



Choosing to Become a Nurse in Saudi Arabia and the Lived Experience of New Graduates: A Mixed Methods Study

Submitted by

Mohammed Alboliteeh

A thesis submitted as the requirement of the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree

Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Nursing

February 2015

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	vii
List of Tables	viii
Statement.....	ix
Acknowledgements	x
Abstract	xi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Introduction to the Study.....	1
Personal Interest in the Research	2
The Research.....	3
The Research Aim.....	3
The Research Questions	3
The Potential Significance of the Research.....	3
Structure of the Thesis	4
Chapter Two: Background	6
Saudi Arabia.....	6
Economic and Political Background.....	7
Cultural and Gender Issues	9
Saudisation Plan.....	11
Healthcare in Saudi Arabia	12
Nursing in Saudi Arabia.....	14
Nursing Organisations.....	16
Men in Nursing in Saudi Arabia	18
The Current Situation of Men in Nursing	19
Recruitment and Retention.....	21
Image of Nursing in Saudi Arabia	22
Nursing Education in Saudi Arabia.....	24
Conclusion	25
Chapter Three: Research Design.....	28
Introduction.....	28
Research Strategy.....	29
Research Design.....	29
Mixed Methods Research.....	32

Sequence and Priority	34
Integration	35
Mixed Methods Study Types	36
Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design	36
Sequential Exploratory Mixed Methods Design	36
Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design.....	37
Choice of the Design.....	37
Conclusion	40
Chapter Four: Study One	42
Introduction.....	42
Background	42
Recruitment and Retention.....	43
Motivation to become a Nurse	46
Understanding of the Nursing Role.....	48
Gender Balance	49
Methods.....	50
Description of Research Design.....	50
The Setting of the Study.....	51
Population and Sample.....	51
Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.....	53
Recruitment Strategies	53
Ethical Considerations	54
Development of the Tool	54
Issues of Validity and Reliability	56
Expert Panel	56
Translation	56
Piloting	57
Data Analysis	57
Results.....	58
Introduction.....	58
Demographic Characteristics	59
Motivation to Become a Nurse	65
Perceptions of Nursing.....	71
Future Plans.....	75
Open-Ended Question	82
Conclusion	82

Discussion of Study One.....	84
Introduction.....	84
Profile of Saudi Nurses Working in MOH Hospitals in Riyadh	85
Motivation for Becoming a Nurse.....	86
Perceptions of Nursing.....	88
Gender Issues and Nursing.....	89
Recruitment and Retention.....	91
Limitations	94
Conclusion	94
Chapter Five: Study Two	97
Introduction.....	97
Background	98
Preparation of Nurses in Saudi Arabia.....	98
Transition into Practice	99
Cultural Competence.....	101
Language and Communication	102
The Image of Nursing	104
Methodology	106
Introduction.....	106
Philosophy and Phenomenology	107
Emergence of Phenomenology	108
Phenomenology of Husserl	109
Phenomenology of Heidegger.....	109
Hermeneutic Phenomenology	110
Hermeneutic Phenomenology: An Interpretative Approach.....	112
Hermeneutic Phenomenology as a Research Approach for this Study	113
Methods.....	115
Research Question.....	115
Research Process.....	115
Training and Preparation.....	116
Participant Selection.....	116
The Research Setting.....	117
Data Collection	117
Recruitment Process.....	117
The Interviews.....	118
Translation and Language Issues	119

Data Analyses	120
Trustworthiness	121
Conclusion	123
Findings.....	124
Participants.....	124
Maha.....	125
Waleed	125
Mohammad	125
Wiaam	126
Dalia.....	126
Norah.....	126
Abdullah.....	127
Kholoud.....	127
Noor	128
Sarah.....	128
Mona	128
Danah	128
Major Themes	129
Interpretation.....	166
Introduction.....	166
The Process of Interpretation	168
Being a New Saudi Arabian Nurse	169
Preparation to Be a Saudi Nurse	170
Perceptions of Nursing.....	174
The Day-to-Day Feelings.....	184
Wanting to Go Further and Being Part of the Change	187
Conclusion	194
Chapter Six: Integration.....	196
Introduction.....	196
Integration of Results	196
Drivers of Change	197
Challenges.....	199
Saudisation Program	199
The Saudi Culture	200
Preparation for Practice.....	202
Attrition.....	203

Opportunities.....	204
Conclusion	206
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	208
Introduction.....	208
Implications and Recommendations	208
Nursing Education and Training.....	209
The Work Environment	211
The Image of Nursing	213
Urgent Need for Nursing Research.....	214
Areas of Future Research.....	216
Limitations of this Research.....	217
Conclusion	217
References.....	218
Appendices.....	232
Appendix 1: The Questionnaire (English version).....	232
Appendix 2: The Questionnaire (Arabic version).....	239
Appendix 3: Ethical Approval from the University of Adelaide's Human Research Ethics Committee.....	245
Appendix 4: Ethical Approval from the Ethics Department of the Ministry of Health in Saudi Arabia.....	250
Appendix 5: Invitation Flyer.....	251
Appendix 6: Invitation Sheet	252
Appendix 7: Participants' Information Sheet.....	253
Appendix 8: Consent Form in English.....	254
Appendix 9: Consent Form in Arabic	255
Appendix 10: Complaint Form	256

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia showing the bordering countries.....	7
Figure 2: Study design using sequential explanatory mixed methods	40
Figure 3: Age of respondents	59
Figure 4: Number of dependents.....	60
Figure 5: Respondents' province of origin.....	61
Figure 6: Highest qualification in nursing	62
Figure 7: Years of experience in nursing	63
Figure 8: Type of position held.....	64
Figure 9: Area of nursing practice	65
Figure 10: Motivation to become a nurse – altruism	66
Figure 11: Motivation to become a nurse – a caring profession	66
Figure 12: Motivation to become a nurse – job security.....	68
Figure 13: Motivation to become a nurse – a good salary	68
Figure 14: Motivation to become a nurse – family expectation.....	69
Figure 15: Motivation to become a nurse – advice from a nurse.....	70
Figure 16: Motivation to become a nurse – personal experience of healthcare	71
Figure 17: Perceptions – nursing is for women.....	72
Figure 18: Perceptions – nursing does not require high academic qualifications.....	73
Figure 19: Perceptions – nursing is a respected profession	74
Figure 20: Number of days respondents would prefer to work.....	75
Figure 21: Intention to leave nursing	76
Figure 22: Reason to leave nursing – my gender.....	77
Figure 23: Reason to leave nursing – dealing with the opposite sex	78
Figure 24: Reason to leave nursing – dealing with patients of the opposite sex.....	79
Figure 25: Reason to leave nursing – I will become a fulltime student.....	80
Figure 26: Reason to leave nursing – I have to work long hours.....	81
Figure 27: Reason to leave nursing– difficulty communicating in English.....	81
Figure 28: Interpretation of the experience of being a new graduate Saudi nurse.....	170

List of Tables

Table 1: The provision of healthcare in Saudi Arabia	13
Table 2: Gender of respondents	58
Table 3: Years of experience in nursing	63
Table 4: Changes that would alter the decision to leave nursing	82
Table 5: Examples of the themes and sub-themes	164

Statement

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signature:

Date:

Acknowledgements

There are two important groups to whom due acknowledgement needs to be made. The first is formal and the second is informal. It is difficult to know which group is the most important because without either one, this thesis would never have been written and completed. Convention decrees that the formal acknowledgement be made first.

To my principle supervisor Associate Professor Judy Magarey, who always supported and encouraged me in every stage of my journey, thank you for your patient supervision during my journey and unwavering faith in my capacity to complete the thesis. To my co-supervisor Dr. Richard Wiechula who gave me valuable, skilled and thoughtful advice, encouragement and guidance. I am thankful for the valuable experience I gained from both of you during the last four years.

The informal group is much larger and there are too many to name. However, I wish to acknowledge my friend Mr Fahad Algahtani, for his considerate support and treasured friendship during the difficult and great times.

Finally thanks goes to my beloved wife and my daughters Nora, Dalal and Razan, my son Ibrahim, my mother and father, my brothers and sisters for their support, patience and encouragement during my study and stay in Australia. I am also thankful to all participants and to the hospitals and health administration for their participation in this study. Also, I would like to thank my sponsor the University of Ha'il for their valuable sponsorship and support during my study.

Abstract

Saudi Arabia has undergone rapid social and economic change in recent years. As one of the largest employers in the country, these changes have had a significant impact on the healthcare sector, in particular on the nursing workforce. In the past, Saudi Arabia relied almost exclusively upon expatriate nurses to meet the healthcare needs of its growing population. However, an increase in the Saudi population, high levels of Saudi unemployment, and a desire to redress the country's reliance on an expatriate workforce, led the Saudi government to implement a *Saudisation* program, an initiative to recruit, train and employ Saudi nationals throughout the workforce. As a result, approximately 50% of nurses are now of Saudi nationality.

This research is a mixed methods study. A quantitative study was undertaken to gain a description of the Saudi nursing workforce in Riyadh city; in particular their motivations, views of the profession and future plans. The initial aim of the quantitative study was to ascertain why high numbers of Saudi males were entering the nursing workforce in Saudi Arabia; however, female nurses were also surveyed in order to understand if there was a relationship between gender and motivations to undertake nursing, views of the profession and future plans. In this component of the study, a self-administered survey was distributed to all Saudi nurses working as registered nurses in Ministry of Health (MOH) hospitals in Riyadh. The results indicated that the Saudi Arabia nurses surveyed were young and inexperienced with a mean age of 27 years and with 80% having less than five years' experience in the nursing field. Other important issues emerged in this study, such as the nurses' desire for educational and professional development; poor working conditions in the sector; the low social status of the profession; difficulties associated with working in a mixed-gender environment; and cultural and communication problems. Significantly, just below half of all respondents intended leaving the profession.

These results informed the second, qualitative component of this study which sought to explore in more depth, some of the findings which emerged from the initial component of the study. The second study aimed to explore the lived experience of newly graduated Saudi Nurses. Twelve newly graduate nurses who had been working in Ministry of Health Hospitals in Riyadh five years or less were interviewed. In-depth interviews in the Arabic language were performed with the nurses, who had been working in the profession for five years or less.

Themes were identified from the data using van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Six major themes emerged from analysis of the data. Firstly, nurses felt unprepared for nursing. They felt they lacked the educational and training support they required, had little knowledge of the profession before joining, and had rarely chosen the profession themselves. Secondly, nurses in the study felt they were not readily included in nursing teams and were marginalised and discriminated against by management and expatriate nurses. In addition, Saudi nurses suffered from the poor social status associated with the profession and were subject to criticism and poor treatment by family, other health professionals and society at large. Despite this, nurses in general had a positive attitude to their profession. Saudi nurses indicated that they believed Saudi nurses were vital to the profession; both male and female nurses considered male nurses of central importance to the profession to ensure that the cultural and religious needs of Saudi patients were met. Finally, Saudi nurses showed an awareness of social changes occurring in nursing and in society in general and expressed a desire to be part of this change.

This study offers important insights into a segment of the Saudi nursing workforce, which has not been the subject of intensive study. This new, emerging nursing workforce is making a mark on the Saudi healthcare sector. In order to prevent attrition in the nursing field, Saudi nurses need to be provided with appropriate education, training, respect and

working conditions. This study offers important recommendations and insights for the future of Saudi nursing.