



Associate Degree Nursing Students' Perceived Barriers to Baccalaureate Nursing Education and Intentions to Enroll in a Baccalaureate-only Nursing Environment¹

Cristan Sabio, PhD, MSN, RN^{*,2}

Department of Nursing, Oakton Community College, Des Plaines, IL

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Barriers to baccalaureate nursing education
Nontraditional students
Associate degree nursing students
BSN-only
Likelihood to enroll in nursing

ABSTRACT

Although they are known to be nontraditional, studies have not addressed Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) students' choice of the ADN route to professional nursing practice. A survey of ADN students revealed perceived barriers to baccalaureate nursing education and that up to 37% would not have enrolled if the baccalaureate had been the minimum requirement to become registered nurses. The findings could provide information for more reasoned solutions toward the goal of advancing nurses' education.

© 2018 Organization for Associate Degree Nursing. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

In 1987, the North Dakota Board of Nursing raised the educational preparation for registered nurses' (RNs) to the baccalaureate level and reduced the role of new Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) graduates to the technical level (Rose, 2006; Smith, 2009). Immediately after its implementation, RN enrollment within the state declined significantly from a high of 1385 prior to the new regulation, to 803 the following year, and to a low of 720 in 1998 (Rose, 2006). There were reports of out-migration of nursing students toward neighboring states that continued to recognize the ADN as entry-level preparation for professional nursing practice (Rose, 2006). The new educational requirements created barriers to nursing enrollment in the state. For example, Rose (2006) noted that aspiring nurses, who were older and place-bound, could not afford the time expenditure and cost of a four-year nursing degree. It appears that a significant number of students, who would have otherwise enrolled if the ADN remained a path to becoming an RN, did not enroll when baccalaureate-only entry took effect.

Although the Bachelor of Science in Nursing regulation (BSN-only) was eventually rescinded in 2003 (Rose, 2006), there is a dearth of studies regarding the barriers to baccalaureate nursing education

among ADN students. How the BSN-only regulation affected RN enrollment or how the same regulation would affect RN enrollment in current times has also never been explored. As the BSN-only issue is, once again, being thrust forward for debate (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2017; Smith, 2017), it is very important to understand the perspective of ADN students as they constitute more than half of RN enrollment and supply in this country (National Council of State Boards of Nursing [NCSBN], 2016). This study was therefore conducted to examine the ADN students' perceived barriers to baccalaureate nursing education, and whether they would have enrolled to become RNs if the baccalaureate degree had been the minimum requirement for professional nursing practice. The results of this study could inform the regulatory bodies, administrators, and educators alike as they continue to improve and fashion the educational preparations for the nursing profession.

Background

The ADN Demographic versus the BSN Demographic

Due to an acute shortage of nurses, ADN programs developed in the 1950s as an alternative to the restrictive and prohibitive Diploma and BSN programs offered at the time (Andrist, Nicholas, & Wolf, 2006; Mahaffey, 2002). Diploma nursing programs were essentially boarding schools with strict admission requirements for single, young females willing to live in and study at the hospital (Orsolini-Hain & Waters, 2009). BSN programs, on the other hand, took longer, were costlier, and required the student to travel farther from home.

¹ Data were from the author's dissertation study, entitled, "Would You Have Enrolled?: Decision Factors in Baccalaureate-Only Nursing among Associate Degree Nursing Students." Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +847 987 8105, +815 753 1210.

E-mail address: csabio@niu.edu

² Cristan Sabio is now at the School of Nursing, Northern Illinois University.

Because ADN programs in community colleges charged a lot less, took only two years to complete, and were situated right within communities, they attracted those students considered nontraditional at the time, namely older, minorities, men, single parents, married women who were ineligible for diploma nursing, and those of modest means who could not afford university education (Orsolini-Hain & Waters, 2009). Over time, the ADN route, due to its accessibility and affordability, became the most popular route to nursing, accounting for as much as 60% of the RN supply since the 1980s (Andrist et al., 2006; Buerhaus, Auerbach, & Staiger, 2016; Mahaffey, 2002).

Today's ADN students are comparable to the ADN students of the 1950's in that they are older, more likely to have dependents, self-supporting, working, and of modest means. For instance, 42% of ADN students are 30 years of age or older compared to only 14% among BSN students (National League for Nursing [NLN], 2014). Only 37% of ADN students are 25 years of age or younger compared to 75% of BSN students (NLN, 2016). The average age of ADNs upon graduation is 33.1 years compared to 27.5 years for BSNs (USDHHS, 2010). Community college students are also more likely to have children (30% versus 14%) compared to four-year college students (Fishman, 2015). As well, 60% of community college students are financially independent of their parents compared to 36% of four-year institution students (Ma & Baum, 2016). As a result, one-third of community college students work full time compared to about one out of five of four-year students (Arbeit & Horn, 2017; Ma & Baum, 2016). Moreover, adults over the age of 25 who return to school after spending time in the workforce choose the community college system at a higher rate over four-year institutions, and they are more likely to be older, married, have children, and working more hours (Soares, Gagliardi, & Nellum, 2017). A higher proportion of community college students also hail from low income families with 50% at the lowest income level (<\$30,000/year) compared to 37% among four year students (Fishman, 2015).

The National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (2002) defines nontraditional students as those that have at least one of the following characteristics: (a) have not entered college immediately after high school, (b) are part-time students, (c) work at least 35 hours a week, (d) are financially independent of parents, (e) have dependents other than a spouse, (f) are single parents, or (g) have no high school diploma. As far as institutions of higher education are concerned however, nontraditional students are those who are 25 years of age or older (Cross, 1981; NCES, n.d.). Essentially, age "acts as a surrogate variable that captures a large, heterogeneous population of adult students who often have family and work responsibilities as well as other life circumstances that can interfere with successful completion of educational objectives" (NCES, para 1, n. d.). Those who are married and/or are the head of a household are also considered nontraditional (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). In contrast, traditional students are those full-time students who are 18 to 24 years old and financially dependent on family (Cross, 1981; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; NCES, 2002). Considering these delineations, ADN students are therefore overwhelmingly non-traditional compared to BSN students.

Nontraditional Students Less Likely to Enroll in the BSN Program

The fact that ADN students are predominantly nontraditional compared to BSN students is significant, because it helps explain their choice of the ADN program to enter nursing. A study based on data from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses has shown that personal circumstances such as age and family responsibilities are important determinants of educational choice in nursing (Spetz, 2002). According to the study, prospective nurses who are married and have children are more likely to choose the ADN route. Further, for each year of age, an aspiring nurse is 1.5 percentage

points less likely to seek the BSN. Hence, the figures, showing that ADN students are much older than BSN students.

The Economic Advantages of the ADN Program

The primary reason for nontraditional students' preference toward the ADN route may be economic. In a survey of ADN students in Illinois ($N = 2920$), researchers asked the students why they chose the ADN program to become nurses (Jezuit & Luna, 2013). The reasons given were lower cost, the program's convenient location, and shorter completion time.

There is a huge gap between the costs of an ADN program compared to a BSN program. The annual cost (tuition and fees) of an associate degree at a community college is less than half that of a baccalaureate degree at four-year public colleges and universities, and one tenth that of private four-year institutions (College Board, 2013; NCES, 2008). Additionally, community colleges are geographically accessible, eliminating the need for most students to room and board, which typically costs \$5000–\$9000 a year (College Board, 2013). Since it takes two to three years to complete the ADN program compared to four years for a BSN, the total cost of ADN education is further reduced compared to the BSN.

Moreover, although BSN wages are generally higher than those of ADNs (Auerbach, Buerhaus, & Staiger, 2015; Budden, 2015; Spetz & Bates, 2013) there is inconsistency in wage differentials between BSN and ADN graduates among employers (Chu, Spetz, & Bates, 2017; Graf, 2006; Lowry, 1992; Megginson, 2008; Pittman et al., 2013) with only 25% providing pay differentials for a BSN degree (Pittman et al., 2013). The ADN program also allows quicker entry to the labor market. After taking into consideration the cost of education and lifetime earnings, studies have shown that the ADN route is more economically advantageous compared to the BSN (Graf, 2006; Lowry, 1992; Spetz, 2002; Spetz & Bates, 2013). It is no coincidence therefore, that the ADN program has become the most popular pathway toward becoming an RN, especially among nontraditional students.

The Advantages of a BSN Degree

The BSN degree does provide certain advantages to prospective students, however. Spetz and Bates (2013, p. 1872) calculated that if an ADN program actually requires three years of full time study, the BSN may be a better investment in the long run compared to the ADN. Additionally, if ADN graduates continue on to obtain a BSN degree, their expected lifetime earnings will be greater, especially if they complete their BSN within 5 years of graduation (Spetz & Bates, 2013). There is also a preference among employers for hiring BSNs over ADNs (Feeg & Mancino, 2017), particularly in the hospital setting (Auerbach et al., 2015; Shen, Peltzer, Teel, & Pierce, 2015) — likely, a result of the Institute of Medicine's call for a more highly educated nursing workforce (Auerbach et al., 2015; Pittman et al., 2013). BSN graduates are therefore getting hired at a higher rate (92%) than ADNs (84%) four to six months after graduation (Feeg & Mancino, 2017), and, although overall unemployment rates are extremely low for both groups at less than 2%, the unemployment rate for BSNs is lower compared to ADNs (Auerbach et al., 2015).

Professionally, a BSN degree also positions a nurse more easily for promotion into managerial and leadership positions (Buhr, 2010; Shen et al., 2015; Spetz & Bates, 2013) and, educationally, toward advanced practice and faculty positions (Shen et al., 2015; Spetz & Bates, 2013). These factors, along with employer preference for BSNs, may have driven the very strong recent growth in ADN-BSN completions and a steady increase in entry-level BSN graduates (Buerhaus et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2015).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11025641>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11025641>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)