

Influence of International Service Learning on Cultural Competence

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of an international service learning experience on cultural competence for nursing students.

BACKGROUND

1. Providing culturally competent care to a diverse population is a necessary goal for nursing school graduates.
2. Various teaching strategies need to be compared to determine how best to prepare nurses to work effectively with a culturally diverse population.
3. Research is needed to compare effectiveness of teaching strategies for cultural competence for nursing students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does a 2 week international service learning experience affect the development of cultural competence in undergraduate nursing students?
2. How does international service learning compare to a control group in their home community?

STUDY OBJECTIVES

1. Measure the cultural competence and self-efficacy level of nursing students in a pre & post intervention experience.
2. Compare pre-intervention scores to the post-intervention scores.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of an international service learning experience as a teaching strategy in strengthening self-efficacy towards cultural competence.
4. Identify the phenomenological themes of student nurses in an international service learning medical experience.
5. Compare the intervention group with a control group of nursing students.

METHODOLOGY

This **descriptive intervention** study examined the affect of a **two-week international medical service** experience on undergraduate nursing students to evaluate its influence on developing cultural competence.
Tools: Pre/Post intervention surveys (quantitative) and a daily journal with post intervention interview (qualitative).

The study was quasi-experimental involving the **comparison of two groups:**

- 1) Intervention group (n=18) RN students in a 2-week international service learning experience in Belize, Central America.
- 2) Control group (n=18) graduating nurses in their final 2-week preceptorship, who served in a local diversified US hospital in Las Vegas, NV.



Student nurses completed home visits in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to assess for running water, electricity and illnesses. Those who were ill were invited to attend the free clinic for additional treatment.



RESULTS

1. Both groups showed **statistically significant** improvement from pre-survey to post-surveys.
2. Several last semester and graduated RN's from the same program **stated they never received training** in cultural competence, although it is built into their curriculum with lecture and readings.
3. The control group stated in their journals that their patients had no special cultural considerations although the variety of patients seen are very diverse.
4. The intervention group's journals were much richer and expressed deep **gratitude** and **new awareness** of another culture. They expressed **more commitment** to becoming culturally competent.



The nursing intervention group of 18 student nurses and new grad RNs.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The nursing profession must identify a **definition of cultural competence** and how to train both students and educators.
2. Both international and local communities with **diversity can improve confidence** and cultural competence.
3. **Reliable and valid instruments** must be created to better compare teaching methodologies in nursing education.
4. Nurse educators and students should be aware of the **positive impact of international service learning on self-confidence** towards cultural competence.
5. **Funding resources** must be identified to allow this opportunity for more nursing students, or to create similar experiences in their local community.



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