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Factors influencing students' choice of nursing as a career

Most nurses in senior positions in all fields of nursing are nearing retirement age. The latter pose a concern because the number of school leavers currently entering the profession will not be able to replace the volume of staff due to retire in the near future. The researcher's perception is reiterated by the South African Nursing Council (2011) statistics that reflect that nursing has not been attracting sufficient young entrants to maintain the profession (<http://www.sanc.co.za/stats.htm>). When interacting with school leavers at different levels it appeared as if young people do not consider nursing as a career option. Therefore the purpose of this study was to explore and describe the factors influencing students' choice of nursing as a career. A quantitative, exploratory and descriptive design was used to conduct this study. Ten senior secondary schools in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, participated in this study and 500 Grade nine learners who were randomly selected completed structured questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data. Strategies were implemented to ensure quality research and that ethical principles were adhered to throughout the study.

The response rate for this study was 81.4% (n=407). The main findings revealed that 51% (n=407) of the participants indicated an interest in nursing as a career. Having a relative in nursing did not influence the learners' choice in selecting nursing as a career. There was no significant difference $p=.538$ among participants who had a relative who was a nurse and those who did not have a relative as a nurse when it came to the choice of nursing as a career. The three main factors highlighted for wanting to do nursing were to make a difference in people's lives, service provided by nurses are equally important as the doctors and there are a variety of areas in which nurse could specialise. The main factors highlighted with regard to why learners do not pursue a career in nursing, were because nurses work very hard and have to obey the doctors. The findings of this study contributed towards the development of guidelines for a marketing strategy that could be used by nursing education institutions for attracting young learners to the profession of nursing.

Biography

Esmeralda Ricks obtained her DCur Degree from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa. She is an Associate Professor and has published more than 20 papers in reputed journals. She has also written a number of book chapters. She is a reviewer for a number of peer reviewed journals. Her speciality areas include, Community Nursing Science and Primary Health Care.

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