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SOCIAL SERVICES, HEALTH AND SPORTS

# LANGUAGE BARRIER IN CLINICAL PRACTICES FOR IMMIGRANT REGISTERED NURSES

E-poster

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## Abstract

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>A significant number of registered nurses have migrated for better careers in other countries due to globalization. A considerable number of registered nurses have chosen Finland for better employment opportunities. In their performing clinical practice trails in Finnish health care organizations, language barriers were found to be a pertinent enabler of working terminations of immigrant registered nurses. Therefore, the current thesis aimed to explore the language barriers that immigrant registered nurses face in clinical practice.</p> <p>This thesis was conducted as a development work. This thesis aimed at designing an E-poster that would elucidate the obstacles that language barrier posed, and the effects it had on working performance of immigrant registered nurses in the Finish healthcare facilities. To collect and enhance information for an E-poster, literature research was used. The working life partner for development work was Savonia University of Applied Sciences. This E-poster will be used as an information and guidance tool in Savonia UAS for new international health care students.</p> <p>This E-poster, sample and abstract of the thesis, outlines the challenges and their effects on working outcomes of immigrant registered nurses. Importance of peer support to reduce language barrier has been mentioned too in the E-poster. By tailoring it to a particular workplace, future research could enhance the present product.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Clinical practice, language barrier, registered nurses, immigrants, E-poster</p>	

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary healthcare settings have become increasingly culturally diverse due to globalization. The healthcare system of Finland is based on the public healthcare services that are provided to every individual residing in the country. As per the constitution of Finland, the public authorities guarantee that everyone has rights to enough health, social, and medical facilities. (EU 2023.) There are 21 wellbeing counties that operate in Finland, for example the Wellbeing County of North Savo or Pohjois-Savo Hyvinvointialue (PSHVA) in Finnish and serve as service providers to ensure the wellbeing of the patients (STM 2023). The Wellbeing County of North Savo provides many services, some of them are primary health services for people which includes reception and inpatient care at health centers, first aid services, oral healthcare, elderly care services, and working-age services (PSHVA s.a.). In addition, private health sector also works in Finland for example Mehiläinen and it maintain high quality and monitor the effectiveness of treatment (Mehiläinen 2024). Since the early 2000s, nurse responsibilities have evolved as critical components of hospital care, Pratt (2014) mentions in his research that nursing today is one of the most pursued jobs across the globe. He also described that, internationally nursing has been attracting a significant amount of interest, in terms of both profession and research.

Many countries have integrated culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) nurses. Studies suggest that nurses need support for integrating into a foreign or diverse range of cultures. (Ropponen et al. 2023.) Tideman and Tengelin (2019) suggest that the language barrier has long been a problem that exists within the healthcare system. Since nurses are found to be the first individual who encounters patients, the language barrier is the first concern for them (Gerchow, Burka, Miner & Squires 2021). The differences in languages lead to a varying number of challenges. The difference in language often causes an inability for the nurses to understand the symptoms and complaints of the patients. As a nurse, it is important to understand the health problem of a patient to provide adequate patient care. The relationship between nurses and patients is based on mutual understanding and communication. The nurses with poor proficiency in Finnish language are unable to provide efficient care and on the other hand, patients at times are also unable to express their feelings and anxiety in such a situation. (Finncare.fi s.a.) This determines that there is a need for a strategy to cope with this challenge. Finland has been addressing this situation because of immigrants coming from around the world. (infoFinland.fi s.a.). There is a lot of supporting evidence about Finnish language barrier in the clinical practice for registered nurses (Finncare.fi s.a.).

The purpose of this development work was to produce an E-poster that contains information about how language barriers impact the clinical practice of immigrant registered nurses. The thesis was conducted as a development work in which the author tested a set of proposed learning Vocabulary presented in the introduction of the thesis. Another important working life partner of development work is Savonia UAS. The aim of this development work is to outline the supporting ways that are required for immigrant nurses to recognize the barriers affecting their clinical practice.

## 2 IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE BARRIER ON FINLAND'S HEALTHCARE SECTOR

A language barrier, commonly called a communication barrier, results from individuals concerned speaking different languages (Van Rosse, de Bruijne, Suurmond, Essink-Bot & Wagner 2016). Al Shamsi, Almutairi, Al Mashrafi & Al Kalbani (2020) determined that the language barrier between the healthcare providers and patients has a major impact on the quality of healthcare especially when they do not share native language. Regardless of the language barriers, healthcare providers are required to deliver high-quality healthcare facilities. Nurses belonging to different cultures and ethnicities should be aware of the working environment as a whole, Finnish nursing environment and Finnish language. (Mattila, Pitkäljärvi & Eriksson 2010.)

### 2.1 An insight on nursing education in Finland

Nursing education is a structured and comprehensive process that enables nurses to become qualified and competent. The program of nursing education varies in length and context while sharing a common goal among all the students. Nursing education consists of theoretical and practical training. This prepares them for the purpose of performing their duties as nursing care professionals. (Savonia UAS 2023.) Nursing education in Finland is regarded as focused on evidence-based practice and quality (Kielo, Suhonen, Salminen & Stolt 2019). Finnish nursing education program includes 210 ECTS, and it further divides into 180 ECTS of basic studies and 30 ECTS of elective studies (Savonia UAS 2023).

Nursing is a governed profession by which its practice depends on fulfilling obligatory conditions set in legislations according to Finnish National Agency for Education (OPH s.a). These prerequisites include completion of nursing training program and authorization to practice in the health care field (Health Care Professional Act 559/1994; EU-healthcare.fi 2023; Finnish Nurses Association s.a.). The nurse's specialist role encompasses competences in areas such as ethics, health promotion, nursing decision-making, supervision and instruction, collaboration, research and development work, management, multicultural nursing, social activity, clinical nursing, and pharmacotherapy (Numminen 2010).

Based on Savonia UAS (2023) curriculum Nurse's competencies include following main areas:

- 1) Client centeredness
- 2) Understanding and balancing moral values in nursing
- 3) Leadership and entrepreneurship
- 4) State and functioning of social and health care system
- 5) Clinical nursing
- 6) Enabling of the doctrine of evidence-based practice and decision making
- 7) Education and teaching
- 8) The improvement of general population's health and functional ability
- 9) Quality and safety of social and health care services

In recent years, nearly half of nursing studies occur in diverse healthcare organizations and educational settings. Consequently, students gain essential theoretical knowledge and the practical skills

to apply during internships, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the nurse's competence. (Savonia UAS 2023.)

## 2.2 Communicational obstacles in nursing clinical practices

Regarding the nursing profession, communication is a basic aspect in the performance of their duties. It considerably involves sharing information, social interactions, and caring conversations (Jirwe, Gerrish & Emami 2010) and it is needed to ensure safety of the patient in daily hospital care situations (Van Rosse et al. 2016). Moreover, McCarthy, Cassidy, Graham & Tuohy (2013) determine that culture and communication are closely linked with one another. Cultural differences have an impact on communication and understanding. Registered nurses in the healthcare setting may need to navigate cultural sensitivities while adapting to competent care. The quality of communication has a direct impact on the clinical care for patients. (De Moissac & Bowen 2019.) The healthcare providers are in need of language assistance as they could provide healthcare facilities to individuals (Kale & Syed 2010).

The effect of the language barrier in intercultural communication in healthcare has been well-explained in previously conducted studies of De Moissac & Bowen, (2019) and Kale & Syed, (2010). In addition, during the previous years, nursing involvement with clinical practices has changed, because of advanced medical technology and assumption of new responsibilities which were previously performed by doctors (Pratt 2014). Individuals seeking jobs tend to travel to different countries across the globe and among them, nurses are at the top (Socha-Dietrich & Dumont 2021). There are many reasons causing this brain drain, for example, Finnish language barrier is creating job dissatisfaction, burnout and therefore intention to leave (Ambani, Kutney-Lee & Lake 2020). This brain drain can be covered by giving opportunities to specialized immigrants in Finnish nursing institution (Shahzad, Ali, Younas & Tayaben 2021). Additionally, nursing leadership must be used to bring improvements in clinical practice by assisting and supporting foreign nurses during struggling phase (Fulton, Mayo, Walker & Urden 2019). This can positively impact the working outcomes of the nurses in general and will result in error free clinical care provision (De Moissac & Bowen 2019).

The ideal working environment for nurses is characterized by several factors. These include a supportive management, professionalism, and a balanced work schedule. Policy reforms and regulations are required to create a healthy working environment for registered nurses. In addition, healthcare sector also needs to focus on learning and development of the registered nurses. (Hegazy, Ibrahim, Shokry & El Shrief 2021.) Furthermore, Van Bogaert, van Heusden, Timmermans & Franck (2014), examined that stress and well-being of the nurses are some of the key indicators of the working conditions within the healthcare setting.

Stress free nursing practices increase job satisfaction among registered nurses (Alharbi, Wilson, Woods & Usher 2016). The clearer the connection between nurse practice, job outcome, and assessment on quality of life, the more job satisfaction and the lesser likelihood of leaving the job. In addition, as a viable solution these studies suggested that this can also be achieved by providing language proficiency training to the registered nurses. (Masum, Azad, Hoque, Beh, Wanke & Arslan 2016.)

### 2.3 Patient's satisfaction

Language barrier was identified as a reason for patient's lack of confidence in receiving quality care in Canada. In this study, most patients described delays in treatment because of language barriers, i.e., use of English language in French speaking areas. This created a gap in understanding of health care providers that also raised patient's concerns, struggling to find the correct terms, or having the provider repeat questions, thus prolonging the assessment process. The results of the study suggested that there is a significant need for more robust and practically usable language support in the emergency departments. (De Moissac & Bowen 2019.)

### 2.4 Responsibilities of registered nurses and peer support in clinical practice

Registered nurses (RNs) and nurse practitioners (NPs) are at the forefront of delivering quality care to patients (Atefi, Abdullah & Wong 2016). Cho, Min, Heo, Lee & Kim (2023), examined that the clinical practice for registered nurses usually involves a range of responsibilities. These include patient assessment, direct patient care, collaboration with the healthcare team and patient education. The study of Lukewich et al. (2022), has examined the effectiveness of registered nurses within acute care and long-term care settings. The evidence derived in this review further supports the positivist assertion that RNs positively affect patient outcomes within primary care that include satisfaction, enablement, quality of life, self-efficacy, and improved health behaviors.

Effective communication among nurses and also within clinical teams is important (Flores, Abreu, Barone, Bachur & Lin 2012). First, as a part of clinical practice, nurses should be able to convey health-related information accurately. Secondly, nurses should be well equipped theoretically as well as practically to provide patient care. (Mormina & Pinder 2018.) Language proficiency is one way to equip nurses to better understand the needs and preferences of the patients. These builds trust that can lead to enhanced patient compliance with better health outcomes. (De Moissac & Bowen 2019.) Moreover those hospitals and healthcare institutions that invest in the language training of health care providers understand cultural sensitivity, and this adds value to the treatment options (Bausewein et al. 2018).

Peer support is an important component in clinical practice. Miscommunication in the healthcare sector can be life-threatening for the patient. Nurses who tend to face difficulty in communication need peer support. (Alshammari, Duff & Guilhermino 2019.) To encounter the miscommunication, language interpreter is of great help (Al Shamsi et al. 2020). In addition, having a peer support considerably contributes to provide a higher level of quality care to patients (Karaca & Durna 2019). It facilitates the bridging of cultural gaps between healthcare providers and patients (Squires 2018). The nurses within the healthcare setting are also encouraged to seek support from their colleagues who can interpret the patient's language effectively (Jirwe, Gerrish & Emami 2010). The shared decision-making considerably helps the nurses to take charge of care e.g., making and monitoring the nursing care plan effectively (Ellahham 2021).

### 3 PURPOSE AND AIM

The purpose of this development work was to produce an E-poster that contains information about how language barriers impact the clinical practice of immigrant registered nurses.

The aim of this development work is to outline the supporting ways that are required for immigrant nurses to recognize the barriers affecting their clinical practice.

## 4 DEVELOPMENT WORK

### 4.1 Theoretical description of the development method

The aim of this development work is to outline the supporting ways that are required for immigrant nurses to recognize the barriers affecting their clinical practice. Requirements for development work are to evaluate the current situation, to search for and value alternatives, to define goals and to decide means and ways to acquire the goals (Kananen & Gates 2011, 151). Mainly development research can be described as intervention-based research (Daniels 2008). Primarily, it functions as a research methodology that centers on the development, creation, and assessment of instructional materials. Developmental research is just one of many studies approaches that can offer practitioners valuable data. The unique aspect of this is its emphasis on the planning, production, and evaluation of products and processes. (Richey & Klein 2005, 23-38.) My thesis focuses on the problems faces by immigrant registered nurses during the clinical practice due to language barrier. I did research on this topic using reliable data research sources. I chose the development work method for my thesis because I wanted to develop a tool which can help to do better understanding of this issue. Therefore, to achieve the goal of carrying out development research work, adequate planning, production, as well as evaluation of the ideas established is obligatory. This thesis will cover phases of planning, and design of E-poster.

### 4.2 Designing the E-Poster

An E-Poster poster is a monochrome or multi coloured sheet of paper. A poster. A poster serves the purpose of communicating information, providing guidance, and inspiring individuals. The process of creating a poster involves several processes, including the formulation of information, the design of the composition, and the arrangement and rearrangement of elements to enhance its attractiveness. (Duchin & Sherwood 1990, 205-208.) The electronic form of poster is known as E-poster. Normally the rules of making an E-poster are the same as for the normal paper poster. These rules include choice of color, clear-cut information, not too long text, and reasonable flow of information. (Masters, Gibbs & Sandars 2015, 1-9.) The poster should be designed in such a way that it should be appealing to attract the spectators. To create an effective poster, it is important to consider elements such as content, layout, color choice, imagery, and the use of positive and negative space (Berg & Hicks, 2017, 461-469). The poster should primarily consist of essential information presented through visuals such as photos or graphs, minimizing the use of superfluous words (Goodhand et al. 2011, 138). I chose an E-poster because it gives a quick and brief description of my research work which I have done in my development work.

### 4.3 Implementation of the E-poster

The E-poster should be made to be visually captivating in order to attract viewers. To create an effective E-poster, it is important to consider elements such as content, layout, color choice, imagery, and the use of positive and negative space (Berg & Hicks, 2017, 461-469). Google search was made by the author to choose the best software to make this E-poster. In the end, this E-poster was made using power point software, as this tool is easy to use and is familiar to the author. However, the author spent quite a lot of time learning how to use PowerPoint tool to design an E-poster

through educational videos and google search. A good color combination was used to provide an E-poster with an aesthetic feature while keeping the poster simple. So that audience not distracted because of lot of colors and text. Short sentences were used in design. The author tried to keep only the main message in an E-poster. To get a final E-poster contents arrangement, colors, fonts, layouts, and images were altered multiple times. The content in the E-poster was based on literature review. Below, the author provided a summarized outline of how she started the process of creating an E-poster.

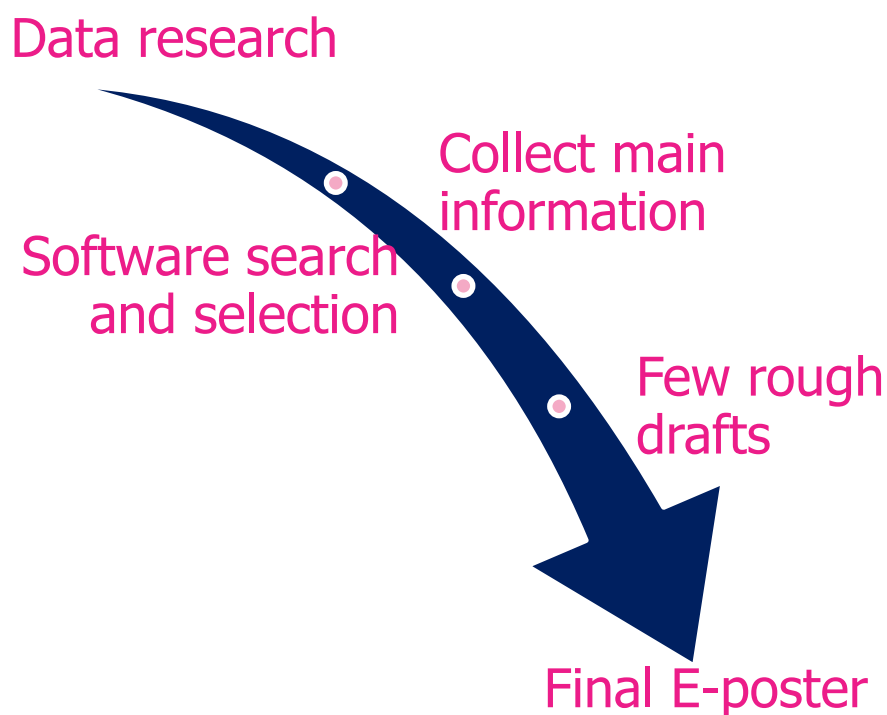


FIGURE 1. Process of creating an E-poster

## 5 DISCUSSION

This development work explored the effects of language barriers on immigrants registered nurses s clinical practice. The purpose of this thesis was to produce an E-poster that contains information about how language barriers impact the clinical practice of immigrant registered nurses. In this development work, I tried to discuss the problems and outcomes faced by immigrant registered nurse due to lack of proper command on native language. Figure 2 describes briefly main issues which can occur because of language barrier.



FIGURE 2. Impacts of language barrier

The final product of this development work was an E-poster that pays attention to the problems and challenges faced by immigrant registered nurses because of language barriers. This E-poster highlighted some ways and supporting environment for immigrant registered nurses to reduced language barrier induced problems. To make an E-poster, content was taken from literature review for communication barrier for immigrant nurses in clinical practice. After getting results of literature review, E-poster was made by using selected software. After discussion with thesis supervisor, final version of the E-poster was added to this thesis.

### 5.1 Evaluation of development work and output

The idea for E-poster came because author observed problems and challenges which immigrant nurses faced during clinical practice. There was no large amount of research available on this topic. Only few numbers of research were found relating to communication barrier for immigrant nurses in

clinical practice in Finland from research database. The research database used for this thesis were Google Scholar and PubMed. Only a small number of research were found on this topic by using search database i.e. Google Scholar and CINAHL complete from 2000 to 2024. Based on these search results, it was found that immigrant registered nurses face problems due to language barrier during clinical practice worldwide. The figure below gives a quick description how changes happened in clinical practice as result of increased globalization.

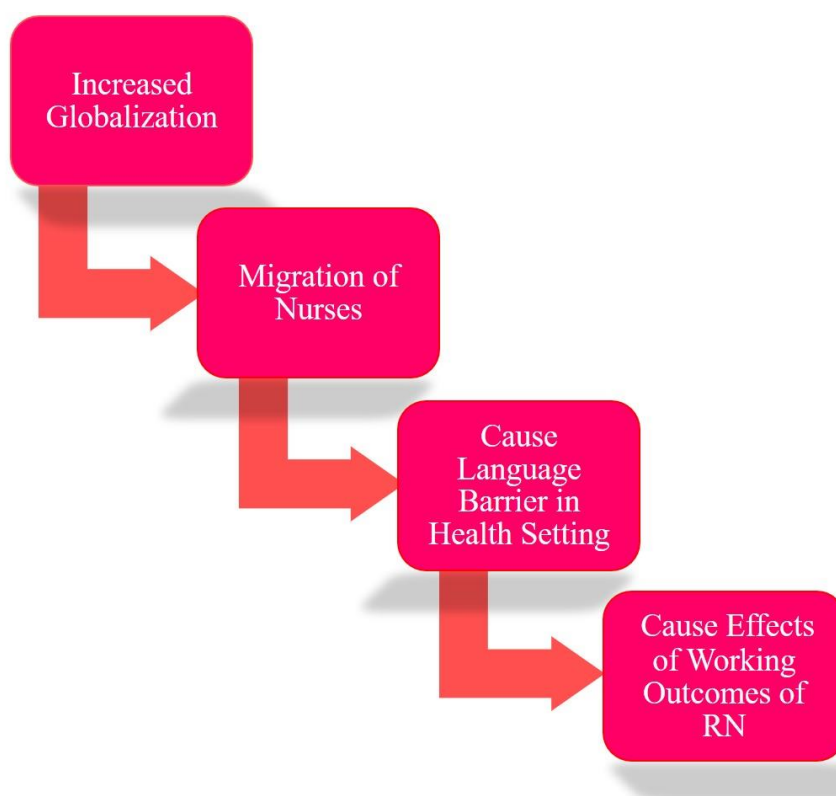


FIGURE 3. Effect of globalization on nursing profession

The process of production of E-poster contains summarization of data which was obtained from literature review and made an E-poster with help of power point software. This procedure took quite a lot of time because of making corrections and to avoid spelling mistakes, to choose good and appealing colour and fonts to make a good poster based on literature review.

The evaluation process was planned initially when author started this thesis process, and the author was really interested in this evaluation part to check feedback of her research work. Unfortunately, this part was not conducted as it was planned due to some personal issues. One of the reasons was shortage of time.

## 5.2 Ethicality and reliability

This development work followed all ethical research practices and considered the ethical principles relevant to all research efforts. In the course of thesis writing the author has used ethical recommendation for thesis writing of the University of Applied Sciences ARENE. As for the structure of the paper, it was stipulated that a supervisor was to be assigned to the author of this paper from the

beginning of the process. The author took guidance from supervisor when needed. The topic, objectives, and key areas of concentration for the development work were discussed and mutually agreed upon with the supervisor. In the course of literature search, the major databases like Cinhal Complete, PubMed, GoogleScholar etc were being mostly used and majorly the supervisor vouched for the reliability, authenticity and relevance of the data. Librarian from Savonia UAS also guided about search sources and databases to find information related to topic. The author made references for all articles used to write her thesis and followed the standard guidelines of references provided by Savonia UAS to avoid plagiarism. During the thesis writing process, thesis supervisor also helped and guided the author in ethics and reliability.

The literature review for this development work was conducted using research obtained from a renowned database. The author has additionally conducted a thorough evaluation and obtained confirmation from the supervisor regarding the sufficiency of the theoretical work. In conclusion, all the developmental stages have been described systematically with a brief conclusion of the author.

### 5.3 Learning experience of development work

The purpose of writing a thesis is to enhance the student's overall professional competency, both in general and in their specific field, which is necessary for success in a professional setting (HAMK UAS 2023). In terms of general skills, the author used her time management and problem-solving skills to write this thesis. As an inexperienced researcher, the author learnt how to conduct authentic, reliable research of relative literature for writing a thesis. The author also learnt and improved her knowledge about evidence-based practice and decision making. This competence is much needed during clinical practice. By guidance of thesis supervisor about ethics and reliability, the author learnt more about these skills in detail. This thesis writing process also enhance ability of author in education and teaching competence. The author can now create fresh content for clinical practice and make proper use of the instructional and guidance materials already in existence. The communication skill of the author was already quite good but during this writing process it became more advanced. Throughout the writing process, the author used to communicate with supervisors, graphic designers, and librarians via emails and WhatsApp. For better communication, it is quite important to write a clear message. It will help to save the time during thesis writing process.

### 5.4 Applicability and future research

With regards to the relevance, the work resulting from this thesis would serve as study material for international students majoring in nursing. Besides, it could be manual in form of a wall poster or E-poster to the hospitals, which employs immigrant registered nurses. As well as this poster can be used by recruiting firms to guide newly recruited international nurses to get an idea about the language barrier challenges after starting work in hospitals.

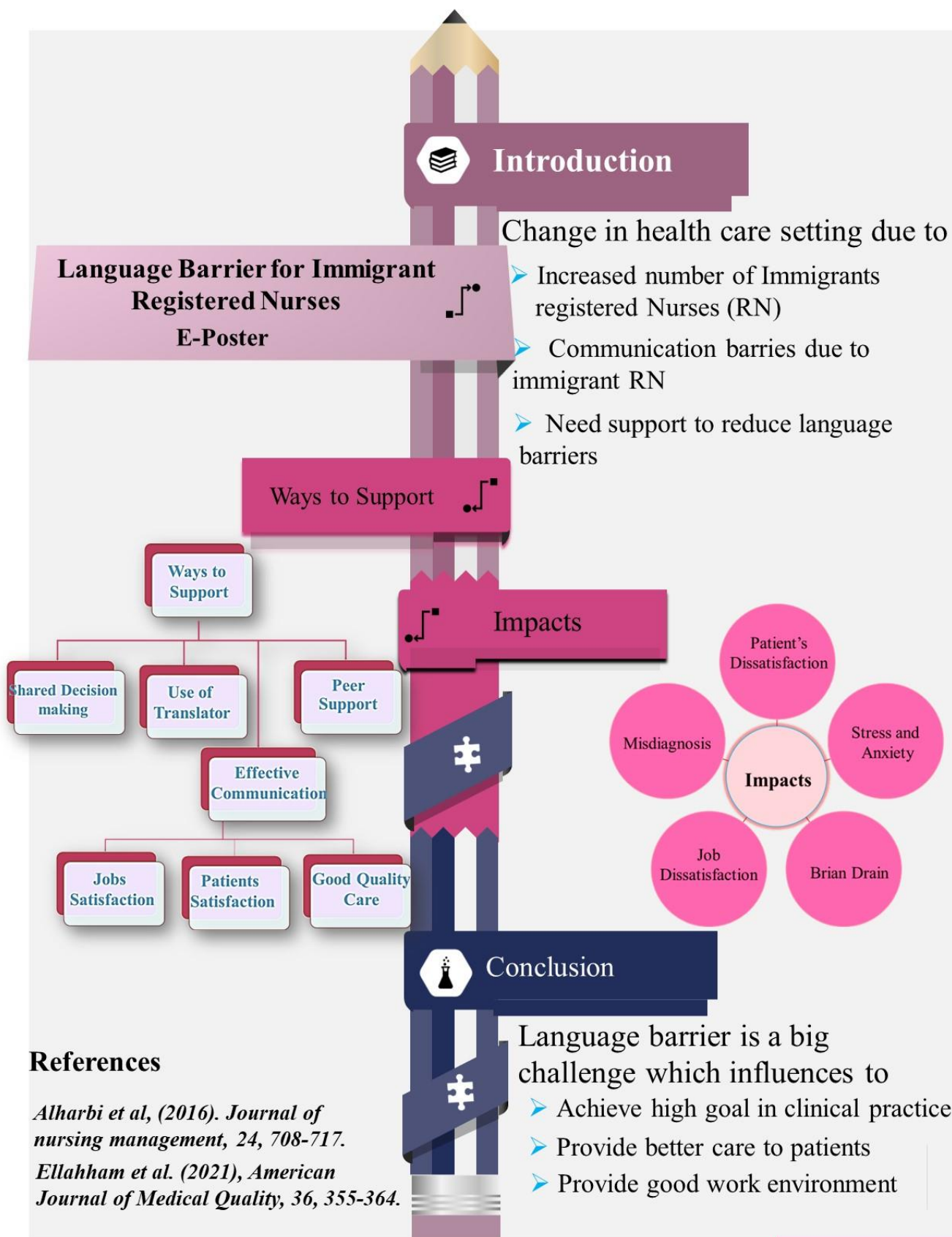
Further studies and research could be performed on communication challenges to immigrant nurses and its impact on their clinical practice. Based on this development work I would like to recommend that more evidence-based research should be done on this topic. Any further research also be helpful for immigrant registered nurse to understand and improve their language learning skill. In addition, I will recommend peer support involvement too for better understanding of native language.

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