

Challenges in the Nursing Admission Program among Senior High School Students

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Abstract:- The great need for increasing the enrolled number of nursing students made this qualitative study dig deeper into the current admission policies. Nursing is one of the most in-demand healthcare programs coveted by many senior high school graduates. However, the rising issue today is the difficulty in getting admitted to Nursing programs. With the objective to elucidate the career path of senior high school graduates who aspire to pursue a career in Nursing, this study aimed to explore challenges faced by senior high school graduates related to nursing program admission at Western Mindanao State University (WMSU). A quantitative research approach employing a phenomenological research design was used in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select participants according to the aims of the research. From the result, it can be deduced that the main hurdle in nursing program admission is the strict qualifying criteria set by Western Mindanao State University, College of Nursing. As compared to other course programs being offered by the institution, the BS Nursing program required SHS students to have a higher college entrance test mark (90%) and a Nursing Aptitude Test mark of 95%. Moreover, a quota size of only 200 students is admitted among the qualifiers. Other concerns such as financial matters, peer pressure, and family influence also add to the challenges in admission to the nursing program among senior high school graduates. Thus, the study concluded its findings with a clear recommendation for nursing school administration to revisit their current admission policies, without compromising its standard of education. Senior high schools may consider enhancing their career guidance program to include a review of test exam strategies for desired career programs.

Keywords:- Challenges, College Admission, Nursing Program, Senior High School.

I. INTRODUCTION

Students' career success can be best attained if the right college program, suited to their interests and intellect, serves as their guide in choosing the course they are to take in college. However, admission to a college program requires more than the passion and interest of students. Above all, it entails tougher academic work than most people think, and the route to get there is challenging. Nursing education, in particular, is a rigorous and demanding process that prepares individuals to

provide quality care to patients. It involves a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on clinical experience, which equips students with the knowledge and skills necessary to become competent and compassionate nurses. Nursing is a profession that requires a strong commitment to patient care and a willingness to work in a fast-paced and challenging environment (Abou, 2018). Nurses must possess excellent communication skills, critical thinking abilities, and the ability to work well under pressure. These are some of the reasons why the nursing program requires a higher standard of college admission.

A student admission policy has been implemented for many nursing colleges and universities to standardize their educational ranking level. These high criteria set by academic institutions have posed a major challenge in the recruitment process of prospective nursing students among senior high school graduates. Nursing program requires students to have a strong academic background, including high grades in science and math courses. This can be a challenge for students who struggle in these areas. This program is highly competitive, and the number of seats available is limited. This means that even highly qualified students may not be admitted due to the limited number of slots. Moreover, Nursing programs can be expensive, and many students struggle to pay for tuition, books, and other expenses. This can be a significant barrier to admission for some students.

Western Mindanao State University is the only state university in Region IX, Philippines, that offers a nursing program for senior high school graduates in and around the Zamboanga Peninsula and nearby provinces. However, getting into nursing school can pose many challenges. The admission policy for its nursing program requires senior high school graduates to obtain a College Entrance Test (CET) of 90% and a Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT) of 95%. These exams can be challenging and require extensive preparation. There is also a limited number of slots and even highly qualified students may not be admitted once all available slots are filled up.

The need for these qualifying requirements for college admission is supported by the 1987 Philippine Constitution. In order to protect the academic freedom of the citizen and also safeguard the quality of education, Article XIV, section 5, paragraph 3 of the 1987 Constitution, enunciates that "Every citizen has the right to select a profession or course of study,

subject to fair, reasonable and equitable admission and academic requirements (Cruz, 2018).

According to the studies conducted by Wollin (2011), which conclude that students' entrance GPA scores and qualifying nursing aptitude tests have a significant association with their academic and social progress at nursing colleges. The study claimed that the students with the initial potential to study nursing were motivated to achieve high marks at the college. In addition, they were able to build up strong social connections, academic networks, and self-confidence to debate their subjects' marks in college. In a 2012 study conducted by Bosch, Doshier & Newsome, it was concluded that students with higher GPAs were more competent. And were able to pass the standardized exit nursing exam (NCLEX-RN) smoothly whereas those with lower GPAs had been faced with significant problems in passing the same exam.

Among the many course programs being offered in college, Nursing is one of the most in-demand healthcare programs coveted by many senior high school graduates. However, the rising issue today is the difficulty in getting admitted to Nursing programs, hence, this inspired the researcher to embark on the study. The great need for increasing the enrolled number of nursing students made this qualitative study dig deeper into the current Nursing admission policies.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

This study was designed to explore challenges in admission to the nursing program among senior high school students.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following problems:

- What are the challenges in admission to the nursing program currently faced by senior high school students?
- What are the preparations made by senior high school students to overcome these challenges?
- What strategies can be recommended to help senior high school students address these challenges?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research utilizing a phenomenological research design. phenomenological research is used to determine and describe what an experience means to those who have lived it (Creswell, 2012). Since phenomenological research is geared toward giving voice to the experience being described, a phenomenological research design was the most suitable to address specific research problems on the challenges in admission to the nursing program among senior high school graduates.

A non-probability purposive sampling design was used for the study to identify 10 senior high school graduates who wanted to take up nursing at Western Mindanao State University. The research chose the participants because of

their lived experiences. The design was also chosen because the researcher wanted to develop a rich and dense description of experiences of the challenges of senior high school graduates in the transition to tertiary education. The purposive design provides cases for in-depth study.

A focus group interview using open-ended questions was conducted with participants. Group interviews have been recommended to test people's attitudes and opinions about their learning styles (Creswell, 2012). Group interviews are considered the best method to collect unlimited responses from senior high school graduates, as they motivate the students to talk by providing a freely unrestricted atmosphere (Diefenbeck, Michalec & Alexander, 2016). Afterward, multistep coding or theming processes were used to analyze the collected data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña 2014). A pilot study took place with a small group of students to guarantee the validity of the questions and used a trial meeting to edit the prepared questionnaire.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study collected the data through a pre-piloted open-ended questionnaire throughout a planned focus group interview. All participants had a clear orientation to the research study's purpose and objectives. A stress-free environment has been provided for the students by informing them that this research is voluntary and confidential and their identity will remain anonymous. After the collected data were coded and analyzed, the following common themes were noted in the challenges experienced by the senior high school students regarding the nursing admission program:

A. Problem 1. What are the challenges in admission to the nursing program currently faced by senior high school graduates?

➤ *Theme 1. High Standard Admission Requirements*

The students had clear doubts about not having a guaranteed chance to study nursing because of the many challenges in the admission policy due to high composite scores of the College Entrance Test (CET) of 90% and the Nursing Aptitude Test (NAT) of 95%. Students specifically found it more challenging to land in the 200 quota criteria for admitting nursing students. However, some of the students were fine with the admission policy as they found it fair to have such requirements to keep the standards within the nursing profession. For instance, one student said, "The admission policy is fair as it is based on clear quality standards". While the majority of the students replied that the admission policy is "not fair and it has many challenges and limitations". Moreover, others said, "The admission policy required more than our abilities after graduating from senior high school". It is not surprising that most of the students were against the idea of the admission policy of accepting nursing students based on their school cumulative scores of the CET and NAT, as it was not reflective of their passion for the

profession. They felt that the admission policy was limiting students' chances to join the nursing college. They argued that their results assessed only one aspect of their personality.

➤ *Theme 2. Financial Aspects*

The financial aspect also posed a challenge for senior high school students who aspire to enroll in nursing. Some students are hesitant to pursue their dream to become a nurse because of the higher financial expenses the course entails. While it is true that government schools provide free tuition fees to their students, the nursing program requires affiliation with different training hospitals for related learning experiences to take place. This necessitates an affiliation fee which is not included in the free tuition fee and, therefore, must be personally shouldered by the student. According to some students the affiliation fee, together with other expenses for school materials needed by beginning student nurses can take its toll on average-income families. However, some students who are determined to proceed in taking nursing said that there are also scholarships being offered by the government as well as by private entities for deserving students.

➤ *Theme 3. Previous Senior High School Strand*

Adding to this discussion is the choice of senior high school strand they made as preparation for college. The majority of the participants agreed that type of senior high school strand chosen by students plays a significant role in their transition to tertiary education. Most of them agreed that it is more difficult to get admitted to the desired college program if the senior high school strand of the student is not aligned with the college course. They were unanimous in saying that the skills they learned in senior high school will be very helpful, specifically, in the career path they plan to embark on. However, some participants said that their SHS track was not significant to their present program choice. Nonetheless, everybody agreed that the 2 years in senior high made them more mature in life.

➤ *Theme 4. Family Influence*

Lastly, participants also identified that family preference also posed a challenge among senior high school in their career choice. Some of the participants verbalized that their parents are apprehensive about letting them take up nursing for fear of hospital exposure, especially during the time of the pandemic. According to one participant, her parents were afraid that she may acquire diseases if she will be assigned to hospitals.

B. Problem 2. What are the preparations made by senior high school graduates to overcome these challenges?

➤ *Theme 1. Vertical alignment of senior high school strands and college program choice*

The research revealed that the majority of the participants who wanted to pursue Nursing as a career program enrolled in the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

senior high school strand in preparation for college courses in nursing and other allied sciences. The strand of students in senior high school influences their academic self-regulated learning and academic performance. Students' stranding in senior high school has prepared them for a better transition in college especially in the nursing program. Students who are graduates of the academic STEM strand from senior high school appear to be more prepared to take up the nursing course, are better able to cope with the demands of the course, and are likely to excel in nursing school.

➤ *Theme 2. Self-review preparation*

Most of the participants agreed that they need to be prepared for the examinations in order to qualify for the Nursing program. They also have to pass the exams with high marks to get a slot in the nursing program. Most participants are unanimous in saying that in order to prepare for the College Entrance Test and the Nursing Aptitude Test, they need to be self-reliant in their review since their senior high schools do offer review classes and private review centers are expensive. Some participants verbalized that it takes discipline to cope with the self-review because of other school priorities. Others needed to be resourceful to get good review materials.

C. Problem 3. What strategies can be recommended to help senior high school graduates to address these challenges?

➤ *Theme 1. Review support from senior high school administration*

All participants agreed that senior high school faculty and administration should help aspiring students in examination review to better prepare them for the challenges and rigors of the college entrance and Nursing examinations, to better ensure their chances of getting a slot in the college program of choice. They suggest that school administration should conduct review coaching to help reinforce their knowledge prior to the actual exam.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The great need for increasing the enrolled number of nursing students made this qualitative study dig deeper into the current admission policies. After the investigations, the study found four challenges that limit the admission of senior high school to nursing programs. These are high-standard admission requirements, financial aspects, senior high school strands, and family influence. Among the four mentioned, the primary challenge is the high-standard admission requirements which entail high test result scores for the Nursing admission program as well as the quota slots set by the university for Nursing. The study concludes its findings with a clear recommendation for nursing school administration to revisit their current admission policies, without compromising its standard of education. A previous study conducted in the United States supports this recommendation. The study showed that students general percentage average (GPA) test had a great effect on students' academic success (Sawyer,

2013). However, nursing schools should also consider the desperate need to produce more nurses within local and global communities. The researcher recommends that recruiting nursing students must be based on their passion for the career in addition to having good GPA scores. Moreover, the research suggests that senior high school faculty and administration should provide appropriate career guidance for graduating senior high school students. It is also strongly recommended, that senior high school faculty and administration should facilitate review and test strategy coaching for senior high school graduating classes to better equip them for the challenges of college program admission.

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