The Relationship Between Nursing Student Test-Taking Motivation and the Exit Examination Score

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A primary objective of nursing programs includes nursing student first-time success on the NCLEX-RN®. As the nursing shortage continues, it is essential to have qualified nursing graduates pass the NCLEX-RN®. One approach nursing programs have chosen to assist with identifying nursing students' probability of success on the NCLEX-RN® includes the administration of an exit examination. This exit examination which is part of a standardized comprehensive assessment and review program, is an examination that mimics the NCLEX-RN® blueprint. Although this examination is predictive of NCLEX-RN® probability of success, it does not identify whether nursing students were motivated to do well on this test. Furthermore, no studies have been conducted to examine if nursing students were motivated while taking this examination.

Studies reveal that test-taking motivation has a role in test performance. When higher levels of test-taking motivation were identified, higher scores on standardized examinations were more likely to occur (Cole & Bergin, 2005; Liu, Bridgeman, & Adler, 2012; Tella, 2007; Wise & De Mars, 2005). Thus, this correlational study investigated if a relationship between nursing students' test-taking motivation and exit examination score exists.

A quantitative, descriptive correlational design was used in four nursing programs to assess nursing students' test-taking motivation when taking the exit examination. This study used a 10-item questionnaire to examine the motivational concepts of effort and importance on the exit examination. Data were collected from four cohorts of nursing students required to take an exit examination at the end of their nursing programs (n=150). The numerical data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis.

Using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (5), the study revealed that a moderate correlation existed between nursing students' Total Motivation Score and exit examination score (r=.311, n=150, p<.001). Further statistical analysis revealed that nursing students' perceived effort on the exit examination moderately correlated with higher exit examination scores (r=.350, n=150, p<.001). A small correlation was revealed between nursing students' perception of the importance of the exit examination and their exit examination score (r=.198, n=150, p =.015).

The study's findings emphasize the role that test-taking motivation plays in identifying preparedness for the NCLEX-RN®. The implications of this study may be used by nurse educators when determining whether a student should be encouraged to complete remediation before taking the NCLEX-RN®. Future studies should examine specific motivational factors that influence test-taking motivation in nursing students.

Title:
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Abstract Summary:

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship between nursing student test-taking motivation and exit examination score exists. The results of this study offer nurse educators and nursing programs insight regarding nursing student preparedness for the NCLEX-RN®.

Content Outline:
Introduction

1. A primary objective of nursing programs and nursing students is to pass the NCLEX-RN® on the first attempt.
2. The use of an exit examination as a criterion for progression and remediation policies has been a trend in some nursing programs to enhance NCLEX-RN® first attempt success.

Body

1. Main Point #1:

   The use of an exit examination has become a high-stakes situation for many nursing students.

   Supporting point # 1:

   According to the NLN Vision: Fair Testing Imperative in Nursing Education (2012), one-third of nursing programs require a benchmark score to progress, 20 % require students to meet the benchmark score to graduate, and 12% will not send information to the State Boards of Nursing for the student to be eligible to take the NCLEX-RN®.

   a. Some high-stakes for nursing students that do not attain the benchmark score on the exit examination may include the inability to graduate and a delay or inability take the NCLEX-RN® (Heroff, 2009; Morrison, Free, & Newman, 2002; Spurlock, 2006; Spurlock & Hanks, 2004).

   b.High-stakes for nurse educators regarding exit examination scores that do not meet the benchmark score may include increased workload for tutoring and remediation of content weaknesses, increased effort to assist nursing students with NCLEX-RN® preparation, and the concern for the integrity of the nursing program's first time NCLEX-RN ® pass rates.

2. Main point #2:

Some nursing programs, on the other hand, have chosen to administer the exit examination with no

consequences associated with the students' results (low-stakes).

   Supporting Point #1:

 If a student is not motivated to do well on the exit examination, it may not reflect the students' true knowledge and preparedness for NCLEX-RN®.

Supporting Point #2:

Therefore, it is necessary to identify nursing students' test-taking motivation on the exit examination to interpret the nursing students' scores accurately.

Main Point #3:

Test-taking motivation plays a significant role when interpreting standardized test results (Barry, Horst, Finney, Brown, & Kopp, 2010).

Supporting point #1:

Lack of test-taking motivation may not reflect the student's achievement level or knowledge retention (Sundre, 2000).

Supporting Point #2:

Understanding a student's level of motivation is essential to make valid assumptions regarding the student's performance. A lack of motivation by the student, may not reflect the student's knowledge acquisition and abilities accurately (Barry, Horst, Finney, Brown, and Kopp, 2010; Wise & DeMars, 2005; Zerpa, Hachey, Barneveld, & Simon, 2011).

Conclusion

1. Results of this study did demonstrate a medium positive correlation between Total Motivation and Exit Examination Scores. However, there were no difference in self-reported levels of motivation between high-stakes and low-stakes groups.
2. Further results revealed that there were significant differences between high-stakes (*M*=86.20, *SD*=12.32) and low-stakes groups' *(M*=61.43, *SD*= 28.23; t (13.5) =3.25, *p*=.006) exit examination scores.
3. Results of this study provide nurse educators and nursing programs with a foundational knowledge regarding nursing student test-taking motivation and exit examination score.

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