

Thematic Content Analysis of POST—Preliminary Results

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Background

Global health professionals and trainees frequently participate in activities during short-term experiences in global health (STEGH) in low or middle-income countries (LMICs) where they are confronted with the dilemma of performing outside of their scope of training (POST). Previous studies have shown that thousands of healthcare professionals and trainees engage in STEGH [1, 2]. In response to these activities, ethical frameworks and best practice guidelines have emerged to provide guidance for participants and institutions [3]. However, one of the many potentially harmful dilemmas that healthcare professionals and trainees face during STEGH is being asked to engage in POST. Therefore, understanding practitioners’ lived experiences and general perspectives regarding POST is critical.

Research Objectives

The goal of this thematic content analysis is to provide qualitative descriptions of the themes that emerged about ethical challenges, context, and experience regarding performing outside scope of training (POST) for clinical health professionals and trainees who participate in short-term global health professional activities.

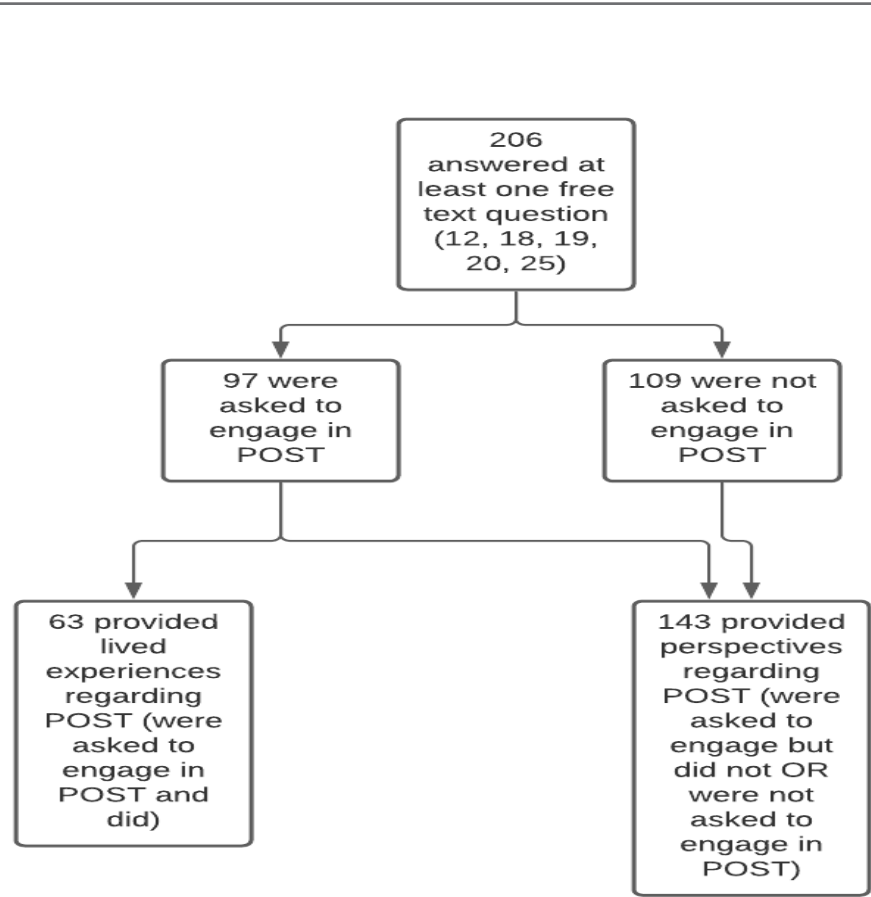
Methods

Using data from a 2017 web-based survey about POST, 206 free-text responses to five open-ended questions were included in this analysis. Several indexed themes were initially identified and categorized through several iterations of analysis; emergent themes were also identified. The responses underwent iterative analysis by independent reviewers and the final qualitative analysis determined the final thematic categories. The data are organized into resulting categories and representative quotations.

Figure 1. Five Open-Ended Survey Questions

Q12	Based on your experience practicing professionally in an LMIC or resource-constrained setting, what is the biggest ethical challenge for HIC professionals and trainees working in these settings?
Q18	Please describe briefly the most challenging situation in which you were asked to, or did perform a clinical activity beyond your scope of training.
Q19	Thinking back to the most challenging situation in which you performed clinical activities beyond your scope of training, how did you feel at the time about the experience?
Q20	How do you feel now about the experience (described in the previous question)?
Q25	For your previous answer, please explain why you made your selection. (Q24: Do you believe it is appropriate for HIC-trained clinicians to practice beyond their scope of training when in LMIC or resource-constrained settings?)

Figure 2. Respondents’ Experiences vs. Perspectives



Results

- 206 responses analyzed
 - 63 lived experiences
 - 143 perspectives

Themes regarding factors contributing to POST

- Recognition of limitations of the visitor’s knowledge, skills, or attitudes,
- Mismatch between perception held by local patients/healthcare workers/community members or facilitating organizations/colleagues of a visitor’s capabilities and their actual capabilities,
- Practical judgement at times influenced by sense of superiority,
- Assumption of superiority of visiting practitioners’ approach to care/actions compared to local status quo,
- Concern for and/or prioritization of sustainability informing scope of practice,
- Communication issues and cultural and contextual disconnects,
- Reasons POST is justified

Themes regarding emotional responses to POST

- Moral Distress/Cognitive Dissonance
- Stress/Conflict/General Tension

Conclusions

- Presence of themes indicates need for further education and inquiry regarding POST
 - Possible areas for education include
 - clarifying expectations among healthcare providers, hosting/sending organizations, and stakeholders
 - ensuring that resources/time/effort are put towards sustainable efforts

References

1. American Association of Medical Colleges. Medical school graduation questionnaire: 2018 all schools summary report. Washington: AAMC; 2018.
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3. DeCamp M, Lehmann LS, Jaeel P, Horwitch C. Ethical obligations regarding short-term global health clinical experiences. Ann Intern Med. 2018;169:651–7.