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Background

With the global ageing population, the shortage of nurses is a serious global public health problem. Recruitment of foreign nurses has been proposed as a solution to the nursing shortage in many developed countries including Japan. However, there are no studies looking at the foreign nurses' work motivation and experience with the context of Japan.

Aim

This study aimed to explore foreign-educated male nurses' motivation to migrate to a different country and explore the contextual factors that shaped their career trajectories in Japan.

Methods

A qualitative research design was adopted, using video (zoom), semi-structured interviews. Participants were selected with the criterion of having a Chinese nationality, holding both Chinese and Japanese nursing licence, and with minimum clinical experience of 6 months in Japan. Interviews were recorded via zoom and subsequently transcribed. The data was imported and managed using NVivo software. Two researchers analysed the data independently, using thematic framework analysis. Participants were reached to validate the findings.

Results

In total, 16 male nurses from Eastern and Western Japan participated in the study (Table 1). Their tenure in Japan ranged from six months to eight years. The findings confirmed the factors identified in earlier reports as those that influenced nurses' motivation and work (Table 2). Two new factors were suggested: influence by others and social reasons (Fig 1). The relationship between the various factors was complex and sometimes contradictory.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics (n = 16).

Variables	N (%)	
Mean age (SD+) in years	30 ± 2.8	
Years worked in China	0	8
	0.5	1
	1	6
	2	1
	2	1
Years working in Japan	0.5-1	2
	2	2
	3	2
	4	1
	5	3
	6	1
	7	3
	8	2
Educational background	Vocational training	7
	BSc program	8
	No Answer	1

Table 3. Career Plans.

Themes	Subthemes
Remaining in the nursing profession	1. To work in other areas of nursing care. 2. To introduce the experience of older adult care in Japan to China. 3. To improve their abilities.
Changing career	1. Engage in international trade. 2. Retake exams to enter medical school as a doctor. 3. Become self-employed. 4. Have a suitable job and want to change career.
Others	1. Staying in Japan and starting a family. 2. Upgrade education.

Conclusions

This was the first study that focused on foreign male nurses' motivation to seek work abroad with a specific focus on Chinese nurses working in Japan. The study's results confirmed perspectives on foreign nurses' motivation to migrate for work conducted in other countries. Importantly, it identified two additional influential factors, and thus expanding the current theoretical factors. The study results may provide a framework for the further development of policy with regards to recruit and retain foreign-educated male nurses, particularly in Japan.

Ethical considerations and conflicts of interest

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Kyoto University Hospital (R3261).

Table 2. Factors affecting foreigner male nurses' work motivation

Individual priorities	'I came to Japan for two reasons: I should go out and see things when I am young. I could not stay in a small place forever. Another reason was that I heard that Japanese nurses were well paid, so I came here'. (Pt 16)
Personal characteristics	'My first impression was that the medical system here is very well developed, so for that reason I came here. I thought that it would be better to work here first and then return to my country. It's more competitive to have work experience abroad, that's how I feel. (Pt 17)
Internal, psychological	'The older family members still cannot accept it (male nurses) and think men have no future in this profession'. (Pt 10)
Work-place characteristics	'At the time, there were many countries to choose from, but Japan was closer and the people there were all yellow-skinned, like Chinese and Japanese. If you went to Europe or America, you might feel like you were different, but in Japan, you would feel more like you belong because you are the same as the Japanese people. Living in Japan might be easier.' (Pt 2)
Working conditions	In the future, I would like to open a visiting nursing station. Then, if it is a success, I would like to introduce this model to China'. (Pt 1)
Influence of others	'Opening a company is currently one of our plans. It will be more focused on the market and trade aspect, rather than the nursing aspect. After stabilization, there may be other plans, such as finding a way to expand the company or establish international connections.' (Pt 9)
Social reasons	'The Japanese government set up the social system under the Japanese colonial system. We are all working class—whether you earn 10 million or less, if your income is high, your taxes will be very high, whether it is income tax or even paying health insurance or social security—you do not get to enjoy it much.' (Pt 7)

Figure 1. Framework of the factors.

