



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

A conceptual framework for retention-to-graduation of nursing students in universities in South Africa

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Introduction

- The process of streamlining and restructuring healthcare system together with an increase in the migration of experienced nurses from various settings of the healthcare system has given rise to the need to graduate and retain more nursing students in Higher Education Institution's (HEIs).
- However, due to the challenges within the NEI's in South Africa and the quadruple burden of disease it seems that the realisation of the health outcomes is impracticable.
- The challenges occur at the time that many NEIs are grappling with the problem of delayed or low throughput rates and attrition in the undergraduate nursing programme.

Introduction (Cont).

- **Thus, in order to be successful in higher education, nurse educators with an obligation to increase throughput and graduation rates require specific competencies and strategies related to retention and graduation of nursing students in the undergraduate nursing programmes (Seekoe, 2013).**
- **There seems to be no models for retention of undergraduate nursing students in the Eastern Cape Province which is one of the provinces with isolated and underserved health care facilities in need of greater numbers of nursing student enrolment.**
- **Therefore, the need to develop a retention-to-graduation model for undergraduate nurses to meet the demands of the Department of health became obvious and was conceived (Motswaledi 2019).**

Aim / Objectives of the study

- Thus, the aim of the study was to develop a conceptual framework for a retention-to-graduation model for nursing students in universities in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

Research question

The research question for this study was:

- **What conceptual framework could be developed to enhance retention –to-graduation of undergraduate nursing students in the Eastern Cape, South Africa**

Definition of key Concepts

A conceptual framework:

- **Burns and Grove (2011) describe a conceptual framework as an abstract, logical structure of meanings that enable the researcher to link findings to nursing knowledge to facilitate the dialogue between the literature and the study.**
- **The conceptual framework for this study was derived from the concluding statements of factors associated with attrition, retention and graduation of nursing students in the bachelors programme and forms a meaningful structure that serves as the basis for the retention-to-graduation model.**

Definition of key Concepts

Undergraduate nursing student

- **Undergraduate nursing student is a student enrolled for a nursing programme that leads to registration by the South African Nursing Council as a general (psychiatric, community) and midwife at an accredited HEI**

Literature Review

- During the initial literature review deductive reasoning was applied to extract empirical data for further research, and from other models to guide model development (Chin & Kramer, 1995).
- After the collection of data, the phenomenon was analysed and scrutinised by inductive abstraction and generalisation.
- Inductive inferences were therefore drawn from the knowledge gained through the study of the literature to reformulate concepts and statements (Chin & Kramer, 1995).
- Burns and Grove (2005) support the notion that concept analysis is a strategy that identifies a set of characteristics that are essential for the conceptual definition of concepts.

Literature Review

- **According to Walker *et al.* (2011), concepts are the basic foundation in theory construction, which must be solid and strong to be able to uphold the structure of the theory.**
- **Concepts contain within themselves the attributes or characteristics that make them unique from other concepts.**

Methodology

Design

- **In this seminal work, the researcher employed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative, descriptive and theory generating research design to develop a conceptual framework which culminated in a model for retention-to-graduation of undergraduate nursing students at universities in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa.**
- **The quantitative approach involved the use of an exploratory factor analysis to identify essential concepts from the descriptive data for the retention-to-graduation model.**

Methodology

- **The important concepts relating to retention-to-graduation of nursing students in the undergraduate nursing programme were analysed.**
- **Essential attributes of the concepts of retention-to-graduation of nursing students were also identified.**
- **The factors are the essential attributes of the central concept of retention-to-graduation of nursing students.**
- **The identified factors for retention-to-graduation of nursing students in the undergraduate programme will be discussed according to Table 1**

Data Analysis

- **The factor analysis identified multidimensional factors for retention-to-graduation which were classified according to the context of nursing education.**
- **In this study, the concept ‘support’ has been central in enhancing retention-to- graduation of nursing students in the undergraduate programme.**

Table 1: Support as a concept in retention of nursing students

Factors	Category	Sub-category
Academic Factors	Academic support	Resources,
Physical/Physiological factors	Social support	Nursing students' characteristics
Social and psychological Factors		Professional events,
Political & Economical factors	Commitment of Stake-holders: DHET, DOH, ETQAs (SAQA, SANC)	Funding, scholarships, bursaries,
	Environment	

Methodology

- **The concepts of retention-to-graduation were integrated into the existing literature.**
- **Reasoning strategies such as deduction, induction, analysis, synthesis and derivation (Chin & Kramer, 1995) were used to develop a conceptual framework for the model.**

Data Analysis

- **After synthesis of the results the nursing student retention-to-graduation, the context of nursing education, role players, support and commitment were identified as important concepts in this study.**
- **The initial exploratory factor analysis was further conducted to identify the essential attributes of the concept retention-to-graduation.**

Data Analysis

- **To refine and clarify ambiguity and vagueness of concepts in the orientation to the study, the literature review, the conceptual framework, and the retention-to-graduation model (Creswell, 2003) concept analysis was utilised.**
- **Synthesis as a strategy was used after factor analysis to single out important factors and relationships from undergraduate nursing students' retention so as to develop an understanding that could add to theoretical developments**

Data Analysis

- **The factors emanate from various contexts and the current situation within an environment in which nursing education in South Africa exists and operates.**
- **These factors have been discussed in the literature and are pivotal around the need for support and commitment from all the role-players to enhance retention-to-graduation.**
- **Concept synthesis was used when the hidden meaning of a phenomenon of retention was sensed and interpreted.**
- **During synthesis, the researcher suspends assumptions regarding the retention phenomenon (De Vos & Meganck 2009)**

The Conceptual framework for retention -to- graduation

Academic factors

- **The SANC (Act 33 of 3005) approves all curricula pertaining to training of nursing students in all the different categories of nursing.**
- **Attendance in the undergraduate nursing programme is important for one reason: it is governed by specific national and state accreditation guidelines and a framework for attendance policies and also determines how committed the role players (students and nurse educators) are to their learning and teaching.**

The Conceptual framework for retention -to- graduation

Academic factors

- **Therefore, these attendance policies need to be strictly adhered to and be monitored by all nurse educators in the undergraduate programme as they have an impact on performance and academic achievement.**

Physical/ Physiological factors

- **Amongst the reasons cited stress of the heavy workload on the programme, the difficulty of the programme, family, the needs of dependants and lack of support have had impact on the total health status of students, (Dlungwane, 2017; Roos et al., 2016).**

The Conceptual framework for retention -to- graduation

Socio- economic factors

- **The problem of finance has been a bone of contention lately in the recent “fees must fall” campaign by the students countrywide in South Africa.**
- **Hence, there is a need for improvement in convenient accommodation, transport and financial support for students in the programme.**

The Conceptual framework for retention -to- graduation

- **According to the National Human Resource Plan for Health (South Africa, 2005), nurse educators need to develop skills in assessment, programme planning and preparing for programme reviews and they are strategically positioned to identifying the problems that impact on retention-to-graduation of nursing students (Seekoe, 2013).**
- **Therefore they have a crucial role to make sure every nursing student is supported to enhance retention-to-graduation.**

Relational statements

- **Nursing students in the undergraduate programme are challenged by among others: lack of perseverance and commitment to their learning process;**
- **Stress, due to inability to cope with the academic demands of higher education; lack of support, (academic, socio-economic); and In-ability to cope with the demands of the clinical environment has an influence on student's performance and decision to quit or stay in the programme.**

Relational statements

- **There is a need to evaluate the existing strategies for teaching and learning, among others; mentorship programmes, student counselling services and academic advising to see if they enhance retention-to-graduation of nursing students in the undergraduate programme**

Relational statements

- **Any form of education take places successfully when relationships among role-players are engaging and mutually supportive of one another.**
- **This point is substantiated by Tinto's (1993) Student Integration Model (SIM) which endorses that students who strongly identify with the institution's internal characteristics will succeed.**

Relational statements

- **Unless collaborative efforts are made, it seems that retention in undergraduate nursing programmes will always be an issue of ongoing debates.**
- **The institutional support should inculcate the values which are pillars of nursing education for both the student and academic staff.**
- **There is a need for sufficient condition conducive to improvement of student retention-to-graduation.**

Relational statements

- **There is a need for a collaborative reciprocal communication between the stakeholders in order to enhance retention-to-graduation.**
- **Retention-to-graduation is the goal of all NEIs, the students, nurse managers / practitioners and faculty within a formalised educational, practice and management system of the organisation.**
- **Good academic advising also provides the only opportunity for all students to develop a personal, consistent relationship with someone in the institution who cares about them.**

Relational statements

- **Retention-to-graduation is a relational process in which the institution, the student and nurse educators, clinical system of nursing education facilitators and preceptors / tutors / mentors are important role players within a formalised system of nursing education.**

Limitations of the study

- **The conceptual framework may have taken a different form if the sample size of the descriptive data was large.**
- **As such, future studies should endeavour to use larger sample in order to give a clear picture of the problem under investigation.**

Conclusion

- **This conceptual framework relied on the reasoning strategies of deduction, induction, analysis, synthesis and derivation; and could be used to develop the retention-to-graduation model.**
- **It could form the basis for retention of undergraduate nursing students in South Africa.**
- **Researchers could also use the conceptual framework to develop a model describing the guidelines for retention-to-graduation.**
- **Nurse educators can use the model for their specific situational context.**

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