

2020

Lived Experiences of African American Nursing Students in an Associate Degree Nursing Program

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Walden University

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Monique Merritt

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Lived Experiences of African American Students in an Associate Degree Nursing

Program

by

Monique Merritt

MSN, Walden University, 2011

BSN, Medical University of South Carolina, 1993

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Nursing

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

Despite recognition of the barriers that African American nursing students encounter while pursuing nursing education, leaders of U.S. nursing programs continue to struggle to retain these students and promote their degree completion. Poor retention and lack of completion contributes to the unequal representation of African American nurses in the U.S. healthcare workforce compared to the overall population. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experiences that helped to promote African American nursing students' success or served as barriers to successful completion of an Associate Degree Nursing program. Tinto's integration model was used as the theoretical framework. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 11 African American novice nurses who attended a community college in the Southeastern region of the United States. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim by a transcription company. Transcripts were then analyzed using Van Manen's 3-step method. Thematic analysis yielded 4 themes: the path was destined; I'm here, now what; barriers seen and overcome; and insight for the future. Participants discussed a determination to succeed and persist until completion. To overcome the barriers of lack of academic preparedness and financial support, participants implemented strategies that promoted their success with the aid of faculty, peers, and family support. The results of this study may lead to positive social change by providing insight into strategies that nursing programs can implement to promote African American student retention and graduation. The results may ultimately contribute to an increase in the number of African American nurses in the U.S. workforce.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my deceased grandmother, Elizabeth Pickens, and to my mother, Elizabeth Williams, who, as nurses, stressed the importance of education and having compassion for others.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank God for allowing me to complete this educational journey. Without him, none of this would be possible. Thank you to my husband, Jimmy, and my two sons, Jamal and Michael, for being so supportive, encouraging, and believing in me. I could not have done this without you. To my mom and siblings, who did not allow me to give up even when I thought that I should, thanks for pushing me and never giving up on me. Lastly, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Janice Long, for her guidance, support, patience, and invaluable contributions to my dissertation as well as the rest of my committee, Dr. Mary Martin and Dr. Hussey, who shared their wisdom and support that enabled me to conquer this educational journey.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The attrition rate for ethnic minority nursing students in the United States has been an issue since the 1960s. From 2004-2008, there was a small increase (12.2% to 16.8%) in the percentage of minority nurses entering the workforce (U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration, 2010), yet this increase did not match the percentage of the U.S. minority population seeking healthcare services. Evidence shows that disparities between providers and patients can adversely affect patient care. The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare (2004) issued a report, for instance, identifying a lack of diversity in healthcare as contributing to a feeling of hopelessness and lack of empathy for individuals seeking care. Health disparities also result in significant economic and social losses for U.S. minority populations (Ayanian, 2015).

Several nursing organizations and stakeholders have recognized the importance of increasing the number of nurses who represent minority populations as a means to eliminate or decrease health disparities (Phillips & Malone, 2014). They view having more nurses who are from minority groups to be a strategy that will ensure that the minority population receives adequate care that is ethnically and culturally appropriate (Loftin et al., 2013). Phillips and Malone (2014) posited that nurse-led efforts must be conducted in the academic and clinic setting if health disparities are to be eliminated. One effort that may improve the number of minority nurses at the bedside is to reduce the attrition of minority nursing students, thereby increasing the number of minority students who graduate with their nursing degree.

In this study, I identified strategies that African American nursing students used to promote their success in a community college located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The project may promote positive social change by raising awareness of the factors that contribute to African American and nursing success in an Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program. In this chapter, I will preview the background, problem statement, purpose, research question, theoretical framework, and nature of the study. The definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study are also discussed. I conclude the chapter by providing a brief summary of key points.

Background of the Problem

African Americans have long had poorer education outcomes compared to other ethnic groups in the United States (Ansell, 2011; Metcalfe et al., 2016). The graduation rate for African American students increased by only 3% in the 2-year period from 2004-2006, settling at a low 42%, while the graduation rate for White students averaged 62%, for example (“Black Student College Graduation Rates,” 2018). The graduation rate of African American students in nursing programs is similarly low ranging from 12.1 to 9.6 (Murray, 2015). Lack of academic preparation, the nonexistence of faculty support, and social and economic status have been identified as significant contributors to the high attrition rate of African American nursing students (Ansell, 2011; Dapremont, 2014; Metcalfe et al., 2016). To combat these barriers, nursing programs have sought to create an environment imbued with a “sense of belonging” and have created faculty mentoring relationships for students (White & Fulton, 2015). Metcalfe et al. (2016) evaluated a

pipeline program that was based on the interventions that White and Fulton (2016) suggested and concluded that pipeline programs can be beneficial but need to be individualized to meet the needs of each student, which is a major undertaking for nursing programs. Without the success of these type programs, nursing schools will continue to have an issue retaining African American nursing students (Metcalfe et al., 2016).

Although the literature supports implementing interventions for African American students prior to nursing courses, there is a need for these interventions to be reinforced throughout the program (Dapremont, 2014). Interventions such as time management, development of study groups, reading assignments, and referrals to campus resources should be introduced and reassessed by faculty to ensure that they are being used by African American students (White & Fulton, 2015). An integrative review of prior studies has suggested that innovative strategies continue to be developed and implemented that can increase the graduation rate of African American students (Loftin et al., 2012; Murray, 2015). These findings support nursing programs' offering of multiple and ongoing interventions targeted at African American nursing students.

Problem Statement

There are 3,000,000 registered nurses in the United States, making nurses the largest group of healthcare providers (Murray, 2015). Yet, only 13% represent minority nurses (Murray, 2015). Since 1960, the shortage of minority nurses has contributed to the major problem of maintaining a diverse nursing workforce in the United States (Dapremont, 2014). As the U.S. population continues to grow, the demand for a

culturally diverse nursing workforce will also increase (Smith & Smyer, 2015). If there is no increase in minority nurses, the disparities in health care and health outcomes may rise and negatively affect the underserved population (Philips & Malone, 2014). The need for more minority nurses has prompted the National League of Nursing (NLN) to challenge nursing schools to produce nurses that can provide care and knowledge for a diverse population (Dapremont, 2014). Despite this challenge, African American nursing students continue to have the highest attrition rate of any ethnic group (Dapremont, 2014).

In the state of South Carolina, associate degree nursing programs have a higher enrollment than bachelor's programs but still have a small number of minority nursing students. From 2011 to 2014, only 14.8% of African American nurses graduated although African Americans make up 28% of South Carolina's population (South Carolina Office for Healthcare Workforce, 2018). This low percentage may be catastrophic for South Carolina, which is expected to have a shortage of 10,000 registered nurses by 2030 (Office for Healthcare Workforce Analysis and Planning, 2014). With a lack of nurses and a decrease in diversity in the workforce, patients from diverse backgrounds will suffer (Graham, Phillips, Newman, & Atz, 2016). The time is now for recruiting and retaining African American nursing students who can deliver competently and culturally sensitive care to a growing diverse population (Harris, Rosenberg, & O'Rourke, 2014). Previous studies have been conducted to promote success for nursing students, but there is a gap in addressing how minority students can be successful in nursing school (Murray, 2015; White & Fulton, 2015). To address this issue, I conducted

a study on the lived experiences of African American nursing students in an ADN program in South Carolina.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of prior African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an ADN program. I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study using semistructured interviews. I sought to understand the strategies that have helped African American students to be successful in their ADN program. Findings from this study may help nursing educators to address the disparity between the number of African American nursing students and the numbers of African Americans in the U.S. population (Harris et al., 2014). Identifying successful strategies would allow for necessary changes to be implemented that can promote retention and increase the graduation rate for African American nursing students. Without the identification and dissemination of successful strategies to schools of nursing, African American nursing students may continue to be underrepresented in healthcare settings where the diversity of the patient population continues to increase (White & Fulton, 2015).

Research Question

I sought to answer the following research question: What are the lived experiences of African American registered novice nurses who successfully completed an ADN program?

Theoretical Framework

I chose Tinto's student integration model. During the 1990s in the US, the focus of student retention shifted to include "students of color, underrepresented populations, and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds" (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011, p. 302). In 1993, Tinto disseminated the theory of retention, which identified different student groups, such as African American students, students from low-income families, adult students, and transfer students, as having unique experiences that needed to be addressed. Researchers have used Tinto's theory to study retention in nursing programs in community colleges (see Ferrell et al., 2016; Murray, 2015; Shelton, 2012; Strayhorn, 2012). Therefore, it was appropriate to use in this study.

According to Tinto's theory, a student must be integrated socially and academically to be retained (Strayhorn, 2012). Students must have positive interactions with faculty and feel that their abilities, goals, and values coincide with others in the institution (Strayhorn, 2012). The lack of integration can cause students to feel isolated and distant, which can affect students' persistence and graduation rates (Dapremont, 2011). I will further discuss Tinto's theory of retention in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The research design used for this dissertation was qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Using a phenomenological approach allows for the exploration of each participant's lived experience to gain a better understanding of a particular topic or phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The phenomenon for this study was African American nursing students' strategies for success. I conducted

semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to ensure that participants would respond in their own words with detailed explanations (see Creswell, 2014; Houser, 2015). The interviews allowed the participants to recall their experiences and me as the researcher to gain an understanding of the phenomenon from the rich, detailed information that was elicited (see Houser, 2015).

I conducted the study in the Southeastern United States. Interviews were conducted by telephone and recorded with an electronic device per permission of the participant. I selected participants using a purposive sampling method. Using a structured interview process allowed me to ask probing questions based on each participant's response to explore their experiences. Responses were transcribed and analyzed to identify themes that were consistent with the theoretical framework chosen for this study.

Definitions

African Americans nursing students: Nursing students who identify themselves as Black or African Americans born in United States.

Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) program: A program in a community setting in which students pursue and obtain a nursing degree in at least a two-year span. Upon successful completion of the program, students can take the national licensure test.

Novice registered nurse: A nurse who has graduated from an ADN program in the past 5 years and obtained licensure as a registered nurse.

Successful: Students who have completed all nursing courses in a 24-month nursing program.

Assumptions

I had several assumptions for this study. I assumed that the retention and graduation rate of African American nursing students was a significant concern for the local community college and the healthcare community in the Southeastern region of the United States. I also assumed that the participants selected for this study would share their experiences as African American nursing students in a 2-year nursing program. Another assumption was that participants would be truthful in recalling and describing the interventions they utilized to promote successful outcomes. Last, I assumed that participants would not be reluctant to agree to participate in the study even though they had taken prior nursing courses in which I was an instructor.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study was the exploration of prior nursing students' perceptions of their success in nursing courses while attending a local community college. According to Terrell (2018), a delimitation of a study occurs when the researcher identifies and controls factors that could affect the results of the study. I included only African American students who had graduated from an ADN program within the past 5 years to decrease the chances that they might be inconsistent when recalling their experiences. The exclusion criteria were participants who were over the age of 45 and/or who had achieved master's and/or PhD degrees in other disciplines.

My decision to use Tinto's (1993) student integration model as the study's theoretical framework was another limitation in that I did not consider other theories and models that might have been relevant. These included Bandura's (1977) theory of self-

efficacy, and Bean's (1982) theory of attrition. Bean's theory of attrition is based on external factors as being the main determinant in the decision of whether or not a student is persistent or decides to leave the institution (Aljohani,2016). Because my study was focused on the exploration of internal and external factors, Bean's theory was not appropriate. Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, which is rooted in the field of psychology, posits that behaviors that promote positive outcomes can only be achieved if individual believe they are capable of being successful (Bandura, 1977; Shelton, 2003). These theories were not appropriate to answer the research question, which centered on internal and external factors central to student retention and success. Other delimitations were that purposeful sampling was used and only participants who responded to the invitation to participate were included. Because I had a sufficient response to reach saturation, I did not use the snowballing approach to recruit participants.

Limitations

I used interviews to elicit ADN-prepared nurse participants' experiences as a nursing student. Interviews were a means of collecting data that provided insights into the individual perspectives of the interviewees. There is a potential that the interviewer/researcher may interject bias into the analysis of the results (Creswell, 2014). To avoid researcher bias, I kept a journal of personal reflections. I also engaged in member checking to prevent bias. According to Houser (2015), member checking allows the researcher to discuss interpretations and conclusions with the participants to ensure that the data collected are correct. Member checking is essential in determining that the researcher has captured the real meaning of the data and eliminated bias from the

conclusions (Houser, 2105). The transcribed data was shared with the participants to ensure that all information was correct.

Another limitation of this study was related to the location of the participants. Participants were from a state in the Southeast region of the United States. Their experiences might not be similar to those of African American nursing students in different geographic locations in the United States. Thus, the results of the study may lack transferability. According to Cope (2014), transferability is obtained when the results of a study have meaning for individuals not involved in the study and when readers can relate the results to their own experiences.

Last, the validity of responses by participants could have affected this study. I am a nursing instructor in the region, and the participants may have taken a course that I taught, which could have influenced participants' responses, such as showing gratification. To avoid this problem, I informed participants in the introductory statement of the consent form of the importance of sharing valuable information that will help future nursing students. Rubin and Rubin (2012) posited that participants will only provide open and honest responses when a trusting relationship has been established. To create this relationship, I was attentive and allowed each participant time to answer each question fully. I also gained participants' consent for record their interviews, which I did to allow for observation of each participant's response.

Significance

As the demand for diversity increases, nursing programs will need to address the challenge of attrition for minority students (Harris et al., 2014). The need to understand

how African American nursing students are successful will enable nursing programs to create an environment that will foster engagement, learning, and persistence and ultimately lead to successful completion of the nursing program (Ferrell et al., 2015).

This research aim was to promote the retention and graduation rate of African American nursing students by identifying successful strategies utilized by African American nursing students. The results of this study could promote positive social change in nursing programs by providing published information that other nursing schools could utilize to retain African American nursing students.

Summary

There is a need for nursing programs to investigate and find solutions that will retain minority nursing students. This chapter has described the problem, background, and the significance of conducting a study that will examine the barriers faced by African American students that can hinder success and identify interventions that helped to overcome these barriers. The next chapter will provide the literature review that supports the theoretical framework and a synthesis of the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Currently, the attrition rate for ethnic minority nursing students in the United States ranges from 15% to 85%; which further validates a need to investigate the experiences of African American nursing students (Gona et al., 2018). Despite numerous studies on the factors that lead to African Americans being unsuccessful in nursing courses, these students are still less likely to graduate than White students (Harris et al., 2014). It is important that nursing programs reevaluate their programs to better understand the needs of minority students and employ strategies to address those needs (Harris et al., 2014). The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of prior African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an ADN program. The information elicited from successful minority students about their experiences while being enrolled in an ADN program may help nursing educators to implement strategies to improve minority student retention and graduation.

This literature review will focus on several topics that are pertinent to African American success in pursuing a nursing education and will further validate the importance of this study. To fully understand the success of African American nursing students, the review will begin with a brief discussion of the need for a diverse nursing workforce, an overview of African American nursing students, and a discussion of the factors necessary for nursing students to be successful. I will also discuss the theoretical

framework used for this study. This chapter will end with a brief overview of the chapter and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the following databases to review the literature review: CINAHL & MEDLINE, Ovid Nursing Journals, ProQuest Nursing, and Allied Source, Psych Articles, CINAHL Plus, Dissertations & Theses @ Walden University, ProQuest Dissertations, and Google Scholar. The search terms were *African American, minority students, retention, attrition, community college, barriers, Tinto's theory of retention, student integration model, institutional departure model, social integration, academic integration, successful, education, African American nurses, associate degree nursing program, and underserved population*. I used the terms interchangeably to obtain articles pertinent to the study. Furthermore, references in the selected articles were researched and read. An exhaustive search was performed. I excluded articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria, were redundant, and/or published before 2011. The dates of the articles chosen were 2011-2018, however, I included older resources related to the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Vincent Tinto is considered the pioneer in addressing student retention in higher education. His theory has existed for over 40 years, has reached paradigm status, and is applicable to nontraditional students and community colleges (Aljohani, 2016; Burrus et al., 2013; Davidson & Wilson, 2014; Reed & Wilson, 2016). For these reasons, it served as the underlying theoretical framework for this dissertation. Utilizing Durkheim's

theory of suicide (1951) and Spady's theory of dropout (1970), Tinto introduced his theory in 1975. Durkheim contended that suicide occurred as a result of an individual failing to connect socially or intellectually to society (Aljohani, 2016). Spady associated the concept of social integration to the cause of attrition by postulating that a student's decision to stay or leave college depends on "grades and intellectual development in the academic system, and normative congruence and friendship support in the social system" (Aljohani, 2016, p. 5). Building further on this model, Tinto introduced his student integration model in 1975; the model is sometimes referred to as the institutional departure model. The student integration model is based on the concepts of social and academic integration. According to this theory, students need to experience a sense of belonging to the institution on an academic and social level to succeed or persist; if not, students will become "suicidal" and dropout (Aljohani, 2016; Davidson & Wilson, 2014).

In 1993, Tinto revised his student integration model to include a longitudinal process of how a student integrated into the societies of their academic institutions (Aljohani, 2016, p. 6; see Figure 1). Based on this model, Tinto identified several variables: preattributes (family background defined as social status, individual attributes defined as race, and past experiences defined as academic ability and secondary school performance); goals and commitments (based on preattributes and goals set prior to entrance and within the institution setting); academic and social integration; modified levels of goals and commitments (determined by the success of integration); and outcome (persistence/withdrawal) (Aljohani, 2014, Burrus et al., 2014). According to Tinto's theory, a student's preattributes serve as a preparation for the longitudinal process of

interacting with the informal and formal social/academic environment of the institution (Connolly, 2016). A student's initial goals/commitments will be affected as integration takes place, leading to a change or modification in the student's goals/commitments (Aljohani, 2014). As illustrated in Figure 1, this modification/change would determine if a student decides to persist or leave college (Aljohani, 2014).

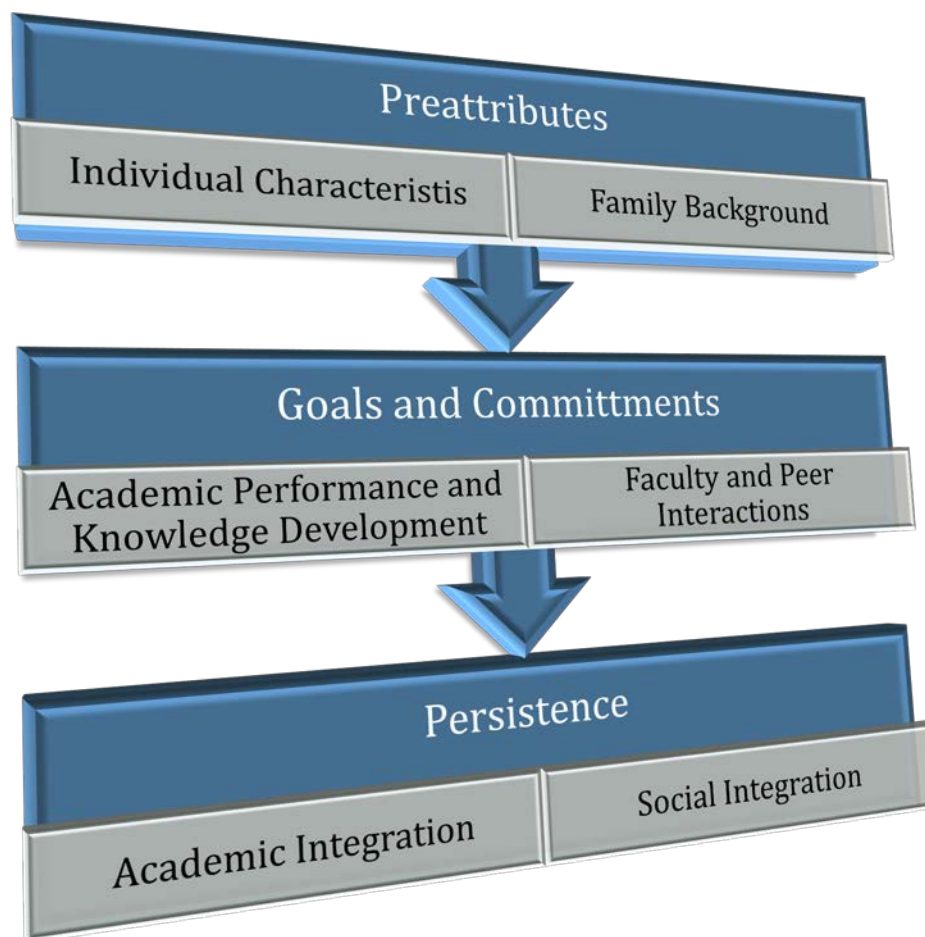


Figure 1. Student integration model. I based the model on Aljohani (2014).

Tinto's model has undergone testing and been cited in studies that address retention for nontraditional students (including minorities) and community colleges

(Aljohani, 2014, Davidson and Wilson, 2014, Reed and Wilson, 2016). Utilizing Tinto's model, Sweet (1985) conducted a study with nontraditional participants to determine if there was a correlation between social integration and persistence for the nontraditional student (Davidson & Wilson, 2014). A study conducted by Strauss and Volkwein (2004) supported this model as being applicable to a community college. Strauss and Volkwein concluded that classroom experiences allow community college students to become socially integrated by forming a supporting environment (Davidson & Wilson, 2014; Tinto, 1997).

Tinto's theory has been cited in numerous studies pertaining to retention of African American nursing students. In 2012, Shelton conducted a study aimed to develop strategies for retention that addressed certain variables that hinder nontraditional nursing students (Shelton, 2012). Utilizing Tinto's theory, Shelton designed a questionnaire based on the student's background, internal psychological processes and external environmental support system. Shelton provided a detailed definition of these components and how they promoted the retention of the study. The participants consisted of successful and unsuccessful students from nine associate degree nursing programs. The results of the study revealed that the academic success of a student correlates with their background and the perception of faculty support (Shelton, 2012). Shelton suggested that the findings of this study serve as a guide for developing intervention programs that are geared to promote retention and graduation rates of nursing students.

Ferrell and DeCrane (2016) conducted a study to identify factors perceived by current minority nursing students that promoted success. Tinto's theory was chosen as

the guiding framework for this study. Thirty-one minority students were selected for this study. Questions were designed to elicit strategies that students used or barriers that they perceived during nursing school. The results of the questions were analyzed by comparing to the concept of persistence from Tinto's theory (Ferrell & DeCrane, 2016). After analyzing the data, the themes identified were an institutional commitment, feedback, communication of expectations, involvement, and social, academic, and family support (Ferrell and DeCrane, 2016). Ferrell and DeCrane (2016) concluded that minority nursing students could be successful if nursing programs create an environment that fosters engagement, build knowledge, and supports determination (Ferrell and DeCrane, 2016).

Using Tinto's theory, Dapremont (2011) conducted a qualitative descriptive study to determine strategies that Black graduates used to be successful in a predominantly White nursing program. The author chose to use a qualitative descriptive design for this study to elicit rich and detailed information about perceived barriers for success. Participants consisted of 18 Black nurses between the ages of 18 and 50 that graduated from nursing school between 2000-2006 (Dapremont, 2011). Using an interview process, each participant was asked 18 semi-structured questions. The results identified strategies Black graduates recognized as necessary for success: having a daily routine, meeting with a diverse peer study group, family support, and encouragement, and support from faculty (Dapremont, 2011). Approximately eighty-nine percent of participants stated the value of peer support as being a significant factor in promoting success. This study fully supported Tinto's theory of student feeling integrated socially and academically,

influencing persistence (Aljohani, 2016; Burrus et al., 2014; Davidson and Wilson, 2014).

Tinto's theory posited that students must be social and academic integrated to persist until graduation. My study identified the factors relating to social and academic integration that was utilized by prior nursing students. The interview questions were developed to elicit responses that supported Tinto's student integration model. The results of my study could bring awareness of valuable information that might be useful when developing retention strategies for a specific population. This study would build on the existing literature of phenomenological studies addressing the lived experiences of prior nursing students being successful in an ADN program.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

While numerous studies are addressed in this chapter, provide evidence of efforts to recruit and retain African American nursing students, the retention and graduation rate of African American nursing students remains a challenge because of the various obstacles that African American students experience in the learning environment (Dapremont, 2014; Phillip & Malone, 2014). However, examining the successful experiences that African Americans encounter while in the nursing program provides a unique perspective for nursing programs to design and implement evidence-based strategies distinctive to the African American racial group. To sustain and retain African American nursing graduates, nursing programs must intervene early with interventions that encourage African American nursing students to utilize evidence-based strategies (Dapremont, 2014). Rather than focus on the barriers to success, this study addresses the

gap in the literature to show the successful strategies that African American nurses describe from their ADN nursing program experiences.

For this study, I addressed the following key variables pertinent for my study: justification for having a diverse nursing workforce, African American nursing students, factors deemed necessary for African American nursing student's success, and barriers that cause failure.

Need for Diverse Nursing Workforce

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that an estimated 1.09 million registered nurses will be needed by the year 2040, which will increase the RN workforce by 18% (as cited in American Association College of Nursing, 2014). This growth will be perpetuated as the United States experiences changes demographically, leading to a need for a more diverse nursing workforce. These rapidly changing demographics are expected to result in racial and ethnic minorities becoming the majority by 2043 (Phillips & Malone, 2014). By 2060, the demand for nursing staff who are members of racial and ethnic minorities will be even higher as the minority of the United States will become the majority (Philip & Malone, 2014). Table 1 illustrates the expected growth of ethnic groups and their contribution to the overall U.S. population by 2060.

Table 1

Expected U.S. Population Growth by Ethnicity in 2060

Ethnicity	2012 population (in millions)	2060 population (expected, in millions)	Expected - percentage of population in 2060
Hispanics	53.3	128.8	33.0%
African Americans	41.2	61.8	14.7%
Asians	15.9	34.4	8.2%
American Indians	3.9	6.3	1.5%
Alaska Native	3.9	6.3	1.5%

Note. Data are from U.S. Census Bureau, 2012.

Nursing organizations and stakeholders have recognized the importance of the nursing workforce mirroring the diverse population in which it will serve to ensure positive outcomes are obtained for a diverse, underserved population (African AmericanCN, 2015, Institute of Medicine, 2010, and Philip & Malone, 2014, Thompson, Campbell, & Deming, 2017). Degazon and Mancha (2012) posited that minority nurses could promote positive outcomes by forming a trusting relationship with minority patients based on the results of having “shared experiences” (p. 5). In a study conducted by the Institute of Medicine, it was concluded that the rate of certain illness and premature death were linked to lack of healthcare access and a shortage of minority healthcare providers for diverse populations (IOM, 2002; Colville et al., 2015; White and Fulton, 2015).

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), African Americans succumb to more diseases, injury, and disability than any other racial or ethnic group; causing this group to have a high mortality rate (CDC, 2014; Gona et al., 2018). Initiatives to increase the enrollment and graduation rates of minority students should be established to combat

health disparities and increase diversity in the workforce (Phillip & Malone, 2014).

Despite these initiatives, the nursing workforce still lacks minority representation.

Without representation, the diverse population will suffer, and the nursing shortage will continue, creating a major crisis in healthcare. Increasing the African American nursing workforce could greatly contribute to improving health at the community level and helping to address and seek solutions to health disparities in the African American community (White, 2018).

Retention of African American Nursing Students

During the last ten years, the enrollment of African American nursing students has not experienced a significant growth; averaging only 10.8% (NLN, education statistics). This has caused great concern since African American nursing students have the lowest retention rate and suffer more academically than any other ethnic group (Deurkesen, 2013). Because of this, there is a need for nursing programs to identify and implement interventions that retain African American nursing students. Increasing the African American nursing workforce would greatly contribute to improving health at the community, state, and national level (Phillips & Malone, 2014). Several studies have sought to discover and address the barriers to promote success of African American nursing students (Beauvais, Stewart, Denisco, & Beauvais, 2013; Dapremont, 2011; Dapremont, 2014; Ferrell & DeCrane, Edwards, Foli, Tennant, 2016; Ferrell & DeCrane, 2016; Gona, Reed, Duynstee, and Gall, 2018; Harris et al., 2014; Murray, 2015; Veal, Bull, & Miller, 2015). While these studies have provided some guidance, the retention and graduation rate of African American nursing students remains a challenge because of

the various obstacles that these group of students bring to the learning environment. However, examining the experiences that African Americans encounter while in the nursing program, provides a unique perspective for nursing programs to designing and implementing evidence-based strategies distinctive to this ethnic group. To sustain and retain African American nursing graduates, nursing programs must intervene early with interventions that encourages African American nursing students to utilize evidence-based strategies (Dapremont, 2014).

Gona et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative exploratory study to investigate barriers and success strategies that African American nursing alumni utilized while attending a predominantly White institution. Sixteen alumni participated in a focus group interview. The results of the interviews identified the following themes for barriers: alienation, lack of diversity, limited access to minority mentors, and cultural assumptions. The alumni expressed a feeling of isolation, being subjected to stereotypical bias related to their speech or lack of participation in class, and having no role model (Gona et al., 2018). To overcome these barriers, the African American alumni utilized the following strategies to be successful: finding faculty and peer mentors who could empathize with them, building resilience, relying on religious belief, and remaining silent to avoid being subjected to bias (Gona et al., 2018). The strategy of remaining silent was unique to this study by serving as a coping mechanism for dealing with feeling unvalued in the learning environment (Gona et al., 2018). Gona et al. (2018) posited that nursing programs must create a caring environment in which African American nursing students feel that their cultural perspectives are valued, respected, and contribute to the learning environment.

Murray (2015) conducted an integrated review to identify factors that influence the success of African American nursing students in prelicensure nursing program. Five qualitative descriptive articles were selected to analyze and identify consistent themes. The analysis revealed the following themes: discrimination, academic support, mentoring, and academic integration/inclusivity; as being factors that can promote or hinder the success of African American nursing students (Murray, 2015). Murray (2015) posited that nursing programs implement strategies to address each theme by hiring diverse faculty, incorporate enrichment services, designing a system to classify at risk students along with appropriate interventions, employing activities that promote socialization of faculty and students, and allowing access to resources that include family and financial support. These strategies would promote retention and success “ by fostering engagement and integration in the learning environment” (Murray, 2015, p. 74).

Factors Promoting Success for African American Nursing Students

Faculty mentoring. Faculty mentoring is an important strategy that can be utilized to retain minority students. According to Crooks (2013), mentoring serves as a guide that enhances the learning process for students while allowing them to navigate through the nursing program successfully. Crooks posited that nursing programs implement the MENTOR program to increase the retention rate of minority students. MENTOR is based on 16 weeks of mentoring designed to help minority students develop and implement strategies for unsuccessful barriers such as time management, study habits, financial support, setting priorities, and course requirements. During this program, students were able to form a faculty-student relationship that elicits a caring

environment; which enabled students to develop a “persistence” attitude needed to be successful (Crooks, 2013; Peltz & Raymond, 2015). According to Crooks (2013), the MENTOR program is a strategic intervention that has been successful in retaining minority students.

In a study by Peltz and Raymond (2015), the validation of mentoring as a positive intervention was further investigated. For this study, 249 nursing students were recruited from nine ADN programs. Each participant completed a survey that asked questions about a mentor-student relationship; how often they met and the overall experience of having a mentor. The study concluded that students viewed their mentor as a role model, who offered psychological and emotional support and encouraged them to persist in their nursing program (Peltz & Raymond, 2015). Peltz and Raymond (2015) posited that mentoring promotes persistence which is necessary for African American nursing students to overcome failure. African American nursing students are looking and hoping for words of encouragement from faculty to diffuse their stress and help them to refocus (Dapremont, 2011; Veal et al., 2014).

Payton et al. (2013) conducted a study to obtain African American nursing students’ perceptions about mentoring. Utilizing a qualitative approach, 26 students were interviewed using semi-structured questions about mentoring. The data were analyzed, and four themes emerged: role models, tricks of the trade, feelings, and someone who looks like me (Payton et al., 2013). Participants of this study stated that they desired mentors who represented the same ethnic background, could provide insights on how to study and organize notes, and serve as a role model, encourager, and listener (Payton et

al., 2013). Payton et al. (2013) posited that nursing programs should increase diversity in the faculty population and recruit mentors from outside resources to embrace diversity and ensure empowerment among African American nursing students.

Mentoring has been shown to elicit positive results for African American nursing students by providing a nurturing environment in which students feel safe to share experiences and seek understanding (Gona et al., 2018). However, nursing faculty must be willing to serve as mentors and implement other interventions to ensure that African American nursing students conquer obstacles and be retained in their nursing program (Crooks, 2013; Gona et al., 2018; Payton et al., 2013).

Peer support. African American nursing students have stressed the importance of having a relationship with their peers to avoid feeling isolated (Veal et al., 2014). Dapremont (2011) posited that peer support enables African American nursing students to integrate successfully into the nursing program by fostering learning and building confidence. In a study conducted by Tab (2015), a diversity program promoting faculty and peer mentoring were implemented to increase the success rate of minority students from a rural area. Peer tutors were required to meet with minority students weekly to offer academic support and to eliminate any foreseen problems (Tab, 2015). At the end of the program, minority students validated the importance of having peer support/tutors by completing a survey that measured academic enhancement, support and feedback, student relationship, and student satisfaction (Tab, 2015). Each category received a mean score of over 4.7 out of 5. Tab (2015) concluded that nursing programs need to

create a nurturing environment that is “culturally sensitive and fosters psychological safety, a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization” (p. 72).

According to Deurksen (2013), peer support creates a sense of a close community by promoting the interactions of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Within this community, students were able to obtain clarification of nursing content and gain valuable knowledge that helped progression within the nursing program (Dapremont, 2014).

Intervention programs. Most African American nursing students are unprepared to meet the demands of nursing school. Nursing programs have recognized this and, therefore, have implemented retention interventions to combat this problem, thereby retaining minority nursing students (Harris & O’Rourke, 2014). A summer pre-matriculation program was implemented to provide 33 minority students with appropriate resources to prepare for nursing school admission and courses (Norris & Cowan, 2016). Each participant attended weekly classes that boosted reading, writing, and math, and social skills. At least thirty-nine percent of participants were successfully accepted into a nursing program and maintained a relationship with peers and faculty. Norris and Cowan (2016) concluded pre-matriculation programs could foster the skills and confidence vital for minority students pursuing a nursing career.

Harris and O’Rourke (2014) discussed an intervention program that was implemented in the ADN program to decrease the attrition rate of nursing students. Participants selected for this program were identified as poor test takers on the ACT and math, repeaters of sciences courses, and at risk of failing the fundamental nursing course.

Over 16 weeks, 18 students were exposed to strategic topics to address barriers, mentoring sessions, and provide an overview of resources available on campus. Three African American nursing students participated in this program and went on to be very successful in their fundamental nursing course (Harris & O'Rourke, 2014). Harris and O'Rourke (2014) concluded that interventions for minority students should be implemented before starting the nursing program; which would ensure that strategies can be successfully integrated.

Barriers African American Nursing Students Face

Academic. According to Murray (2016), minority students are less likely to be a success despite meeting the requirements to pursue a nursing education. The lack of academic preparedness is identified as one of the major contributors for failure for African American nursing students (Murray, 2016; Dapremont, 2014; Loftin et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2014). Pursuing an associate degree in nursing can be very demanding and rigorous for minority students coming from diverse backgrounds. Murray (2016) posits that minorities are less prepared than White students, are first-time generation students, and lack knowledge relating to the commitment needed to be successful in the nursing program. Nursing courses require students to develop critical thinking skills by building and applying the knowledge that promotes safe, patient-centered care. If students lack a background in science, reading, and math, it could be difficult for them to attain these skills (Norris et al., 2016). There seems to be a strong correlation between academic success and poor scores in these three areas (Norris et al., 2016; Olsen, 2017). Furthermore, minority students are less likely to have strong study habits and time

management skills needed to conquer the demand for nursing courses (Loftin et al., 2012; Dapremont, 2014; Olhsen, 2017).

Minority students lacking these skills are more likely to have attended schools with low academic standards in rural areas. Because of this, these students are more likely to be less challenged academically. Loftin et al. (2015) posited that minority students lacked inappropriate advising on grades and course requirements while in high school, concentrating on graduation rather than higher learning. Misconceptions about the workload, time constraints of clinical and class, poor computer skills, and notetaking further serve as academic barriers for minority students (Loftin, 2012; Dapremont, 2014; Murray, 2015; Colville et al., 2015; Veal et al., 2016; Olsen, 2017). Colville et al. (2015) designed a model at a local community college to address these barriers and decrease the attrition rate of African American nursing students. Courses were offered during the summer prior to admission into the nursing program that included writing, reading, math, critical, and study skills (Colville et al., 2015). Over five years, the community college experienced a huge increase in retention, 30% to 85% (Colville et al., 2015). This program strategically implemented and succeeded by recognizing barriers that African American nursing face and ensuring that they overcame those barriers (Colville et al., 2015).

Financial. Financial burden is not unique to the African American community; however, it is considered another major barrier for African American nursing students (Ferrell & Crane, 2016). Most African American students are sole providers and have financial responsibilities that require them to work full time while pursuing their

education. Having to attend school and work can be demanding and puts the student at risk for failure. Burrus et al. (2015) posited that financial obligations such as high tuition and lack of ability to pay are directly related to persistence. Furthermore, students who are committed to working spend less time on campus and are more prone to make poorer grades and lose the opportunity to become socially integrated to the institution (Burrus et al., 2015). This could be disastrous for minority students if the institution fails to offer any interventions to combat this problem (Burrus et al., 2015; Ferrell & Crane, 2016). If nursing programs are going to retain students, finding solutions for students experiencing financial difficulty must be done immediately.

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review provided an insight into the factors that African American nursing students experience while attending a prelicensure nursing program. There is currently a need for a more diverse workforce. It is predicted that the United States will experience a huge growth in population, becoming a minority-majority by 2043 (Phillip & Malone, 2014). Because of this growth, there will be a demand for minority nurses to increase health outcomes and help eliminate health disparities for underserved populations (Graham, Phillips, Newman, & Atz, 2016; Phillips & Malone, 2014; Smith & Smyer, 2015). However, nursing programs will be unable to retain and graduate minority nurses if they don't address and implement strategies that promote success for these students, who have the highest attrition rate than any other ethnic group (Dapremont, 2014; Harris et al., 2014).

There is a gap that remains in understanding how to retain African American nursing students. The literature has identified factors that promote success, yet African American nursing students are less likely to graduate and pass NCLEX. Today, there is a need to fully understand the experiences of African American nursing students in an ADN in the challenges they face and the factors they overcame to be successful. Gona et al. (2018) posit a need for more research to be conducted in different regions of the United States. This study will be conducted in the southeastern region of the United States. There have been limited studies conducted on nursing students in the ADN program in this region. My study would provide awareness of African American registered novice nurses' experiences while attending an ADN program and provide new knowledge that could be utilized by nursing programs in the future. This study could impact social change by identifying strategies that nursing programs could implement to retain minority students.

Chapter 3 will discuss the research method chosen for this study. This will include the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical concerns.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an ADN program. A phenomenological approach was used to gain detailed information from the participants about their experiences. In this chapter, I will discuss the research design and rationale, the role as a researcher, the selected methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Research Design and Rationale

The research question for this study was, "What are the lived experiences of African American registered novice nurses who completed an ADN program?" I used the qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Using a phenomenological approach allows for the exploration of each participant's lived experience to gain a better understanding of a topic or phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Use of this approach allowed the African American novice nurses in the study to describe the study phenomenon, which was being successful in an ADN program. Study participants identified barriers they experienced and how they overcame these barriers to be successful. I conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions to ensure that participants would respond in their own words with detailed explanations (see Creswell, 2014; Houser, 2015). Conducting an interview with recently graduated nurses enabled me to contextualize their behavior and to gain an understanding of the actions they took to be successful in nursing school (see Siedman, 2012).

The qualitative approach chosen allowed for follow-up questions to be asked to elicit a depth of meaning (see Houser, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The rationale for selecting this approach was to explore the lived experiences of African American novice nurses who completed an ADN program and identify barriers that they overcame while attending the program. Polit and Beck (2017) posited that the goal of using a phenomenological approach is “to understand lived experience and the perceptions to which it gives rise” (p. 471). In the phenomenological approach, the researcher should guide the participant in describing the lived experience without controlling the discussion (Polit & Beck, 2017). Using the qualitative approach ensured that I could answer the research question appropriately and efficiently.

Role of the Researcher

My role in this research was to gather and analyze all data collected through interviews and observation of participants. As stated by Polit and Beck (2017), qualitative researchers are the data collection instruments as well as creators of the analytic process. Therefore, the researcher’s qualifications, experiences, and reflexivity are relevant in establishing confidence in the data (Polit & Beck, 2017). As an African American nurse and a prior nursing instructor to prospective participants, my goal was to create an interview that was free from bias. Chen et al. (2013) posited that researchers should be aware of their “own values, interest, perception, and thoughts” (p. 4) throughout the study. To ensure such awareness, I sought to enable participants to describe their lived experiences without leading the discussion (see Chen et al., 2013; Polit & Beck, 2017). Furthermore, I did not share my personal experience to eliminate

any possible influence on participants' answers. I also conducted member checking with participants. Member checking allowed me to discuss interpretations and conclusions with participants to ensure that data were correct (see Chen et al., 2013; Houser, 2015).

To maintain confidentiality, I identified each participant by a number.

Participants were reassured that their names and addresses would be excluded from the data analysis. Interviews were conducted outside of the community college to eliminate participants feeling an obligation to the school or former instructors. I offered an incentive, a gift card worth 10 dollars, for participation in the study. This served as a token of appreciation for the time allotted for a 60-minute interview. To elicit valuable responses, I informed prospective participants in the invitation letter, and at the beginning of the interview, how valuable their shared information would be in aiding the success of future minority nursing students.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

For this qualitative phenomenological study, I selected participants through purposive sampling. When conducting a qualitative study, a researcher might choose to use purposive sampling in which the selection of participants is based on certain characteristics that enhance the credibility of the study (Houser, 2015). Houser (2015) posited that criteria for selection of participants should be determined by who can best inform the question, support the methodology, and conduct the study. The inclusion criteria for this study were nurses who graduated within five years from an ADN program, were unsuccessful in only one nursing course, graduated within 24 months or

less of starting the ADN program, and were African American. The exclusion criteria for this study were participants over the age of 45 and participants who obtained a master's or PhD prior to starting the ADN program.

The alumni department provided a contact list of prior African American nursing graduates within the past 5 years. I sent an informative e-mail/postal letter to all graduates on the list. See Appendix A for the information provided to participants. Participants were instructed to call or e-mail me if they expressed an interest in participating. Interviews were conducted until saturation was accomplished. For this study, I planned to select eight to 10 participants until saturation was reached. As stated by Polit and Beck (2017), a sample size of 10 or fewer is recommended for a qualitative study. However, Patton (2015) posited that a qualitative study must be flexible and emergent as a sample size might need to be adjusted for saturation to be obtained.

Instrumentation

A semistructured interview was the instrument used for this study. The interview consisted of questions designed to answer the research question of this study, which was What are the lived experience of African American novice nurses who successfully completed the ADN program? According to Houser (2015), interviews used in qualitative studies provide excellent information about the respondents' perceptions and beliefs. Interviews allow the researcher to explore each participant's lived experience to gain a better understanding of a particular topic or phenomenon (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The use of open-ended questions ensured that participants responded in their own words with detailed explanations (see Creswell, 2014; Houser, 2015).

I conducted interviews by phone and at a time that was convenient for the participant. The interviews were recorded using a smartphone app, Rev, capable of recording and transcribing the interview verbatim. I stored the transcriptions in a password-protected computer in an assigned folder.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited participants using an identification list provided by the alumni department at a community college located in the Southeastern region of the United States. Participants were sent a detailed letter that explained the study and provided my contact information. This letter was sent by e-mail or mail once approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the college and Walden University. I offered to speak by phone with any participant who contacted me to further discuss the study, the interview process, and the consent form. This form of communication allowed participants to ask questions for clarification before agreeing to the study. A consent form was e-mailed/mailed to the participants once the introduction call was completed, all participant questions had been answered, and the participant agreed to partake in the study. Eight participants met the inclusion criteria and ultimately participated in the study. I planned to initiate snowballing sampling if participants' responses were insufficient or saturation was not reached.

Upon the return of the consent form, I conducted the interview at a time convenient for each participant. The interview consisted of semi-structured questions that was recorded utilizing the Rev recorder app on my iPhone or FreeConference.com. The app, Rev, was capable of audio recording and transcribing the data.

Freeconference.Com is a free online service that audio recorded and transcribed data obtained from a telephone interview. An email was sent to confirm the time prior to the interview.

Interviews would begin with a brief introduction to inform participants about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and the length of the interview. Each participant was encouraged to ask questions and was reminded that they had the right to end the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, I thanked participants and asked permission to contact for further clarification if needed. I informed participants that they could contact me with questions if needed. Interviews were transcribed within 24 hours, and participants were contacted to review the transcription for accuracy.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Houser (2015), the purpose of the qualitative analysis is to organize, interpret, and disseminate data that is collected. To accomplish this, Van Manen's three-step approach for phenomenological analysis was utilized for this study. This method has been validated in prior phenomenological studies exploring the lived experience of nursing students. Chachula et al. (2018) conducted a phenomenological study on the lived experiences of Licensed Practical Nurses returning to school. Utilizing Van Manen's three-step approach allowed for five themes to be identified and to provide insight into how best nursing educators can help this group of students (Chacula et al., 2018). Sailsman et al. (2018) conducted a study on the lived experiences of English Second Language (ESL) students in an online program and was able to identify five themes using Van Manen's approach. The result of this program helped nursing

educators to be cognizant of these learners by providing strategies that apply to diverse learners (Sailsman et al., 2018).

In Van Manen's three-step approach, the data will be analyzed first as a whole to gain meaning (holistic), second- statements will be selected that are relevant to the experience (selective), and third- every sentence collected will be analyzed (Polit & Beck, 2012). This approach enabled me to identify pertinent themes from the data collected. To ensure accuracy, all interviews were audiotaped and transcribed within 24 hours. An Excel spreadsheet was used to group codes and eventually identify pertinent themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Rubin and Rubin (2014), the term quality means that the results of the research are fresh and real, the conclusions are balanced, thorough, credible, and accurate, and the final reports are rich with details. However, achieving the highest possible quality is a major challenge for qualitative researchers when conducting and reporting research (Cope, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Polit & Beck, 2017; Van Manen, 1989). To develop trustworthiness in qualitative research, four criteria should be present: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1989).

Credibility

Polit and Beck (2017) described credibility as presenting the findings in a truthful and neutral way. A qualitative study is considered credible when human experiences are recognized by individuals that share the same experience (Cope, 2014). To ensure that

my study represented credibility, I utilized the following strategies: member checking, triangulation, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing (Houser, 2015; Polit & Beck, 2017). Member checking required that the researcher asked participants to review and comment on the accuracy of transcripts, interpretations, or conclusions (Houser, 2015). After the completion of each interview, I allowed participants to review the transcribed document for accuracy. I accomplished triangulation by observing and interviewing participants until saturation was achieved. This would ensure that multiple data sources have been employed to reach a conclusion (Polit & Beck, 2017).

I proposed to spend at least a month collecting data from the participants. Polit and Beck(2017) posited that rich, detailed information would be obtained if the researcher spends adequate time forming a trust relationship with participants. I used a reflexive journal to eliminate bias by documenting my personal feelings and thoughts during the interview process. In addition, my committee members conducted peer reviews to address any issues of bias and shared experience and knowledge related to the interview process.

Transferability

The transferability of a study is accomplished when the results of the study can be transferred or applied to other groups (Polit & Beck, 2017). Houser (2015) posited that the researcher needs to provide a thick description of the study to allow each reader an opportunity to draw conclusions and decide if the results can be transferred to others. I provided a thick description of the study by presenting direct quotes from each

participant. Having eight to ten participants ensured that I had sufficient quotes to obtain transferability.

Dependability

A study possesses dependability when replication of the study yields similar findings (Houser, 2015). To maintain dependability, I used an audit trail. The audit trail would ensure that I had a “thorough, conscientious reflection on and documentation of the decisions that were made, the procedures that were designed, and the questions that were addressed during analysis” (Houser, 2015). I kept this information as notes in my journal. To further assess dependability, an inquiry audit was performed by my dissertation committee in which the data and pertinent documents would be fully examined to confirm the stated results and conclusions of the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability in qualitative research refers to the researcher’s ability to showcase an unbiased interpretation of each participant’s response (Polit & Beck, 2017). Cope (2014) posited that this could be demonstrated by providing a detailed explanation on the establishment of conclusions and interpretations, and illustration of the collaboration between findings and data collected. I kept a reflective journal to bring awareness to my own beliefs, values, and assumptions that are revealed during the research process (Amankwaa, 2016). I shared this journal with the dissertation committee and as a reference for addressing potential bias.

Ethical Procedures

Houser (2015) posited that a researcher is guided by ethical considerations and legal obligations during the entire research process. To ensure that I adhered to this, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University and the educational institution located in the southeastern United States. Prior to approval, I prepared the Research Ethics Planning Worksheet and submitted it to the IRB. This document identified possible ethical considerations with procedures listed to address them.

I provided each participant with a detailed description of the study, the right to deny participation, my role and responsibilities, and the risk and benefits of the study as recommended by Polit and Beck (2017). This allowed each participant to make an informed decision about the study. Once each participant agreed to be in the study, an informed consent was signed. Participants were informed that their identity and responses would be kept confidential. A number was assigned to each participant, and the data collected was kept on a computer protected with a password. The dissertation committee and I would only have access to the data collected. The data will be destroyed at the established time set by the IRB approval. I will share the results of the study with the dean, associate dean, faculty, and stakeholders while maintaining the confidentiality of participants.

Summary

This chapter has described in detail the research method selected for this study; phenomenological. The information included the research design, the researcher's role,

instrumentation, and method used to recruit participants. In addition, the procedure for analyzing the data, maintaining trustworthiness, and addressing ethical concerns was discussed. This chapter served as a guide for ensuring that this study was completed in a timely, efficient manner. Chapter 4 will showcase the collection, findings, and results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an ADN program. The research question for this study was, What are the lived experiences of African American novice registered nurses who completed an ADN program? To effectively elicit responses from the participants, I asked the following subquestions (SQs):

SQ1: What led you to choose a nursing career?

SQ2: What influenced your desire to attend an ADN program?

SQ3: Tell me about your experiences in nursing school.

SQ4: What factors or experiences were instrumental in you being successful in graduating from nursing school?

a. What helped you the most?

SQ5: What factors or experiences presented barriers to your success in graduation?

a. What was your greatest challenge?

b. How did you overcome the challenges or barriers?

SQ6: Is there anything else that you would like to say?

In this chapter, I will present the results of the study, along with the setting of the study, demographics, data collection methods, data analysis, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Setting

After receiving Walden IRB approval, I recruited participants between October 2019 and November 2019. I obtained a list with the names of potential participants and their e-mail addresses from the Institutional Research Department of a community college located in the Southeastern region of the United States. I sent an email to each participant explaining the purpose of the study. Participants were instructed to contact me by e-mail or telephone if they were interested in being a part of the study. Initially, 11 participants responded with interest to participate in the study. However, three respondents did not meet the inclusion criteria as they had obtained a master's degree in another discipline before starting nursing school; they were excluded from participation. Those who met the inclusion criteria were sent a consent form and asked to sign it electronically. I made phone calls to each of these participants to arrange a scheduled time for an interview. Each participant voiced a need to have a phone interview instead of a face-to-face interview. At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed the consent with participants. Interviews were conducted using FreeConference.Com and the smartphone app Rev., which allowed for verbatim transcription.

Demographics

I interviewed eight participants for the study. Seven of the participants were African American women, and one participant was an African American man. All participants were actively employed as registered nurses. All participants were one to five years postgraduation from the ADN program, and the highest level of education achieved was a bachelor's degree in another discipline. Participants' ages ranged from 25

to 45 years of age. All participants had successfully completed the ADN program within 24 months of beginning the program.

Data Collection

Once I received the consent response, I then scheduled the interview by asking each participant to state a preference of a phone or face-to-face interview and indicate a time that was convenient for the interview. All participants requested phone interviews as time constraints, work schedules, family obligations, and geographical location made face-to-face interviews inconvenient for the participant. Interviews were conducted between October 15, 2019, and November 18, 2019.

At the beginning of each interview, I explained the purpose of the study and the consent form. I reminded participants that the interview was strictly voluntary and could be ended at any time during the interview. I asked direct open-ended questions to elicit detailed information from participants about their experiences during nursing school that promoted success, what led them to choose nursing, and information they would like to share for future minority nursing students. Immediately after each interview, I took field notes to use as I began the analysis of the transcripts.

I recorded all interviews. Each recording was saved on a password-protected iPhone using the app Rev. The audio recording of the interviews allowed me to repeatedly listen for cue words and phrases as each participant described their lived experiences as a nursing student. I paid a small fee to have Rev transcribe the interviews into a Word document. Then, the transcriptions were sent to me by e-mail. Once I received the transcriptions, I ensured that each was accurate by comparing the

transcription to the recording of the interview. This was done for each interview. The transcriptions were kept in a password-protected computer and stored in a Dropbox folder. There were no variations in collecting data from what was outlined in Chapter 3.

Data Analysis

Houser (2017) asserted that the researcher must prepare, conduct, represent, and interpret data during the process of analyzing qualitative data. In this study, I used Van Manen's three-step approach to analyze the data for this study (Polit & Beck, 2017). The three-steps consisted of (a) analyzing the whole to gain meaning (holistic), (b) selecting statements that were relevant to the experience (selective), and (c) analyzing every sentence that was collected (Polit & Beck, 2017). Using this approach allowed me to identify pertinent themes in this study.

I listened to the audio recording of each transcript several times to ensure that the transcription was accurate. Then, I read and reread the transcripts to gain an understanding of each participant's experience. I wrote notes to identify keywords that were prominent in the transcripts. Once I completed note-taking, I reread the transcripts to ensure that the keywords were a true representation of the participants' experiences.

In the next phase, I assigned codes by analyzing each statement made by participants and highlighting like codes with various highlighters. I ensured that the codes were a representation of the participants' experiences. I used a Microsoft Excel worksheet to organize and sort the codes by color into meaningful units which enabled me to gain a better understanding and meaning of the data being analyzed to answer the research question and to ensure that emerging themes were identified with supporting

quotations from participants (see Polit & Beck, 2017). Four themes were identified to answer the question, What are the lived experiences of African American registered novice nurses who successfully completed an ADN program? Two discrepant cases were identified while analyzing the data and will be further discussed in the results. Table 2 and Figure 2 illustrate the themes that emerged from data analysis.

Table 2

Themes and Codes

Main themes	Codes
Theme 1: The path was destined	Role models Rewarding Seeking information Proud Caring Helping others
Theme 2: I'm here, now what	Lifelong friendship Peer support Seeking clarification Family support Bonding
Theme 3: Barriers seen and overcome	Competitiveness Uncaring Financial obligations Loneliness Balancing Self-doubt
Theme 4: Insight for the future	Perseverance Diversity Encouragement Resilience



Figure 2. Four common themes.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

I maintained credibility while conducting my study by performing member checking and reflexive journaling (Polit & Beck, 2017). Member checking involved having participants check transcripts for accuracy and interpretations. All participants were provided a copy of their transcript with the option to comment on accuracy. All participants stated that the transcription was an accurate representation of their responses to the interview questions. I also incorporated reflexive journaling to avoid bias and

misinterpretation of the data by addressing personal feelings or experiences after each interview. By engaging in prolonged engagement with my participants, I was able to collect their discussions about their lived experiences of being in an ADN program (Polit & Beck, 2017).

Transferability

To help me establish the transferability of my study, eight participants were interviewed until saturation was reached. Recruitment of these novice registered nurses who attended a local community college in the southeastern region of the United States ensured that I had a true representation of the phenomenon under study. This allowed me to provide a thick, rich description of the setting and the data collection method so that others could draw their own conclusions and decide if the results can be transferred to others (Houser, 2015).

Dependability

Houser (2015) posited that the dependability of a study ensures that a researcher can replicate this study and draw the same conclusions. To ensure that I established dependability for my study, I used an audit trail that showcased how all the data were collected and analyzed (Houser, 2015). I also established triangulation by utilizing reflective journaling to describe my personal feelings and thoughts after each interview. A clear and detailed description of how I analyzed the data using Van Manen's three-step approach was provided. This approach allowed me to develop four themes.

Confirmability

Cope (2014) refers to confirmability as the researcher's ability to provide an accurate representation of participants' perspectives without biases or viewpoints. Confirmability was achieved in my study by engaging in reflective journaling. After each interview, I reflected on my own experiences and any events that occurred during the interview by writing notes. This allowed me to eliminate any potential biases that could be interjected while analyzing the data (Cope, 2014).

Results

The interview transcripts were manually coded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet to identify themes. The following themes were identified: the path was destined, determined to make it, overcame the barriers, and shared thoughts for the future.

Theme 1: The Path Was Destined

Participants elicited an experience that described their path to pursue and become a nurse. Participant 1 stated that "I was raised by an uncle and aunt who was always like in health care like as a tech or CNA. But she was very driven when I was younger to actually go back to nursing school, so she was the one that actually kind of got me interested in the health field." Another participant (2) stated, "Um, my grandmother was a CNA, and she liked being a CNA. So I was like, okay, well since you are a CNA, then I'm going to be a nurse, and then she was like okay. I was going to be the first nurse in the family." Participant 3 shared a similar experience when reflecting on what led to pursuing nursing and stated,

I started working as a patient care technician when my grandmother saw the opportunity; I really didn't want to do it at first. But she told me that it would probably turn out to be something that I would really like to do. When I worked as a patient care technician, I just saw the impact that nurses were having on patients' lives, and it actually made me feel good about myself.

Participant 4 described how two incidents influenced her decision to become a nurse.

growing up as a little girl, like I always curious and doing things so, there was an incident when I when I was a little girl. My dad got injured, at work, and my mom had to do like dressing changes on him, and I was really young, and I was always fascinated with, like, just things like that. As I got older, I would see my grandmother and others, they were a lot of them on different medications, but a lot of times they didn't know like why they were taking the medication ... not knowledgeable about their disease. My family don't have medical.....I was the first nurse....just being able to have that knowledge, you know, a lot of my family members didn't have, so that was kind of like another drive for me.... that's what really pushed me to become a nurse.

Participant 5 stated, "I always had an interest in it since probably my sophomore year high school, but with life-happening, I wasn't able to really pursue.....I had clinical in hospital while pursuing phlebotomy,,,,,this pretty much what made my mind up; that I wanted to become a nurse and go to nursing school." Participant 6 expressed,

To be honest, I always wanted to do nursing. I feel like my first degree was more my dad's pushing... He wanted me to go the law route. But as I got older, I just

realized that the politics and law was not the route I wanted. I would rather help people than manipulate and hurt. I became the first nurse in my family.

Participant 7 stated, "I was geared toward nursing. My mom was a nurse. I watched her go to work every day, and she really enjoyed it. I thought it was the ideal job to work."

Participant 8 described an experience by stating, "I was EMS technician and I had reached my full potential. I wanted to do more. Plus, I had a friend who was going thru nursing school."

Each participant shared a different story for wanting to be a nurse; however, the commonality of a path that was destined was demonstrated by the experiences shared.

Theme 2: I'm Here, Now What

The participants for this study attended a nursing program that was very structured and required the introduction of a new nursing course every seven weeks. The participants expressed an appreciation for the educational journey that they endured. Participant 8 stated, "it was tough; lots of work....it was a good experience; I learned a lot to help me get a future and not be in the EMS field anymore." Participant 6 stated, "nursing school was very informative. Um, nursing school was very challenging. Although it was really tough....it prepared me well for what I am doing now." Participant 4 stated, "I learned a lot. Like I felt like we got a lot of information in school, you know in the classroom setting. I definitely got a lot out of it, and even now that I'm working, you know, I feel prepared, um, to go on the floor and like care for patients."

Several participants shared that they recognized early the importance of having family and peer support, seeking assistance from the instructors, and utilizing resources available at the college to be successful. Participant 1 stated, "it was a lot of camaraderie in, in nursing school with, um, you know, with the other nursing students. It was like, okay, we're going to have to do this together. We're going to have to set somebody to make sure they take the best notes, raise your hand if you're that person." Participant 2 stated, "I definitely made sure that I wasn't a loner. I made sure that I had a group and made use of the resources that were available not only to myself but to the others.....I had to stay focused and disciplined. Ask for help if I didn't understand content from instructors...who had that warm and inviting vibe."

Participants emphasized the importance of having the support of family to accomplish their studies. Participant 1 stated, "Yes, I definitely had a lot of support from my family, and my children's dad and his family supported me a lot as well. I could not have done it without family support." Participant 3 stated, "my mom helped me a lot. She was kinda like my backbone to get through the program because I definitely don't think that I would've been able to do it without her helping me."

Theme 3: Barriers Seen and Overcome

Participants expressed facing barriers while attending nursing school. A financial barrier was mentioned numerous times. Participants stated that they had to work during nursing school and how challenging it was to manage and become successful. Participant 5 stated, "I had finances with interfered with my studying and spending time with my daughter. I had to work enough to pay all my bills and go to school. I didn't have a Pell

Grant or loan. So I cut back on my bills. When I was out of school for a break, I would work extra. To help with my courses, I would seek clarification from my clinical instructor on content that I didn't understand." Participant 3 stated, "you have to be able to dedicate the time to learn this information, to be able to apply it on the test. And that can be a struggle when you have a family, and you're working full-time. So I'd have my clinical, and, you know, when classes were ... everything on this huge calendar I kept in my room. And then I'd have like appointments, and then study groups, and then from there, I would work. I would talk with, uh, one of the directors at the company I worked for, and she would just kind of plug me in, and that helped a lot, being able to have a company and working for someone who was able to kind of go around your schedule." Competitiveness was expressed when participants discussed barriers that they experienced. Participant 8 stated

I will definitely say I felt there was a competitive nature in nursing school. So it's just like you know, of course, we all want to know like what each other's grades were you know and things like that just seemed like every kid is a slightly different student. It's kind of like rubbed it in your face. The grades were a little bit higher, and it was like you know we get it right. You made whatever you made, and it just seemed like it was more of like the White students were kind of like congregating and having more of their own little study group versus the black students. I think initially we're kind of left on our own. So for me, I had to pretty much not necessarily assimilate into what was going on, but I needed to I feel like creating my own like study group for people that look like me you know that I

would make them more interesting and we could all vibe and just have a good time and make sure we were all successful and that's what I did.

Participant 3 stated, "it was hard for minorities coming in because a lot of the other students, they kinda helped each other, but as far as the minorities, I think we're kinda like left to fend for ourselves. We are not easily invited to study groups, um, in my opinion. I ended up just studying with one other student that was feeling the same way, and we kinda just go through the program together."

Participants elaborated on being able to master how to answer nursing questions on the test as they progressed through the program. Participant 6 stated that "I experienced a lot of self- doubts. I was never sure of my answer and would always doubt myself. I felt that my White classmates were smarter than me." Participant 4 stated, "the greatest challenge at nursing school was the process of elimination during test time. I would attend the test review, just to look at it, to see what I did wrong, and I would go and speak to the instructor. This would help me figure out how to do better on the next test."

Theme 4: Insight for the Future

Participants shared a common theme of wanting to provide insight for future African American nursing students to ensure that they were successful. Participant 1 stated, "don't give up on your dream. You can do it. Do not ever let anyone tell you that it's not possible because it is possible. If you set your mind to it; it will happen. You know, we can be very successful as well. You know, we're entitled to what everyone else is entitled to, so just don't give up on your dreams." Participant 7 stated

I would definitely say it doesn't have to be a large study group, but always have somebody that can help you, you know, be accountable for what you're doing in nursing school, always have a buddy. Have someone in your group that's just as determined as you are, when you're in nursing school. That way, you two can work together. Exchange numbers. Exchange information, and, also, have a good rapport with your instructor because that's important.

Participant 4 stated,

before you start any program, to make sure that you have a plan, and an agenda, and have a backup plan for your plan so there's nothing that will happen that will throw you off the track. And to make sure that you put in the time and put in the work to study. And I mean as long as you put in the studying time and everything along those sorts, then I mean you will be successful. And try to find a study group consisting of four or five people, because any more can kind of get confusing. It helps a lot to be able to understand the information and to be able to see different points of view that you may not have seen just studying by yourself.

Discrepant Data

Two of the participants stressed that the lack of minority instructors was experienced as a barrier. Participant 3 stated, "...it does help to have diversity...I feel that sometimes you feel comfortable talking to somebody with your ethnicity. It makes it a little bit easier to communicate." Participant 8 stated, "there are definitely not enough African-American instructors in the nursing program." The literature supports the correlation of minority instructors serving as role models/mentors in improving the

retention rate of African American students. Lin (2018) explained that minority faculty must be included in the teaching of minority students if nursing programs seek to recruit and retain minority students. Minority faculty can form relationships that encourage, motivate, and build confidence for minority students (Lin, 2018).

Summary

The research question guiding this study was: What are the lived experiences of African American novice registered nurses who attended an Associate Degree Nursing Program? Interviews with 7 participants elicited detailed, rich information that described their experiences while attending nursing school. The participants expressed their educational journey as being stressful, challenging, and being a major contributor to feeling fully prepared as novice registered nurses. The participants were able to overcome challenges such as working full-time and balancing school and family, competitiveness, test-taking skills, and being a loner by forming peer study groups, reaching out to instructors, and utilizing other available resources.

In this chapter, I discussed the setting of the study, demographic information of the participants, the process of data collection, and analysis of the results. Evidence of trustworthiness was presented along with the results that were obtained during data collection. The interpretations of these findings are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an ADN program. I conducted a qualitative phenomenological study using semistructured interviews. Analysis of interview data elicited the following themes: (a) the path was destined, (b) I'm here, now what, (c) barriers seen and overcome, and (d) insight for the future.

Interpretation of the Findings

The Path Was Destined

This phenomenological study allowed participants to shed light on their experiences that led to being successful while attending nursing school. The participants in this study expressed a strong desire to pursue nursing and complete the path to becoming an asset to the nursing workforce. Participants also verbalized a need to share their knowledge and experiences with family members, community, and coworkers to increase better outcomes for the U.S. minority population. Findings from this study align with those of previous literature on the success of African American nursing students in helping to increase the diversity of the nursing force. Jean-Baptiste (2019) posited that African American nursing students are driven to be successful in their program of study when they are highly motivated to be a change agent and advocator for their community.

Key Factors That Contributed to Success in Nursing School

A theme that emerged from the results of this study was the key factors that participants identified as being vital for survival in nursing school. The theme I'm here, now what? resonates with the literature. Participants expressed that nursing school was extremely difficult and recognized the importance of forming peer groups while in their first semester of nursing school. Most of the participants stated that their peer study group consisted of students from different ethnicities who met routinely. Daparmont (2014) posited that the success of African American students correlated with forming a relationship with other ethnic groups, a finding that confirmed the results of this study. Forming a relationship with members of other ethnic groups allowed African American students to experience a different perspective on content, thus contributing to an increase in their knowledge base and formation of a community with other nonminorities as described by Dapramont (2014) and Deukersen (2013). However, Gona et al. (2018) stated that minority students are more prone to form their own inclusive study groups as a result of feeling unwanted by White students and needing to feel a connection with other minority students.

Family support and positive faculty-student relationships were also acknowledged as valuable tools needed for survival. Gipson-Jones (2017) stressed the importance of African American students being able to have a family to serve as a coping mechanism while undergoing stressful experiences. Offering words of encouragement, participating in childcare, and helping financially were some of the words that participants used to describe their family support. Additionally, participants reported having a positive

relationship with faculty that allowed them to seek assistance and guidance, which enhanced their learning. Jean-Batiste (2019) posited that the retention of minority students is enhanced dramatically by the approachability of faculty members, integration of family support, and forming of relationships with peers.

Barriers Experienced and Overcome

The literature has shown that African American nursing students face more barriers that negatively affect their success in completing their programs than any other ethnic group. Academic, financial, and social barriers have been recognized as being a major problem for African American students (Diefenbeck et al., 2015, Ferrell et al., 2016; Jean-Batiste, 2019, Murray, 2015). Participants stated several barriers that they felt were obstacles while pursuing their degree. However, the participants said they were able to overcome the barriers by implementing strategies that helped them overcome the obstacles. All participants stated financial barriers as being the most challenging related to lack of financial aid and needing to work full-time to pay tuition and support their family. However, participants were compelled to identify and implement strategies to help overcome the financial barrier. One example was participants establishing a work schedule with their employers that allowed them to excel in their coursework. Gipson-Jones (2017) posited that African American students are successful when there is a positive balance between work, family, and school. The participants in this study verbalized having a full commitment from family and work that enabled them to devote the time needed to their studies.

African American students are more likely to be unprepared academically for the rigorous demands of nursing school thus creating a challenge for a successful outcome (Dapremont, 2014; Freman & Ali, 2017; Murray, 2015.) The participants in this study verbalized having difficulty with test questions and feeling inadequately prepared to achieve mastery in this task. However, by attending test reviews, meeting with instructors, and using the nursing resource center, participants were able to gain skills needed to conquer this task. Ferrell and DeCrane (2016) concluded that African American students are likely to succeed when faculty provide the essential resources, guidance, and encouragement needed to promote academic success.

Insight for the Future

The last theme that emerged was shared insight for future nursing students. Participants provided words of wisdom for future minority students that stressed resilience and persistence. “Don’t give up,” “you can do it,” “push through,” “don’t let anyone make you feel that you don’t belong here,” and “always remember why you are here” are comments stressed by participants. In addition, participants discussed the value of forming relationships with peers, seeking clarification from instructors, and using resources offered by the nursing program. According to Young-Brice and Dreifuerst (2020), African American nursing students come to the learning environment with an attitude of persistence until completion while realizing that they will encounter obstacles during the journey. This attitude serves as a motivator for African American nursing students.

Interpretations Based on Theory

The theoretical foundation for this study was Tinto's student integration model. According to Tinto's theory, students who become fully integrated socially and academically to the institution are most likely to succeed in their college studies (Aljohani, 2016; Davidson & Wilson, 2014). Tinto asserted that a student's preattributes and goals/commitments established before entering the institution influence how well the student is able to integrate socially and academically in the learning environment (Aljohani, 2016, Davidson & Wilson, 2014). The results of this study confirmed the role of integration in contributing to the success of African American nursing students in an ADN nursing program.

Tinto postulated that a student's preattributes consisted of family background, individual characteristics, and prior academic performance, while goals and commitments were based on pre-attributes and goals established prior to entering the program (Aljohani 2014, Burrus et al., 2014, Tinto, 1993). The participants' past academic performance was not evaluated for this study. Therefore, I was unable to support the findings in the literature that African American nursing students lack the appropriate academic skills needed to succeed in nursing school (Dapremont, 2014; Loftin, 2012; Murray; 2015; Olsen, 2017). However, Jean-Baptiste (2019) postulated that African American nursing students are highly motivated by intrinsic characteristics that enable them to seek assistance to compensate for any skills that they lack academically. Each participant stated the goal of becoming a nurse before starting the program and relating this goal to making a positive contribution to the nursing workforce and serving as an advocate for

their family and community. The participants for this study demonstrated an intrinsic motivation and commitment to achieving their goal which supports Tinto's theory.

The main assumption of Tinto's theory is the importance of students becoming academically (faculty support) and socially (peer and family support) integrated in the learning environment to reach their goals. The participants in this study sought out the resources at the institution that helped them to overcome any obstacles or barriers while achieving their goals. Difenback et al. (2017) postulated that minority students would experience positive outcomes when they seek and gain support from family, peers, and faculty. Participants recognized peer support as being the most important factor for conquering challenges through study groups and for creating lifelong friendships. According to Igbo and Sule (2020), African American students persist to graduation with the aid of peer support that increases knowledge, builds confidence, and promotes empowerment. All the participants also mentioned family and faculty support as being factors that contributed tremendously to academic success. Participants described faculty as being approachable and exhibiting a caring attitude when seeking information and clarification of content. Family support allows participants to manage work and family obligations. The finding of this study supported Tinto's student integration model and the literature that suggests that minority students will be retained with the proper interventions implemented.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to my study. My study included a group of African American novice nurses who shared their experiences of attending an ADN program at a

community college in the southeastern region of the United States. Due to the sample size consisting of 8 participants, their experiences may not have represented the experience of other African American students who successfully completed an ADN program, and therefore, the findings might be applicable only to this group.

As a prior nursing instructor to the participants, the potential for participants to not answer questions entirely was a limitation. To avoid this problem, I reminded each participant that their identity would be confidential and that their responses would help future minority students to be successful in nursing school. Research bias was minimized through the use of a personal journal for reflections, and member checking. By utilizing member checking, each participant was given an opportunity to review their transcription for accuracy.

Another limitation of this study pertained to the collection of the data by interviews. Due to participants' time constraints, only telephone interviews were conducted. Conducting telephone interviews did not allow me the opportunity to observe non-verbal cues that participants may have exhibited. However, during the interview, some participants had periods of silence, which could have been taken as hesitancy to answer the questions correctly.

Recommendations

The call to increase diversity in nursing has been stressed by many nursing and health organizations over the last 40 years (Dapremont, 2014). However, the nursing workforce still lacks diversity, which has been linked to negative outcomes for ethnic minority patients (Gona et al., 2018; Graham, Phillips, Newman, & Atz, 2016). To

combat this problem, the literature states that nursing programs will need to address the attrition rate of minority students and provide strategies to recruit and retain these students (Murray, 2015; White & Fulton, 2015). This phenomenological study provided an examination of how prior African American nursing students perceived their experiences in an ADN program that led them to complete nursing school successfully. Participants for this study were limited to the southeastern region of the United States. A recommendation for future study would be to repeat the study and elicit participants from different geographic locations. Participants from other geographical locations may provide additional insights into the experiences that African American minority nursing students encounter.

Future studies should include nursing programs that have a range of diversity among faculty. Two of the participants stressed the importance of having instructors of the same ethnic background that could relate to the experiences that African American nursing students faced while pursuing a nursing degree. The literature has suggested that minority nursing faculty is needed to enhance the success of minority students and to provide insights on how to implement culturally competent care (Murray, 2014). Lin (2018) posited that minority faculty could help minority students conquer barriers by serving as exemplars. A replicate of this study would help identify the role that African American faculty contributed to the success of minority students.

Another recommendation for a future study is to conduct a study examining the concept of competitiveness. One participant discussed feeling that there was a competition between African American and White students. This competitiveness served

as a motivator for this participant to complete the course successfully. Further study would determine if other African American students have experienced and dealt with being in a competitive environment.

Implications

The findings of my study are supported by the literature review that addressed the success of African American nursing students. African American nursing students are more prone to attrition rates than any other ethnic group (Dapremont, 2014). However, this study provided insight on prior nursing students who persisted and were able to complete their program of study successfully. The participants of this study entered the nursing program with a strong desire to succeed, and with family, faculty, and peer support, they were able to accomplish success by overcoming barriers. This finding resonates with the study conducted by Diefenbeck et al. (2016) that discussed that social and academic support is a major factor in the success of African American nursing students.

This study has major implications for positive social change as it may help nursing programs to identify barriers and strategies that African American nursing students face while pursuing a nursing education. The findings may allow nursing programs to create and implement interventions that will meet the needs of African American nursing students, enabling them to persist and successfully complete their nursing studies. With an increase in African American nursing graduates, the number of African American practicing nurses would also improve and impact health disparities that plague the minority population.

Conclusion

My study explored the experiences of prior African American nursing students who successfully completed an ADN program. Eight African American novice nurses were interviewed for this study. By sharing their experiences, a better understanding of the barriers that African American nursing students faced, and the strategies utilized to overcome these barriers as they progressed in the nursing curriculum were gained. This knowledge will significantly impact social change by enabling nursing programs to make valuable changes that will assist in recruiting and retaining African American nursing students.

The findings of this study are supported by the literature review outlined in Chapter 2. The participants reported barriers of feeling unprepared for the nursing curriculum, work and family obligations, competitiveness, and lack of African American faculty as being barriers that they experienced. However, with family, peer, and faculty support, the participants were able to find and implement strategies that enabled them to overcome these barriers and pursue their dream of becoming a nurse. The participants stressed that having the support of their peers using study groups and the formation of lifelong friendship was the most importation strategy that promoted success.

As the African American population continues to grow, nursing programs must be able to recruit and retain African American students. Creating an environment in which African American nursing students feel welcome, will ensure that they become socially and academically integrated, which promotes success. The success of African American nursing students could contribute significantly to the workforce by increasing the number

of African American nurses who can help ensure positive outcomes for the African American population through education, patient care, and research aimed at eliminating or decreasing disparities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Introductory Statement

Hello, my name is Monique Merritt and I am a PhD student at Walden University. I would like to thank you for meeting with me today. I'm currently researching successful strategies that African American nursing students utilized to help overcome barriers while pursuing an ADN. Any information that you share will be helpful for future minority nursing students.

The interview should last for about 60 minutes. I would like you to know that the interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will be allowed to review the transcription once I complete it. I will respect your privacy and if you want to end this interview at any time please let me know. Do you have any questions? If not, we will begin the interview.

Interview Questions

1. What led you to choose a nursing career?
2. What influenced your desire to attend an ADN program?
3. Tell me about your experiences in nursing school.
4. What factors or experiences were instrumental in you being successful in graduating from nursing school?
 - a. What helped you the most?
5. What factors or experiences presented barriers to your success in graduation?
 - a. What was your greatest challenge?
 - b. How did you overcome the challenges or barriers?

6. Is there anything else that you would like to say?

Closing Statement

I would like to thank you so much for your time. As I stated earlier, I will be analyzing and transcribing this interview. You will be able to review it after I'm done. Your identity will be kept confidential. Do you have any questions? Thanks again and have a good day.

Appendix B: E-mail for Recruiting Participants

Dear Registered Nurse,

My name is Monique Merritt and I am a PhD student at Walden University. The study described in this email is being conducted as part of my doctoral research. This study is being conducted independently and is not affiliated with any nursing programs.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an Associate Degree nursing program. Your participation will provide insight on the barriers that you faced as a student and how you overcame those barriers to be successful. As a successful African American nursing student, you will offer valuable information that can be beneficial to future minority students. If you have graduated from an ADN program within the last five years and completed your degree within 24 months, your participation is requested. If you possessed a master's degree or PhD prior to pursuing your nursing degree, you are excluded from participating. Your experiences could promote social change by providing other minority nurses would strategies that promote success; thus, increasing the retention and graduation rates of minority students in an ADN program.

A consent form will be sent for review, if you agree to participate in this study. Upon arrival to the interview, you will sign the consent form. If you are unable to participate in a face-to-face interview, an online interview via FreeConferenceCall.com will be utilized. If this type of interview method is utilized, the consent form will be obtained electronically. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. You will be asked a series of open-ended questions relating to your experience in nursing school. Your participation is strictly voluntary, and you can agree to not participate at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email me at Monique.Merritt@waldenu.edu. and I will follow up with a response to set up a day and time that is convenient for us to meet. You may also contact my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Janice Long at Janice.long@mail.waldenu.edu for any questions or concerns. Thank you for your consideration in participating in this study!

Best regards,

Monique Merritt

Walden University

Monique.merritt@waldenu.edu

[telephone number redacted]

Appendix C: E-mail to Alumni Association

Dear Alumni Association,

My name is Monique Merritt and I am a PhD student at Walden University. I will be conducting a study as part of my doctoral research. This study is being conducted independently and is not affiliated with any nursing programs.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of African American nursing students to understand the factors that contributed to their success while attending an Associate Degree nursing program. Prior nursing students will be asked open-ended questions in an interview for this study. To recruit participants, I will need the assistance of your association. I'm asking for the name and address (email/ mailing) of African American nursing graduates who completed the program within 24 months' time frame, didn't possess a master's or PhD degree prior to enrolling in the program, and graduated in the last 5 years. The names provided will be kept secured on an encrypted flash drive and a password protected MacBook and HP computers. After the study is completed, any data with names will be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can email me at Monique.merritt@waldenu.edu. In addition, you can email my dissertation chair, Janice Long at janice.long@mail.waldenu.edu if you have questions/concerns. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Monique Merritt

Walden University

Monique.merritt@waldenu.edu