

Understanding the Perspectives and Experiences of Nursing Transfer Students in a Private Higher Institution (HEI)

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ABSTRACT

Nursing is a demanding course that some students are not successful at their first attempt resorting to transferring into another institution to achieve the dreams of becoming a nurse. This phenomenon of nursing transfer students is not widely explored. This qualitative research utilized the descriptive phenomenology in exploring the lived experiences of nursing transfer students in a private higher education institution for the third quarter of 2024. Findings of the study revealed four major themes: (a) The beginnings: the triggering factors to enrolling in nursing with subthemes of a personal choice and dream; an inspiration from a family member, a relative and a friend; and the pandemic. (b) The battle: The challenges in nursing with subthemes of language barrier, poor study habits, waking-up early, poor foundation, poor time management; challenges in the first school resulting to failure (pre-test and post-test, grading system, school environment, and teaching styles); Cebuano culture; language barrier; lack of motivation from teachers; and the core for the transfer. (c) A fresh start: Navigating the transfer experience (helping the transition: friendly mates; extraordinary clinical instructors; comfort of students; studying harder; the challenges of the transfer experience (school credentials and distance). (d) the aftermath: A multitude of realizations and beyond (the realization of gaining self-understanding, gaining friends, becoming the best version of self, more responsible, more flexible, motivated, a wide-reader, and more appreciative, and beyond the phenomenon of being a transferee: A professional nurse). Based on the findings implications on practice, policy, education, and research were provided.

Keywords: Cebu City, Descriptive phenomenology; Lived experiences; Transfer students.

INTRODUCTION

Transfer students have traditionally been given less regard in scholarly works and within higher education, particularly in nursing schools. Approximately 33 percent of students change their tertiary schools at least once throughout their academic years, and 25 percent of those who transfer move universities two or more times (Marling, 2023). Hence, research is necessary to investigate the unique experiences of transfer students in colleges or universities, their utilization of institutional support systems, and the effectiveness of these systems in meeting their needs. Demographic variables are essential in understanding how to successfully assist and inspire transfer students to succeed in higher education.

Transfer students in higher education institutions are seeing reduced rates of retention and completion, leading to adverse consequences for this vulnerable student demographic (Jacobson et al., 2019). Transfer student attrition is associated with factors like transfer shock, inadequate comprehension of the transfer process, lack of support, negative stereotypes about transfer students, difficulties with credit transfer, and feelings of isolation and self-doubt (O'Connell & Resuli, 2020; Chamely-Wiik et al., 2021). Universities may either presume that normal and transfer students have equal needs or expect that transfer students need

less help in adapting because of their prior post-secondary education. Transfer students may overstate the similarities between their former and present colleges and expect a seamless move without encountering any difficulties. However, these ideas have been proven false, causing transfer students to not get enough support or forcing them to seek help from the institution (Ching et al., 2020).

Combining academic and practical courses is a crucial element of nursing education and training in the Philippines. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program requires nursing students to participate in theoretical classroom instruction and practical tasks in clinical and community environments. Integrating practical components into the nursing curriculum is crucial as it provides students with hands-on experience in different clinical and practice environments. The Related Learning Experience (RLE) in the Philippines focuses on teaching and learning experiences to improve students' skills in various health settings. These contexts may include hospitals, Rural Health Units, clinics, schools, industrial organizations, and community settings (Oducado et al., 2019). Nursing education in the Philippines is renowned for its comprehensive approach, combining theoretical knowledge with practical clinical experience. The standard nursing program typically spans four years, but students sometimes face significant challenges when transferring between institutions, especially from public to private higher education institutions (HEIs). These challenges include curricular variations, cultural adaptation, and credit transfer issues, all of which can impact the students' academic journey.

Curricular differences between institutions often result in the loss of credits or the need for additional coursework, delaying graduation and increasing stress for transfer students (Llaguno & Tagupan, 2021). These disparities are exacerbated by the absence of standardized curriculum guidelines in the country's nursing programs (Reyes & Villanueva, 2021). Additionally, transfer students may struggle with cultural adjustment, as new teaching styles, expectations, and social environments in private HEIs may feel unfamiliar (Pimentel & Tolentino, 2022). The lack of a unified credit transfer system further complicates the situation, leaving students unsure about how their prior academic work will be recognized (Jurado, 2020).

In the Philippines, nursing transfer students have a higher prevalence of mental health difficulties than non-transfer students, especially among freshmen entering the field. They have difficulties in meeting academic criteria, encounter elevated stress levels associated with academics, have trouble adjusting to changes in academic regulations, and see themselves as being in competition with incoming freshmen (Bantugan et al., 2023). If the institution does not recognize their study credits, students can encounter heavy workloads or graduation delays. Some transfer student nurses struggle to perform at their best in clinical and community practices due to past academic failures at their previous educational institution, which may impact the quality of their education and patient care outcomes (Al-Dweik et al., 2021). Clinical and community nursing education are crucial for nurses to provide high-quality care, as their ability to deliver care is greatly impacted by the clinical scenarios they face. Students must achieve a particular level of practical skill at every phase of their nursing education. However, nursing transfer students typically demonstrate performance that is much below than expected levels of competence (Amoo & Enyan, 2022). But what is really the reason behind the phenomenon of transfer students? There are several factors that can be attributed to this phenomenon. One of which is academic difficulties. Different schools have different standards despite having met the requirement mandates. Another could be financial difficulties; it is undeniable that some schools are really expensive. There could be more to this phenomenon and it is worth exploring. Exploring this phenomenon will give readers a better understanding of the experience and transfer students can be given the needed support as they transition to a new environment which could be a factor in academic and performance as a student.

Nursing transfer students found that their academic and clinical performance were impacted by a thorough introduction, engaging curriculum, structured support system, and educator characteristics (Fooladi, 2022). Creating a supportive learning environment and implementing an interesting curriculum may enhance students' academic success, clinical performance, and readiness for practice. The characteristics mentioned were crucial for nursing transfer students to succeed in their academic and clinical performance, which are

necessary for their chosen career. In 2030, the Philippines was forecast to have a shortage of 249,843 nurses unless there was increased investment to keep them in the country's health sector (Tanggol, 2020). The young nursing students joined nursing school with their inspirations and experiences gained during the epidemic surge to serve in the healthcare system. While learning, individuals encounter several challenges and anxieties that must be conquered. The researchers want to concentrate on their lived experiences and the challenges nursing transfer students encounter as they progress in their nursing education.

Prior studies have discussed the obstacles faced by nursing transfer students at their current university. However, there is a lack of research studies, especially in the Philippine context, that explore the experiences of nursing transfer students. In order to address this gap, this study will focus on how the previous academic failures of nursing transfer students impact their current academic performance, school adaptation, and mental health in their new university. Additionally, it is important to investigate the coping mechanisms these transfer students use to address the challenges they face. Thus, the researcher aimed to explore on the lived experiences of nursing transfer students in a private higher education institution in Cebu City for the third quarter of 2024 to provide an answer to a question that is crucial for educational institutions and healthcare organizations aiming to improve the quality of nursing education.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized descriptive phenomenology design. There were 10 key informants from second year level who are nursing transfer students of a private higher education institution in Cebu City. Purposive sampling was used in choosing the participants following a set inclusion criteria. Purposive sampling has its limitations which are selection bias due to criteria, difficulty in generalizing findings and potential for research bias. To address this potential issue, the researcher clearly defined the research question and selection criteria, sought diverse perspectives, and documented the sampling process transparently to enhance credibility and minimize bias. Intentionally selecting the participants who are fit to the inclusion criteria are information-rich and relevant to the research question, aimed to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. The study was conducted in a private higher education institution on Cebu City. The researcher was the main instrument in the study that made use of a three-part semi-structured interview guide that aided in facilitating the gathering of essential information from the participants. Part one is the introductory part where informants provided personal information. Part two was the actual interview where informants were asked about their lived experiences utilizing open-ended questions. Every after question, a probing was done to facilitate rich gathering of information. Part three was the closing part where informants were asked whether they have something else to add about the interview and were thanked for their participation.

Each interview question was thoroughly examined by subject-matter experts prior to data collection from participants to guarantee its validity and acceptance. An approval was given prior to the start of the study process's data collection phase, in addition to the aforementioned interview protocol being reviewed. The research process started as soon as permission had been given and the interview protocol is authorized. In order to reflect the conduct of the first individual interview in the series, interview questions were evaluated and changed as necessary. Lastly, the instrument was validated by a qualitative expert for make sure the validity of the semi-structured instrument.

Data was gathered through in-depth interview with the included participants. The researcher utilized semi-structured interviews to collect data on the lived experiences of nursing transfer students. Giorgi's phenomenological psychological method was used to analyze and retrospectively examine the experiences of the participants who are nursing transfer students in order to establish how they lived, behaved and experienced being a transfer student. There were six steps followed according to Giorgi, namely, data collection, bracketing, horizontalization, textualization, clustering and interpretation. Data were gathered through in-depth interview and field note observations. With bracketing, the researcher set aside her personal biases and preconceptions about the phenomenon being studied. The researcher read the data and identifies

the meaning of the experience (horizontalization). The process of textualization, clustering and interpretation commenced as the researcher described the experiences in a way that is true to the participants' perspectives. Data was organized into clusters and themes based on the common experiences or meanings identified in the horizontalization phase. The researcher interpreted the themes and structures identified to understand the essence of the phenomenon of study. Recordings of the interview were destroyed at the end of data analysis. Data were presented in themes with supporting literature and studies and researcher reflections. With the 10 key informants who took part in the study, the researcher was able to reach data saturation which is the point in the study where the collection of new data no longer uncovers new themes, patterns or insights related to the research question. Reaching data saturation suggests that the researcher has gathered sufficient data to address the research question and draw meaningful interpretations.

The criteria for determining the reliability of qualitative research may differ from those used in quantitative studies; nonetheless, the requirements are the same. Guba (1981) created a set of trustworthiness criteria that included the principles of credibility through prolonged engagement of at least 30 minutes to 1 hour per interview, reflexivity with the data gathered and analyzed and using the participants' verbatim responses in the final report, transferability through providing a detailed description of the study context and of the participants to allow readers to assess the potential for transferability, dependability through describing the specific purpose of the study, discussing the selection of participants, the data gathering procedure, the method of data analysis used and how the data are being interpreted, and confirmability through using multiple data sources such as in-depth interview and participant observation field notes and maintaining an audit trail which is a detailed recording of the process of the data analysis. To further enhance trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed six strategies, which were as follows: (a) prolonged engagement, (b) persistent observation, (c) peer debriefing, (d) member checks, (e) triangulation, and (f) audit trail. Additional support for these strategies was provided by Loh (2013), who looked into what factors should be considered when evaluating qualitative investigations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1. The Beginnings: The triggering factors to enrolling in Nursing

The nursing profession is one of the most sought professions because it is one of the most lucrative professions. The informants were able to express their thoughts about how it all started, what triggered them to take up nursing. For some it is really a personal choice and dream while for others they were influenced by a family member, or a relative or a friend who is also a nurse. Lastly, for some the pandemic has triggered them to take up nursing,

Subtheme 1. Personal Choice and Dream

Seeing nursing as a very profitable profession, this may have triggered the informants to take up nursing. Seeing neighbors or friends who have gone abroad and brought their respective families abroad may be a triggering factor, but it cannot also be denied that nursing is a very noble profession where you get to touch other people's lives and given the opportunity to care for strangers, there is nothing more fulfilling than having served humanity. At present nursing is one of the most lucrative professions that is why nursing is in demand. Filipino nurse is world class and are making names in being good nurses all over the world. Supporting this:

According to Yusri "when I was young, my dream profession was to become a nurse." (L1)

As verbalized by Yishen "I'm just an average student. And being a nurse has always been my dream since high school." (L1-L2)

As expressed also by Joyce "During COVID and pandemic made me realized to go back to my dream and aspiration when I was little, that is to become a nurse." (L1-L3)

Also, Sheenah verbalized that “Based on my character, I have the heart for taking care of others aside from doing volunteer works.” (L1-L2)

Supporting the findings, in the study of Lim and Muhtar (2016), the five main reasons for choosing nursing as a career were “ability to help others”, “training was provided on the job”, “ability to work closely with people”, “parental advice”, and “accommodation was provided while training”. The top three main domains that influenced the nursing students’ decision to choose nursing as their career include “travel opportunities of nursing”, “intrinsic attraction of nursing” and “immediacy of support on entry to nursing”.

Subtheme 2. An Inspiration from a Family Member, a Relative and a Friend

Sometimes parents role model and when their children see how they have succeeded in their respective fields can also serve as an inspiration for them to follow their paths. Similar other person may serve as role models such as relatives and friends. The fact nursing is very lucrative on top of the possibility of getting an immigrant visa and bringing your entire family abroad, no wonder, nursing is in demand. Supporting this:

Marko expressed that “I decide to take Nursing. My biggest influence to pursue nursing was my mother. I shifted from Psychology to Nursing.” (L1-L3)

According to Yusri “I was also inspired by my Tito to enroll in nursing.” (L1-L2)

Annezanine also mentioned that “During pandemic, I have seen my friends and classmates performing nursing return demonstration. This inspired me to enroll Nursing.” (L1-L2)

Similarly, the study of McKenna et al. (2023) revealed that both groups were primarily influenced by desire to serve others and God, personal calling and influence of family members and others. Nurses identified a desire to work in the health field and with the sick, in a noble and caring profession.

Subtheme 3. The Pandemic

The pandemic has brought concerns and this can somehow tickle the hearts of people who have the heart to serve. The lack of nurses, or nurses giving up on their carriers for fear of contracting the infection, these indeed are triggering factors to people who wants to serve humanity. Supporting this:

Lorenz expressed that “I consider healthcare as vital profession, hence during pandemic I was struck as how much nurses was needed. And that influenced my decision.” (L2-L3)

The students’ reasons for entering nursing programs were both personal and career related, with personal being more dominant. The reasons to start nursing were: being able to help and care for people, job security, the ability to enter tertiary education and the enjoyment or love of nursing (Wilkes et al., 2015).

Theme 2. The Battle: The Challenges in Nursing

Nursing requires a good deal of hard work, perseverance, and almost everything. It is important to establish a good study habit. The challenges faced by the students are the contributory factors that lead them in becoming nursing transfer students. With the requirements on the related learning experience, one may need to wake-up early when assigned in the morning shift. And for nursing students to be able to juggle the demands of the course, they should be able to manage their time well. Also, as there are foreign students taking nursing, they are also posed with language barrier.

Subtheme 1. Language Barrier

For foreign students, it is inevitable that language barrier is present. Sometimes Cebuano Clinical Instructors tend to forget that they have foreign students because of their number. Sometimes in lectures clinical

instructors would use the local language to emphasize better understanding among students to the extent of sacrificing the foreign students. Because nursing is in demand, some foreign nationals opt to acquire their degree in nursing in the Philippines and majority of these students are children of Filipino nurses who have migrated to the United States and other foreign countries.

According to Yusri “In my first few days here, it was hard to adapt because I cannot understand the dialect. The teacher will sometimes use their dialect "Bisaya". And I’m Tausug, we speak in Tagalog. Hence, it was a major challenge to understand the discussion. It was difficult, but with the help of my classmates like learning the "Bisaya" dialect, I can now understand the words better. (L7-L12)

Yusri added that “among the challenges, I think It was really more of the dialect that I struggled with. During the class discussion because they were words that I can’t understand. And somehow this affects my understanding of the topics discussed. Though this has a little effect on my academics.” (L14-L18)

It cannot be avoided that teachers sometimes use the vernacular and this is where the problem arises especially if the foreign student is very passive. Speaking in vernacular may be beneficial because it converts the language to a more simplified language and more understandable but teachers should be forgetting especially if they have foreign-speaking students.

Subtheme 2. Poor Study Habits

For a start, in order to survive in nursing, one must have a good study habit. In nursing, students are required to read a lot of books and students are subjected to multiple examination. One must always be prepared for an examination when he or she goes to school. Nursing is a very demanding course; it entails a lot of reading and keeping up with your skills. If one has poor habits, surely, he or she will not survive nursing.

According to Yusri “During my lower years, I rarely study my class lessons. But it was totally different when I enrolled in Nursing. This prompt me to study every night because of the daily quizzes. Eventually my study habit has changed. (L2-L5)

Also, according to Sheenah “Adapting to the major exam is something I needed to work on. I felt my effort were not enough.” (L2-L4)

It was found that students’ study goals played an important role in shaping their study habits. Students aiming for short-term success (e.g., passing the exam) tended to cram before exams, while those with long-term goals (e.g., becoming a good doctor) prioritized continuous learning. In that process, students were strategic in their study approach (David, 2024).

Subtheme 3. Waking Up Early

Nursing students are to render clinical duty as part of the requirement of the course on related learning experience. With this requirement, if they are rotated on a first shift, nursing students have to prepare for the 6 am shift and therefore have to wake-up early to be able to accomplish this. Not only this, nurses are also exposed to other shifts such as the afternoon shift which ends at 10 or 11 pm and the evening shift which starts at 10 or 11 to six or seven am. The shifting in the schedule is indeed very challenging, after all caring for patients is 24/7.

According to Yishen “The most significant challenge about Nursing course is waking up early because of our Clinical duty.” (L2-L3)

The first shift begins in the morning and ends in the afternoon, thus allowing those working in this shift to enjoy their evenings off. Advantages include improved work-life balance, enhanced teamwork, and scheduling that is compatible with normal business operations. Difficulties are waking up early in the morning, burnouts, and little freedom during the day (Work Status, 2024).

Subtheme 4. Poor Foundation

A good foundational knowledge in nursing is very important. This can be linked to having a good study habit. Nursing students should be able to read in advance the topics to be discussed by their clinical instructors to at least have an understanding already of the topics. It is important to start right and starting being prepared, a good foundation will take nursing students a long, long way. Nursing students should be able to read ahead of time and manage his or her time properly in order to survive nursing.

Marco said that “the biggest obstacle I had to face was building strong foundation and knowledge because nursing is a very challenging course.” (L3-L4)

The study of Berhe and Gebretensaye (2021) revealed three major themes including Theme 1: learner’s non-readiness, Theme 2: insufficient clinical supervision and Theme 3: unsupportive clinical environment emerged.

Subtheme 5. Poor Time Management

Nursing is a very demanding course; students really need to manage their time to be able to breeze through the course. One key to a successfully hurdling nursing is to have time management. Through time management, students will be able to address the demands of the courses and this will him or her breeze through the program.

According to Marco “mastering and time management is essential.” (L5)

Also, Yishen said that “in this kind of profession, time management is important. Never be late nor be absent.” (L2-L3)

Lastly, Joyce expressed that “in my previous school, I was time pressured. They were so many academic schedules that has to be followed (pretest & posttests).” (L5-L6)

The findings of the study of Gripshi et al. (2021) found that nursing students face these difficulties: Low level of student’s engagement in clinical practice; low number of nursing courses; passive teaching methods; unfair and non-transparent evaluation; large number of exams per season; insufficient time to prepare for the season; employment and finances; physical environment in the faculty and public transport.

Subtheme 6. Challenges in the First School Resulting to Failure

These are the following challenges faced by the students in their previous school which somehow contributed to the phenomenon of transfer such as the presence of a pre- and post-test during lectures, the grading system, the school environment, and the teaching styles.

In some nursing schools they adopt having pre- and post-tests to assess the students learning. This is a matter of school policy and making sure that students come prepared during their class. However, some students may not be able to cope with this demand that this greatly affects their academic performance which contributes greatly to the reason why they are transferring schools. Somehow the implementation of pre- and post-test is a way of keeping and maintaining the quality of nursing education.

According to Annezanine “I first studied nursing in from a different school however I find it difficult there because we have several quizzes, like Pretest and Post test. So, I find it difficult and challenging there.” (L4-L6)

Some nursing schools have stringent grading system, because nursing is a board program or course it also follows that grading systems should be established. Different nursing schools have different grading systems. One school may have higher standards compared to other schools.

As mentioned by Erica “My previous school was okay but there is one thing I was not happy with, their grading system.” (L3-L5)

According to Yishen “Apart from that, the feeling was so draining because of their system.” (L4)

As expressed by Sheenah “One of the major reasons is the grading system. As hard as it was, I need to study even harder in order to pass the different quizzes and exams.” (L4-L6)

School environment includes the student, teachers and everything else like the infrastructure, etc. A good school environment facilitates learning. It provides an environment that is conducive to learning. The environment should be a contributory factor for students to succeed in their academic dreams.

According also to Marco “I’d consider my previous school as the worse. I hated going to school that time because of the school, students and sometimes the CI’s.” (L5-L7)

Different learners have different learning styles and this should be considered when teaching in nursing. It could be that the teaching style of the teachers did not match with their learning styles that learning is hampered and contributes to the students failing. Especially, with the new generations of students right now, it is imperative that their learning styles are determined and facilitated to effect better outcomes.

According to Marko “...And I did not like the teaching style, as it did not suit me.” (L8-L9)

Subtheme 7. Cebuano Culture

For a foreign student, being in nursing school is already a stressful event. Being exposed to a different culture is an added stress and combining these stressors may be too much for the student that the student is unable to cope with the demands of the course and eventually fail. For foreign students the first years may be challenging as they are adjusting to the school and at the same time adjusting to the culture of their environment. Juggling this may pose a challenge and may hamper them performing well in school.

According to Lorenz “Culture, as I did not grow up in the Philippines nor had any experience in a foreign country.” (L4-L5)

According to Regis College (2022), students globally report many different factors in their decision to transfer schools. Here are some of the most common: (a) upward transfer; (b) major dissatisfaction; (c) culture shock; (d) financial barriers; and (e) shifting proximity.

Subtheme 8. Lack of Motivation from Teachers

Teachers play an important role in motivating their students. Students need to be motivated to have interest in the course because when that spark is lost, they become disinterested in the topics and will not delve on exploring more about the subject. Teachers have a role of motivating their students to keep them going until the end.

According to Lorenz “There was a lack in motivation or drive to study. I felt like the institution did not care for me. I was not able to apply the best of my abilities due to lack of drive and nurturing from previous teachers.” (L6-L9)

If students do not believe that their efforts are likely to improve their performance, they will not be motivated to work hard. Motivation can be affected, for instance, if a course that has a reputation for being inordinately difficult. Students may also have had discouraging experiences in similar courses or on early assignments in a course that convince them they cannot do the work. Additionally, students have beliefs about intelligence and learning that can affect their motivation. If they believe learning is generally fast and

easy (and should not be slow or arduous), they may lose motivation when they encounter challenges (Carnegie Mellon University, 2024).

Subtheme 9. The Core for the Transfer

The informants were in unison in saying that the reason why they transferred was because they failed to comply with the academic requirements of their subjects which resulted to failure. This is not something new in nursing and even in other courses. They have academic difficulties; it could be that they are still in the process of adjusting to the student life in college or could be some other related factors.

According to Yusri “The reason for transfer of school was due to getting a failing grade in the subject Maternal & Child Health Nursing. In order to continue, I decided to transfer to another school instead.” (L56-L6)

As expressed by Annezanine “I first studied nursing in from a different school however I find it difficult there because we have several quizzes, like Pretest and Post test. I find it difficult and challenging there. The reason for transfer primarily because I got 3 failing grades in Health Assessment, Maternal and Pharmacology. So, this made me decide to transfer.” (L4-L8)

Also, Erica expressed that “It was sad that I failed in one subject, Maternal and Child Nursing.” (L5-L-6)

Marko verbalized that “I failed in Maternal in my previous school.” (L7)

Yishen verbalized that “I struggled a lot in my previous school. I failed in my nursing subjects. (L3-L4)

Also, Joyce said that “Having difficulty in Pharmacology and a falling grade in Maternal.” (L6-L7)

Lastly, Sheenah said that “Though I study very hard, yet I failed.” (L4)

According to Writers (2023) another reason students often consider transferring colleges is poor academic performance. The thinking behind this is that a new environment, with new classes and new professors, will lead to better grades — but this is not always the case. A 30-year retrospective study discovered five possible causes of attrition: personal reasons, transfer to other medical schools, dismissal due to poor academic performance, student death, and unspecified reasons (Kruzicevic et al., 2012. One of the causes of attrition is poor academic performance in struggling students (Andyryka et al., 2016).

Theme 3. A Fresh Start: Navigating the Transfer Experience

The moment that the students have moved to their new institution, the transition is without challenges. The new institution has catered to the students on what they failed to meet in their previous schools. For some of the foreign student, the local dialect serves as a barrier.

Subtheme 1. Helping the Transition: Friendly Mates

A new environment that fosters friendliness and good relationship is important in achieving academic goals. It hastens the discomforts that transferees would feel and gives them more focus on their academics.

Yusri explained that “They are fond of making jokes, so it made feel at home and classmates were also very helpful and friendly too. They helped me with understanding the dialect.” (L12-L14)

In a conducive learning environment, learners feel safe, respected, and valued. A sense of belonging and positive teacher-student relationships foster motivation and engagement which are crucial elements for successful learning (Roorda et al., 2011).

Subtheme 2. Helping the Transition: Extraordinary Clinical Instructors

A factor that greatly contributes to making the transition as smooth as possible is the attitude of the clinical instructors. Students felt that they have found a new home when their clinical instructors are very approachable, accommodating, open, nice, kind, and supportive.

Yusri said that “While the faculty were approachable and accommodating too. Having been able to meet new people, made friends was a very good experience. It helps you understand them and yourself even better. I am forever thankful of their help and guidance.” (L18-L21)

Erica verbalized that “It was good also that teachers here are easily approached especially if we have concerns. It’s nice to work with other people like making our projects. It’s one way of gaining new friends.” (L15-L17)

Yishen expressed that “I felt happy and contented because the Clinical Instructors were accommodating and understanding.” (L7-L8)

Yishen added that “However the teachers were all considerate.” (L12-L13)

Annezanine verbalized that “I had a good relationship with the faculty especially the time when I had a bad experience losing my phone. In addition, the teachers were very supportive.” (L12-L14)

Annezanine further explained that “The teachers were accommodating. They will really find time to discuss everything to you. And they were helpful especially the time I needed their help. While it was good meeting new individuals who are also trustworthy to be your friends.” (L19-L22)

Sheenah mentioned that “I’m happy and contented in this institution. The instructors were friendly and accommodating.” (L7-L8)

According to Erica “I transferred here. I have no struggles here because the teachers were nice and kind.” (L6-L7)

Sheenah expressed that “There was a good relationship between me and the teachers. We could always approach them.” (L11-L12)

Marko added that “It was enjoyable especially the CI are nurturing and caring. I appreciated it. A lot of support and encouragement from my previous and current CI which I deeply appreciate.” (L14-L16)

Joyce mentioned that “The teachers have helped us and I did not expect that I will be able to adapt easily.” (L13-L14)

According to Marko “The instructors and faculty here are more open. It was easier for me to fit in especially that I can relate. It was far different from before where my peers are from different background.” (L21-L23)

In respect to the support factor, the unwavering support of family, the engagement of friends, and the guidance of other staff and professors have been instrumental in helping the participants react to and cope with challenges of transition (El Jerdi, 2020).

The teacher’s attitude and behavior significantly shape this environment. Empathetic and responsive teachers, who value student input, foster a positive psychological climate (Cornelius-White, 2007).

Subtheme 3. Helping the Transition: Comfort of Students

It is important that students feel comfortable with their new school, making sure that their transition is smoothly flowing. The least that the student should undergo is to feel discomfort as this will later on have an effect on his or her academic performance.

Marko said that “When I transferred here, I think here is better. I think the biggest factor was the comfortability the fact that I belonged to a class that were all transferee and with failing grades like me.” (L14-L16)

Diverse, student-centered instructional strategies that cater to different learning styles and levels can enhance engagement and learning outcomes (Tomlinson, 2014). Creating a conducive learning environment is a dynamic and complex process that necessitates careful consideration of physical, psychological, and instructional factors. By addressing these areas, educators can cultivate environments that truly enhance learning, paving the way for student success and lifelong learning (Kmutt Sustainability, 2023).

Subtheme 4. Helping the Transition: Studying Harder

Students must learn their lesson from being a transfer student. They need to exert more effort in gaining better academic performance in order to breeze through nursing and become a successful professional nurse.

According to Marko “Getting a failing grade from my previous school is beyond imaginable. With that I took that as an opportunity to assess myself and learn to find time for my studies so that I will not get a failing grade again. This time I was motivated to study harder and not do the same mistakes again. In this institution, I have appreciated how the teachers taught us during their lectures and skill. I really learned a lot.” (L14-L19)

Subtheme 5. The Challenges of the Transfer Experience

The informants were faced with a few challenges being a transfer student. Compliance with documentary requirements was one of the challenges faced by them as well as the distance of the new school from their residence.

School Credentials

It is customary that when students transfer to another school and honorable dismissal should be processed and that records of the student are to be transferred to the school where he or she transferred. This is a mandate by the regulating agency of the government. Processing of honorable dismissal and other documents may take some time.

Erica “One of the challenges upon transferring was I had problems with my TOR from my previous school because they don’t have a copy of my form 137. So, it was really a very big challenge for a transferee like me.” (L11-L14)

Yishen expressed that “One particular challenge all about my school credentials. So, I have to gather all the needed requirements in order to be enrolled and be able fulfill my dream of becoming a nurse.” (L8-L10)

The traditional college credit transfer process can be a daunting experience for students, typically involving long wait times and a lot of confusing paperwork. As a result, organizations and professionals across the higher education landscape are pivoting to comprehensive digital solutions that can help them better support learners in this process. College credit transfers — the process of transferring academic credits earned at one institution to another — generally involves learners submitting transcripts to a receiving institution for evaluation (Parchment Staff, 2023).

Distance

Distance of the school is usually considered when enrolling. The nearer school may be the first option and because the student fails in that school, there is no other option but to transfer to another school which may be situated farther from the residence of the student,

Yishen expressed that “While at first it was hard because I was not familiar with the place and distance from my home is far.” (L6-L7)

According to Regis College (2022), students globally report many different factors in their decision to transfer schools. Here are some of the most common: (a) upward transfer; (b) major dissatisfaction; (c) culture shock; (d) financial barriers; and (e) shifting proximity.

Theme 4. The Aftermath: A Multitude of Realizations and Beyond

The incident was without realizations. It was indeed a realization of becoming better. The experience has allowed informants to see the brighter side of things, for them it allowed them to gain self-understanding, gain friends, become a better version of themselves, become more responsible, become more flexible, become motivated, become a wide reader, and become more appreciative. With the help of these realizations, they are very hopeful that they will achieve their dreams of becoming a professional nurse whether here or abroad.

Subtheme 1. The Realization of Gaining Self-Understanding

For an informant, having experienced being a transfer student allowed him to gain better self-awareness. Gaining introspection of the incident allowed the informant to be more self-conscious and self-aware. It is through this experience that they gained better understanding about themselves. And this is really true as experience is the best teacher.

According to Yusri “It helps you understand them and yourself even better.” (L20-L21)

Supporting this finding, according to Hastings (2023), admitting failure reflects self-confidence and persistence, while hiding failure reveals weakness and a lack of self-assurance. Sharing failures brings trust, confidence, and the ability to face adversity courageously.

Subtheme 2. The Realization of Gaining Friends

The experience of being a transfer student gave informants an opportunity to gain new friends considering that it is a new environment, it is inevitable that the informants will be meeting new faces and new acquaintances. The phenomenon of transferring bridges socialization and an opportunity to unlock the benefits of gaining new friends and not just being in a new environment.

Yusri mentioned that “Having been able to meet new people, made friends was a very good experience.” (L19-L20)

Annezanine also said that “While it was good meeting new individuals who are also trustworthy to be your friends.” (L21-L22)

According to Erica “It’s one way of gaining new friends.” (L17)

Also, Joyce said that “I was used to meet people and it has taught me to be adaptable to different people. So far so good here.” (L16-L17)

Lastly, according to Sheenah “Meeting new friends is surely amazing.” (L12-L13)

An unexpected situation that some students may experience is the need to transfer schools. This is more common for those about to enter high school since many parents opt to transfer their children to bigger schools. Many often wonder how to make new friends as a transfer student. It is a period of adjustment that they definitely will go through (Reedley International School, 2022).

Subtheme 3. The Realization of Becoming the Best Version of Self

Having failed and transferring to a new school means that informants did not give up. This experience allowed them to become better persons so that the same incident will not happen again. Being a transfer student has unlocked a better version of oneself. This event serves as an awakening, having experienced failure may serve as an awakening that they have to strive harder and become better versions of themselves.

Marko said that “It has turned me to become patient, empathetic and more confident as a person. I have finally grown to be a better version of myself.” (L19-L21)

As verbalized by Lorenz “And above all, I give my best. I have found growth in myself as a person in this institution. With my new attitude & new instructors who made me feel important, I’ve grown a lot.” (L11-L13)

From failure, people learn resiliency. It is hard to not learn how to build resilience after a failure, especially if one is determined to overcome failure. Resilience is an important life skill to build. And when one builds (and learns) resilience, it helps in other ways, too. Resilience can help build a growth mindset. It can help adopt the right behaviors to overcome change. And it can help build grit, tenacity, and motivation (Miles, 2022).

Subtheme 4. The Realization of Becoming More Responsible

Gaining a failing grade could mean that the informants were not responsible students. This time they are owning it and taking full responsibility of their actions. It is when one fails that there is a realization and that realization could be not doing his or her best. Being given a chance to be in a new environment also means that they are given an opportunity to take full responsibility of achieving their dreams of becoming and nurse that failure is no longer an option.

Yishen said that “It made me become responsible and cautious with my priorities in life.” (L10-L11)

Also, Sheenah mentioned that “It made me more responsible and improve in the academic. And of course, do better. I think it was more of a good result especially it made me become responsible with my studies. (L8-L11)

According to Hreha (2023), in a society that often glorifies success and shuns failure, it is revolutionary to see failure as an opportunity rather than a setback. This shift in mindset begins with changing how we perceive failure. Instead of seeing it as a dead-end, envision it as a fork in the road, offering valuable insight into which direction to take next. Each failure brings with it a wealth of knowledge about what does not work, which, in turn, gets one step closer to discovering what does. The process of extracting lessons from failure is akin to mining for gold. It involves digging into the details of the situation, examining decisions, strategies, and actions. It requires honesty, introspection, and sometimes, a little courage. This shift in perspective takes the sting out of failure and makes it a constructive part of the journey, fostering a positive attitude towards setbacks.

Subtheme 5. The Realization of Becoming More Flexible

Failure indeed, provides a lot of learnings. It is considered as one of the best teachers. The key is to not give up and by being a failure the first time, this will allow the person to become more flexible and adjust to the demands of the course. Being in a new environment, a transfer student also adopts to all the changes. And to be able to adopt to these changes one has to be flexible.

Lorenz said that “Though I’m not from the Philippines, it does not put disadvantage with my peers. I faced it instead of backing away. This has made me a more fluid person, letting me tailor myself to different patients. It taught me to adapt in order to survive.” (L16-L19)

According to Miles (2022), one can learn from his or her first failure that he or she needs to adjust his or her goal or maybe, one can still achieve the goal. One just needs to adjust his or her approach. That is where flexibility comes in. Failures teach people flexibility, adaptability, and perseverance. They teach people to use change to his or her advantage. They keep people nimble and helps people adopt that growth mindset.

Subtheme 6. The Realization of Becoming Motivated

When everything falls into place, nothing is impossible. By slowly achieving one's goal this serves as a motivation for the individual to do better. Being in a new environment could be a motivation itself. This drives the transfer student to be given a new chance and start all over again and this serves as his or her motivation.

Lorenz expressed that "It has improved me academically as desperation makes a good motivation." (L19-L-20)

The value of hard work is something that is learned best by experience—and failure can be the best teacher. When we fail, it can motivate us to do better and try harder. Through this process, one can begin to see the value of efforts instead of focusing solely on the outcome. It strengthens intrinsic motivation (the inner drive to complete a task because one finds it enjoyable or challenging) and builds self-esteem (Struggling Students, Teaching Strategies, 2023).

When one fails, it can motivate people to do better and try harder. Through this process, one can begin to see the value of efforts instead of focusing solely on the outcome. It strengthens intrinsic motivation (the inner drive to complete a task because one finds it enjoyable or challenging) and builds our self-esteem (Struggling Students, Teaching Strategies, 2023).

Subtheme 7. The Realization of Becoming a Wide-reader

Because nursing course demands that students should read, it allows the students to explore more from different sources to gain more knowledge and become ready when they become nurses later on. One of the lessons learned in being a transfer student is the need to become more hardworking, if one does not want history to repeat then one has to improve his or her study habits and this includes becoming a wide-reader, after all, knowledge is power.

Joyce expressed that "It molded me to become a lover of book. To read a lot and prepare for the quizzes." (L9-L10)

One has to want to learn to actually learn from failure. To do this well, one needs to adopt a growth mindset. A growth mindset embraces challenges. It perseveres even in failures. People can learn, change, and adapt. People want to learn and grow. People accept and embrace constructive feedback and constructive criticism. And it is not easy. But a fixed mindset does not set up anyone for success. Think of ways one can change perspective around his or her day-to-day interactions as a start (Miles, 2022).

Subtheme 8. The Realization of Becoming More Appreciative

It is when one fails that he or she starts to appreciate things around him or her and that studying in nursing is not a big joke. It has to be taken seriously. Being a transfer student means that he or she is given another chance. By that chance, they become more appreciative of the given opportunity to start all over again and focus on their goals of becoming a nurse.

According to Joyce "The challenges have prompt me to appreciate what is at present rather than complain." (L13-L14)

The famous phrase – “Experience is the best teacher” – can swiftly be modified to – “Failure is the best teacher”. When one fails, it helps him or her develop a deeper understanding of life. While failing is often a painful experience, the pain felt can alter the frame of mind and encourage people to reflect on the true nature of what we are doing and the importance it holds within their lives. Knowledge is accumulated through experience, especially when experiencing failure, and in time that buildup of knowledge becomes the key to succeeding (Struggling Students, Teaching Strategies, 2023).

Subtheme 9. Beyond the Phenomenon of Being a Transferee: A Professional Nurse

After having gone through the process of transferring school, the informants are still hopeful that they will be able to achieve their dreams of becoming a nurse. They are hopeful that one day will become nurses in the hospitals, here and abroad. For some they have not expressed going abroad but instead were just simply wanting to achieve their dreams of being a professional nurse. That is why they resort to transferring to another school because this means that they are not giving up on their dreams. They are searching for means to achieve their dreams, and by transferring this is the next step to achieve that dream.

Marko said that “I see myself as an accomplished nurse in the future.” (L23-L24)

Joyce also mentioned that “In the future I feel like I will be working in the special area like the Delivery Room.” (L18-L19)

Further, Sheena expressed that “I see myself in few years already a graduate and a board passer at the same time.” (L13-L14)

Also, Yishen expressed that “I see myself as a dedicated hospital staff.” (L14-L15) Others fulfilling their dreams of working abroad.

According to Yusri “After finishing college, see myself working as nurse already probably in New Zealand. (L21-L22)

Also, Annezanine said that “I think I will be working in Singapore, because my mom is also there.” (L22-L23)

Erica added that “Hopefully I will be an RN and take the NCLEX and maybe work in Canada.” (L17-L18)

Lastly, Lorenz mentioned that “A travel nurse perhaps in the US or pursuing to be a Nurse Practitioner.” (L22-L23)

It is inevitable that one will encounter a number of setbacks and obstacles in every aspect of their lives. No one is perfect, and neither is life. The first time one fails, it hurts and can be discouraging, however, bouncing back from failure teaches one to be more resilient in the future. One needs to be flexible to succeed, whether it means compromising with others or being willing to adjust initial mindset. This teaches people that success takes effort and time, it does not just happen overnight (Struggling Students, Teaching Strategies, 2023).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Findings of the study revealed four major themes: (a) The beginnings: the triggering factors to enrolling in nursing with subthemes of “a personal choice and dream; an inspiration from a family member, a relative and a friend; and the pandemic. (b) The battle: The challenges in nursing with subthemes of language barrier, poor study habits, waking-up early, poor foundation, poor time management; challenges in the first school resulting to failure (pre-test and post-test, grading system, school environment, and teaching styles); Cebuano culture; language barrier; lack of motivation from teachers; and the core for the transfer. (c) A fresh start: Navigating the transfer experience (helping the transition: friendly mates; extraordinary clinical

instructors; comfort of students; studying harder; the challenges of the transfer experience (school credentials and distance). (d) the aftermath: A multitude of realizations and beyond (the realization of gaining self-understanding, gaining friends, becoming the best version of self, more responsible, more flexible, motivated, a wide-reader, and more appreciative, and beyond the phenomenon of being a transferee: A professional nurse).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

While nursing transfer students in private HEIs face significant academic and emotional challenges, their experiences also provide a valuable opportunity for personal growth and professional development. Understanding these challenges and the coping mechanisms employed by transfer students is crucial for improving institutional support systems. Many students reflected on how the transfer process shaped their professional and personal identities, offering valuable insights into their motivations, expectations, and future goals. These realizations often lead to a renewed commitment to the nursing profession, as students gain a clearer understanding of their career path and the obstacles they must overcome to succeed. Future research should focus on developing interventions that can ease the transition for nursing transfer students, ensuring that they not only survive but thrive in their academic and professional journeys.

Recommendations

Given the challenges faced by nursing transfer students in private higher education institutions (HEIs), several avenues for future research can be explored to improve their academic experiences and outcomes.

1. Future studies could investigate the long-term effects of transferring on nursing students' professional success, career satisfaction, and job retention. This could involve exploring whether the difficulties faced during their transition affect their practice as nurses or their ability to adapt to the healthcare workforce. Longitudinal studies could help track their progress over several years to assess how early academic experiences impact their long-term career trajectories.
2. Research could also examine the experiences of nursing transfer students in various regions of the Philippines, especially in rural or underserved areas. It would be valuable to explore whether students from these regions face unique challenges compared to those in urban centers, particularly in terms of access to resources, support services, and the recognition of credits between different types of institutions.
3. Future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions designed to support nursing transfer students, such as academic advising, peer mentoring programs, and orientation sessions tailored to transfer students. Research could examine how these interventions impact students' academic performance, mental health, and sense of belonging. Identifying successful support strategies could inform institutional policies and help improve retention and graduation rates among transfer nursing students.
4. Investigating the potential for curricular standardization and the establishment of a unified credit transfer system in Philippine nursing education could be another important area for future research. Studies could explore how these changes might reduce the challenges associated with credit transfer and enhance the academic experience for transfer students across various HEIs.
5. Comparative research examining the experiences of nursing transfer students alongside those in other disciplines, such as education or business, could reveal discipline-specific challenges or highlight successful strategies that could be applied to nursing education. Understanding differences in how various academic fields manage transfer students could offer insights into best practices that could be adapted to nursing programs.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Based on the findings, the following implications are crafted:

Practice. Through the study, nursing educators will gain sights of the study findings and thus they will gain better understanding of what transfer students go through. They can provide appropriate support to make sure that their transition becomes better.

The study's results will help in identifying well-prepared nurses and pinpointing certain qualities that promote success in nursing education. More skilled nurses will join the field to address the shortfall, overcome hurdles, and enhance patient care outcomes.

Policy. Policies relating to transfer of students can be hastened through the understanding of what the transfer students went through by crafting policies allowing the transition to be smooth sailing. This will also allow creation of internal policies among educational institutions offering nursing programs to provide measures or mechanism allowing transition of transfer to be smooth. Student services and guidance office take proactive steps to help transfer students making their experience better, if not best.

The study's results may enable policymakers to create nursing programs that are more integrated and provide measures to promote the well-being of nursing students. Nursing programs need to revise student success techniques to enhance student capabilities. Enhanced programs to support nursing students will lead to a higher number of graduates who will meet the need for a more varied group of nurses who are former transfer students with bachelor's degrees.

Education. By gaining a deeper comprehension of the real-life experiences of nursing transfer students, the faculty, program, and institution may create initiatives for success. Nursing education may increase the number of transfer students who surpass their nursing achievement by enhancing the student experience via investment.

The Commission on Higher Education, Professional Regulation Board of Nursing, Accredited Professional Organization, and educational institutions offering nursing programs will be educated about the findings of the study by gaining knowledge on the findings. This may call of a review and revision of the CHED memorandum order along with school policies on nursing program and curriculum to provide emphasis and provisions on transfer students.

Graduation and nursing licensure examination passing rates are crucial indicators of nursing education performance, but they fail to fully capitalize on the potential to enhance student achievement. Nursing transfer students may successfully graduate and pass the licensing test on their first try, but the quality of their experiences may differ significantly from other successful students. The study's results may serve as a benchmark for higher education institutions that provide nursing programs, enabling them to customize treatments to enhance certain traits that indicate success. Focusing on developing their talents, rather than fixing their weaknesses, may lead to success in both collegiate and professional settings.

Research. This study's results indicate a need for more investigation concerning nursing transfer students. This study was prompted by the increasing importance of transfer students in the nursing sector, highlighting the need for research in this unexplored area of nursing education. Academic institutions, nursing programs, and faculty may adopt specific measures to provide a conducive atmosphere for success. This study will be submitted for a possible journal publication either local or international refereed journal. It will also be submitted for either oral or poster presentation in any local or international research congress. The following research titles are also suggested for future researchers to undertake.

1. A descriptive study on satisfaction on the school services among transfer students in the nursing program;

2. A descriptive analysis on the challenges encountered by transfer students in the nursing program; and
3. A grounded theory: a theory development on transfer students' experiences.

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