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Walden University

College of Nursing

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Kristy Patrick-Lewis

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Dr. Cara Krulewitch, Committee Member, Nursing Faculty
Dr. Jonas Nguh, University Reviewer, Nursing Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Evaluation of an Orientation Program for

Graduate Nurses Transitioning Into Professional Practice

by

Kristy Patrick-Lewis

MS, Walden University 2014

BS, University of Memphis, 2011

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Nursing Practice

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

The transition from student nurse to practicing professional is extremely challenging. The local organization experienced increases in turnover among new graduate hires and determined that adjustments to their orientation program to better meet the needs of new graduates were warranted. The problem that this doctoral project addressed is the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the new orientation program. The practice-focused question examined the effectiveness of the new orientation program at reducing turnover and improving satisfaction with the quality of the orientation program among new graduate nurses. The framework used to guide this study was Patricia Benner's novice to expert model. Data on satisfaction with orientation and retention rates among new graduates obtained from the organization's staff development and human resources departments were used to answer the practice-focused question. The proportion of new graduates who were satisfied with orientation and the retention rates were compared for three quarters of data before and three quarters of data after the implementation of the new orientation program. The results indicated that there was a 37-percentage point increase in the retention rate and a 44.4 percentage point increase in satisfaction with the quality of the orientation process on average after the implementation of the program. From these results, it was concluded that substantial increase in retention and in satisfaction with the orientation process among new graduates. These findings of this project contribute to positive social change by providing evidence that supports the effectiveness of helping new graduates transition from student to professional as they navigate through this pivotal moment in their life.

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Dedication

I have made this journey with an angel watching over me, my mother Rosietta Nowley. My mother never got to see me as a nurse, but she always told me I would be great at whatever I do. She was the woman that I looked up to and will always admire. I dedicate this research and my nursing career to my heavenly angel “Mom.” Love you.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all the faculty at Walden University. I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Ojeda for her patience, guidance, and wisdom during this process. I would also like to thank my amazing husband Cedric and son CJ for giving me the time I needed to pursue my dreams to better myself for our future. Thanks to my all my family and friends.

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Section 1: Nature of the Project

Introduction

Nursing is a professional career that should be taken seriously from the beginning of orientation until retirement. The orientation program is where the new hire will gain the knowledge, training, goals, and confidence to practice within a given organization. This doctoral project evaluated a quality improvement program involving the implementation of an orientation program designed to meet the needs of new graduate nurses transitioning into the professional world of nursing. The project has implications for positive social change: it will provide leadership with information that can support its continuation, and that contributes to the continuous improvement of the new orientation program. Also, the organization may benefit from this project by helping to build a strong reputation for ensuring the success of new graduates early-on by supporting the development of their knowledge, skills, and confidence upon hire.

Problem Statement

The transition from student nurse to practicing professional is becoming more challenging. The transition phase is a time when the new graduate is learning what all encompass to becoming a professional. Thus, the process of transitioning from student nurse to practicing nurse presents challenges for the new graduate that can cause high levels of stress and fatigue (Hofler & Thomas, 2016; Laschinger et al., 2016). Research has demonstrated that nurses who experience high levels of stress tend to suffer from anxiety, fatigue, and lack of confidence, which can eventually lead to attrition (Cheung & Yip, 2015; Hofler & Thomas, 2016; Meyer et al., 2015). The report on *The Future of*

Nursing recommends a planned orientation program for all new nurses' transition to practice (Shalala et al., 2011). The recommendation was intended to address the turnover and financial loss experienced when a new graduate nurse leaves the organization. Novice nurses expect a more structured orientation when compared to advanced nurses (Hofler & Thomas, 2016). Graduate nurse turnover can range from 20% to more than 40%, and the financial loss to hospitals is approximately $40,000 for each graduate nurse who leaves before/during their 1st year of practice (Hofler & Thomas, 2016). With proper orientation programs for the new nurses, the organization can benefit by reducing turnover among new graduates. According to Hofler and Thomas (2016), orientation programs help stabilize the retention of nursing staff by addressing their educational needs during a pivotal transition to practice, which fosters confidence and competence in their ability to perform in the clinical setting.

In the transition phase, a proper orientation for the new graduate is the key to giving them confidence in becoming professional nurses (K. Peggins, personal communication, July 31, 2020). For example, Murphy and Janisse (2017) found that over 23% of new graduates entering an orientation program were not able to conduct a successful head-to-toe assessment of their patients. However, participation in an orientation program that incorporated experiential learning helped new graduates feel more confident in their preparation for clinical practice. The graduates need to know that the organization is taking them and their professional transition seriously. This is one way for the organization to retain high-quality nurses. Thus, an orientation program structured for the success of the nurse will also contribute to the success of the organization. The

organization where I currently work had a high turnover rate over several years (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). To assess the reason behind this problem, the leaders reviewed the results of exit interviews. The most frequently cited reasons for leaving were the nurse-patient ratio, lack of support, unorganized orientation, and insufficient training during orientation (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). A way to combat stress among new graduate nurses is to provide a positive and supportive nursing orientation experience. Thus, the local organization identified a gap in practice in that the orientation process was not meeting the needs of the new graduate nurses and thus, contributed to turnover (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). In August 2019, the local organization instituted an orientation program designed to meet the needs of new graduate nurses entering practice for the first time. However, the effectiveness of the new orientation program has not been evaluated. Thus, this doctoral project addressed the need to improve the orientation experiences of new nurses by evaluating the quality of the orientation program at the local organization.

This doctoral project is significant to nursing practice because it will help the leaders of the local organization to determine whether the goal of reducing turnover rates with the new orientation program was met. Based on this information, the leadership can determine if adjustments to improve the program are needed.

Purpose Statement

The problem that this doctoral project addressed is the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the new orientation program at the local organization. Thus, this doctoral project determined if the new graduate nurse orientation program was effective at

improving satisfaction with the orientation process and reducing turnover among new graduate nurses. Ultimately, it is expected that the information gained from evaluating the effectiveness of the new orientation program will allow the leadership at the local organization to continue to refine their orientation processes in such a manner that will help reduce stress, boost confidence, and increase the retention of new graduate nursing staff.

Nature of the Doctoral Project

There is minimal research on nursing orientation programs and how they impact nurses' knowledge or readiness to practice (Woolwine et al., 2019). The Staff Development department at the local organization has been collecting data on staff satisfaction with orientation and supplied some of the data for this doctoral project. The data are collected quarterly at the local organization. The data can be accessed from a secure database in the Human Resource Office by Staff Development members and other authorized personnel. I obtained the retention rates from the Staff Development Department; these data are routinely generated quarterly. I used a line graph containing 6-8 months before the new orientation process started and then the same time frame after the new process to show the trends in retention rates over time, allowing for comparison before and after the implementation of the new graduate orientation program; this allowed me to determine whether the orientation program contributed to an increase in retention rates.

Significance

The stakeholders in this doctoral project include the organization, its leaders, the Staff Development department, and the nurses. It generated data that allowed the local organization to determine if the new orientation program has improved the retention of new graduate nurses longer. This project contributes to nursing practice by providing evidence of the effectiveness of an orientation program focused on the needs of new graduate nurses at increasing retention among new graduate nurses. Other organizations may benefit by translating the methods used in this doctoral project to evaluate similar quality improvement programs within their organizations. The proper orientation with the new graduates will give them a better outlook on professional nursing. The new nurses will have more confidence in themselves and show how positive mentorship and orientation promote growth in the local organization. With all these positive changes (increased retention, less stress, more confidence, and less fatigue), the nurses will have more positive things to say about the local organization and possibly help bring in more staff members. Orientation programs should be evaluated to know if they are successful. This project will inform the local organization's leadership on the effectiveness of the changes that were made to the orientation program for the new graduate nurses. Based on the results of this doctoral project, the leadership will be able to determine whether further changes are needed to ensure that the new graduate nurses receive an orientation experience that will support a high level of quality and the safety of the care provided to patients.

Summary

Orientation is an important aspect of a successful transition into practice for new graduates. At the local organization, the orientation process had to be changed to ensure that new graduate nurses are getting properly trained. The project will show the leaders at the local organization that a proper orientation program will increase retention rates and meet the needs of the new graduates. This project evaluated the effectiveness of a quality improvement project that instituted a new orientation program aimed at addressing the needs of new graduate nurses by examining satisfaction with the program and retention among new graduate nurses. The information generated by this project will give the local organization insight into the orientation program that is being used. The positive social change implications of this project are improvement in confidence and increased retention among new graduate nurses, improved quality and safety in patient care, and an improved reputation for the local organization. In Section 2, I will describe the concepts, models, and theories that are relevant to this doctoral project, along with the project's relevance to nursing practice, local background, and context, and the role of the DNP student in the completion of the project.

Section 2: Background and Context

Introduction

The transition from student nurse to practicing professional is becoming more challenging. The local organization was experiencing high rates of turnover among new graduate nurses. The orientation phase is a critical step for new nurses to become competent and confident in their skills. Exit interviews at the local organization indicated that insufficient training during the orientation period may have contributed to this problem, and therefore the institution revised the orientation program to better suit the needs of new graduates. The practice problem that this doctoral project addressed is that the effectiveness of the new orientation program was not known. Thus, the purpose of this doctoral project was to evaluate the effectiveness of the new orientation program at meeting the needs of new graduate nurses by determining if the program was effective at improving satisfaction with the orientation process and increasing retention among new graduate nurses. In this section, I will discuss the concepts, models, and theories that will frame this project, the relevance of this project to nursing practice, local background on the problem, and my role in this project.

Concepts, Model, and Theories

Patricia Benner's novice to expert model was used to frame my doctoral project. This model describes how a novice nurse can gain expertise through knowledge and experience. Benner (1982) explained that nursing in acute-care settings has grown to be so complex that what a nurse does cannot be translated into standardized tasks and care routines. Nurses first develop their perceptions regarding the implementation of

individualized care during training when working with nursing faculty even though Benner's model provides direct care starting with advanced beginner level (Benner, 2004; Benner et al., 2009). However, novice nurses have limited experience in hospital settings when it comes to patient care (Benner, 2004). As novice nurses, new graduate nurses need proper orientation when transitioning from student to professional nurse. Benner's model describes how guidance and education provided by educators and coaches contribute to the development of novice nurses.

Novice nurses are the new nurses entering the professional world. The model describes how to build confidence among nurses at every stage of expertise. Benner (2004) posited that it illustrates how common programs including residencies and mentoring programs help nurses maintain their competencies as well as evaluate their ability to provide individualized nursing care. Benner's model is broken down into the different levels of nursing experience acquired in their profession, which include the novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert stages.

The novice Stage I is where the nurse has no experience with the situations in which they are expected to perform tasks (Benner, 1982). This is the stage that the nurses are in at the beginning of orientation. Stage II is an advanced beginner phase, which is where the nurse can demonstrate marginally acceptable performance (Benner, 1982). The nurse has been able to cope with real situations or had a mentor point out meaningful situations (Benner, 1982). Stage III is competent; this is where the nurse has been on the job for 2 to 3 years and the nurse begins to see their actions in terms of their goals/plans (Benner, 1982). Stage IV is proficient, which is perceived situations rather than in terms

of aspects, and they have guided performance (Benner, 1982). Stage V is an expert, where the nurse no longer relies on an analytical principle to understand the situation to appropriate actions (Benner, 1982). These stages are linear, and one must complete each stage to move to the next one.

During the orientation phase, the graduate nurses are in the novice and advanced beginner levels and have to learn their new roles and tasks. The novice stage is when the nurse is taught about the objective attributes and how these attributes are features of the task recognized without situational experience (Benner, 1982). The nurse has to navigate through this stage to complete orientation.

Benner (1982) argued that novice practitioners are taught the rules to help guide their actions toward different attributes. The transition for the novice nurse can be difficult if proper guidance is not given. Novice nurses may find it difficult to use discretionary judgment since they have no experience with the situations they face. The novice also struggles to decide which task is most relevant since they have no real-life experience; it is the stage where the nurse is gaining knowledge and learning tasks with real situations. Gaining this knowledge will ensure their progression to the advanced beginner stage (Benner, 1982).

Clarification of Terms

New graduate nurse: A new graduate is a person who recently graduated from a nursing program, passed the national licensure exam, and was issued a license to practice as a registered nurse by the state in which they will practice their new profession.

Orientation: Orientation is an 8-12-week period wherein the new graduate will learn about hospital guidelines, computer systems, and benefits, and then move into the mentorship phase of nursing orientation. During the mentorship period, the new graduate nurse will be paired with a preceptor and introduced to the unit where they will work.

Relevance to Nursing Practice

Orientation is an important phase in transitioning into nursing or any profession. Creating classroom-based training that is interactive and motivating and achieves learning objectives is a challenge for the nursing professional development specialists (Woolwine et al. 2019). Many professional nursing education organizations have identified the need to promote the development of lifelong learning among nursing students to help improve the entry-level preparedness of graduate nurses (Kaulback, 2020). In nursing, orientation is a period in which training is provided by the organization, usually delivered by the human resources department and staff development department, that includes company details such as the vision, mission, values, and the company handbook with specific company information (Ahmed, 2020). New employee orientation programs have been shown to socialize newcomers, and it also increases their knowledge, skills, and abilities upon completion of the program (Acevedo & Yancey, 2011). Nurses who are happy in the ward and feel that they have had a proper orientation will stay at the organization longer (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Lack of employee morale, unprepared new employees, lack of communication, and poor guidance are sure signs of poor orientation (Ahmed, 2020). In contrast, a proper orientation supports a sense of competence among nurses (Lalithabai et al., 2021).

Orientation is when the new nurses are transitioning from student nurse to professional nurse. This transition from school to professional life can be difficult. When a nurse does not have a smooth transition into nursing, the resultant stress plays a key role in the turnover rate. According to Kiel (2020), orientation plays a crucial role in the overall recruitment and retention of new nurses. With the proper orientation, the new graduate nurse retention rate has been seen to increase. Properly structured orientation programs should be based on nursing education theory as well as general education theory (Kiel, 2020). Healthcare organizations, including hospitals, have used several strategies to improve the orientation programs for nurses. According to Christensen (2011), orientation is a time when new nurses need to learn how to do task-based skills but tend to lack self-confidence in the areas of delegation, prioritization, organization, communication, and critical thinking. Thus, a simulation training program was used to help new nurses transition to the role of professional nurses (Christensen, 2011). Using this approach, the local organization uses simulation to boost competence in a safe and controlled environment after orientation is completed.

This doctoral project will give the local organization information that will help them determine how to enhance their orientation program. Ensuring a proper nursing orientation can have positive effects for new nurses and healthcare organizations (Lalithabai et al., 2021). By evaluating new nurses' satisfaction with the orientation program at the local organization, the organization will indicate whether the changes that were made were successful. By describing changes in the rates of retention before and

after the implementation of the new program, the local organization will receive evidence of how such a program can contribute to cost savings related to retention.

Local Background and Context

The local organization was having issues with retaining nurses, especially new graduate nurses. The organizational leaders noticed the turnover rate was increasing over the year (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). To investigate the origins of this problem, the staff development department added questions to the exit interview and conducted telephone interviews with former employees to see if anything could have kept them with the organization (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). According to Erby, the questions were generic: *What was the reason you left? What could the organization change to have kept you?* They also asked for any suggestions they might have. The nurse-to-patient ratio and poor satisfaction with the orientation program emerged as major concerns for new graduate nurses. The staff development office decided to focus on resolving the problems with the orientation process because there are no regulatory laws on the nurse-to-patient ratio in the state of Tennessee. Each local organization (administration) determines the optimal nurse-to-patient ratio at their respective facilities (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). The staff development department then surveyed the current staff on what part or parts of the orientation process could be improved upon and/or changed (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). Some of the issues leadership found out about were that new graduate nurses were not properly paired with a preceptor and lacked other mentors on the unit to ask questions to. Based on those findings, the way that

preceptors were being used was adjusted and parts of the orientation process were recreated (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). The old orientation lacked structure, but the current orientation program was designed to provide the new graduate nurse with support and training from two experienced nurses: one as the primary support and the other as the secondary source of support for the new graduate (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019).

The local organization in which this doctoral project took place is an acute-care hospital with over 500 beds. The local organization is non-profit, so the state/federal portion of the orientation process just requires that the nurse have competencies signed yearly, showing that the staff is the competency of each the tasks (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). The local organization has a mix of staff nurses including graduate, seasonal, and nurse interns. In our organization, a new graduate nurse is 1 year or less from the date they pass their state board examination, but there are no data on exactly how many new graduate nurses are in the local organization (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019). It is also a teaching hospital for both the nursing and physician staff. It is a Level 2 hospital for trauma and is stroke and chest pain certified. It is the main hospital in the metro area with several outlining smaller facilities. It serves people from the inner city and as well as the surrounding counties with no hospitals in the area.

This doctoral project was warranted to evaluate the revised orientation program that the organization is using. It determined if satisfaction with orientation and the retention rate have increased since its implementation. This information is important to

the local organization because the retention of experienced nurses improves patient safety while providing cost savings related to the hiring process.

Role of the DNP Student

I currently work for the local organization as a head nurse on an acute cardiac intervention unit. I am not on any of the committees that have developed the orientation program. However, I am a preceptor and mentor for new graduate nurses as well as seasonal nurses that come to this organization. It is a passion of mine to ensure that all nurses are knowledgeable and educated properly. I make sure to follow the guidelines that are given to me by the staff development office for orienting all nurses. I attend class annually to be a preceptor. The leadership over staff development is based at the corporate office and are the main developers for the orientation program. They also make sure all preceptors are up to date on all annual learning requirements for their roles. My doctoral project is focused on evaluating the new orientation process. As a preceptor at this organization, I want to contribute my knowledge of evidence-based practice to improve the quality of orientation offered to new nurses.

My role in this doctoral project was to evaluate the orientation program currently being used at the local organization. I compared existing data on retention rates and satisfaction with the orientation process among new graduate hires before and after the implementation of the current orientation program to evaluate the success of the program. I will set up meetings with the different leaders at the local organization to give them the results from the findings. The feedback was based on the old and current orientation program.

Role of the Project Team

The project team consisted of leadership from the staff development department and representatives from the human resources department. The staff development department is where the orientation program is developed and organized for each nurse; they supplied me with the data on nurse satisfaction with orientation. The human resource department supplied me with the data on the retention rate before and after the establishment of the new orientation program. Mrs. Erby is part of the staff development department and was my point person. She has worked for the local organization for several years. She played an important role in getting me all the data and information needed for this project.

Summary

In the next section, I will describe the methods that I used to evaluate the new orientation program including the practice-focused questions, sources of evidence that were collected to complete this project, and how this evidence was analyzed.

Section 3: Collection and Analysis of Evidence

Introduction

The transition of a new graduate through the orientation process to become a professional in the nursing world is the problem that is addressed in this project. Thus, the purpose of this project is to determine if a newly revised graduate nurse orientation program was effective in helping to increase satisfaction and increase retention for the new graduate nurse compared to the old orientation program. It will give the local organization information about how their organization is doing with nurse orientation.

The local organization was seeing a problem occurring more often than they would like when it came to retaining the new graduate nursing staff. They put their staff development department to work to see exactly where the problems were originating from. The department focused on the orientation process after they had collected information via exit interviews, phone calls, and speaking with the staff nurses. So, with the information they gathered, they were led to revise the orientation program at the local organization. In Section 3, I will review the practice-focused questions, sources of evidence, analysis and synthesis, and summary of Section 3.

Practice-Focused Questions

The transition from a student nurse to a practicing professional is becoming more challenging. The orientation program structured for the success of the nurse will also contribute to the success of the organization. The local organization was having issues with retaining nurses, especially new graduate nurses. This project will help the leaders of the local organization to determine whether the new orientation program is meeting the

needs of the new graduate nursing staff. The problem that this doctoral project addressed is the lack of evaluation of the effectiveness of the new orientation program. The practice-focused question that was addressed is: *How effective is the new graduate nurse orientation program at reducing nurse turnover and improving new graduate satisfaction with the quality of the orientation program?* The practice-focused question aligns with the purpose of this project by assessing satisfaction data as an indicator of the new orientation program's ability to meet the needs of new graduate nurses and whether that resulted in increased retention and thus, reducing turnover rates.

Operational Definitions

Peer resource/mentor: A peer resource/mentor is a nurse, respiratory therapist, pharmacist, physical therapist, and any other clinical professional that the new graduate nurse or any nurse can go to for clinical/skills questions and use as a reference throughout their working career at the local organization. It is a formal role within the organization and can be distinguished from other staff by a special badge.

Preceptor: A preceptor is a nurse that is paired with the new graduate nurse for 8-12 weeks during orientation. This is the nurse that will serve as the main reference (for skills, knowledge, guidance, and administrative questions) person for the new nurse.

Sources of Evidence

I worked closely with the staff development department and the human resource office. The data on satisfaction with the orientation were obtained from the staff development department, and the data on retention came from the human resources department; these two areas work together and share the data needed to help the local

organization grow. Once the data were supplied by both departments, I was able to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes in the orientation program.

The data that I used had already been collected by the local organization. The staff development department collects quarterly data about nurse's satisfaction with orientation. However, the data were never examined to obtain insights on the effectiveness of the orientation process. By analyzing the data, I was able to provide the organization with empirical evidence of how satisfied the nurses are with the current orientation program. I will compare data on retention before and after the implementation of the new orientation program to determine if the program also affected nurse's satisfaction with their employment overall.

Archival and Operational Data

The information on satisfaction and retention that led to the development of a revision of the orientation program was originally collected by human resource personal. With that information, the human resource personnel met with all of the other departments to share the findings. The staff development department committed to an initial review of the satisfaction data.

I used quantitative data to compare satisfaction with orientation and retention before and after the implementation of the new program. The data are compiled quarterly on a routine basis by the local organization. I met with the staff development office (S. Erby, personal communication, November 15, 2019) and obtained permission to use the satisfaction survey for this project. The data on satisfaction with the orientation came from random surveys of the staff nurses (random questionnaires given out) and from

questions on the exit interviews of former staff nurses. The data are de-identified and do not contain any of the names of respondents. The questionnaire asks about overall satisfaction with orientation as well as other aspects of their employment at the local organization. The surveys are scored based on a dichotomous scale (satisfied, unsatisfied); if no response was provided, the question is coded as undetermined. The data on retention consisted of the number of new graduate hires and the retention rate (percentage) for new graduate hires.

The local organization uses a spreadsheet to record and store the data on the retention and orientation satisfaction questionnaires on a secure network drive that only certain staff members have access to. I did not have personal access to the network drive due to other organizational information is on there. The data on satisfaction with orientation came from the staff development office, and the data on retention came from the Human Resource department. Mrs. Erby is the contact person from the local organization that gave me all the compiled data in percentages.

The data are relevant to the doctoral project because the purpose is to determine if the new graduate orientation program was effective at increasing nurse satisfaction with the program while increasing the retention rate. Since a poor orientation experience was one of the reasons for leaving that nurses who were interviewed had given to the local organization, an increase in satisfaction with orientation is expected to coincide with an increase in the retention rate.

Analysis and Synthesis

I used line graphs to compare trends in orientation satisfaction and retention before and after the implementation of the new orientation program. I did not expect any missing information from the local organization. Using the graphs gives a visual representation of improvement. I used descriptive data that were already in the form of percentages to display my data.

Summary

This section focused on describing how the practice focused question and purpose of this doctoral project align with the data collection and analysis that was conducted. I received quarterly data on satisfaction with orientation and the rate of retention; this information was provided by the staff development office and human resources department. I compared data for three quarters before and three quarters after implementation of the new orientation program and reported the results using line graphs. In Section four, I will report the findings and their implications, recommendations, contributions of the doctoral project team, and strengths and limitations of the project.

Section 4: Findings and Recommendations

Introduction

The local organization was experiencing high turnover rates among new graduate nurses; subsequently it was identified that the orientation process was not meeting their needs and contributing to the turnover. Based on feedback from exit interviews, the local organization revised the orientation program to better meet the needs of new graduate nurses. However, there was a gap in practice in that the effectiveness of the revised orientation program remained unevaluated. Therefore, the purpose of this doctoral project was to assess the effectiveness of the new orientation program. The specific practice-focused question that guided this project was: *How effective is the new graduate nurse orientation program at reducing nurse turnover and improving new graduate satisfaction with the quality of the orientation program?*

The data were compiled quarterly on a routine basis by the local organization. Archival quantitative data on satisfaction with orientation and retention for the period of January of 2019 through August of 2020 (three quarters before and three quarters after the implementation of the new program) were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. All the data were provided to me in de-identified and aggregated form as percentages. The data on satisfaction were provided by the staff development department, and the data on retention were provided by human resources. The data were used to develop graphs depicting either an improvement or decline in satisfaction and retention over time, specifically before and after the implementation of the new orientation program.

Findings and Implications

The local organization in which this doctoral project was conducted is one hospital within a hospital system. The findings do show an improvement in satisfaction with orientation and retention rate. The average quarterly retention rate was 18% and ranged between 10% and 25% for the time between January 2019 and September 2019. The program was implemented in August 2019; therefore, the last quarter of the pre-implementation data may reflect some slight improvements since the project was implemented during the last month of that quarter. After the implementation of the program, average quarterly retention rate was 55% and ranged between 25% and 75% between October 2019 and June 2020. Thus, post-implementation, there was a 37-percentage point increase on average in the retention-rate on average (Figure 1). The average quarterly rate of satisfaction with the orientation process was 28.6% and ranged between 25% and 35% for the time between January 2019 and September 2019. After the implementation of the program, the average quarterly rate of satisfaction with the orientation process was 73% and ranged between 53% and 89% between October 2019 and June 2020. Thus, post-implementation, there was a 44.4 percentage point increase on average in the rate of satisfaction with the quality of the orientation process (Figure 2). These results demonstrate a substantial increase in satisfaction with the orientation process and in the retention of new graduates.

There was an unanticipated limitation that caused me an initial delay in gathering the data from the local organization. My point person was working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the information needed for my project was on a special server

at the local organization. She was finally able to get on site and provide me with the data I needed for my project.

The findings of this doctoral project contribute to positive social change at the institutional or organizational level. The results will provide the local organization with evidence that the new orientation program is better at meeting the needs of new graduates than the previous orientation program, as measured by satisfaction with the program. This supports the continuation and perhaps expansion of the program. Through higher levels of retention among new graduates within the local organization, patient safety and quality of care may increase, and the organization will be able to control some of the costs related to the recruitment and hiring of nurses. Positive social change will also occur at the individual level by helping the new graduate with transitioning from student to professional by showing them how to navigate through this pivotal moment in their life.

Figure 1

Pre- and Post-Implementation Quarterly Trends in Retention Rates

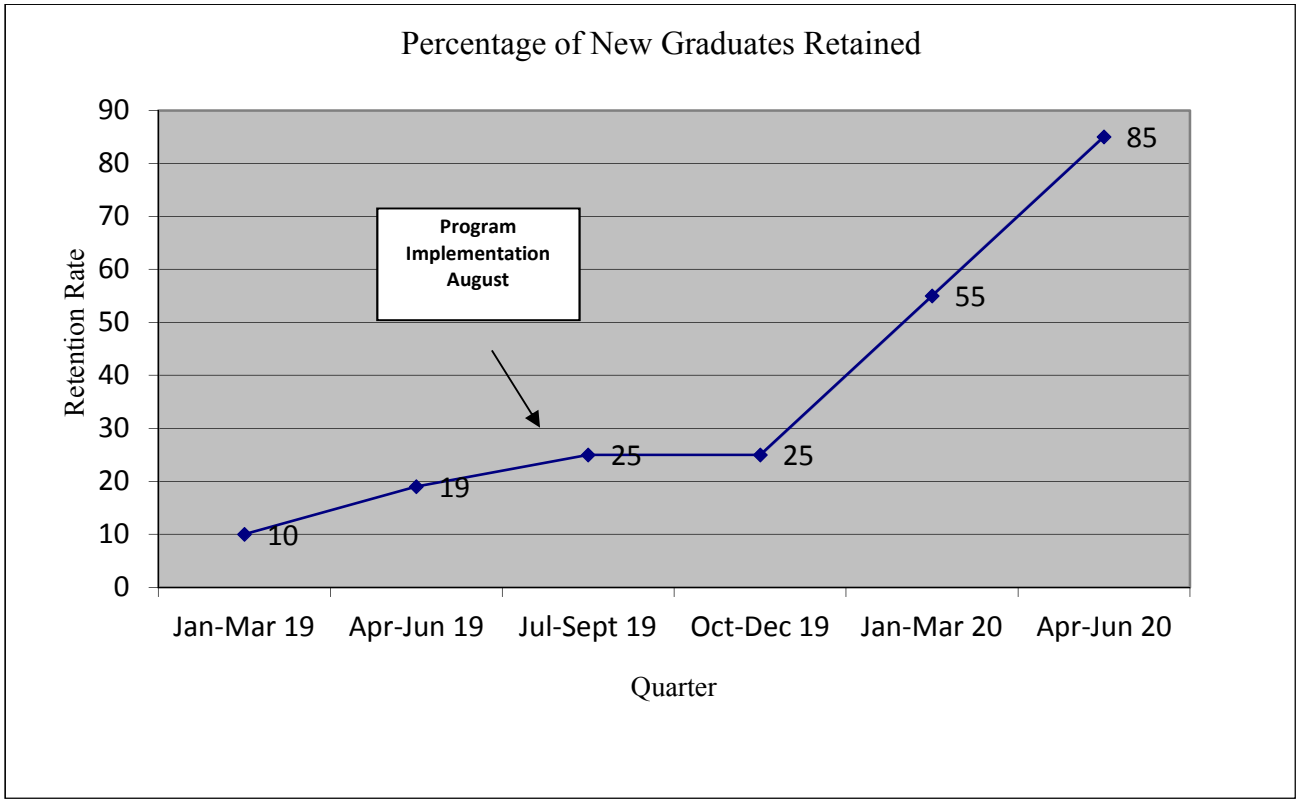
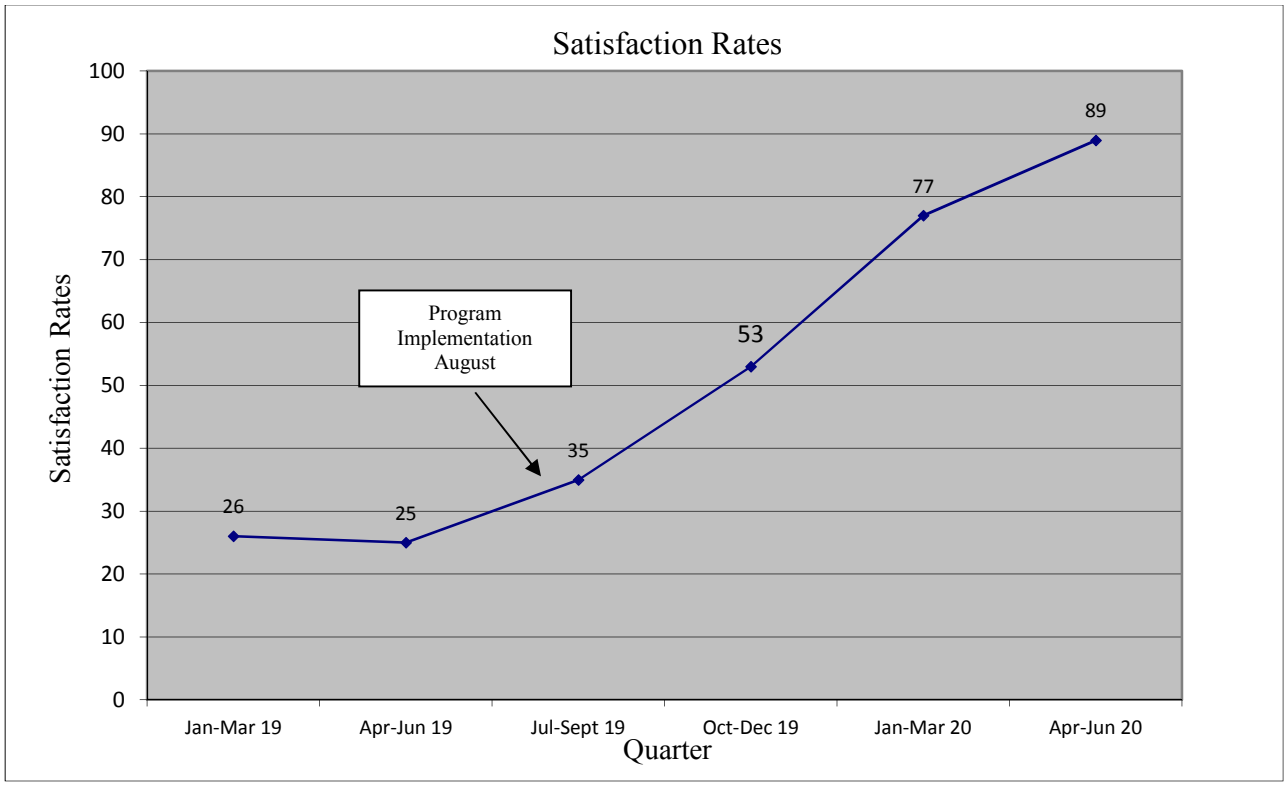


Figure 2

Pre- and Post-Implementation Quarterly Trends in Rates of Satisfaction with Orientation



Recommendations

The project demonstrated an increase in satisfaction and retention among new graduate nurses. The findings are what the local organization wanted to see from the evaluation of the current process. It would be my recommendation from these findings to implement this orientation process throughout the entire hospital system that the local organization is a part of. It will help with growth in the nursing staff as well as patient safety. Pooling the data across the entire hospital system instead of just the local organization may provide an indication of the consistency of the effectiveness of the program. The local organization needs to set up a system for continuous evaluation of the

new orientation process using the Plan, Do, Check, Act (PDCA) model (American Society for Quality [ASQ], n.d.) as a guide (Appendix). As part of the "Study" phase of this model, the local organization should continue to elicit the suggestions for improvement from recent orientees. A follow-up evaluation of satisfaction with the program among those that have been in practice for several months would also allow the local organization to evolve the program by determining if the needs of new graduates are changing.

Contributions of the Doctoral Project Team

The project team was great to work with and was willing to help me throughout this entire doctoral project. The staff development person was responsible for providing me the data on orientation and satisfaction rates. The representative from human resources was responsible for providing me with retention rates for new graduates. However, during the implementation of this doctoral project, the human resources representative and the staff development representative agreed that the staff development representative should be my point of contact. The data on new graduate nurse retention were given to the staff development representative by the human resources representative, who then provided me with all the information and data needed for this project. This all happened due to COVID-19 and all the bad weather that been happening in our area. All the staff members were not working in person at the local organization and did not have time to set up for work at home. The staff development representative played a major role in how I would present this information in the project as well as to the local organization. The representative was able to get into the office and get the

needed information for my project and was there for any questions I had about the information.

Strengths and Limitations of the Project

This project had a few strengths. This project demonstrated that an orientation program specifically aimed at meeting the needs of new graduates can be effective in retaining new graduate nursing staff. The project evaluated the effectiveness of an orientation program designed to meet the needs of new graduate nurses at the local organization. New graduate residency programs can be lengthy and expensive for any organization to implement. The results from my project indicate that tailored orientation programs may be a less costly alternative to residency programs that can provide substantial improvement in retention. The limitation to this project was that it remains unclear what part of the orientation program the nurses were satisfied with and which aspects could use some changes. Without that information, it cannot be determined which part of the orientation program is giving the organization an increase in satisfaction and retention.

Section 5: Dissemination Plan

The findings of this doctoral project will be disseminated through the organizational staff development department. I may have to present my results in email form to the staff development and human resource departments. The staff development representative who served on the project team will present the results to the leadership at the local organization. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the exact venue where this will take place has yet to be determined.

Analysis of Self

I started out on this project with many concerns and doubts of my ability to write a scholarly paper. I had several issues when it comes to writing on a scholarly level. Reflecting on this journey as a Masters-prepared RN and educator, I continued to maximize my use of all that I have learned in this DNP program. I learned to use the Writing Center at Walden University and tapped into other local resources to improve my scholarly writing. I worked closely with my committee chair and received consistent feedback that geared me in the correct direction for my doctoral project. I felt the most accomplished when the IRB approved my work as well as when I completed my oral presentation. My long-term goal includes using my doctoral degree to support my career trajectory in clinical nursing education. I feel that nurses need to have good hands-on skills as well as book knowledge.

It took me over 3 years to complete the DNP coursework and the project. The challenges of being in school full-time, being employed full-time, and being a full-time mother/wife was a lot most days during this process. As the project manager, I quickly

realized that I had to stay focused and get myself organized to reach my goals. I instituted habits such as the use of a calendar to keep track of all the important things I had to do. My 7-year-old son was my greatest source of motivation; he would say, “Momma you can do it! I believe in you, and you a rockstar.” It makes me smile every time I hear him say it.

Summary

It is important for hospitals and other healthcare organizations to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the orientation process. Doing so demonstrates that such organizations are dedicated to the development of new graduates and to supporting their career goals. This doctoral project evaluated the effectiveness of an orientation program designed to meet the needs of new graduate nurses. The program was found to increase satisfaction with orientation and the retention of the new graduate nurses at the local organization. The results of this doctoral project demonstrate that targeted orientation programs represent an opportunity to increase retention while improving patient safety and reducing organizational cost related to turnover.

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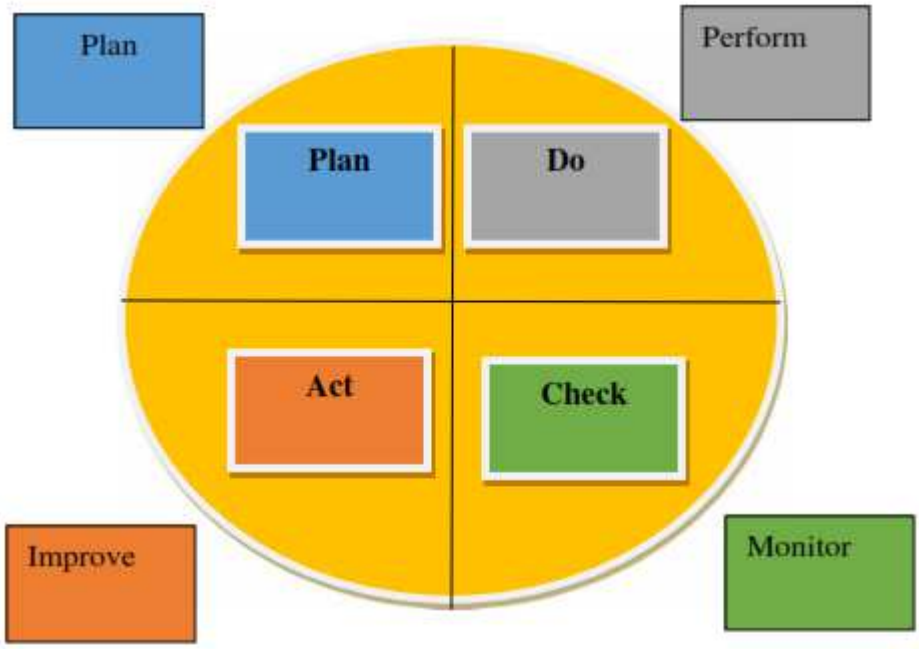
Appendix: The Plan, Do, Check, Act Model