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**FOREIGN-BORN PRACTICAL NURSES AND SOCIAL CARE  
WORKERS CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING QUALITY OF  
CARE TO THE ELDERLY IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN FIN-  
LAND**



## ABSTRACT

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Foreign-Born practical nurses and social care workers challenges in promoting quality of care to the elderly in the Institutional care in Finland.

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The aim of this research was to identify and acknowledge experiences and challenges encountered by foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers which had influenced them in providing quality care and social support in the institutional care for the elderly people. This thesis investigated the challenges that may have impacted the quality of care provided by Foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers.

A qualitative method was utilized by interviewing three foreign social welfare professionals who were all working in the same institutional care unit. Semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the research questions to collect the research data. The interviews were analysed with thematic analysis.

The results of this research have been grouped into two main themes: the challenges faced by foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers and the solutions for these challenges. Language difficulties, need for recognition workload and working hours were identified as challenges, while training, language courses and better management has been suggested as a solution for these challenges.

In conclusion, this research has indicated the presence of some challenges faced by the foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers in the institutional care. Further studies are needed to determine more concrete solutions to meet these challenges.

**Keywords:** Social welfare professionals, foreign-born practical nurses, social care workers, institutional care, quality of care

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The ageing of Finland's population is one of the most significant challenges for long-term social policy. Finland's population is aging faster than most of other EU countries of the OECD countries, with only Japan having a faster aging population than Finland. The proportion of the elderly population will rise to the second largest by 2030. The elderly are major consumers of social and health services in Finland. Demographic developments changes therefore put significant upward pressure on the growing need for work force into the elderly care sector (Seniori-Suomi, 2003).

In 1950, the amount of the elderly persons who were over 65 years represented 6.6 % of the whole population. In 2019, the amount of the same elderly persons represented 22.3 % of the whole population. The statistics has shown how the elderly population have grown more than 15.7 percent of the whole population from the past 70 years until now in Finland. The statistics predicted a continuous growth of the elderly in the future (Statistics Finland, 2020).

This elderly is identified through an age scale and life expectancy that has been estimated to grow more to 1.2 billion in 2025 and worstly to two billion in 2050 in developing countries. Therefore, ageing is a natural process that represents a unique challenge for all parts of the society. Despite the controversial definition of Elderly, it is still defined as people with a chronological age of 65 years and above with a real progress in promoting healthcare services in institutional care (Shrivastava, 2013).

Institutional care includes, for example, help with everyday routines, rehabilitation, support and guidance, recreational activities and health care or treatments. The purpose of institutional care, too, is to secure as well as possible functional abilities for an elderly client. (City of Helsinki, n.d).

Foreign-born health and social care professionals who are working in elderly care have been increasing rapidly for the last decade. A shortage of labour in the near future in Finland may forecast to worsen in the health sector, especially in elderly care. The foreign- born professionals are in demand in the work force for elderly care (Sttk, 2020).

Several elderly home care providers in Finland have encountered cases of neglect over the elderly which had led to a poor-quality care. The inefficiency of the care had

alarmed the Finnish government and authorities and as a result investigations were initiated into the cause of this neglect in some of the elderly care institutions. The outcomes of these investigations have revealed other ground and complaints from practical nurses that were related to poor quality care such as lack of task forces and overload of unrelated duties to the health care professionals. (Stojanovic, 2019).

In January 2019, National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) received many notifications of complaints about the quality of social care provided in elderly homes and the responsibilities of the care were quickly attributed and transferred to the related municipality. The reasons for the complaints were simply associated to the lack of staff and poor quality of care. These complaints had triggered the Finnish social and health authorities to intervene and initiate extensively a massive operation of inspections around many private elderly homes in Finland. These inspections around the country had led to several suspensions and periodic penalty payments to a few of the cases in which some private elderly care companies had to improve issues related to social services, safety and increase in staff. (STT, 2019).

## 2 AIM AND PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

The number of foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers working in elderly care has been increasing rapidly for the last decade. It is crucial and relevant to hear the challenges and experiences encountered by the key actors involved in the promotion of welfare, social support, wellbeing of the services users and the impact made in institutional care or working life communities. And whether these challenges may influence the quality of the care they provide or not.

The aim of this research was to identify and acknowledge experiences and challenges encountered by foreign-born practical nurses and social workers which had influenced them in providing quality care and social support in the institutional care in Finland. The challenges that will be expressed by the foreign social welfare professionals during our collection of data will be acknowledged and interpreted as their own perceptions.

The purpose of this research was to find and provide valuable information and solutions that could be used in the future to solve the challenges that are met by foreign practical nurses and social workers in the Finnish elderly home care to improve the quality of care and social support to the elderly.

The research questions were chosen to help us identify the issues and problems met by social welfare professionals who practical nurses and social workers were. On the other hand, these qualitative research questions were used to help to get answers that responded to the type of needs and actions that should be considered to improve the foreign-born social welfare working conditions, the well-being, quality of health and social care of the elderly in the institutional care.

According to Agee (2009), good qualitative questions could be an important tool that can shape a study, design and analysis. Although initial questions often emerge from a researcher passions and interests in particular topics but it also gives space to reflect on the issue. Therefore, the research question below will be utilized.

1- What are the challenges faced by the foreign-born practical nurses and social care workers in institutional care in Finland?

2- How does these challenges experienced by foreign-born practical nurses social care workers be addressed and resolved?

### 3 WORKING LIFE PARTNER

The working life partner of this research was one of the biggest private organizations in Finland that provides sustainable daily care and social support around the clock to the elderly in Finland. This organization have institutional care for the elderly in most big cities in Finland. The interviews were conducted in one of the institutional care units which is situated in the Metropolitan area of Helsinki.

The organization's goal is to be a pioneer in the field of elderly care. So, they are developing new, more diverse models of housing and support for the elderly population. This organization anticipates the needs of the elderly care industry and society and develop its operations so that they can continue to provide their clients with quality services. The organisation wants to continue providing quality care for an increasing number of elderly people living in institutional care in Finland.

We provided to the working life partner a research permit and research consent letter issued by the Diaconia University of Applied Sciences beforehand. The manager signed the contract and then we contacted the participants. For ethical reasons, the identity of the organization will not be mentioned in this thesis.

### 4 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, we will discuss literature related to the thesis topic. As part of our work, we have researched other publications related to our theme to further identify the challenges and difficulties of integration faced by social care professionals from abroad. we have found similar academic materials and thesis related to the nursing perspectives.

Vilma Laitinen (2017) in order to obtain her nursing degree focused on the integration of foreign nurses in a new working community, with the main objective of finding out the experiences of employers with these foreign nurses. The author uses the content

analysis technique, while respecting the work ethics of nurses. The following were the results: the integration of foreign nurses is affected by several factors. The challenges faced by foreign practical nurses' concerns language differences. The author concludes that a positive work environment and positive employees favour the integration of foreign nurses. The challenges for employers were the lack of training to welcome foreign nurses, the difficulty of welcoming new employees and the increased costs. The results also show the importance of a positive attitude of local workers and the preparation of employers and employees to welcome foreign nurses into the working community.

For Nelius Wanjohi and Peris Maringi (2013) who also conducted a study in Southern Finland to find out about foreign nurses' experiences and factors influencing their job satisfaction. They adopted a qualitative analysis methodology by collecting information through an interview guide from these foreign nurses. The study showed that the experiences were challenging and difficult at the beginning. Factors affecting job satisfaction include language, cultural barrier, discrimination, workload, relationships with colleagues, clients and family members, work environment, salary, career growth and advancement. The authors conclude by recommending the need to ensure favourable recruitment policies, selection, training, job design and salary payment for foreign nurses, cultural awareness campaigns and the creation of activities that will allow workers to socialise and build trust.

Genotiva and Krivosheeva (2017) conducted a quantitative study to understand the work efficiency of a multicultural team consisting of both foreign and Finnish nurses. The study was conducted in Western Finland (Ostrobothnia). The aim was to define the responses of Finnish and foreign nurses in a comparative way. In a multicultural working environment using the criteria. The study was carried out using the quantitative method by means of a questionnaire administered to a sample of 122 nurses, 83 of whom are nationals and 39 foreigners. The results showed that: the team trusted each other skills, they perceived openness in communication, mutual respect, integration and interaction. Furthermore, most participants were willing to accept new things and new ways of working from colleagues with different cultural backgrounds. A different culture enriches the working community by learning it through personal encounter. On the other hand, multicultural teams also have their challenges. The main concern was always the language barrier. Communication in nursing is very important, so



learning the language must be a priority to be effective in one's work. On the other hand, managers are also encouraged to give equal support to the multicultural team.

According to the literature review of Mahat B (2015), Nepalese nurses have had a supportive attitude in promoting social care to the elderly, but language barriers and lack of contact were identified as challenges that they have encountered in providing social care to service users in multi-cultural environments.

Finding out the perspectives and challenges of foreign-born social and health care professionals, as well as their role met in the regulatory system and Finnish labour market, the findings of the fieldwork show that national and professional backgrounds of social and healthcare are significant in the integration process, and that nurses recruited abroad in recent years were in lower-status roles. (Calenda, et al., 2019)

## 5 KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter, we will describe and explain our key concepts. Keywords in this research are social welfare professionals, foreign-born practical nurses, social worker, institutional care, quality of care.

### 5.1 Social Welfare Professionals

According to Valvira (2020), social welfare professionals are professionals who have been granted a licence upon application by the National Supervisory Authority for welfare and Health which enable and gives them the right to use a protected professional title within social welfare and practice and act as a licensed social welfare professional.

The social welfare professions include several occupations, all of which involve advising and guiding people in difficulty to remedy economic and social problems. In general, these professions often accompany families, elderly people and people with disabilities, who have difficulties in integrating into society, in self-management or in education. Working in social work therefore requires great communication skills, and the ability to understand and solve other people's problems while taking a step back. To work in social work, and to cope with the complexity of the situations encountered, it is therefore more than necessary to want to and like to help others. (Sttk, 2020)

Licensed social welfare professionals are known as social workers, social service professionals, elderly care professionals while protected professional titles of social welfare professionals are recognized as practical nurse, home support worker, Disability support workers, Rehabilitation counsellor. (Valvira, 2020). Social welfare professionals have the necessary qualification requirement related with the competence area of their work (Ministry of Social affairs and Health Finland, 2005).

## 5.2. Foreign-born Practical Nurses

practical nurses are holders of a vocational qualification in social and health care and have either completed training in Finland or abroad and have been granted the right to practice healthcare profession. (Valvira, 2015). Practical nurses are one of the healthcare and social welfare professionals who are holders of vocational qualifications in social and health services. They carry a wide range of capabilities and competences in eight different areas of care. In addition, they provide both health and social services to the elderly in the Finnish institutional care, especially in the competence area of care and rehabilitation of the elderly, basic life support and specialized medical care. (Super, 2021).

Foreign-born Practical Nurses are known as health and social care professionals with foreign background. Additionally, they are culturally, racially and maybe ethnically different to the Finnish nationals or locals

The reason practical nurses and social workers are involved co-partnership in this qualitative research is firstly because both are social welfare professionals. Practical nurses are also social care professionals who are permanently in touch 24 hours a day on a regular basis with the elderly for the promotion of health care and social services. Therefore, it is crucial for a Social Worker to partnership with practical nurse in order to be able to efficiently collect the right information for the client, to identify, assess and meet their psychological, emotional mental needs and help access to social support in the institutional setting. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021).

In addition, practical nurses are recognized as social welfare professional, they work in a broad range of jobs in the fields of social and health care and education. They adhere to shared values and professional ethics. In their work, practical nurses are responsible primarily to the customer or patient, but also to society as a whole. (Super, 2021).

Practical nurses who practice as a social care professional knows how to plan, implement, and assess social services that promote the services user's health, wellbeing, functional capacity, growth, and social inclusion in different social and health care or educational operating environments. Practical nurses can provide service users-oriented guidance related to services, and capable of utilizing diverse assistive devices, and improve professional competence related to the principles of lifelong learning. (European Communities, 2002).

Practical nurses have the necessary education and training related to vocational qualification in social services and healthcare and other comparable qualification. (Ministry of social affairs and Health, 2005).

### 5.3 Social care worker

On application, National supervisory authority for welfare and health(Valvira) grants the right to practice the profession of social care worker as a legal professional to persons who have completed university of applied science suitable for the social field in Finland ( Valvira, 2015).

Social care worker is a professional who work with diverse individuals, target groups and communities of all types of cultural, ethnic backgrounds and age in order to identify needs and help to improve the standard of life through specific working methods in accordance with the implementation of welfare policies and legislations. Social workers handle diverse challenges involving children, families, elderly, addiction and abuse in a professional manner through different environment such as a client's home, schools, health centres and offices. (Indeed Career Guide, 2021).

Social care workers shall have met the qualification requirement in completing major subject studies or university studies in social work that are related to the major subject in higher university degree. (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2005).

### 5.4 Institutional care

Institutional care is known as well as an old people home or inpatient health centre that provide 24 hours assistance to the service users who cannot live independently

anymore because of functional capacities, mental state and overall health assessed and granted the right to the social care and place. (Taipale-Lehto and Bergman, 2015).

Finland has been aiming away from institutional care better known as de-institutionalisation, which means to reduce or to replace the institutional care to home care services and homelike housing units for ethical, political and economic reasons (Anttonen and Karsio, 2016).

An assessment of the need for a service can be requested by a person over the age of 75 himself, his relatives or another person who is familiar with the situation, such as a doctor. The assessment is carried out by a municipal social and health care worker, who may have a background such as a nurse, social service worker, physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

In institutional care the elderly gets assistance with daily routines, rehabilitation, information and guidance, social activities, health care or treatment, social benefits. The aim of institutional care, therefore, is to secure to the elderly client well-beings and assist to live a normal everyday life. (City of Helsinki, n.d).

## 5.5 Quality of Care

According to the World Health Organization (2021), Quality of Care “the process of which social welfare services given to services users aim to enhance desired health outcomes. Social and health services must be safe, effective, timely, efficient, equitable and people-centred in order to reach this goal.

Quality of care is a multidimensional concept. There are many definitions of quality of care. According to the WHO, quality of care is: "an approach that ensures that each patient receives the combination of diagnostic and therapeutic procedures that will provide the best health outcome, in accordance with the current state of medical science, at the lowest cost for the same result, with the least iatrogenic risk, and with the greatest satisfaction in terms of procedures, outcomes and human contacts within the health care system". (Langlois, 2015).

According to McMillen, Proctor, Foster, Striley, Cabassa, Munson and Dickey (2005), quality of care could be defined as the implementation of social services standard of care that are related to desired outcomes.

The link between quality care and foreign-born social welfare professionals in institutional care lay on shortage of workforce that has been addressed and acknowledged by the social professionals and the authorities in recent years due to the complaints on the quality of care and notifications made to National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health(Valvira ). In addition to that, there is a considerable increase of the foreign professionals in the elderly care service. (STT, 2019).

## 6 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter explains the methodology that was used in this research. Thus, it comprises the qualitative research methods, data collection and analysis that were utilized to collect and process information. All parts of methodology will be described and justified below.

## 6.1 Qualitative Research Method

This study utilized qualitative research approach with semi structured focus group of Foreign Social care professionals in the Finnish Institutional care. Interviews were conducted as the qualitative data collection method including discussion with social welfare professionals in the Finnish Institutional care. The qualitative research path is evaluative and targeted a set of three foreign born social welfare professionals, two practical nurses and one social service professional. The qualitative research approach was chosen because we wanted to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences from the social care professionals involved. The intention was to find out and collect in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas and solutions for the research. (Bhandari, 2020).

In social sciences, there are generally two types of research: qualitative and quantitative. However, in the context of our work, the inductive approach was used, that is part of a qualitative approach. This approach allowed us to understand and explain phenomena.

Indeed, according to Madrigal and McClain (2012), qualitative research focuses on people's experiences in the world and personal understanding of these experiences. On the other hand, it also explores feelings and behavior and it is based on the interpretation of information and tries to explain phenomena in life.

Qualitative research has several characteristics. The first is that information is prioritized, and some tend to be more important and relevant than others. Secondly, it is contextual, and the researcher must be very careful not to step out of context. Thirdly, the researcher immerses him/herself in the natural setting of the participants in order to learn their behavior and explore their thoughts. (Summer, 2001).

It is also important to note that the main objective of qualitative research is to answer the questions 'why', 'how' and 'what' (Patton and Cochran, 2002).

The qualitative research perspective focuses on participants' views, meanings, interpretations, and perspectives (Woods, 2006). It involves the description, analysis, and interpretation of data. Furthermore, the relationship between researcher and participant is based on equality and is closed. Finally, it allows for a high degree of reflection.

(Holloway and Wheeler, 2009). From all this information, the qualitative research method was the best methodology to use for this research.

## 6.2 Sampling technique

In this research, it was essential to choose a good sampling method to obtain adequate, efficient and relevant results. The appropriate sample size must also be considered as it is very unrealistic to examine the sample population in question. In these cases, purposive sampling has been used to select the right participants (Marshall 1996).

The number of years working, and the status of foreign social care professionals were the most important factors in the selection of the participants. The participants included both registered nurses and a social service worker. Therefore, the participants in this research were foreign-born social care professionals who had worked in Finland for more than two years. In this case those working in the nursing home. The nursing home was contacted to request formal permission and after the nursing home had given the go-ahead, the selection of participants was made. The number of participants was three, i.e., two nurses and one social worker. The selection was made after signing a consent form(appendix).

## 6.3 Data collection

From the qualitative data collection, we have had one type of data collection methods: in-depth interview. An in-depth interview was carried out and enabled the data to be collected by using close-ended and open questions. There was a possibility of meeting face to face in the working life settings during the Covid19 pandemic fortunately the work life partner and participants had agreed to meet face to face in a convenient space and time, respecting the Covid 19 restrictions and safety rules in the working environment. After acquiring the research permit, the participants were interviewed in the first week in April 2021. The interviews were successfully recorded and later transcribed.

The reason for the use of this qualitative data collection was simply to identify and learn about the experiences and challenges of social and health care professionals that were met and to get opinions of the problem on a greater scale (Bhandari, 2020). Our data collection method was a face-to-face, semi-structured, thematic interview. Open-ended questions were asked about experiences, challenges, and possible solutions to



these challenges. Approximately 30-40 minutes were allocated to each interview. Individual interviews were used because they allow for more personal contact, sensitive issues could be easily addressed, and more detailed information can easily be obtained. Interviews are in most cases intended to better reach the respondent and are therefore the best choice for data collection in our case (Opdenakker 2006).

The two authors were present and conducting the interview. During the interviews, the interviewers were very observant in order to capture the facial expressions and reactions of the interviewees. Two of the interviews were conducted in English and one was in Finnish language, which later translated to English. Interviewers tried to create a good relationship and trust with the interviewees by ensuring confidentiality and treating the participants with respect. The interviewers also made sure that the participants were aware of the research being conducted beforehand.

#### 6.4 Thematic data analysis

In the qualitative data analysis, the information and answers collected and acquired through interviews and academic materials have been processed, interpreted, and assessed through a thematic analysis. Qualitative data took the form of texts and audio. For example, working with interview transcripts, fieldnotes and recordings. The data was prepared and organized by transcribing interviews and typing up field notes (Bhandari, 2020).

Transcribing is an analysis method or practice that helps to convert speech to text word for word when conducting an interview. In addition to that the data was reviewed and explored repeatedly. (Streefkerk, 2019).

Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis method. It is commonly applicable when the researcher is analysing a collection of texts, such as transcripts of interviews. The reason thematic analysis was chosen was because we intended to analyze the data closely to recognize common subjects, topics, ideas, and context trends that came up frequently. Also seeking to identify and interpret patterns and themes in the qualitative data. This method was originally developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke for psychology studies. Thematic analysis, however, is a versatile technique that can be applied to many different forms of study. (Caulfield, 2019).

In this research we opted for thematic data analysis. This is a method of analysis that seeks to capture what the interviewees said in the most objective and reliable way possible. Berelson (1952). This method consists of the transformation of an oral discourse into a text, then the construction of an analysis and decoding of what has been said. This analysis establishes the meaning of the speech, interprets the similarities and differences between the respondents and arrives at an objective analysis. It is carried out in several stages.

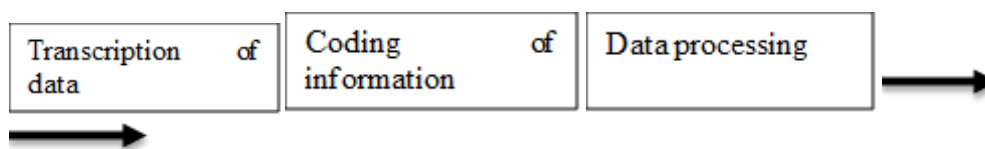


Figure 1: Thematic data analysis steps (Source: Wamba (2010))

Before starting the analysis, the first step was to make an inventory of the information collected and to put it in written form. The resulting text is called a verbatim which represents the raw data from the interview. The transcript of the interviews is usually done by hand, noting down word for word everything the interviewee says, without changing the text, without interpreting it and without abbreviation. The process is a process that aims to make sense of the verbatim by exploring line by line, step by step, the texts of interviews or observations. The processing of qualitative data can be carried out from a semantic or statistical point of view. In this case, we proceeded with the manual processing of the collected data.

In this section we proceeded to analyse the content of interview we have conducted, the objective of which is to examine the discourse of our respondents. To this end, identified what the verbatim is about and the category or the theme addressed. An intra-case analysis was also done. The vertical or intra-case analysis consists of working interview by interview. This means making a detailed study of the content of the speeches. The aim was to identify in each interview the experience and challenges faced by social care professionals, as well as possible solutions for a better quality of care. The properties of each case were highlighted in the form of a table.

After a review of the theoretical literature on the challenges faced by foreign professionals working in the field of care for the elderly, which has enabled us to identify several difficulties faced by these foreign professionals. An empirical investigate of the reality of the quality of care of these professionals as affected by these challenges. To do this, the qualitative method was used, drawing up a sample of three foreign professionals all working in the same institutional care unit. They all had more than two years of experience in the field of care for the elderly.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted based on the research questions to collect the research data. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and followed the covid-19 guidelines. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to carry out an

analysis of the speakers' verbatim. This analysis was done by grouping similar speeches under themes and proceeding with the coding of information and data processing.

There will be three tables. Table one shown here below and the other two table in appendix two and appendix three. These tables show how we have done transcribing the interview and putting the interview contents under themes. We have divided the themes of the table in two main themes and each main has subcategories. The main themes are related to challenges and the solutions for it.

Thematic Analysis of table 1

Themes/ Categories	Subcategories	Items	Verbatim
Challenges faced by foreign social welfare professionals in Finland	Social integration difficulties	Language barriers	<i>I would say that the Finnish language is really, really difficult. Learning Finnish can be a challenge and that's true, but I think it's quite difficult to find a job in Finland without knowing the language. ..."</i>
		Cultural or discriminatory barriers	<i>I think there are other problems like cultural ones. Finnish people are quiet people and their culture is different from other countries. Sometimes you hear things like; you must come from a new country. When you come here you don't know much, you don't speak the language you have to adapt to the culture, I think that's more important than doing your job properly than anyone else in my opinion</i>
	Difficulties in the working environment	Need for Recognition	<i>I think in western society the world is so capitalist that values like empathy and kindness are not put forward. Making money has become the real motive, so human life is not valued, that's why nurses are leaving, that's why so many people are quitting. There are not enough nurses. They are not good enough in terms of the stress that this job brings in my opinion. There is also this difficulty of recognition at the level of the management who don't have the time to take care of our affairs, they are just content with the retirement home and seem to be more preoccupied with the organization of meetings".</i>
		Workload and working hours	<i>I think that every normal human being wants to do his job as well as he can, but there are problems with the doctrine, and people still can't do their job well because of the overload of work in the nursing homes and Finland as a result they get stressed and depressed. There is not enough time for work, nurses are called to do other work which creates work pressure for others. For example, the frantic search for profit means that not enough is put in where it is needed and on time.</i>
Solving the challenges faced by foreign professionals for a better quality of care	Social	Strengthening social justice	<i>We have to value the life of our people and of all people, yes making profit is good but we have to take care to set up good social systems even if it doesn't bring money, but a good social system allows people not to be hungry and not to be homeless which consequently increases the well being and allows by soot to earn more money. So we have to put money from taxes and other things to pay for nurses for example, that is a balance to the human condition in my opinion people will become more peaceful when they don't have to worry about the problem of lack of money.</i>
	Managerial	Supervision	<i>Yes, I think that the management should have a look at the problems of nurses in order to try to find solutions. They should be trained in management to better manage human resources problems.</i>

## 7 RESEARCH ETHICS AND PRIVACY

Before the interview occurred, we made sure that ethical research and privacy guidelines were being followed. It was very important to consider the confidentiality and privacy of our research participants by applying the latest General Data Protection Regulations (EU GDPR). The research permit process was discussed with the work life partner, and it was agreed that the research proposal would be supported. A promise was made to protect the identity of participants and work life partner and apply the right of confidentiality during the entire research process of the thesis topic before and after publication (European Commission, 2020).

The interviews were done after the consent letters were signed by the participants. Additionally, in this qualitative research it was capital to inform in advance the subject, aim and goal of the research data. The actors were participants who have signed the agreement forms to contribute to this research, the working life partner, and the educational institution. This is another way of revealing professional ethics and team up. This research was guided by the ethical standards of Diaconia University of applied sciences. (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, 2019).

According to the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, participation in research should be voluntary and based on informed consent. In this research study, we promised to destroy the data as soon as our research and thesis will be completed accepted and published. Also, in case the participants involved in the research do not want the data to be stored, neither published. (FABRI, 2002).

## 8 RESULTS

The aim of our study was to identify and recognize the experiences plus challenges/difficulties faced by foreign nurses and social workers that influence the quality of their care in the organization concerned. The aim was to provide solutions for better performance in care. The results of our work have been grouped into two main themes: The challenges faced by foreign social care professionals in Finland and the solutions to the challenges faced by foreign professionals for a better quality of care.

### 8.1 Challenges or difficulties faced by foreign social welfare professionals in Finland

According to Mahat (2015) and Laitinen (2017), social welfare professionals of foreign origin encounter several difficulties during their professional career in the host country. In our Study, we were interested in foreign social care workers in Finland. All the three professionals interviewed, it was mainly language barriers, cultural barriers and discrimination. However, some of them also identified other difficulties such as: need for recognition of their work; workload and working hours; and relations with colleagues. The results obtained are as follows: challenges faced by Foreign born social care workers and solutions that they suggested.

Language: All the interviewees felt that the Finnish language is a very difficult language, and that it took them quite some time to learn it. They all thought that the Finnish language is one of the most difficult to master and that they have experienced

enormous difficulties in communicating with clients, nursing colleagues and doctors. Some even experienced discrimination by clients who felt that they could not be treated by them. Another said that not knowing the language considerably reduces the chances of getting a job in Finland and thus of social success.

*“The first thing I can say is that the language is a prestige challenge, the language we use as practicing nurses is very difficult and especially when you are dealing with the elderly. They can speak very differently from what you learn in school. I can say that language is the most difficult challenge I face in everyday working life. Maybe I can only understand half of what the client is saying, and this can cause me not to provide the best care to the clients because I can misunderstand some of the client's needs”.*

Cultural and discriminatory barriers: All the foreign professionals agreed that they face problems of culture shock. The Finns are not open enough to other cultures, which leads to divergences and conflicts in the workplace. One of the interviewees remarked that Finland, unlike its continent of origin, is a country that is not sociable enough. The Finns are rather closed and direct, they have a rather different lifestyle and do not seem to be interactive. Another respondent pointed out that this difference in culture means that some people do not cooperate with foreign nurses, and it takes a long time to be accepted and provide care. A foreign nurse must prove that he or she is as competent as a Finnish nurse even though they have the same level of training and the same diploma.

*“I think another difficulty I face is when the client doesn't cooperate with the foreign professional nurse and he may discriminate, he says he doesn't want you to take care of him. It takes a lot of time to discuss that you are as good as the other Finnish nurses. Sometimes it can frustrate you and challenge you to take care of the person .... so maybe I can say that the discrimination of the client in not wanting you to take care of him is a real challenge.”*

Need for recognition: As in every profession, every worker would like to be recognized for their work. Employers should sincerely acknowledge every achievement, from the smallest to the biggest of their worker. Our interviewee goes further and shows that Finnish society is quite capitalist. People are more concerned with the pursuit of profit at the expense of human values such as empathy and kindness. The human being is thus relegated to the background, leading to discontent and resignations all over the



place. Moreover, the bosses do not seem to be concerned about the fate of the nurses who do not always receive enough recognition, which leads to demotivation.

*“I think in western society the world is so capitalist that values like empathy and kindness are not put forward. Making money has become the real motive, so human life is not valued and that's why nurses are leaving, that's why so many people quit. There are not enough nurses. They are not good enough in terms of the stress that this job brings in my opinion. There is also this difficulty of recognition at the level of the management who don't have the time to take care of our affairs, they are just content with the retirement home and seem to be more preoccupied with the organization of meetings.”*

Workload and working hours: Only one of our interviewees expressed his opinion on the issue of workload, and he believes that in Finland the fact that nursing homes are primarily profit-oriented leads to a reduction in the number of nurses, who, in addition to their workload, have to deal with other tasks. This increases the workload and puts a lot of pressure on the nurses.

*“I think that every normal human being wants to do his job as well as he can, but there are problems with the doctrine, and people still can't do their job well because of the overload of work in the nursing homes and Finland as a result they get stressed and depressed. There is not enough time for work, nurses are called to do other work which creates work pressure for others. For example, the frantic search for profit means that not enough is put in where it is needed and on time.”*

Relationships with colleagues: All our respondents agreed that the work of medicine is a team effort. To have a good service, it is important to rely on others and perfect collaboration between colleagues is an undeniable asset. However, one of our interviewees noted that this collaboration is not always evident in Finland. Sometimes it is not always easy to give one's point of view on the way of working to the other because this sometimes leads to anger, especially from the team leader.

*“We know that health is a kind of teamwork and sometimes it depends on the people you work with, some workers are not cooperative, you are not operational, you have tasks to do, but now it happens that someone is with you causing sometimes phone theft. If you want to approach them to give your point of view on how to work, it can*

*make the boss angry which affects the system, so this uncooperative aspect is something you have to deal with, especially for the younger people coming into the profession. Sometimes there is the problem of equity and discrimination, because of your origin, which means that despite the same level of study and the same certificate, the foreigner always has to show more education. This discrimination leads to tensions between employees and a lack of collaboration, sometimes leading me to talk to the boss for arbitration. In fact, the lack of communication between colleagues affects my work.”*

Having outlined the main challenges faced by foreign social workers and professionals in Finland, we will now look at proposed solutions.

## 8.2 Solutions to the challenges faced by foreign professionals to improve the quality of care

Each of the interviewees gave the solutions they thought were appropriate for improving the care of nurses and social workers of foreign origin. The majority of them emphasized the strengthening of social justice and the quality of supervision by managers. However, some interviewees emphasize the personal effort in terms of learning and training that each foreign nurse or social worker should make.

Strengthening social justice: Indeed, the need to improve the care provided by foreign nurses and social workers requires their acceptance and integration into the Finnish health care system. These findings are in line with Likupe's (2006) earlier studies, according to which difficulties and challenging experiences are common to foreign nurses, regardless of the country where they are based.

*“It is important to consider that we are all human beings and to acknowledge cultural differences which will allow people to behave in their own way thus avoiding hypocrisy between people. This increases the resilience of the group and makes it easier to solve problems.”*

This interest in strengthening social justice will allow foreign social workers in Finland to feel useful and integrated in society and this sense of fairness will allow them to give more of their best in the care they provide; all of which would enhance the quality

of care and implicitly promote Finland as a destination for foreign social workers with the skills and qualifications they want to value abroad.

*“We have to value the life of our people and of all people, yes making profit is good but we have to take care to set up good social systems even if it doesn't bring money, but a good social system allows people not to be hungry and not to be homeless which consequently increases the wellbeing and allows by soot to earn more money. So, you have to put money from taxes and other things to pay for nurses for example, that's a balance to the human condition in my opinion people will become more peaceful when they don't have to worry about the problem of lack of money.”*

The quality of supervision on the part of managers: All our interviewees agree that the way in which a manager rules his or her staff has a significant impact on improving the working climate and managing conflicts that may arise between staff. Moreover, this management should take into account the needs of foreign professional workers for a better efficiency at work and an impact on the improvement of the quality of care provided.

*“Yes, I think that the management should have a look at the problems of nurses in order to try to find solutions. They should be trained in management to better manage human resources problems.*

*The boss must take the trouble to listen to his employees, ask them what they want and what they are doing on the ground, and finally the boss must acknowledge the work done.”*

Training: Most of the interviewees see training as one of the solutions to the difficulties encountered by foreign professionals to improve the quality of care; it is notably translated into capacity building for foreign workers through Finnish and English language courses with the aim of better communicating with colleagues, clients and patients' families. Managers or bosses should integrate into their management a program of upgrading foreign professionals to enable them to be at the same level of understanding and integration as their Finnish colleagues.

*“I learned to speak Finnish by watching tutorials on my mobile phone, I also watched TV programs at home and in my reading time. I strengthened my language skills which*

*allowed me to be more comfortable with customers, I had more pressure. I solved my teamwork situation; I make sure I do everything that is needed throughout the day, and I support others because I don't just focus on my own plans. So, I do more than what I should do when I need to, I also think about others. The management makes sure that the guidelines are followed at work. So, in order to communicate and give my best care I have to learn more Finnish. If you have language or communication difficulties, what you need most is time; time to try to explain as slowly as possible to the client, sometimes if they don't work with you give them some time to process the information you have given, and try to be more understanding which is very helpful, and to have that time you need to have more teamwork.”*

And to deal with other staff you have to explain the intention to use another language like English to improve communication and make yourself better understood.

## 9 DISCUSSION

The aim of our study was to identify and recognize the experiences plus challenges/difficulties faced by foreign nurses and social workers that influence the quality of their care in the organizations concerned.

### 9.1 Difficulties encountered and expectations

The results of data analysis show that all our interviewees encountered difficulties at the beginning of their careers in Finland, feeling that it was not easy to integrate easily into the Finnish society. These results are in line with those of Nelius Wanjohi and Peris Maringi (2013), according to whom nurses of foreign origin encounter difficult experiences in the workplace, regardless of their country of origin. This was partly explained by the adjustments to the environment, the new culture, the new society and by the fact that they are starting a new life away from their home country.

It should be noted that these difficulties are experienced by nurses and social care workers with experience in the sectors as well as those who do not, because of the new system they encounter and to which they will have to adapt. All our respondents mentioned reasons related to barriers, language, culture, and discrimination. Some felt that it was difficult because of the lack of recognition, a heavy workload and relations with colleagues that were not always good. Nevertheless, some of our interviewees felt that

it was easier for them to adapt once they had learned the language. This helped to take a lot of pressure off them. According to JM Perretti (1998) *"Training is considered as a set of actions, means, methods, and planned supports with the help of which employees are encouraged to improve their knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary both to achieve the objectives of the organization and their own personal objectives, to adapt to their environment and to accomplish their present and future tasks"*.

A factor of adjustment and adaptation, training is also a factor of social regulation because it can be one of the keys to reconciling the social and the economic, insofar as it contributes to providing employees with professional satisfaction and improving the economic performance of the company. (Meignant 1991).

Thus, training can be defined as a set of development actions that provide individuals with all the means necessary to accumulate knowledge and improve their skills and performance in order to meet the requirements of their jobs and internal and external developments.

Continuous training refers to the educational means offered to employees to develop synergies, behavior and skills at work. The proposed actions strengthen technical and operational skills and vocations and enrich skills and personality by helping to move into new roles. It is therefore important for social workers and nurses to continue training and to learn the language of the host country. Furthermore, the management of the institutions where social workers work should provide this continuous training with the support of public authorities to facilitate the integration of foreign social workers.

## 9.2 Challenges influencing the quality of care of foreign social professionals

In the context of this study, the following difficulties emerged: language barriers, cultural barriers and discrimination; lack of recognition; workload and working hours; and relations with colleagues.

**The language barrier:** The results of the study indicate that language is a major factor influencing the quality of care of foreign social care professionals in Finland. Maude (2011) states that the ability to communicate in the main language of a country helps newcomers to establish relationships with community members and improve cross-

cultural adjustment. Our results corroborate these predictions as the poor language skills of foreigners made it very difficult for these foreign professionals to integrate. However, over time these foreign social care professionals improved their language skills and were able to integrate easily. Thus, effective communication is very important for every nurse in order to achieve the best results for the patients and to have a harmonious working relationship with others. Language is the most important element that allows newcomers to integrate into a new culture and its way of doing things. Participants said that it was difficult at first to communicate with clients, staff, and other professionals involved in patient care. They said that it was a very difficult language and that it took time to learn.

The respondents are fully aware that the Finnish language is the most important requirement in the Finnish health care system. Besides learning the Finnish language as a whole, it is also important to learn the professional language. Välipakka (2013) defines professional language as the language used in the workplace. Especially in the field of health care, there are so many terms that are used to refer to so many things and it is very important for foreign social care professionals to learn them.

**The need for recognition:** One interviewee felt that employers give little recognition to the work of social care professionals. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the search for profit is emphasized, to the detriment of human values. This lack of recognition of the work of nurses and workers leads to demotivation for some and resignation for others. Yet according to Nelius Wanjohi and Peris Maringi (2013), workers always appreciate recognition of their achievements at work. Employers should sincerely acknowledge every achievement, from the smallest to the biggest, of their workers. For example, you can give them something as a sign of appreciation and show them that their contribution is not in vain and that the organisation is satisfied with the work done. Lack of recognition can contribute to dissatisfaction. These findings corroborate our respondent's account.

**Cultural and discriminatory barriers:** According to Sammon 2009, for employees to be satisfied with their work, they need to become familiar with the culture of the community in order to achieve the desired results. The interviewees stated that the huge difference in culture between Finland and their home country has led to conflicts in the workplace. It was interesting to see that some interviewees felt that not everyone is

ready to accept and understand different cultures, which contributed to some discrimination at work.

Cultural awareness is defined as the ability to recognize, observe and be aware of similarities and differences between cultural groups (Goode, 2006). Therefore, to achieve intercultural effectiveness, the Finnish health care system should find ways to identify the level of cultural awareness of employees. According to Nelius Wanjohi and Peris Maringi (2013), foreign nurses and social workers should strive to learn the new culture in order to integrate. However, natives should also be able to accept and embrace foreign cultures and find a way to work together to build commonality in similarities and differences, thus avoiding cultural crush.

**Working relationships with colleagues:** Our respondents recognize that nursing work is teamwork. The reasons given are that nursing work involves interaction with others. Teamwork is very important in the workplace and therefore a good and respectable relationship should be established. The key to a good relationship is honesty, which builds trust between team members. Respect for each other and each other's opinions, despite differences in culture and beliefs, must be established.

75% of the respondents felt that they did not encounter any obstacles in dealing with employees, which suggests that despite some confrontations that may occur in the workplace, the work ethic is very much respected. Training on cultural differences is therefore essential to improve relations between workers.

**Workload and working hours:** There should be an equal distribution of work at each workplace. Workloads result from a lack of proper scheduling. An organisation needs to ensure that it has employed enough workers and find replacements for those who are away or on sick leave. 25% of our participants felt that there was a high workload, the remaining 75% did not give an opinion on this suggesting that they did not feel a high workload. (Lephala, 2006)

## 10 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to Yle 2019 the ageing of the population in Finland is increasing and this has led to a growing demand for nurses and social workers. However, the Finnish working population does not seem to be really attracted to these professions, leading to a large influx of nurses from abroad.

There is a problem of culture shock, which has an impact on the quality of care of these foreign social workers and nurses who have come to seek better living



conditions. Beyond this culture shock there are other challenges that were facing these social care professionals (Korpela, 2008).

It must be said once again that for all the interviewees said it was not easy for them to integrate into Finnish society, but through information and training on the language and culture, it has considerably improved the working conditions and integration of these persons.

We therefore make some recommendations for improving the quality of care of these social care professionals. On the individual level: it is important that social care professionals continue to learn the Finnish language and culture, which will facilitate the interaction with clients, leading to a better understanding of the clients' expectations and thus to a better quality of service. For the system: It is recommended that the management of old people's homes and other health and social care institutions show more concern for their foreign employees, recognizing their work despite the cultural differences. Establish continuous training programs on both languages and social care developments. On the other hand, for the government, it is a question of strengthening social justice by guaranteeing the same opportunities for success to both foreigners and nationals and by emphasizing social equity.

This will result in a stronger sense of belonging to Finland for foreigners and consequently an improvement in the quality of care (Wanjohi and Maringi, 2013).

## 10.1 Professional development

Both thesis authors are foreign-born professionals in the field of social and healthcare working as practical nurses and future social service professionals, the finding of this study seems already to correlate to our professional reality and may help us to face the challenges in the future and acknowledge them in suitable manner.

One important professional development as a future social service worker that Khadra made during the thesis process is research skills. To have good research skills means that you know what is and is not relevant to your topic. And applying information effectively to meet your needs.

Having research skills in social work is crucial for several reasons such as evaluating the effectiveness of a project or practice. Research may be utilized to develop new

policies and programs which will help communities and society in general. I have still to develop my analyzing skills. Effective communication skills help to deliver ideas and information, whether it is on paper or in person. and time management skills were also especially important for our thesis project and for my future career as a social service worker.

During this thesis process Didier's professional development as a future social service worker was enhance as good research skills were exercised. Determining the relevance of information collected about the topic and applying that information effectively to the topic. Research skills in social work is crucial for several reasons such us evaluating the effectiveness of a project or practice. Research may be utilized to develop new policies and programs which may help communities and societies alike. The ability to analyze information was challenging and requires more skills. Effective communication skills helped to deliver ideas and information, whether it was on paper or in person and time management skills were also especially important for this thesis process.

Personal lives, schedules, and the distance to commute were challenges faced and prevented regular meetings face to face. However, it did not influence the ability to cope and succeed in meeting deadlines. Goals were set from the very beginning, taking into consideration cultural sensitivity and awareness which created a reciprocity of respect and patience allowing us to consider each other opinion. Understanding the schedule prevented any negative and unneeded pressure that could affect the dynamic of the team and the outcome of this thesis. Regarding the theme and our independent research activity and growth, time management has been key during our thesis process, meeting the dates and setting times according to personal schedules. Being flexible has helped us to meet goals through constant communication.

As a future social service professional Didier realized how patience and respect are fundamental keys of multicultural competences and should be considered and implemented in future professional endeavors. It was understood how multicultural competence has helped to boost and maintain a positive dynamic, allowing us to cope with obstacles while being efficient and productive as a team in meeting our aim and purpose in a timely manner.

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## APPENDIX 1. Interview questions

1. Are there any challenges that you experienced while promoting quality of care in the Finnish Elderly homes?
2. How do you define Quality service or care with the services users and staff in this Institutional care?
3. What adjustments and actions should be considered, made to deal with challenges encountered in order to encourage, support and motivate foreign-born social care professionals to promote efficiently quality care in the institutional care in Finland?
4. How should the work life management handle and deal with issues met by practical nurses and social workers in order to improve the quality of care in the institutional care in Finland?



## APPENDIX 2. Thematic Analysis of table 2

Themes/ Categories	Subcategories	Items	Verbatim
Challenges faced by foreign social welfare professionals in Finland	Social integration difficulties	Language barriers	<i>"the first thing I can say is that the language is a prestige challenge, the language we use as a practicing nurse is very difficult and especially when you are dealing with the elderly. They can speak very differently from what you learn in school. I can say that language is the most difficult challenge I face in everyday working life. Maybe I can only understand half of what the client is saying and this can lead to me not providing the best care to the clients because I can misunderstand some of the client's needs.</i>
		Cultural or discriminatory barriers	<i>I think another difficulty I face is when the client doesn't cooperate with the foreign professional nurse and he may discriminate, he says he doesn't want you to take care of him. It takes a lot of time to discuss that you are as good as the other Finnish nurses. Sometimes it can frustrate you and challenge you to take care of the person .... so maybe I can say that the discrimination of the client in not wanting you to take care of him is a real challenge.</i>
Solving the challenges faced by foreign professionals for a better quality of care	Social	Strengthening social justice	<i>"treat everyone as an equal</i>
	Individual	The training	<i>So in order to communicate and give my best possible care I have to learn more Finnish. If you have language or communication difficulties, what you need most is time; time to try to explain as slowly as possible to the client, sometimes if they don't work with you give them some time to process the information you have given, and try to be more understanding which is very helpful, and to have that time you need to have more teamwork And to deal with other staff you have to explain the intention to use another language like English to improve communication and make yourself better understood.</i>
	Managerial	Supervision	<i>I think that the boss should embrace diversity in working life and always give everyone what he or she can and treat everyone as an equal, while maintaining a certain distance from his or her employees and introducing training in the local language as well as English. The boss must take the trouble to listen to his employees, ask them what they want and what they are doing on the ground, and finally the boss must give recognition to the work done".</i>

## APPENDIX 3. Thematic Analysis of table 3

Themes/ Categories	Subcategories	Items/codes	Verbatim
Challenges faced by foreign social welfare professionals in Finland	Social integration difficulties	Language barrier	<i>In addition to the problems of teamwork, we as foreigners, the language is an obstacle in a way, you know it's easier when you know how to express yourself in the local language, which allows you to provide better care and promotes teamwork and facilitates exchanges</i>
		Cultural or discriminatory barriers	<i>I would like to say that they are not like us in Africa, they are not sociable. We are more sociable, they don't behave like social leaders, they are not interactive, the life styles are different.</i>
	Difficulties in the working environment	Relationship with colleagues	<i>We know that health is a kind of teamwork and sometimes it depends on the people you work with, some workers are not cooperative, you are not operational, you have tasks to do, but now it happens that someone is with you so sometimes phones are stolen. If you want to approach them to give your point of view on how to work, it can make the boss angry which affects the system, so this uncooperative aspect is something you have to deal with, especially for the younger people coming into the profession. Sometimes there are problems of equity and discrimination, because of your origin, which means that despite the same level of study and the same certificate, the foreigner always has to show more education. This discrimination leads to tension between employees and a lack of collaboration, sometimes leading me to talk to the boss for arbitration.....</i>
Solving the challenges faced by foreign professionals for a better quality of care	Social	Strengthening social justice	<i>This will allow people to behave in their own way and avoid hypocrisy between people. This increases the resilience of the group and makes it easier to solve problems</i>
	Individual	The training	<i>I learned to speak Finnish by watching tutorials on my mobile phone, I also watched TV programmes at home and during my reading time. I strengthened my language skills which allowed me to be more comfortable with customers, I had more pressure. I solved my teamwork situation, I make sure I do everything that is needed throughout the day and I support others because I don't just focus on my own plans. So I do more than what I should do when I need to, I also think about others. The management makes sure that the guidelines are followed at work.</i>
	Managerial	Consideration of difficulties by management	<i>I find the system quite open, there is a closeness with the leaders unlike in Africa. The system here is essentially decentralised, there is a good division of labour. It is easy to pass on a message to a superior. We need to maintain this working climate, we need to help nurses to have a good career plan. Promote the participation of all in the decision making process. The boss must maintain language training programs, so that they are comfortable communicating with others.</i>

## APPENDIX 4 Consent Letter

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## CONSENT FORM:

Consent form for participation in research.

This research concerns the bachelor thesis titled: **FOREIGN-BORN PRACTICAL NURSES AND SOCIAL CARE WORKERS CHALLENGES IN PROMOTING QUALITY OF CARE TO THE ELDERLY IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN FINLAND**

The responsible students are: KHADRA ADEN and DIDIER NYETAM  
Supervising teacher: MARIANNE NYLUND

By signing the form below, you agree to this interview being recorded for the thesis research. By participating, you agree that the information you share during the interview can be used in the publicized thesis. Your name and identity will only be known to the responsible students, and any identifying information will be altered for anonymity purposes. The recording of this interview will be stored on a password protected device, and the interview will be transcribed onto another password protected device and document. This data will only be accessible to the students responsible and kept for this research project and discarded after completing the thesis and publication from all stored devices. We do not expect that your participation will pose any risks to you, and withdrawal of your participation in the research may be done at any stage of the research for any reason without consequence.

By signing this form, I agree to the above conditions and consent to the interview and information obtained from this interview to be used in the aforementioned thesis research. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from participating at any time during the research. I am also aware that my identity will be known only to the responsible students conducting the interview.

Date

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Printed Name (Capital Letters)

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Signature

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