

ОБЩЕСТВЕНИ КОМУНИКАЦИИ И ИНФОРМАЦИОННИ НАУКИ
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**IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
TO ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF NURSES**

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Abstract: *The ever-worsening shortage of nursing staff is presenting the German healthcare system with far-reaching structural, organizational and staffing challenges. Against this backdrop, the international recruitment of nursing staff is becoming increasingly important. The population is ageing and there is a sustained increase in the demand for care. Consequently, the German healthcare system must overcome further new challenges in order to integrate recruited nursing staff into care facilities (Kathy Krüger 2017). This paper examines effective communication strategies for addressing the shortage of skilled nursing staff. As part of the study, interviews conducted by the author are analyzed and evaluated on a scientific basis with regard to the professional integration of foreign nursing staff.*

Keywords: *communication; recruitment; integration; international nursing staff; intercultural competence; multifocus; intercultural diversity*

INTRODUCTION

The shortage of nursing staff is one of the key and, at the same time, most persistent challenges facing modern healthcare systems, and has been the subject of intensive debate in the health and nursing sciences literature for several years. Despite numerous political reform initiatives, structural adjustments and a wide range of programs aimed at recruiting and retaining staff, the staffing situation in many care settings has not stabilized in the long term. On the contrary, numerous analyses reveal a continuing – and in some cases worsening – discrepancy between the rising demand for care and the number of qualified nursing staff available. (Hradecky, Sander 2024)

This is due to multifactorial developments encompassing demographic, labor market-related and organizational structural dimensions.

Against this backdrop, people from overseas backgrounds are increasingly being integrated into the care sector in Germany, and international recruitment measures are also being implemented. Integrating foreign care professionals with a migrant background who are already living in Germany is often easier than recruiting skilled workers from abroad. (Press Release 21 2025)

It is now recognized that a sustainable solution to the shortage of skilled workers goes far beyond simply recruiting staff from abroad. In addition to recruitment, retaining staff within one's own organization or company in the long term plays a particularly crucial role.

The complex processes – ranging from international recruitment, through recognition procedures and language training, to structural and cultural integration – require systematic and holistic working processes. Only through a coordinated approach can successful integration, stable collaboration and the long-term retention of nursing staff be guaranteed.

Communication processes, intercultural diversity management and organizational support structures play a central role in this regard. Intensive induction programs and transparent mentoring structures can be established as accompanying measures. These measures certainly entail additional staffing and financial resources.

However, one short-term benefit is the stabilization of staffing levels. In the long term, these measures open up opportunities for innovation, diversity of perspectives and improved problem-solving capabilities within the organization.

Overall, it can be concluded that the professional integration of foreign nursing staff requires a multidimensional and interdisciplinary strategy.

Against this backdrop, the integration of international nursing staff into care settings should not be viewed solely as a short-term solution to existing staff shortages, but rather as a long-term development task. Integration forms a central building block for ensuring stable, high-quality and resilient care provision in the context of demographic change and increasing systemic complexity.

This publication, or academic study, addresses this issue directly by systematically analyzing the significance and role of effective communication strategies and structures in the context of the recruitment, integration and retention of international nursing staff. The focus of the study is on the extent to which communicative processes, as a strategic management tool, can contribute to successful integration.

Following a review of the current state of research, the paper concludes by analyzing the associated structural and organizational challenges within the healthcare sector. The aim is to provide a scholarly context for the topic, to identify existing challenges and to highlight the relevance of the study against the backdrop of current developments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This academic publication is based on a systematic analysis of the literature and relevant documents, in which existing academic findings and relevant information were evaluated.

In addition, legal and institutional frameworks are taken into account, particularly with regard to the recognition of foreign professional qualifications, provisions under migration law, and labor law requirements in the healthcare sector.

The analysis is supplemented by expert interviews to gain a deeper understanding of the findings from practical experience. The qualitative data collected is analyzed on the basis of four key aspects. The following categories have been identified:

1. Communication processes in the context of international recruitment,
2. Linguistic and intercultural barriers to integration,
3. Organizational support and information structures, and
4. Factors contributing to the long-term retention of international nursing staff.

The chosen methodology thus enables a plausible and comprehensible holistic examination of the research subject.

RESULTS

The international recruitment process for nursing staff requires, in particular, clearly structured, transparent, target-group-specific and legally binding information. The quality of this information is a key prerequisite for managing complex decision-making processes in the context of cross-border recruitment. In particular, the reliability and traceability of the information communicated – for example, regarding recognition procedures, the framework of employment law, remuneration structures, career development opportunities and integration support – have a significant influence on the decision-making of all stakeholders involved.

For healthcare institutions and their management, communication serves as a strategic management tool in human resources management. In this context, managers make far-reaching decisions regarding whether, and to what extent, potential international professionals can be recruited to work within the respective healthcare system. These decisions are closely linked to the quality of the available information and the clarity of the legal and organizational framework.

Without a clear, consistent and legally sound basis for communication – both in dealings with state institutions and regulatory decision-makers, and with external recruitment agencies – it is only possible to a limited extent to make well-founded, responsible and sustainable staffing decisions.

At the same time, this reliance on transparent and reliable communication also applies from the perspective of international nursing staff themselves. They, too, face far-reaching, often life-changing decisions as part of their professional migration, which have a lasting impact on their career, social integration and personal circumstances. In the absence of clear, comprehensible and legally sound information on working conditions, recognition processes, language requirements and in-

tegration structures, uncertainty increases significantly, which can impair decision-making ability and reduce the willingness to migrate.

Against this backdrop, it becomes clear that successful international recruitment processes depend to a large extent on a communication structure that is consistent, transparent and legally sound for both parties. Communication thus functions not merely as an accompanying channel of information, but as a central, constitutive element in the decision-making and integration process of international healthcare professionals.

Following the arrival of internationally recruited nursing staff, various challenges continue to arise, presenting an adjustment period for both the staff themselves and the host organizations. Measures such as language support, intercultural orientation and structured induction programs play a key role in reducing uncertainty and promoting sustainable professional integration.

Furthermore, the long-term retention of international nursing staff is closely linked to the quality of organizational communication. A supportive working environment, a culture of open communication and continuous feedback promote job satisfaction and reduce staff turnover.

DISCUSSION

Based on ten guided interviews with managers and experts, it becomes clear that the successful recruitment and integration of international skilled workers cannot be viewed as an isolated process, but is always linked to organizational, cultural, linguistic and legal frameworks. The analysis thus highlights that integration and retention must be viewed as multidimensional, long-term processes that need to take into account both structural and individual factors.

In the area of recruitment, the findings show that the respondents perceive the recruitment processes for international professionals as complex and multi-stage. Administrative and regulatory hurdles are mentioned particularly frequently, including recognition procedures, residence permit requirements and time-consuming bureaucratic processes. These factors not only prolong the recruitment process but also create uncertainty on the part of both the organizations and the applicants. Added to this are language requirements, which play a central role in the healthcare sector as they are directly linked to patient safety, inter-professional collaboration and documentation obligations.

At the same time, it is clear that language deficits should not be viewed solely as an individual problem for healthcare professionals; rather, institutions also bear a responsibility with regard to language support, induction and accompanying support measures. In this context, the high level of motivation among many international nursing professionals and the increasing professionalization of international recruitment structures – for example, through specialized recruitment agencies or state-funded programs – are highlighted as positive factors. According to the respondents, successful recruitment processes also depend to a large extent on good organizational preparation, in particular on clearly structured onboarding programs, designated points of contact and teams with an awareness of intercultural issues.

Analysis of the barriers to integration shows that language and communication difficulties are among the greatest challenges. In particular, communication using specialist terminology in everyday clinical practice is described as demanding, as it affects not only direct contact with patients but also teamwork and documentation processes. Inadequate language skills can lead to misunderstandings and thus impair both the organization of work and patient safety.

At the same time, linguistic integration is understood as an ongoing developmental process that can be accelerated through targeted training and support programs. In addition to linguistic aspects, organizational shortcomings are identified as a further key barrier. The lack of standardized induction and integration programs, unclear lines of responsibility and a shortage of time available for mentoring colleagues significantly hinder the integration of new staff. As a result, integration processes often depend on the resilience of individual teams or managers, rather than being systematically underpinned at an institutional level. Furthermore, social integration within the team is described as a key factor. Cultural differences in communication styles, attitudes to work or understandings of hierarchy can lead to friction and require a high level of intercultural competence on

the part of managers and teams. Furthermore, administrative and legal frameworks – in particular procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications – are regarded as time-consuming and, in some cases, opaque and complicated, which further complicates the integration process.

Particular mention should be made of the mentoring programs in place at some institutions, which help staff navigate this phase by providing clear responsibilities, ongoing professional support and language guidance. This initial phase is regarded as crucial to the decision to remain with the organization in the long term. Furthermore, working conditions and the overall organizational framework play a central role. In particular, adequate staffing levels, reliable rota planning, family-friendly working time arrangements and fair remuneration structures are cited. These conditions have a direct impact on staff job satisfaction and their willingness to remain with the organization. Equally important is an appreciative organizational and leadership culture. Recognition, respectful communication and supportive leadership behavior are described as essential prerequisites for a stable employment relationship. A lack of appreciation or emotional support, by contrast, is regarded as a factor contributing to staff turnover.

In addition, the respondents did not regard the importance of further training and professional development opportunities as a priority. It was striking that several interviewees reported that foreign nursing staff initially show little interest in additional professional development measures.

According to the experts, this is linked, amongst other things, to the stressful experiences during the recruitment and recognition process.

Many nursing staff wish to focus initially on language acquisition upon their arrival and prefer to avoid the additional time commitment involved in further training.

An open, appreciative and diversity-oriented organizational culture facilitates social and professional integration, as diversity is perceived as a resource rather than a burden. By contrast, hierarchical or closed organizational structures in healthcare settings can reinforce existing barriers to integration. Managers play a key role here, as their behavior significantly influences the cultural character of an organization. They act as multipliers who shape the culture of integration through communication, attitude and by setting an example.

Furthermore, it is emphasized that not only formal structures but also informal social interactions in day-to-day working life are crucial for an inclusive atmosphere. A positive team atmosphere and actively encouraged social contacts foster a sense of belonging and help to break down reservations.

With regard to the political and legal framework, the picture is mixed. There have recently been several reforms designed to facilitate labor migration. Nevertheless, their practical implementation is often regarded as inadequate. Complex recognition and visa procedures are the subject of particular criticism.

All interviewees complained of a discrepancy between political objectives and administrative reality. The respondents therefore see a clear need to simplify, standardize and digitize procedures in order to make the recruitment of international skilled workers more effective.

The interviewees cited retention rates, staff turnover and length of employment as key indicators for measuring success. In addition, subjective factors such as job satisfaction, a sense of belonging, and social and cultural integration were cited as crucial indicators.

CONCLUSION

It can be inferred from the findings of this study that sustainable relief cannot be achieved through isolated recruitment measures. It requires a multifaceted, integrated interplay of several components and effective retention strategies.

In particular, the interviews highlight that communication acts as a key strategic factor at all levels and in all phases for all those involved in the recruitment and integration of skilled workers. Transparent information sharing, language support and interculturally sensitive communication structures are essential prerequisites for ensuring that international nursing staff are not only recruited but also successfully integrated into existing work contexts. Appreciative communication processes fulfil a multidimensional function at all levels and stages, and for all those involved: they

reduce uncertainties whilst simultaneously promoting growth, identification and the capacity for development among the people and systems involved.

Furthermore, the study makes it clear that the shortage of nursing staff in the German health-care system can only be addressed sustainably if the recruitment, integration and retention of international nursing staff are understood as a multidimensional process.

It is particularly worth emphasizing that successful international recruitment relies on transparent, reliable and target-group-specific information structures. At the same time, it is clear that language support, intercultural awareness and clear organizational processes are crucial prerequisites for successful integration. Without these elements, uncertainties persist which can hinder both professional integration and long-term retention.

The analysis also highlights that organizational conditions have a significant influence on the success of integration. An appreciative leadership culture, structured induction processes, ongoing professional development opportunities and an open corporate culture not only promote job satisfaction but also foster a sense of belonging among international professionals. This makes it clear that staff retention is determined not solely by individual motivation, but to a large extent by institutional and cultural conditions.

From a scientific perspective, this study helps to define communication within the international nursing context as a strategic factor for success. It demonstrates that communicative processes are closely linked to organizational development, intercultural competence and the quality of care. The study thus broadens the perspective on the shortage of nursing staff to include a communicative and organizational dimension, which should be given greater consideration in future strategies.

In conclusion, it can be stated that international nursing staff should be viewed not as a short-term stopgap solution, but as a permanent component of a sustainable healthcare system. Their successful integration requires a holistic action plan that systematically links recruitment, language training, cultural integration and long-term retention. Further research should therefore focus in particular on the effectiveness of specific communication and integration strategies, as well as taking greater account of the perspectives of the nursing professionals themselves.

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ПРИЛАГАНЕ НА ЕФЕКТИВНИ КОМУНИКАЦИОННИ СТРАТЕГИИ ЗА СПРАВЯНЕ С НЕДОСТИГА НА МЕДИЦИНСКИ СЕСТРИ

Резюме: Все по-задълбочаващият се недостиг на медицински персонал поставя германската здравна система пред структурни, организационни и кадрови предизвикателства. На този фон международното набиране на медицински персонал придобива все по-голямо значение. Населението застарява и се наблюдава траен ръст на търсенето на грижи. Вследствие на това германската здравна система трябва да преодолее още нови предизвикателства, за да интегрира наетия медицински персонал в заведенията за грижи (Kathy Krüger 2017). Настоящата статия разглежда ефективни комуникационни стратегии за справяне с недостига на квалифициран медицински пер-

сонал. Като част от изследването интервютата, проведени от автора, се анализират и оценяват на научна основа по отношение на професионалната интеграция на чуждестранния медицински персонал.

Ключови думи: комуникация; набиране на персонал; интеграция; международен медицински персонал; межкултурна компетентност; многоаспектен подход; межкултурно многообразие

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