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A Motivational Profile of Nurses Who Pursue Doctoral Education

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The need for nurses to pursue doctoral education is imperative to the professionalization of the discipline of nursing in light of the changing healthcare environment. Presently, < 1% of the nursing workforce possesses a doctoral degree ("Transforming Nursing Education," 2016), albeit recommendations from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2010) admonish the need to increase the number of doctoral-prepared nurses. The need to understand characteristics of nurses who seek doctoral education is critical in planning long-term strategies for nursing education in the United States (US) (Kovner, Brewer, Katigbak, Djukic, & Fatehi, 2012). In conjunction with describing characteristics of nurses pursuing doctoral education, this research describes the motivational orientation and factors of registered nurses (RNs) pursuing doctoral education.

A nonexperimental descriptive design was utilized to examine concepts relating to motivational orientation of RNs pursuing doctoral education. Participants were divided into two categories: (a) RNs seeking the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree and (b) RNs pursuing the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. A total of 173 RNs enrolled in either a Ph.D. or DNP program in the Gulf South region of the US comprised the final sample. Binary logistic regression was utilized to analyze the motivational orientation. Results of the study indicated that participants self-identified with the motivational orientation of intrinsic motivation-to know—reflective of a self-determined motivational orientation. The second highest self-reported motivational orientation was extrinsic motivation-identified which further reflected a self-determined motivational orientation. Positive correlates included geographical locale, age, and race.

Namely, the odds of nonwhites as compared to whites were 1.857 times greater for enrollment in a Ph.D. course of study. Further results reflected the odds of someone residing in a rural area as compared to an urban area were 0.532 times less in a Ph.D. program. The odds of being in a Ph.D. program are 1.759 times greater for a 40-year-old as compared to a 39-year-old. By identifying the motivational orientation of RNs engaged in doctoral study, nurse administrators, policymakers, and educational institutions must seek innovative means to recruit RNs with a self-determined motivational orientation.

Title:

A Motivational Profile of Nurses Who Pursue Doctoral Education

Keywords:

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Abstract Summary:

An awareness of the motivational orientation and factors of RN's pursuing doctoral education provides a frame of reference for the recruitment of the next generation of nurse scholars. A descriptive correlational design was utilized to examine the concepts relating to the motivational orientation of RNs pursuing doctoral education.

Content Outline:

The need for nurses to pursue doctoral education is imperative to the professionalization of the discipline of nursing secondary to the enhanced needs within the healthcare environment. Patients of today are faced with more complex and multiple disease processes which further necessitates the need for nurses with advanced degrees. The demand for nurses educationally prepared to meet complex health needs continues to expand, thereby expanding the relevance of nursing workforce trends. Further, in some demographic regions, registered nurse supply is anticipated to outpace demand with substantial variation by state (HRSA, 2014).

The need to understand characteristics of nurses who seek doctoral education is critical in planning long-term strategies for nursing education in the United States (US) (Kovner, Brewer, Katigbak, Djukic, & Fatehi, 2012). A nonexperimental descriptive design was utilized to examine the motivational orientation and factors of nurses pursuing doctoral education.

The Academic Motivation Scale (AMS) is a survey instrument developed to measure motivation toward education. The AMS instrument is designed for college students in pursuit of general education. The instrument was revised with electronic permission granted by Vallerand et al. for RNs in pursuit of doctoral education. The survey instrument included 11 items which provided a means to obtain demographic information, with 28 Likert-type items to collect information on the motivational orientation. A total of 173 registered nurses enrolled in doctoral education responded to the survey for a response rate of 70%. Ph.D. respondents represented the highest proportion of respondents (48.28%) followed by DNP (32.18%), BSN-DNP (17.82), and BSN-PhD (3.45%). Most were female (89%), Caucasian (71%), second African Americans (19%) and between the ages of 23 and 66 years. The calculated mean age for participants was 40 years.

Key findings of the study revealed the motivational orientation of RNs pursuing a doctoral degree with the highest computed mean as 5.069, intrinsic motivation-to know. Further encouraging findings revealed a motivational orientation of extrinsic motivation-identified with a mean of 4.911 second highest. Lastly, intrinsic motivation-toward accomplishment reflected the third highest calculated mean of 4.585. Hence, RNs pursuing doctoral education were, in essence, pursuing doctoral study simply for the accomplishment and learning involved in obtaining a doctoral degree.

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Author Summary: Tomekia Lockett is a graduate of Southwest MS Community College and William Carey University where she earned an associate, bachelors and master's degrees. She completed her doctor of philosophy degree in nursing leadership at The University of Southern Mississippi. She is the recipient of a number of awards, and has presented at several scientific meetings. She enjoys her career as an Assistant Professor of Nursing at William Carey University.