

# The impact of the 9-21 earthquake experiences of Taiwanese nurses as rescuers

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摘要

## Abstract

The powerful earthquake of September 21, 1999 wrought incalculable havoc on lives and properties in Taiwan. Although the scars of the earthquake can never be erased, the calamity can lead to a more full understanding of the experiences, perceptions and reflections of nurses involved directly in post-rescue situations. The purpose of this study was to compare the impacts of rescue experiences on Taiwanese female and male nurses who worked as rescuers following the earthquake of 21 September. A purposive sample of 46 nurses (40 women, 6 men) (mean age 26) who worked in a renowned hospital with a reputation for high quality of emergency care in Northern Taiwan was obtained. Data were collected by in-depth semi-structured interviews and analyzed by a unique mode of between-method triangulation. The majority of the subjects (38 female, 6 male) reported various impacts from their rescue experiences. They are: (a) recognition of the impermanence of life and wishing to lead a more significant life (32 female, 3 male); (b) more caring relationships with others and for their homeland (19 female, 5 male); (c) a clearer concept of disaster care (19 female, 4 male); (d) a better appreciation of the value of nursing and their own self-worth (11 female, 3 male); (e) enhanced knowledge of the survivors' needs (3 female); and (f) enhanced ability to identify the factors hindering rescue operations (1 female, 2 male). However, one female nurse complained of having been bothered by feelings of fear of earthquake disasters resulting from her rescue experience. Rescue experiences help to strengthen most Taiwanese nurses' professional competency, reinforce their commitment to nursing, and lead them to have positive life goals. The relative weight of the impacts for male and female nurses were somewhat different. The vulnerability of nurses, which was manifested in the post-rescue stage, requires attention and long-term follow-up. A comprehensive and organized pre-rescue training program which recognizes the need to care for both acute and chronic post-disaster conditions, along with spiritual care for the survivors, as well as a disaster reduction course for health professionals are suggested.