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Barriers that Impact International/Foreign-Born Practical Nursing Students' Completion Rate in a Diploma Program Located in a Community College in the Midwestern United States

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Barriers that Impact International/Foreign-Born Practical Nursing Students'

Completion Rate in a Diploma Program Located in a Community College in the

Midwestern United States

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all faculty, staff, and administrators passionate about working with international/foreign-born students in higher education institutions. Your hard work and dedication to this population of students are recognized and valued. You are helping to change the trajectory of generations of lives through your hard work and commitment to this population of students.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my coworkers, the Director of Nursing, the Dean, the Vice President, and the President of the higher education institution, that supported me throughout my dissertation journey.

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Finally, I thank everyone who has shown me kindness throughout my dissertation journey. I appreciate each of you. Thank you again.

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NOMENCLATURE

AAS	Associate of Applied Science
ATI	Assessment Technologies Institute
CITI	Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
ESL	English AS A Second Language
IHE	Institutions of Higher Education
IIE	Institute of International Education
RQ	Research Question
SQ	Sub-Question
SES	Socioeconomic Status
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
US	United States
USCIS	US Citizenship and Immigration Services

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ABSTRACT

Thousands of international students leave their countries of origin each year to pursue higher education in the United States. These students left their homelands to pursue higher education, which helped change the trajectory of their lives and the lives of their families. Although some of these students have high hopes and aspirations of completing their programs of studies, the literature review showed that they experienced barriers, such as English language, financial, culture shock, and unfamiliar teaching and learning pedagogies. This qualitative phenomenological research study aimed to identify self-reported barriers that impacted the completion rate of international/foreign-born students pursuing the Practical Nursing Diploma Program at a community college in the Midwestern United States. Purposeful sampling was utilized, and the sample size was eight participants. This research found that the participants experienced barriers such as English language, time management, and financial: The participants reported that these barriers significantly impacted their lives. The results also showed some commonalities with previously completed research studies such as Moon et al. (2020) and Rivas et al. (2019). These researchers reported in their research studies that English language difficulties were a significant problem for international students in higher education institutions in the United States. All participants reported that they experienced barriers that had impacted their academic and personal lives. The findings from this study may benefit college administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders, who may utilize the findings to help implement practices that may help improve the academic outcomes of international/foreign-born students in the United States.

Keywords: barriers, international, foreign-born, immigrant, students, practical nursing, higher education institutions, community college, United States

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Annually, thousands of international students leave their countries of origin to attend institutions of higher education (IHE) in the United States (US). These students pursue higher education in both community colleges and universities. Jennings (2017) related that the low cost of community colleges in the US makes them attractive to international students. Education.org (2020) reported that 1,095,299 international students came to the US in 2019 to pursue higher education. In 2019, there were 432,930 international undergraduate students and 377,943 international graduate students in US colleges pursuing courses or degree programs. These students are usually willing to leave their countries to come to the United States to obtain an education that will enable them to improve the quality of life for themselves and their family members. These students leave their countries on the quest to obtain their goals in higher education; however, in the process of obtaining their goals, they are often faced with barriers such as English language idiosyncrasies, different pedagogies, financial hardships, academic workload, and acculturation challenges (Alfaifi, 2020; Chen & Bang, 2020).

Although many research studies address barriers that international students in the United States face, the literature review that this researcher completed did not find any research study with specific barriers associated with specific course and degree program completion rates in higher education; also, the literature review failed to reveal barriers that impacted the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Therefore, based on the literature review, a knowledge gap exists regarding specific barriers that negatively impact international students' completion rate in higher education. There is also a knowledge gap on barriers that impact the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Consequently, there was a need to identify specific barriers impacting specific course/program

completion rates of international/foreign-born students pursuing higher education in the United

States.

Theoretical Framework

When international/foreign-born students leave their countries of origin to pursue higher

education degrees in the US, some students may experience a major life transition. In the past,

this researcher had conversations with international/foreign-born students who felt like moving

to the US to study was a significant life transition. Therefore, Schlossberg's Transition Theory

was an appropriate framework for this qualitative research study. Anderson et al. (2012)

explained that transition is based on the perception of the individual experiencing the change.

Transition can be considered a barrier that may impact the completion rate of this population of

students. Killam and Degges-White (2017) explained that transitions could disrupt people's lives

and alter how people experience their existence.

Furthermore, transition theories could help college students adjust to college life and help

identify where students are in their transitions (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). Anderson et al.

(2012) related that it is vital that students identify the type of transition they are experiencing;

however, it is essential to know the degree to which the transition changes students' lives. It is

necessary to note that reactions to transition change over time, depending on whether the

students are moving into the transition, moving through it, or moving out of it (Anderson et al.,

2012). Adults are continuously experiencing transitions, and reactions to transitions are based on

the kind of transition, the adults' perceptions of the transitions, the context in which the

transition occurs, and the impact on the lives of the adults experiencing the transitions (Anderson

et al., 2012). Killam and Degges-White (2017) also claimed that the moving-in phase could

cause anxiety in students moving to a new college campus for the first time. Therefore, it may be

challenging for this population of students to move thousands of miles away from home into

unfamiliar environments. Moving through may represent a time when the students were learning

to balance their personal, work, and college life (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). Moving out

may mean completing the program or looking forward to graduation (Killam & Degges-White,

2017).

Killam and Degges-White (2017) declared that mattering and taking stock are two critical

components of Schlossberg's Transition Theory. The authors indicated that Schlossberg

described mattering as the beliefs people have of themselves, even if those beliefs are false, that

they matter to someone significant, and that mattering is reciprocal. Anderson et al. (2012)

indicated that taking stock of coping resources may be achieved using the *Four S System*.

Students can utilize the Four S System to help them identify the resources they have to help them

cope with transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). This system describes factors that make a

difference in how students cope with stress. The *Four S System* utilizes a ratio of assets to

liabilities based on the changes that the students are experiencing. If the individual assets

outweigh the liabilities, the individual coping strategies are likely to work favorably; however, if

the liabilities outweigh the assets, the individual may be experiencing a difficult time

transitioning (Anderson et al., 2012). The *Four S System* refers to the individual's situation,

support, self, and strategies (Anderson et al., 2012).

Schlossberg's Four S System: Situation

Situation refers to the conditions that the international/foreign-born students experienced

during the transition (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). In this factor, the students must identify

what is happening (Anderson et al., 2012). The situation includes criteria such as triggers,

timing, and control (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) declared that triggers are

events or situations that set off a transition; timing is related to whether the timing is on time or

off time, and control is related to what part of the change the students can control. Killam and

Degges-White (2017) explained that in the situation, it is imperative to know if the situation is anticipated or unanticipated. The authors further related that it is essential to know if the students perceived the situation as good or bad.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Support

Killam and Degges-White (2017) explained that support is essential to human functioning, especially during transition times. Anderson et al. (2012) reported that support indicates to the students the available help they can access. In assessing this factor, it is vital to know if the students have adequate support from family members and support from the college campus where they are pursuing their higher education programs. Social support is the primary factor in dealing with stress (Anderson et al., 2012).

Schlossberg's Four S System: Self

If students are to transition efficiently, they must have a sense of self-awareness of what they believe and insights into their capabilities and attitudes (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). The self is impacted by characteristics such as socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, age, and position in life (Anderson et al., 2012). The authors stated that when assessing the element of self, it is essential to view it through the lens of *Personal and Demographic Characteristics* and *Psychological Resources.*

Personal and Demographic Characteristics

Killam and Degges-White (2017) related that personal and demographic characteristics directly relate to how people view and evaluate their lives. Personal and demographic features include socioeconomic status, age, condition of health, culture, ethnicity, and gender. Personal and demographic characteristics factors influence the way how students experience their transitions.

Psychological Resources

Psychological resources are related to coping resources the students have when they are threatened with perceived threats (Killam & Degges-White, 2017). A student's outlook on life influences how they perceive and assess their transition. Students who believe they have control over their transition are more likely to cope better than students who believe they lack control.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Strategies

According to Killam and Degges-White (2017), strategies are students' coping resources in transitions. The students need to identify the coping resources that they have access to. The authors declared that strategies are twofold: The students must recognize their coping resources, and the student must be able to decide which of the four elements they will use as they transition. An example of a coping resource is academic advisors, who can help guide students on which courses to take to fulfill their prerequisites. Another example of coping resources is deciding which element to use when experiencing difficulties in pharmacology courses. In this situation, the students may choose to improve the situation by increasing their study time.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the literature research concerning barriers that international/foreign-born students experience, there was a need to study international/foreign-born students pursuing a Practical Nursing Diploma in institutions of higher learning in the US. Due to the knowledge gap on specific barriers that impact the completion rates of international/foreign-born students, especially students who were pursuing Practical Nursing Programs in the US, this qualitative research study will add to previous knowledge about barriers that are impacting the population of international/foreign-born students and new knowledge about international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Since many international/foreign-born students are people of color, they are categorized as minority students in the US. However, they may originate from countries such as

China or India, where they make up the majority of the population of their countries. This research study will also give voice to the minority populations who are, at times, underrepresented. Creswell and Poth (2018) declared that qualitative research could provide a voice to underrepresented populations and lead to outcomes such as relating the cultural life of a population and giving an in-depth study of a specific paradigm.

A qualitative phenomenological study on international/foreign-born students was critical because thousands of them come to the US each year to pursue higher education; therefore, research should show specific barriers impacting their completion rates. Although research studies showed barriers that impact international students, this researcher could not locate Practical Nursing courses or programs in which these students experienced challenges. Therefore, identifying the difficulties impacting the completion rate of these students may help stakeholders such as administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff to reevaluate programs in their institutions that serve international/foreign-born students and create correction plans to help alleviate or decrease the challenges that these students face.

Creswell and Poth (2018) related that a research problem could come from a real-life experience. The researcher of this qualitative research study had seen firsthand how international students struggle in IHE in the US. This researcher also had personal experiences as a foreign-born student in IHE in the US.

Due to the many challenges that international/foreign-born students experience while pursuing higher education in the US, the specific challenges that impact the students should be identified so that possible solutions may be found to help eliminate or decrease the challenges. Genc and Sahin (2020) mentioned that the international students who were participants in their qualitative research study reported that they experienced barriers such as language, culture

shock, and stressful academic programs. It can be difficult for these students to face many challenges thousands of miles from their homes and support systems.

Gürel-Cennetkusu (2017) completed a mixed-methods research study that explored the demand, resources, and successful practice of academic writing in English as a second language (ESL) with international students. This study showed that 78.46 percent of the participants did not attend an English language preparatory school. One of the requirements for success in academic programs in the US is to be proficient in English. Therefore, when students are not adequately prepared in the English language before starting IHE in the US, they are more likely to find their courses overwhelming, and experience decreased academic outcomes. This study also revealed that students' perceptions of their writing differ from that of their professors. This study showed that 41.54 percent of graduate students thought their writing was good, and the professors believed that only 22.22 percent of the students' writing was good. Good academic writing in the English language is essential to successful course and program completion rates in IHE in the US. Therefore, barriers impacting completion rates must be identified in this population of students, and access to the necessary resources that can help this population of students should be identified and provided.

A Summary of the Problem

International/foreign-born students experience many barriers that impact their academic outcomes in the US. There was a need in the literature for research studies on international/foreign-born Practical nursing students in the US. Many international/foreign-born students are from countries such as China and India, and in their countries, they belong to the dominant population; however, when these students come to the US, they belong to the minority populations based on race (Institute of International Education (IIE, 2020). Moving from a majority population to a minority group can be a significant transition for these students. This

qualitative research study provided a voice for these students who were placed in the minority populations in the US. This study will add to the existing literature about the challenges that international/foreign-born students face and help fill the knowledge gap on the barriers that international/foreign-born Practical Nursing students experience. This qualitative research study may inform stakeholders such as administrators, faculty, and student affairs staff about specific problems this population of students is experiencing. Knowing the issues may help stakeholders formulate correction plans to help address the problems.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to identify specific barriers that impact international/foreign-born practical nursing students' completion rate who were pursuing higher education in the US. The completion rate in this qualitative research study refers to completing a course or nursing program. Based on the lived experiences of international/foreign-born students in higher education, this research study sought to identify the barriers that the participants identified as the ones directly associated with preventing them from completing specific course/s or their programs of study.

Many research studies identify barriers that international students face while working toward their educational goal/s in the United States (Bai, 2016; Brutt-Griffler, 2020; Lyken-Segosebe, 2017; Maeda, 2017). In most of the research studies reviewed, English language competence is a prerequisite for success in IHE in the US (Abu-Rabia, 2016; Brutt-Griffler, 2020; Gürel-Cennetkusu, 2017; Tang et al., 2018). Chen and Bang (2020) explained that most participants from their research study reported that they were not able to communicate with the English that they had learned in the school systems in their countries; therefore, they needed to pursue extra English programs or study in ESL program before they began their undergraduate studies. Although the students worked on improving their English before starting their

undergraduate programs, they reported that the English language was still a primary challenge

for them while they pursued their educational goals (Chen & Bang, 2020). Chen and Bang

(2020) further said that the students claimed that weak writing skills and inadequate English

vocabulary negatively affected their grades and class performance.

A particular challenge international/foreign-born students face while pursuing higher

education in the US is a pedagogical difference. Lee et al. (2018) indicated that the instructional

delivery method was one of the challenges that international students experienced. Some of these

students experienced teacher-oriented pedagogical delivery methods in their home countries, and

in the US, they are expected to learn a student-oriented pedagogical delivery method. This

difference in instructional delivery method can be difficult for the students who were passive

learners in their countries of origin. In the US, they are expected to be active learners. This

delivery method can be stressful for students who may not have previously interacted with their

peers while completing course assignments.

With the rising cost of college tuition and living expenses in the US, international

students who did not receive a scholarship from their government or a private institution may

suffer from financial hardship. Aljohani (2016) related that family income and socioeconomic

status impact student attrition. In many instances, the tuition for IHE in the US is more costly

than for their peers who are residents of the US. Financial hardship can impact a student in many

ways, including course or program dropout, insufficient resources such as textbooks,

homelessness, food insecurity, and stress that may result in inadequate preparation for courses.

The academic workload in IHE can be daunting for international students who may have

yet to experience this type of workload that can be considered heavy. Tsevi (2018) indicated that

most participants in the research study they investigated reported being overwhelmed by

academic work at first. The author further said that the participants found that the students in the classroom environments participated in discussions, which were different from classroom environments in their home countries in which the classroom settings were teacher-centered. The language barriers that the students experienced also helped intensify the academic workload due to the reading requirements associated with the assignments.

Research studies have documented findings of international students' challenges with acculturation. Incompetence in the English language can result in difficulties in acculturation because the students must be able to read, understand, and speak the language to communicate with their American peers and interact meaningfully in both classroom and extracurricular activities. Chen and Bang (2020) declared that "Making American friends becomes the most common way for them to learn American culture" (p. 197). The author suggested that learning about American culture during preparation may better help international students adapt to American colleges' way of life.

Despite the many barriers noted in research studies, there is a knowledge gap on self-reported barriers associated with the completion rates of specific courses and or programs of study. Therefore, this research study investigated barriers faced by international/foreign-born students and how the barriers were associated with the completion rate of courses/programs of study in IHE in the US.

The Significance of the Study

There is a significant need in the literature to identify the association of barriers that international students face with the completion rate of specific courses/programs of studies in IHE. There is also a significant need to identify the association of barriers that international/foreign-born practical nursing students face with their courses and program completion rates. This researcher believed this information might be helpful to study abroad

preparation programs, college administrators, faculty, students, the student services department, and other stakeholders working with international students.

Chen and Bang (2020) revealed that college preparation programs spend a considerable amount of time preparing students for the English proficiency test that students from non-English speaking countries must complete before attending IHE in the US. Information from this research study may be helpful in the college preparation programs for international students. These stakeholders may integrate the findings of this qualitative research study into their college preparation program.

The findings from this research study regarding the specific barriers that impact the completion rates of courses/programs of study may be helpful to college administrators who may improve the college learning environment for international students. The information may also be used to improve the curriculum content and delivery mode, faculty training, and student support services.

The findings from this research study may be helpful to faculty working with international students. Based on this research study's results, the faculty may differentiate classroom teaching and learning activities. Differentiation in teaching may help meet the student's individual learning needs. Brutt-Griffler (2020) indicated that participants from their mixed-methods research design experienced course difficulties, among other barriers, such as socio-cultural barriers. Differentiation in teaching may be helpful to students who are experiencing course difficulties. Faculty may also refer students to resources if they are more aware of barriers that impact the students. Since the curriculum is usually faculty-driven, the faculty may be able to modify the curriculum to meet the needs of the students based on the findings of this research study.

If international students are aware of specific barriers that impact the completion rates of courses/programs of study, they may be better prepared before attending IHE in the US. The students can participate in programs that help them to work through the identified barriers or to eliminate their barriers.

If the staff in student services departments are more aware of barriers that impact the course/program completion rates of international students, they may be better equipped to meet the diverse needs of these students. For example, suppose a research study found that incompetence in the English language was associated with the participants of the study failing pharmacology course. In that case, the tutoring center could hire an experienced tutor in pharmacology so that the students could be better helped with utilizing reading resources in pharmacology. This researcher believed that all stakeholders might be able to utilize knowledge of specific barriers that impact course/program completion rates to help ensure that resources are available to help meet international students' needs.

Research Question

According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), the researcher must decide if the research question is worth researching and whether the data gathered is worth the time placed into the research. Based on the literature reviews that were completed about barriers impacting international/foreign-born students and this researcher's firsthand experiences both as a foreign-born student in higher education and a faculty who facilitates international/foreign-born practical nursing students in an institution of higher education, this qualitative phenomenological research study was worthwhile because it will likely help to fill the knowledge gap by identifying barriers that affect the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. This study will also provide relevant information to administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders who

have an invested interest in the academic performances of this population of students. Therefore, the main research question and sub-questions were:

- Among practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college, what barriers impact international/foreign-born students' completion rates in higher education?

  a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?

  b. What situations influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?

  c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?

  d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in improving their completion rates?

Research Design

The research design of this research study was a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study. Peoples (2021) emphasized that phenomenological research aims at understanding people's lived experiences. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study describes the common meaning of the lived experiences of several participants who had experienced a phenomenon. "Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). Phenomenology may be considered a philosophy and a method (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; De Chesnay, 2015). Peoples (2021) stated that phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and phenomenological study focused on understanding participants' lived experiences. Therefore,

this research design sought to find out what all participants who experienced the phenomenon shared in common.

Neubauer et al. (2019) reported that phenomenology is considered a research approach that can be utilized to help researchers understand inquiry. Phenomenological research helps researchers understand people's lived experiences and "identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by the research participants" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 54). Therefore, the lived experiences that were reported by the participants were vital in this phenomenological research study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) further stated that phenomenological research studies are both descriptive and interpretive. Therefore, the participants' lived experiences are described, and the researchers can interpret the meaning of the lived experiences based on the collected data.

Moustakas (1994) related that phenomenological studies included a comprehensive study of a small number of participants to develop patterns and relationships. The sample size of phenomenological research studies may vary from three to four to 10-15 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transcendental Phenomenology

While conducting a transcendental phenomenological research study, it is imperative that the researcher brackets themselves so that they do not include their personal experiences with the phenomenon in the research. This is done to help exclude biases. It is also essential that epoche, phenomenological reduction, horizon, and intentionality are addressed (Peoples, 2021). The concept of epoche includes bracketing one's own experiences as early as possible to be able to gain a new viewpoint of the phenomenon; "however, this state is seldomly achieved" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 55). Phenomenological reduction is achieved during the analysis

process, the horizon addresses the researcher's experiences with the data during analysis, and intentionality is related to how the researcher focuses on the data during the analysis (Peoples, 2021).

Definitions of Terms

According to Berkley (n.d.), *international students* are nonimmigrants who are visitors to the US. These students are in the US temporarily and are non-citizens who are not permanent residents. These students are in the US to complete their programs of study. In this research, international students are pursuing higher education in the US.

Foreign-born students were born outside of the US. These students may have changed their status to become permanent residents or US citizens. However, these students should at least have completed high school in their countries of birth.

F-1 visa – All international students who enter the US to pursue an undergraduate program usually obtain this visa.

Completion rates refer to completing a course or a program of study in a college or university.

The phrase *this researcher* in the study referred to the author/researcher who conducted this qualitative research study.

Essence refers to the commonality that people share and is considered universal.

Assumptions

This researcher assumed that in this qualitative research study, participants had experienced barriers that impacted their completion rate in higher education in the US. Another assumption is that the sample size of six to eight participants would be sufficient to yield adequate data to answer the research questions. This researcher also believed that the instruments used in this study would gather relevant data to answer the research questions. An essential assumption that this researcher held was that the researcher, a doctoral student, possessed the

experience and knowledge from the fieldwork experience in the Doctoral Program at Minnesota State University Moorhead to conduct this qualitative research study thoroughly.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included utilizing participants from one community college. A phenomenological design bounded to one college may not represent the population of international/foreign-born practical nursing students at other community colleges. Therefore, a future phenomenological study with larger sample size and participants from multiple colleges may yield different results that better represent the population of international/foreign-born students pursuing Practical Nursing Programs in the US.

Delimitations

This qualitative research study utilized purposeful sampling so that only the international/foreign-born students who met the study's specific criteria were included. International/foreign-born students who did not meet the criteria were excluded from the study. Foreign-born students who attended high school in the US were excluded from the study because studying these students may have different results because they experienced the US pedagogy. This study sought data that would identify barriers that impacted the completion rates of the students. A phenomenological research study was chosen and not a grounded theory because the researcher wanted an in-depth exploration of barriers that impact the completion rates of international/foreign-born students and not to create a theory from the collected data.

Summary

Annually, thousands of international students travel to the US from many countries worldwide to pursue programs in IHE. Although many of these students appeared eager to come to the US to improve their lives academically, they faced many barriers, such as language, finances, and different pedagogy in the classroom. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was the

theoretical framework for this qualitative research study. This framework was utilized to determine where the students were in their transition and how they were coping with their transition. Based on the review of literature, for this research study, on barriers that affect international/foreign-born students' completion rate, the literature did not reveal specific barriers that were directly related to students' completion rate in courses or programs in IHE in the US; however, the literature showed many barriers that affected this population of students while they were pursuing their programs of study. The literature review also showed a knowledge gap in barriers that affect international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Chapter 2 of this research study contains the findings from the literature review, and Chapter 3 contains the Methodology, which includes data collection and analysis. The results of this research study may be helpful to international programs that help prepare students to pursue higher education in the US and to stakeholders such as administrators, faculty, and academic advisors in the colleges and universities that serve international/foreign-born students. One of the assumptions of this research study included the expectation that the participants studied would yield data that answered the research questions. One limitation of the research study included the small sample size. A delimitation of the research study included utilizing purposeful sampling. This sampling method was chosen so that only students who met the criteria for selecting participants were included in the sample.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Each year, many international students arrive in the US to pursue IHE programs. According to Open Doors (2022), there were 1,075,496 international students enrolled in IHE in the US in 2019/2020. This number represented 5.5% of the total number of students enrolled in IHE in the US. Open Doors (2022) also reported that 914,095 international students were enrolled in IHE in the US during 2020/2021. This number represented 4.6% of the total number of students enrolled in IHE in the US. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the enrollment of international students in 2020/2021. Although there has been a decline in the number of international students enrolled in IHE in the US, the number of students pursuing higher education annually in the US is still higher than in other countries globally. The Institute of International Education (IIE, 2020) reported that the US is the primary destination in the world where international students pursue higher education programs. Most international students in the US originated from China, followed by India (IIE, 2020). During the school year 2019/2020, there were 372,000 Chinese students and 193,124 Indian students pursuing higher education in the United States (IIE, 2020). Although the US and the rest of the world are still working on decreasing the positivity rates of COVID-19, the US has seen a 4% increase in enrollment for international students in higher education during the fall of 2021 (Martel, 2021; Redden, 2021).

The international/foreign-born students who decide to travel from their countries of origin usually pursue a competitive and marketable degree that will help them secure jobs that will help change their lives and the lives of their family members. These students originated from many countries and regions of the world. The students' countries of birth included South Korea,

Bahamas, China, India, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, and countries in Europe and Africa (Brutt-Griffler, 2020; Frkovich, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Yuan, 2017). Frkovich (2017) indicated that some Chinese international students wanted to stand out among a humongous competitive global workforce, so they decided to pursue higher education degrees in the US. Frkovich (2017) also claimed that Western education is usually perceived as the best globally, and obtaining an education in the US can give students an edge over competitors. Frkovich (2017) related that the participants from their qualitative study believed studying in the US was progressively popular. Therefore, participants thought they would be likely chosen for job positions over candidates who did not obtain a degree in the US. The research study also showed that some international students pursued higher education in the US because of the opportunity to experience cultural exchange. Brutt-Griffler (2020) claimed that international students from Saudi Arabia attended IHE in the US for cultural exchange. In cultural exchange, the host country and the country the students originated from benefit because students can learn from both cultures.

Although the US remains the most popular destination for international students to pursue higher education degrees, this pursuit is not without challenges. These students who have traveled thousands of miles hoping to obtain a coveted degree are usually faced with many barriers that can impact their academic success. According to Tang et al. (2018), Chinese participants who were prospective international students in the US perceived that they would experience English Language barriers and differences in the culture of American classrooms while pursuing higher education in the US. Despite the perceived barriers, these students are willing to travel to the US to pursue higher education programs. Because many of these students are from countries where their primary language is not English, and classroom instructions in the US are delivered in English, these students experienced many challenges related to language

barriers. Research studies have shown that international/foreign-born students experienced

barriers that included language difficulties, academic differences, challenges with resources, and

differences in cultural norms, among others (Elturki et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2019).

Methods of Searching

Once this researcher had decided on the topic and research questions for this qualitative

research study, an initial search for articles was made using the Google search engine to locate

Eric's database on the online website of the Livingston Lord Library at the Minnesota State

University Moorhead. During the initial research, the following Boolean/phrases were utilized:

International students or foreign students or overseas students or exchange students, and the

United States or America, or USA or US and completion rates or graduation rates and

challenges, or barriers, or difficulties or problems or limitations or obstacles. These search

words only yielded five articles. In a subsequent search, this researcher used truncation with the

word *student* (i.e., an asterisk was placed after the word), and this search method yielded eight

articles. The phrases nursing *students or undergraduate nursing students* were used during

another search. This search yielded ten results; however, these research studies were completed

outside the US and were irrelevant to this research study. The phrases *practical nursing or*

practical nursing diploma or practical nursing education were utilized instead of the previous

search words, and this search yielded zero results. In another investigation, this researcher

eliminated the phrases *completion rates or graduation rates* and then included *programs or*

undergraduate or graduate, and these search words yielded 337 articles. From these articles, this

researcher selected relevant articles for this research study.

Google Chrome search engine was also utilized using *international students'* search

phrases *in the United States.* This search result helped this researcher locate the Institute of

International Education and the Open Doors websites that provided statistical information on international students.

Theoretical Framework

A Transition theory is a model that provides a systematic framework that can be used to help people who are experiencing transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Schlossberg's Transition Theory was utilized to examine the participants' lived experiences as they transitioned in their academic lives. This transition theory is a framework used by professionals such as therapists and other helpers to help people in transition (Anderson et al., 2012). (Killam and Degges-White (2017) explained that transitions disrupt people's lives and change how people experience their lives. Moving to the US to pursue a better life and obtain a higher education diploma can be a massive transition for international/foreign-born participants. These participants have experienced disruptions in their lives as they have left the life they knew back in their countries of birth. They have left what was familiar to them to come to the unfamiliar. They have left behind their family, relatives, and friends and a different lifestyle from the US. Transitions usually begin when something ends in the lives of people. These participants had left the culture they were familiar with to come and live in a new culture. Since transitions happen in stages, the participants will learn to adapt to a different culture as they navigate the cultural norms of American life. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was utilized to determine where the participants were in their transitions. Killam and Degges-White (2017) explained that the initial Schlossberg framework includes *moving in, moving through, or moving out regarding* transitions. Killam and Degges-White also reported that Schlossberg's Transition Theory includes *mattering,* which examines if people feel that they matter and if that feeling is mutual about others they associate with.

Flowers and Reczynski (2015) stated that Schlossberg created three components that helped students to go through transitions. The components are *approaching change, taking stock- the Four S System,* and *taking charge*. The participants' experiences were gathered from the taking stock questionnaire, which aligned with the features of taking stock- the *Four S System:* Situation, Support, Self, and Strategies. See Table 1 below:

Table 1

Schlossberg's Taking Stock-The Four S System

Situation	Self	Support	Strategies
• Trigger • Timing • Role change • Duration • Concurrent stress • Who is responsible?	Personal/Demographic • Age • SES • Gender • Health • Culture Psychological • Optimism • Resiliency • Spiritual outlook	Social Network • Intimate • Family • Friends • Institutions/ communities	To Cope • Modify • Control meaning • Manage stress Flexibility and multiplicity are most effective

Schlossberg's Transition Theory in Scholarly Work

In an earlier research study, Heggins and Jackson (2003) used Schlossberg's Transition Theory to understand better the college experiences of Asian International students at a Midwestern research university. This theory was appropriate for this research as it can be used at any transition stage for college students. In more recent research studies, Anyfanti (2019) and Farah (2020) utilized Schlossberg's Transition Theory in their qualitative research studies.

Anyfanti (2019) integrated Schlossberg's Transition Theory to show the developmental stages that international students experienced as they transitioned from an international campus to the main campus in the US. Farah (2020) applied Schlossberg's theory to investigate how international students used coping strategies. Farah (2020) also examined the students' experiences using the taking stock -*Four S System.*

Theoretical Methodology and Approach

This researcher had chosen qualitative methodology to explore barriers experienced by international/foreign-born practical nursing students pursuing higher education in the US. This researcher believed that a qualitative method was best suitable for this study as it obtained the students' lived experiences in their own words. While a case study was originally considered as the approach for this study, it was determined that a case study did not meet the requirements of focusing only on experiences as lived (Peoples, 2021). A case study could include perceptions that were not experienced; however, a phenomenological study is based on lived experiences. Also, a case study is bounded by time, and a phenomenological study could include previous related experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) related that qualitative research includes the participants' voices. This research study aimed to capture the students' experiences in their voices as they perceived them.

A phenomenological study approach was appropriate for this research study because this approach obtained detailed textual and structural descriptions from the lived experiences of the participants. This researcher sought to explore the challenges that international/foreign-born practical nursing students experienced in higher education. This research study was conducted within a higher education institution in the Midwestern US. The phenomenological study approach was best suitable for this qualitative research because this approach explored the lived experiences of the participants.

Review of Literature

The primary purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to identify barriers experienced by international/foreign-born practical nursing students and explore the impact of the barriers on their completion rate. This researcher sought to obtain the lived experiences of these participants regarding the challenges they experienced and how those challenges impacted their academic performances and course/program completion rates. This researcher reviewed the literature to gain knowledge from previous research studies related to barriers experienced by international/foreign-born students and the impact of those barriers on the student's academic outcomes. Another purpose of this phenomenological study was to add to the body of literature on international/foreign-born students and to help fill the knowledge gap about international/foreign-born students pursuing a diploma in practical nursing in a community college. A literature review did not yield any research studies about international/foreign-born students pursuing a diploma in a Practical Nursing Program in the US. This phenomenological study would help to determine if the barriers that the participants of this study faced were similar to those experienced by other international/foreign-born students in previous research studies.

The literature review showed that international/foreign-born students faced multiple challenges while pursuing higher education in the US. Although these students are often excited and eager to come to the US to pursue programs in IHE, some students are unprepared for the many difficulties they encounter in their quest to obtain higher education diplomas or degrees that are considered highly competitive in their countries of origin. Alfaifi et al. (2020) related that some participants from their qualitative study pursued higher education in the US to improve their incomes and help their family members achieve proper education. Educational qualifications that can set job candidates apart from other candidates are likely to make those candidates more marketable and subsequently obtain better-paid jobs. A good education can

positively change the lives of generations of people because their socioeconomic status is changed.

The review of the literature with regards to the challenges that international/foreign-born students faced and the impact on their academic outcomes revealed the following themes: English Language Barriers, Academic Readiness of Students, Unfamiliar Pedagogy and Classroom Environment, Financial Challenges, Cultural Unawareness and Stress, COVID-19 Impact, and US Academic and Immigration Stipulations. Each theme addressed the difficulties that international/foreign-born students experienced while pursuing higher education in the US.

English Language Barriers

Based on research studies, English Language barriers are the most significant barriers that international/foreign-born students experience. Many international students originate from countries where the primary language is not English. Many research studies showed that these students experienced many difficulties due to English Language barriers. International students from China and South Korea revealed that language barriers were the most difficult challenge they experienced while pursuing graduate education in the US (Moon et al., 2020). Rivas et al. (2019) reported that their research study found that a lack of English language proficiency was a significant problem that negatively impacted academic, personal, and professional success. Multiple research studies have also shown that international/foreign-born students experience language challenges while pursuing higher education programs in the US (Jean, 2020; O'Connell & Resuli, 2020; Shane et al., 2020). Jin and Schneider (2019) mentioned that their mixed-methods research study found that faculty perceptions of international students included a lack of proficiency in the English language. Brutt-Griffler et al. (2020) and Leong (2015) reported that language barriers could be the most significant obstacle international students experience in pursuing higher education in the US. Bastein et al. (2018) claimed that students who lacked

English language proficiency were more likely to experience academic difficulties. The lack of

English language proficiency helped to create added challenges for the students.

International/foreign-born students who are ESL students experience many challenges related to

language barriers.

Additional Challenges Related to English Language Barriers

International/foreign-born students whose primary language is not English tend to

experience more challenges relating to language barriers than students who originated from

countries with the English language as the primary language. However, international students

from English-speaking countries such as the British Virgin Islands and England experience some

challenges with American English. Hunter-Johnson (2019) indicated that students who spoke

British English as their primary language experienced language barriers due to accent,

pronunciation, and enunciation. However, students who speak British English are more likely to

comprehend words and sentences in American English than ESL students. Lyken-Segosebe

(2017) and Yuan (2017) specified that language barriers could isolate students from course

instructors and peers. Due to language barriers, some students are hesitant to participate in

conversations with professors and peers. One research participant in the research study

conducted by Yuan (2017) claimed that the inability to speak fluent English is a type of

segregation due to speaking English with a Chinese accent. While these students may be

reluctant to talk due to their accents, their American peers may have difficulties understanding

them in conversations. Therefore, forming relationships with their American peers may be

challenging due to the language barrier. Elturki et al. (2019) and Kaya (2020) indicated that

language barriers contributed to challenges in making friends and communicating with

Americans. Jean (2020) related that one participant in the completed qualitative research study

reported that barriers to friendship with American peers included English Language barriers.

Rivas et al. (2019) narrated that international students from collectivist cultural backgrounds experienced challenges connecting with American peers due to their assertiveness and self-reliance. Because these students are unfamiliar with individualistic cultures where people are more independent rather than dependent, it can be difficult for these students who grew up making collective decisions to relate to people who make independent decisions. Rivas et al. (2019) further reported that international students experienced difficulties building friendships with American peers. If language barriers are present, starting a conversation with others can be challenging. The intended message may not be received due to language barriers. Leong (2015) stated that a lack of fluency in American English could lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding.

Academic Readiness of Students

Research studies showed that some international/foreign-born students were not fully prepared to study in colleges and universities in the US. Lyken-Segosebe (2017) reported that international students might not be familiar with appropriately using the English language. However, many of these students took some English language courses and passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) before pursuing academic courses in IHE in the US. According to the University of North Georgia (UNG, 2022), the TOEFL evaluates the abilities of students to understand English at the university level. Despite passing this test, some international/foreign-born students still experienced difficulties related to the English language. Because many of these students are English language learners, they are not usually proficient in American English. Lee et al. (2019) claimed that students who lack English language proficiency tend to feel incompetent in college readiness.

Wolf and Phung (2019) related that international students might face some difficulties in their academic programs when the English language is not their primary language, and they are

required to pursue all their academic courses in American English. Academic readiness for

international students includes proficiency in the English language. Chen and Bang (2020)

reported that their qualitative research study explored how preparation for studying in a foreign

country impacted the academic performances of East Asian undergraduate students pursuing

higher education in the US. Chen and Bang (2020) indicated that their research study showed

that most participants revealed that they studied the English language in schools for years in their

countries of origin and still experienced difficulties communicating with their knowledge of

English. Even though these students studied English in their countries, they had to pursue

completing other English language programs to function in IHE in the US. The research study

further found that communicating proficiently in the English language and having knowledge of

American culture helped students succeed academically in higher education in the US (Chen &

Bang, 2020). Abu Rabia (2016) indicated that although some international students pursued ESL

courses in their countries of origin and the US, those courses were insufficient to prepare some

students to be proficient in the language.

One participant in the research study by Abu Rabia (2016) reported that they did not

understand anything in the lecture when participating in ESL courses in the US. The participant

also related that many terminologies were unfamiliar, and they felt like quitting. The author

reported that 80% of the participants said they had poor English language proficiency. O'Connell

and Resuli (2020) related that some participants in their research study reported that their English

language skills were not proficient, so they could clearly explain their ideas at the beginning of

their academic journey in the US. The participants also related that discussing course content

was challenging because the courses were taught in English.

Although some international/foreign-born students from non-English-speaking countries pursued formal English language training, some had no formal training before attending IHE in the US. Gürel-Cennetkuşu (2017) stated that 78.46 percent of international students from a mixed-methods research study did not participate in an English Preparatory School before pursuing higher education in the US. Although these students did not pursue formal English language preparation, they could pass the TOEFL. Based on the performances of these students in IHE in the US, it appeared that these students needed to be better prepared in the English language and may also need additional testing in the language to determine proficiency. Gürel-Cennetkuşu (2017) indicated that the professors of the international students in their research study believed that only 22.22 percent of the students could write well in American English. Lee et al. (2019) related that international students whose primary language is English or who attended high school in the US reported a higher degree of college preparedness than their ESL peers. Therefore, college preparedness for international students pursuing higher education programs in the US should include the English language. If the international/foreign-born students were trained in the English language, they were more likely to be prepared for program courses and may experience decreased stressors related to a lack of understanding of course materials. English language preparedness as a prerequisite before starting IHE may save time and money in pursuing developmental courses in US colleges. English language preparation can help increase student learning outcomes, likely resulting in increased course completion rates and programs.

Unfamiliar Pedagogy and Classroom Environment

Tsevi (2018) stated that their qualitative research study findings revealed that international students experienced academic and non-academic difficulties while attending IHE in the US. Tsevi (2018) further noted that most of the participants in their research study related

that the educational milieu in their countries of origin was teacher-centered compared to the

student-centered milieu in the United States. Furthermore, Moon et al. (2020) reported in their

qualitative research study that "All participants shared that classes in their home nations were

teacher-centered using direct instruction" (p. 40). Therefore, it may be challenging for

international students who grew up attending a school where the teacher is the authoritative

person and students tend to be passive learners to attend a new environment opposite what they

are familiar with.

Shane et al. (2020) claimed that "Another area where substantial difficulties and

problems occur for these students has to do with expectations concerning class participation" (p.

529). It may be challenging for some international/foreign-born students when they are expected

to participate in classes in the US, especially during their first course. O'Connell and Resuli

(2020) stated that one participant from a Chinese culture related that in their culture, they seldom

ask questions in class, and other participants claimed that they do not like to work in groups.

Since group work is expected in some college courses, it was likely that those students had to

learn how to adjust to the activities of the US classrooms. In a teacher-centered classroom, the

teacher is usually the expert, and students do not usually question the teacher's knowledge. In

classrooms with this pedagogy, students tend to listen more than talk, and interactions with the

teacher and peers during class sessions are rare.

On the other hand, students are expected to participate in classroom discussions

individually and in small or large groups in student-centered American classrooms. Bai (2016)

stated that a lack of English proficiency makes it difficult for international students to understand

class content and participate in classroom discussions. It can be challenging for students to

meaningfully contribute to classroom discussions when they do not comprehend the topic or what their peers are contributing.

Additionally, Rivas et al. (2019) indicated that some international students stopped communicating in class due to fear of making mistakes while speaking English. Maeda (2017) stated that participants in their research study claimed they were fearful and embarrassed to make English language mistakes in class because some of their peers laughed at their speech. Maeda (2017) further stated that one participant in their study reported that they feared giving incorrect answers in class because their classmates corrected them. This behavior resulted in reduced expressiveness during class time by the international students. Some participants in the study conducted by Rivas et al. (2019) reported that they must mentally interpret sentences in the English language before speaking. This can cause delays in speaking, which may cause the perception of awkwardness in conversations. Rivas et al. (2019) further explained that students from collectivist countries might wait for directions to follow from the professors rather than ask questions for clarification. This can be problematic for students because US college professors expect students to speak in class and seek clarification if they are befuddled about classroom assignments. These students may complete assignments incorrectly without clarifications, negatively impacting their academic outcomes.

Tsevi (2018) stated that their research study revealed that most participants were overwhelmed by the academic workload. Genc and Sahin (2020) reported that their qualitative research study participants indicated that their educational programs were demanding. Genc and Sahin (2020) also related that their research study showed that graduate programs in the US were more demanding than those in Turkey. Brutt-Griffler et al. (2020) reported that one participant from their qualitative research of Saudi international students reported that they had to write 100

pages in their first semester. The student reported that they wrote approximately 25 pages for each course. The student further claimed that the weekly reading expectation was up to 700 pages. Because the reading workload is less in some schools and universities in the countries of origin of international students, international students are sometimes unprepared for the reading requirements in the US (Brutt-Griffler et al., 2020). As a result, students felt frustrated when they experienced challenges completing the academic workload promptly. Bai (2016) reported that international students spend more time completing homework and other assignments due to language barriers. Consequently, some international students will spend extra time completing the academic workload than their American peers.

Elturki et al. (2019) mentioned that the international students in their descriptive longitudinal research study shared their concerns about completing academic English language courses. Since most program courses are delivered in American English, international students who lack proficiency in the language are at a disadvantage in the classrooms. The students are expected to attend classes prepared (i.e., complete required readings). Language barriers contribute to the following needs that some international students experience: Reading and writing, grammar usage, and understanding of lectures (Elturki et al., 2019). These students have difficulties reading textbooks and other required readings for their courses and completing assignments requiring them to write papers. Brutt-Griffler et al. (2020) and Elturki et al. (2019) found that international students experienced difficulties understanding the reading assignments from their courses due to language barriers. Due to limited English language comprehension, these students may be at a disadvantage in the classroom because of misunderstanding lectures.

Yuan (2017) explained that language barriers that international minority students experience could mislead faculty to have false assumptions about these students' interpersonal

skills, academic performances, and student learning outcomes. Some international students are fearful of speaking in class due to language barriers. Some students are concerned that their peers will make fun of them when they speak, and others are concerned because of their accents and pronunciation of words. This lack of participation may lead to false assumptions of the students because they may be viewed as lacking interpersonal skills.

Language barriers also contributed to a lack of participation in group work and seeking clarification in class. If students are reluctant to participate in group activities and ask questions for clarification, their academic performances may be impacted and reduce student learning outcomes. Jin and Schneider (2019) reported that 173 faculty from a total of 261 related that international students faced numerous challenges due to a lack of English language proficiency. Some faculty in their research study claimed that the lack of proficiency in the English language negatively impacted writing, reading, and listening skills. At the same time, a lack of English language proficiency can impact international/foreign-born students' learning outcomes.

Some international/foreign-born students do not experience writing, reading, or listening difficulties. International/foreign-born students from English-speaking countries are more likely to have fewer problems in the classroom environments than students from countries whose primary language is non-English. However, because these students originated outside of the US, they may be perceived as needing help in reading, writing, and listening. This perception may be inaccurate. International/foreign-born students must be evaluated based on their abilities and not on assumptions.

Financial Challenges

While some international students are excited to travel to the US to pursue higher education, this decision can cause financial difficulties for them and their families. Obtaining a degree in the US can be costly for international students and their families. Vijh (2022) related

that the average annual tuition cost for a public college/university in the US is about $7,000 for

residents and up to $25,000 annually for international students. According to the Harvard

Graduate School of Education (GSE, 2022), the annual tuition cost for graduate students to

attend Harvard University is $53,529. The tuition does not include other expenses such as

housing, books, transportation, and food. Although some international students receive

scholarships from their countries of origin to pursue higher education in the US, some

international students experience financial challenges (Alfaifi et al., 2020; Hunter-Johnson,

2019; Jin & Schneider, 2019; Rabla & Karkouti, 2017). Economic insecurity can be very

difficult for students thousands of miles away from their families. Financial insecurity can be

stressful for students in an unfamiliar environment where they must learn to navigate. The rising

cost of housing, transportation, food, and clothing can be an added burden to students with

financial insecurity, especially students whose visas do not allow them to work in the US.

Cultural Unawareness and Stress

In the US, international students need to learn to adapt to the cultural differences of

American society. They also need to know how to find housing, purchase books, order food,

write papers, take public transportation, participate in classroom activities, and locate resources

on campus, among other things. Relocating to a new country comes with challenges, and

international students are faced with challenges, especially in their first year in the US (Lyken-

Segosebe, 2017). Some international students experienced culture shock when they arrived in the

US because their expectations of the US differed from what they anticipated. Some international

students exhibited cultural knowledge deficits that included how to perform in a culturally

responsive environment (Seyeneh, 2018). Thompson (2018) reported that some international

students experienced difficulty with social integration, and emotional and cultural intelligence

impacted social integration. Some international students expected to find the American culture

based on what was displayed on television in their countries of origin; however, after arriving in

the US, they found that the culture was not exactly what was shown on television or what they

learned in their preparation courses. Some international students reported that they experienced

extreme culture shock due to a lack of support systems in the US (Abu Rabia, 2016). These

students experienced helplessness and isolation as they tried to navigate the American culture.

These international students were likely experiencing helplessness and isolation because they

came from a collective society where decisions were collectively made. In the US, they were

expected to make independent decisions. Many students were away from their parents for the

first time and were not used to living in an individualistic culture where people make

independent decisions rather than collective decisions (Abu Rabia, 2016). Some

international/foreign-born students experienced difficulties with social relationships in the US.

Challenges with social relationships resulted in added stress because the students missed their

friends and family more when they encountered problems forming new relationships in the US.

Abu Rabia (2016) further stated that the weather contributed to culture shock because the winter

months appeared to be very long, and the temperature was colder than the students anticipated.

The classroom environment was also a source of cultural shock and stress for some

international students. The unfamiliar pedagogy and classroom activities were stressful to

international students at times. Cultural shock and stress can cause students to feel isolated;

however, Garcia et al. (2019) revealed that socio-academic integration was the most significant

contributing factor to a sense of belonging. Lyken-Segosebe (2017) indicated that participants in

their research study showed poor social integration at the higher education institution that the

participants attended. Therefore, intentional social integration should be a priority in diverse

classrooms. Kaya (2020) related that their research study found that international students

experienced failure to socialize and make native friends, cultural shock, and feelings of rejection, isolation, and fatigue. Jean (2020) related that some international students had experienced uncertainties, disappointment, sadness, and loneliness while navigating cultural differences in the US. Abu Rabia (2016) and Lyken-Segosebe (2017) explained that international students experienced social and cultural challenges in the US. Hansen et al. (2018) declared that their research study showed that international students experienced high acculturative stress, which can negatively affect their health. Bai (2016) indicated that the pressure to succeed academically in the US sometimes results in increased stress for the students, negatively impacting their health. Bai (2016) further related that international students are usually some of the best academically prepared students in their countries of origin; however, in the US, many students experience difficulties maintaining high performance. Abu Rabia (2016) reported that some international students who identified as females experienced problems attending classes with peers who identified as males. Abu Rabia (2016) further explained that having men and women in the same classroom is a transgression in Arabic society. In Arabic culture, there is gender separation. In the US, those students had to attend classes believing they were sinning. This was likely to cause ongoing stress to the students.

COVID-19 Impact

The novel Corona Virus disease (COVID-19) has affected all sectors of economies worldwide, including the US. The lives of people globally were changed, and people had to learn to adapt to new activities that were once routine and considered a usual way of life. Many people were mandated to wear masks and physically distance themselves from others to help reduce the positivity rate of the disease. COVID-19 has disrupted many organizations and educational systems worldwide and in the US; consequently, international students in the US were adversely

affected (Alaklabri et al., 2021). Fischer and Whatley (2020) reported that US community college international students were among the thousands of students impacted by COVID-19.

The ramifications of COVID-19 caused additional stressors to international students in IHE in the US. COVID-19 ramifications included closing some IHE and moving to the online delivery format for others. Alaklabri et al. (2021) reported that due to the closing of the borders and the travel restriction ban on countries such as China and 27 European countries, where some international students originated from, some students whose colleges were closed were unable to travel home to their countries of origin. Xu et al. (2021) stated that travel restrictions were placed to help prevent the importation of the virus. This closing directly affected international students in the US.

The closing of colleges and universities considerably impacted the students because some institutions' social and support services were no longer accessible due to COVID-19. Therefore, some students were deprived of food and housing due to the pandemic (Fischer & Whatley, 2020). Fischer and Whatley (2020) also reported that the pandemic affected the students' inability to purchase food and access safe accommodations and technology for online classes. The lack of housing during the closing of the colleges was a considerable burden to some international students because some of these students had financial insecurity and could not find new housing if they were available. The students also experienced difficulties accessing the necessary technology for completing online classes. Alaklabri et al. (2021) stated that changing the delivery format of courses from face-to-face to online was very challenging for some students with no prior experience with online classes. The prompt decision to change the delivery format of the courses to online delivery did not include sufficient time for training to work in an online environment. This directly impacted the student's academic performances.

Another challenge the students experienced was the inability to collect funds from their sponsors because the banks were closed due to the pandemic (Alaklabri et al., 2021). Fischer and Whatley (2020) claimed that two participants from their research reported that their sponsors encountered challenges sending money to them due to the closure of the banks.

During the initial quarantine of the virus in the US, Chinese international students experienced criticism for the COVID-19 virus (Xu et al., 2021). Some students were blamed for purchasing too many masks and sending them to China and for eating bats that contributed to the virus (Xu et al. (2021). COVID-19 quarantine time helped heighten unexpected stressors related to government policies based on social distances and non-compliance by some people to safety measures (Xu et al., 2021). During the initial COVID-19 quarantine, safety concerns for the participants were paramount (Xu et al., 2021). At first, the safety concerns were for the participants' families in China; however, as the positivity rate of the virus increased and guidelines from the government and school officials became inconsistent, the safety concerns were more on themselves than their families in China (Xu et al., 2021). The authors related that two participants from the research study related that people had difficulty accessing a doctor and obtaining COVID-19 tests during the initial quarantine. This was a challenging period for the students because life as they knew it had disappeared. The authors also claimed that some participants reported that social and physical isolation had negatively impacted their relationships with professors. Some participants also reported that their English language skills had been reduced due to isolation. Speaking English to their peers and others on campus and the broader society helped improve their abilities to communicate in the English language. The authors also reported that some participants believed their English language skills had regressed during the initial quarantine compared to when they arrived in the US.

Alaklabri et al. (2021) claimed that job opportunities available for students were no longer available due to schools closing. Fischer and Whatley (2020) also related that the loss of on-campus jobs strained international students financially. Some international students are from disadvantaged homes where funds are not readily available to meet all the family's needs; therefore, on-campus job opportunities helped reduce financial burdens for these students. Thus, the job loss for these students caused additional stress. Some families of international students also experienced job loss (Fischer & Whatley, 2020). This further deprived the students of purchasing needed items for everyday living.

US Academic and Immigration Stipulations

International/foreign-born students in the US face various academic and immigration stipulations that can contribute to added stress for these students. These students must comply with numerous educational and immigration regulations while pursuing their education. Therefore, these students must be cognizant of these regulations and guidelines while navigating unfamiliar cultural environments.

Education USA (n.d.) reported three types of student visas, which are named: F, J, and M. Students who come to the US to pursue an undergraduate program usually obtain an F-1 visa. The students must be aware of immigration regulations related to their visa type. Once the students enter the US, all immigration regulations are enforced. Syracuse University (2013) reported that it is the responsibility of international students to ensure that they are always complying with immigration laws while studying in the US. Undergraduate students must be enrolled in at least 12 credits, and graduate students must be enrolled in at least nine credits each semester. US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, 2020) stated that all international students with an F-1 visa must be enrolled in an accredited educational institution full-time. Failure of the students to comply with immigration laws can result in the revocation of students'

visas, and students must leave the US if they are out of visa status. USCIS (2020) indicated that students with F-1 visas cannot work off-campus during their first year of study. USCIS (2020) also stated that off-campus work is regulated by immigration laws that must be adhered to. During circumstances of severe financial hardship, students may petition USCIS for off-campus employment, and these situations are reviewed. Work eligibility may be granted in a case-by-case situation.

Any off-campus training job position must be related to the program of study the student is pursuing. Marbang et al. (2020) reported that international students with F-1 visas can only work 20 hours per week. Marbang et al. (2020) noted that participants reported difficulty with the work restrictions in their qualitative research. These participants were only allowed to work on campus and thought they should be allowed to work off campus. Marbang et al. (2020) also emphasized that international students are responsible for keeping three documents current. Any expiration in any of the documents may result in the termination of their visas. The three documents are a passport, an I-20 form (including a personal, financial report, and school information), and an F-1 visa. These three documents have different expiration dates, and students must ensure that the documents are renewed promptly so they are not out of status. Based on immigration laws and policies, students must educate themselves on how to maintain their visa status so they do not fall out of status. If students become out of immigration status, they will likely return to their countries of origin and forfeit their chances of graduating from their programs of choice in the US.

Critique of Previous Research Methods

As mentioned in Chapter 1, many researchers studied international /foreign-born students and their difficulties while pursuing higher education in the US. Different researchers utilized quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods studies to study the challenges that

international/foreign-born students experienced. This researcher critiqued the methodology of three research studies examining this student population.

Bastein et al. (2018) utilized a quantitative methodology to explore the different impacts of acculturation strategy on international students' psychological and socio-cultural adjustments. The sample size of this research study was 122 participants. The instrument used in data collection was a survey questionnaire. This study showed that attachment to the university community was significantly related to the student's psychological adjustment. Therefore, the more the students immerse themselves into the campus community they experience psychological modification to their new environment. The study's strength included a fair number of participants; however, a weakness is that there needed to be an opportunity for the participants to relate their lived experiences to acculturation or psychological adjustments. While valuable information was obtained from this quantitative research, the direct voices of the participants were excluded from this research study. The authors recommended that a future study that explored the same topic be a mixed-methods research study. They believed that a mixed-methods research study might generate more knowledge about international students. The qualitative portion of the mixed-methods research would likely contain the participants' lived experiences.

A qualitative research study by Hunter-Johnson (2019) investigated factors that impact the experiences of non-traditional adult learners from the Caribbean, specifically the Bahamas. This study also explored the perceived support system these students needed to succeed. The sample size of this study was 15 participants. The findings included financial difficulties, lack of support, and language barriers. The strength of this research study is that it had an adequate sample size for qualitative research and data based on the participants' lived experiences. The

limitations of this study include studying only one country in the Caribbean; therefore, the

findings of this study may not represent international students from the entire Caribbean. The

author of this research study recommended that future research include participants from other

Caribbean countries.

       Gürel-Cennetkuşu (2017) conducted a mixed-methods research study that explored "the

needs, means and successful practices of academic writing in English as a second/foreign

language" (p. 309). The data collection tools for this study included surveys, interviews, and

student writing samples. The sample included both students and faculty who taught the students.

There were 65 graduate students and nine faculty in the sample. The study's findings showed

that 78.46 percent of the graduate students did not attend an English preparatory school. The

results of the study also revealed a disconnection between what the students and the instructors

perceived. The instructors believed that they were giving adequate feedback to students on their

assignments, and the students believed that the feedback they received was inadequate. The

strength of this study included the sample size of 74 participants. However, the number of

faculty was disproportioned compared to the number of students. More faculty in the research

may have yielded a different result. Therefore, a future study could include 50 percent of the

sample students and 50 percent of the faculty. The author did not include any recommendations

for future studies or any limitations.

       The authors of these research studies utilized different research methods in their research

studies. Instruments such as survey questionnaires, interviews, and student writing samples were

used. Limitations of the research studies included the methodology used and the disproportioned

sample size. Future studies with similar topics that follow the recommendations for future studies

may yield different results.

Summary

The literature review on the barriers that impacted international/foreign-born students pursuing higher education programs in the US yielded data showing that international/foreign-born students experienced many barriers. While the literature showed many challenges that international students/foreign-born experienced, there was a knowledge gap in identifying the barriers that international/foreign-born practical nursing students experienced and the specific barriers that affect the completion rates of these students. The review of the literature about the difficulties that international/foreign-born students faced and the impact of the challenges on their academic outcomes revealed the following themes: English Language barriers, Academic Readiness of Students, Unfamiliar Pedagogy and Classroom Environment, Financial Challenges, Cultural Unawareness and Stress, COVID-19 Impact, and US Academic and Immigration Stipulations. The literature showed that the most significant barrier that this population of students experienced was the English Language barrier. International/foreign-born students who lacked English language proficiency experienced many challenges in their studies.

Some of these students were unprepared academically; therefore, some found their courses/programs overwhelming. Some students were unfamiliar with US classrooms' teaching and learning methodologies. Some of these students came from countries where they participated in passive learning, and the interactions in the US classrooms were intimidating to these students. Financial insecurity and a lack of cultural awareness, and stress impacted some students. These students did not escape the ramifications of COVID-19. The closing of schools and the periods of uncertainty affected international students and added stressors for these students. US academic and immigration regulations can be overwhelming to international students. These students must educate themselves on immigration laws related to their visas. The students must be enrolled in school full-time and comply with restrictions on working in the US. The students must also

ensure that all their travel documents are valid. Despite the many challenges that international

students experience in the US, the US remains the most popular country for international

students to pursue higher education. Chapter 3 of this research study will contain the

methodology utilized in data collection.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative phenomenological study explored barriers impacting the completion rate of eight international/foreign-born students pursuing the Practical Nursing Program in a community college in the Midwestern United States. The community college fact book reported that 143 international students from 44 different countries were enrolled at the college within the last two and a half years. The fact book of the college also stated that in 2021, 83% of students were US citizens, 16% of students were non-citizens, and the citizenship of 1% of students was unknown. This information was posted on the college website.

Thousands of international/foreign-born students travel to the United States each year to pursue higher education in IHE. The IIE (2020) related that the United States is the primary global destination for international students to pursue higher education. These students face many challenges, such as English Language barriers, culture shock, unfamiliar pedagogy, financial insecurity, and feelings of rejection and isolation (Abu Rabia, 2016; Jin & Schneider, 2017; Rabla & Karkouti, 2017).

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this research study because it was the best method to gather the participants' lived experiences compared to a survey methodology that may not include current detailed information of the applicants via multiple sources. Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to capture the participants' lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, a qualitative methodology used current data from multiple sources that helped to answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that researchers use qualitative research methodology when a problem needs to be explored. Another rationale for choosing a qualitative method was to capture rich data on the

challenges that international/foreign-born students experienced from the participants via interactions. "An underlying assumption of qualitative research is that rich data is nested in a real context and can be captured only by way of the interactive process between the researcher and the research participants" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 43).

Although there are available research studies on barriers that impact international/foreign-born students, there is a knowledge gap on barriers that impact the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Therefore, this qualitative research study aims to add to the existing literature and help fill the knowledge gap. This researcher also wanted to gather multiple realities from the research study participants and report their lived experiences based on their self-reports. The data gathered from multiple participants demonstrated the triangulation of the research study. Triangulation includes using multiple and different sources to collect data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019). The authors further stated that triangulation shows the trustworthiness of the research study by gathering data from multiple sources. Each participant expressed their own lived experiences concerning the challenges they or they experienced in IHE. Therefore, a quantitative methodology with a single reality would be unsuitable for this research.

Research Design

The research design of this research study was a transcendental phenomenological research study. Peoples (2021) emphasized that phenomenological research aims at understanding people's lived experiences. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a phenomenological study describes the common meaning of the lived experiences of several participants who had experienced a phenomenon. "Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenology' (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). Phenomenology may be considered a philosophy and a method (Bloomberg & Volpe,

2019). Peoples (2021) stated that phenomenology is grounded in philosophy and phenomenological study focused on understanding participants' lived experiences. Therefore, this research design sought to find out what all participants who experienced the phenomenon shared in common.

Neubauer et al. (2019) reported that phenomenology is considered a research approach that can be utilized to help researchers understand inquiry. Phenomenological research helps researchers understand people's lived experiences and "identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by the research participants" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 54). Therefore, the lived experiences that were experienced and reported by the participants are vital in phenomenological research studies. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) further stated that phenomenological research studies are both descriptive and interpretive. Therefore, the participants' lived experiences are described, and the researchers can interpret the meaning of the lived experiences based on the collected data.

Moustakas (1994) related that phenomenological studies included a comprehensive study of a small number of participants to develop patterns and relationships. The sample size of phenomenological research studies may vary from three to four to 10-15 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transcendental Phenomenology Framework

While conducting a transcendental phenomenological research study, it is imperative that the researcher brackets themselves so that they do not include their personal experiences with the phenomenon in the research. This is done to help exclude biases. It is also essential that epoche, phenomenological reduction, horizon, and intentionality are addressed (Peoples, 2021).

Epoche

The concept of epoche includes bracketing one's own experiences as early as possible to be able to gain a new viewpoint of the phenomenon; "however, this state is seldomly achieved" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 55). During the analysis process, the researcher abstained from presupposition or judgments about the researched phenomenon (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). The researcher set aside their experiences as foreign-born student and their worldview of barriers that impact international/foreign-born students to focus on the data collected from the participants. "Epoche requires a new point of view in order to avoid prejudgment when we face a familiar object" (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015, p. 6).

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction is achieved during this analysis process. During this process, the researcher describes the participants' experiences through textural language (Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015). In this phase, the data is cleaned of repetitive words or sentences and irrelevant information.

Horizon

The horizon addresses the researcher's experiences with the data during analysis. Horizon also refers to the meaning units that were derived from the data (Peoples, 2021; Yuksel & Yildirim, 2015).

Intentionality

Intentionality is related to how the researcher focuses on the data during the analysis (Peoples, 2021). During this phase, the researcher intentionally focuses on the data to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

Research Questions

According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), the researcher must decide if the research question is worth researching and whether the data gathered is worth the time placed into the research. Based on the literature reviews that were completed about barriers impacting international/foreign-born students and this researcher's firsthand experiences both as a foreign-born student in higher education and a faculty who facilitates international/foreign-born practical nursing students in an institution of higher education, this researcher determined that this qualitative research would be worthwhile because it will likely help to fill the knowledge gap by identifying barriers that affect the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. This research may also provide relevant information to administrators, faculty, and other stakeholders who have an invested interest in the academic performances of this population of students. Although the focus of this research study was on international/foreign-born students who were pursuing a Diploma program in a Practical Nursing Program in the Midwestern US, the research questions included barriers that impacted the population of international/foreign-born students because practical nursing students belong to the international/foreign-born student population. The primary research question and sub-questions are below:

- Among practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college, what barriers impact international/foreign-born students' completion rates in higher education?

a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?

b. What situations/resources influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?

c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?

d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in

improving their completion rates?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the barriers that impact the completion rate of international/foreign-born students pursuing higher education in the US. Based on the participants' self-reported lived experiences, the research study sought to identify specific challenges that affected the completion rate of the participants. Although many research studies identified difficulties experienced by international/foreign-born students, there is a knowledge gap in research studies that utilized international/foreign-born participants from Practical Nursing Programs in the US. This research study explored the specific barriers that the international/foreign-born participants experienced during their quest to earn a Diploma in Practical Nursing in the US. Other researchers who have studied barriers that affect international students included Chen and Bang (2020). The authors reported that participants from their research study found that they could not communicate with the English language they learned in their countries of origin. Therefore, those participants had to pursue further English Language courses before they had the level of proficiency needed to pursue their undergraduate programs in the US. While the participants in the study sought additional English courses, they still reported that the English language was still a challenge for them while they pursued their undergraduate programs. The authors also stated that the participants said that their lack of English language proficiency negatively impacted their academic performances.

As stated in Chapters 1 and 2, international students face multiple challenges, including pedagogical differences in the classroom setting (Lee et al., 2018). Some of these students are from countries where memorization is the primary study strategy. This study strategy is not very helpful in some courses where students are expected to utilize critical thinking to solve problems and function at the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy. Students in institutions of higher

education in the US are expected to be able to perform the skills of *applying, analyzing,*

evaluating, and *creating* while completing assigned coursework in their specific programs

(Armstrong, 2010). While memorization can be helpful in some courses and aspects of other

courses, students in higher education in the US need to function at the higher levels of Bloom's

Taxonomy to be successful in their programs of choice.

The academic workload in IHE in the US can be overwhelming for international/foreign-

born students who may not have experienced similar workloads in their home countries. Tsevi

(2018) stated that most of the participants in their research study reported that they were

flabbergasted by the academic workload in their programs. This can contribute to stressors for

international/foreign-born students and may likely impact their academic performance.

Although many research studies are related to international/foreign-born students, there is

a knowledge gap on self-reported challenges related to the completion rate of specific courses

such as Practical Nursing courses. This research study intended to add knowledge to the existing

literature that addresses the difficulties that international/foreign-born students face while

pursuing higher education in the US. This research study will also add new knowledge about

international/foreign-born practical nursing students' challenges while completing a Diploma

program.

Sample and Population

This qualitative research study sought eight participants via purposeful sampling.

Purposeful sampling is also known as purposive sampling (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Creswell and

Poth (2018) recommended three to four participants to 10-15 participants in a phenomenological

study. The rationale for including eight participants in this research study was to obtain more

data that may yield more information that could be added to the existing knowledge about the

barriers that impact international/foreign-born students. The rationale for using this type of

sampling was to ensure that the participants met the requirement of being international students

or that the participants were born outside of the US and completed high school outside of the US.

A survey was included with the recruitment letter to obtain the participant's self-report on

completing high school before migrating to the US. The survey was available to 25 students in

one section of the second-semester students in the Practical Nursing Program at the Midwestern

community college. The survey included questions on completion rates and course challenges.

See Appendix G for the survey questions. Creswell and Poth (2018) related that purposeful

sampling is utilized in qualitative research. The authors further reported that purposive sampling

"means that the inquirer selects students and sites for study because they can purposefully inform

an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell &

Poth, 2018, p. 326). To obtain the relevant data related to the research question, this researcher

purposely included participants from the intended population of international/foreign-born

students at a site that offered a Diploma in Practical Nursing. The participants in this research

study differ in their unique cultures and values. Although participants may originate from the

same country, each participant may vary in how they perceive their lived experiences. Fraenkel

et al. (2019) reported that purposive sampling is different from convenience sampling because, in

purposive sampling, the researcher selects the sample that will yield the required data. Fraenkel

et al. (2019) related that in a convenience sample, the researchers study those who are available;

however, for this research study, the participants had to meet the requirements of being

international /foreign-born students who had completed high school outside of the US.

Therefore, this researcher purposely included the participants based on the criteria of this

research study.

Setting

The community college in the Midwestern US is in a mostly quiet neighborhood. It is near two interstate highways and a main road where students can commute to the college using public transport. The college lies on the top of several acres of land that slope to the north side of the property. The landscape is usually decked with roses of various colors, well-trimmed trees, and a well-manicured lawn during spring and summer. The spacious classrooms contain up-to-date technology, such as computers, projectors, and monitors. The college also housed a state-of-the-art simulation center replicating a hospital with an isolation room, intensive care unit, doctor's office, nurses' station, pharmacy, and neonatal intensive care unit. The simulation center also mimics a long-term-care facility with geriatric equipment and a conference room for simulated family members. All mannequins in this lab are high-fidelity. High-fidelity mannequins are computerized and can be programmed to mimic human responses to many disease conditions. The practical nursing students have access to the simulation center.

Due to confidentiality, the name of the community college was not disclosed in this research study. The population of the city where the Midwestern community college is located includes 57% White, 19% Asian, 16% Black or African American, and 5% of people who identified as belonging to two or more races. The fact book of the college revealed that in 2021, 83% of the student population were US citizens, 16% were non-citizens, and the citizenship of 1% of the population was unknown. The Midwestern community college website related that 65% of the student population were students of color in 2021. The fact book also stated that 60% of the student population identified as females, 39% identified as males, and the gender identity of 1% of the students was unknown. Sixty percent of the students were first-generation students.

This college has a long history of admitting foreign-born students. The website showed that the college enrolled 143 international students from 44 countries within the past two and a half years. The classrooms in the Practical Nursing Department were well-equipped with modern equipment, small class sizes, and a diverse student body, and the faculty in the nursing program reflected the students that were served. In spring 2022, 75% of the full-time faculty in the Practical Nursing Program were people of color. The institutional research department of the college revealed that of the total number of foreign-born students in the Practical Nursing Program, 88% identified as females, 11% as males, and the gender of 1% was unknown. The institutional research department also disclosed that of the total foreign-born students in the nursing program, 66% were US citizens, and 33% were other/refugee/asylee/resident aliens. The college website also revealed that the Practical Nursing Diploma could be completed in three semesters.

Procedures

The procedures were written in a step-by-step order so that another researcher may adopt these procedures when completing a similar research study.

Participant Selection

The sampling method that was used for this qualitative research study was purposeful. As previously mentioned in the section of this study entitled *Sample and Population,* Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasized that purposeful sampling enables the researcher to choose suitable participants, sites, and sample sizes for the research study. Creswell and Poth further stated that purposeful sampling allows researchers to intentionally sample people from whom they will generate data that will inform them about the research problem. The participants self-identified their nationalities and or countries of origin and where they completed high school in a survey.

The link for the survey was posted with the recruitment letter so that the potential participants would have access to it.

The Practical Nursing Program had two sections for second-semester students in the fall of 2022. The recruitment letter with the link to the initial survey was posted in the D2L Brightspace Medical-Surgical Nursing course shell in the section of the second-semester students that this researcher was not facilitating. The students who enter the practical nursing program are considered second-semester students. During their first semester, they were outside of the program, completing their prerequisite courses. The letter was posted by the instructor who was teaching the students in that section. See Appendices E & G for the recruitment letter and survey questions. The rationale for the initial survey was to identify participants who self-identified as foreign-born students who completed high school outside of the US. Other vital information, such as course challenges, was gathered from this survey. The consent form was then sent to all students via email, which was provided by the students who met the criteria for participating in the research study. See Appendix B for the consent form. The students were informed that participating in the research study was voluntary in the recruitment letter. The selected students were sent the consent form via email and were instructed to return the signed form by email by the specific deadline indicated in the email.

Sample Size

Creswell and Poth (2018) related that the sample size of phenomenological research studies differs in size from three to four participants to 10-15 participants. The sample size for this qualitative research study was eight participants. The rationales for choosing eight participants were to gather extensive data so that themes could be identified and various viewpoints could be obtained. The literature review revealed qualitative researchers with sample sizes of five to six participants. Jean (2020) reported that the sample size for their qualitative

research study was five participants, and Moon et al. (2020) studied six participants in their qualitative research study.

The sample size for this qualitative research study was selected from the target population of international/foreign-born students pursuing a Diploma in Practical Nursing. The international/foreign-born students in the research study completed high school outside of the US. Students who completed high school in the US tend to be more familiar with the teaching pedagogy of the US. This research study focused on students more likely to have experienced a teacher-centered pedagogy.

Protection of Participants

The names of the participants were not used in this qualitative research study. The letters of the alphabet from A to H were used to replace the given names of the participants. This research study included demographic data such as age range, gender, and country of origin. Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory, age and gender were obtained to help evaluate students' transition. The country of origin was included to help the readers know where the international/foreign-born students originated. Holland and Linvil (2019) explained that the primary characteristic of protecting participants in a research study is to assure participants that their personal information will be protected. The name and state of the community college were not included in this research study to help strengthen the anonymity of the participants. The confidentiality agreement between the participants and the researcher was included in the consent form approved by the Internal Review Board, Minnesota State University Moorhead, that approved this research study. Data collected from the participants were kept in a personal computer locked with a private password known only to the researcher. The collected data will be held for approximately five years.

Instrumentation

Creswell and Poth (2018) reported that the researcher utilizes different forms of

qualitative data, such as interviews and surveys, to understand a phenomenon comprehensively.

The instruments for this phenomenological study included the recruitment survey, Schlossberg's

Transition Theory questionnaire (taking stock questionnaire), and a semi-structured interview.

The survey was utilized to help determine the eligibility of participants for the research study and

to gather information about course challenges that participants may have experienced. The taking

stock questionnaire was used to determine the coping strategy of the participants. This survey

was sent to the participants via email after the consent forms were signed and returned to the

researcher. This questionnaire was completed anonymously in Qualtrics. The rationale for

choosing to have participants complete the survey anonymously was to allow the participant

privacy to answer personal questions about their support systems and coping strategies. Murdoch

et al. (2014) related that anonymous survey methods seem to gather greater admission of

sensitive information when compared to non-anonymous survey methods. The semi-structured

interviews were scheduled and completed during September and October of 2022. Bloomberg

and Volpe (2019) explained that interviews are usually chosen as the main instrument in

qualitative research studies because they can collect thick and rich data. The semi-structured

interview consisted of 12 questions related to the research questions. A copy of the interview

questions is in Appendix A. The rationale for choosing the semi-structured interviews included

collecting rich, thick narratives of the participants' lived experiences and the opportunity for the

participants to explain information to the researcher. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) related that an

interview "offers researchers an opportunity to clarify statements and probe for additional

information" (p. 193). Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) further stated that semi-structured

interviews obtain more information on a specific topic. The interviews were conducted

individually via Zoom. Briggs et al. (2012) reported that online interviews included individual or

group options. See Table 1.2 below for the order in which the instruments were utilized:

Table 1.2

Timeline & Instrumentation Association to Research Question/Rationale

Timeline	Instrument	Research Question/Rationale
Fall Semester	Short Survey	To determine participant eligibility for the research study and obtained information for the primary research question
Fall Semester	Taking Stock Questionnaire (Related to Schlossberg's Transition Theory)	To determine the position in transition and the evaluation information for the *Four S System*
Fall Semester	Semi-Structured Interview	All research questions and sub-questions

Credibility

Briggs et al. (2012) related that credibility refers to evaluating a document for accuracy.

The authors further stated that credibility also depicts the accuracy of reports and whether they

reflect the true meanings of the participants. Each participant fact-checked the words that were

received from participants. This ensured the accuracy of the statements about the participants'

lived experiences. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) stated that credibility reveals whether the

researcher's portrayals of the participants match the participants' perceptions. Therefore, it was

imperative to have the participants check the data collected about them to verify that the data

depicts their lived experiences.

Bracketing

The researcher of this qualitative research study was a foreign-born student in a Practical

Nursing Program; therefore, it was essential for the researcher to bracket herself by not allowing

her lived experiences to influence the data of this study. The researcher of this study included

disclosure statements about her experiences as a foreign-born student in Appendix I to establish

transparency for the readers. The researcher was aware that this research study was about the

participants, and only their lived experiences should be included in the research study. Therefore,

the researcher bracketed her personal experiences as a foreign-born student in higher education

in the US to report the participants' lived experiences. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that

bracketing does not take the researcher entirely out of the research study; however, it allows the

researcher to set aside their personal experiences with the phenomenon and focus on the

participants' experiences.

Dependability

Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) reported that the research must warrant that the research

procedure is documented, rational, and traceable to ensure dependability. The data for this

research was dependable because the collected data answered the research questions. The

procedure for data collection in this study was explained in the *Data Collection* section (p.61) of

this research study. Other researchers should be able to replicate the data collection procedure

utilized in this study to perform a similar qualitative research study.

Trustworthiness

Triangulation of data was achieved for this qualitative research study. This was done by

obtaining data about the same phenomenon from multiple participants via interviews and

questionnaires. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) explained that data triangulation includes obtaining

multiple participants' different perspectives and experiences. The authors explained that

triangulation strategies establish the trustworthiness of research studies. The member check of

the collected data was performed to ensure the participants and their lived experiences were

accurately documented. A committee of four people evaluated the data collected for this

research. Two of the members were my peers (i.e., one member was a student in the Doctoral

Program that the researcher was pursuing, and the other member was a coworker). Member-

checking of the written transcript of each interview was checked by the participant of the

interview for accuracy. The transcript was sent to each participant via email. See the member-

checking memo in Appendix F. The researcher was involved in reflexivity throughout the

research study process. The researcher participated in detailed notetaking about assumptions and

interpretations of data. The researcher ensured that her personal lived experiences were not part

of the findings of this research study throughout the research process.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was completed, in the summer of 2022, with four foreign-born students who

attended the Midwestern community college. These participants were not included in the

research study. The pilot study was completed before the data collection for the research study.

"The single most effective strategy to minimize problems is to ensure that you pilot your

instruments" (Briggs et al., 2012). The rationales for the pilot study were to evaluate if the

research instruments were effective and if the questions were understood. The questionnaires and

semi-structured interviews yielded appropriate data based on the participants' lived experiences.

The participants were asked to give feedback on the questions, and no participant suggested any

modifications to the questions. Based on the data that were collected, it was determined that the

participants understood the questions in the research instruments.

Data Collection

Before data collection was initiated, this researcher obtained approval to conduct the

research from the Institutional Review Board, Minnesota State University Moorhead. Creswell

and Poth (2018) compared data collection to a succession of related activities to collect the best

possible data to answer the research questions. This researcher participated in a sequence of

interrelated events in the data collection process for this qualitative research study. Creswell and

Poth indicated that a vital step in data collection includes finding participants and suitable

locations to study. The location for this research was chosen based on the researcher's

knowledge of the college serving international/foreign-born students. Approval for completing

the research study at the college was requested and approved by the college.

The researcher also facilitated international/foreign-born students in their pursuits to

complete their program in practical nursing. The researcher chose purposeful sampling because

the researcher included participants in the research study who self-identified as

international/foreign-born students. A recruitment letter with the link to the short survey was

posted into the D2L Brightspace Medical-Surgical Nursing course shell of the second section of

the second-semester practical nursing students in the Diploma program at the Midwestern

community college. The survey was posted by the faculty of the Medical-Surgical Nursing

course. The faculty was asked by the researcher to post the recruitment letter in their course

because the researcher did not have access to that course. One of the rationales for the survey

was to ensure that the participants included in the study had completed high school outside of the

US. The survey also gathered data relating to completion rates of nursing courses, and

information on course challenges was also collected from the initial survey questionnaire. The

participants for this research study were selected from participants who completed the initial

survey. Thirteen of 25 students completed the initial survey, and eight of the thirteen students met the criteria for the research study; therefore, five students did not meet the criteria.

The consent form for the research study was sent via email to the participants who were selected from data collected by the initial survey questionnaire. The participants were given seven days to return the signed consent form via email or in person. Once the signed consent forms were returned, the eight participants who met the criteria of international/foreign-born students and completed high school outside of the US were selected. To decrease bias, the participants for this study were selected from the section of the second-semester students that the researcher was not facilitating. During the fifth week of the semester, the participants completed a questionnaire that collected data to evaluate their transition using the *Taking Stock* -The *Four S System* that was related to Schlossberg's Transition Theory. The link for the survey was sent to the applicants via email. Appointments with each participant were set up via Zoom. Zoom is a video conferencing platform and was selected for the semi-structured interview because of the ability to record and receive a written transcript. The participants were informed that the interview would be recorded and the duration would be approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were completed within eight weeks of the fall semester. See Table 2: *Data Collection Timeline* below: All collected data were stored in a personal computer with a password entry known only to the researcher. The hardcopy notes of the researcher were locked in a file cabinet, and only the researcher had access to the keys.

Table 2

Data Collection Timeline

Fall Semester	Source of Evidence	Activity
2nd Week	Recruitment Letter and Survey	Recruitment Letter with Survey posted on D2L Brightspace
4th Week	Consent Form	Consent form was sent via email
5th Week	Taking Stock Questionnaire	Sent out questionnaire via email.
8th Week	Semi-Structured Interview	Interviews completed.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2018) related that the analysis process includes organizing the data, reading the data thoroughly, locating themes, displaying the data, and interpreting the data. It was imperative that the data were organized and the analysis was conducted sequentially. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) claimed that qualitative analysis is a progressive process that brings order, organization, and meaning to the volume of collected data. The Data Analysis Spiral of Creswell and Poth (2018) and the phenomenological framework were utilized to complete the data analysis of this qualitative research study. See Appendix C, Figure 1, and Table 2.1 below:

Figure 1

Creswell and Poth (2018) Data Analysis Spiral
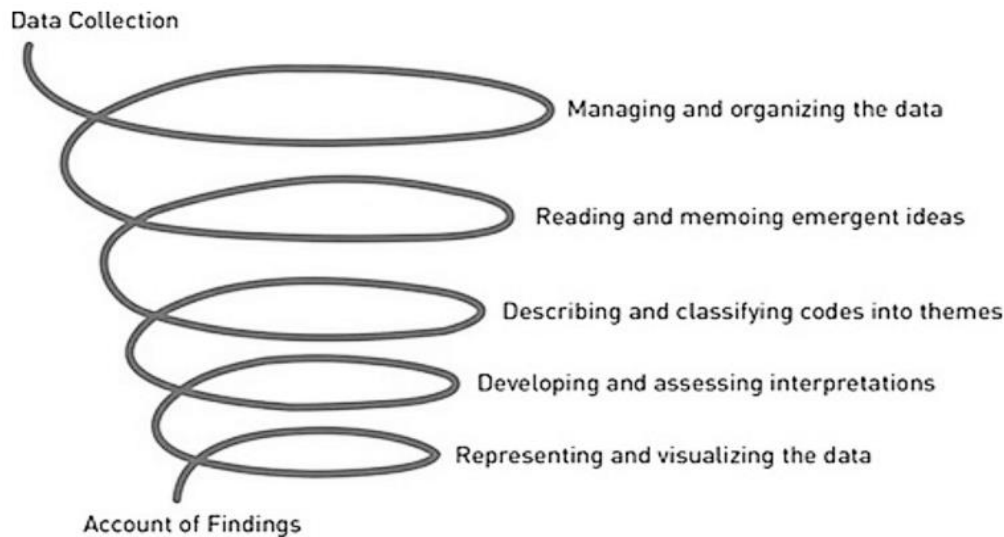
The spiral sections used in the data analysis were: managing and organizing data, reading and memoing emergent ideas, describing and classifying themes, developing and accessing interpretations, and representing and visualizing the data.

Managing and Organizing Data

The transcript for each interview was downloaded from Zoom and fact-checked against the recorded data and the notetaking of the researcher. Member check of data was completed and cleared by participants. A file folder was created and named *Qualitative Phenomenological Study*. This folder housed the individual files of each participant. The individual files were named based on the pseudonyms assigned to each participant.

Reading and Memoing Emergent Ideas

The collected data was read online at first, then printed and read multiple times. The information was read through several times to get a sense of the data. While reading the data, this researcher wrote memos in the margins of the data and formed preliminary codes. Creswell and

Poth (2018) related that writing memos in the margins of the notes help in the discovery of the data. The authors explained that "memos are short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur to the reader" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 188). The memos helped this researcher make sense of the collected data. Each time the data were analyzed, new ideas emerged from the data. The printed data were stored in a locked file cabinet when the researcher was not working with them.

Describing and Classifying Themes

During this phase of the analysis process, this researcher began to describe, categorize, and decipher the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Detailed descriptions of the data were formulated and written. From the detailed descriptions, codes started to emerge from the data. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) noted that codes are a form of classification. The researcher wrote down the codes and the supporting data in a table. Patterns in the data were recorded, codes that appeared necessary were highlighted, and why they seemed important was written. Themes were then formulated from the codes and expanded codes. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended developing five to six codes from research data. Therefore, this researcher developed five themes from the initial codes and supporting data. During this phase, the epoche related to the researcher's personal experiences was described, and the phenomenon's essence was created.

Developing and Assessing Interpretations

During this data analysis phase, this researcher interpreted the patterns found in the data. Significant statements were identified from the data, and meaning units were formed. This researcher also analyzed the themes and categories created from the data. A table was used to show the patterns and relationships to the codes and themes. This researcher also used interpretation to determine what was learned from the collected data. In this phase, the researcher also showed how the interpreted data relates to the findings of other researchers who contributed to the literature on barriers that impact international/foreign-born students in IHE in the US.

Representing and Visualizing the Data

The researcher utilized tables to illustrate the codes, themes, and supporting information from the collected data. Tables and narrative texts were also used to show how the collected and interpreted data answered the semi-structured interview questions and how the questions were related to the research questions. The tables used included research questions with participants' responses that had quotes from the interviews, data analysis with notes from the transcripts and relevant codes, and data analysis with codes, expanded codes, and themes. During this phase, the researcher created textural and structural descriptions, and the essence of the phenomenon was created from the combination of the descriptive contents.

Alignment of the Data Analysis Sections to the Phenomenological Approach

Table 2.1 shows how the steps of the data analysis of this phenomenological research align with Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Sections.

Table 2.1

Alignment of Data Analysis Sections to the Phenomenological Approach

Data Analysis Sections	Phenomenology
Managing and organizing the data	Create and organize data files
Reading and memoing emergent data	Read the text, make notes in the margin, and form preliminary codes
Describing and classifying codes into themes	Describe personal experience through epoche and describe the essence of the phenomenon
Developing and assessing interpretations	Developed significant statements and group statements into meaning units
Representing and visualizing the data	Textural and structural descriptions were created, and the essence of the phenomenon was developed

(Creswell & Poth, 2018)

Taking Stock Questionnaire

The taking stock questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants to determine their transition based on Schlossberg's Transition Theory. Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral was used to analyze the open-ended questions on the survey, and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic data.

Ethical Consideration

During each section of this research study, including the data analysis section, the researcher ensured that ethical considerations were implemented to protect the identity and prevent harm to the participants. Creswell and Poth's (2018) framework on ethics was adapted to ensure that ethical practices were followed throughout the research study. Before the research study began, approval to conduct the research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board, Minnesota State University Moorhead. This researcher also completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program Certificate in Social & Behavioral Research. The content of this course included the protection and ethical consideration of participants during research studies. See Appendix J for the CITI Program Certificate.

The names of the participants were not used in the collected data. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, and these pseudonyms were placed on the data to be analyzed. The letters for the alphabet from A to H were used to replace the names of the participants to ensure confidentiality. Member checking of data was completed with participants to ensure that the data represented their lived experiences. Member checking included having the participants check the written details of their interviews to ensure that the interviews' records reflected their lived experiences. The participants were allowed to submit changes or add to their interviews' written transcripts. However, no changes were made to the transcripts by the participants. The transcripts

were sent to the participants via email. A copy of the member checking memo sent to the applicants can be found in Appendix F.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included utilizing participants from one community college. A qualitative phenomenological study design bounded to one college may not represent the population of international/foreign-born practical nursing students at other community colleges. Therefore, a future phenomenological study with larger sample size and participants from multiple colleges may yield different results that better represent the population of international/foreign-born students pursuing Practical Nursing Programs in the US. Another limitation of this research study is that the participants were not selected from all the second-semester practical nursing students because the researcher was teaching one section of the Practical Nursing courses. The students whom the researcher taught during the period when this research was conducted were not included in the research study. The recruitment letter with the survey was not posted for these students to access.

Summary

The methodology of this research study was qualitative, and the research design was a transcendental phenomenological study. This qualitative phenomenological study aimed to identify barriers that impact the completion rate of foreign-born students pursuing a Diploma in Practical Nursing Program in the Midwestern US. The sample size of this research was eight participants, and purposeful sampling was utilized to select applicants. The instrumentation for the research study included a recruitment survey, a questionnaire, and a semi-structured interview. The data analysis process adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral and phenomenological framework, which manages and organizes the data and represents and visualizes the data. Creswell and Poth's (2018) framework for ethical considerations was applied

throughout the research study to ensure that the participants were protected. The findings of this research study are presented in Chapter 4, and a discussion of the results can be found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction to Findings

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to explore the barriers that impacted the completion rates of international/foreign-born practical nursing students pursuing higher education in a community college in the Midwestern US. Therefore, the lived experiences of eight participants were collected, analyzed, and synthesized. This chapter includes an overview of the research study, the key findings from a transition questionnaire relating to Schlossberg's Transition Theory and semi-structured interviews, and the conclusion of the findings. The findings of this qualitative research study addressed the research problem of identifying barriers that impact the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. The results of this study answered the following research question and sub-questions:

- Among practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college, what barriers impact international/foreign-born students' completion rates in higher education?

    a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?

    b. What situations influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?

    c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?

    d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in improving their completion rates?

Data collection for this research study was conducted in September and October of 2022. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used to help interpret the collected data from the *Taking Stock-The Four S System* Questionnaire to help determine how the participants were transitioning and how barriers impacted them while pursuing higher education in the US. See Appendix H. Open coding, also known as inductive coding, was utilized in this research. Inductive codes emerge from the data, while deductive codes are predetermined codes (Medlyan, n.d.). Deductive coding was not utilized because this type of coding is predetermined, and the researcher wanted codes that emerged from the data rather than looking for information that matched preconceived codes. This type of coding was not used to help eliminate preconceived biases. Manual coding was chosen over data analysis software because the researcher wanted to immerse herself in the data to understand the participants' lived experiences better. This type of coding also helped the researcher to become familiar with the collected data to help identify the essence of the phenomenon. Peoples (2021) emphasized that "When using qualitative data analysis software, researchers can view transcripts as data rather than dwelling on what was said in the interview texts to ascertain the essence of the phenomenon being studied" (p. 66). Additionally, content analysis was used to analyze the transcripts. The content analysis included describing, interpreting, categorizing, labeling, and thematic analyzing (Medlyan, n.d.). Other analysis processes that included Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral and Transcendental Phenomenological Framework were utilized in the analysis process of this research study.

Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain qualified participants for this research study because the researcher could decide on the criteria that each participant must meet to be a

qualified participant for the study. Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to intentionally sample a group of students that could best inform the researcher about the research problem of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A recruitment survey was made available to a group of 25 students which the researcher was not facilitating/teaching. The recruitment survey was included in the recruitment letter that was posted in a Medical-Surgical Nursing course shell located on the D2L Brightspace platform. The survey was posted by the faculty of the course during the week of August 29, 2022. See Appendix E. The faculty was asked by the researcher to post the recruitment letter in their course because the researcher did not have access to that course. A total of 13 responses were received from the survey, and a total of eight respondents met the selection criteria of the research study. Five respondents were eliminated because they did not meet all the criteria. To qualify as a participant in this research study, all participants needed to be foreign-born, attended and completed high school outside of the United States, and pursued the Diploma in Practical Nursing at the Midwestern community college. The eight qualified participants were contacted, consent forms were signed, and interview dates were set up. Pseudonyms using letters of the Alphabet from A to H were assigned to the participants.

The sample size for this qualitative research study was eight participants (i.e., seven women and one man). Creswell and Poth (2018) stated that the sample size for a phenomenological study "may vary in size from 3 to 4 individuals to 10 to 15" (p. 76). Three (37.5%) participants were in the 18-28 age range, three (37.5%) participants were in the 29-39 age range, and two (25%) participants were in the 40-50 age range. The participants originated from five countries: See Table 3 below:

Table 3

Demographic Information

Participant	Country of Birth	Primary Language
A	Somalia	Somali
B	Ethiopia	Amharic
C	Columbia	Spanish
D	Ethiopia	Amharic
E	Nepal	Nepali
F	Myanmar	Burmese
G	Ethiopia	Amharic
H	Nepal	Nepali

Note. N=8

The highest number of participants originated from Ethiopia (i.e., three out of eight or 37.5%), and the second highest number originated from Nepal (i.e., two out of eight or 25%). Six (75%) participants reported that they belonged to the middle socioeconomic class, and two (25%) participants indicated they belonged to the low socioeconomic class. All participants reported that the English language was not their primary language. The primary languages of the participants included the following: Amharic, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish. All participants, except one, stated that the courses in their high schools were taught in British English. All participants started the Practical Nursing Program at the Midwestern community college in the fall of 2022.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's Transition Theory was utilized to examine how the participants transitioned in the Practical Nursing Program at the Midwestern community college. According to Anderson et al. (2012), a transition theory is a typical form of a systematic framework that can help people experiencing transitions. This framework helped identify where the participants were in the transition process, how they perceived themselves, their support systems, and coping

strategies. Each research participant completed a questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed anonymously via Qualtrics. The questions in the questionnaire were aligned with Schlossberg's *Four S System*. Flowers and Reczynski (2015) related that the *Four S System* is one of three components that Schlossberg created to help students transition. Schlossberg's *Four S System* components are Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies. Each component will be expounded on and shown how each emerged within this research study.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Situation

During the situation component, the participants identified conditions such as role change and who was responsible for the conditions that they were experiencing. All participants were students in a Practical Nursing Program and were all enrolled starting in the fall of 2022. All participants experienced role change because they added nursing students to their multiple roles. All participants reported that they experienced the following challenges: Time Management, Language, and Financial. Based on the data from this survey, the researcher found these challenges to be emerging themes.

Only one (12.5%) participant wrote that the challenges that they were experiencing were anticipated. One (12.5%) participant narrated that they were responsible for the challenges that they were experiencing. Another (12.5%) participant reported that no one was responsible for the challenges they were experiencing. One (12.5%) participant re-counted that multiple factors were responsible for the challenges that they were experiencing. Two (25%) participants specified that the situation that they were experiencing was responsible for the challenges. The remaining two (25%) participants identified the challenges that they were experiencing; however, they did not indicate who or what was responsible for the challenges. Four (50%) participants described the challenges that they were experiencing as good. One (12.5%)

participant described the challenges as bad, and three (37.5%) participants described the

challenges as neutral.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Self

Self is the second component of Schlossberg's Four S System. The data in this section

included demographic information. The participants were not traditional college students who

graduated from high school and entered college during the same year of graduation. Adams and

Corbett (2010) related that traditional college students are between the ages of 18-22 years and

enter college after graduating high school. All participants were working adults who were in the

following age ranges: Three (37.5%) participants were in the 18-28 age range, three (37.5%)

participants were in the 29-39 age range, and two (25%) participants were in the 40-50 age

range. Six (75%) participants reported being in the middle socioeconomic class, and two (25%)

identified that they belonged to the low socioeconomic class. All participants originated from

countries where their cultural practices comprised the majority of the population. All participants

described their health as either good or excellent (i.e., three out of eight (37.5%) good and five

out of eight (62.5%) excellent). Seven (87.5%) participants identified as women, and one

(12.5%) identified as a man. Three (37.5%) participants described themselves as optimistic, two

(25%) participants reported that they were resilient, and three (37.5%) participants reported that

they were spiritual.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Support

Support is the third component of Schlossberg's Four S System. The participants

mentioned, in the survey, that people or institutions/communities that supported them included

family, the TRIO program, church, and friends. TRIO programs are usually federal programs in

IHE that were created to recognize and deliver services for individuals from disadvantaged

backgrounds. Some target populations receiving TRIO services include low-income and first-generation college students (US Department of Education, 2022).

One participant reported that they received help from their siblings, and another reported that they received help and support from their local church, family, and friends.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Strategies

Strategies are the fourth and final component of Schlossberg's Four S System. The participants reported several coping strategies that they utilized to help them manage stressful or challenging situations. The coping strategies included the following: listening to music, prioritizing tasks, praying and resting, staying positive, creating a plan to strengthen skills and reduce weaknesses, exercising, and effective communication. One participant said they managed their time by prioritizing and doing self-care activities. Another participant said they coped with their challenges by analyzing situations, designing plans to strengthen skills and reduce weak areas, and evaluating what works.

<div align="center">

Research Instruments

</div>

The primary research instrument was the semi-structured interview questions. These questions were formulated to answer the research question (RQ) and sub-questions (SQ). There were 12 interview questions. See the interview questions that were related to the RQ and SQ in Table 3.1. A pilot study was completed with four participants who met the criteria for the participants of this qualitative research study. All four pilot participants were foreign-born students who attended the Midwestern community college. The results from this pilot study showed that the research instruments were valid and reliable because the data that were generated from the taking stock questionnaire and the semi-structured interview questions answered the questions in these two instruments. Each participant was asked to provide feedback related to any questions that were not clear to them. There was no recommendation for

modifications of the questions in the survey. Therefore, no changes were made to the primary

research instrument.

The data gathered from the initial recruitment survey gave the researcher some insights

into some of the barriers that international/foreign-born students were experiencing. Time

management and English Language barriers that were mentioned in the recruitment survey were

also reported in the semi-structured interview by the research participants.

Table 3.1

Relationship between the Interview Questions and the RQ and SQ

RQ & SQ	Related Interview Question	Process of Analysis
RQ: Among practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college, what barriers impact international/foreign-born students' completion rates in higher education?	1-12	The analysis was completed through the cumulative findings of the SQs
SQ a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?	2	Descriptive and interpretative
SQ b. What situations influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?	4-8	Descriptive and interpretative
SQ c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?	9-12	Descriptive and interpretative
SQ d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in improving their completion rates?	9-12	Descriptive and interpretative

Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview was completed via Zoom with each of the eight study participants. The interviews were completed in September and October of 2022. The participants were contacted via their email contact information that they provided in the recruitment survey that was posted in the D2L Brightspace course shell in August of 2022. The consent form for the research was sent via email to each participant, and the forms were signed and returned to the researcher before the semi-structured interview was conducted. Each interview was scheduled based on the participant's availability during the months of September and October 2022. The data analysis process adopted Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral, which managed and organized the data and represented and visualized the data. The data analysis of this phenomenological research study included creating a data file that stored each transcript: There were eight transcripts. The analysis process included the following:

- recording personal experience
- reading and rereading the transcripts in a series of two
- describing the phenomenon's essence
- recording significant statements and meaning units, and
- identifying codes, expanded codes, and themes.

Both descriptive and interpretative analyses were completed on the data. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that "Phenomenology is not only a description but is also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences" (p. 78).

Transcendental Phenomenological Framework

During the data analysis process of this phenomenological research, the following components of the Transcendental Phenomenological Framework were utilized: Epoche, Bracketing, Phenomenological Reduction, Horizon, and Intentionality (Peoples, 2021). The concept of epoche includes bracketing one's own experiences as early as possible to be able to gain a new viewpoint of the phenomenon; "however, this state is seldomly achieved" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019, p. 55). The researcher bracketed her lived experiences as a foreign-born student and worldviews about barriers that are experienced by international/foreign-born students to focus objectively on the narrative data of the participants. The researcher tried to ensure that the findings of this study did not include her personal biases, assumptions, and lived experiences. This was done by focusing on the participants' lived experiences and intentionally setting aside the researcher's experiences as a foreign-born student. The phenomenological reduction was achieved during the analysis process. During this phase, repetitive phrases and unnecessary words and sentences were removed from the data. The horizon addresses the researcher's experiences with the data during analysis. The researcher focused on the data to obtain the reality of the participants. Intentionality is related to how the researcher intentionally read, reread, and wrote reflective notes to obtain the meaning of the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021).

Codes and Expanded Codes

Codes and expanded codes were formulated from multiple readings of the transcripts and memoing of inductive codes. See the codes and expanded codes in Table 4.

Table 4

Inductive Codes and Expanded Codes

Sample Statement	Codes	Expanded Codes
English is not my first language. So that's one of the things that makes me study more and more and more. That's one of my barriers, language barrier.	Language Barrier	Language barrier impacting foreign-born students
The content of the theory course is difficult, mainly dealing with the drug thing, and that is knowing about the drug.	Academic Challenges	Academic challenges
I don't go out a lot. I don't hang out with friends.	Social	Students need life, work, and college effectiveness
Sleep is affected. I don't get enough sleep.	Sleep	
The barrier that I am experiencing right now is a time constraint, time management like I am a mother. I also work because I have to finance my family and I am a student.	Time Work Finances	Financial barriers impacting the foreign-born students
Okay, in my opinion, ATI is the best resource.	Resources	College resources available to students

Note. Codes and expanded codes were inducted from the lived experience statements of the research participants.

Significant Statements

Many significant statements that were relevant to the codes and expanded codes were found in the data during the data analysis phase. These significant statements contained information that answered the research questions. The themes were derived from the significant statements. See some relevant significant statements and the formulated meaning in Table 4 below:

Table 4.1

Significant Statement and Formulated Meaning

Significant Statement	Formulated Meaning	Themes
This is the challenge I have in understanding the concepts of nursing and interpreting them in English, which is my third language, and understanding and being able to study.	The English Language barrier can be a factor in the comprehension of verbal and written materials in courses and contributes to student outcomes.	English Language barrier
The course I am finding challenging right now is pharmacology class because of the things I need to memorize. All the medications are very challenging right now.	Some foreign-born students experience academic difficulties in the core nursing courses.	Academic Challenges
I am overwhelmed with work. I work overnight, three shifts, every other weekend. I am usually up for more than 12-15 hours.	It can be difficult for some foreign-born students to balance life, work, and school.	Time Management
I also experience time management and financial barriers. I don't have enough income to support myself.	Some students experience financial barriers while attending college.	Financial Barrier
I think the college has everything. There is the tutoring area, and the teachers are available.	College resources can impact students' academic outcomes.	Beneficial College Resources

Themes

Five major themes emerged from the significant statements and expanded codes derived from the phenomenological experiences of the participants that were interviewed. The themes are listed below:

1. English Language barrier

2. Academic Challenges

3. Financial Barrier

4. Time Management

5. Beneficial College Resources

All themes addressed the research problem and are related to the RQ. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the RQ and themes, and Table 5 shows how the SQs and themes are related. See Figure 2 and Table 5 below:

Figure 2

The Relationship Between the RQ and Themes
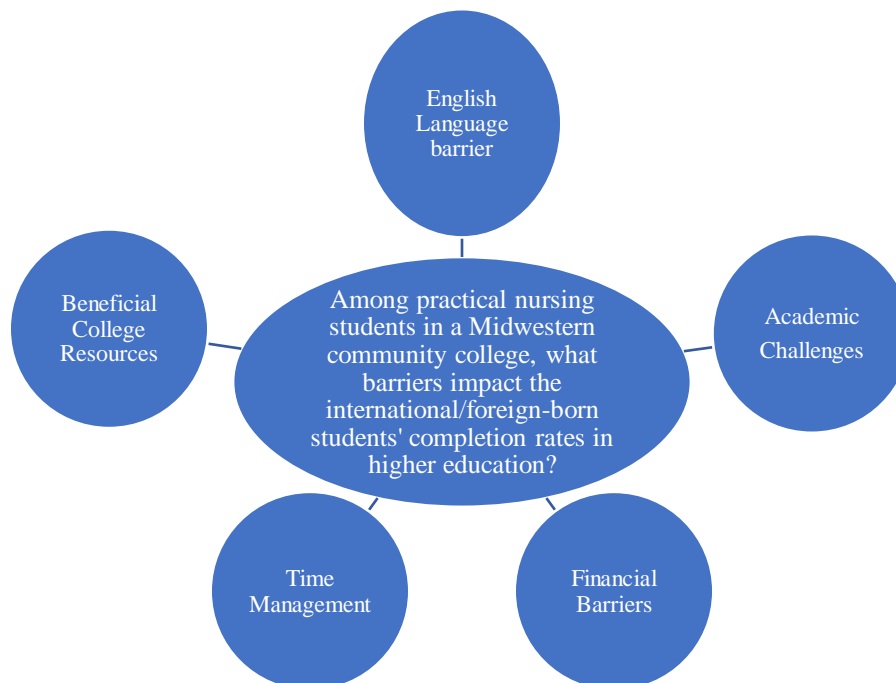
Note. All themes were related to the RQ.

Table 5

Relationship Between Sub-Questions and Themes

Sub-Questions (SQ)	Themes
SQ a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?	Theme 1: English Language barrier Theme 3: Financial Barrier Theme 4: Time Management
SQ b. What situations influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?	Theme 2: Academic Challenges Theme 4: Time Management
SQ c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?	Theme 5: Beneficial College Resources
SQ d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in improving their completion rates?	Theme 5: Beneficial College Resources

Three of the five themes that emerged from the data seemed to have more influence on the participants: The participants identified the following barriers as impacting them significantly:

1. English Language Barrier

2. Time Management

3. Financial Barrier

Four (50%) participants reported that the English language was a significant barrier. Two (25%) participants related that insufficient time/time management was a significant barrier, and two (25%) participants indicated that both time management and financial barriers were significant. Regarding the English Language barrier, Participant E reported that the "language barrier is the major one." One participant emphasized that insufficient time hindered their nursing program

progress. Participant B related, "Since I have limited time, it is affecting me in my progress as well. I am not progressing as I want to progress in my nursing program." Another participant stated that they were experiencing financial barriers. "It would be helpful for me to spend more time studying rather than working" (Participant D).

Theme 1: English Language Barrier

All participants originated from countries where their primary language was not English, and seven of eight (87.5%) of the participants reported experiencing challenges with the English Language barrier. This theme was prevalent not just in relation to school but also to the stressors of everyday life. Some participants made references related to difficulties with the pronunciation of words and understanding words and course materials. Others also made references to difficulties in understanding course materials because they had to interpret them in English and then into their primary language to try and comprehend the meaning. Some participants indicated that it was very difficult to understand when others were speaking in the English language.

When discussing the issue of the English Language barrier, Participant E noted that focus is needed to obtain meaning. "We have some English friends in our apartment, and while they are talking, I have to listen carefully to get what they are talking. Then when I am talking, they are unable to understand" (Participant E). Participant E also discussed that they felt uncomfortable answering questions in class. "I feel uncomfortable saying the answer to the instructor … I am afraid of saying what will be wrong, then everyone will be laughing or something." Participant D also believed that the English language impacted them. "English can be a barrier sometimes. That's not my primary language" (Participant D). Other participants discussed how the English Language barrier impacts their interactions with classmates. Participant C said, "Sometimes my classmates don't understand what I say. They say, okay, can you repeat that? So sometimes it is the pronunciation, as in words, our expressions are different."

Participant C also related that it was challenging to understand when others were speaking in a different language. "Sometimes it is difficult following when somebody is talking differently" (Participant C).

Two out of eight participants also stated that it takes time to understand and communicate in English. Participant H stated, "English is my second language, and it really takes time for us to understand lots of things and communicate." Participant F said, "For me, it is hard to catch all the words." Participant B explained that the nursing program was new to them and would take time to understand. "This is totally new, so I need more time to understand … English is my second language, and that is one barrier" (Participant B).

One participant explained that it was difficult to leave a voice message due to the nervousness of not leaving the perfect message:

> It was tough communicating in English for a couple of years. It was like when I first arrived here. Everyone was like using technology to communicate. And then the main issue was voice messages. I can't even leave it right now, like the perfect message, you know. I get nervous with that, and then with the practice…but even now, I get confused and not sending good messages. (Participant H)

Three out of eight participants stated it took a long time for them to read and study course assignments that required reading chapters in their textbooks. One participant related the following statement:

> The barriers that I'm experiencing as an ESL student are that I am focusing a lot, and I'm reading a lot, and I think that I have taken so much time studying for more hours because English is not my first language. (Participant A)

Participant B believed that it took a long time to study because they had to interpret the nursing concepts in the English language. "So, this is the challenge, I have to understand the concept of nursing and interpret it in English, which is my second language and understand it that way and be able to study" (Participant B). Participant H discussed that they studied for long hours in the nursing program. "Sometimes I may not understand the terminologies" (Participant H). A lack of understanding of the terminologies in the textbooks can increase the study time for some participants.

Three participants related that the English language was difficult to learn, especially when they first started to learn the American English language:

The language, for the first time, was very hard to understand. I need to learn more English and continue to learn. The language is important, but the first time I say no, this is not for me. It is difficult, but I want to be a nurse here. My English is not better, but now, I never give up. (Participant C)

Participant D explained that they are still struggling to understand the meaning of concepts in the nursing courses. "I am still struggling to understand more … but the challenges are still there" (Participant D). Participant H also noted that it was more difficult for them to communicate when they first came to the US when compared to now. "It was like tough communicating in English for like a couple of years" (Participant H). Participant H also said, "I can communicate and do things better than before."

Seven of eight (87.5%) participants reported that they studied their high school courses in British English. Two participants related that British English is different from American English in some pronunciation and spelling of some words. See the responses from the participants below:

The language is British English, and this is American English, with most of the words

being different. If the questions come with some of what I don't understand. If I don't

understand the question and its meaning, my answer is wrong. (Participant E)

Participant H related that their study background was in British English. "My study background

is British English, and here we go for the American language. So, some spelling and some

terminology may be different in reading and learning" (Participant H).

One participant stated that they needed help understanding the faculty who taught their

prerequisite courses for the nursing program. Participant E related their lived experiences in the

following way:

There is a misunderstanding of the language. So, this is a major difficult part for me. I

didn't understand sometimes what the generals for nursing teachers were saying in the

classes. I was not feeling comfortable asking questions. I was asking my friend what she

was saying or what he was saying. (Participant E)

One participant reported that they previously failed an associate degree nursing (ADN)

program due to English Language barriers. The participant explained their lived experiences in

the ADN program in the following manner:

I was doing RN course, and because of the English language, I didn't make it. I didn't

pass it because of the questions, and I was unable to understand the questions. But when

the teacher was explaining to me at the review before seeing the answer, I was coming to

the conclusion these would be the answers, but because of not knowing what the person

was saying, I made mistakes in the answers. Just because of the English language, I was

doing the things wrong. (Participant E)

Theme 2: Academic Challenges

Academic challenges were reported by all (100%) participants. The participants reported experiencing difficulties with understanding nursing core courses such as pharmacology and Medical-Surgical Nursing courses. One (12.5%) participant stated that they experienced difficulties with all theory courses. Seven of eight (87.5%) participants reported that the English Language barrier impacted their performances in the Practical Nursing courses. One (12.5%) participant related that cultural differences impacted their academic outcomes, and another (12.5%) participant reported that they felt that they were not adequately prepared for college in the US because they attended high school in their country of origin.

Regarding course difficulties in the core nursing courses, Participant G said, "Medical terminology in all courses is challenging." Participant H also related that they found medical terminology in the courses challenging. "Sometimes I may not understand the terminology" (Participant H). Participant A reported that they struggle with knowing and spelling long medication words. Participant A said, "When my teacher says, you know, long words, I'm really missing the spelling parts. I ask my teacher, will you write it down, please?"

The overwhelming majority of (87.5%) participants reported that the English Language barrier also contributed to academic challenges. The participants expressed their lived experiences in the following ways: Participant A stated that they had to study the course materials repeatedly due to the English Language barrier. "So, that's one of the things that makes me study more and more. That's one of my barriers, language barrier" (Participant A). Participant D expressed difficulties understanding course material due to ESL. "English is not my primary language, and there are some words or some things in the book or in the course materials that I might not really understand" (Participant D). Participant B also related challenges with the courses due to the English Language barrier in the following manner:

So, this is the challenge I have understanding the concept of nursing and interpreting it in English, which is my second language, and understanding it that way and being able to study. I mean successful with that is another challenge I am facing. (Participant B)

Participant E noted that a lack of understanding of course questions due to ESL contributed to course outcomes. Participant E indicated, "If the questions are coming because of something that I don't understand. I am not understanding the question and make my answers wrong. So, this is the main problem. Language is the main one." Participant C related that they had a hard time understanding when others were speaking a language that was not their primary language. "It's difficult following when somebody is talking differently" (Participant C). Participant H explained that they experienced challenges understanding and repeating words relating to course materials. "Maybe sometimes communicating and understanding the tone while I'm communicating whatever someone is saying to get the right exact point. Like communicating and understanding the words to repeat them correctly" (Participant H). Participant F related that they had to listen keenly to understand spoken words in the English language. "For me, it's a hard time to get all of them to catch all the words. Takes time to get all of them" (Participant F).

The majority (75%) of participants reported that they found the Pharmacology course challenging. These participants stated that they had difficulties remembering the names of the drugs and other vital information, such as side effects that are related to the drugs. Six out of eight participants expressed the challenges that they experienced with the Pharmacology course: Participant B indicated that the pharmacology course was the most challenging of all the nursing core courses. "The most challenging one is Pharmacology because knowing one part of the body is one thing, and memorizing or knowing what kind of medication and the side effects and benefits comprise all these things is the biggest challenge" (Participant B). Participant C also

expressed that they found the pharmacology course difficult. *"The one [course] I'm finding*

challenging right now is pharmacology class because of the things I need to memorize"

(Participant C). Participant D also related that they found the pharmacology course challenging

due to the number of concepts that should be memorized. "I'm finding challenging right now the

pharmacology class because of the things I need to memorize; all the medications are very

challenging right now" (Participant D). Participant A related that they found the dosage chapter

in the pharmacology textbook difficult:

> There is one chapter for the dosage calculation. You know, I think the dosage calculation
>
> is something that I have to pay attention to. You know, as far as measurements. Those
>
> milligrams and milliliters are the ones that I am thinking of. I need to study more.
>
> (Participant A)

Participant F reported that giving medication was challenging. Participant F reported. "I need to

do more practice, and then the grades that I have to improve in pharmacology…."

Participant H stated, "Yes, for me is the medicine names. There are side effects, and then it's

new to me. Pharmacology is tough."

Some (37.5%) participants reported that they found the Medical-Surgical Nursing course

challenging. One participant related that this course is complex, and the textbook has more

chapters than the textbook in other courses. Another participant related that they had found

Medical-Surgical Nursing concepts, such as the gastrointestinal system and the drugs that are

related to the system, challenging. Three participants related the challenges they experienced in

the Medical-Surgical Nursing course: Participant C noted that the Medical-Surgical Nursing

course is challenging and complex. "Medical-Surgical is challenging because it's deeper, but it's

nice. There are more chapters" (Participant C). Participant E explained that sometimes they were

confused with the Medical-Surgical concepts. "Sometimes, I mix up things: So, the GI system and the drugs that are related to that system" (Participant E). Participant A related that they felt lost while reading the Medical-Surgical textbook. "I loved to study more like biology, and I'm really lost, you know, especially my surgical book" (Participant A).

One of eight (12.5%) participants found the Foundations of Nursing course difficult. Participant G reported that the Foundations of Nursing course was challenging for them. They further stated, "Foundations of Nursing rules and regulations. The rules are new to me" (Participant G).

One (12.5%) participant reported experiencing cultural differences in teaching pedagogy that also impacted learning in the classroom. The participant related the cultural differences in the following way:

> In our country, we are taught not to make eye contact with the teachers and not to interrupt them by asking questions. So, I am feeling a little bit uncomfortable here, but I am practicing being comfortable asking questions and making eye contact while communicating. (Participant E)

One (12.5%) participant believed that because they attended high school in a foreign country, they experienced more academic challenges:

> I think as someone who just migrated from Africa to here, I think that there are so many things that make me study a lot of hours. One of the things is that I did not attend high school here. I had my high school in another foreign country. I think that I missed the high school basics in America. I struggle a lot through my college years. I think that makes me struggle more. (Participant A)

Theme 3: Financial Barrier

Five (62.5%) participants reported that they experienced financial barriers. Participants who are international students are not qualified for Financial Aid grants and loans. These students are not qualified for some scholarships. Due to the financial barriers that the participants experienced, they had jobs that reduced the time they used to complete the coursework. All five participants reported their experiences in the following ways: Participant G noted that they have to work to take care of their financial needs. "We study at the library, and most of my classmates don't work. I can't be with my friends to study because I work" (Participant G). Participant B related that they did not have adequate income to take care of themselves. "I don't have enough income to support myself. That's why I need to work even part-time. Otherwise, it would have been easier for me to devote most of my time to my studies if I had enough income" (Participant B). Participant C also claimed that they experienced financial barriers. "My barriers are language, money, and time" (Participant C). Participant F stated that they have a job and manage all of the finances in their household. "I have to manage all of the finances and the community stuff as well" (Participant F). Participant D related that they could not receive financial aid loans because of their status as an international student. Participant D described their situation below:

I cannot receive loans like financial aid from the government, so I have to pay the expenses of my school, basically everything, the books and supplies, and school payments out of pocket. Taking a full-time course and working makes it hard.

(Participant D)

Theme 4: Time Management

Most (75%) participants reported that they experienced challenges balancing life, work, and school activities. The participants revealed they had time management difficulties or insufficient time to complete required tasks such as caring for family and completing course

assignments. One participant stated that when they are home, they try to balance studying and spending time with family:

> When I'm home, you know I am a mother … I have to balance my time with my family, and I am really avoiding just wasting my time. So, what do I do? I take every minute as an advantage. Whenever I have free time, I study so I don't waste a lot of time. So, I think I am missing the fun part that I used to have for the LPN Program. (Participant A)

Another participant reported that they were late for classes due to family obligations. "I'm late for school because I dropped my children at school. After that, I come to school, and then I got late and missed the first part of the lecture. I don't have enough time to study" (Participant F). Participant B discussed having insufficient time to spend on schoolwork and family. "I don't finish my work at home. I don't finish my schoolwork" (Participant B).

Some (37.5%) participants believed they missed out on their social relationships with family and friends. Participant A stated that they were not able to socialize with friends due to their college workload and personal responsibilities. "I don't go out a lot. I don't hang out with friends. I know that I don't want to be behind" (Participant A). Participant G believed that they were missing out on socializing and studying with friends. "I can't be with my friends to study because I work" (Participant G). Participant D indicated that they experienced time management barriers with finding a balance with social relationships, family, and work and college responsibilities:

> I need to socialize with my family and friends, you know since I have a lot of homework assignments … which could be a barrier for me. Like I said, the time management between work and class, and you have to keep your social time with your family and friends. (Participant D)

Four of eight (50%) participants reported that spending time with family and completing other necessary tasks, such as shopping, was challenging. One participant expressed their experiences in the following manner: "I don't have time to go to the grocery shop, and then I cannot cook for my kids, and I don't have time to spend with them, and I don't have time to worship" (Participant F).

Two (25%) participants believed that they were negatively affected by their work hours on their jobs.

> Sometimes, I will be assigned to do overnight jobs, so that will directly affect me. I am not able to focus as I want to. And if I am at work, I don't finish my work at home. I don't finish my schoolwork, so it will directly impact me that way. It makes me lag behind. (Participant B)

Participant G noted that they are overwhelmed with work due to the long hours they worked at their job. "I am overwhelmed with work; I work overnight, three shifts, every other weekend. I am usually up for 12-15 hours, then I go home and study" (Participant G).

Some (37.5%) participants believed that they were sleep deprived. Participant A and Participant D expressed that they received inadequate sleep, especially when studying for course exams. "I'm reading a lot, especially when the exams are close. I don't get enough sleep. I study until eleven or Midnight" (Participant A). "Whenever there is an exam, we might have a lack of sleep, and we cannot really concentrate when the teacher is teaching. That is also challenging" (Participant D). Participant G also related that they were tired due to insufficient sleep. "Sleep is affected. I don't get enough sleep. I am tired due to lack of sleep" (Participant G).

Theme 5: Beneficial College Resources

All (100%) participants reported that they had utilized the resources at the Midwestern community college. All eight participants named resources that they found beneficial. However,

two participants had recommendations about other resources that they believed would benefit the

nursing students. The participants identified the following resources at the college that they

thought were beneficial to them: Tutoring Center, Spacious Environment, Library, Internet,

Laptops, Study Guides, Videos, Practice Quizzes, Educational Websites, TRIO Program, and

Bookstore.

F. A. Davies is a website related to the textbooks in the nursing program. This website

has course materials such as videos, practice quizzes, case studies, and e-books. Participant E

claimed that they found the videos and practice quizzes on F. A. Davies helpful in their basic

understanding of nursing concepts.

> F. A. Davies videos, that one, because seeing the videos and doing the exercises and
>
> practice quizzes help me a lot. Then going through the chapters of the books for the
>
> exams and covering the whole chapters, I'm getting the basic knowledge. (Participant E)

Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) has tutorials, practice exams, test-taking

strategies, and standardized exams that help prepare nursing students to learn nursing skills and

pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) (ATI, n.d.). All graduate nurses

must pass the NCLEX to become licensed nurses. ATI tutorials and assessments are integrated

into all courses in the Practical Nursing Program. Participant C expressed that ATI was the best

resource because this website taught them what was important to know in the nursing course

courses. "In my opinion, ATI is the best resource. ATI is teaching you what is most important,

and the books show you the keys. ATI tracks the pathway to achieving your goals" (Participant

C).

All (100%) participants indicated they used the internet on the college campus to access

course materials, YouTube, Google, and educational websites. One participant related that the

faculty and advisors were helpful, and another participant related that borrowing a laptop from the college was beneficial to them. Participant H indicated that "The internet and available study guides really help with most things" (Participant H). Participant F indicated that the faculty and advisors were helpful to students. "I learn from my teachers and pathway advisors" (Participant F). Participant B discussed the benefits of borrowing a laptop from the college. "Right now, like the school has provided me with the laptop. That's helpful so that I can take my laptop wherever I go, and I can take it home" (Participant B).

Some of the participants had recommendations regarding helpful resources, and one participant believed that the time spent in the classroom for one of the core courses was too long. Two of eight participants believed that resources such as scholarships for international students would help with financial insecurity for this population of students. "If I am provided with some financial help, then the time that I am using to work, I can focus on my studies, so certain kinds of scholarships. A generous amount of scholarship or a generous amount of help" (Participant B). Participant C related that access to loans and or tuition for studies would be helpful. "…Get access to a loan or access to tuition for studies" (Participant C). Participant C also stated that the college could provide an app that could translate course materials into the students' primary languages. "The college could get an app that could translate from English to Spanish in some resources like the internet and D2L" (Participant C). The participant also related that course materials should be formatted to translate into other languages. "Faculty could have assignments and teaching materials in formats that can be translated into other languages" (Participant C). This participant also suggested that more activities for students of diverse cultures would help them learn more about their peers' cultures and result in more interactions. "I think for more activities to mix the cultures together outside the classrooms, crossing the barriers" (Participant

C). Participant G believed that the Medical-Surgical Nursing course should be held twice weekly instead of once weekly. "Tuesday schedule should be split into two days per week for Medical-Surgical Nursing. The hours are too long for this course" (Participant G).

The participants stated that they learned about the resources at the college from sources such as faculty during orientation, other students, advisors, student services staff, an affiliated organization, and the college website. Participant C indicated that they were informed about the available resources by their teachers. "When I studied the reading and writing class, my teachers told me" (Participant C). Participant D related that they learned about the resources at the college during orientation. "On the first day, we had an orientation before we started class, and the teachers told us about some of the resources that we have in school" (Participant D). Participant B claimed that they were informed about the resources at the college by other students. "I learned it from other students; in fact, I didn't know about the laptop and hotspots. Other students involved me" (Participant B). Participant F related that they were aware of the resources at the college by faculty and advisors. "I learned from my professors and pathway advisors about all of them" (Participant F). Participant G stated that the student services staff and faculty helped to make them aware of the resources at the college. "One-stop staff helped with the college website's password, and teachers gave information about the library and cafeteria" (Participant G). Participant A related that they learned about the available resources that the college had from the website of the college. "I go to the college website to see what they are offering" (Participant A).

Conclusion

The findings of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study were included in this chapter. The participants' demographic data, the procedures for the sample size, and data analysis were discussed in this chapter. All participants were born in countries with non-English

primary languages, and seven of the eight claimed that the English Language barrier was challenging, and five of eight narrated that this barrier was significant. The findings from Schlossberg's Transition Theory showed how the participants were transitioning in the nursing program. Five themes emerged from the research data, and all themes addressed the research problem of identifying barriers that impact the completion rates of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. The themes also answered the RQ and SQs. All participants reported barriers that impacted their academic and personal lives. The participants revealed that they experienced significant barriers that included the English language, time management, and financial. One of seven participants revealed that they previously failed an ADN program due to English Language barriers. The participants said they found the Midwestern community college resources beneficial. Some (37.5%) participants recommended that the college provide additional resources. The recommendations included scholarships for international students and an app that can translate the English language into other languages, such as Spanish. Chapter 5 will include discussions of the findings, interpretations, limitations, and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This qualitative transcendental phenomenological research study explored barriers impacting the completion rate of international/foreign-born students pursuing a Practical Nursing Diploma Program in the Midwestern US. The phenomenon of barriers that were experienced by international/foreign-born students was explored via the expressed lived experiences of the participants. The discussions and conclusions from this study are related to the research problem, research question, sub-questions, and findings. Therefore, this chapter includes an overview of the research study, the application to the theoretical framework, a discussion of findings, and the applications of the research for future practice.

Overview

Regarding the research problem of identifying the barriers that impact the completion rate of international/foreign-born students, this phenomenological research study was implemented to explore their experiences with barriers. The literature review that was completed informed the researcher about barriers that other international/foreign-born students experienced in IHE in the US. The literature review also informed the researcher about the knowledge gap regarding international/foreign-born practical nursing students. During the time that the literature review was completed, there was information found in the literature about the barriers that international/foreign-born students experienced; however, there was a knowledge deficit on specific barriers that international/foreign-born practical nursing students experienced. A phenomenological design was deemed appropriate for this research study because this design allows participants to report their lived experiences. The researcher wanted to know what it was like for the participants to experience the phenomenon of barriers that impacted their academic

outcomes and to gain knowledge about how this population of students can be better helped in

the college setting. Peoples (2021) related that "A phenomenological research is used to answer

the question, 'What is it like to experience a certain phenomenon?'" (p. 3). Therefore, it was

important for the researcher to obtain a self-report of the experiences that this population of

students experienced.

Purposeful sampling was utilized, and the sample size was eight participants. Creswell

and Poth (2018) related that the sample size for phenomenological studies varies from three to

four participants to 10-15. The participants were selected from practical nursing students who

were foreign-born and attended high school outside of the US. Although the researcher is an

instructor in the Practical Nursing Program at the Midwestern community college where the

students attended, during the research process, none of the participants were taught by the

researcher. The administrator of the college worked with the researcher to ensure that none of the

participants were placed in the researcher's clinical group. The theory classes were divided into

two sections due to the ratio of one teacher to 30 students; therefore, the recruitment of students

for this research study was not done in the courses that the researcher taught.

All participants originated from non-English speaking countries. The primary languages

of the participants included Amharic, Burmese, Nepali, Somali, and Spanish. There were seven

participants who identified as women, and one identified as a man. All participants were

nontraditional students who were not recent high school graduates: This is common for

community college students. Three (37.5%) participants were in the 18-28 age range, three

(37.5%) participants were in the 29-39 age range, and two (25%) participants were in the 40-50

age range.

The following instruments were used to collect data for this research: A questionnaire relating to Schlossberg's Transition Theory and a semi-structured interview. The collected data were analyzed using Creswell and Poth's (2018) Data Analysis Spiral and Phenomenological Framework. The data were manually analyzed, and inductive coding was used. The rationale for using inductive coding was to allow the researcher to immerse in the content of the narrative data to obtain the best understanding of the barriers that impacted the participants and how they experienced the barriers. Many significant statements were found in the data, and meaning units were derived from the significant statements.

This research study sought to answer the following RQ and SQs:

- Among practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college, what barriers impact international/foreign-born students' completion rates in higher education?

    a. What barriers were considered more significant by the international/foreign-born students?

    b. What situations influenced how the participants experienced the barriers?

    c. What services/support do international/foreign-born students in a Practical Nursing Program find most helpful in improving their completion rates?

    d. What, if any, nursing-specific resources/services/support do students find helpful in improving their completion rates?

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's Transition Theory was used as the underpinning framework to determine where the participants were in their transitions. Schlossberg's Transition Theory was utilized to examine participants' lived experiences as they moved through stages of transition in their academic lives (Anderson, 2012). There are three phases of Schlossberg's Transition Theory

which include *moving in, moving through, or moving out* (Killam & Degges-White, 2017).

Schlossberg's *Four S System* has the following components: situation, support, self, and

strategies (Flowers & Reczynski, 2015). The *Four S System* was used to examine how

participants perceived their challenging situations. An anonymous questionnaire via Qualtrics

was utilized to gather data from the participants. The findings from this questionnaire were

consistent with the purpose of the theory. Schlossberg's Transition Theory identified the

transition phase and the perceptions of the participants regarding their situation, self, support,

and strategies used during difficult situations.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Situation

Three barriers emerged from the collected data relating to Schlossberg's Transition

Theory: Language, Time Management, and Financial Barriers. One participant wrote that they

experienced financial barriers and experienced hardships in keeping up with their bills. The data

showed that the participants were aware of their individualized situations. As stated in Chapter 4,

two (25%) participants indicated that they were responsible for the challenges that they were

experiencing. Five (62.5%) participants believed that factors other than themselves were

responsible for the challenges that they experienced. One participant believed that no one was

responsible for the challenges that they were experiencing. Based on the collected data, it seemed

that all participants acknowledged that they were experiencing challenges; however, most

believed that they were not responsible for the challenges that they were experiencing. The

collected data regarding the participants' situations were related to the RQ and SQ a.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Self

Based on the reported findings in Chapter 4, six participants (75%) indicated that they

were in the middle socioeconomic status, and two (25%) participants wrote that they were in the

low socioeconomic status. The participants described themselves as either optimistic, resilient, or

spiritual. Most participants believed that they were either optimistic or spiritual. Regarding the

self-report of the participants, it appeared that the psychological outlook of the participants was

positive because the participants evaluated themselves as either optimistic or spiritual. Despite

the challenges that the participants were experiencing, they chose to be optimistic or used their

spiritual beliefs to help them cope. These findings were related to SQ b.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Support

All participants related that they were supported by people or institutions. Some forms of

support that were reported included family, friends, church, and the TRIO program. The findings

related to this component are associated with SQ b and SQ c. Although the participants were

experiencing barriers, they felt that they had support.

Schlossberg's Four S System: Strategies

All participants reported strategies that they utilized to cope with their stressful and or

challenging situations. The participants utilized various coping strategies that included listening

to music, praying, resting, evaluating strengths and weaknesses, and creating a plan to decrease

weaknesses. These findings were related to SQ b.

Results Summarized

The findings from the semi-structured interviews were congruent with the RQ and SQs.

All participants originated from countries where the primary language was non-English. Five

major themes emerged from the findings of the primary research instrument. The themes that

emerged from the findings were: English Language barrier, Academic Challenges, Financial

Barriers, Time Management, and Beneficial College Resources. All participants identified

barriers that they thought were significant to them. The identified significant barriers were:

English language, Time Management, and Financial. Fifty percent (50%) of the participants

reported the English Language barrier as significant, 25% of participants related that time

management was a significant barrier, and 25% revealed that both time management and financial barriers were significant. See Figure 2 below: These findings were related to the RQ and SQ a.

Figure 3

Significant Barriers
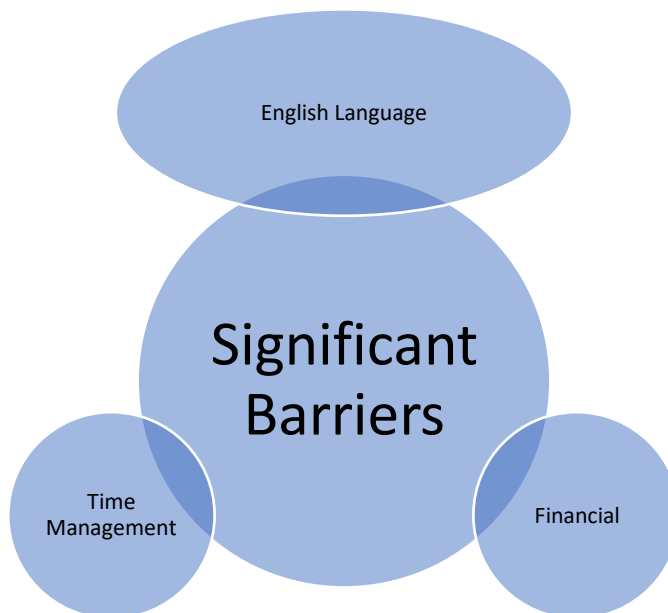
Note. The Significant Barriers were self-reported by the participant as having a greater impact on their academic outcomes. The English Language barrier was considered significant by 4/8 or 50% of participants.

The relationships between the themes and RQ and SQs are discussed below:

Theme 1: English Language barrier

All (100%) participants originated from countries where the primary language is not the English language. Seven out of eight participants reported that they experienced challenges with the English language. Although all participants attended high school in their countries of origin, only one participant reported that they lacked the basic preparation for college because they did

not attend high school in the US. Some participants reported that the English Language barrier impacted them both in the classroom and in their communities. They had problems understanding others, and others had difficulties understanding them. Some of these problems were derived from accent, pronunciation, and enunciation. Other participants related that they had difficulties with speaking and comprehending the English language both in the classroom and in their communities. Some participants related that they had difficulties communicating with the residents at their workplaces. Two participants related that they were fearful of speaking: One related that they were fearful of speaking in the classroom, and the other stated that they were fearful of leaving voice messages. Other participants related that they did not understand what they read in their course textbooks and experienced challenges remembering course information. A few participants related that it took a long time to complete the required reading in their coursework because the English language is not their primary language. It appeared that the English Language barrier contributed greatly to some of the academic challenges that the participants experienced.

Since the curriculum of the Practical Nursing Program was created and taught in the English language, the participants had to prepare for each course in the nursing program by reading materials and completing all assignments in the English language. These participants were also expected to read, understand, and apply nursing concepts to clients' (patients') healthcare situations. Therefore, some of the challenges regarding the English Language barrier were associated with limited proficiency in the English language. This theme was related to the RQ.

Theme 2: Academic Challenges

The participants (100%) reported that they experienced academic challenges in the nursing program. Based on the reported lived experiences of the majority of participants, it

seemed that the English language contributed to some of the academic challenges that the participants experienced. Most participants reported that pharmacology and Medical-Surgical Nursing were the most challenging courses. One participant reported that the Foundations of Nursing course was challenging. Most participants reported that they struggle with medical terminology, medication names, side effects of medications, and medications that are related to the different body systems. One participant reported that they found all theory courses challenging, and another participant mentioned that dosage problems were difficult. The teaching and learning pedagogy in the Midwestern community college where the participants attended was somewhat different from what some of the participants experienced in their countries of origin. One participant believed that cultural barriers negatively impacted them in the classroom. The participant reported that in their countries, eye contact with people and speaking in the classroom during lectures are signs of disrespect. However, in the US, looking someone in the eyes is a sign of respect. Additionally, in the US, students are expected to participate in discussions in the classrooms. Because the teaching and learning pedagogies in the Midwestern community college usually include active learning in which students are expected to participate, some immigrant students are likely to experience difficulties with this form of teaching and learning. Shane et al. (2020) emphasized that immigrant students from other countries with different pedagogies are likely to experience difficulties in the classroom. This research study showed commonalities with the findings of differences in teaching and learning pedagogies in the research completed by Shane et al. (2020).

One participant disclosed failing an ADN program due to the English Language barrier. They further revealed that they needed help understanding the questions on course assignments. Therefore, the English Language barrier was related to the academic challenges that the

participants experienced. Some participants reported that financial barriers also contributed to their academic challenges because they had to work long hours, which took away time from studying.

Based on the information gathered from the participants' lived experiences, this researcher concluded that a significant rationale for some of the difficulties experienced by the participants in this research study was related to their limited proficiency in the English language. A positive academic outcome is usually associated with the application of nursing concepts to the needs of clients in healthcare settings. It could be challenging for the participants to apply nursing concepts if they were unable to understand course materials. This theme was related to the RQ and SQ b.

Theme 3: Financial Barrier

Five participants reported financial insecurity for various reasons, including the inability to obtain financial aid grants or loans because of their status as international students. One participant related that they had to pay all college expenses out of pocket and attended college full-time while working to earn money to pay for college. One participant explained that working at their job took away time that could have been used for studying course materials. Another participant said they had inadequate money to support themselves and therefore had to work. Because the participants had to work and had less time to study, this barrier contributed to some of the academic challenges that the participants experienced. The hours the participants spent at their jobs seemed to influence their academic outcomes.

Financial barriers can be a significant hindrance to academic achievement. With regards to the participants of this study, five out of eight reported being economically disadvantaged, resulting in some participants working long hours. Working long hours impacted their academic performance due to inadequate individualized study time. This barrier also impacted the

participants socially, with insufficient time spent with family and friends. Some participants who

worked related that they could not find time to socialize with friends. These findings were related

to the RQ and SQ a & b.

Theme 4: Time Management

All participants were working adults, and most (75%) participants reported that they

experienced problems relating to time management/insufficient time. Fifty percent of

participants related that they experienced challenges with finding time to spend with their family

members and completing essential tasks such as shopping. Some participants described that their

social life was affected because they did not have time to meet with family and friends. Other

participants reported that they were sleep deprived. One participant related that they were late in

class attendance and missed a portion of the lecture. Time spent at work, college, studying, and

caring for family appeared to limit the sleeping time of the participants. It seemed like time

management also contributed to academic difficulties because the participants reported having

inadequate sleep and study time.

Time management also appeared to impact academic performances and the physical well-

being of the participants. Inadequate preparation for course evaluations such as exams can

impact the completion rates of courses and programs. Sleep deprivation related to insufficient

sleep can negatively impact the participant's physical and emotional health, as well as their

performances on formative and summative evaluations. These findings were in alignment with

the RQ and SQ b.

Theme 5: Beneficial College Resources

One hundred percent of the participants reported that they found college resources

helpful. The helpful college resources included laptop computers that were loaned to students,

the tutoring center, the TRIO program, and academic advisors and instructors. Nursing-specific

resources that the participants found helpful included ATI and FA Davis websites that provided

learning activities related to nursing.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, two participants had recommendations for resources that they

believed would be useful to international/foreign-born students. Two participants recommended

that the college provide scholarships for immigrant students who are not qualified for financial

aid. Another participant believed the college could provide an app that translates the English

language into other languages, such as Spanish. This participant also recommended that course

materials are formulated so they can be easily translated into other languages. The participant

also would like to see more activities on the college campus that allow students from different

cultures to mingle. One participant also discussed that the timeframe for the Medical-Surgical

Nursing course in the nursing program was too long and recommended that the course be held on

two days weekly instead of once weekly.

Based on the lived experiences of the participants, the college resources were helping

them to better navigate the courses in the nursing program. The loaning of laptops to students

was helping them economically by providing resources that could be costly to students

experiencing financial insecurity. The videos and quizzes that the participants had access to in

the nursing program may have been instrumental in helping them to better learn nursing

concepts. These available resources also helped with time management because the participants

could access the course materials at times that were convenient to them.

Interpretations of Findings

Based on the findings related to Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the participants

appeared to be coping well with the challenges that they were experiencing. They identified

coping strategies, such as exercise and communication, that they used to help them with difficult

situations. Students who are healthy in mind and body are likely to cope better with stressors. The participants described their health as good to excellent.

The researcher of this qualitative phenomenological research study believes that most international/foreign-born students in the US pursuing nursing are likely to experience barriers that impact their academic outcomes and some of these students' completion rates of their courses and or programs. All participants reported that they experienced barriers that impacted them in the classroom, and some stated that the barriers also impacted them in their communities.

Although the participants were faced with challenges, based on their reported lived experiences, they seemed determined to continue working to achieve their goal of becoming licensed nurses. Those participants experienced challenges inside and outside the classrooms, and yet they did not verbalize dropping out of the nursing program. This researcher knows firsthand some of the challenges that some international/foreign-born students experience both in the classroom and in the community at large. Although the individualized experiences may differ, there are a lot of commonalities among international students. Navigating the cultural differences of the environment and pedagogical differences can be daunting to some international/foreign-born students; however, having a sense of knowing the individualized rationales for achieving their academic goals can be motivating to some students. One of the rationales why this researcher pursued higher education in the United States was to provide an economically stable environment for her children. Some of the participants in this research study experienced financial insecurity, and achieving their goal of becoming licensed nurses could help to alleviate financial difficulties.

It appeared that the English Language barrier played a significant role in some of the difficulties the participants experienced in the classroom. Based on the analysis of the collected data, the researcher concluded that the English Language barrier was a gateway barrier to other barriers, such as academic and time management barriers. Seven participants (87.5%) reported that they experienced English Language barriers. The English Language barriers may have contributed to the length of time that students spent studying. Some participants stated that they read and reread the course materials. Seven of eight participants disclosed that they completed their high school courses in British English. Despite completing their courses in the English language, seven of eight participants still reported the English language as a barrier to their academic outcomes. A lack of comprehension of what was read and reading slower due to unfamiliar words may have contributed to the time spent studying. One participant stated that they translated the course materials into their primary language for understanding and back into the English language again. This process can be exhausting. The English Language barrier also contributed to a lack of understanding of lectures and participation in classroom activities such as answering questions and group activities. Course outcomes are likely to be impacted due to a lack of understanding of assignments, quizzes, and course exams written in English. One participant stated that they failed an ADN program due to a lack of understanding of what the teacher said and exam questions written in the English language. Since all the courses in the nursing program were presented in the English language, most of the participants experienced challenges in the courses that were likely partly related to the English Language barrier.

Due to the limitations of this research study, the findings may not reflect the population of international/foreign-born practical nursing students; however, the findings may be able to inform stakeholders in community colleges that serve international students to add or modify

practices to help meet the needs of these students. Ensuring that there are programs that address

the English language proficiency of some international/foreign-born students seemed to be a

good place to start meeting the academic needs of these students. This researcher believes that

revising and evaluating the English language prerequisite course for the nursing program to help

meet the needs of these students would likely help to increase the academic outcomes for these

students. If the curriculum team evaluates the nursing concepts and content and the required

grade level that shows proficiency in the English language, the students are more likely to

improve their academic outcomes.

Some applicants reported working long hours, which took time away from studying.

Since some participants were not qualified for financial aid, they had to work to pay for tuition,

college supplies, and other personal needs. Some participants experienced sleep deprivation due

to work and studying for long hours. Others experienced social isolation from family and friends

due to inadequate time. It seemed like juggling work, family obligations, and school assignments

placed additional stress on some of the participants, which impacted their academic outcomes.

Based on the reported lived experiences of the participants, it appeared that they found

the available college resources beneficial. Some participants reported that they received help

from teachers and academic advisors and utilized other resources, such as the tutoring center and

the TRIO program. The laptop loan system, which is free to the students, seemed to help the

students economically and academically. Purchasing a laptop for college may not be feasible for

some students due to cost. Also, a laptop is an essential tool for accessing course materials and

submitting assignments; therefore, this item is important to learning. Some of the participants

reported that they had not used the tutoring center at the time that the research data were

collected. More use of the tutoring center may help to improve student outcomes in nursing

courses.

Discussion of Findings in Relationship to the Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological approach was chosen to help the researcher explore barriers that

impact international/foreign-born students. The findings of this research study showed that each

participant experienced barriers that impacted their academic outcomes. Moustakas (1994)

explained that the essence of the experience is related to what the participants experienced and

how they experienced the common phenomenon. The essence of this phenomenological study

was based on the fact that all participants reported that they experienced the common

phenomenon of barriers while pursuing the Practical Nursing Program in the Midwestern

community college. The results of this study also showed how the participants experienced the

barriers. Phenomenologists describe what all participants have in common and how they

experience the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Based on the participants' lived

experiences, all participants experienced barriers and utilized coping strategies that helped them

to cope with the challenges that they experienced as international/foreign-born students. The

reported barriers impacted both the personal and academic life of the participants; however, in

this section, emphasis will be placed on the academic life of the participants.

All participants were ESL students, and 75 percent of the participants related that the

English language was one of the barriers that they experienced. All components of the practical

nursing course which the students were pursuing were presented in the English language.

Therefore, all students who are accepted into the program are expected to be proficient in the

English language. Although all the participants met the English language requirement for the

program, the majority of the students reported challenges due to language barriers. Therefore, to

help future students in the nursing program, more training in the English language and or raising

the levels of the reading and comprehension requirements may help future nursing students. This

study also found that 50 percent of the participants reported that the English Language barrier

was a significant barrier. This finding was similar to the findings of previous researchers who

found that the participants in their research studies reported that the English Language barrier

was significant to them. Moon et al. (2020) claimed that international students who were

participants in their research study reported that English Language barriers were the most

difficult challenges they had experienced. Participants in a research study that was completed by

Rivas et al. found that a lack of English language proficiency was a major problem that

negatively impacted the participants of the study in areas such as academic, personal, and

professional (Rivas et al., 2019). This researcher believes that because the participants do not

have proficiency in the American English language, they appeared to experience more academic

difficulties than nursing students who were born in the US and attended high school in the US.

This comparison was based on the researcher's observation and evaluation of working with

practical nursing students over the years. This researcher also believes that English language

proficiency is a required skill for students to be successful in the nursing program. It is

imperative that all nursing students are able to apply knowledge to clients' needs in the nursing

field. Therefore, it can be difficult for students to apply knowledge that they do not comprehend.

Knowledge, understanding, and application are essential to the academic success of nursing

students. The practice of practical nursing requires the "application of knowledge, skills, abilities

and clinical judgment" (National Council for State Board of Nursing (NCSBN), 2023, para, 2).

The majority of test items on course exams in the Practical Nursing Program and in the NCLEX-

PN are written at the application level (NCSBN, 2023). Therefore, if students are to achieve

academic success in the Practical Nursing Program, it is imperative that they are able to function at the application level of Bloom's Taxonomy.

All participants reported that they experienced academic challenges in the nursing program. Based on the findings, the English Language barrier, among other challenges such as sleep deprivation and time management, contributed to academic barriers. Based on the reported lived experiences of the participants, they reported experiencing difficulties with nursing concepts in the core nursing courses. The overwhelming majority (87.5%) of participants related that the English Language barrier impacted their performance in the nursing courses. Elturki et al. (2019) indicated that some international students experienced difficulties in reading and writing, and understanding lectures. This researcher believes that if the participants were more proficient in the English language, they may have experienced reduced difficulties in the nursing courses. The majority of participants reported that they found the pharmacology course difficult due to a variety of reasons, such as recalling the names of medications and the side effects of the medications. Other participants also reported that they found the Medical-Surgical Nursing course difficult, and one participant found the Foundations of Nursing course challenging. Based on this researcher's observation of the practical nursing students in general, the identified courses that were deemed difficult by the participants could not be described as easy; however, students who attended high school in the US and whose primary language is the English language tend to perform better on these courses when compared to the performance of some students who are ESL students. This researcher believes that if the problem with the proficiency level of the English language is decreased through additional training and evaluation, international/foreign-born practical nursing students are likely to experience reduced difficulties in the core nursing courses.

Some students reported experiencing financial barriers. Moving away from family support can contribute to financial barriers. Also, limitations on how many hours to work are set by the US immigration services and also contribute to financial barriers. Because students with financial insecurity usually work, time spent at work reduces the time allocated for studying course materials. Vijh (2022) related that the cost of tuition for international students could be up to $25,000 annually. The cost of tuition that does not include housing, transportation, clothing, and food can be an added burden to international students and their families.

The time management barrier was experienced by most of the participants. Due to this barrier, the participants experienced many difficulties, which included insufficient time to study for course exams and completion of course assignments. This researcher believes that a better knowledge of time management may help some students to plan for short-term and long-term goals as well as prioritize tasks.

Based on the lived experiences of the participants, the Midwestern community college had beneficial resources. All students named resources that they believed were useful to them. The participants mentioned resources such as the WIFI hotspots on the campus and videos and quizzes from ATI and F. A. Davies websites: These were nursing-specific resources. The students were able to review the videos and complete practice quizzes for unlimited times. The students who experienced time management challenges were able to view course materials on both ATI and F. A. Davies websites at a time convenient to them, and multiple access was likely to enhance learning.

Based on the results of this research study, all participants experienced barriers that impacted their academic outcomes. Despite the many reported challenges that the participants experienced, they utilized coping strategies such as listening to music and praying to help them

cope. All participants reported that they felt that they were supported in their communities. Some

support systems that were identified by the participants included family, friends, and church.

Coping usually includes adapting to or accepting negative events while maintaining a positive

self-image and emotional stability (Cleveland Clinic, 2020). Based on the findings of this

research study, all participants adjusted well in the midst of the challenges they experienced.

This researcher believes that utilizing coping strategies during difficult situations can help

individuals to cope better with stressors, and having support systems can help individuals to

continue to work hard to achieve their goals despite the challenges that they face.

The findings of this research study were obtained from the participants' lived experiences.

All participants reported barriers that impacted their academic and personal lives (See Results

Summarized with regard to the lived experiences of the participants on pages 103-109). All

students started the Practical Nursing Program in the fall of 2022. All students indicated that they

utilized coping strategies and were supported by their support systems.

Comparison of Findings to Previous Research

Although the literature review did not show research studies that were completed on

barriers that impact international/foreign-born practical nursing students, some of the findings of

this research study were similar to the findings of other researchers who had completed research

studies on international/foreign-born students who were pursuing other programs in higher

education. This qualitative phenomenological research study found that English language, time

management, and financial barriers were considered significant to the participants in this study.

Leong (2015) reported that their qualitative research study found that language barriers could be

the most significant obstacle international students experience while pursuing higher education

in the US. All participants from this qualitative research study reported experiencing academic

difficulties in college-level courses. Bastien et al. (2018) reported that their research study

revealed that students who lacked English language proficiency were more likely to experience

academic challenges. Findings from this research study showed that some students reported that

they had to interpret the spoken words in the English language by translating them to their

original language to obtain understanding. Rivas et al. (2019) related that in their research study,

they found that international students mentally interpreted sentences in the English language

before speaking. Some participants in this study reported that they encountered difficulties

understanding the English language, and others had difficulties understanding them. Bai (2016)

reported that their research study found that a lack of English language proficiency contributed to

difficulties that international students experienced in the classroom. These difficulties included

understanding class contents and class participation. Shane et al. (2020) found that international

students experienced substantial difficulties concerning class participation.

Some findings from this qualitative research study that were not found in the literature

review or in any of the previously mentioned research studies included the likelihood of the

association between the English Language barrier and dropping out of a nursing program. One

participant reported that due to the English Language barrier, they failed out of a previously

attended nursing program. This research study also identified the names of courses, such as

pharmacology and Medical-Surgical Nursing, which the participants found challenging. Overall,

the findings from this research study also showed that international/foreign-born practical

nursing students from the Midwestern community college experienced barriers that were similar

to what other international/foreign-born students in IHE in the US experience.

Contribution to the Body of Knowledge

This qualitative phenomenological research study showed that international/foreign-born

practical nursing students experienced barriers similar to those of other international/foreign-

born students pursuing non-nursing courses in IHE in the US. The significant barriers that the

participant reported were the English language, time management, and financial. This research

study contributed to the gap in the literature by providing data about the barriers that impact

international/foreign-born practical nursing students. This research study also showed that all

participants experienced academic challenges in the core courses of the nursing program. Most

participants found pharmacology and Medical-Surgical Nursing courses challenging. One

participant found the Foundations of Nursing course challenging. Most participants related that

they found medical terminology difficult. Another knowledge gap in the literature is that the

barriers pertaining to international students did not show any relationship between students

failing a nursing program and the English Language barrier. This research revealed that the

English Language barriers contributed to one participant failing an ADN program.

The findings of Schlossberg's Transition Theory showed that the participants were aware

of their situations and felt supported by family, friends, and their communities. The participants

also reported using coping strategies such as exercising, communicating, and praying. Based on

Schlossberg's Transition Theory, the findings also showed that the participants were moving

through the transition.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included utilizing participants from one community college.

Another limitation was related to the fact that the researcher is a faculty member in the nursing

program that the participants of this research attended. Due to this fact, the recruitment of

participants was not from the entire population of international/foreign-born students in the

nursing program. There were two sections for each theory course in fall 2022, and participants

were not recruited in the section of the classes that the researcher taught. The administrators of

the Midwestern community college worked with the researcher to ensure that the researcher did

not teach participants for this research during the research period. Therefore, the researcher was

not assigned any of the participants for clinical rotations. A qualitative phenomenological design bounded to one college may not represent the population of international/foreign-born practical nursing students at other community colleges. Therefore, a future phenomenological study with larger sample size and participants from multiple colleges and countries may show different results that better represent the population of international/foreign-born students pursuing Practical Nursing Programs in the US.

Implications of Findings

The findings from this research study may be utilized by stakeholders such as prospective international/foreign-born students, college administrators, academic advisors, faculty, and preparatory schools that help to prepare international/foreign-born students to transition to IHE in the US. The students may use this information to help them better prepare themselves before entering IHE in the US. Being more proficient in the English language may be a major step toward better college success in the US. College administrators and other college-based stakeholders may create a pre-nursing course emphasizing the English language, pharmacology, and Medical-Surgical Nursing. The pre-nursing course could also include an introduction to the Foundations of Nursing, a review of medical terminology, and preparing individualized time management plans. This course could be one semester in length. This course may likely help to increase student outcomes in the population of international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Facilities involved in preparing international/foreign-born students may use the information from this research to modify their curriculum to better meet the needs of the population of students they serve.

Recommendations for the Nursing Program at the Midwestern Community College

Based on the findings of this research study, the practical nursing students at the Midwestern community college may benefit from one semester of pre-nursing courses that

include an introduction to Pharmacology, Medical-Surgical Nursing, and Foundations of Nursing. The pre-nursing course should also include teaching students how to create an individualized time management plan. The pre-nursing course would be a prerequisite for all nursing students because all prospective nursing students are likely to benefit from this course. A dosage course could also be completed before starting the nursing program. All nursing students should be strongly encouraged to take the English language in their major course that is related to nursing. This course should be required and not optional for all nursing students.

To help with the financial barriers that the students experience, the college could create more scholarships and designate the percentage of scholarships that would be given out to international students and students who are residents/citizens. However, this researcher would recommend that all students who were economically disadvantaged, regardless of their place of birth, would be able to apply for this scholarship.

Based on the recommendation from one of the participants, the Medical-Surgical Nursing course could be delivered twice weekly instead of once weekly. Reducing the length of this course may help students to be more focused for the entire class, resulting in a better understanding and application of course materials.

This researcher believes that a flipped classroom format would be more beneficial for the students because they would spend more time in the classroom engaging in applying the concepts in the courses. This format may help the students to understand course materials better and likely results in improved academic outcomes. This format may include more work initially from faculty because lectures and some assignments would need to be prerecorded and posted before face-to-face classroom activities; however, the reward may be great if student outcomes are significantly improved.

Recommendations

This researcher recommends that more research studies be completed in the future on international/foreign-born practical nursing students. Other researchers, including the researcher of this research, may complete different forms of research studies on this population of students. Some research methods that could be performed on this population include quantitative and mixed methods. These research studies may generate new knowledge that may be beneficial to these students.

Future Research

This researcher recommends that other researchers complete future studies with international/foreign-born practical nursing students—both quantitative and qualitative studies with larger sample sizes than this research. These studies may generate new findings. A comparative study with practical nursing and respiratory therapy international students regarding barriers that impact their completion rates may generate valuable data regarding how students experienced the barriers. This researcher recommends that other researchers complete more qualitative research studies on international/foreign-born practical nursing students using larger sample sizes and including participants from multiple community colleges in the same region. Other researchers may include participants from various community colleges from two or more areas. Future studies could also have participants who originated from countries with the English language as the primary language. Another prospective research study may consist of participants from the Caribbean. A future study may also include participants from multiple programs within one college. These research studies may yield different results that better represent the population of international/foreign-born students. Other future research studies may include a comparative study with participants who are international/foreign-born students who attended high school outside of the US and participants who were born in the US and completed

high school in the US. This comparative study may yield tangible results that may be used to

help the general population of practical nursing students.

This researcher would like to complete two future research studies on this population of

students. One of these studies would be a quantitative study, and the other would be a qualitative

study with participants from multiple community colleges. These studies may yield more

information that could be useful in creating better practices for this population.

Researcher's Reflection

This researcher found that working with the participants was both awe-inspiring and

interesting. The participants allowed the researcher to ask questions and to listen to them relate

their lived experiences of being international/foreign-born students in an institution of higher

education in the US. While listening to the participants relate their lived experiences, and during

the analysis of the transcripts, the researcher had to bracket herself so that her experience as a

foreign-born student did not influence the lived experiences of the participants. The researcher

acknowledged that while international/foreign-born students may experience similar barriers,

everyone's experience is unique. The researcher listened to and recorded the participants' lived

experiences electronically and in a hand-written format to ensure that their voices would be in

this research study. While the researcher immersed herself in the collected data, she learned more

about the challenges that international/foreign-born practical nursing students experienced.

Based on the information gathered from the participants' lived experiences, the researcher will

integrate more active learning during classroom sessions and try to record more lectures and post

them before class sessions. More hands-on activities may help the students better learn nursing

concepts, and the prerecorded lectures may help them to understand the concepts better because

they will be able to listen to the lectures on their own available time and will be able to replay the

lectures at their convenience. The researcher will also advocate for a pre-nursing course for all nursing students.

The researcher learned that the English Language barrier was a gateway barrier to other barriers, such as academic and time management barriers. The researcher also learned how resilient those students were and how they overcame challenges. The major information derived from this research study is that the international/foreign-born practical nursing students encountered barriers that impacted their academic performances, and there were commonalities from the findings of this research study to previous researchers who completed studies on international/foreign-born students in IHE in the US. It was enlightening to learn from the participants the courses in the Practical Nursing Program that they found difficult. Based on the researcher's knowledge of teaching in Practical Nursing Programs, the researcher expected that more students would report that they found the Medical-Surgical Nursing course difficult. Only three (37.5%) participants in this study found the Medical-Surgical Nursing course challenging.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological research study explored the impact of barriers on the completion rate of international/foreign-born practical nursing students in a Midwestern community college in the US. Schlossberg's Transition Theory framework showed that the participants were aware of their challenges. This theory showed that the participants were transitioning through the Practical Nursing course in the Midwestern community college, despite the challenges that they were experiencing. The participants positively described themselves with words such as optimistic and spiritual. All participants related that they were supported by family, friends, and their communities. They reported coping strategies such as exercising and praying during challenging situations.

The findings of this research study also showed that the participants identified the English language, time management, and financial barriers as significant. This study showed that the English Language barrier was likely the most important of the three significant barriers. The English Language barrier was associated with one participant failing to complete a previously attended nursing program. All participants reported experiencing academic challenges. The findings revealed that the participants found pharmacology and Medical-Surgical Nursing challenging. One participant found the Foundations of Nursing course difficult. The time management barrier impacted some participants in various ways, such as insufficient time to complete assignments and attend classes promptly. Some participants reported that their social life was affected by insufficient time to complete personal, work, and college tasks. Some participants experienced financial insecurity due to having to pay for tuition and college supplies out of pocket because they were not eligible to apply for financial aid due to their status as international students. Therefore, those participants were working while attending college. All participants worked while attending college; however, some worked more hours than others.

Despite the reported barriers that impacted the participants, they were committed to working hard until they achieved their goal of becoming licensed practical nurses. It was evident from this research study that the participants felt like they were supported by family, friends, and their community. The participants also reported college resources that benefited them; however, two participants had two suggested resources that they believed could help improve their academic outcomes. These resources were an app that could translate the English language into other languages, such as Spanish, and scholarships for international students. Overall, this research showed that international/foreign-born practical nursing students at the Midwestern community college experienced barriers similar to those experienced by other

international/foreign-born students pursuing other programs in IHE in the US. This study helps

to contribute information to the knowledge gap of identifying barriers that impact

international/foreign-born practical nursing students and identifying specific courses which the

participants found challenging. This research study found that the English Language barrier

contributed to the failing out of a participant from a nursing program that the participant

previously pursued before attending the Midwestern community college. This study also showed

that other reported barriers, such as the English Language barrier, time management, and

financial barrier, were related to academic challenges. However, the English Language barrier

appeared to have the most impact on the participants based on the overwhelming majority

(87.5%) of participants reporting that the English Language barrier impacted them, and 50%

reported that this barrier was significant.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about the barriers you believe you are currently experiencing in the Practical

   Nursing Program.

2. Which barriers do you consider to be more significant, and the rationale/s and why do

   you think they are more significant than other barriers?

3. Based on your perception, how do the barriers impact you?

4. State some examples of how the barriers you are experiencing directly impact you in the

   classroom.

5. State some examples of how the barriers you are experiencing directly impact you

   outside the classroom.

6. Relate your feelings about the Practical Nursing course/s that you are currently pursuing.

7. Is there any content area of the Practical Nursing Program that seems more challenging to

   you than others?

8. Is there any aspect of the classroom experience in which you struggle?

9. What resources would be beneficial to you?

10. What is being done or what can be done better in the Practical Nursing Program or in a

    particular course to help eliminate or reduce the barriers?

11. What resources are available at the college to help resolve your barriers?

12. How did you learn about the available resources at the college that you may utilize to

    help resolve or reduce the barriers you are facing?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Department: School of Teaching & Learning

Title of Study:

Barriers that Impact International/Foreign-Born Practical Nursing Students' Completion Rate in a Diploma Program Located in a Community College in Midwestern United States

Purpose of the study:

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research study is to explore the self-reported barriers and possible resources that may help to alleviate the barriers that impact the completion rates of international/foreign-born Practical Nursing students.

What will you do in this study:

I will contact the participants, set up interviews and conduct the interviews, record interviews, and analyze and report data.

Risks:

There are no known risks for participating in this research study.

Benefits:

The data from this study will be beneficial to stakeholders, such as college administrators, Practical Nursing faculty, student affairs personnel, such as Pathway advisors, and Practical Nursing students. The data from this study may be utilized to implement changes that may improve the completion rate of international/foreign-born Practical Nursing students.

Confidentiality:

The names of participants will not be included in the research study. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym. All data will be kept on a personal computer that can only be accessed by a password that is known only to the researcher.

Participation and withdrawal:

I understand that my participation in the research study is voluntary, and I may choose to withdraw from

this project at any time for any reason/s without any consequences.

I understand that I can withdraw any data that I have provided for this project at any time.

Contact:

Principal investigator's name: Dr. Andrew Burklund

Department: School of Teaching & Learning

Telephone number: 320-224-7174   E-mail address: Andrew.burklund@mnstate.edu

Co-investigator's name: Joy Seymour

Department: School of Teaching & Learning

Telephone number: 612-807-2289   E-mail address: joy.seymour@go.mnstate.edu

Whom to contact about your rights in this experiment:

Please contact Dr. Andrew Burklund, at Andrew.burklund@minnstate.edu , or 320-224-7174, School of Teaching & Learning, or else you may contact Dr. Lisa I. Karch, Chair of MSUM Institutional Research Board, at irb@mnstate.edu, or 218-477-2699.

Agreement:

The purpose and nature of this research have been sufficiently explained and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time and my withdrawal will not affect any future relationship with Saint Paul College.

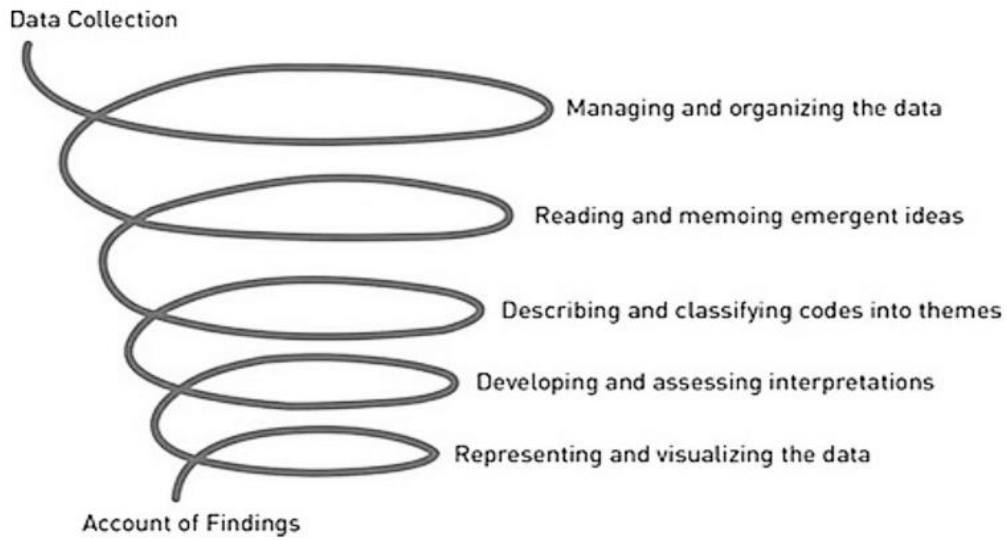**In signing this agreement, I also affirm that I am at least 18 years of age or older.**

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (print): _____

APPENDIX C: DATA ANALYSIS SPIRAL

Figure 1

Creswell and Poth (2018) Data Analysis Spiral

Data Collection

Managing and organizing the data

Reading and memoing emergent ideas

Describing and classifying codes into themes

Developing and assessing interpretations

Representing and visualizing the data

Account of Findings

Source: Creswell and Poth (2018)

APPENDIX D: SCHLOSSBERG'S TAKING STOCK-THE Four S System

Table 1

Schlossberg's Taking Stock-The Four S System

Situation	Self	Support	Strategies
• Trigger • Timing • Role change • Duration • Concurrent stress • Who is responsible?	Personal/Demographic • Age • SES • Gender • Health • Culture Psychological • Optimism • Resiliency • Spiritual outlook	Social Network • Intimate • Family • Friends • Institutions/ communities	To Cope • Modify • Control meaning • Manage stress Flexibility and multiplicity are most effective

Source: Flowers and Reczynski (2015)

APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Student,

I am seeking participants who would like to participate in a qualitative phenomenological research study on barriers in higher education. If you are willing to participate in this research, please complete the short survey below:

https://mnstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2ggcRQUJ3HBPI3A

 Please note that conducting the research study is voluntary.

Please contact me via email at joy.seymour@go.mnstate.edu if you have any questions regarding the research study.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joy Seymour

APPENDIX F: MEMBER CHECKING MEMO

To: Research Study Participants

From: Joy Seymour

Topic: Member checking

       Thank you for participating in this phenomenological research study. Please read the attached interview transcript and check if the information is correct. I want to work with you to add or change any information that may not reflect your lived experiences. Please return this document with any changes or addition that you have made.

       Please record your participation in this process by placing your signature and date below.

Print Name _____   Date _____

Signature _____

I have reviewed the transcript of my interview and (Initial one).

_____ There are no changes or suggestions.

_____ I would like the attached changes to be made

APPENDIX G: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH SURVEY

1. Which country do you originate from?

   [   ]

2. What is your gender?

   - Woman
   - Man
   - Non-binary/third gender
   - Prefer not to say
     Other

3. In which country did you complete your high school education?

   [   ]

4. Were the courses in your high school taught in the English language?

   - Yes

   - No

5. When did you start the Practical Nursing Program?

   [   ]

6. Have you failed a nursing course in the past?

   - Yes
   - No

7. Have you failed any other course outside of nursing?

   - Yes
   - No

8. What factors attributed to your failed grade?

   [   ]

9. Would you be willing to participate in a doctoral study about barriers that impact practical nursing students' completion rates?

    - Yes
    - No

10. Please print your name and email address below if you want to participate in the research study.

H: TAKING STOCK QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age range?

- 18-28

- 29-39

- 40-50

- 50-60

- 60-70

2. What gender do you identify with?

- Woman

- Man

- Other _____

3. What is your socioeconomic status?

- High

- Middle

- Low

4. Explain any challenges you are currently experiencing and state whether the obstacles were anticipated.

5. How do you consider the challenges?

- Good

- Bad

- Neutral

6. Who is responsible for the challenges that you are experiencing?

7. Describe the coping strategies that you use during stressful and or challenging situations.

8. How would you describe yourself?

- Optimistic

- Resilient

- Spiritual

9. How would you describe your health?

- Excellent

- Good

- Fair

- Poor

10. In your culture, what are some things that are important to you?

11. Identify the people and or institutions/communities that support you.

APPENDIX I: DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The researcher of this qualitative phenomenological research study is a foreign-born student who had pursued and graduated from a Practical Nursing Program. The researcher is a current faculty in the Practical Nursing Program in which the study was conducted. She also graduated with an AAS Degree in Practical Nursing from the college where the study was conducted. The AAS degree in Practical Nursing is no longer available at the college.

Although the researcher had experienced some barriers as a foreign-born student, she tried to ensure that her experiences were not included in the findings of this research study. Only the lived experiences of the participants of this study were included in the results.

APPENDIX J: CITI PROGRAM CERTIFICATE

Completion Date 02-Sep-2020
Expiration Date 02-Sep-2023
Record ID 38006666

This is to certify that:

Joy Seymour

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Minnesota State University Moorhead

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w0935d94e-8d38-437c-84ac-5731c54174bd-38006666