

PRESS RELEASE

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Study shows high dissatisfaction among Filipino nursing staff in Germany

Many people have become more aware of the fact that there is a lack of nursing personnel in Germany at the latest as a result of the Corona pandemic. Attracting foreign nursing professionals could improve the situation in many hospitals and health care facilities. In this regard, the Philippines is an important country of origin that has a good reputation among employers. However, a recent study found an alarming state of overall satisfaction among Filipino nursing professionals in Germany.

Only 17 percent of Filipino nursing professionals working here would recommend their current job to friends and colleagues* in the Philippines. More than half (58 percent) of the respondents feel "not welcome" and 64 percent feel their professional qualifications are devalued.

This is the result of a study by intercultural consultant and trainer Grace Lugert-Jose, who specializes in the integration of foreign nursing professionals in Germany. For the study, which was conducted in February 2022 and has just been evaluated, Grace Lugert-Jose surveyed nursing professionals from the Philippines living and working in Germany about their job satisfaction and various aspects of integration. With 109 participants, the study allows good conclusions to be drawn about the entirety of Filipino nursing professionals in Germany. The majority of the findings of this study are also likely to be transferable to the overall situation of foreign nursing professionals in general, as the result of this survey confirms previous qualitative studies, including those conducted by the Hans Böckler Foundation, and now makes them quantifiable.

"The results of the study reveal considerable weaknesses in integration efforts in Germany to date," Grace Lugert-Jose comments on the findings. "Especially when comparing the satisfaction of Filipino nursing professionals in this country with those in other countries. In the

United Kingdom, 71 percent of Filipino nurses are satisfied. There are also high satisfaction scores in the United States. Satisfaction also appears to be higher in other EU countries such as Finland." If recruiting skilled workers from abroad is to produce sustainable results, there is definitely an urgent need for action, the intercultural consultant and trainer continues: "There are employers who are already doing a very good job of integrating and thus retaining skilled workers in the long term. Unfortunately, this is only a minority.

Dissatisfaction leads to high turnover

Only 12 percent of respondents fully agree with the statement "Generally, I can say I am very satisfied with my job," while 64 percent disagree. The results are also disappointing when it comes to the question of recommendation. The statement "I would definitely recommend this job to a family member or friend in my home country" is fully agreed with by only 17 percent of respondents, but disagreed with by 66 percent.

For comparability, the eNPS (Employee Net Promoter Score) was also calculated from the survey as a widely used benchmark metric. The score of -49 percent found in this study is worrisome.

"The low satisfaction of foreign professionals working here explains the high turnover reported by many employers," says Grace Lugert-Jose.

Lack of recognition of colleagues as biggest problem

A key issue for recruited professionals is a lack of respect and recognition from colleagues. For example, only 17 percent fully agree with the question "Do you feel that your qualifications and previous work experience are valued in your current job?" This compares with 64 percent who disagree. From the openly formulated answers, it is clear that this problem is primarily perceived with colleagues and direct superiors.

This is particularly remarkable because the formal and theoretical qualifications of the Filipino nursing staff are based on the standards of the USA and, with a bachelor's degree, are higher

than the German standards. In addition, a large proportion of the Filipino nursing professionals working here have already gained several years of international professional experience, often in the Arab Countries, for example. Thus, an objectively assessable high level of competence is contrasted with a very low level of appreciation by colleagues in the core workforce. Grace Lugert-Jose very much regrets this point in particular: "It's a shame how much potential is lost here by devaluing highly qualified personnel."

Discrimination and racism are widespread

In the open-ended responses, 22 percent of respondents said they had experienced discrimination and racism on the basis of origin. Since such experiences were not asked about directly, this result is all the more shocking. In many cases, racism manifests itself subtly and also through the attribution of inferior qualifications. "Why specifically the negative experiences occur varies greatly," says Grace Lugert-Jose. "Of course, there are cases of genuine xenophobia. Often, the core workforce also seems overwhelmed by the fact that more and more foreign professionals are working in Germany."

Sometimes cultural misunderstandings also cause perceived discrimination. Especially the very different ways of communicating when comparing Germany and the Philippines quickly lead to misinterpretations. "In many cases, immigrant professionals perceive remarks that pass as not particularly sensitive but acceptable in Germany as bullying," says Grace Lugert-Jose.

German language is a major challenge

One of the biggest barriers is the German language. Many recruited professionals come to Germany with a B1 or B2 language level. Neither language level is usually sufficient to participate in normal everyday conversations unless the other participants in the conversation show consideration. In everyday working life, such consideration is also not always possible. Lack of linguistic participation is therefore a major factor for dissatisfaction.

Soft factors determine overall satisfaction

When analyzing which of the aspects have a particularly large influence on job satisfaction and recommendation, it became clear that the so-called "soft" factors play a central role. The feeling that one's qualifications are valued and the feeling of being welcomed were at the top of the list.

Another very important point for satisfaction is good support for professional recognition. Grace Lugert-Jose explains, "Filipino nursing professionals who want to work in Germany have to have the qualifications they acquired abroad recognized (berufliche Anerkennung) in Germany and also take some exams." This professional recognition is usually one of the biggest challenges for newly arrived foreign professionals, she says. Failure to pass the additional exams required here in Germany, she said, results in serious negative consequences for both employees and employers.

Grace Lugert-Jose: "For the newly recruited nursing professionals, passing the professional recognition is a major stress factor. If they don't feel adequately supported, there is immediate uncertainty and dissatisfaction."

Recommendations for employers

Direct recommendations can be drawn from the findings. Intercultural consultant and trainer Grace Lugert-Jose advises:

The general expectations must be communicated realistically and transparently to the core local nursing staff. The competencies of the new colleagues and also the differences to the German training (Ausbildung) should be clear to all colleagues. Everyone should assume that the newly recruited nursing professionals from abroad will not be fully operational for a few months and that this will mean extra work and patience for the local staff due to the induction process.

There should also be more understanding created for the situation of people who are new to a country and need to adjust. Intercultural competence needs to be trained throughout the team.

Employers should prioritize intensive language support measures, such as language training and placement in departments with a general high level of communication within the staff in the first

few months. Only when new employees make rapid progress in language acquisition, will smooth communication and interaction with colleagues and patients be possible.

The first months are also the time for intercultural training of the newly recruited professionals. These lead to better mutual understanding and the breaking down of barriers.

Hospitals and care facilities set the wrong priorities

When analyzing the results, it becomes clear that many employers are setting the wrong priorities with their measures. "They focus on a quick on the job training "Einarbeitung" and want the new employees to be fully assigned into the duty schedule directly. Unfortunately, this then leads to the grievances observed here," says Grace Lugert-Jose.

Employers often assign the foreign professionals to full duty as soon as possible and then schedule language classes outside of work hours, if they are still held at all. At the same time, the newly recruited professionals must prepare for the recognition exam. As a result, there is often no time or energy left for language classes. Language competence does not develop sufficiently, which in turn is the basis for subsequent problems.

It becomes apparent that employers must not see the recruitment of foreign nursing professionals as the plugging of personnel gaps. If employees from different cultures are to work together successfully, facilities must become interculturally competent organizations, and they must also make the local nursing staff ready for the changes. In addition, sufficient time and budget must be planned for the integration of the new colleagues. Unfortunately, the results of the survey show that this has hardly happened so far.

Additional information on the study

The study was conducted in connection with Grace Lugert-Jose's work as an intercultural trainer and consultant. Grace Lugert-Jose is also the founder of the Facebook group "Network of Pinoy Nurses in Germany". This group is one of the largest exchange platforms for Filipino nursing professionals in Germany. Through this group, a call was made for the survey, which was

conducted from Feb. 18 to Feb. 25, 2022. 109 fully completed questionnaires were included in the study. The survey was conducted in English, and the phrases mentioned here are translations. The business psychologist Grace Lugert-Jose was supported in the conception of the study and the interpretation of the results by Priv.-Doz. Dr. med. Dipl.-oec. med. Alexander Joist. He is chief physician for trauma surgery at the Hufeland Klinikum Mühlhausen and health economist. The statistical evaluation was carried out by the statistician Kristine Leduc from Rennes (France), who specializes in the evaluation of satisfaction surveys and has many years of experience in this field, including her work at the Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK).

It is planned to further develop the questionnaire used in this study into an instrument that can be used in hospitals and nursing facilities to measure satisfaction and derive improvement measures in the operational integration of foreign nursing professionals.