

“Student Veterans’ Transition to Nursing Education: Barriers and Facilitators

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Abstract : Background: The transition for student veterans from military service to higher education can be a challenging endeavor, especially for those pursuing an education in nursing. While the experiences and perspectives of each student veteran is unique, their successful integration into an academic environment can be influenced by a complex array of barriers and facilitators. This mixed-methods study aims to explore the themes and concepts that can be found in the transition experiences of student veterans in nursing education, with a focus on identifying the barriers they face and the facilitators that support their success. Methods: This study utilizes an explanatory mixed-methods approach. The research participants include student veterans enrolled in nursing programs across three academic institutions in the Southeastern United States. Quantitative Phase: A Likert scale instrument is distributed to a sample of student veterans in nursing programs. The survey assesses demographic information, academic experiences, social experiences, and perceptions of institutional support. Quantitative data is analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess demographics and to identify barriers and facilitators to the transition. Qualitative Phase: Two open-ended questions were posed to student veterans to explore their lived experiences, barriers, and facilitators during the transition to nursing education and to further explain the quantitative findings. Thematic analysis with line-by-line coding is employed to identify recurring themes and narratives that may shed light on the barriers and facilitators encountered. Results: This study found that the successful academic integration of student veterans lies in recognizing the diversity of values and attitudes among student veterans, understanding the potential challenges they face, and engaging in initiative-taking steps to create an inclusive and supportive academic environment that accommodates the unique experiences of this demographic. Addressing these academic and social integration concerns can contribute to a more understanding environment for student veterans in the BSN program. Conclusion: Providing support during this transitional period is crucial not only for retaining veterans, but also for bolstering their success in achieving the status of registered nurses. Acquiring an understanding of military culture emerges as an essential initial step for nursing faculty in student veteran retention and for successful completion of their programs. Participants found that their transition experience lacked meaningful social interactions, which could foster a positive learning environment, enhance their emotional well-being, and could contribute significantly to their overall success and satisfaction in their nursing education journey. Recognizing and promoting academic and social integration is important in helping veterans experience a smooth transition into and through the unfamiliar academic environment of nursing education.

Keywords : nursing, education, student veterans, barriers, facilitators

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