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English as a Second Language Students' Experiences in Associate Degree Nursing Programs

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences

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Angie Lundgren

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Walden University

2020

Abstract

English as a Second Language Students' Experiences in Associate Degree Nursing

Programs

by

Angie Lundgren

MSN, Walden University, 2012

BSN, Winston-Salem State University, 2006

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Nursing Education

Walden University

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Abstract

The general nursing shortage experienced in the U.S. leads students who speak English as a second language (ESL) to enter into nursing school programs. Although these students may enter the nursing programs, they may not successfully complete the nursing programs due to various barriers they face during their enrollment. The purpose of this phenomenological study, guided by the NURS model, was to understand the perceptions and experiences of ESL nursing students related to learning and the barriers to learning and success while enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. Semi structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 associate degree ESL nursing students. The themes that emerged from the data were perceptions of high rigor of the nursing program, that dedication and commitment to the program of study was required; families had high expectations and students maintained responsibilities of the family, and ESL students perceived they were different from the rest of the class. The results of the study offer insights of the barriers perceived by nursing students to inform nursing faculty and future ESL nursing students on factors that may be needed to promote program success, persistence, and program completion. Recommendations for future studies are to investigate perceptions of ESL students of specific age groups and to better understand barriers experienced by ESL nursing students. The findings of this study provided an increased awareness of the barriers and experiences of ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program which will affect positive social change.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dear husband, Eric, and my son, Bradley. Eric has been my rock and biggest cheerleader throughout this doctoral program. His constant encouragement and reminders of where I started kept me determined to finish what I started. Eric always listened to my frustrations with this project and never failed to help me see my way through the darkest of days to achieve this long-term goal of a doctorate degree, and you continue to be there for me every day. To my son, Bradley, you have made me the proudest mom ever with your life choices and successes. You too, have been a great support and motivator throughout this program. I could not have done this without the both of you.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background.....	4
Problem Statement.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Research Questions.....	9
Conceptual Framework.....	9
Nature of the Study.....	10
Definitions.....	11
Assumptions.....	12
Scope and Delimitations.....	12
Limitations.....	13
Significance.....	14
Summary.....	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Literature Search Strategy.....	18
Conceptual Foundation.....	19
Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concept.....	23
Factors That Contribute to ESL Program Completion.....	23
Summary.....	27

Chapter 3: Research Method.....	28
Introduction.....	28
Research Design and Rationale	29
Role of the Researcher	30
Methodology.....	30
Participant Selection Logic	30
Data Analysis Plan.....	33
Issues of Trustworthiness.....	34
Ethical Procedures	35
Summary.....	36
Chapter 4: Results.....	38
Demographics	39
Data Collection	41
Data Analysis	41
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	43
Credibility	43
Confirmability.....	43
Dependability	43
Transferability.....	44
Results.....	44
Theme 1: Perception of High Rigor of the Nursing Program, Dedication and Commitment is Required	44

Theme 2: Expectations and Responsibilities of Their Family	47
Theme 3: Perceptions of Being Different from the Rest of the Class	50
Summary	53
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	55
Introduction.....	55
Interpretation of the Findings.....	56
Limitations of the Study.....	60
Recommendations.....	61
Implications.....	61
Conclusion	62
References	64
Appendix A: Screening Questions.....	72
Appendix B: Interview Guide for Interviews with Participants	73

List of Tables

Table 1. NURS Model	20
Table 2. Participant Demographics.....	40

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The changing demographics of the United States has created a population with an increasingly diverse population of immigrants from many countries, such as Mexico, China, and Haiti (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). With the increase in cultural diversity, a need is created for additional ESL nurses in the nursing profession (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, [AACN] 2019). Currently, there is a shortage of nurses and an even greater shortage of nurses that speak English as a second language (ESL) in the United States (AACN, 2019). In 2015, ESL nurses represented only 19% of the nursing profession in the United States (Cantwell, Napierkowski, Gundersen, & Naqvi, 2015). In 2019, that number has only increased to 19.2% (AACN, 2019). This lack of diversity has led to an increase in recruitment of ESL students into nursing programs. Despite the increased recruitment of ESL students into nursing program, attrition rates are as high as 85% among ESL students in some nursing programs (Olson, 2012). Starkey (2015) posited that the higher attrition rates may be related to a lack of understanding of the lecture material by culturally diverse students as well as their lack of reading comprehension of the material. ESL students are also at a disadvantage when taking lecture notes in class (Starkey, 2015). Many of the nursing students for whom English is a second language reported that they must record lectures and then spend hours at home after class transcribing the information to understand the lecture content (Starkey, 2015).

ESL students not only experience language barriers, but they often experience cultural barriers at home and at school, which may contribute to the high attrition rate

(Starkey, 2015). Cultural barriers at home and at school include: the expectations of the role in the family, the expectations of working and as a parent or wife, the time available to commit to studying at home and at school, family expectations to achieve good grades, the ability to translate information taught in class and discussed with their class peers, and the expectations of the nursing faculty when working with an ESL nursing student (Mulready-Shick, 2013). Many ESL nursing students must continue to work or continue to be the main caregiver for children and or parents that live in the home. ESL students may face high expectations by their family, including that the student does not interrupt the environment at home by attending college (Mulready-Shick, 2013). ESL nursing student may not have spousal support at home and buy-in while attending college, and these barriers have a great impact on the student success rate (Mulready-Shick, 2013).

Nursing curriculums require critical thinking and application of the material taught. In some educational systems, such as in Asian communities, students are taught to memorize important information, which is a stark contrast to the expectations in nursing programs in the United States (Mulready-Shick, 2013). The barriers and cultural differences of ESL nursing students continue to contribute to the high attrition rate seen in associate degree nursing programs (Scheele, 2011). The current study provides information to help the nursing profession understand the cultural barriers of ESL nursing students that contributes to their high attrition rates

There are different types of nursing degrees available in both the community college and the university setting. There is a 1-year, practical nursing degree; a 2-year, associates degree program; and a 4-year Bachelor of Science of nursing (BSN) degree.

Both the associate degree and bachelor's degree programs provide the student with the requirements needed to take the National Council Licensing Exam (NCLEX) (NLN, 2018). Successful completion of the NCLEX allows a person to practice as a RN in the United States (NLN, 2018). In this qualitative, phenomenological study, I focused on ESL students that are enrolled in an associate degree nursing program at the community college level. I chose to focus on associate degree nursing programs because there is a tremendous amount of information related to BSN nursing programs but not associate degree programs. An additional reason to focus on associate degree nursing programs was related to a personal experience with a past student.

To keep up with the increasing demand and shortage of nurses in the United States, attrition must be decreased in nursing programs. Because ESL nursing students account for a high percentage of the attrition, attention to retention of ESL students is important. Additionally, thousands of qualified applicants are unable to gain admittance into nursing programs due to a lack of nurse educators and clinical space; therefore, a higher percentage of the students who are admitted must be successful to sustain a supply of qualified nurses in the healthcare workplace (Zangaro, Streeter, & Li, 2018). To understand and address the attrition rate, I studied ESL students' perceptions and experiences related to learning and the barriers to learning and success while enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. The increase in ESL nurse graduates may provide additional RNs to fill the gaps in the employment demands of healthcare facilities and help to replace the many aging, baby boomers that retire each year (Zhang, Tai, Pforsich, & Lin, 2018). The findings of this study contribute to the goal of increased retention rates

among ESL nursing students. The decrease in attrition will affect positive social change by increasing cultural diversity in nursing.

Background

ESL is defined as the practice and theory of learning and teaching English for use in countries where it is used by some people but where other languages are also spoken language (Collins, 2019). The National League for Nursing (2018) reported that 16.2% of students enrolled in nursing programs are ESL students, which is a representation of both community college and university level nursing programs; however, ESL nursing students often have a higher attrition rate than non-ESL nursing students that has been reported as high as 85% in some nursing programs (Olson, 2012).

ESL students that enroll in associate degree nursing programs at community colleges are often faced with barriers that students attending universities do not face (Mulready-Shick, 2013). There are many ethnically and experientially diverse students enrolled at the community college level. Programs in the community college system provide a faster track for obtaining employment than universities do; therefore, many students, both ESL and English as a first language, choose to enroll in these programs. In 2010, ethnic minority students comprised one third of the population that enrolled in community colleges (Bonet & Walters, 2016). Within the diverse community college population, many were first generation college students who were inadequately prepared for college level work (Pence, 2011). Often students that enroll in community colleges need developmental learning courses along with learning a new language (i.e., English), leading to lower persistence level for ESL students (Osman, 2018). Many of the

community college-enrolled ESL students must work full-time, need emotional support, and are single parents with no family support to help the student throughout the semester or when homework and study time is needed (Bonet & Walters, 2016). The community college environment is comprised of students that must travel to class each day because they do not live on campus. The commute time each day, the preparation and planning of childcare, and the additional expense of traveling to school may contribute to the higher attrition rate for the ESL student at a community college (Bonet & Walters, 2016).

The high attrition rate for ESL students continues to have a direct effect on a lack of diversity in the nursing profession (Olson, 2012). There is a need to increase cultural diversity within the nursing profession, which may increase the quality of care for the community of culturally diverse patients. The increasing cultural competence needs of the growing minority population in the United States may be affected by an increase in diversity of the RNs. The Institute of Medicine (2004) reported that there is a direct link between poor health outcomes for minority patients and a lack of minority healthcare providers including RNs (Metcalf & Neubrandner, 2016).

There is also a need to assist faculty working with and advising failing students who are at risk for withdrawing from nursing programs to decrease attrition rates. Olson (2012) discussed the low level of cultural awareness of nurse educators and that many considered ESL students to be the same as traditional students enrolled. Often faculty have little information and knowledge on how to work with ESL nursing students in class and in the clinical setting to promote their academic success (Olsen, 2012).

The gap in the knowledge of why ESL student retention rates are low in associate degree nursing programs remains present today. In this study, I focused on the barriers experienced by and perceptions of the ESL nursing students that were successful in the nursing program. The findings of this study can be used to inform nursing faculty on what strategies best help ESL nursing students to be successful in an associate degree nursing program.

The results from this study provide information regarding problems faced by ESL students enrolled in nursing programs that are also experienced by students whose first language is English. The findings can also help faculty understand how to assist ESL students in the classroom and clinical setting and potentially reduce ESL nursing student attrition. By providing these findings, this qualitative, phenomenological study can be used to positively affect social change for the community and for patients in other areas that are culturally diverse in the future.

Problem Statement

In this study, I explored the barriers that ESL nursing students enrolled in associate degree nursing programs experience that may prevent them from successfully completing the program. Understanding what barriers are present prevents future increases in attrition for ESL nursing students. ESL nursing students experience many barriers (Zangaro et al., 2018), but there is a gap in understanding what barriers exist that may affect the students' persistence and, ultimately, graduation from the program. When barriers are removed and ESL students are provided with the resources to help them succeed, an increase in retention may be seen. The findings of this study provided

additional information that will assist educators when working with ESL students, leading to early identification of students at risk for attrition. When identifying the students who are at risk earlier in the semester, student support can be provided, promoting student success and reducing attrition numbers for the program (Zangaro et al., 2018).

There are few studies available related to the retention of ESL students in associate degree programs; therefore, this study contributes to the gap in the literature. An increase in diversity of the nursing workforce will help to enhance the quality of life for the increasingly diverse population of the United States and the local community where this research was completed (see Zangaro et al, 2018).

Cantwell et al. (2015) conducted a study on students from cultures who spoke languages other than English in a second-degree nursing program by implementing the Nursing as an Additional Language and Culture Program pilot and found that there was an increased rate of retention when barriers, such as cultural differences, language difficulties, and insufficient emotional support, were minimized, leading to a positive learning environment. The researchers also reported that other factors contribute to the attrition of ESL nursing students, including age, ethnicity, gender, background, language spoken, low grade point average, and decreased placement test scores. Cantwell et al. revealed that when ESL students were provided with additional resources, such as tutoring, academic support, study groups, or when the instructors had a knowledge of what the ESL students needed to be successful through a needs assessment, the attrition rate decreased.

Without additional research on the experiences of ESL nursing students, the United States will continue to need more culturally diverse nurses to provide care to the diverse groups of patients (Cantwell et al., 2015). This study contributes to positive social change by providing information to educators on assisting ESL nursing students to be successful in the associate degree nursing program. Through the presentation of the findings in this study, nurse educators are provided with research data that will allow for consideration of the needs for ESL nursing students and what is experienced by ESL nursing students while enrolled in the associate degree program.

This study was unique because it involved students in an associate degree nursing program that speak languages other than English. The students that participated had experienced a nursing program for at least a full semester. Gathering the experiences of current students allowed me to provide information on problems and barriers that ESL nursing students in associate degree program are faced with.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of ESL nursing students related to learning and the barriers to learning and success while enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. I designed this study to reveal new information on the experiences of ESL students, which can increase understanding of the reasons why many ESL nursing students do not successfully complete their program.

The phenomenon of interest was the high attrition rate of ESL students when enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. I explored the phenomenon using

Jeffreys's (2015) nursing universal retention and success (NURS) model. I further studied what ESL students perceive as barriers and deterrents of being successful in the associate degree program and how they overcame these barriers.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the perceptions of barriers experienced by ESL students in an associate degree nursing program?

RQ2: What are the experiences of ESL as they overcome the barriers to be successful while in an associate degree nursing program?

Conceptual Framework

I used Jeffreys's (2015) NURS model as the conceptual framework to guide my study. The NURS model is globally applicable to all levels of nursing and focuses on retention rather than attrition rates (Jeffreys, 2015). Jeffreys used the model to help explain ways in which diverse factors often affect nursing student retention and attrition rates. In the NURS model, factors that are related to student retention and success are used as a framework to help nursing faculty identify at risk students enrolled in nursing programs. Jeffreys suggested many reasons why the attrition rate is affected and how academic success depends on a multifaceted combination between age, gender, race, ethnicity, ESL, prior nursing experience, prior educational degrees, environmental factors, academic factors, and student affective characteristics related to their self-capabilities.

One factor in the NURS model related to ESL student retention is a student's affective characteristics, which are influenced by the student's belief in themselves and

their values of education (Jeffreys, 2015). The factors related to academics in the NURS model include: student study skills, comprehension, amount of time spent studying, whether the student attends all classes, and open labs and tutoring services offered by the program or college (Jeffreys, 2015). There are many environmental factors that could affect the student's success in the nursing program. Many nursing students enrolled in community colleges are parents of small children or single parents; therefore, childcare may be an issue. Finances may affect academic success, and a lack of family support, a poor living situation and a lack of dependable transportation are all environmental factors that can lead to increased attrition rates at the community college level (Jeffreys, 2015).

The use of the NURS model helps to determine valuable data to connect faculty and researchers; therefore, encouraging collaboration for a mutual goal of student retention and success (Jeffreys, 2015). This model aligned with the current study because the research questions addressed the experience of ESL nursing students that are successful in the nursing program. The main goal for the study and the use of the NURS model was to help identify the experience of the ESL nursing students and what has contributed to their retention in the nursing program. The NURS model is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative. The use of qualitative research reveals the understanding of what the participants experienced. I used a phenomenological design to discover the ESL students' feelings and experiences when in an associate degree

nursing program. The use of a qualitative approach provided information that may educate and assist both future educators and ESL nursing students.

Data were obtained from in-person interviews with the participants enrolled in the study. I interviewed participants one-on-one in a quiet, private setting. This type of data collection allowed for a greater expression of feelings and experiences by the participants versus a survey initiated in the mail or online (see Creswell, 2017).

Definitions

Associate degree nursing program: A two-year nursing program. Associate degree nursing programs take place at a community college or junior college level (Associate degree nursing program, Merriam Webster, 2018).

Attrition rate: A decrease in the number of students in a class caused by students leaving related to personal reasons, grades, or attendance (Attrition rate, Collins, 2019).

Community college: A government-supported college that may offer diploma and associates degree programs for the community (Community College, Merriam Webster, 2018).

Diversity: A group or class composed of different elements or people (Diversity, Merriam Webster, 2018).

English as a second language (ESL) students: A group of students who speak a language other than English as their first primary language (Choi, 2005; Lynch & Hanson, 2011).

NURS model: A model used to determine elements that affect the retention and success of ESL nursing students (Jeffreys, 2015).

Assumptions

I assumed that the ESL nursing student were honest when responding to the interview questions. Another assumption was that the ESL nursing students had a desire to be successful and to complete the nursing program. I also assumed that the participants wanted to assist in the study to benefit future ESL nursing students. All assumptions listed were important when I obtained the needed data to complete the study. Honesty in answering the questions, a goal of success and a desire to help others, provided quality information for the study during the interviews.

Scope and Delimitations

I chose the topic for this study because there are few studies that examine the problem that is present in associate degree nursing programs related to ESL nursing students and high attrition rates. Additionally, there is a need for a more culturally diverse nursing community to provide care for the diverse population. Having a diverse group of nurses will directly affect the healthcare of the citizens that are culturally the same as the nurse (Beach, 2016).

I conducted a qualitative study and interviewed each participant to explore their experience in an associate degree nursing program. A quantitative study would not have allowed me to conduct interviews necessary to gather in-depth descriptions of the participants' experiences.

Jeffreys's (2015) NURS model was the conceptual framework that guided this study. The NURS model is focused on retention rather than attrition rates (Jeffreys, 2015). The NURS model provided a framework with which to identify the barriers of the

ESL students currently enrolled in the associate degree nursing program. A different theoretical framework that I considered for this study was the adult learning theory developed by Malcolm Knowles. The adult learning theory identifies six principles of adult learning and how adults learn (Cox, 2015). This theory would not have supported the purpose of this study because it posits how an adult student learns and this study was focused on factors that are barriers to learning for ESL students and strategies to success; therefore, I chose the NURS model.

I recruited participants that were ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. For inclusion in the study, the participants had to be in the second semester or higher in the program to have the experience needed to answer the study questions. Students that were in the first semester of the associate degree program, students that spoke English as a first language, and students that were not currently enrolled in the program at the time of the study were excluded. I chose students in an associate degree program instead of a BSN program or a practical nursing program because there are many extant studies regarding ESL students enrolled in both BSN programs and practical nursing programs but studies on ESL students in an associate degree program are lacking in the literature.

Limitations

One limitation of my study was an insufficient number of ESL nursing students enrolled in the associate degree program who are in the second semester or higher. Having a limited number of ESL nursing students affected the time required to collect the data for this study. The participants were from similar situations as nursing students and

shared some similar cultural backgrounds, which was consistent with their experience; the similarity of the students' backgrounds contributed to the transferability of the study results. The participants use of self-disclosure and the honesty of their answers should be considered a limitation because it was possible that the participants did not want to answer the questions honestly in fear of retaliation by faculty if faculty were informed that they had participated. I assured the students that the associate degree program faculty were not aware of their participation in the study. While exploring the experiences of ESL nursing students, the diverse learning modes of the participants were not taken into consideration, which could have also affected the bias and transferability of the data obtained.

Significance

The results of this study provided information that is needed by nurse educators when working with ESL students, focusing on the needs of the diverse students in the program. The findings of this study reveal barriers and issues experienced or perceived by the ESL nursing students, which leads to important information that is helpful to future nursing students and educators (see Beach, 2016). Additional research is needed regarding the barriers faced and overcome by ESL nursing students; there continues to be a higher rate of attrition in diverse groups within the nursing profession, while diversity in communities continues to grow (Cantwell et al., 2015).

This study contributes to positive social change by providing information to educators that assist ESL nursing students to be successful in the associate degree nursing program. An increase in retention of ESL nursing students will increase diversity in the

profession of nursing upon successful completion of the program. This study is unique because it provides information on the barriers faced and the experiences of the associate degree nursing ESL student that has overcome the barriers to be successful in the program. The study provides information on how future ESL nursing students can also overcome the barriers faced in an associate degree nursing program.

Summary

In this qualitative, phenomenological study, I investigated the experiences of ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. I used the NURS model (Jeffreys, 2015) as the conceptual framework to guide the study. The participants were recruited from a community college in the southeastern United States. The associate degree nursing program has a class enrollment of 80 students each semester with a small percentage of the students coming from an ESL background. Individual interviews were completed with each qualifying participant, and their responses were recorded for data collection. There are many barriers faced by ESL nursing students, including that they often have difficulty with the course work as well as translations of the material (Graham et al, 2016). This study provides data to help minimize the barriers and obstacles for ESL nursing students.

I conducted a review of the literature on the topic, which indicated the higher than normal attrition rates for ESL nursing students (see Zhang et al., 2018). The findings of this study provide additional information that assist educators when working with ESL students, leading to early identification of students at risk for attrition. When identifying the students who are at risk earlier in the semester, student support can be provided to

promote student success and increase retention rates for the program. This study is unique because it contributes to positive social change by providing information about how nurse educators can assist ESL students to be successful in the associate degree nursing program. In Chapter 2, I present a literature review, the databases and search engines used to locate sources for the literature review, and an in-depth explanation of the conceptual foundation for the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The demographics of the United States continue to change, and this increase in diversity creates a need for diversity within the nursing profession (Starkey, 2015). Currently, there is a shortage of nurses and an even greater shortage of ESL nurses in the United States (Starkey, 2015). In 2015, ESL nurses represented only 19% of the nursing profession in the United States (Cantwell et al., 2015), which has led to an increase in recruitment of ESL students in nursing programs. Despite the increased recruitment of ESL students, their attrition rates are as high as 85% in some nursing programs (Olson, 2012). Research has shown that the higher attrition rates are related to a lack of understanding of the lecture material by the ESL student as well as their lack of reading comprehension of the material (Olson, 2012). ESL students are also at a disadvantage when taking lecture notes in class (Starkey, 2015).

ESL nursing students experience language barriers and will often experience cultural barriers at home as well as in college contributing to a higher than normal attrition rate (Bonet & Walters, 2016). In some educational systems, such as those in Asian communities, students are taught to memorize important information, which is a stark contrast to the nursing curriculum in the United States where students must learn and then apply the information to a patient setting (Scheele, 2011).

Sailsman, Rutherford, Tovin, and Cianelli (2018) posited that ESL nursing students feel as if they are just a name on a list and that the faculty are not aware that they are ESL students if not notified by the student. ESL students believed that faculty need be

aware that ESL students may have a diverse mode of learning and challenges that other non-ESL students do not have (Sailsman et al., 2018).

There has been little research regarding the experiences of the ESL nursing students in associate degree programs. Watson (n.d.) examined the barriers experienced by ESL nursing students, but there is little research about the experience of being a nursing student with language barriers and cultural differences as it applies to associate degree programs (Olsen, 2012). The barriers and cultural differences of ESL nursing students continue to contribute to their high attrition rate seen in associate degree nursing programs. The findings of this study provide information about barriers faced by ESL nursing students and strategies they use to be successful in completion of their nursing program.

This chapter includes the literature search strategies used to locate the current studies on the topic and the data that were retrieved from the review of extant research. The search terms and search engines used are provided. I explain the conceptual foundation of the NURS model and discuss other studies where it was utilized previously. A detailed synthesis of the literature is also included in this chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

I used numerous search terms and databases to locate articles relating to this research topic. An extensive search was conducted using the following terms: *attrition in ESL students in nursing program, education and ESL students, at risk students in nursing program, global health, international students in English speaking nursing school, factors contributing to academic outcome of foreign students, improving retention of ESL*

students in nursing school, international students and adult learners in primarily English learning environment, instructional methods for ESL students, ESL students and higher education, ESL students and academic success, educators in diverse learning environment, professional development for instructor of ESL students, ESL, learning theory for ESL learners, adult learning theory, ESL students , cross cultural learning, attrition among ESL students in community college nursing program, and experiential learning. These terms were used to search the following multidisciplinary, educational, and nursing and health-related databases: ERIC, Research Complete, SAGE, ProQuest Central, CINAHL PLUS, MEDLINE, CINAHL, MEDLINE, and Ovid Nursing Journals. After using these terms in various combinations, I determined that the search results began to produce the same articles. I confirmed that full saturation had been reached once duplicate articles were the only articles that appeared in the search.

Conceptual Foundation

I used Jeffreys's (2015) NURS model as the conceptual framework to guide this study. The NURS model is globally applicable to all levels of nursing and focuses on retention rather than attrition rates (Jeffreys, 2015). In the NURS model, factors that are related to student retention and success are used to help identify at risk students enrolled in nursing programs (Jeffreys). There are many factors that may prevent the student from being successful in an associate degree nursing program and the use of the NURS model not only presents concepts that may contribute to the student's success in the program but also the issues outside of the program that may affect student success (Jeffreys; see Table 1).

Table 1

Factors of the NURS Model: Retention, Persistence, and Optimal Outcomes (Jeffreys, 2015)

Factors	Descriptions	Goals
Student profile characteristics	Age, Ethnicity and Race, Gender, Language, Prior Education	Graduate
Environmental factors	Financial Status, Family Financial Support, Emotional Support, Child Care, Employment Hours, Transportation	Successfully Passes NCLEX
Student affective factors	Cultural Values and Beliefs, Self-Efficacy, Motivation	Obtain First Job
Academic factors	Study Skills, Study Hours, Attendance, Class Schedule	
Outside surrounding factors	World, National and Local Events, Politics and Economics, Health Care System, Job Certainty	
Academic outcomes	Course Grades, Cumulative Nursing GPA, Overall GPA	
Professional integration factors	Nursing Faculty Advisement and Helpfulness, Professional Events, Encouragement by Friends in Class, Peer-mentoring Tutoring	
Psychological Outcomes	Satisfaction, Stress	

The NURS model is divided into seven areas that focus on retention of students rather than the attrition, including student profile characteristics, student affective factors, academic factors, environmental factors, academic outcomes, psychological factors, outside surrounding factors, and professional integration factors (Jeffreys, 2015). Student profile characteristics describe characteristics present before starting nursing school,

including the age of the student, ethnicity and race, gender, the language spoken at home, any prior education, the family's education background, any of the student's prior work experience, and the enrollment status (Jeffreys, 2015). Student affective factors are the student's attitudes regarding learning, their cultural beliefs, self-efficacy, and to be successful in the nursing program. Academic factors for the nursing student are related to the amount of time spent studying, their study skills, their attendance in class, and the number of hours included on the student's class schedule (Jeffreys, 2015). Environmental factors in the NURS model include factors that may interfere with the retention and success of the nursing student from outside and not related to the nursing program and schedule, including any financial burdens the student might incur, the emotional support of family and friends, childcare issues, employment hours, and any transportation issues the student may have affecting attendance in class and clinicals. Jeffreys (2015) posited that outside surrounding factors that may affect the student and their success in a nursing program may include any issues that are locally or nationally or worldwide. Political and economic issues occurring locally or globally may also affect the student's success in the nursing program. Students that must work during school and experience job uncertainty are at risk for attrition (Jeffreys, 2015). Academic factors that may affect the student's success are related to the total grade point average overall as well as the grade point average for the nursing courses (Jeffreys, 2015). Psychological outcomes for the nursing student include the amount of stress experienced and the satisfaction in the nursing program. If the stress is unsatisfactory and unmanageable, the student is at additional risk for attrition. The professional integration factors that are considered include the

interaction of the student within the college system (Jeffreys, 2015). Faculty advisement and helpfulness will contribute to the success of the nursing student, and the encouragement and assistance of fellow classmates will provide an environment for learning and success. Students active in professional organizations experience professional socialization and career development; a lack of professional integration may lead to attrition for nursing students (Jeffreys, 2015).

Several studies have used and supported Jeffreys's NURS model as a conceptual framework when studying the attrition of ESL nursing students. Pence (2011) conducted a study that used the NURS model as the conceptual framework for the study and determined that student characteristics and motivation in a nursing program affected attrition and retention both in a negative and a positive way. Schrum (2015) also completed a study using Jeffreys's NURS theory as the conceptual framework. Schrum posited that there is a relationship between the use of tutors and retention specialists to aid in the performance and retention of nursing students in an associate degree nursing program.

Donnell (2015) conducted a study that included 3,258 nursing students from 27 different universities that focused on identifying students at risk for attrition and implementing effective interventions to increase retention rates. Donnell's study supported the theory by finding that student profile characteristics included in the NURS model, such as age, ethnicity, race, gender, language, and prior education, affect academic outcomes. The study also indicated there was an association between academic factors and academic outcomes consistent with the categories listed in NURS model (see Table 1). The

association may be negative or positive, depending on the student and the characteristics (Donnell, 2015). Donnell indicated a need to identify and evaluate students at risk for attrition enrolled in a nursing program early in the semester to allow for specific interventions to be initiated.

The NURS model related to this study because I focused on the retention of nursing students in an associate degree nursing program. The NURS model aligned with the research questions that I used in my study because the questions focused on the barriers experienced by ESL nursing students and how the ESL nursing students overcame the barriers to become successful in the nursing program. My findings are useful to nursing educators to inform them about the barriers experienced by ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concept Factors That Contribute to ESL Program Completion

There are several factors that contribute to the successful completion of the associate degree nursing program. According to Jeffrey's (2015) NURS model, the characteristics that may lead an ESL nursing student to be successful in an associate degree nursing program include student profile characteristics, environmental factors, student affective factors, academic factors, outside surrounding factors, academic outcomes, professional integration factors, and psychological outcomes. I reviewed the extant literature in the field to determine additional factors contributing to an ESL nursing student success while enrolled.

Preparation for intensity of the program.

First semester ESL nursing students often underestimate the rigors of a nursing program, leading to attrition (Fontaine, 2014). Fontaine (2014) posited that setting a plan for new or incoming ESL students, including goal setting for the program, developing study strategies, creating time management goals, determining their personal responsibilities at home, and developing a plan to care for themselves while in the program, will assist them in preparing for the intensity of the program, promoting retention. Beard (2016) theorized that training educators in the needs of ESL nursing students is a plausible way to create a community of appreciation towards ESL barriers, strengths, weaknesses, and learning needs.

Grade Point Average and College Classes Completed

There are factors that affect ESL student success in a nursing program. Bosch, Doshier, and Gess-Newsome (2012) posited that the students initial grade point average was a predominant factor on student persistence. ESL nursing students with high grade point averages in prenursing science classes demonstrated a higher persistence rate than their fellow classmates with a lower grade point average in prescience classes. The total number of college credits earned in courses before entering the nursing program, the number of premath courses and the number of preprogram developmental courses were not found to be a predictor of success in the nursing program (Bosch, et al, 2012).

The ESL nursing student's ability to pass the National Council License Exam was also found to be related to a preadmission grade point average. Many nursing programs use a selective point process to admit students into the program in hopes of maintaining

persistence throughout the program. ESL students with high grade point averages will often have a higher graduation rate from nursing programs (Bosch et al, 2012).

First Generation College Student

Donnell's (2015) study examined the association between attrition, retention and ESL students in nursing program utilizing the NURS model to examine associated variables. The study assessed the predictability of attrition rates based on the student profile characteristics and whether the students were first generation college students. In this study the NURS model was modified to focus on these specific variables. The study findings indicated that there is a need to determine students at risk for attrition early in the semester to increase retention rates of ESL nursing students (Donnell, 2019).

Cultural Competence of Nursing Faculty

Nursing programs have successfully attracted and admitted diverse groups of students, unfortunately, the programs continue to see a high attrition rate with ESL students (James, 2018). Nursing faculty often feel under prepared to teach ESL nursing students, working with a diverse group of students can be challenging. James (2018) posited that there is a direct correlation between the numbers of ESL nursing students and successful graduation and the cultural competence of the nursing faculty teaching the students.

Despite efforts to retain a diverse group of nursing students, schools of nursing continue to see high attrition rates with ESL students (Ume-Nwagbo, 2012). The minority population continues to grow in the United States, but the numbers of minorities in the nursing profession has not increased. Muronda (2016) posited that there are many

benefits to increasing diversity in the nursing profession. Such benefits would be twofold; by having a greater culturally diverse group of nurses practicing, this increases the likelihood that diverse patients will receive culturally compatible care, culturally diverse nurses can also help with the advance of health policies related to the care of the diverse populations (Muronda, 2016).

Qualitative research requires questions that explore the real-life experiences of the participants and prompts the participants to explain the lived experience to enrich the researchers understanding of the phenomenon (Kross & Giust, 2019). When developing research questions for the study, the researcher narrows the focus of the study by creating questions that provide structure. To provide structure with research questions in a qualitative study, the questions should be open-ended and require additional information from the participants. The main question should be followed by a subsidiary question to provide clarification of the answers from the original question. The questions should be stated clearly, they should be relevant to the research topic and important to the study (Kross & Giust, 2019).

In my study, the research methodology used was phenomenology. My study sought to discover the lived experiences and perceptions of the participants of the study. Heidegger (1962) described phenomenology as being in the world and understanding people while perceiving their personal meanings and experiences in the world. Gulick and West (2011) posited that phenomenological qualitative research provides the participants perspective and has an increasing value in data collection for researchers. The use of phenomenology allowed me to probe and question the participants to discover

what their experiences have been while enrolled in an associate degree nursing program and how they have been able to overcome any barriers to be successful.

Summary

There is a vast problem with high attrition rates of ESL nursing students. After a thorough search of the literature, the same factors appear that contribute to the attrition; lack of faculty support and cultural awareness, financial issues, lack of family support, and responsibilities at home. Other reasons for attrition include; a lack of understanding of the rigor in nursing programs, time management, and lack of communication with faculty and in the classroom environment. Additional research related to attrition in ESL nursing students continues to be a needed. Many faculty are aware of what is needed to assist the ESL student in the nursing program, and they are willing to take their time to invest in these students to help increase diversity in the nursing profession. With continued research and knowledge, as well as application of the information, the diversity of nurses in the health care community will grow.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss the purpose of my study, why I chose to complete a phenomenological study, the conceptual framework used, the research design, and the research questions. I will discuss the role of the researcher in the study and I will also discuss the methodology used in the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the barriers experienced by ESL nursing students when enrolled in an associate degree program and how the students overcome the barriers to success. I used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to discover what experiences contribute to the retention of ESL nursing students. The goal of my study was to determine what can be done to increase the retention rate of ESL nursing students to contribute to a positive social change for the nursing profession and the healthcare community. The demographics of the United States continue to change, and these changes in the diversity of the population create a great need for an increase in diversity among the nursing profession (Starkey, 2015). The findings of this study provide information that may help increase the graduation rates of ESL students. Through a thorough review of the literature, I determined that there is an additional need for further research related to ESL nursing students in an associate degree program regarding retention. The information gleaned from this study may help assist faculty helping ESL students to be successful in the nursing program.

I used Jeffreys's (2015) NURS model as the conceptual framework for this study. The use of the NURS model helped me to focus on the retention of ESL nursing students and their success, leading to graduation and license attainment. Jeffreys suggested that there were specific factors that were related to student attrition in nursing programs. The barriers experienced by ESL students contribute to their high attrition rate, and

identifying these students early in the program can help retain the student in the nursing program (Beach, 2016).

In this chapter, I discuss the research design of the study and why I chose to use it. I provide details concerning my role as the researcher and explain the methodology of the study. The plan for recruiting participants and the process for data collection are also presented. I also discuss the data analysis plan, including the manner of data analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of barriers experienced by English as a second language students in an associate degree nursing program?

RQ2: What are the experiences of English as a second language students as they overcome barriers to be successful while in an associate degree nursing program?

The phenomenon under the study was the barriers experienced by the ESL nursing students while enrolled in an associate degree program and how they overcome those barriers to success. I used a phenomenological approach to learn more about the ESL students' experiences, perceptions, and barriers while in a nursing program. A phenomenological approach allowed for the exploration of the ESL nursing students' feelings regarding the program. Other approaches, such as a quantitative study, would not have provided the needed data to gather this information. Burkholder, Cox, and Crawford (2016) described phenomenology as an analysis of the participants' perceptions, which includes lived experiences and their own feelings about the situation or experience.

Role of the Researcher

In this study, my role as the researcher was to recruit the participants, contact the individuals to schedule a meeting to conduct the interviews, and complete the interviews. I gathered, organized, and analyzed the collected data obtained from the participants (see Burkholder et al., 2016). There were no personal or professional relationships with the participants, and I had no connection with the associate degree nursing program at the study site. Potential biases were managed by recruiting a diverse group of participants to whom I had no connection and asking all participants the same questions in a similar setting. It was important to be aware of all potential biases, my own biases, and the impact of my biases on the study. Several strategies were effective in preventing bias, including bracketing, critical review of the evidence, using a checklist such as the Critical Appraisal Skills Program checklist, and by asking for input and feedback from my dissertation chair throughout the study and during analysis of the data. Input from an outside source may have brought to light issues of bias that may not have been identified if I had not asked for input. I also had the participants review my notes to ensure accuracy (see Glick, 2017).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The population of this study included ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program in their second through fifth semester. I used purposeful sampling to select the participants from a pool of potential, ESL, associate degree, nursing students. Data were collected from 15 participants, which allowed me to

achieve my goal of an in-depth study and to obtain saturation concerning the participants' experiences (see Dawidowicz, 2016).

I assigned pseudonyms to each participant (e.g., P 1, P 2, etc.) to keep their identities confidential. Participants were recruited by posting flyers in the nursing building break rooms and hallways as permitted by the school. I asked that the potential participants contact me via e-mail if interested in being a volunteer for the study. I obtained the participants' phone numbers to allow for faster response time by both me and the participants for future contact. I established a rapport with the student once contact had been made, explained the study, and asked screening questions to ensure that the potential participants met the requirements for the study (see Appendix A). Appointments were scheduled at a neutral meeting place that was nonthreatening and comfortable for the participant to conduct the interviews (see Creswell, 2017). I met with each participant for 1 hour to complete the interviews, unless additional time was required by the participant to answer the questions. If the participant requested to break up the meeting time into 30-minute chunks and meet twice, I was available to accommodate this request.

I had a room reserved to conduct the meetings in the nursing building of the college if the participant had no preference for the location of the interviews. The study site college provided an assigned meeting space to meet with participants when needed. If the participant had a preference of a meeting place, I took that into consideration and made sure the preferred meeting place was safe and allowed me to record the interview. If the participant preferred a meeting location close to their home, I offered meeting

space at one of the satellite campuses made available to me by the college. If the participant wanted to complete the interview at the time of initial contact, I had the capability to record the phone conversation and interview with the participant's verbal consent. I also made Skype interviews available if the participants could not meet in person or if they requested a Skype interview. I provided each participant with a \$10 gift card for their time participating in the study.

If saturation had not been obtained with the sample size recruited for the study, I planned to recruit additional participants that met the criteria for the study. Data collection continued until there was not any additional new information obtained, which indicated that saturation had been obtained (see Van Rijnsoever, 2017).

Instrumentation

I was the instrument used to collect the data and for data analysis in this study. In qualitative research, there is often no additional instrument used to collect the data other than the researcher (Creswell, 2017). I audio recorded the interviews using two different recording devices to ensure that I did not lose the information provided by the participants. One recording was made with a recording application on my iPod, and the second was made with a recording device. I also took written notes during the in-person interviews to document the participants' body language, facial expressions, and hand gestures. The interview questions were semi structured, allowing for additional questions to be asked to clarify responses given by participants (see Appendix B). Semi structured interviewing is described by Rubin and Rubin (2012) as the best format to use when there may only be one chance to complete the interview and obtain the greatest amount of data.

I continued to interview participants until obtaining data saturation. Once the data were collected, I had the recordings transcribed and began to analyze the data, identifying themes and synthesizing the results from the study.

Once the interview was completed, I debriefed the participant and reviewed the information obtained throughout the interview. Through debriefing, participants approved the recording of the data obtained and notes taken. Debriefing occurs after an event, which provides the time to reflect on the experience (van den Hoogen & Meijer, 2016). If at any time the participant wanted to withdraw from the study, I planned to remove them and destroy any information obtained from their interview. I gave the participants information on how to contact me, where the completed study will be published, and instructed them to notify me with any questions related to the study. I also told participants that I would be in contact with them if additional information was needed for the study. I met with each participant once to collect all information needed, and if additional time was required to obtain data, I contacted the participant to inquire about an additional meeting time to complete the interview process.

Data Analysis Plan

According to Saldana and Omasta (2018), there is no single right way to analyze qualitative data. Throughout the data collection process, I began to analyze the information by grouping like information together. Each interview was transcribed individually. The computer software program, NVivo, was not used as planned to determine and organize codes with each transcribed interview. NVivo assists with data analysis connecting codes and concepts throughout interviews obtained after transcription

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I determined that hand coding was the best method for my study to analyze data. Hand coding was completed, then codes were sorted into categories from which themes emerged as analysis was completed.

Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility in qualitative research, multiple steps must be followed. Many phenomenological researchers have used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria, which includes four questions to determine if the information and findings were worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Following the criteria of Lincoln and Guba was vital that so I could establish credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability.

Credibility, or the truth value, must be established in a qualitative study. Credibility can be determined or established with the use of methods, such as peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and with the use of member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, I used member checking to verify that the information recorded and documented was correct with the participants. This was completed during the debriefing stage, after the interview had been completed, changing and noting any inconsistencies that the participant indicated from interview.

Confirmability in research indicates a neutrality in the study and data analysis. Having neutrality means that the findings are not based on the researcher's personal biases or motivations, the findings are based on the participants' responses (De Chesnay, 2015). To show confirmability, the researcher must document and provide an audit trail that details the raw data, data reduction, and the data analysis; this gives an accurate

depiction of the participants' responses (De Chesnay, 2015). To obtain confirmability, I maintained a journal of the activities, insights, and methodological decisions utilized.

Dependability must be demonstrated in qualitative studies. Dependability indicates that the study could be repeated and that the findings would be consistent with the original study completed. There should be enough information for replication of the study if desired (De Chesnay, 2015). To confirm dependability, I used an audit trail systematically documenting the process.

Transferability provides evidence that the study's findings are applicable to other similar situations (De Chesnay, 2015). In my study, other similar situations would be other ESL nursing students attending associate degree programs at other colleges. I provided thick descriptions using a wide range of information which assisted me in determining whether the study had transferability to readers.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures that were followed included using a qualitative research checklist, maintaining confidentiality of the participants included in the study, applying for Institutional Review Board approval from both Walden University and the college in which the study took place. The participants' identities remained confidential throughout the study and participants were told that they could withdraw their participation at any time they decide not to continue (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I assigned a pseudonym which was a number to each participant that enrolled in the study to maintain privacy.

The participants were recruited from the associate degree program at the college where I work. I did not have any direct teaching responsibilities or any direct contact with

the participants. I work in a different nursing program than the program from which I recruited the participants. I did not personally know the students, and did they know me as an employee at the college. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent to participate before the study started, I explained the study and confirmed that the participant understood what the purpose of the study was, methods, timeline and how the information will be disseminated in the future. I maintained appropriate boundaries throughout the study with participants, establishing rapport was completed, but I avoided becoming overly friendly with the participants (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The information obtained from recordings, transcribed data, and written notes were stored in a locked box within a locked file cabinet kept in my home office. The audio recorder and the iPod used in the interview were also kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. All information obtained and stored on my computer was password protected and the password was encrypted. I was the only person with access to the information obtained from the interviews stored in the file cabinet and on my computer. I will keep all information for 5 years; at that time the information will be destroyed, shredded and deleted from my computer.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I have provided details on the role of the researcher in my study explaining how I avoided biases and other ethical issues related to the study and the participants. The study was a phenomenological study to explore the participants experiences and barriers faced while enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. I explained that I was the instrument used in the study to collect data from the participants.

The participants were recruited and selected based on preselected qualifications as indicated on the selection questions and on the flyer provided.

I provided information that details the issues of trustworthiness and how those issues were addressed. All ethical concerns have been covered and addressed in Chapter 3 that could have occurred during the study as well as how the information and data were stored during the study and after the study was completed.

In Chapter 4, I provided the findings obtained from the study. The information includes: the setting that the interviews took place, the demographics of the participants, data obtained from the study, the data analysis, issues of trustworthiness and the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions and the experiences of ESL nursing students in an associate degree nursing program. I conducted this qualitative, phenomenological study to help determine what barriers to learning and success exist for ESL nursing students while increasing the understanding of how these students were able to be successful when there is such a high attrition rate among ESL nursing students. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of barriers experienced by English as a second language students in an associate degree nursing program?

RQ2: What are the experiences of English as a second language students as they overcome barriers to be successful in an associate degree program?

Chapter 4 includes the settings and demographics of the study participants. I describe the collection methods used throughout the interviews in addition to the trustworthiness of the study, the results, and a summary of the study.

Setting

I received research approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (# 09-27-19-0289342) for this phenomenological study. The sample of participants was 15 ESL nursing students. The participants were all in the second semester or higher of the associate degree nursing program. To analyze the qualitative data collected, coding of the information was completed throughout the data collection process to reveal emergent themes.

I used a semi structured interview process to gather the data from the participants. Each participant was asked open-ended questions as well as some probing questions to further understand their responses. Notes were taken throughout the interviews on the participant's responses, facial expressions, and body language. Once each interview was completed, I downloaded the audio-recorded interview to a transcription application, and the interview was thereby transcribed into a typed document. Then I uploaded the transcribed information to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which allowed for the organization of the data in the workspace, a review for accuracy, and analysis for additional themes and codes. All participants' identities were kept confidential, and each participant was assigned an anonymous name throughout the data collection, transcription, and uploading process of the transcribed interview data.

There were no personal or organizational conditions that influenced the participants or their experience throughout the interviews or any influences that affected the interpretation of the data from the study interviews.

Demographics

Fifteen students from the associate degree nursing program expressed interest in participating in the study. All 15 participants were interviewed. All participants met the inclusion criteria of obtaining a passing grade for the semester, English as their second language, and being currently enrolled in the second semester or higher in the associate degree program. The 15 participants included one male and 14 females, represented seven different countries, and spoke six different first languages. English was the second or third learned language for the participants. The countries represented by the

participants included China, Nigeria, Mexico, Japan, Philippines, Russia, and Ghana.

Table 2 shows the participants' demographic data, including age, gender, country of origin and current semester.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant #	Age	Gender	Country	Semester
1	45	Female	Japan	5th
2	23	Female	Nigeria	5th
3	35	Female	Mexico	2nd
4	34	Female	China	4th
5	29	Female	Philippines	2nd
6	44	Female	Ghana	4th
7	43	Female	Philippines	5th
8	51	Female	Philippines	3rd
9	28	Female	Russia	4th
10	44	Female	Mexico	4th
11	48	Female	Nigeria	4th
12	37	Female	Nigeria	3rd
13	37	Female	Japan	5th
14	32	Female	Russia	5th
15	28	Male	China	5th

I did not formally collect the demographic information of the participants, but each participant was asked to provide me with background information. The participants willingly shared their country of origin during the interview process.

Data Collection

I interviewed 15 participants. The interviews were completed in a reserved, private, conference space, and each interview lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour each. I conducted interviews for 4 months from September 2019 through December 2019. The participants' responses were recorded on a transcription application on an iPod and on a backup recording device. Once the face-to-face interviews were completed, I uploaded the interviews to the transcription application to be transcribed. Notes were taken on the participants' facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language throughout the interviews and after the participants completed their interview.

There were no variations in the data collection process as described in Chapter 3. During data collection, I had an unexpected delay in obtaining participants for completion of the study. I had to visit additional classrooms and post additional flyers in the nursing building of the college. Data saturation occurred with the 12th interview, but I continued to interview the remaining three participants because they had committed to the interview process and wanted to be involved with the study as a nursing student. In Interviews 13 through 15, I continued to have redundancy of the information as realized in the 12th interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began as I completed each of the interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were read and notes, codes, and definitions were written in the margins of the transcripts, numbering each code to stay organized. I also kept a record of the emerging codes in a separate file on my password-protected computer that

were numbered, which enabled me to organize the same codes identified from each participant's transcript. Saldana (2016) posited that coding is a crucial aspect of data analysis, and coding is heuristic, meaning used to discover. Reading the interviews allowed for the making of meaning from the participants' experiences, while coding helped to discover information that was similar. I listened to the audiotaped interviews while reviewing the transcribed interviews to ensure that I had accumulated all information that was critical to the study (see Polit & Beck, 2012).

The initial plan for a second cycle of coding was to use the computer software program, NVivo, but I determined that using hand coding was the most beneficial during the coding process. I was able to stay organized by making a list and with the use of a spreadsheet on my password-protected computer. Coding was completed after three cycles of coding in the same manner for each interview. To enable the transition from codes to themes, the codes were analyzed and placed into categories to help narrow down the information and identify patterns. Saldana (2016) posited that a theme reflects a pattern of significance related to the research questions. While generating themes from the categories, I looked for relationships among the categories that addressed the research questions.

The themes derived from the categories addressed the research questions on how the participants perceived the aspects that contributed to their success in the nursing program. The themes identified also enabled me to better understand what the participants perceived as requirements to success as a nursing student in an associate degree program. There were three themes that emerged from the participant interviews.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Credibility, or the truth value, must be established in a qualitative study. Credibility can be determined or established with the use of methods, such as peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and with the use of member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking is used to verify the participants' information was recorded and documented correctly. I completed this during the debriefing stage, after the interviews were completed, changing and noting any inconsistencies that the participant indicated from interview.

Confirmability

Confirmability indicates a neutrality in the study and data analysis. Having neutrality means that the findings are not based on the researcher's personal biases or motivations but that the findings are based on the participants' responses (De Chesnay, 2015). To show confirmability, the researcher must document and provide an audit trail that details the raw data, data reduction, and the data analysis, which gives an accurate depiction of the participants responses (De Chesnay, 2015). To obtain confirmability, I maintained a journal of activities, insights, and methodological decisions utilized throughout the interview process.

Dependability

Dependability must be demonstrated in qualitative studies. Dependability indicates that the study could be repeated and that the findings would be consistent with the original study completed. There should be enough information for replication of

the study if desired (De Chesnay, 2015). I used Van Manen's (1997) approach to review the interview transcripts to determine the meanings provided by participants. I also used an audit trail to systematically document the process.

Transferability

Transferability in a qualitative study provides evidence that the findings of the study are applicable to other similar situations (De Chesnay, 2015). In this study, similar situations are other ESL nursing students attending associate degree programs at other colleges. I provided thick descriptions using a wide range of information, which assisted in determining whether the study has transferability to readers.

Results

The following three themes emerged from the interview data: (a) high rigor of the nursing program, dedication is required; (b) expectations and responsibility of the student by the family; and (c) perceptions of being different from the rest of the class. In the following subsections, I provided detailed responses from the study participants related to the themes identified.

Theme 1: Perception of High Rigor of the Nursing Program, Dedication and Commitment is Required

The first theme that emerged from participant responses during the interviews was the perceptions of high rigor in the nursing program that required hours of studying outside of the classroom. All participants discussed the need for many hours of studying, which included rereading textbooks and listening to audio recordings of the lectures to assist them in being successful in the associate degree nursing program.

Participant 7 (P7) believed that coming from the Philippines with a language barrier and her age contributed to her need to study for hours. To overcome these barriers, she reread the information over and over. P7 stated,

I have noticed that, I don't know it might be the age factor or my language, that it takes a little bit more time for me, I have to reread it and reread it. And also, I have to listen very carefully, and our instructor allows us to record, so I'll listen that riding home and everything and stuff. I have to be committed to passing the program.

Participant 3 (P3) discussed the need to decrease her work hours to 4 hours per week due to the demands of up to 12 hours of studying per day so she could be successful in the nursing program, saying:

This semester, we had school Monday and Wednesday for lectures. I would get up at 6 or before 6 a.m., and I would start studying by 6:30 until I come to school which was at 10 or 10:30. And then I go home, and I would probably start studying at 6:30 p.m. until 10 or 10:30. Then on the weekend I just study because it's 10 hours, you have 10 to 12 hours a day on the weekend to study. I can only work 4 hours every 2 weeks because I have to study all the time to pass, all I focus on is passing the class.

Participant 4 (P4) stated the following:

I usually take a nap after the class because that's helping me to rest, and then get up and study 6 hours. All straight, and then I also go to study groups that really helps. If I don't study, I will not pass the test. I study and study for the class.

I only work part time; I must use my time to study.

Participant 6 (P6) reiterated the same information regarding the rigor and amount of time needed to study to be successful:

After class, I go home and I try to eat, and then I do like an hour studying content and then I take a break, like 20 minutes, and then I go for another hour and then at the end of that hour, I just study lab values or medications for 2 hours. The next day I do the same thing at least 5 days a week. I don't sleep much these days. I just go down through the module, the exemplars, medications and test and study and then reread the information two more times before the test at school. If I didn't study for all of these hours, I would not pass the course. I have to repeat the reading over and over.

Participant 12 (P12) discussed studying and still having to work while in school:

I usually study between 8 p.m. and 1 a.m. When I go back to school, I stay up till 1a.m. I usually study for like 3 or 4 hours a day. I can only study in the evening after my children are in bed, after 8. I cannot study on the weekends during the day because I must work.

Because I had to. I worked full time, but I worked weekends. I worked Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and then school is Wednesday, Thursday, I had clinical on Mondays. Sometimes rotations on Tuesdays, so... it was hard, but I had to because I need insurance.

Participant 9 (P9) emphasized the need to be committed to studying after class, clinical or lab for at least 3 hours a day to pass the test in the nursing program. P9 stated

that she had to reread all of the assigned textbook information at least three times to understand it and get with a study group for other students to explain what certain words meant in English so she could translate it into her language. Repetition was the key to her knowing the information. P9 also stated that she does hours of practice questions so that she can practice translating the questions into her native language of Russian during the class test or she will not complete the test on time or pass the course.

Participant 10 (P10) stated that she had to change her lifestyle to allow for hours of studying to pass the courses. She no longer goes out with friends, sees family on weekends or works each day. P10 is now unemployed and spends most evenings studying at the college library and completing practice questions in order to pass the course. P10 also stated that she is committed to studying, reading and listening to her lectures every day to be successful and to become a nurse. She has returned home to live with her parents to be able to go to school and study instead of working, she feels this was required for her to be successful in the program, stating “there is no other choice for me.”

Participant 1 (P1) felt the same way as other participants, hours of studying are required if English is your second language, stating “If you speak another language other than English, you must be determined and committed to succeed in the nursing program, you have to forget everything else and study all the time.” “Learn how to translate the information into your language while listening to lectures and taking test.”

Theme 2: Expectations and Responsibilities of Their Family

The second theme that was determined is the expectations and responsibility of the students family. Thirteen of the 15 participants discussed that their family had high

expectations for them because, it is their culture. Nine participants were supporting their family or have family that depends on them for many things. Completing nursing school was expected of the student. The participants stated that they had to be committed and dedicated to the nursing program to succeed and help their family by working as a nurse.

Nine participants indicated that they had to complete the nursing program, their family depended on them for the things they needed to live. Participant 4 (P4) discussed how she had to work weekends to have insurance on her children.

“It was hard, but I had to because they are in school and need insurance too, so we don't have to pay that much insurance for his school. I have to work for my family to get insurance”.

Participant 15 (P15) discussed the need to care for his parents that brought him to America from China and how they expect him to finish college.

I came from China 6 years ago, I think. No, 6.5. It took me some time to learn to English because that's pretty hard for me sometimes. Yes, I grew up in China. My hometown is a coastal city south of Beijing. It's really close. And I came here because my parents, they're here. I started with a part time job in a restaurant to help my parents, they need me to help pay. I can answer the phone for taking orders and then in the meantime I have started in school like a full three semesters. It's a total year. That's really helping me a lot actually. I now work as a CNA to help with bills in school. My family expects me to finish school so I can make more money and be a nurse. Well, because I was in college in China, I was a dental student. I was a dentist student, but I didn't graduate because I have to

move to here with my parents. So, I took like 4 years in there. It should take like 5 years. So, one year left but I don't decide to come back again.

Participants 7, 8, 12 and 13, 14 have children that they are raising while in nursing school. The participants mentioned having to provide for the children and not having someone else to rely on. P7, P8, P12, P13, P14 stated that they must pass the program to have a better life for their children and themselves. P7, P8, P12, P13, P14 continued to work when they can to provide for their children and utilize college resources to help with finances when it is available. Working affects their ability to study, therefore, they sacrifice sleep for study time and time to care for their children.

Participant 6 (P6) has two daughters that are in high school that she must take care of, therefore she works full-time while in school to support them.

So, I'm not trying to make any excuse or anything, but it's just some facts that affects, because you know in nursing you have to really focus and study. You've got to allocate all this, you know, you've got to be able to manage your time because you are not going to be successful if you don't. Time management is the best thing. I always have a calendar that I put on my binder in the front to make sure that I can look what's ahead, what's tomorrow, when's my due date. I usually don't procrastinate; I usually just get it done and get over with.

It's kind of hard when the weekend you're working to 16 hours and then you come back on Monday and you have an exam. Even though my job at my work right now, we have days that we're not really busy. I'm working at an assisted living

and also, we do respond to emergency calls on our individual cottages and stuff.

So, we have some kind of down time and you can still read.

Participant 1 talked about caring for her mom while in school and how her mom has the high expectation of her daughter finishing college and having a higher salary. P1 gets up in the morning to care for her disabled mom before school, sets everything up that she may need for the day and then goes to class all day. After class she goes home to check on her mom and then goes to work for 8 hours 4 days a week to provide for her mom and herself. Her mom relies on her for care and for help with bills in the home.

My mom needs me at home, I have to go to school and to work to make our lives better. I work in the kitchen at nursing home now, I want to be a nurse instead.

My mom is counting on me to finish school soon, then I won't work and go to school. I can make more money, take better care for my mom. Mom is alone a lot; I don't want that.

Theme 3: Perceptions of Being Different from the Rest of the Class

Twelve participants agreed that they felt different in the class from the other students and the instructors. This feeling of being different created a barrier for the participants, they were uncomfortable speaking up in class or asking questions of the instructors. The participants voiced their concern with not being understood when they asked questions in class and being laughed at by other students. The participants described how they had to resolve the feelings of being embarrassed to speak up in order to be successful in the nursing program.

Participant 15 discussed how he was embarrassed and shy to ask questions in class and to talk with patients in clinical. P15 stated “I see other students talking to their patients and instructors, but I felt that I wasn’t the same as the others. The instructors might treat me different because of my language, and they won’t understand when I ask a question in class”.

The first thing is my language at first, the first year of the first semester. But, from the time going on, I think the barrier for me is the culture. Yes, sometimes the patient, they're talking about different things and you don't understand. You understand what they talking about, but you don't know the meaning behind it. Before I was too shy to talk in class and clinical. I was afraid to talk to my nurse and the patient and the one day I walked in my instructor’s office and I told her my problem and then she told me if you focus more on the patient care more than you, that's going better to assist them so it's also better to help myself. For future students, if they speak English as their second language, I think the most important is if they want to speak up like, shy. If there are too shy, they can't talk to the teacher or patient and they cannot talk to the student so they can’t make friends in class. That's very hard to them. They're going to feel alone and if they can overcome the shy, the something like that, they will be better, I think.

Participant 4 (P4) talked about feeling different than the other students in the class because of her language barriers. She felt uncomfortable speaking up in class because others would not understand her. P4 was determined to become more comfortable asking questions so she could be successful in the nursing program.

One thing I learned was to go ahead and ask for questions anyway, before then I don't feel comfortable speaking up in class. Because feel like, oh, maybe half of them won't understand me or, you know but... over time I got more comfortable, really, I'll just go ahead and ask. If you want me to repeat myself I will. I really don't let it stress me out that probably this person doesn't understand because of my accent. Because sometimes I don't understand too because of the accents, so, that was one thing that I think I got comfortable in my own skin. Yeah, don't hesitate to speak up, don't hesitate to ask questions. If they don't understand, some people might not want to understand but it's not really your business. As long as the person you're asking or communicating with understands, you're able to communicate.

Participant 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14 all indicated that they felt different that the other students in the class because of their language barriers and different cultures. P1 and P10 discussed feeling like an outsider in the class. P2, P6, P8 talked about how it is hard to make friends when you are different from everyone else in the class. P3 and P9 voiced their experiences with other classmates ignoring them when they spoke to them because they could not understand their accents or what they were saying to them. P11 stated "the instructor would skip over me every time I had a question in class, I guess she couldn't understand me." P13 discussed issues in clinical with patients and nurses not understanding them, "other students would talk with the same patients or nurses and they would be friendly to those students but not to me."

P14 stated “my clinical instructor doesn’t like me because I am quiet, she always gives me a bad clinical evaluation and says that I don’t talk to my patients. My patients sometimes won’t talk to me or get frustrated with me because of my accent.” Twelve of the participants want to be treated the same as the other students, but they feel treated differently because of their accents and cultures in both class and clinical. The remaining 3 participants believed that they were fitting in now and had made friends to sit with in class.

Summary

In my phenomenological study, I interviewed 15 participants to get an understanding of the experiences of ESL students in an associate degree program. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure that all participants met the criteria for the study. All participants, 15, were interviewed one-on-one and recorded for transcription. All interviews were completed in a quiet, and private conference room, that was reserved on the campus of the college.

Three themes emerged from the data obtained: perception of high rigor of the nursing program, dedication and commitment is required; expectations and responsibilities of their family, and perceptions of being different from the rest of the class. Within the first theme, participants stated that the nursing program is hard for ESL students, and that ESL students must be committed and determined to be successful in the program. The participants noted how important it is to spend hours each day studying after lecture to fully understand the information and to pass the test.

The second theme to emerge is the expectations and the responsibilities of their families. The participants primarily noted that they felt pressure to be successful from their families. The expectation was to graduate and work as a Registered Nurse allowing the participants to care for the family's daily living needs. One of the participants described how she takes care of her mom and needs to be home with her more to keep her safe and help to pay bills after completing the nursing program.

The third theme was the perceptions of being different from the rest of the class. Twelve of the participants perceived themselves as different than the rest of the class because of their language barrier and their culture. The participants stated that it was difficult to make friends and ask questions because they sounded different than the others in the class. Three of the participants perceived themselves as fitting with the rest of the class and have made friends to sit with and feel comfortable in the class.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the study findings and results. Chapter 5 includes the limitations of the study, the recommendations for further research and the implications for positive social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The nursing profession continues to see a shortage of ESL nurses entering the workforce, and with the continuous growth in diverse communities within the United States, the need is at an all-time high (AACN,2019). An increase in nurse diversity is needed to help with the growing disparities in healthcare and the health outcomes of the diverse population. ESL nursing students have specific needs and challenges when enrolled in nursing school. Understanding some of the barriers faced by ESL students and how they overcome these barriers and experiences, as perceived by the student as they strive to be successful in the nursing program, may offer a means to assist future ESL nursing students in academic success.

The purpose of this study was to understand the perceptions and experiences of ESL nursing students when enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. I conducted this study to determine what barriers to learning are faced by ESL nursing students that may prevent their success and to provide information on how the participants were able to overcome the barriers to be successful in the nursing program in spite of the high attrition rate among ESL nursing students.

I employed a qualitative, phenomenological design in this study to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of barriers experienced by English as a second language students in an associate degree nursing program?

RQ2: What are the experiences of English as a second language students as they overcome barriers to be successful in an associate degree program?

Three themes emerged from data analysis and provided important information on the participants' experiences and perceptions while enrolled in the nursing program. Themes related to the first research question of the study were barriers experienced by the participants, issues with retaining and learning the information, and feelings of being different from the other nursing students as well as being treated differently by both students and faculty. Themes related to the second research question concerned student motivation for success, such as time spent studying and a desire to provide for their family and better themselves and their life by becoming a nurse. The participants discussed what was needed as a student to be successful, which included decreasing their work hours, decreasing the amount of sleep they received, and committing to long hours of studying. The participants had recommendations for future ESL nursing students, such as speaking up in class and being committed to passing the class, including long hours of studying each week and decreasing their work hours to support their goal of program completion.

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of the study findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations. The implications of the study are also explained, and final conclusions are provided.

Interpretation of the Findings

The need for ESL nurses continues to grow in the United States (Cantwell et al, 2015). Nursing program faculty are charged with providing the workforce with an

increased number of successful ESL student graduates to fill the void; however, attrition rates for ESL nursing students enrolled in associate degree nursing programs are reported to be as high as 85% in some nursing programs (Olson, 2012). Nursing faculty must look at the attrition and retention rates of their diverse student population and attempt to understand the needs of the at-risk ESL students. Faculty understanding of the barriers experienced by ESL nursing students may assist the faculty to determine strategies to assist with ESL student success when barriers include issues, such as faculty instruction, interaction, and a lack in awareness of cultural needs of the ESL student. James (2018) posited that there is a direct correlation between the numbers of ESL nursing students successfully graduating and the cultural competence of the nursing faculty teaching the students.

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of the experiences and barriers faced by ESL students when enrolled in an associate degree nursing program and may offer insights on strategies to support ESL students in their pursuit in completing the nursing program. Language barriers have been found as the most significant barrier faced by ESL nursing students, affecting communication among faculty and students, comprehension of information taught, and limiting the students' ability to communicate in the clinical setting with staff and patients (Olson, 2012). Given the importance of effective communication in the classroom, lab, and clinical settings and the effects on safe, quality nursing care, ESL nursing students are at risk for failure when communication issues are present (Rogan & Miguel, 2012)

ESL nursing students are at a disadvantage when taking lecture notes in class (Starkey, 2015). Participants revealed that they must record lectures, then spend hours at home after class transcribing the information to understand the lecture content. While the nursing curriculum is designed to require students to critically think and apply the information, some diverse cultures teach students to memorize information, which is a harsh contrast to what is required of the U.S. nursing student and contributes to attrition rates (Mulready-Shick, 2013). The participants reported that communication in the clinical setting was an issue leading to unsatisfactory evaluations for the student.

The study findings support previously reported barriers experienced by the ESL nursing student from the research of Bonet and Walters (2016). Many of the community college-enrolled ESL students must work full time, have a need for emotional support, and may be a single parent with no family support to help the student throughout the semester or when homework and study time is needed (Bonet & Walters, 2016). The community college environment is comprised of students that must travel to class each day because they do not live on campus, adding additional time away from home. The commute time each day, the preparation and planning of childcare, and the additional expense of traveling to school creates additional barriers for ESL nursing students (Bonet & Walters, 2016).

Cantwell et al. (2015) conducted a study on students from other cultures who spoke languages other than English, implementing the Nursing as an Additional Language and Culture Program pilot and found that there was an increased rate of retention when barriers, such as cultural differences, language difficulties, and

insufficient emotional support were minimized, leading to a positive learning environment (Cantwell, et al., 2015). Other factors that contribute to the attrition of ESL nursing students included age, ethnicity, gender, background, language spoken, a low GPA, and decreased placement test scores (Cantwell et al., 2015). Cantwell et al. revealed that when ESL students were provided with additional resources, such as tutoring, academic support, and study groups as well as when the instructors had a knowledge of what the ESL students needed to be successful through a needs assessment, the attrition rate decreased. The findings of the current study align with those Cantwell et al.'s because the participants indicated that when cultural differences and language barriers were removed and an inclusive positive learning environment was provided, it contributed to their success in the program.

The participants in this study shared that they felt left out and ignored in class by faculty when they would not answer their questions as well as when the other students would not talk to them. One student also indicated that when the clinical instructor gave her a bad evaluation and would not talk to her, the experience created an issue for her success in the program. These findings are in alignment with Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2009), who found discrimination among ESL nursing students created a challenge and barriers to success for the students. Discrimination leads to feelings of social exclusion, loneliness, and isolation (Chui, 2009).

The participants revealed that there was significant pressure from their family as well as from themselves to complete the program and make a better life for themselves. Some participants discussed that they still had to work while in school and had

considered dropping out of college because of financial issues or other demands from their family. These findings align with Wray, Aspland, and Barrett (2014) who found that students left nursing programs due to financial struggles and barriers related to family obligations. Financial issues may be a significant factor in a student's decision to leave the program and their ability to be successful in the program (Wray et al, 2014). The participants interviewed were able to overcome the barriers at the time of the interview by decreasing work hours and asking for help from family members.

The participants in this study expressed and demonstrated a desire to be successful, explaining that students must be committed and determined to complete the program. This determination included the commitment to study for long hours most days of the week to be successful and sacrifices have to be made to study the needed hours, such as decreasing work hours and giving up time with your family and friends in order to study. Wray et al. (2014) posited that a strong desire to be a nurse accompanied by commitment and drive have been shown to be a predominant factor that influences success in a nursing program.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited by the available diverse ESL nursing students enrolled at the research site. The participants were all enrolled in the associate degree nursing program; were in different levels of the program; and were from different geographical areas, including Nigeria, China, Mexico, Japan, Philippines, Russia, and Ghana. The interviews with participants from diverse backgrounds required me to be aware of their

different body languages, cultural habits, and other cultural and language differences that could have an impact on my understanding of the information obtained and interpreted for the study (see Brinkman & Kvale, 2015).

Recommendations

The results of this study contribute to the understanding of barriers to program success and completion experienced by ESL nursing students and support previous literature related to the barriers among ESL students. Future research should include a more diverse sample of students from different college campuses across the United States. The literature supports the experiences of the participants related to faculty and peer communication to meet the needs of the ESL nursing student and how it should be further explored. According to Graham, Phillips, Newman, and Atz (2016), nursing program faculty must address the barriers and challenges that may affect the experiences of the ESL nursing student. Future studies can include a specific portion of the curriculum to review, such as only the clinical portion or the classroom portion, to more accurately determine what areas in particular are barriers experienced by ESL nursing students. I would recommend that future studies are designed to consider different responses among different age groups of the participants included in the study.

Implications

There continues to be a great need for an increase in ESL nurses in the United States. The National League for Nursing (2018) reported that 16.2% of students enrolled in nursing programs are ESL students, which is a representation of both community

college and university level nursing programs; however, ESL nursing students often have a higher attrition rate than non-ESL nursing students, which has been reported as high as 85% in some nursing programs (Olson, 2012). ESL students that enroll in associate degree nursing programs at community colleges are often faced with barriers that students attending universities do not face (Mulready-Shick, 2013).

This study contributes to positive social change at the societal level. The implications for positive social change include a better understanding of the barriers and experiences of the ESL nursing student. Having a better understanding of the barriers and experiences of the ESL nursing student may help provide information for future ESL nursing students and nursing faculty that leads to a decrease in attrition rates among ESL nursing students. With a decreased attrition rate among ESL nursing students, healthcare communities will have an increase in diversity among nursing professionals. The Institute of Medicine (2004) reported that there is a direct link between poor health outcomes for minority patients and a lack of minority healthcare providers including ESL RNs (Metcalf & Neubrandner, 2016).

Conclusion

The findings of this study support the information found in the literature review indicating the need for a decrease in attrition with ESL nursing students to help increase the cultural diversity of the nursing profession. I designed this study to better understand the barriers and experiences of ESL nursing students enrolled in an associate degree nursing program. The data revealed the following three themes that help to better understand the ESL nursing students experience: perception of high rigor and the need

for dedication and commitment is required, expectations and responsibilities of their family, and perceptions of being different from the rest of the class. The information obtained from this study may help future ESL nursing students and nursing faculty to assist with the ESL nursing students' success. Society may benefit from an increase in diverse nurses in the workforce, leading to a decrease in healthcare disparity for the community.

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Appendix A: Screening Questions

Screening Questions

Is English your first language?

What is your first language, if English is not first?

Are you currently enrolled in the associate degree nursing program?

What semester are you currently enrolled in?

Are you in the second semester or later of the associate degree nursing program?

Are you willing to provide information to questions regarding your experience in the associate degree nursing program?

Are you currently passing the associate degree nursing program unit test?

Have you experienced barriers in the associate degree nursing program while enrolled?

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Interviews with Participants

Context of the Interviews: The interviews will take place in a pre-selected area determined by both the participants and I that is private and conducive for audio recording. Questions will be used to elicit the participants input from their experiences in the nursing program as an ESL student.

Introduction:

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study and for sharing your experiences in the associate degree nursing program, along with barriers you have experienced and overcame which has led to your success in the program.

I will be asking you several questions about your experience and barriers faced in the nursing program. If there are any other areas that you would like to discuss that I might have left out and that you feel are important, please feel free to talk about it.

Guiding Questions:

Describe your background, where are you from and what is your first language spoken at home? What is your age and race? Are you single, married or have children?

Why did you decide to enroll in nursing school?

Do you have family members that have enrolled in college and have they graduated?

Did your family encourage you to enroll in college, if so, what program did they encourage you to enroll in?

Describe your time commitment given to studying the nursing program lecture material.

Do you work while attending college, if so, is this a requirement for you and how does working impact your role as a nursing student?

What are specific barriers that you have overcome or that you anticipate you will face in the future while enrolled in the nursing program and how were you or will you be able to overcome these barriers to be successful?

What has helped you to be successful in the nursing program?

How does the faculty impact your success in the nursing program, if they do?

Have you used any of the resources provided here at the college to help overcome barriers, if so, what was your experience with the resource?