

An Analysis of Bachelor of Science Nursing Students' Attitudes on Nursing Profession at the end of their Basic Training: Case of Public Universities, Kenyan.

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ABSTRACT

Background information: Attitudes are learned predispositions to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object. Thus they cannot be observed directly. Their dimension on a particular aspect determines the end result of that activity. Nurses are responsible for caring for patients and are directly involved in decisions regarding a patient's care. Nurse's attitudes are also influential on other health care providers. Today's nursing students and future nurses make up the backbone of the health care forces in every country and a positive attitude is essential in provision of health care services. **Methodology and objective** This study investigated the attitude of BScN as they finish their training. Study subjects involved 46 final year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) students, randomly selected from purposefully selected Kenyan public universities which included, Kenyatta University, Moi University and University of Nairobi. Data was collected using self administered questionnaire and attitude scales. Statistical package of social studies version 17 was used for data analysis. **Results and discussions:** Most respondents had a positive attitude toward the nursing profession because their main reason for joining nurse training was to help and care for the sick (70%). This was supported by the fact that 45.7 % of them viewed nursing as a noble profession. However, 52.2% of the respondents had not made a definite choice to remain in the nursing profession. This was mainly associated to lack of recognition for the work performed by nurses and poor financial motivation. **Conclusions and recommendations:** Majority of the nursing students have a positive attitude toward the nursing profession but certain aspects in this noble profession tend to diminish the proportion of those who would like to take it up as a lifelong career. Therefore, effort to motivate nurses financially, improve the working schedules and recognize the work done by the nurses should be encouraged in order to increase the number of the students who would prefer to remain in the nursing profession in future.

Key words: Bachelor of Science Nursing Students, Attitudes on Nursing Profession, Public Universities in Kenya.

1.0 Background information

A *nurse* is defined as, "A person formally educated in the care of the sick or with disability". Currently, nursing is the largest healthcare profession, with 2.6 million registered nurses (RNs), and many more needed in the future. Nurses are the largest single component of any hospital staff the primary providers of hospital patient care and, they deliver most of the nation's nursing health care. They work in a variety of other settings (Boswel C and Cannon S. 2011).

Student nurses undergo various experiences during training in order to produce a competent nurse. These include both curriculum stipulated and extracurricular activities. However, certain studies have indicated that a great number of BscN graduates do not want to practice the actual nursing (hands on practice) (Brinda F, 2008). This is a great concern because a lot of efforts and resources go along with their training. Besides, despite the increase of the number of students being enrolled in the training institutions, the shortage of bed side nursing personnel has persistent in most of the Public institutions (Sherwood, G & Drenkard, K. 2007). This study aimed at analyzing attitudes of nursing students at the at the end of their training in an effort to in determine the impact of BScN curriculum on the perceptions and attitudes towards the nursing profession in order to recommend improvement for the weak areas and reinforce the good areas.

1.1 Materials and methods

1.2 Research design A descriptive cross-sectional design was used. The main study institutions were Kenyan Nurse training public universities namely University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University and Moi University. These study sites were purposely chosen and stratified random sampling technique was done to get nurse students as the respondents. 46 final/fourth year BScN students were selected as study participants. Data was also collected from three key informants and also from the student respondents three focus groups discussions were conducted.

1.3 The Research Instruments

The study instruments comprised of structured questionnaire, Attitude scales, focus group discussions guides and key informant interviews. Validity and reliability: Construct and content validity of the instruments were supported by literature and guided by research objectives. The instruments were pre-tested at Kenya Methodist University. Appropriate corrections were made in order to make them more valid and reliable using reliability index of 0.8.

1.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis was done using the SPSS version 17. The questionnaire was coded, entered in the SPSS data dictionary and analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics. Variation of responses among graduates from first and fourth years were analyzed by the use of Kruskal-Wallis test. Variations between two respondent groups were analyzed by The Mann-Whitney test while categorical values were analyzed by (Chi-square). Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney tests were used in analyzing skewed data.

Qualitative data from focus group interviews was analyzed thematically and clear narratives were developed. The results were presented descriptively and by percentages, graphs, pie charts, and tables.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

Approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Institutional Research Ethics Committee (IREC) of Nairobi University. Informed consent was obtained from the subjects. The questionnaires were anonymous while the focus groups participants were not identified to protect their identity.

2.0 Results

2.1 Socio demographic characteristics of the study respondents

Majority of the student respondents were from Kenyatta University 12 (26%) . Out of the 46 respondents 14 (30%) were from Moi University while 20 (43.5%) were from University of Nairobi. Most of these student respondents (56.5 %) were regular (Government sponsored) students while 43.5% of the respondents were parallel (self-sponsored) students. More still most of the students were in 21-23 years age group (80.4%). Only 19.5 % of the students were aged above 24 years.

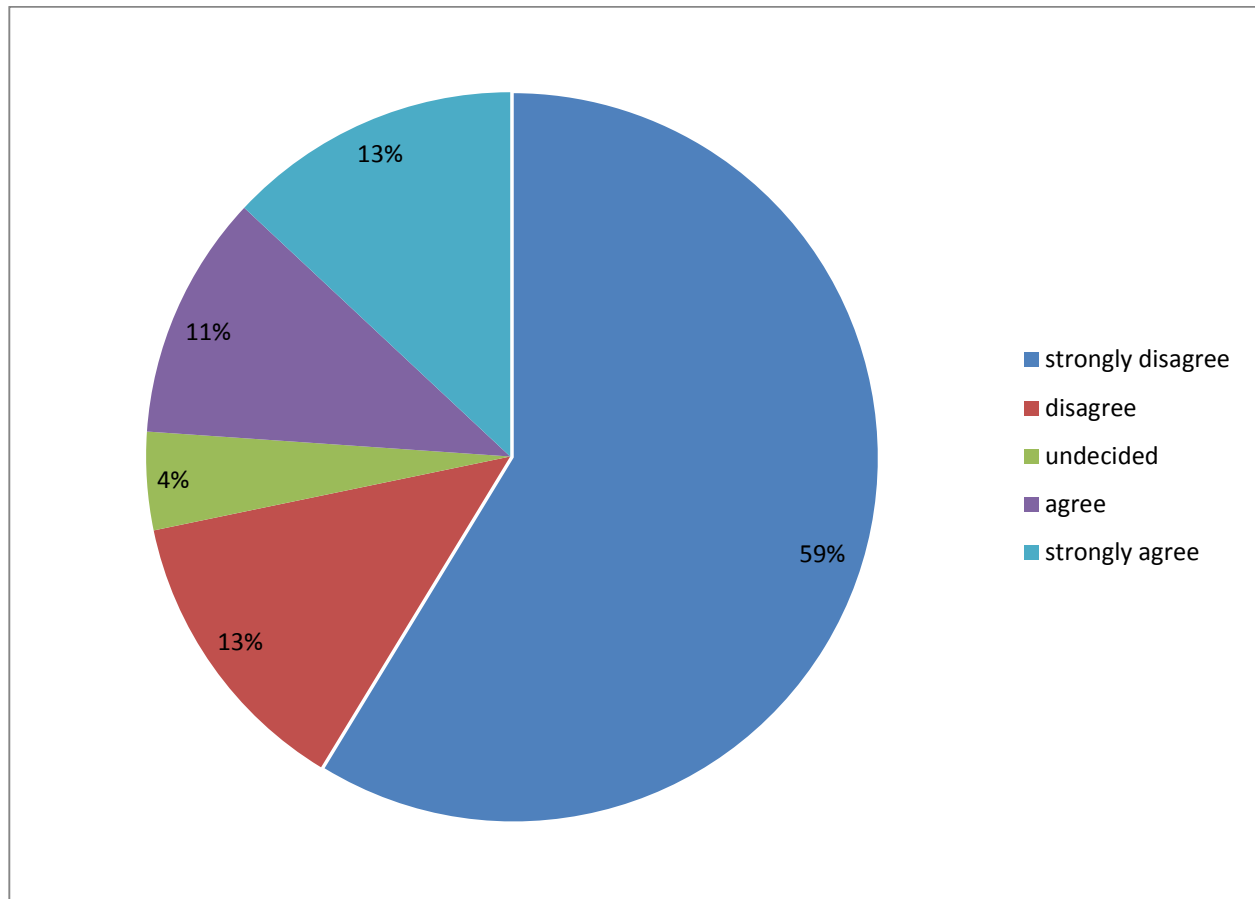
Table1. Socio demographic characteristic of the study subjects

Variable	Number (frequency)	Percentage %
<i>Training institution</i>		
UON	9	19.6
MU	15	32.6
KU	22	47.8
Total	46	100
<i>Student category</i>		
Regular	26	56.5
Parallel	20	43.5
Total	46	100
<i>Age range</i>		
21-23	37	80.4
24-26	9	19.6
Total	46	100
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	22	48
Female	24	52
Total	46	100

The present study revealed that the age of the nurse students sample ranged between 19 and 23 years (80.4%).the remaining 19.6% were between 24 and 26 years of age. In addition, most of the study respondents were females (51%). With the male respondents comprising of 49%.

2.2 Attitude related responses from the study respondents

Figure 1 Responses on whether Nurses are well motivated financially to do their work.



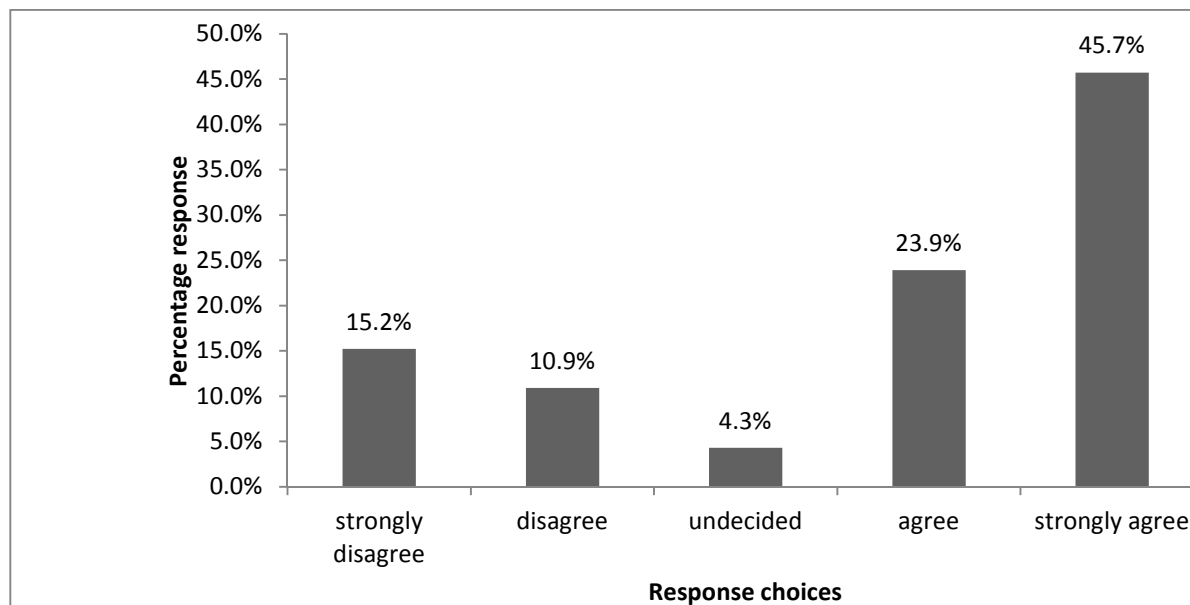
The study findings indicated that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that nurses are well motivated to perform their duties (59%). 13% just disagreed with the statement whereas 4% remained undecided on the issue. In comparison, 11% of the respondents agreed while 13% strongly agreed with the fact that nurses are strongly motivated to perform their duties.

This study results concur with the social learning theory by Julian Rotter a psychologist developed in 1974 as quoted by Siegel, 2008. Briefly, this theory postulates that human behaviours in specific situations are contingent upon the individuals expectancy that a particular behaviour will be reinforced (rewarded) (Siegel, 2008).

In social learning theory, behavior is regulated not only by directly experienced consequences from external sources, but by vicarious reinforcement and self-reinforcement (National League for Nursing, 2010, Srikanthan, & Dalrymple, 2003).

2.3 Nursing as a caring and a helping profession

Figure 2 Responses on whether Nursing is a caring and helping profession



These study findings indicated that majority (45.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the fact that nursing is a caring and helping profession. 23.9% just agreed with the statement whereas 4.3% remained undecided on the issue. Surprisingly 10.9 % of the respondents agreed while 15.2% strongly disagreed with the fact that nursing is a caring and a helping profession

These results also agree with Ibrahim *et al.* (2009) who found that the majority of the students thought that nursing provides caring for individuals and give opportunity for employment after graduation.

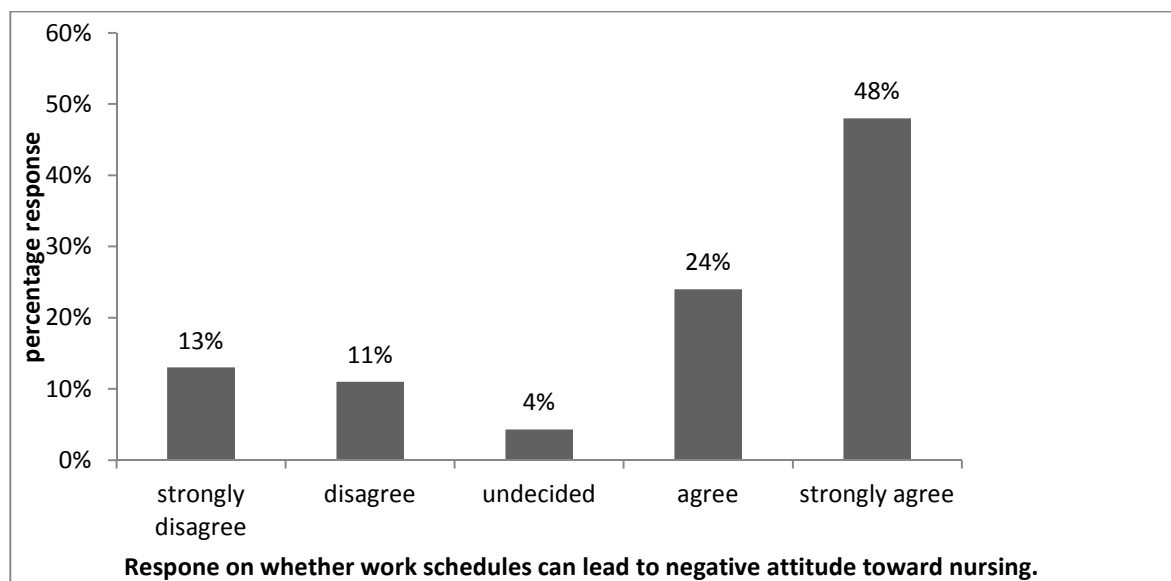
2.4 Definite choice of nursing as a career profession

Table2. Response as to whether a definite choice of nursing as a profession has been made

If a definite choice of nursing as a profession has been made	Frequency	percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes	22	47.8%	47.8%
No	12	26.1%	73.9%
Unsure	12	26.1%	100%
Total	46	100%	

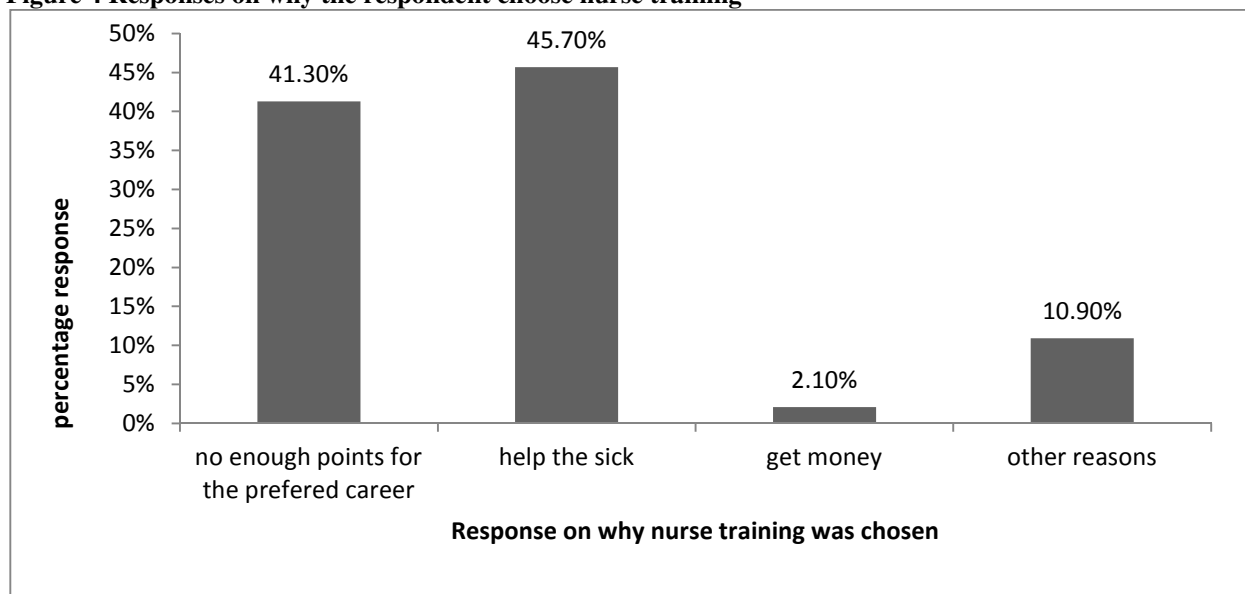
The results of the study demonstrated that 47.8% of the nurse students had a positive attitude, 26.1% were neutral to this issue, and a similar percentage (26.1%) had a negative attitude toward the nursing profession. These results are in concordance with Joulaee *et al.*, reporting that 18.3% of nurses have been reported to have negative attitude in their occupation (Joulaee *et al.*, 2007 and Mearns, J. 2009). However these findings are not in accordance with the results achieved by Banaderakhshan's study in which 1.17 % negative attitude toward the nursing profession was found. The reason behind such a contradiction may be owing to the instruments applied (Banaderakhshan *et al.*, 2008). On contrary, Lai *et al* 2011 conducted a study in Taiwan and found that 65.4% of the nursing students would not choose nursing as a career after graduation. (Lai *et al.*, 2011).

Figure3. Responses on whether works schedules can lead to negative attitude in nursing



70% of the respondents agreed to the fact that work nursing schedules can lead to negative attitude. However 24% disagreed and 4% remained undecided to this fact. Nonetheless, the level of positive attitude in this study is consistent with Zhang *et al.*, 2008 survey, reporting 53.3% of nursing students with positive attitude toward their occupation the slight discrepancy might be due to the population studied, the questionnaires used and the specific conditions of the student nurses investigated (Zhang *et al.*,2008).

Figure 4 Responses on why the respondent choose nurse training



This inquiry indicated that a greater percentage of the nursing students joined the profession in order to help the sick 45.7%. However, 41.3 % joined nurse training because they did not have enough points for the preferred course. The remaining 13% joined the profession for other reasons and to get money. Previous research studies by Lisa M 2005 reported that most students decided to join nursing profession because they had a desire to help others, and nursing was perceived as caring and serving humanity job (Lefcourt, 2008). These findings are incongruence with previous research studies, which reported that most students decided to join nursing profession because they had a desire to help others, and nursing was perceived as caring and serving humanity job (Michigan Education Association, 2009).

Table 3 Response on whether there is lack of recognition for nursing

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Yes	36	78%	78
Sometimes	8	18%	96
No	2	4%	100
Total	46	100	

From the students responses it was found that 78% (n=46) said the work done by nurses is not recognized. 17% said nursing is only recognized sometimes whereas only 4.35% said that nursing is recognized. This was contrally to the study done by Anurag 2011 where two thirds (69.4%) of the nursing students perceived their profession as dignified and respectful as well as a way to get due recognition in society (69.6%) (Anurag *et al.*,2011).

3.0 Discussions

The present study revealed that the age of the nurse students sample ranged between 19 and 23 years (80.4%). The remaining 19.4% aged between 24 and 26 years. In addition , most of the study respondents were females (51%) . With the male respondents comprising of 49% . Both of these results agree with Rochester *et al.*, 2008 who stated that the vast majority of undergraduate nursing students were female, under the age of twenty three (Rochester *et al.* 2008). This could be attributed to the fact that most basic BScN undergraduate students join the university training colleges immediately following completion of their high school education

Regarding whether nurses are well motivated financially, the study findings indicated that majority of the respondents strongly disagreed with the fact that nurses are well motivated to perform their duties (59%). 13% just disagreed with the statement whereas 4% remained undecided on the issue. In comparison, 11% of the respondents agreed while 13% strongly agreed with the fact that nurses are strongly motivated to perform their duties.

This study results concur with the social learning theory by Julian Rotter a psychologist developed in 1974 as quoted by Siegel, 2008. Briefly, this theory postulates that human behaviours in specific situations are contingent upon the individuals expectancy that a particular behaviour will be reinforced (rewarded) (Siegel, 2008). In social learning theory, behavior is regulated not only by directly experienced consequences from external sources, but by vicarious reinforcement and self- reinforcement (National League for Nursing, 2010, Srikanthan, & Dalrymple, 2003).

3.1 Relationship between attitude toward nursing and work schedules; 70% of the respondents agreed to the fact that work nursing schedules can lead to attitude. However 24% disagreed and 4% remained undecided to this fact. There was a significant relationship between nursing work schedules and attitude toward nursing profession. Nonetheless, the level of positive attitude in this study is consistent with Zhang *et al.* 2008 survey, reporting 53.3% of nursing students with positive attitude toward their occupation the slight discrepancy might be due to the population studied, the questionnaires used and the specific conditions of the student nurses investigated (Zhang *et al.*,2008).

3.2 Recognition of nursing services: The results indicated that their is no recognition of the work done by nurses 78% (n=46). 17% of respondents said nursing is only recognized sometimes whereas only 4.35% said that nursing is recognized. This was contrally to the study done by Anurag 2011 where two thirds (69.4%) of the nursing students perceived their profession as dignified and respectful as well as a way to get due recognition in society (69.6%) (Anurag *et al.*,2011).

3.3 Relationship between attitude toward nursing and work schedules;

70% of the respondents agreed to the fact that work nursing schedules can lead to attitude $\chi^2=0.01$, 1df $p \geq 0.05$. This implied a positive co-relation between the nature of duty schedules and the attitude of nurses. However 24% disagreed and 4% remained undecided to this fact. There was a significant relationship between nursing work schedules and attitude toward nursing profession, Product-moment correlation coefficient (r) =0-80.

3.4 Recognition of nursing services: The results indicated that there is no recognition of the work done by nurses 78% (n=46). 17% of respondents said nursing is only recognized sometimes whereas only 4.35% said that nursing is recognized. This was statistically significant with $P=0.002$. There was a positive correlation between lack of recognition of the work done by nurses and negative attitude of the students (spearman rank

coorelation $P=0.003$) This was contrally to the study done by Anurag 2011 where two thirds (69.4%) of the nursing students perceived their profession as dignified and respectful as well as a way to get due recognition in society (69.6%) (Anurag *et al.*,2011).

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Generally some aspects of the BScN training curriculum brought a positive attitude while others yield to negative perception toward the nursing profession.

Concurrently majority of nursing students have a positive attitude toward the nursing profession but certain aspects in this noble profession tend to diminish the proportion of those who would like to take it up as a lifelong career. Therefore, effort to motivate nurses financially, improve the working schedules and recognize the work done by the nurses should be encouraged in order to increase the number of the students who would prefer to remain in the nursing profession in future.

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

Nurses and nursing education must keep pace with the current charge in the field of health, and the nursing education curriculum must respond to new approaches in health care.

Attitude form a key component in the nursing profession. Therefore, Nurse training institutions should emphasize on aspects which encourage build up of positive attitude toward the nursing profession.

Urgent attention is required from nursing educators of the BScN programmes to address identified gaps in the training of the students.

The researcher recommends that universities should consider implementing an “Introduction to nursing course, which includes a lecture, field and a clinical experience component. This will be able to provide career information about nursing and so the students will make a choice to train in nursing having an idea of what nursing it’s all about.

In addition, the government and nursing regulatory bodies should ensure that nurses are well motivated and their services are recognized. This can be done by improving nurses salaries to be at par with the other employees, registering nursing bodies and having flexible work schedules for the nurses. This will help to increase the rate of retaining nurses in the profession and also help create a positive impact toward nursing among the BScN students.

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