initiates and performs nursing services to individuals, families and communities in any health care setting. It includes, but not limited to, nursing care during conception, labor, delivery, infancy, childhood, toddler, preschool, school age, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. As independent practitioners, nurses are primarily responsible for the promotion of health and prevention of illness. As a member of the health team, she shall collaborate with other health care providers for the curative, preventive, and rehabilitative aspects of care, restoration of health, alleviation of suffering, and when recovery is not possible, towards a peaceful death. Further, this can only be achieved by performing independent and dependent nursing interventions based on the identified needs and conditions of the patient.

**Table 1c. Care competencies of Filipino nurses in terms of attitude n=82**

Indicators	Assessed by Self	
	WM	DE
1. Respect the patient's right, as expressed by the patient or an authorized surrogate.	4.52	HC
2. Provide an emotional support to the patient and his/her family.	4.35	HC
3. Establishes rapport with the patient and his/her family.	4.39	HC
4. Maintains hope by focusing on palliative care when cure is not possible.	4.46	HC
5. Addresses desires and needs for support from the family and friends.	4.37	HC
6. Provides an anticipatory guidance about the illness, treatments and possible outcome	4.35	HC
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>4.41</b>	<b>HC</b>

“Respect the patient's right, as expressed by the patient or an authorized surrogate” got the highest weighted mean of 4.52 and transmuted as highly competent. This could be pointed to the fact that nurses are bound to uphold patient's right as patient advocate by respecting the decision concerning the care or to have a family member as a surrogate in decision making and the right of the client to have accurate and complete information about illness and treatment.

“Maintains hope by focusing on palliative care when cure is not possible” and “Establishes rapport with the patient and his/her family” with 4.46 and 4.39 weighted means and described as highly competent. This proves that showing hope and building a sustaining relationship of mutual trust, harmony and understanding are commonly seen to nurses since they are highly competent in doing so. Establishing rapport is essentially meeting individuals to achieve a person's viewpoint, appreciate feelings, and be on the same wavelength. Having rapport on the other hand, does not mean that you have to agree, but to understand where a person or people are coming from.

“Provide an emotional support to the patient and his/her family” and “Provides an anticipatory guidance about the illness, treatments and possible outcome” with a tied weighted mean of 4.35 and transmuted as highly competent. This finding is ascribed to patient's experience throughout the disease process varies to individual. However, they all need a good support system in order to cope throughout the different stages of disease process. In addition, to cope with the physical and medical challenges, patients usually face many worries, feelings, and concerns unique to their situation and as a nurse they provide anticipatory guidance about the illness, treatments and possible outcomes.

The nurses are highly competent on their care attitude as revealed by the 4.41 average weighted means. These findings aptly indicate therefore that the abovementioned attitudes towards the care of patients were properly handled by highly competent nurses. It is distinguishing to note since along this domain, nurses show an excellent performance in their care attitude towards patient care, a need to sustain or further enhance their capabilities and potentials should be addressed by subscribing to professional journals and attending to trainings and seminars relevant in this area of specialization.

**Table 2. Communication competencies of Filipino nurses (n=71)**

Indicators	Assessed by Self	
	WM	DE
1. I find it easy to get along with others.	4.59	HC
2. I treat people as individuals.	4.44	HC
3. I interrupt others too much.	2.06	FC

4. Others find it “rewarding” to talk with me.	4.07	C
5. I deal with others effectively.	4.17	C
6. I am a good listener.	4.51	HC
7. I am easy to talk to.	4.48	HC
8. I won’t argue with someone just to prove I am right.	3.86	C
9. My conversation behavior is not “smooth.”	2.99	FC
10. I generally know how others feel.	3.65	C
11. I let others know I understand what they mean.	4.06	C
12. I am relaxed and comfortable when speaking.	4.41	HC
13. I like to be close and personal with people.	3.18	MC
14. I generally know what type of behavior is appropriate in any given situation.	4.10	C
15. I usually do not make unusual demands on my friends.	4.10	C
16. I am supportive of others.	4.32	HC
17. I can easily put myself in another person’s shoes.	3.72	C
18. I am generally relaxed when conversing with a new acquaintance.	3.46	C
19. I am interested in what others have to say.	4.08	C
20. I enjoy social gatherings where I meet new people.	4.15	C
21. I am not afraid to speak with people in authority.	4.17	C
22. People can come to me with their problems.	4.25	HC
23. I generally say the right thing at the right time.	4.20	C
24. I like to use my voice and body expressively to communicate.	3.84	C
25. I am sensitive to others’ needs of the moment.	4.14	C
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>C</b>

The nurses rated the item “I find it easy to get along with others” got the highest weighted mean of 4.59 and described as “highly competent”. Next in the table were the items “I am a good listener”, “I am easy to talk to”, “I treat people as individuals” and “I let others know I understand what they mean” with a weighted means of 4.51, 4.48, 4.44 and 4.41 respectively.

This implies that Filipino nurses employed in Tobruk Medical Center were viewed easy to get along with, a good listener, holistic in approaching a patient and kept themselves understand what the patient wants to convey. This only shows that Filipino nurses are good communicators since they can converse their feelings and ideas to their respective patients.

These are the common trait Filipinos are known. Although they are not the only people in the world who can be friendly and welcoming, their attitude towards other people is said to be exceptional. They extend a helping hand even for a stranger because Filipinos believes that serving other people the best of what they have will leave them an honor and a promise of true friendship.

The lowest indicator along this domain is taken by the item “I interrupt others too much” which is rated as “Fairly Competent” with 2.06 weighted mean. This only shows that Filipinos nurses are skilled enough in communicating with other nationality as they are not interrupting them to speak such. Further, the finding proves that listening to the communicator and not interrupting them is sign of respect which is a common value among Filipinos.

Nevertheless, the average weighted of 3.96 and described as “competent”. This means that Filipino nurses working in Tobruk Medical Center communicates well to their colleagues. These are true since Filipino nurses usually make friends easily. They smile a lot, which makes it easier for strangers or foreigners to feel at ease with them. They communicate with peoples

of other nations with ease because the majority of the population can fluently converse in English.

Further, Filipinos in particular is viewed to have good impression, low profile, and friendly without being artificial and show a genuine interest in the culture. They have a knack for humor and always find something to laugh about.

### **Discussion**

In the analysis of the other factors that may affect the Filipino nurse's level of care and communication competencies. Commonalities of responses were presented in the preceding portion of this chapter

The Philippines has emerged as a leading labor exporting country. According to the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), of the 9.4 million Filipinos living abroad as of 2010, 4.3 million Filipinos are documented as living outside of the Philippines under temporary, work-related residence programs. Given the high demand for nursing professionals to fill overseas shortages, the nursing sector has been a major source of OFWs. From 2004 to 2010, nurses comprised an average of 19 percent of all emigrating Filipino professional, medical and technical workers.

Majority of the overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) that are still in Libya are mostly nurses and they chose to ignore the mandatory evacuation order from the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). Many of the Filipino nurses that are still working in Libya chose to stay despite the urging of the Philippine government for them to return home because of the risky situation there.

Thousands of Filipino nurses refuse to be repatriated and are still working in Libya up to now because of the huge salary that they are currently enjoying. Libyan employers have doubled and even tripled the salaries of Filipino nurses. Aside from the high salary, they would also be entitled to hazard pay and other benefits. This really encouraged them to stay in Libya and motivates them to work and perform tasks in accordance to their job descriptions.

Likewise, it is ironic to say that Filipinos are praised for their hard work in the hospitals. The close family ties, hospitality and caring attitude that they possess are what make them excel in their jobs in the medical industry. They are not only there for the money but they really want to save lives.

As a common observation, nationality and gender sensitivity issues greatly affect the overall nursing workforce in the hospitals where they are working. It is therefore recommended that healthcare institutions are encouraged to make a stand on equal opportunities in gender, age and nationality as part of the countries' move on Sustainable Development and nursing personnel should be hired based on their qualifications, experience and work attitude regardless of nationality.

### **Conclusion**

Filipino nurses working in Libya are young, married Catholics who finish baccalaureate degree holders and neophyte in service. They are highly skilled in caring professionals and communicate well to their colleagues and clientele. Their levels of care and communication competencies are not linked to their profile variables. There is a strong relationship on communication and skills and attitudes of nurses towards nursing care. A lot of factors may contribute to the care and communication competencies of Filipino nurses.

### **Recommendations**

Considering that nurse's communication skills are influenced by their care skills and attitude, attendance to appropriate skills development and values development activities such as team building activities and self-transformation to sustain such status. Likewise, giving

additional honorarium, economic rewards and incentives for these will motivate them and become more committed and dedicated in performing their work.

#### **Conflicts of Interest Disclosure**

The author declares there are no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

#### **Acknowledgement**

The authors would like to extend their sincere gratitude and deepest appreciation to their affiliations and to the participants that led to the possible accomplishment of this research work.

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