

Original Article

Factors Related to the Participation or Non-Participation in the University Study Abroad Program among Japanese Nursing Students

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Abstract

Introduction

It is important for nursing students to learn about diverse cultures and develop a positive attitude toward patients from different backgrounds. This study investigated factors that related to their participation in study abroad programs.

Method

We designed and conducted a mixed-methods cross-sectional study using an online self-reported questionnaire. We collected data as a part of class activities from 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year nursing students (n = 165) during the 2020 spring semester at a medical university in Tokyo, Japan. The university's Institutional Review Board approved this study.

Result

We analyzed data from 156 students, with an effective response rate of 94.5%. Overall, the median of their intercultural sensitivity score was 79.0. Students who had participated in the program (n=10) demonstrated a significantly higher intercultural sensitivity score (84.0) than those who had not (79.0). Factors related to participation in the program included the willingness to study or work abroad, length of stay abroad, and the number of foreign nationals in social vicinity. The most common reason for non-participation was a lack of confidence in English proficiency (n=75). The categorized conditions that could facilitate participation in the program comprised an improving support system (with increased financial and linguistic support), diversified content (increased program options and form of program), and flexible requirements for participation (expanding students' awareness of the program, increasing the pool of eligible participants, and improving conditions for participation).

Discussion

The nursing students in our study, who had participated in the program, showed a higher level of intercultural sensitivity than those who had not. However, it remained inferior to that of their Turkish and American counterparts. It is necessary for Japanese nursing students to learn about and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. The study abroad program could be an effective method to improve cultural sensitivity and competence.

Keywords : Intercultural sensitivity, Study abroad program, Nursing students

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