

Research Article

# Exploration on International Employment of Undergraduate Nursing Students in the Context of Global Population Aging

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## Abstract

With China's accession to the WTO and the continuous advancement of economic globalisation, population mobility has become increasingly frequent. It not only increases opportunities for international exchanges and cooperation but also the demand for nursing professionals in various countries has increased dramatically, due to the acceleration of global population aging trends. Because the Nursing major is highly professional and the domestic job market is highly competitive, international employment provides another employment choice for nursing graduates. With the accelerated aging of the global population, the shortage of elderly care personnel has become a common problem facing many countries. In response to this challenge, many countries are increasing the attractiveness of the nursing industry, encouraging more young people to join the industry and promoting the sustainable development of the industry. Through the study of data analysis method, it is found that some domestic schools have completed the revision of the construction plan of nursing major, and cultivated the international awareness of nursing students by establishing Chinese-Foreign Cooperation schools mode and employing foreign teachers. This paper analyzes the challenges of nursing graduates in international employment. To become an international nursing talent and adapt to the job market of foreign-related hospitals, strategies are proposed from the perspectives of universities and graduates, such as revising the model of international talent training, vigorously developing international cooperation, and planning carriers in advance. These strategies are proposed to help nursing graduates obtain high-quality employment opportunities in the vast international market and thus achieve personal development.

## Keywords

Population Aging, Nursing Profession, Internationalization, Employment

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Current Situation of Global Population Aging

Population aging is the inevitable result of socio-economic development and scientific and technological progress. As early as 1965, France became the world's first age oriented

country, followed by Sweden. After the 20th century, some developed countries in Europe and the United States have stepped into these ranks. According to the United Nations «World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision» [1], the population over 65 is growing faster than the younger age group in the world. According to the United Nations standard: the proportion of the population aged 65 and above more than 7%

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is an aging society, more than 14% is a moderately aging society, more than 20% is a super-aging society. Nowadays, population aging has become a global problem.

According to World Bank statistics [2], as of 2022, approximately 22% of the total population are aged 65 and above in Germany. According to data from the German Federal Statistical Office, it is expected that by 2035, the number of retired age population (67 years old and above) in Germany will increase by 4 million, reaching around 20 million. With the rapid growth of the elderly population, the shortage of nursing staff is expanding. Germany's Federal Statistics Office estimates that there are currently 5 million elderly people needing care in Germany, and that this number will reach 7 million by 2040. So they require more than 190,000 full-time caregivers to meet the demand. According to data released by the Singaporean government, one in five people in Singapore is now 65 or older, and by 2030, the proportion will reach 1/4. Singapore's Minister of Health, Yi kang Wang said that, the current number of caregivers in Singapore is 58,000, and it is expected to increase to 82,000 by 2030. According to the Costa Rican Ministry of Health, the aging population in Costa Rica is accelerating, and the demand for healthcare workers will be four times higher by 2050 than it is now. In addition, as a tourist destination, Costa Rica has a developed pension industry, and many retirees from other countries come here every year for vacation or retirement. So, the demand has further increased for healthcare workers in the country.

## 1.2. The Background of International Employment

With the continuous renewal of science and technology and the economic globalisation continuing to develop in a deeper direction, the mobility of talents is becoming more and more large. So international employment has become a new development trend. «Medium and long term education in the country (2010-2020)» clearly states that, China should cultivate a large number of international talents who have an international perspective, are familiar with international rules, and can participate in international affairs [3]. «Nursing career development plan (2021-2025)» [4] proposes that we should carry out in-depth cooperation and exchanges in the field of nursing with international and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions, especially in the nursing management, system policy, personnel training, nursing technology and other aspects of the exchange and cooperation.

The World Health Organization calls on all countries to strengthen the training and recruitment of nurses, and wants the people to change their minds and pay more attention to the profession of nurses. A report written by the World Health Organization and the International Council of Nurses shows that, there are fewer than 28 million nurses in the world, with a gap of 5.9 million, especially in Africa, Southeast Asia, parts of South America and the Middle East. Mary Watkins, who participated in writing the report esti-

mated that 80% of the world's nurses serve 50% of the world's population. Nursing has always been one of the world's highest-status and well-paid professions. The nursing talent is also one of the most urgently needed talents in the world. Therefore, nurses with deep professional knowledge, high comprehensive quality and excellent international communication ability have great advantages in terms of development prospects.

With the transformation of the concept of university education, the number of graduates has been increasing yearly. According to statistics from the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, the number of graduates in 2025 will reach 12.22 million, an increase of 430,000 from last year. However, there has been no significant increase in market demand, and the contradiction between social supply and demand remains prominent. The pressure on student employment is still very high. Due to its professional characteristics, nursing graduates encounter many difficulties in employment. How to make nursing graduates stand out in such a fierce employment environment and provide them with more opportunities and a broader market for employment market is a question that every nursing education institution and educator needs to consider [5]. According to the database of The World Bank, China's total labor force in 2022 was 780 million, far ahead of India (550 million) and the United States (170 million) [6]. In the face of no significant increase in domestic jobs, graduates have to compete with social personnel with work experience. Graduates obviously have no advantages, so employment abroad has become a good employment choice for graduates.

## 2. The Challenges of International Employment for Nursing Graduates

### 2.1. Intercultural Conflict

Intercultural conflict is the process of mutual opposition and mutual exclusion between different forms of culture or cultural elements. It not only refers to the conflict caused by the different cultural concepts of the host countries when operating in other countries, but also includes the conflict in an enterprise because employees belong to countries with different cultural backgrounds. As different countries (regions) have different cultural backgrounds, historical origins, customs and habits, people's ways of thinking and behavior patterns are very different. Also the concept of diseases and emergency medical services may be different [7]. Intercultural employment brings not only opportunities but also many challenges. In the intercultural work environment, nursing workers must face and adapt to new values, behavior norms and social etiquette as soon as possible. Otherwise, it may lead to misunderstandings in communication and emotional maladjustment. This can also complicate integration into new teams and Social Network Services.

An important principle of clinical nursing is to give different care for different people. If we want to achieve satisfactory health care, we need to understand the cultural background of the service object. So nursing workers should improve their cultural ability and cultural sensitivity through effective communication to understand the patient's cultural specificity needs, such as family visits, food preferences, pain and gender sensitivity [8]. Then, we should provide nursing measures in line with its cultural background. Cultural conflicts and cultural differences cause a large part of the problems in the nursing works. In the nursing diagnosis involving foreign patients, nursing professionals must understand the cultural background of the service objects. We need to communicate their feelings, and we can not impose our own cultural concepts, lifestyles and beliefs on the service objects of different cultures, which is also an important condition for good nursing work.

## 2.2. Communication Challenges

The target of international nursing work may come from different regions, which requires that nursing workers not only have professional nursing skills but also good communication skills. Language communication is the most important form of communication between doctors and patients. They convey, explain and care related information through language. The most common challenge of communication between doctors and patients is the language barrier in intercultural backgrounds. The most common communication challenge between doctors and patients is the language barrier, which may lead to errors or lack of information transmission between doctors and patients. It may affect patients to sign informed consent forms, etc. and also can affect patient's treatment, safety and health management [9].

Graduates need to constantly improve their language skills, including learning how to express their ideas and correctly understand the nonverbal signals of their patients. So we can provide accurate care. In the international workplace with cultural integration, intercultural communication skills are the skills that every employee must master. If we can respect cultural differences, use common language, accurately understand nonverbal communication and follow international workplace etiquette, it will help us adapt to the international workplace well.

Nonverbal communication is also important in international nursing work. Nonverbal communication is the information communication and expression in nonverbal ways such as appearance, posture, tone, gesture, expression, eye contact in the process of disease treatment [10]. Especially for some patients who suddenly loss the language expression ability caused by diseases. We need to pay attention to the emotional changes of patients, and provide psychological support through eye contact, encouraging words and appropriate physical contact to reduce their mental load.

## 3. The Path of Cultivating International Employment for Nursing Students

### 3.1. Revise the Talent Training Program to Enhance the Ability of International Employ for Nursing Students

In rapid development of the world economy, people pay more and more attention to their health. So nurses are more and more widely employed. "The Belt and Road" national strategy makes all industries provide products and services with international influence with new ideas and actions. In the field of health care, our nursing education, nursing management, nursing employment policy must quickly keep pace with the development of international nursing. The internationalization of talent and employment has become an irresistible development trend. In order to promote students to the international stage, universities should update the teaching concept, and revise the talent training program from the International perspective. We should revise the content and structure of the talent training program scientifically.

We can learn from Chinese-Foreign Cooperation schools, and invite foreign experts to participate in revising the talent training program. We can bring excellent foreign resources, including teaching, course, management and teaching evaluation into our teaching. We can employ foreign experts as full-time or part-time teachers to train and guide professional teachers in teaching and scientific research [11].

Set up the direction of "Foreign Nursing" in the nursing major and select excellent students to form a foreign nursing class. In the course content, we can appropriately add courses such as world country profile, interpersonal communication, international etiquette, etc., in order to cultivate general foreign nursing talents. These courses can effectively improve students' understanding of other cultures and enhance students' humanistic caring ability. Especially in the aspect of language, it can provide more abundant theoretical and practical courses. It also can bring speaking, listening, reading and writing into daily theory and operation courses. We can provide targeted foreign education and teaching for students who want to study abroad or engage in international nursing work so as to cultivate international advanced nursing talents.

### 3.2. Strengthen International Cooperation and Create International Employment Resources

Strengthen Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools and share foreign high-quality nursing education resources. With the internationalization of higher education, international cooperation projects have become an important part of the internationalization process of China's higher education, based on the purpose of promoting graduate employment. According to the supervision platform for Chi-

nese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, as of 2024, 24 nursing cooperation programs have been certified, covering undergraduate and master level education from 22 colleges and universities in 17 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions [12]. For example, Capital Medical University cooperates with Deakin University in Australia to organize the undergraduate education program in nursing. Shandong First Medical University cooperates with University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" in Italy to organize the undergraduate education program in nursing. Central South University cooperates with the University of California, San Francisco, USA to organize Master's education program in nursing.

We need to actively explore ways of international exchanges and cooperation in teaching, research, discipline construction, academic exchanges and social services. Comprehensively organize the exploration and practice of international nursing talent training, and select nursing teachers to participate in visiting study activities. To enter foreign schools and medical institution, to help us expand our international vision, and strengthen the quality of teachers and the concept of international nursing education. It can not only bring advanced educational ideas to teachers and students, but also play a positive role in promoting the construction of the nursing profession, talent training and connotation construction. This can also further improve the quality of nursing personnel training.

We should strive to develop short-term overseas exchange programs, and select nursing students to participate in overseas exchange studies, which can help students understand the local culture and social background, and deeply experience the local nursing and health concept. Relying on the international exchange program of the China Scholarship Council, the School of Nursing of Hunan University of Chinese Medicine selected outstanding undergraduates to go to Australian Catholic University for a three-month short-term exchange each year from 2016 to 2018. After participating in this project, students have obvious advantages in developing their thinking, awareness of Evidence-based nursing, team spirit and interpersonal communication skills [13]. Many hospitals in large and medium-sized cities in China have foreign-related outpatient clinics. Some joint venture and foreign hospitals are springing up in Beijing, Shanghai and other places. In the nursing student internship stage, we can provide internship opportunities in foreign or joint venture hospitals to learn operation, interpersonal communication, nursing etiquette and other skills, so that graduates can adapt to the international working environment in advance.

### 3.3. Clear Career Planning, Obtain Excellent Occupational Quality

Nurses are vital caregivers and play an important role in health systems, according to a new editorial in «The Lancet» .

Corona Virus Disease 2019 has strengthened the important role in the public mind, but it has not been reflected in protection and support in work. We should also think of nurses as scientists and leaders who need high quality education, clear career development plans, and investments commensurate with their responsibilities and roles in the health system.

A clear career plan can help graduates better face workplace challenges and ensure they can develop in the right direction. In the "The Belt and Road" environment, international talents should have the following key competencies: international vision and competitiveness, professional knowledge and skill, intercultural communication ability, career values, innovation ability and practical ability [14]. It is a key step for graduates to make a clear career development plan in intercultural employment. Graduates who want to engage in international nursing work should not only learn the basic knowledge of nursing, but also continuously strengthen their language skills, improve their understanding of different cultures, and get familiar with the international common nursing operation norms in academic planning.

## 4. Conclusion

With the accelerated aging of the global population, the shortage of nursing talent has become a common challenge for many countries. In response to this challenge, Germany, Singapore, Costa Rica and other countries have introduced relevant bills, increased government support and strengthened talent training. Their goal is to enhance the attractiveness of the elderly care industry, thereby motivating more young people to participate in this field and promoting its sustainable development.

In early 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Council of Nurses (ICN) and "Nursing Now" jointly released the first State of «The World's Nursing Report» [15], which proposes a global nursing strategy. The report notes that there is no global nursing workers that can be relevant to universal health and commensurate with the sustainable development goals. Today, there are many global social issues, such as climate change, human rights and health. Social problems that involve a wide range of countries often require international cooperation to solve effectively. As a result, there is an increased demand for talents with an international perspective and intercultural competence. Nursing graduates with intercultural communication, international collaboration and multicultural understanding will have more career opportunities in global platforms such as international non-governmental organizations, international government agencies and international medical institutions.

## Abbreviations

WTO	World Trade Organization
USA	United States of America



WHO World Health Organization  
 ICN International Council of Nurses

## Author Contributions

Jiang Junjun is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declared no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, author-ship, and publication of this article.

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