

The Perspectives of African-Born Nurses on their Educational Experiences in the US

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Purpose

- To examine the experiences of African-born nurses during their RN-to-BSN program in the United States.



Specific Objectives

- Identify challenges encountered by African-born nurses during their undergraduate nursing education in the US
- Describe factors that enabled the nurses to succeed in nursing school
- Highlight some recommendations for improving the experiences of foreign born students in baccalaureate nursing programs



Background

- Africa is the world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent, and is made up of 54 countries
- Most immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa come to the US through permanent immigration channels such as:
 - Family and employment connections
 - Humanitarian routes
- Nurses that come to the US from Africa are as diverse as the countries



Background

- A near record 14% of the US population is foreign born compared to 5% in 1965 (Pew Research Center, 2016).
- According to 2010 census, those identified as “born in Africa” constitute 4% of the population or 1.6 million
- The swift demographic changes in the US population call for strategies to increase minorities in nursing and healthcare (Beacham, Askew & Williams, 2009).

Background

- The IOM (2010) recommends that the proportion of nurses with baccalaureate degree be increased from 50 to 80 percent by 2020.
- African-born nurses constitute a significant proportion of this targeted nursing workforce.
- Most African-born nurses start their academic journeys at community colleges where they earn their associate degrees.
- The environment of four year institutions is intimidating and often overwhelming for foreign students



Methodology

- Design: Qualitative descriptive study
- Study Sample: Convenient sample of 25 *African-born* nurses who graduated from the RN-BSN program
 - Men: 8
 - Women: 17
 - Age range: 30-53 years
 - Years in the US (range): 9-25 years



Methodology

- Data collection: Face-to-face & phone interviews
- Data Analysis:

Qualitative content analysis



Interview transcripts/field notes read over and over



Data grouped into units of analysis



Categories and sub-categories

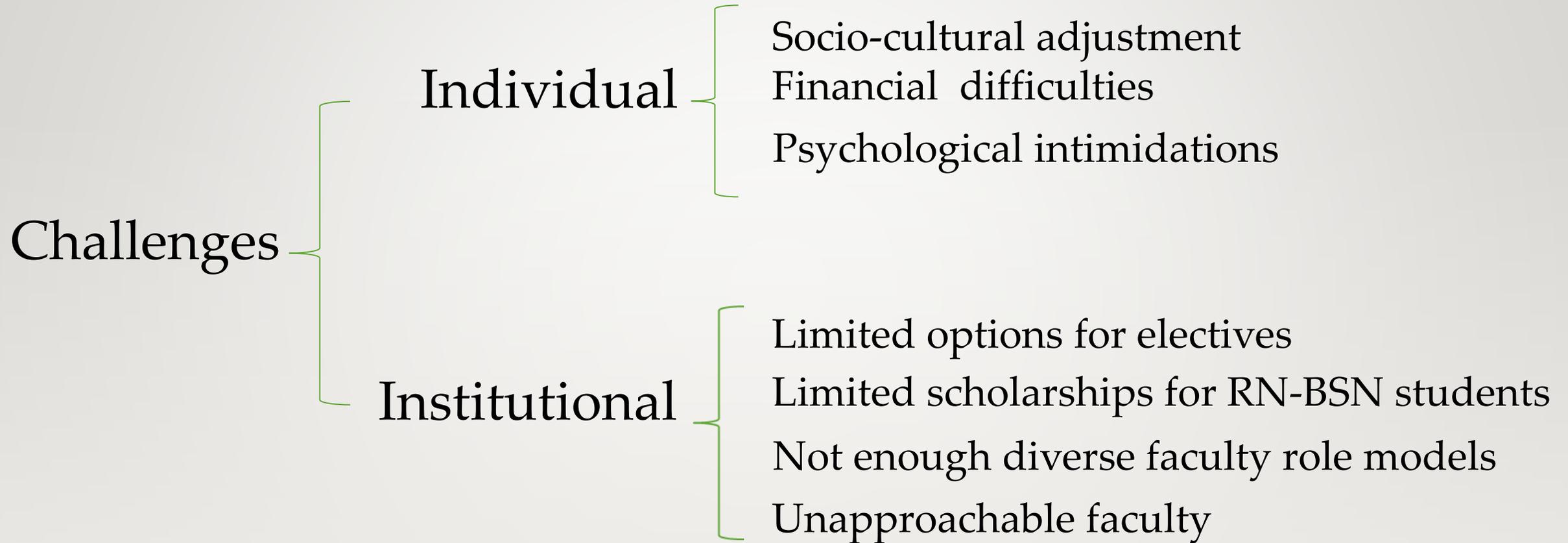


Themes and sub-themes



FINDINGS:

RN-BSN Program Challenges



Individual Challenges

Psychological intimidation

“Immediately they hear your accent, you are put in a corner. You are put in a category. You are not being heard. But inside you, you believe you are intelligent.”
“And some peers are not accepting”

Socio-cultural adjustment

1. “I know English a little bit but the academic English was higher level for research. It was new for me”
2. “Some of my challenges are not necessarily due to school but being a full time mom, being in school full time and working night shift.”

Financial difficulties

“ The tuition was much. I am now with lots of student loans to pay.”

Institutional Challenges

Limited electives

“I had to come to school twice a week in my final quarter due to electives. I took a *films and documentaries* class because it was the only available elective and it was meaningless to me”

Limited scholarships

Not enough faculty role models

Inadequate research resources/support

“Africans are not exposed to search engines such as CINAHL. We learn everything here”

Unapproachable faculty

“It was difficult. Some instructors were terrible. They look down on you. One instructor asked me how I ended up here.” The students were horrible to me and that made it worse because I had no one to turn to”

Success Factors

Personal/Individual Factors

- Self-determination & confidence
- Supportive family members
- Strong peer support

“I have confidence and I am willing to learn. If you don't show confidence, they will think that you do not know what you are doing”

“Having someone to identify with was huge, both faculty and fellow students who share the same experiences as me”

Success Factors

“Faculty were very supportive. Sometimes, some assignments were not submitted on time but they understood.

This was the human factor. I was touched. This was way different from the associate degree program”

Institutional Factors

- Hybrid/online course options
- Writing center support
- Group projects (with the right group)
- Supportive professors and advisors
- Student-friendly class designs (1 day/week)

Recommendations for Improvement

Design and include more hybrid and online courses

More available elective options

Resources to support scholarly writing & research

Creating and sustaining African Nurse Students' Association on campus

Peer support

More African-born professors

Scholarships for working students

Mentorship opportunities

“When I was starting, I talked to a lot of people, so I was mentally prepared and the program was not much of a challenge for me. ..

... For people that are starting, talk to people that already went through the program. Especially for ESLs, it will be nice to have people to talk to”

Policy Implications and Conclusion

- Although lumped together and classed as African Americans, African-born nurses are different as they have unique characteristics, backgrounds and experiences.
- Despite socio-economic and institutional challenges, they are determined and resilient, hardworking, and dedicated to nursing as a top tier profession of choice.

Policy Implications and Conclusion

- African-born nurses thrive and practice at all levels within the US health care system.
- It is critical that higher institutions and schools of nursing ensure that there are appropriate resources, programs and policies in place to support students who come from minority and marginalized backgrounds.





THANK YOU!