Faculty of Health Sciences
Department of Nursing Science

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Dissertation

by

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Date: August 2021

DECLARATION

Student number: 13362098

I declare that the dissertation **"Challenges experienced by recognition of prior learning candidates in the nursing education institution of South Africa"** is my original work and that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other institution. All sources that have been acknowledged by means of complete references in the text and the reference list.

31 August 2021

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GLORIA MORABA UDEAGHA   **DATE**

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to many people who have influenced me academically.

My husband Chidiebere Udeagha, for his help, support, and encouragement, as well as for always being there for me.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / ACRONYMS

ACE	American Council for Education
APEL	Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning
BNCQF	Botswana National Credit and Qualification Framework
BOUPRPL	Botswana Open University Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
KNQA	Kenya National Qualifications Authority
KNQF	Kenya National Qualifications Framework
MQF	Malaysian Qualification Framework
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NEI	Nursing Education Institution
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANC	South African Nursing Council
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SA	South Africa
PLA	Prior Learning Assessment
PFE	Policy Framework for Education
USA	United States of America

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ABSTRACT

CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Introduction: Recognition of prior learning in South Africa was established in 1996 as a policy by the Department of Education to provide fair and equal opportunities for individuals who want to advance their studies. Recognition of prior learning provides possibilities for entrance, transfer and advancement to education and training. According to the literature, and researcher's observations at a specific nursing education institution, admitting learners with lower grades, affect their academic performance leading to termination of training in many cases.

Objectives: The aim of the study was to explore and describe challenges experienced by recognition of prior learning candidates related to the four-year comprehensive nursing training programme and three-year nursing training programme at a nursing education institution of South Africa.

Methods: A qualitative, descriptive, and contextual phenomenological approach was used to explore and describe the challenges experienced by the recognition of prior learning candidates in a nursing education institution. The research sample consisted of 10 purposefully selected participants. The unstructured, face-to-face individual phenomenological interviews with participants were conducted to collect data by exploring the candidates' challenges during their nursing programme. Data were analysed using Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method. Trustworthiness was obtained through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Findings: The following four themes were identified in this study: challenges related to teaching and learning, personal challenges, coping methods and suggestions regarding recognition of prior learning students. Some candidates for recognition of prior learning stated that they were not receiving appropriate support from the institution, which had a detrimental

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impact on their studies, while others stated that they were receiving adequate assistance from their peers. Nursing education institutions should conduct an orientation program for newly recognition of prior learning candidates to learn about the course and how to prepare for it before starting training. Recognition of prior learning candidates should interact with younger students or non-nursing students because they learn and absorb material more quickly, allowing them to aid and support learning.

Keywords: Recognition of prior learning, nursing training programme, nursing education institution, South Africa.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) refers to identification of previous knowledge to recognize prior learned information and abilities related to a person's academic qualifications and experience (Merikallio 2019:23). The same author stated that RPL acknowledges learning that is been acquired in institutions and health care settings. The RPL process enables individuals to change from workplace to education, appreciating all experiences they have obtained through their lives. RPL acknowledges non-formal and informal learning by offering entrance to formal education for certain people who did not have the chance to register in the formal system (Merikallio 2019:23).

The development of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) started in 2004 to support individuals with wide experience from work and learning acquired in institutions and community health care settings and to evaluate whether learning outcomes learned in these settings are equivalent in content and significance to formal qualifications (European Commission 2008:4). Recognition of people's knowledge abilities are important for the advancement of individuals in career pathways (European Commission 2008:6). Talbot (2019:6) supports this statement by stating that RPL (also known as prior learning assessment) was initiated since the 1970s to encourage lifelong learning. Furthermore, the author stated that the American Council for Education recognized institutions utilizing RPL as a means of experiential learning for the purpose of access of credits as part of formal programmes.

Different countries implement RPL in different ways. For example, in Malaysia, accreditation of prior experiential learning is a way of admitting individuals without formal qualifications in higher institutions and acknowledging prior knowledge acquired in the institutions and workplace (Ooi & Eak 2019:2). The authors also stated that RPL permits students to use working knowledge or previous experience to register into higher education institutions and permit learners from different backgrounds to gain access to higher education institutions for professional growth. The Malaysian Qualification Framework (MQF) (Malaysian Qualifications Agency 2017:2) was first published in 2007 and its implementation was enforced to set national categories of qualification levels of learning attainments based on learning outcomes.

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In addition, Malaysia introduced the Enculturation of Lifelong Learning Plan in 2011, aimed to increase the number of lifelong learners in 2020 by admitting large numbers of students in the higher education institutions, who previously were admitting limited numbers of learners (Ooi & Eak 2019:2).

Similar to information in the previous paragraph, in Kenya, RPL is a process of assessment by which learners can advance recognition for knowledge, understanding, skills and competences that they already have. This formal recognition may be used for access to any programme of study in place of the usual entry qualifications (Kenya National Qualifications Authority [KNQA] 2020:1). Kenya National Qualification Framework was developed in 2012 with the aim to cover all educational and professional qualifications and recognize learning outcomes and objectives of the given qualification. Furthermore, the Kenya National Qualification Framework specifies how learners can move amongst qualifications and levels in the education system (Kenya Ministry of Education Science and Technology 2012:50). The Kenya National Qualifications Framework Act (Act no 2 of 2014) established the Kenya National Qualifications Authority for recognition of achievement or capabilities including skills, knowledge, attitudes and values and encouraging lifelong learning through the recognition of learning acquired in institutions, community and health care settings (KNQA 2020:5). Assessment for RPL is directed to formally acknowledge experience gained on-the-job or as a result of other informal or unstructured learning experiences (KNQA 2020:18). Level of success and competencies of learners who went through various learning systems or education structures was accomplished by establishing and evaluating interrelationships and linkage through national qualifications in consultation with relevant institutions (Nyangweta & Reinsch 2019:4). The Aga Khan University in Kenya started a work and study improvement programme for nurses in 2001 to improve their qualifications while continuing to work (Brownie, Gatimu, Wahedna, Kambo & Ndirangu 2019:209).

The Botswana Open University Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning [BOUPRPL] acknowledges that individuals may have attained learning outcomes through various learning processes, and in different contexts (Botswana Open University 2017:2). It involves recognizing, evaluating, and certifying all learning outcomes, making the lifelong learning system more unbiased for those self-learners who could not attend the formal education and training system (Botswana Open University 2017:15). Regulations were created to encourage lifelong learning through the recognition of all forms of learning accomplishment including workplace learning. Furthermore, to encourage regional and international recognition of local qualifications, Botswana National Credit and Qualification Framework (BNCQF 2016:2) was established by Botswana Qualifications Authority Act (Act no 24 of 2013) with the aim to

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advance life-long learning through the recognition of all methods of learning attainments, including workplace learning (Botswana Qualifications Authority 2016:2).

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) developed guidelines in 2014 to aid with the ideas and the nature of the awards to be provided at the end of the RPL process to successful applicants and the differences in the implementation stage. SADC intended to enable the decision-making process concerning all the components of any RPL process, from concept, assessment and award, and their societal recognition (SADC 2014:16).

In South Africa, RPL is a process whereby the previous knowledge and abilities of individuals are noticeable, and evaluated for the purposes of access and entrance, recognition and certification, or further learning and development (South African Qualifications Authority [SAQA] 2019:5). RPL provides an alternative access path into a programme of studying, professional title, or acknowledgement in the workplace to the individuals who did not qualify with formal qualifications (SAQA 2019:9). SAQA was accountable for the development of the NQF in 1996 with the purpose of translating the educational system in the country. In addition, SAQA developed an RPL process that intends to enable access to education and training to people whose skills and knowledge were not recognized for personal and professional development in the workplace (South African Nursing Council [SANC] 2009:1). The RPL process can be applied inversely for the purposes of recognition in the context of professional titles, and recognition in the workplace. Furthermore, RPL is conducted using different specific learning interventions and assessment methods through which the knowledge capabilities of a person are observable and considered (SAQA 2019:11).

Snyman and van den Berg (2018:24) stated that the RPL process has been initiated to escalate access and advance the quality of education and training. Furthermore, the authors asserted that RPL permits adult learners to get entrance to higher education while they are encouraged to further their studies and move to higher qualification ranks. RPL plays a significant part in recognition of prior knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal learning and access admission to formal training for certain groups of people. RPL candidates are often adult learners who have not been involved in studies for a long time, and their learning background may no longer be applicable to the current education system (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:1). The author asserted that without relevant qualifications to further their studies in higher education institutions, individuals were admitted following the process of RPL. These individuals were provided with the opportunity to use their prior knowledge that they acquired from life experience and integrate it into academic requirements (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:2).

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SANC (2013:11) stated that assessment procedures should recognize previous experience of an individual with the purpose of achieving credits towards qualifications offered by nursing education institutions. Nursing education institutions use the RPL system to offer development opportunities to RPL candidates in the nursing profession. In this research RPL refers to the recognition of experiential knowledge of enrolled auxiliary, enrolled nurses and non-nursing personnel such as clerks, cleaners and porters who meet the requirement of the admission criteria in an RPL process.

SANC (Circular no 7 of 2016) has started the process of phasing out legacy nursing qualifications in preparation for the introduction of the higher education qualifications sub-framework (HEQSF) aligned nursing qualifications. Legacy nursing qualification, the four-year comprehensive nursing training programme is gradually being phased out. The purpose of this qualification was to equip students with the necessary cognitive, psychomotor, and affective skills, as well as professional values and attitudes, to promote the physical, social, and mental health of diverse individuals, families, and communities in any setting, and to allow them to register as a professional nurse with SANC. A three-year diploma nursing programme is currently being phased in. The purpose of the programme is to produce competent, dedicated generalist nurse practitioners who can exhibit the essential abilities in a variety of health-care settings while remaining within the legal and ethical framework in order to address the national burden of disease.

The RPL process will make career progression possible for the lower categories through recognising their prior learning with the aim of attaining credits towards a qualification registered by the NQF and offered by a nursing education institution (SANC 2013:11). The findings of this study will be applicable for future as RPL candidates will still be selected using similar policies.

As a nurse educator, the researcher observed that the RPL candidates are performing poorer in theory than the non-RPL nursing students in a nursing education institution. The students who are gaining entry through RPL process are enrolled nurses and enrolled auxiliary nurses and non-nursing personnel who qualified for the RPL process in the nursing education institution.

Although some researchers (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018; Snyman & van Den Berg 2018) have investigated the experiences of the RPL candidates in a nursing training programme, this study aims to explore the challenges experienced by RPL nursing candidates in a specific

nursing education institution in South Africa. This study also aimed to make recommendations based on the identified challenges.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The RPL system can be used by nursing education institutions to provide opportunities for RPL candidates to advance in the nursing profession, acknowledging the skills nurses have learned from their experiences within the healthcare system and enabling entrance to nursing education and training programmes. RPL plays an important role in providing opportunities for adult learners to be able to transit effectively from working life to education (Merikallio 2019:14). In South Africa RPL is critical to the development of an equitable education and training system and plays an important role in social fairness (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:1).

Nursing education institutions in South Africa are tasked with the commitment of graduating knowledgeable and skilled graduate nurses. This desired outcome can be accomplished by assuring satisfactory academic performance and achievement. (Mthimunye & Daniels 2019:53). The purpose of RPL is to recognize the previous learning of an individual with the purpose of achieving credits towards qualifications offered by nursing education institutions (SANC 2009:3).

Nursing education institutions are allowing large numbers of qualified adult learners with work-related experience in the nursing profession (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:2). There is a gap between the context and knowledge gained through the experience and the recognized context of the academic knowledge, as little is known about the RPL nursing student's prior learning. Students cannot be prepared for success in formal educational settings when their prior learning is unknown (Talbot 2019:1; Merikallio 2019:7; Snyman & van den Berg 2018:25). Identifying and recognizing learners' previous experience can be challenging when the learning occurred in a different context than the recognition (Merikallio 2019:15). There is a higher probability of not completing a nursing programme for learners admitted with lower grades (Handwerker 2019:168; Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:2).

As a nurse educator, the researcher observed that RPL nursing students without the required academic qualifications are being accepted into the nursing programme even when they do not meet the admission necessities. In addition, RPL candidates may lack academic willingness into the nursing programme as they were accepted based on their prior knowledge rather than their desire for further studies. RPL candidates are struggling to handle the essential demands of the nursing programme, not actively participating in class activities that result in poor academic performance. The researcher also observed that most RPL candidates

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are resigning and are terminated due to academic failure.

According to the Gauteng Nursing Education Institution data, the number of RPL students who are not performing well or ending the programme are between 12% to 16%, higher than those who are not RPLs (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:2). Poor academic performance and failure by RPL candidates affect nurse educators as they introduce various methods of teaching and learning strategies to ensure students' success. It is uncertain what these students are undergoing during their studies, and they are given little chance to express their challenges. Hence, the purpose of this study to explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a nursing education institution of South Africa to fill the knowledge gap.

1.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

The significance for nursing management, practice and education is discussed.

1.3.1 Nursing management

The outcomes of the study may encourage managers responsible for policy formation to implement innovative, learning and teaching strategies to assist the RPL candidates to cope with the academic demands and enhancing academic performance. The study will be of value for policymakers to make decisions that are applicable leading to improvement of academic performance of RPL candidates. In addition, support services could be provided to help learners in making proficient options about available programmes to cope with their studies.

1.3.2 Nursing practice

The study can play an important role within the nursing profession by improving the intake of RPL candidates in nursing education institutions. The outcomes of the study emphasized academic support for RPL candidates during their training.

1.3.3 Nursing education

The study outcomes may benefit current students and those who wish to further their studies in future by inspiring and motivating them to put more efforts and complete their studies at a stipulated time. In addition, the nurse educators may implement the recommendations from the study to enhance the academic performance, success, and retention of the RPL nursing candidates.

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1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

From the above problem statement, the following research question is formulated:

- What are the challenges experienced by RPL candidates related to two nursing training programmes at a nursing education institution in South Africa?

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.5.1 Research aim

The overall aim of this study was to have an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a nursing education institution of South Africa. This understanding guided the researcher to propose recommendations in terms of nursing practice, nursing education and nursing research.

1.5.2 Research objectives

The objectives that formed the basis of this study are the following:

- Explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in the nursing education institution of South Africa.
- Propose recommendations for RPL candidates in a nursing education institution of South Africa, based on the findings of this study, with reference to nursing practice, nursing education and nursing research.

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The concepts related to the study are defined in this section.

1.6.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) means the principles and processes through which the previous experience and abilities of individuals are made visible and assessed for the purposes of certification, other entry and acceptance, further learning and development (SANC 2013:4).

In this research RPL refers to the recognition of experiential learning of enrolled auxiliary and enrolled nurses and non-nursing personnel and includes giving an acknowledgment value to their previously achieved formal qualifications.

1.6.2 Adult learner

An adult learner refers to an individual who has acquired life experiences and knowledge, whose life situation is characterized by various roles such as worker, spouse, parent and learner (Gravett 2001:6).

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In this research "adult learner" refers to PRL nursing candidates who had previous nursing education and experience which they had to connect to the four-year comprehensive nursing training programme and three-year diploma in nursing training programme.

1.6.3 RPL nursing candidate

A RPL nursing candidate refers to a nursing student who has formally challenged the RPL process and have obtained credits in a particular course with the intention of gaining access to a nursing programme and employment with the Department of Health (Gauteng Nursing Colleges 2003:5).

In this research a RPL nursing candidate refers to enrolled nurses and enrolled auxiliary nurses who have been awarded credits for access to a four-year comprehensive nursing programme and three-year diploma in nursing training programme in one of the Gauteng nursing education institutions.

1.6.4 The four-year comprehensive nursing training programme (R425)

The course of study means a programme of education and training approved in terms of section 15(3) leading to obtaining a qualification which confers on the holder thereof the right to registration as a nurse (General, Psychiatric and Community) and midwife (SANC Regulations 1988).

In this research a four-year comprehensive nursing training programme refers to programme which can be accessed by enrolled auxiliary and enrolled nurses and non-nursing personnel who do not meet the formal entrance criteria of a qualification by following the RPL for credit route at a specific nursing education institution.

1.6.5 The three-year diploma in nursing training programme (R171)

The course of study means a programme of education and training approved in terms of section 58(1) leading to obtaining a qualification which confers on the holder thereof the right to registration in the category Staff Nurse (SANC Regulations 2013).

In this research a three-year diploma in nursing training programme refers to programme which can be accessed by enrolled auxiliary and enrolled nurses and non-nursing personnel who do not meet the formal entrance criteria of a qualification by following the RPL for credit route at a specific nursing education institution.

1.6.7 Nursing education institution (NEI)

A nursing education institution (NEI) refers to any institution that is accredited by SANC in terms of the Nursing Act, 2005 (Act no 33 of 2005) for education and training recommended to qualify an individual to practice as a nurse or midwife (SANC 2013:3).

In this research, NEI refers to a public NEI in South Africa in which various nursing training programmes are provided. The NEI is situated in Gauteng Province, one of the nine provinces of South Africa.

1.7 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A paradigm is a world view that contains collections of philosophical assumptions that directs one's approach to an investigation (Polit & Beck 2017:9).

In this study, the constructivist paradigm was used to apprehend, explore and understand the RPL candidates' experiences. The constructivist paradigm assumes that information is extended when the space between the investigator and those who participate in the study is diminished (Polit & Beck 2017:11). The benefits of constructivism are that constructivist studies yield rich, in-depth information, and their findings are grounded in real-life experiences of people with first-hand knowledge of a phenomenon (Polit & Beck 2017:12).

The researcher utilized phenomenology as a method and a philosophy to guide the study (Polit & Beck 2017:470). The phenomenological research approach was suitable to the purpose of the study, in exploring challenges experienced by RPL candidates in the NEI. Using the descriptive phenomenological method helped the researcher to understand the experiences of RPL candidates in a NEI as it was verbalized by the RPL candidates themselves. The paradigmatic approach is discussed in terms of the following philosophical assumptions, ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions.

1.7.1 Ontological assumptions

Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality. In addition, it guides all succeeding choices made by the researcher (Botma, Greeff, Mulaudzi & Wright 2010:5). Constructivist ontology assumes that reality is created inter-subjectively throughout significances and considerations established socially, even across cultures (Polit & Beck 2017:10). The RPL candidates in NEI have a distinctive understanding about the challenges they are experiencing during nursing training programmes. These ideas are seldom consciously questioned since they appear to be obvious. In this study, the researcher apprehended the experiences of RPL candidates

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regarding challenges experienced in a NEI, Gauteng Province in South Africa. Unstructured individual face-to-face phenomenological interviews were conducted with the RPL candidates to achieve intense and comprehensive description of their lived experiences of their challenges.

1.7.2 Epistemological assumptions

Epistemology is a divider of philosophy responsible with how an individual define what is true (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:453). The epistemology of descriptive phenomenology enlightens the meaning of the lived experiences and knowledge of people (Polit & Beck, 2017:11). In this study the researcher utilized the authoritative knowledge as it was acquired from the participants. RPL candidates have knowledge about challenges they experienced regarding academic performance. The researcher facilitated the research process as the RPL candidates were actively involved in the process as participants. The researcher acquired adequate information regarding the lived experiences of RPL candidates during their nursing programmes. The outcomes of this study were the establishment of the collaborative process between the researcher and the RPL candidates.

1.7.3 Methodological assumptions

Methodology uses rules and procedures that direct how the researchers acquire knowledge and study anything they believe to be known through qualitative approaches (Polit & Beck 2017:11). The assumption provides researchers with approaches that they can use when gathering information (Botma et al 2010:6). In this study the researcher decided on a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach to explore and describe challenges experienced by RPL candidates in NEI.

Varying interpretations can be refined through interaction between researcher and participants (Polit & Beck 2017:11). Unstructured individual face-to-face phenomenological interviews were conducted to explore the challenges experienced through the explanations given by the RPL candidates.

1.8 DELINEATION

The focus of the study is on learning experiences, as per interview question. The researcher wanted to explore and describe the challenges experienced by the RPL candidates related to the four-year comprehensive nursing training programme and three-year nursing training programme. The study was conducted in one NEI in Gauteng Province, one of the nine provinces of South Africa.

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1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1 Research design

Descriptive phenomenological design was suitable for this study to explore and describe the challenges experienced by the RPL candidates thoroughly. Descriptive phenomenologists emphasize across deeper understanding the meaning of people's daily experiences (Polit & Beck 2017:470). Descriptive phenomenology entails direct investigation, review and explanation of phenomenon from unstudied assumptions focusing on intuitive presentation, according to an original source (Spiegelberg 1975:57). The design will be discussed in more details in chapter 2, 2.2.

1.9.2 Research methodology

Research methods are utilized to structure the study, to collect and analyse information relevant to the research question (Polit & Beck 2017:743). An overview is provided here, but the methods will be discussed in more depth in chapter 2, 2.3.

1.9.3 Context

The study was done in a provincial government nursing education institution in an urban area in Gauteng Province that offers two courses which are of interest in this study. The setting selected for this study secured time, resource and cost-effectiveness. According to Gauteng Nursing Education Institutions' data at the time of the study, there were 65 RPL candidates enrolled in the NEI, five for the three-year nursing programme and 60 for the four-year comprehensive nursing programme.

A minimum of ten were selected as participants in the study, two for three-year nursing programme and eight for four-year comprehensive nursing programme guided by data saturation.

1.9.4 Population

According to Polit and Beck (2017:739) population is a group of people having certain similar attributes. For this study the population consisted of RPL nursing students in four-year nursing programme and three-year nursing programme enrolled at a NEI in Gauteng Province during 2020 to 2023 academic year. See Chapter 2, 2.3.2

1.9.5 Sampling method

Purposive sampling utilizes research information about the population to make selections. The researcher selected the participants that were informed regarding issues under study, as proposed by Polit and Beck (2017:493). This type of sampling method was suitable for this study as it permitted the researcher to choose participants that have experience of the study phenomenon. The inclusion criteria were RPL candidates who applied for a four-year comprehensive nursing programme (R425) who were at their second, third or fourth level of training and a three-year diploma in nursing programme (R171) who were at their first (second semester) level of training between 2021 to 2022. The exclusion criteria were all other candidates not training for the four-year comprehensive nursing diploma programme and three-year diploma in nursing programme who did not meet the inclusion criteria.

Ten candidates were selected as participants in the study, two for three-year nursing programme and eight for four-year comprehensive nursing programme. The sample size was based on data saturation (Burns, Grove & Gray 2013:371).

1.9.6 Data collection

Data collection is collection of information to solve a research problem (Polit & Beck 2017:725). The researcher conducted unstructured individual interviews to collect data because it is an adaptable method to explore in-depth meaning. Open-ended questions were used to acquire information and explore RPL nursing candidates' experiences and challenges.

Interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken by the researcher as evidence and to assist the researcher to understand the phenomenon (Polit & Beck 2017:286). The phases followed in data collection will be discussed in Chapter 2, 2.3.4.

1.9.7 Data organisation

An appropriate method to organize data was utilized to guarantee easy recovery when necessary (Polit & Beck 2017:531). Folders were utilized to keep the collected data and identification numbers were enclosed to every file. Organizing the data comprised a general cleaning up of the data to make it more manageable. This involved transcribing all the individual interviews and recording field notes through participant observation. Audio-recorded data were transcribed verbatim.

1.9.8 Data analysis

Giorgi's (2012) descriptive phenomenological method was utilized for data analysis by explaining the meaning of interview transcripts. The researcher transcribed and analysed the

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data using the four steps of Giorgi's (2012) The four steps that were utilized to guide the analysis, are discussed in Chapter 2, 2.3.5.

1.10 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness, the degree of confidence that qualitative researchers have in their data and analysis that is measured by credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability criteria (Polit & Beck 2017:747), were used in this study and will be discussed in Chapter 2, 2.4. The researcher developed credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability in this study to enable trustworthiness judgements.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration is a principle to confirm participants are not maltreated (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:61). It is the duty of the researcher to guarantee that the rights, dignity, safety and wellbeing of the individuals are protected when taking part in the research (Polit & Beck 2017:18). Ethical considerations were obeyed in the following manner: the research proposal was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee, Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Pretoria, for approval before starting with the research (see Annexure A). In this study, ethical principles of beneficence, justice and respect for human dignity were adhered to.

1.11.1 Beneficence

Beneficence is defined as a crucial ethical principle to expand benefits for research participants and reducing harm (Polit & Beck 2017:139). The following dimensions were covered by the principle of beneficence: the right to freedom from harm and discomfort, as well as the right to protection from exploitation.

1.11.1.1 The right to freedom from harm and discomfort

The participants were protected from any harm or injuries during the study (Polit & Beck 2017:139). Furthermore, the author asserted that participants should not be subjected to unnecessary risks of harm or discomfort, their participation should be essential to achieve logical and significant objectives that could not be apprehended. In this study, RPL candidates were informed before the study regarding the objectives of the study, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they wish so (Polit & Beck 2017:148). They were also informed of support options, should they need it. No participants needed referral to the nursing education institution department for counselling, emotional and psychological support.

1.11.1.2 The right to protection from exploitation

The right to protection from exploitation arises when participants are positioned in an underprivileged position by the researcher when displaying them to a situation that the participants were not prepared for (Polit & Beck 2017:139). In this study the researcher obeyed the agreement of spending only 45 to 60 minutes of the participants' time for interviews. In addition, the participants were ensured that their identity will not be revealed in reports and publication of the study. Each quote used in the research dissertation was followed by the participant number in brackets, for example, (P1)

1.11.2 Respect for human dignity

Polit and Beck (2017:140) affirm that respect for human dignity highlights the right to self-determination and the right to full disclosure. In this study, the researcher notified the participants about their right to choose whether to participate or not.

1.11.2.1 The right to self-determination

The principles of self-determination mean that the potential participants have the right to voluntarily choose whether or not to participate in the study (Polit & Beck 2017:140). No participants withdrew from the study. No participants were coerced to participate in the study.

1.11.2.2 The right to full disclosure

Full disclosure means the researcher has fully described the nature of the study (Polit & Beck, 2017:141). In this study, all RPL nursing candidates participating in the study were informed regarding the purpose, objectives, benefits and the risks of the study and the researcher's obligations to disclose the nature of the study.

1.11.3 Justice

The principle of justice involves fair treatment and the right to privacy and anonymity (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011:65). According to Polit and Beck (2017:141) participants are not chosen for study purposes because they are susceptible. The right to fair treatment and privacy were covered under the principle of justice.

1.11.3.1 The right to fair treatment

No participants withdrew from the study. The researcher displayed respect for the beliefs, habits, and lifestyle of various cultures of the participants (Polit & Beck 2017:141).

1.11.4 The right to privacy

Researchers should ensure that their study is not more intrusive than needs to be and that participants' privacy is maintained (Polit & Beck 2017:141). All the data collected were kept confidential and the participant's right to privacy were preserved. Interviews were conducted in a room free from noise and distractions.

1.11.5 Informed decision–making

The participants were fully informed about the study by giving them adequate and essential information regarding the study. In addition, participants were also informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time. The participants who voluntarily chose to participate were asked to sign the consent form without being coerced (Polit & Beck 2017:144).

1.12 CONCLUSION

The results of this study were made available in the form of a dissertation for the Master's degree in Nursing Science at the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Health Sciences, and Department of Nursing Science and will also be published in an article in a journal paper. Feedback was provided to all the participants of this study and to all relevant stakeholders.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one, the background, problem statement, significance of the study, definition of concepts and paradigm were discussed. The overall aim of this study was to explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a nursing education institution of South Africa. The following research question was formulated: What are the challenges experienced by RPL candidates related to a four-year comprehensive nursing training programme and three-year diploma in nursing at a nursing education institution in South Africa? In this chapter the research design and methods were discussed through elaborating on the design, population, sampling and data collection and analysis methods.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was discussed in terms of a descriptive phenomenological and qualitative design.

2.2.1 Descriptive phenomenological design

Descriptive phenomenologists emphasize deeper understanding of the meaning of people's daily experiences (Polit & Beck 2017:470). Utilizing the descriptive phenomenological approach made it easy for the researcher to recognize the challenges experienced by the RPL candidates, as it were expressed by themselves (Polit & Beck 2017:471). The descriptive phenomenological approach enabled the researcher to describe the lived experiences of the RPL nursing candidates (Motswasele, Peu & Moloko-Phiri 2020:4). The researcher tried to get true meanings by engaging in-depth into reality. The concepts used in descriptive phenomenological studies include phenomenological reduction, experiences, perceptions and intentionality (Giorgi 2009:98); as will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.1.1 Phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction is limiting difficult issues into primary components by removing own bias regarding the research phenomenon (Watson, Mckenna, Cowman & Keady 2008:234). Reduction in Giorgi's analysis correlates to the researcher being transparent to capture the meaning of any experience the same way it appears in the awareness of the other (Isabirye & Makoe 2018:3). The researcher was transparent in grasping the meaning of some occurrences shown in the consciousness of the participants. Bracketing is the method

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whereby the researchers hold in abeyance perceptions and believes regarding the topic that are being explored (Ellis 2016:40). In this study the researcher suspended any information concerning the experiences of the RPL candidates in the NEI to prevent her own knowledge and experiences from impeding the recovery of a refined explanation of the phenomenon.

2.2.1.2 Experiences

The quality and worth of all interactions, direct or indirect, clinical and non-clinical, over the course of working in a certain context are referred to as experiences (Wolf, Niederhauser, Marshburn & La Vela 2014:9). For the purpose of this study, experiences refer to all interactions between the RPL candidates and their studies in the NEI. RPL candidates were free to share their experiences as recognized by them and the way they were linked to the study objectives. The researcher also attempted to understand the experiences of RPL candidates as described by the participants themselves.

2.2.1.3 Perceptions

Perception is a psychological process in which sensory neurological impulses reaching the brain are chosen, organized, and interpreted so that humans may make sense of and assign meaning to sensations (Weiten 2018:156). In this study, the researcher explored perceptions of RPL candidates regarding the nursing program in training. The perceptions were presented as part of the findings and influenced the research recommendations.

2.2.1.4 Essences

Streubert and Carpenter (2011:74) describe essence as factors correlating to true meaning of something. Essence is described as the most crucial explanation for a specific situation (Watson et al 2008:232). Ellis (2016:30) stated that essence is referred to as a creation of something. It is awareness of essence that indicates a significant understanding of the experience of the phenomenon (Ellis 2016:30). The researcher analysed the lived experiences and how the intuition of essences builds on the meaning of the experiences of the RPL candidates. The researcher also analysed the meaning of participants' experiences explored during the unstructured individual interviews.

2.2.1.5 Intentionality

Intentionality refers to the "human being's actions associated to the world and objects" as positioned in the human consciousness (De Castro 2003:50). Cooper (2003:440) describes intentionality as the crucial interrelationships among subjects and objects. Other authors asserted that intentionality refers to the idea that our consciousness is always directed toward something, which means that when we experience anything, we perceive it as "something"

with significance for us (Sundler, Lindberg, Nilsson & Palmér 2019:734). When conducting research, intentionality encompasses a sense of "what it's like" and relies on a holistic capture of awareness (Jackson, Vaughan & Brown 2018:4). In this study, the researcher concentrated on the crucial meaning of the experiences of RPL candidates concerning their challenges with regards to their academic demands in the NEI.

2.2.2 Qualitative design

Qualitative design is a method utilized to define life experiences and provide them with meaning to understand them without making assumptions (Gray, Grove & Sutherland 2017: 62). The same authors stated that a qualitative design follows real-life experiences and essential methods of exploring emotional reactions, as it focuses on apprehending the whole that is compatible with the holistic philosophy of nursing. Qualitative research offers an in-depth exploration and description of a phenomenon that is initiatory in nature (Botma et al. 2010:211). Qualitative research methods allow the researcher to deliberate on lived experiences that are accurately positioned in their contexts (Merikallio 2019:38).

In this study, the researcher acquired clear understandings of the different meanings of human experiences of RPL as they occurred within the NEI. Data was gathered with the aim of exploring and describing the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a NEI of South Africa.

2.3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods are methods utilised to conduct the study, collect and evaluate the collected data as initiated in the research question (Polit & Beck 2017:743). According to Botma et al (2010:199), research method refers to data collection, data analysis and establishing accuracy in research. The research methods included: research setting, selection of participants, data collection and data analysis, as will subsequently discussed.

2.3.1 Research setting

Research setting is explained as a place in which data collection takes place (Gray, et al 2017:353). The research setting refers to the environment in which a study is carried out; it might be natural, partially regulated, or highly controlled (Burns & Grove 2013:40). To develop rapport between the researcher and the participants, gaining access to the research setting is critical and must be arranged prior to data collection (Polit & Beck, 2017 154; Streubert & Carpenter 2011:37).

The study was done in a provincial government NEI in South Africa that offers two courses which were of interest in this study. The setting selected for this study secured time, resources and cost-effectiveness. The lecturers' profile varies depending on the modules and the number of students enrolled. At the time of the study, there were 75 lecturers including the heads of the department and 539 students both registered for R171 and R425, in the NEI.

2.3.2 Population

Gray, Grove, and Sutherland (2017:329) describe population as the whole set of individuals or elements that meet the sample requirements. Population is group of people having certain similar attributes (Polit & Beck 2017:739). The population consisted of RPL candidates in a four-year nursing programme and a three-year nursing programme, enrolled in a NEI in Gauteng Province for the 2020 to 2022 academic year.

The population in this study consisted of RPL candidates in four-year nursing programme and three-year nursing programme enrolled in NEI in Gauteng Province for the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

2.3.3 Sampling method

Purposive sampling utilizes research information about the population to make selections. The researcher selected the participants that are informed regarding issues under study (Polit & Beck 2017:493). The researcher considered which participants were able to provide the needed information regarding the study (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:3). This type of sampling method was suitable for this study as it permitted the researcher to choose participants that have experience of the study phenomenon.

Inclusion criteria

- The inclusion criteria were RPL candidates who applied for four-year comprehensive nursing programme (R425) who were at their second, third or fourth level of training and three-year Diploma in Nursing programme (R171) who were at their first level (second semester) of training between 2020 to 2022.
- These RPL candidates were enrolled nurses and enrolled auxiliary nurses who did not meet the entry requirements for access to the four-year nursing diploma course and followed the RPL access programme.

Exclusion criteria

- The exclusion criteria were all other candidates training for the four-year comprehensive nursing diploma programme and three-year Diploma in Nursing programme who met the admission requirements for entry into diploma studies.

2.3.4 Data collection

Data collection is a systematic gathering of information essential to the research aim and the specific objectives, questions, or hypotheses of a study (Gray et al 2017:675). Data were collected from three to twenty six February 2020 from a NEI in Gauteng.

An unstructured interview is one in which the researcher asks participants questions without having a predefined plan for the content or flow of the data collected (Polit & Beck 2017:747). Unstructured interviews were conducted in a conducive environment accessible to all participants where privacy was maintained (Burns & Grove 2013:695). Participants granted approval for the researcher to utilize an audio recorder to record interviews. In this study, the following phases were used to guide the process of data collection:

2.3.4.1 Preparatory phase

The researcher asked permission from the Department of Health to utilize a NEI as a research setting. Permission was granted. The dates and time were agreed upon by the researcher and respective principal of the selected NEI campus.

2.3.4.2 Recruitment and access of participants

Recruitment is the method of finding participants for a study, categorizing, and approaching them to partake in the study (Gray et al 2017:690). Gaining entry to research setting was arranged to establish rapport between the researcher and the participants, as described by Streubert and Carpenter (2011:37). The researcher arranged a meeting with the campus head of the NEI to gain access to the research site. Coordinator of the programme, who is also chairperson of the research committee was instrumental in securing appointments with relevant participants. In this study the researcher communicated the research topic and the process followed to the potential participants to direct their choices in becoming participants. Appointments were scheduled with each participant to be interviewed at a time and date depending on their availability. The researcher verified the appointments before the appointment date (Polit & Beck 2017:168). Informed consent forms comprehending the objective of the study, and reason for collecting data were handed to the participants on the days of the interviews (Polit & Beck 2017:168).

2.3.4.3 Pilot study

Polit and Beck (2017:739) refer to a pilot study as a "trial run" arranged prior to the main study. The objective of a pilot study was to establish whether the data collection to be utilized in the main study were adequate and significant to answer the research question (Kim 2011:190). The researcher conducted pilot interviews using unstructured individual interviews to enhance her interviewing skills and evaluate the research question using two participants to identify problems that might arise with the research question (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011:90). The outcomes of the pilot study were not used in the main study. No challenges were encountered, and no changes were made to the research question based on the pilot study as the researcher managed to acquire sufficient information with the interview questions. The pilot interviews were conducted on the day when the participants were not in theory class to prevent academic interruptions.

2.3.4.4 Individual Interviews

Interviews are the most suitable method to obtain plentiful, inclusive, and individual experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2014:10). Unstructured individual phenomenological interviews were used to collect data as the researcher wanted to obtain comprehensive information from participants. Unstructured individual interviews are collaborative in nature and are used when researchers cannot foresee the outcome of the interview since they do not have a set of questions prepared in advance for the interview (Polit & Beck, 2017:747). Another author stated that interviews provide the researcher chance to be in subject-subject contact with the participants in a naturally occurring event to acquire a first-person explanation of the experience (Sekgobela 2018:44). For the purpose of this study the researcher conducted unstructured individual interviews in English to acquire comprehensive data from participants.

The researcher adopted an attitude of phenomenological bracketing, reserve prior thoughts, judgments and was open to the descriptions given by the participants. Once the participants were relaxed and ready for the interview, the researcher started interviews by asking the following open question linked to the research topic: *What are your experiences in learning as an RPL candidate?*

2.3.4.5 Research venue and time frame

The study was done in the environment of participants, in a specific NEI in Gauteng as it allowed them to loosen up and become involved during the interview (Creswell 2014:185).

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Conducting research in the area where the participants experience the problem can be of advantage to them as they will be comfortable to express their views in the familiar environment. (Polit & Beck 2017:168). Interviews resumed until no new information were revealed during data analysis. An audio recorder was utilized to record data with consent of the participants. Confirmation of data saturation was concluded by the researcher and an independent coder. The interviews lasted for 45 to 60 minutes.

2.3.4.6 Establishment of rapport and trust

Qualitative researchers must create an atmosphere that securely allows participants to share experiences and feelings (Polit & Beck 2017:508). The researcher introduced herself and permitted the participants the chance to present themselves to establish rapport and trust. The process of this research was enlightened, and the researcher asked the participants approval to record the interviews to apprehend all the data.

2.3.4.7 Communication techniques

In unstructured, phenomenological interviews there is no set of prepared questions but only an open-ended question to follow the intent and thoughts of the participants. An interview guide was utilized to guide individual interviews and the main question was asked: "*What are your experiences in learning as an RPL candidate?*"

Along with the overview question, there are often additional questions coming from the conversation (Polit & Beck 2017:509). Unstructured interviews offer participants with a chance to thoroughly explain their experiences (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:35). The following communication techniques were used during the individual interviews; probing, paraphrasing, clarification, and reflecting (Uys & Middleton 2014:180).

a) Probing

Probing is established to convince participants to provide adequate data regarding the matter under study (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport 2011:290). The researcher paid attention to participants and used probing to obtain further information. With probing, nondirective questions were used to motivate the participant to elaborate on aspects not mentioned, clarify what had been said, extract more information, and to address questions insufficiently answered (Polit & Beck 2017:740).

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b) Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing entails verbal feedback whereby the researcher intensifies meaning by saying the participant's words in another form with the same essence (De Vos et al 2011:122). Paraphrasing is reinstating a person's thoughts in a way that captures the meaning and indicates understanding (Gray et al 2017:686). Paraphrasing was utilized during the interviews to make sure that participants understand research questions. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that paraphrasing was posed accurately in order not to distort the meaning of the message.

c) Clarification

Clarifying is described as searching for the importance of the transmitted message (Uys & Middleton 2014:180). Clarification was utilized by the researcher asking questions to gain clarity on the challenges experienced with RPL in the NEI.

d) Reflection

Reflection is a communication method that entails communicating to the sender, his/her expressed ideas and feelings (Uys & Middleton 2014:178). Reflection was used by the researcher to reflect on the feelings that participants experienced during their nursing programme.

2.3.4.8 Debriefing session

The researcher asked the participants if they will require counselling or emotional support after the interview. All ten participants verbalized that they do not require emotional support. The researcher ensured them that they can contact her if they require emotional support and referral services. None of the participant contacted the researcher for assistance

2.3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the systematic organizing and synthesis of research data (Polit & Beck 2017:725). According to Holloway and Galvin (2017:287), data analysis is a complex, methodical, ordered, and structured process that is iterative in nature. Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method was utilized for data analysis by explaining the meaning of interview transcripts. The method involves raw data divided in units of meaning, reorganized in terms of meaning clusters, where all the participants' constituent themes are the same (Isabirye & Makoe 2018:3). The researcher transcribed and analysed data. The following four steps of Giorgi's (2012) method was utilized to guide the analysis:

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2.3.5.1 Reading to search for sense of the whole

The researcher listened to the recordings and read the transcripts of the interviews several times to familiarise herself with the data. This process enabled the researcher to understand the sense of the whole, as an explanation of the experiences from the participants.

2.3.5.2 Re–reading the description and demarcating spontaneous shifts in meaning

The researcher paid attention to the transcripts of the interviews, reading numerous times to acquire better understanding of the entire situation where experiences occurred. The purpose of re-reading the transcripts was to find the meaning of the experiences.

2.3.5.3 Generation and determination of natural meaning units

The researcher achieved a complete understanding of the data by identifying the meaning units that were relevant to the study. The researcher explained the significance by linking constituents (themes and sub-themes) to each other and to the whole.

2.3.5.4 Synthesizing the reflections and insights into a consistent statement

The researcher looked for the lived nature of the constituent of each participants' experiences, communicated the emotional understanding in each of the meaning units and constructed units into reliable statements (themes and sub-themes) concerning participants' experiences.

2.4 MEASURES TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINES OF THE STUDY

The criteria for developing the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry; credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Polit & Beck 2017:559), are discussed in this section.

2.4.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to assurance in the truth of the data and interpretation of them (Polit & Beck 2017:559). The researcher established confidence in the truth of the findings in the context of the research. Adequate time was allocated for data collection to gather all the challenges experienced by RPL candidates during their training. The researcher warranted credibility of the study through prolonged engagement in the field, and triangulation (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:316).

2.4.1.1 Prolonged engagement

Prolonged engagement is the process of spending adequate time with participants during data collection (Polit & Beck 2017:589). The researcher spent 45 to 60 minutes per session with the participants during individual interviews to ensure credibility.

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2.4.1.2 Triangulation

Triangulation is the utilization of various methods to collect and interpret data about a phenomenon and assess the degree to which a compatible and logical picture of the phenomenon appears (Polit & Beck 2017:747). Green and Thorogood (2014:93) describe triangulation as a process of utilizing various techniques to enhance the validity of results, based on the assumptions that results are reliable if they are in line with others. In this study data triangulation was ensured by collecting data from participants from different age groups (between 26 and 45 years).

2.4.2 Dependability

Dependability indicates the solidity of data over time and over circumstances (Polit & Beck 2017:559). The researcher examined the correctness of transcriptions and the correlation between the research questions and the data (Creswell 2014:203). Dependability is a standard reached once researchers have illustrated the credibility of the results (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:49).

In this study, the transcribed individual interviews were analysed by the researcher and the independent coder. The researcher and the independent coder agreed on the themes and sub-themes recognized from the transcripts.

2.4.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to congruency between two or more independent people's data in relation to correctness or significance (Polit & Beck 2017:559). Confirmability is a standardization method in which the researcher documents the outcomes of confirmability by writing the methods and findings of the study so that another person can follow them (Streubert & Carpenter 2011:316).

The findings reflected the participants' voices that were recorded during the interviews to confirm their responses during data analysis. The researcher made sure that the data was analysed by an independent coder who is an expert in qualitative research. The independent coder signed the confidentiality agreement before analysing the data (see Annexure F).

2.4.4. Transferability

Transferability means generalisability of the data and the extent to which the results can be relevant to the individuals or groups (Polit & Beck 2017:560). Green and Thorogood (2014:93)

describe transferability as the way the findings are applicable to the setting. In this research the setting and sample were well described for transferability purposes.

2.4.5 Authenticity

Authenticity means the extent to which researcher's honestly and loyally display a variety of realities (Polit & Beck 2017:560). Streubert and Carpenter (2011:239) assert that "authentic" means that the document provides a sincere reporting of a research topic. The researcher ensured that the feelings and ideas of the participants were portrayed in the findings using direct quotations.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the research design and methodology were discussed in depth. The qualitative, descriptive phenomenological and contextual design and method of this study were addressed. The researcher specified the way in which data were collected and analysed. The unstructured interviews focused on the challenges experienced with RPL in the NEI. The chapter concluded with the measures used to ensure trustworthiness.

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presented an overview of phenomenology and an in-depth discussion of the research design and methods implemented to address the objectives of the study. The research design was qualitative and the aim of the study to explore challenges experienced by the RPL candidates in the NEI. The population, sampling method, data collection method, and the measures used to ensure trustworthiness, were discussed together with the data analysis. In chapter 2, the methodology for this study was discussed thoroughly. This chapter will provide a discussion of the research findings and literature control. The aim of the study was to explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a NEI in South Africa. The demographic profile of the target population is described. The findings from the data collected through individual interviews are presented and explained.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TARGET POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The target population were RPL candidates studying for a period of one year to four years in one of the NEIs in Gauteng Province. The sample was taken from the NEI which offer the R425 and R171 nursing programmes in Gauteng Province. Only RPL nursing candidates who applied for the four-year comprehensive nursing programme and the three-year diploma in nursing were sampled (See 2.3.3 in Chapter 2).

The total number of participants in this study were ten RPL candidates (ten females) who had been studying for a period of one year to four years in one of the NEIs in Gauteng Province. Their ages ranged between 26 and 45 years. See Table 3.1.

3.3 SUMMARY OF DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected in one of the NEIs in Gauteng Province. Ten unstructured individual interviews were conducted in English to acquire comprehensive data from participants. The interviews were audio recorded with the participant's approval. Confirmation of data saturation was finalized by the researcher and an independent coder.

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Table 3.1 Demographic information of the sample

CRITERION	CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
3.2.1 Age	<40 yrs	7	70%
	41 yrs – 50 yrs	3	30%
3.2.2 Gender	Females	10	100%
3.2.3 Race	Black	10	100%
3.2.4 Level of training	R.171 L1	2	20%
	D4L2	3	30%
	D4L3	2	20%
	D4L4	3	30%

3.4 PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS

Four steps of Giorgi's (2012) descriptive phenomenological method of data analysis were utilized by explaining the meaning of interview transcripts (see 2.3.5 in Chapter 2). The transcribed individual interviews were analysed by the researcher and the independent coder. The researcher and the independent coder agreed on the themes and sub-themes recognized in the transcripts. Four main themes and 18 sub-themes emerged from the transcribed interviews. The findings were established on the experiences of participants as shared in their own voices. The identified themes and sub-themes are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Overview of themes and sub-themes of the study

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
3.5.1 Challenges related to teaching and learning. (Theme 1)	3.5.1.1 Teaching approach
	3.5.1.2 Challenges with certain subjects
	3.5.1.3 Technological skills
	3.5.1.4 Work overload
	3.5.1.5 Fear of failure
	3.5.1.6 Study challenges
	3.5.1.7 Clinical placement challenges
	3.5.1.8 English proficiency
3.5.2. Personal challenges (Theme 2)	3.5.2.1 Age related challenges
	3.5.2.2 Financial challenges
	3.5.2.3 Balancing study and family responsibilities
3.5.3. Coping methods (Theme 3)	3.5.3.1 Consult with lecturers and peers
	3.5.3.2 Apply different study techniques
	3.5.3.3 Receive family support
	3.5.3.4 Utilise peer support
3.5.4 Suggestions regarding RPL students (Theme 4)	3.5.4.1 Provide technological support
	3.5.4.2 Provide teaching and learning support
	3.5.4.3 Provide counselling and preparation for RPL students

3.5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE CONTROL

Each sub-theme is discussed in detail and verbatim quotations from the participants' interview transcripts are presented as relevant to the respective findings. The verbatim quotes were written in italics. Quotes from the data were utilized as supporting evidence for recognized

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themes and sub-themes. Each quote is followed by the participant's number in brackets, for example (P 1). Researcher's explanations were written in a normal font. Each sub-theme is followed by a discussion of relevant literature findings.

3.5.1 THEME 1: Challenges related to teaching and learning.

Learning is a fundamental concept in human behaviour and includes the acquisition of knowledge, skills and personal choice and characteristics. Teaching is whereby the educator communicates and allows students to take part, enable their understanding and application of knowledge. (Bruce, Klopper & Mellish 2011:122). Participants expressed teaching and learning as one of the challenges they experienced. The following eight sub-themes were identified under this theme**:** Teaching approach, challenges with certain subjects, technological skills, work overload, fear of failure, study challenges, clinical placement challenges and English proficiency. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in this section.

3.5.1.1. Teaching approach

Teaching approach is defined as a teacher-centred and learner-centred approach (Bruce et al 2011:248). The same authors stated that in a teacher-centred approach, the teacher has authority over what he or she teaches and the way he or she gives out information to students**.** The authors furthermore stated that in a learner-centred approach, the learner is participating actively in the educational process. Hadžiomerović (2021:42) confirmed that student-centred learning is an approach to education concentrating on the learners and their needs, instead of being centred on the teacher's view. The same author asserted that in a student-centred approach the emphasis is on learning instead of teaching, motivating students to participate more actively in the learning process. A learner-centred approach was being introduced in all NEIs. Teaching and learning strategies are also introduced whereby lecturers facilitate the content and whereas students actively participate utilizing different teaching and learning strategies.

Some of the participants viewed the learner-centred approach and some teaching and learning strategies as not supporting them as they are used to a teacher-centred approach. The participants found the learner-centred approach challenging and time consuming as compared to the teacher-centred approach. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

The issue of demarcation, I think they can guide us in class to look where when preparing for class. It will be better; the workload will be a little much lesser (P 1).

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Yes, also methods of teaching like way back when you used to study. The methods are no longer the same as tertiary institution, they are different methods of teaching whereby they need to teach at times (P 4.)

The other challenge is method of studying, if we are using study method to study as a group. If we have given the work to prepare work as a group in theory block, you are in different group in practica block, so it makes difficult for the group to meet and finish the work that has been given as we have different placement according to different blocks of different theory and practicals (P 7).

Students must do most of the work. Student do 90% and lecturers do 10% and is not the same as lecturers used to stand in front of the learner and give them information. Students must go also to find information which requires more internet which require more of data, they have to google and find information also on you tube (P 10).

As participants in the study explained that the teaching approach has been changed from a teacher-centred approach to a student-centred approach. Instead of focusing on the lecturer throughout the learning process, the new approach has positioned students into the center (Merikallio 2019:15). Cheng, Huang, Yang and Chang (2020:3) confirmed that nursing education's teaching and learning methods have changed from old ones that concentrated exclusively on knowledge transfer to active student learning strategies. Teaching approaches should enhance learning to motivate students to cope and meet the academic demands (Boore & Deeny 2012:117). Hadžiomerović (2021:42) confirmed that an educator is a facilitator while a student must practice energetic comprehension. The same author asserted that the teaching experience must be applicable to the students, including the content, materials, strategies and setting. Teachers foster cooperative learning by offering tasks that require small groups of students to collaborate (Oermann, De Gagne & Phillips 2018:64). According to the same author, learners who engage in cooperative learning activities develop group processing abilities such as managing group dynamics and ensuring that all group members participate. Active learning involves students in the learning process, and learning is most effective when they actively construct information through their participation (Jowsey, Foster, Cooper-Ioelu & Jacobs 2020:2)

3.5 1.2 Challenges with certain subjects

Mhlongo and Masango (2020:140) describe biological natural science as a vital subject in the nursing syllabus that provides necessary information on the structure and role of the human body. The same authors stated that the information acquired from anatomy and physiology

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give a basis for all nursing subjects. Fajar, Hussain', Sarwar, Afzal and Gilani (2019:8) stated that some students do not pay attention in specific subjects due to lack of knowledge and unskilled teachers and insufficient study materials**.** Most participants in this study had challenges and did not have the academic background to study certain subjects which made it difficult for them to cope with the academic demands. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

What I can say mam is that the other challenges that I have encountered is that you know with some of the subjects that we are doing for example, Biological Natural Science (BNS), it's got a little bit of physics and a little bit of sciences of which I don't have a background, so it's much of a struggle to understand. So, I have to complete that part, so I have to compliment that part with the other part that I understand, hence I won't pass the content. So, it's so difficult to understand because I don't have background with physics and chemistry and stuff, so that one is a huge problem for me (P 8).

Some of my challenge is subject like psychiatric nursing science (PNS) because it's a new subject. It takes me long time to understand its psychology. I feel like is really challenging, like study it several times, it's hard for me (P 2).

What I can say mam is that the other challenges that I have encountered is that you know with some of the subjects that we are doing for example, Biological Natural Science (BNS, it's got a little bit of physics and a little bit of sciences of which I don't have a background, so it's much of a struggle to understand (P 8).

All the modules but those that are demanding like psychology. I really try to study it but it's hard for me (P 3).

But if now everyday it's a new study unit for new subject is confusing like if today you like if today, you're doing FNS, tomorrow you are doing BNS and also on Monday evening you need to prepare for BNS you don't even go back to make sure that you understand FNS so if its theory block for 2 weeks, only BNS because the students will be able to understand better. Unlike when everything is different subjects it brings confusion (P 7).

Provision should be made for prerequisite fundamental subjects like human anatomy and physiology and social science to assist students who got access into nursing programmes to prepare them for other core subjects like nursing care and primary health care (Mthimunye & Daniels 2019:53). The same authors asserted that students with lack of basic knowledge of

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fundamental subjects can be recognized and support should be provided to enhance their learning and adjusting to academic demands. Educators should clearly define and clarify all the subjects that are hard for learners to understand (Sikhwari, Ravhuhali, Lavhelani & Pataka 2019:291).

3.5.1.3 Technological skills

Information technology includes computers and their software and telecommunications to recover, safe and convey information (Bruce et al 2011:245). According to Botma, Brysiewics, Chipps, Mthembu and Phillips (2014:52) information technology is of the utmost important for record keeping in the nursing practice. Nursing education utilizes technology for teaching and learning strategies (Boore & Deeny 2012:176). Most participants felt that being computer illiterate is a big challenge as most of the academic activities require technology. Furthermore, participants stated that it is difficult to utilize teaching and learning strategies when studying, as these strategies are computer based. The following quotes support this sub-theme:

And then one experience is that it has challenged us as RPLs to know a computer, to be computer illiterate, because most of the assignments you have to type them and of when and of which it was a problem that I have to learn as a candidate; and then be able to use Microsoft word and you able to use the font size, font colour and everything which was new to me and it's been an experience that taught me a lot (P 1).

There are new methods that are in place that are been used to study and to learn which are technology. There are too much use of technology and majority of us, RPLs we are not familiar with the use of computers and having to study with those technology methods. So, it becomes, we experienced that there are things that we are being guided into in terms of coming to learn (P 7).

Being a computer illiterate, here at school, a lot of thing is done on a computer. We type a lot because we have to submit a typed copy on most of the assignments. We spend a lot of money doing those printings (P 1).

Students must go also to find information which requires more internet which require more of data they have to google and find information also on Youtube (P 10).

Herman (2016:4) argued that teaching strategies assist students in enhancing their comfort, engaging them in learning activities, and reviving their interest. The same author claimed that through reinforcing concepts, students' attention is captured, and a learning environment is

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created. Technology can facilitate learning, but it needs to be utilized in such a way that it assists in expanding the lessons learned (Holloway & Gouthro 2020:203). The same authors asserted that new technology does not guarantee improvement in teaching and learning. Learning activities with effective learning technologies generate in students the maximum possible level of knowledge and skills and promote the development of thinking and memory (Bochkareva, Akhmetshin, Zekiy, Moiseev, Belomestnova, Savelyeva & Aleynikova 2020:373) Some nursing students are unable to use computers for academic purposes due to their age, which is a necessity for self-directed learning (Brenner, Goodman, Meadows & Cooper 2021:11).

3.5.1.4 Work overload

Workload is defined as numerous jobs demands performed with severe time limitations (Huey & Wickens 2013:4). Same authors stated that unforeseen circumstances, environmental stressors and supplementary factors add to an individual's workload Participants revealed distress concerning the academic workload as they are given too much information with limited time to meet their academic demands. Furthermore, some participants stated that they are unbale to cope with the demands as they cannot balance college and home responsibilities. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

Myself I am a mother, a wife, and a student. I find that they cause stress, the fact that you must come and consult (to the lecturers) and then with myself staying very far at Soshanguve. I find it difficult to go and consult because by the time the school is out, I must then go and consult and at the same time I must be at home doing my motherly chores and then you are expected to study at night and also the husband is here, and in the morning, I wake up and come to school, is very challenging mam (P 1).

Felt like the workload was so compacted in such a way that I felt like having to juggle study unit. With that it was a great challenge because you got a lot of work to do, lot of things to study, put it in your head, and will be having test back-to-back, especially level 2 and level 3 were assignment. And you will be travelling like as far as Hammanskraal for your practical experience and when you come back, you have to see what you can study and prepare for your next test or and your exams, so it was…I felt is so compacted (P 5).

About academic demands, is just that I must study, I must go to work and in between I have an assignment that I must submit. Sometimes requires me to spend sleepless nights to prepare otherwise I won't make it. Sometimes I go to work, I knocked off at seven at night. I

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have to wake up in the early hours of the morning in order to prepare the task that I am being given, so those are my challenges, but I try by all means to those needs (P 8).

...three subjects to-day it's for example I'll say today it was MNS and tomorrow is GNS the other day its BNS so for me to prepare a lesson before coming to the class, it's difficult for me. I think maybe if they give us let's say a week per day or maybe, for two days we do one subject and the other two days we do another subject, maybe that will help for us (P 9).

You take the first two and half hours to rest and the other two hours is not enough if you get home around six and you prepare everything for tomorrow. You start studying around 21:00, after you have cooked and eaten so is not enough time. Is only three hours until 00:00, so that you have time for the next day because you can't come to school only when you wake up around 03:00 or you only slept around 03:00 and be productive the next day, it's not possible (P 10.)

Overburdening the students has an adverse impact on their academic performance, achievement and detention of nursing students (Mthimunye & Daniels 2019:55). The impact of workload on student outcomes has been documented in school nursing literature (Jameson Anderson & Endsley 2020:3). Same author asserted that academic achievement, quality of care, and student safety are all impacted by school nurse workload. Duboviciene and Gulbinskiene (2014:143) supported those students should not be overburdened, and educators should adjust between prior and new knowledge. Overloading adult students may lead to memorization of the information. According to Jameson, Engelke, Anderson, Endsley and Maughan (2018:213), workload measurements must consider student challenges, demographical area and support services

3.5.1.5 Fear of failure
Fear of failure is described as a reaction to the frightening and potentially dangerous consequences of failure (Haghbin, McCaffrey & Pychyl 2012:249).

Most participants experienced fear of failure as they have already repeated a year of study. They also expressed the feeling of shame when they must go back to their institutions after failing a year. Programme regulations of the NEI confirm that students who did not achieve all the academic demands for the year, may be allowed to repeat the remaining modules. The regulation also stated that a student who fails to achieve an overall average mark of 40% for all courses for the academic year or had repeated a year, may be terminated from studying

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(Gauteng Colleges of Nursing Programme Regulation 2021:13). The following quotes support the sub-theme:

Fail is when you are failing the subject. Another thing that is challenging is that here at the institution, you're given only one chance to repeat and then if you fail, you repeat, and you fail again you're out of the college. So, you will be a failure in life, failure at school. You will be a failure because even if when I go back to work, they will look at me saying she went there and came up with a fail so it's not nice (P 1).

What will happen if I don't cope, obviously I am not going to achieve the goal of passing and achieving. What I've been send there to be a Professional Nurse, so I won't achieve. If I don't study, I will fail and it will affect me negatively bad because all I wanted is not that, I do want to pass because of circumstances. So, it will affect me, like should I fail I must go back to the institution, what will the people say, what other nurses will say about me? So sometimes psychologically it's also affecting me like you think of quitting but if you quit you go back to the … the people will say why is she back. It causes stress, also that is why you have to push (P 4).

Also, the issue of like having to think of if I don't reach the expected outcomes like passing all your subjects, you end up failing or being terminated; and also, when you think of the institution that you are coming from, people will be like…or can I say even if you pass or you don't pass, they will be looking at you, are you passing? are you getting there? You feel like a pressure from the institution (P 5).

You would have gotten into … then you need certain marks in order for you to get exam entrance, if you don't meet that, you fail, and you only allowed to repeat academic year once and you pass and go to the next level (P 7).

The course will be terminated because I don't have any other chance to repeat, so I'm not coping and don't have the relevant exam entry for this exam. I would say I forgot those letters that they will call me to acknowledge that I'm not going to write the exams due to my results, so I know I must go back to where I come from (P 9).

Anoita, Tiatri and Sari (2020:539) confirmed that fear of failure may prevent students from attaining the fulfilment of their potential, thus reducing performance in learning so that they fail to achieve the highest results. Students are afraid that they are unable able to achieve their academic demands, leading to poor performance and delay finishing assignments in the

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stipulated time (Wang 2020:4-5). The same author asserted that students' fear of failure should also be reduced by continuous motivation and an enhanced sense of achievement. Fear of failure is disturbing students to achieve academic demands leading to poor performance as they do not make any effort to attain the progress needed to meet their objectives (Anoita et al 2020:539).

3.5.1.6 Study challenges

Study challenges are impediments that can be resolved or complicated. It can be dealt with through another person's assistance (Alfayed 2020:18). Most of the participants experienced challenges with their studies as they found it difficult to absorb the information. They cannot concentrate when distracted during studying. The following quotes provide evidence for this sub-theme:

It's difficult to absorb a certain chapter, you study a chapter for two hours and come back after two hours trying to revise the very same content that I am not absorbing, and it takes me the whole time and night trying to absorb that content, that is why at the end of the day you perform poorly academically (P 3).

I haven't been studying for quite some time and suddenly, I must get used to studying, like you know, a whole lot of work and it can be draining (P 8).

For example, according to our college regulations, they say as a student we must work on weekends and holidays or working on Saturday. You find that you are tired, and I cannot study, so that this is also a problem for me as a RPL (P 9).

I am renting a room, those rooms are close to each other, so it's a lot of noise, if someone is having a party next door you can hear everything and every sound, so it becomes destructive, even when preparing one of my exams it was distractive. Because I could hear the noise because the wall is too close that you could even hear the sound from the next door, so that is the problem with the area (P 10).

The majority of participants believed theory and practice do not correlate resulting in contradiction between their prior experiences and their current studies. Although RPL candidates have prior clinical knowledge and expertise, they find it challenging to adjust to academic demands.

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Da Silva and Hitotuzi (2020:2) describe a study lesson as a significant methodology utilized to assist educators to enhance their teaching methods through the orderly observation of certain lectures. Such methods can be used to support students. Mothokoa and Maritz (2018:5) supported those adult students should be given a chance to study while they are still young for them to adjust with their academic demands. Students' professional development and determination to continue their studies might be favourably influenced by nursing institutions' empathy for students and their learning surroundings (Henderson, Sewell & Wei 2020:106). The same authors further stated that institutions who lack empathy for students and their learning settings can have detrimental effects on students' learning and quality of life.

3.5.1.7 Clinical placement challenges

Clinical placement is an obligatory requirement, to introduce students to learning opportunities for the achievement of clinical skills (Ally, Motsaanaka & Makhene 2020:1). Clinical placement is described as the placement of a medical, nursing or allied health care student in a primary, secondary or community health care centres providing quality health care to clients (Janse van Vuuren, Bodenstein & Nel 2018:2) Some participants experienced challenges regarding clinical placement as they were not placed near their demographic area. They also stated that they had challenges with transport when travelling from one institution to the other due to financial constraints and some areas not having adequate transport. The following quotes support this sub-theme:

The other challenge is that as I already said, we are parents, the placement, we have to go and do the practicals where they place you…wherever they place you. They can place you in Hammanskraal and you are staying in Mamelodi, you still have children to look after. When you come back from Hammanskraal it's a challenge, the child must do their homework, you still must do work. Being at the practical doesn't mean that you don't have to study. You still need time to study, you still need time to take care for the family and the children and you still must help them with their homework and everything (P 6).

When you're doing practicals you find that they allocate you far from where you're staying, sometimes is difficult to get there on time. That is another way they are for practicals. It's still a challenge, for example let's say you are going to this clinic, the place is not good because there is no transport, which a problem for us as a student it's also to get there, it's also a challenge (P 9).

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So, by placement you find that they place me in Hammanskraal, and you find that I can't, not because of absenteeism, because of maybe financial constraints (P 4).

The challenges are I am travelling from one place to another, waking up early in the morning which travelling, it has a challenge with finance and buying of books (P10).

Some participants experienced that they were not treated the same as compared to other basic nursing students. They experienced that the nursing personnel assumed that they can do the work due to experience and prior knowledge, as explained in the following quote:

Other challenge on the institutions, if the nurse or the staff realize that you are an RPL student, they do not teach you and they just think that you know everything as an RPL student (P 10).

Some participants felt that clinical staff were not supporting them to meet learning objectives. Ohers felt that they were not given a chance to meet their learning objectives during clinical placement, as mentioned in the following three quotes:

With the work demands in the unit, because you find you are placed in a certain unit that meets certain objectives, for an example, you are placed in labour ward and the institution that you are at you are been placed there and you are 10. The unit manager will say my labour ward is small, I cannot have 10 students from other institution and 10 students from another institution (P 7).

The practicals what we were doing at work, according to what we were simulated and what we are supposed to do. I experience a lot that we do things differently but here at school, I could see we must do things differently unlike the way we are doing at work (P 9).

The other thing as a student is when you are being placed in the unit, you not only there to meet objectives, but the unit also wants and demand from you that you should help with rendering quality patient care, so in terms of you having those objectives, it can get difficult (P 10)

Most participants believed they were not gaining knowledge and meeting clinical learning outcomes since they were not assigned to units where those outcomes can be met. Clinical placement empowers students to acquire knowledge from patients, families and communities, so that students are enabled to integrate theory and practice (Bruce et al 2011:253). During clinical placement, students are allocated to various institutions to integrate theory and

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practice (Hart 2010:126). The same authors stated that some NEIs do not let students change their placements due to the possible problems of many students wanting to practice at one institution at the same time.

Maidment and Crisp (2011:408) stated that students think that NEIs should place them according to their various demands related to family and work, at the cost of quality practical learning experiences. Clinical educators help and enable students in a clinical context to gain the necessary information, skills, and attitudes to meet the institution and nurses' regulating authority criteria (Levett-Jones, Reid-Searl & Bourgeois 2018:16)

3.5.1.8 English proficiency

Language is the preparation of sounds utilized to communicate views and emotional states (Weiten 2018:323). Language permit us to send and receive data, which permits for communication and socialisation. Worae (2021:22) describe language proficiency as a vital component of academic achievement to students, making studies and integration effectively. Some students felt that they struggled to understand due to modules facilitated in English. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

My experience is some of us cannot speak English well and they take us when we are old (P 1).

It takes me long time to understand and English it's a challenge due to all subjects being taught with it. I suppose the use English, it takes me a long time to understand the content (P 2)

We can get the English lesson first, because sometimes it's not like you don't understand what is been asked but don't understand the phrasing of the English words (P 7).

That's how I have coped and then using some of the young students because their minds are still fresh, when maybe you don't understand something you can ask them, I was involved with them (P 6).

The majority of RPL candidates are unable to communicate effectively in English, which has an impact on their studies because they are unable to comprehend what is being taught. A study done in South Africa asserted that educators pointed out that language differences and poor language competency are some challenges they come across during class facilitation

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(Mthimunye & Daniels 2019:59). The same authors stated that these challenges impede effective communication which negatively influence academic performance.

Struggling in mastering and communicating effectively in English language make it difficult for some students to understand lecturers, participate in class activities and completing assignments (Ozoglu, Gur & Coskun 2015:228). Educators can think of ways in which they can help and support students by giving opportunities to strengthen their effective communication in English, such as providing tasks within their learning contexts to enhance students' capabilities and their vocabulary (Holloway & Gouthro 2020:203). During lectures, when students have to interact using English language, students with poor language proficiency become nervous and do not ask questions from educators, therefore, they do not participate and engage in class activities (Maqsood, Maqsood, Kausar & Shahzadi 2021:1248).

3.5.2 THEME 2: Personal challenges

Personal challenges were identified as the second theme. Personal challenges affected participants' academic performance as most participants did not cope with their academic demands. Participants mentioned that they had to work hard and cope with their personal challenges to meet academic demands. The following three sub-themes, namely age-related challenges, financial challenges, balancing study and family responsibilities, emerged under this theme.

3.5.2.1 Age related challenges

An adult learner is an individual who can be labelled as an adult who engaged in academic activities (Gravett 2008:7). Adults' prior experience as students, their inspiration, societal status and financial state may play an important role in whether they partake in learning activities or not (Merikallio 2019:15). Most participants stated that their age has influenced their studies negatively as they take long to understand the content being taught. They felt that they should have been granted a chance to study when they were still young to, so they would have coped with academic demands better. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

The approach from the lecturers is different from us RPLs and other students. When we as RPLs ask questions to the lecturers, they give us negative feedback like you are too old to ask such questions, or you are not putting effort on your studies. When the other students ask the

same questions, they get positive feedback. Sometimes you are afraid to ask questions, that's my experience so far (P 3).

Also learning as an old student with younger students, it was such an experience because the younger students tent to grab information that is taught quickly (P 4).

… excited because when doing a pupil enrolled nurse course, they were so many RPLs, there were no young stars but when I got to the college, I find out that I am the old lady, how am I going to cope with these young ones (P 6).

One challenge is like you feel like you can't make it. You feel like other students are younger than you, you are old, and you have to try to put yourself under pressure for you to even cope with your study like the 18 to 20 years in class and that maybe I am at the 30's and 40's, how will I deal with them (P 10).

Most participants agreed that younger students have a better ability to grasp information than adults. During content facilitation, adult learners take more time to grasp the content. Adult learners discover, reflect and respond slower in their studies than younger students (Gravett 2008:6). The same author stated that adult learners require sufficient time to study new information. Most RPL students are generally adults who have certain experiences from working life as they have other responsibilities like, family and community responsibilities (Snyman & van den Berg 2018:30).

Kachur (2020:12) asserted that an adult learner is a person, who is married and or has children, is financially independent, has life commitments outside of their studies, such as family or career, and may or may not be a full-time student. Caruth (2014:27) believes that providing a supportive environment is crucial for adult learners' learning success and encouragement, arguing that an environment that lacks support or responds negatively impedes learning. This is supported by Topala (2014:232), who reported that adult learners who were satisfied with the relational and educational climate created by the educator were found to be interested and enthusiastic about learning

3.5.2.2 Financial challenges
Financial literacy is the ability to understand and analyse financial options, plan for the future, and to respond appropriately to events requiring finances. This ability can influence the conditions of life and work and can be very helpful in anticipating the future to increase income (Philippas & Avdoulas 2020:360). Several participants in the study encountered financial

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challenges during their training which affected their academic performance. Some participants stated that their salary is insufficient as they are used to an additional income by working overtime. The following quotes supports the sub-theme:

We type a lot because we have to submit a typed copy on most of the assignments. We spend a lot of money doing those printings (P 1).

I've already bought a car, must pay school fees for my kids, paying for my house, so it's really challenging. I personally have lot of challenges (P 3).

Also, I can be able to go to Hammanskraal for five days straight, at times you find that you will be absent because you don't have funds to go there (P 4).

For myself as a single parent everything is on top of my head, it's my daughters school fees, I am paying a bond, you find that I am stressed with other things like that, the other side I have to study while having that condition on my mind (P 9).

Adult students perceive economic stress which negatively influence relationships with their loved ones (Wu, Wu & Le 2014:1134). Nursing students' socioeconomic backgrounds significantly impact their academic performance, success and retention in the programme (Mthimunye & Daniels 2019:59). Academic fees, loss of funding and accommodation fees can put a significant burden on students leading to feelings of withdrawal, isolation, yearning for home and poor academic performance (Worae 2021:17-18.)

3.5.2.3 Balancing study and family responsibilities

Hadžiomerović (2021:106) defines family responsibility as having authority over own actions and withstand the influences of others and providing care to parents, spouses and children. Adult learners are confronted with balancing the academic needs with family, home, partners and children's demands (Stone 2008:275). Another author stated that for adult learners, balancing situational challenges is a crucial difference. Adult learners must balance time and financial constraints with their family, work, and educational responsibilities, which can complicate the demands of their educational responsibilities, such as assignment due dates and use of support services (Kachur 2020:40)

Some participants felt that is difficult to be a wife, mother and student at the same time, as evidenced in the following quotes:

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Myself I am a mother, a wife and a student I find that the stress. The fact that you must come and consult and then with myself staying very far at Soshanguve. I find it difficult to go and meet with the lecturer for clarity regarding the content taught because by the time the school is out, I must then go and consult and at the same time I must be at home doing my motherly chores and then you are expected to study at night and also the husband is here, and in the morning, I wake up and come to school. it's very challenging mam (P 1).

My children at home they expected me to help them with the homework, parent meetings in children's school and my children they don't perform well. Their teacher always contacts me and asked me why? at the other side I am a student, and the college has expected me to do… to produce the results (P 2).

I think it is a challenge, but you must divide your time, you must have time for your family and have time for studies, or what you can do I think is to limit some of the things you were used to do. Maybe a funeral, you must limit yourself you don't have to attend those things because they will consume time (P 6).

Most of the thing that makes me to cope is that I have taken my kids away from me. It makes me cope well because I can do things at my own time, not have to when I get home I have to look after the kids and to do the chores (P 10)

Adult learners have additional demands such as, family, peers, work and leisure time which can generate challenges for an adult to meet academic demands (Mothokoa & Maritz 2018:5). Academic accomplishment was determined by the type of family support students received in the form of applaud, finances and motivational words (Sikhwari et al 2019:294). In order to overcome challenges and provide encouragement in their studies, adult learners require social support from family, friends, and peers (Brunton & Buckely 2020:4). Most students experienced loss of identity and this aggravated psychosocial problems such as isolation, loss of confidence, and decreased time for entertainment due to the detachment from families and peers (Worae 2021:21). The discrepancy between the home culture and the decision to engage in education can be too difficult for the adult learner to overcome, so a lack of familial support can act as a barrier to learning and impede self-directed involvement (Maloney 2021:147).

3.5.3. THEME 3: Coping methods

Coping methods emerged as the third theme. Coping is the method of dealing with conditions by expending effort to resolve personal and interpersonal problems and minimise or tolerate stress (Janse van Vuuren et al 2018:1). The same authors stated that coping methods can be identified as problem-focused coping, emotional-focused coping and thoughtful, altering or evading strategies. Coping is described as the ideas and behaviours that people employ to cope with stressful situations (Huang, Lei, Xu, Liu & Yu 2020:2). Most students utilized coping methods to meet their academic demands. The following four sub-themes emerged under this theme: consult with lecturers and peers, apply different study techniques and receive family support.

3.5.3.1 Consult with lecturers and peers

School consultation is an evidence-informed method for enhancing quality education and student learning objectives (Wong, Ruble, McGrew & Yu 2018:1). A lecturer is a specialist with a lot of information which he /she must convey to the students (Uys & Gwele 2005:5). Most participants in the study utilized consultation with lecturers and peers for clear understanding of content been taught to meet their academic demands. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

Usually, I read alone when I don't understand anything for that subject or content or study units that I learned about. I go to the relevant lecture who teach this subject and say this one that I don't understand (P 2).

We created the study group with these young ones, and they try to help me a lot because sometimes I just come with a question and then ask of them and they will sit down and try to show me how to tackle it and we discuss up until I understand (P 1).

There were some lecturers who were also available for us, if you maybe you phone and say I don't understand they will give that information (P 4).

What I have experienced is that no matter how difficult or challenging the content you have been taught, you need to consult with the others, you end up making it, even if is tough but because of determination you can go very far, that's what I have realized (P 8).

I consult with the lecture and engaged with my peers and then raising my problem while I get confusion, they try to explain well to me then it becomes easy for me (P 9).

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Most participants engaged in study groups, studied alone and used the library in order to cope with the academic demands. Different coping strategies should be created to deal with stress and life challenges efficiently (Mogotlane, Mokoena, Matlakala, Young & Randa 2018:32). Training institutions need to make sure that students master the skills to perform person-centred consultations to meet their objectives and to render quality nursing care (Qi, Cui, Li & Han 2021:14).

Individuals who apply coping methods effectively can better manage stressful circumstances and lessen negative emotions (Huang, Lei, W, Xu, Liu & Yu 2020:2). The ability to manage with stress is defined as a person's ability to cope better or less well with a task during perceived stress, which improves the efficiency with which they deal with a certain issue (Nogaj 2020:81)

3.5.3.2 Apply different study techniques

Study techniques are printed media, e-learning resources and real objects used by educators to enhance learning during facilitation of content (Bruce et al 2011:249). Furthermore, students can read textbooks to acquire a general view of the topic before moving to a detailed study of a specific module. Most participants in this study utilized different study techniques to meet academic demands. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

You work and must study during the weekends because during the day it's no study for me because I have children, I have husband and house chores to do. So, in the night let's say 10 pm until 3 am, and I am going to study. I make a list of study units ahead to study (P 4).

I used the library at the college and use the books and sometimes I compare our prescribed books with the recommended ones, and then like those things they really helped a lot. You get a structure that they explained it very well, you get a full structure, and they explain it well. You get a full picture about what you're studying (P 9).

I do not use much of the library but if there is something that I need from the library maybe a book I need some pages, I go there, and I take pictures and then I do need them and so with that I can cope (P 10).

I used to download videos so that I can understand because when you listen to the video time and again it makes you to understand better. I am using internet to google and to understand the content better. I also use different books because they illustrate things in different ways, so its quite helping using different study materials (P 3).

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I used prescribed books, recommended books that we had at the library also because for most outcomes that need intense explanation, like those of BNS, and I use you tube because they explain them well and some will be having drawings and you can follow through on what they are talking about unlike in the books, as somewhere when you read you get lost (P 5).

Nursing students require technological literacy to expand their abilities for critical thinking. They need to be able to use technology in nursing education and the nursing profession (Nes, Steindal, Larsen, Heer, Lærum-Onsager & Gjevjon 2021:2). New digital technologies outline strategies whereby educators and students share information with each other and discuss on how they work together and participate in the community at large (Holloway & Gouthro 2020:204). Utilisation of technological resources make adult learning more sufficient, and give substantial flexibility concerning methods of learning (Dinevski & Radovan 2013:64). Utilisation of computers and e-materials need be amicable with the learner-centered approach efficient in improving students' academic experience (Oke & Fernandes 2020:2).

3.5.3.3 Receive family support

Family is a set of people unified by marriage, blood, or adoption to meet their needs to give birth to children (Lauer & Lauer 2004:470). Support is described as designing of an environment for individuals to verbalise their differences and find comfort when they encounter problems (Botma et al 2014:37). The participants explained how they use family support as a way of coping with their studies. The following quotes support the sub-theme:

I can't say I am really coping but through the support that I got from my family, from me like comforting myself how many times you need to put yourself together and pull through (P 4).

I can't say I am really coping but through the support that I got from my family, like comforting myself how many times, you need to put yourself together and pull through (P 5).

It also gives a challenge because you are involved with the rest of the family, I think as an RPL if you don't have the family support you won't make it because you struggle from home and you also struggle in class with academic needs. Because if you don't have support at home maybe when you get home the husband and the children, they don't care of what you are doing they don't see it as an important thing (P 6).

I have full support of my family, they are really supporting me, really understanding when I am busy with my studies. They take and do things that I was supposed to do. So, it really helps because I can meet my academic demands with their full support (P 8).

Participants received and appreciated support from their families as it influenced their academic performance. A study conducted in South Africa by Sekgobela (2018:67) stated that the importance of support from the family was emphasised by all participants. Lauer and Lauer (2004:347) stated that family is accountable for education, spiritual guidance, leisure and providing the essential needs of life.

Support from family is crucial and regarded to play an important role in the emotional, spiritual and physical functioning of learners (Sekgobela 2018:67). Family support in terms of housing and finances is traditionally expected during studies, unless the family is in extreme poverty (Hadžiomerović 2021:60). Anibijuwon and Esimai (2020:56) confirmed that family members may be able to support students in easing and managing the challenges that arise because of their productivity in terms of academic demands. Students' success and a strong sense of identity in the university setting are aided by family support, which allows them to feel more at ease with academic demands (Zambas, Dutch & Gerrard 2020:2)

3.5.3.4 Utilise peer support

Yaghi and Bates (2020:89) describe peer support as organizational ways that entail aiding and providing constructive feedback to teammates. Building relationships and socializing with peers facilitate identity formation and aid in the development of a sense of belonging, both of which should be at the forefront of efforts to increase student achievement (Brunton & Buckely 2020:4) Some participants felt that communicating with their peers was very helpful, reduced workload and assist them to cope with academic demands. The following quotes support the finding:

We created the study group with these young ones, and they try to help me a lot because sometimes I just come with a question and then ask of them and they will sit down and try to show me how to tackle it and we discuss up until I understand. We also created WhatsApp because I just type and ask them how I can tackle this and they answer back, some answer with a voice note then they say tackle it like this. With a voice note is simpler when they do that, I appreciate them a lot (P 1).

Lack of support from the other students, if they don't help me, I try to get more information on the content I don't understand (P 3).

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That's how I have coped and then using some of the young students because their minds are still fresh, when maybe you don't understand something you can ask them. They are those who I was involved with, I would call them and say how do you do this, how do you understand this and then we were helping each other (P 6).

Ok the other method that I am using is like I use the study groups, I do have study groups and the other student that I am studying with and the peer tutoring usually held on the weekends, they are very helpful. With that I can understand much of the content and being able to cope (P 8).

I watch it so that I can be able to understand the contents that have been taught and then I do call, communicate with other students telephonically, WhatsApp and then we do talk about the content that I did not and understand and need clarity from them. Sometimes I do communicate with the lecturers via WhatsApp also to explain the content or to clarify on other things that I didn't understand (P 10).

Some participants stated that they were able to complete their studies with the help of their peers. Support from other peers seemed to be crucial in expanding participants' sense of belonging and security (Sekgobela 2018:69). Furthermore, the author stated that the same experiences were helpful as participants were comfortable in sharing challenges regarding academic demands and the ability to increase their learning process. Peer support can reduce content overload in students studying together with their peers. Friendship support was a significant finding that strengthened the learners' perceptions of themselves as role models in their families and communities (Maloney 2021:148). Boore and Deeny (2012:267) asserted that peer groups can assist in giving emotional support and helping each other with study.

3.5.4 THEME 4: Suggestions regarding RPL students

Suggestions regarding RPL students emerged as the fourth theme. Employers should provide support for RPL students as their employees and ensure that counselling services are available when needed. The participants mentioned some recommendations and strategies that may improve academic performance of RPL students. In this theme, three sub-themes emerged: provide technological support, provide teaching and learning support, provide counselling and preparation for RPL students. Each sub-theme will be explained and supported by quotes from participants.

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3.5.4.1 Provide technological support

Technological literacy is described to utilize technology to access, merge, create and convey information to increase the education process through problem-solving and critical thinking (Estes 2017:78). Some participants mentioned that computer classes are of utmost importance as it will enable them to do assignments to meet the academic demands. The following quotes support this sub-theme:

Also, they should be offered computer classes, or maybe they say once a week to go to computer lab every now and then so that they must be computer literate, because we are going to work on assignments and assignments must be typed and then if they don't know computer lesson, they are going to struggle like I did (P 1).

I think extra classes, computers are going to help and also practical placement. the college must consider my address and placed me next to my place. This is going to give more time to rest and study and also every extra classes for RPLs and WhatsApp group discussion to help each other because being RPL student for me is just like adult learning (P 2).

For the RPL students who wish to study, they can be given short programmes for computer literacy so that they can have knowledge, even if though its supported by the institution they work in, so that they can be able to complete studies before they can apply, because some of them they do not have… (P 10).

A student portal system is a structure for acquiring, exploring and interpretation of information (Sheehan & Jafari 2003:1). Some students recommended the use of a portal system and support regarding online teaching and operating hours of the library to be adjusted, as in the next quotation:

I think they should be sort of a portal in the college whereby the RPLs will get support from, because you can see some like struggling to get support. You know there is so much in your hand, so there should be some sort of supporting system at the college where they can give information on certain things. Then you can go get maybe somebody to explain to you maybe in a different way, maybe you can understand better or if maybe you got challenges at home you can still go and find ways on how to deal with certain things (P 5).

Most participants feel that computer classes will assist them to cope with the utilization of technology as their having challenges meeting academic demands. Application of a student portal entails communication of applications and databases supervised by various campus

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units at a level that may never been attempted at the institution (Sheehan & Jafari 2003:1). Nurse educators need to encourage students to use techniques for dealing with the extensive quantity of new knowledge, concepts, and abilities concerning technological development (Nes et al 2021:2)

Oermann et al (2018:92) argued that technology's quick advancements and constant rate of change, present both challenges and opportunities for teaching and learning. The same authors stated that, nurse educators should consider how their students utilize technology now, as well as how mobile applications and upcoming technologies may influence the technology classroom in the future.

3.5.4.2 Provide teaching and learning support

Teaching and learning is a process of providing training, teaching and presentations, provided and conducted by those competent in the discipline (Uys & Gwele 2005:5). Boore and Deeny (2012:261) stated the importance of student support to assist students to achieve their learning outcomes while at the same time not hindering the standards of patient care. Some participants recommended extra classes, and library services to acquire additional information that will assist them to meet academic demands. This recommendation was supported as follows:

I think extra classes, computers are going to help and also practical placement. The college must consider my address and placed me next to my place. This is going to give more time to rest and study and also extra classes for RPLs (P 2).

Library, you can go to there and borrow books. Older books explain things better than the one that you are using now (P 3).

I would suggest if there are classes for young ones, and RPLs can be separated. I think it will be better because they will be at the same level, and they can do things at the same level (P 6).

I think maybe extra lessons, it can help because it's so stressing, like now I just wrote, and I don't know how the outcomes will be (P 9).

Most participants felt that they were given insufficient time to prepare for class and assessments hence they recommended extra time and additional support from lecturers to enhance learning and meet academic demands, as evidenced in the following quotations:

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But sometimes they think that you're lazy to do the work and they end up saying words like we are tired, this one is lazy and doesn't study, she is not benefiting from us, not knowing that you are struggling with that subject, but some of them they help a lot because a study group is helping me a lot (P 1).

RPL students should be approached well during consultation, not to be labelled as being lazy and not putting effort to our studies. Sometimes when you consult it's not that I am lazy, it's that I don't understand a certain content. Students should be supported equally (P 3).

Ok I think support, like we are all students but for RPLs because most them, 80%-90%, they are old maybe above 35, so maybe if the college form a group of only RPLs, or maybe they say on such a day they want to see RPLs, understands the circumstances that we all have from home, husbands and children and give some extra attention to us. I don't know, maybe that will help (P 4).

The other thing is regarding the timetable for the test and exam. I think if possible, they can add extra study days in between because sometimes you must write on Monday, we only have one day extra on Tuesday, and on Wednesday you are writing again. If you could have one extra study day it would be much better, we would be able to get extra information as possible for the test and exam that we would be writing (P 8).

I can be supported in the facilities with lecturers or mentor in the facility to make staff aware that we are students, and we are there to learn and we do not know, but we need to learn the correct things that are supposed to be done. And also, we supported in such a way that the staff don't rely on us, we are there to learn not to do work for them, they should just give us support and makes us learn because that's what we are therefor (P 10).

Mthimunye and Daniels (2029:59-60) supported that compilation of timetables for subjects is a challenge; according to participants, three subjects were facilitated in one week, resulting in low academic performance. Students should be encouraged to participate in their learning process to initiate a conducive learning environment to participate in the study content. Snyman and van den Berg (2018:36) asserted that students can be assisted in teaching methods, resulting in students advancing in academic performance and by educating them for incorporation into the formal learning environment.

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Oermann et al (2018:92) confirmed that educators should assess the approach's appropriateness with the learning objectives, learner and teacher characteristics, and available resources when choosing a teaching method. Educators can improve students' enjoyment of learning by employing innovative teaching strategies that motivate students to come to class, prepare for class, and remain alert throughout the session (Herrman 2016:3).

3.5.4.3 Provide counselling and preparation for RPL students

Yusop, Zainudin, Ahmad, Othman, Surat and Fung (2020:1) describes counselling as an interrelated process that enhance significant understanding of self and the environment leading to the initiation and explanations of objectives and values for the future. Tolley and Rowland (2021:6) asserted that counselling deal with developmental issues, conveying and resolving certain problems, decision-making, coping mechanisms and enhancing relations with others. Counselling sessions are rendered by the student counselling department for students with academic problems influenced by personal, physical as well as emotional challenges. Most participants felt that they did not get adequate information regarding the orientation of the nursing programme before commencement as it has affected their academic performance hence, they recommended information sharing sessions and counselling regarding the nursing programme. This sub-theme was supported by the following quotes:

Course begins they should be called, sit and communicate to say, how far are you coping so far, so that they will tell their stresses, like we are not coping. So, given those sessions where you can talk to raise your voices it will help (P 7).

Ok I think with the other students, I think what the management can do is they can provide us with accommodation as RPL students because we do not get accommodation. The time we spend on our way home is the one that we can use for our studies (P 8).

I know that in the college we have a counselling department, but I think it's for individual to ask for help. I think I must put more effort; I don't know how but that's what I must do (P 9).

Those who want to study further, I feel like they should be supported also by increasing the number of what we know is a challenge, also they can be supported in such a way that the process of them coming can be explained to them, so that they can know what they are going to experience, so that they can be able to adjust to that. Like if there is to computer literacy they have to be told that for them to go and study for RPL (P 10).

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Most participants said that they could benefit from counselling services as a support system during their training in order to cope with academic demands. Counsellors must have all the attributes of a good counsellor and understand the basic knowledge and skills of counselling (Jaladin, Simmonds & Joseph 2020:261). A counsellor plays a crucial role in counselling learners, addressing the needs of students, parents and academic personnel (Petani 2020:1). The same author asserted that the counselling service can help educators to master how to initiate a relation with students leading to improvement of academic outcomes.

Interpersonal skills of the adult learners can be improved through group counselling that encourages contact with oneself and others. Yusop, Zainudin, Ahmad, Othman, Surat and Fung (2020:513). Other authors stated that counselling services assist emerging adult learners in making the challenging transition to maturity (Crugnola, Bottini, Madeddu, Preti & Lerardi 2021:8)

3.4 CONCLUSION

The findings of the study were presented and discussed and supported together with relevant literature sources. Challenges experienced by RPL nursing candidates at a NEI in South Africa were explained. It was revealed that RPL students did not receive sufficient support and motivation from lecturers, peers and staff at the facilities which had an impact on their studies. They also stated that the teaching approach and strategies had an impact on their learning. The findings, recommendations, implications, limitations and conclusion of the study follow in Chapter 4.

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CHAPTER 4

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on discussion of findings and literature control. Chapter four will focus on recommendations, implications, limitations and conclusion of the study.

RPL candidates mentioned their challenges during training in the interviews. Chapter 3 dealt with the study findings. Each theme and sub-theme were discussed. The findings were supplemented with findings from the literature. The purpose of this study was to explore and describe challenges experienced by RPL candidates in the NEI. The findings of the study are summarized in this chapter. Recommendations are made, and the study's limitations are discussed. The chapter concludes by summarising the issues that RPL candidates encountered during their training.

4.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

4.2.1 Research objectives
The objectives that form the basis of this study were the following:
- Explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL candidates in the nursing education institution of South Africa.
- Propose recommendations for RPL candidates in a nursing education institution of South Africa, based on the findings of this study, with reference to nursing practice, nursing education and nursing research

4.2.2 Research question
To achieve the aim of the research, the following research question was asked:
- What are the challenges experienced by RPL candidates related to two nursing training programmes at a nursing education institution in South Africa?

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4.2.3 Research methodology

The research design was discussed in terms of a qualitative and descriptive phenomenological design to achieve the objective.

4.3 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following four themes were identified in this study: challenges related to teaching and learning, personal challenges, coping methods and suggestions regarding RPL students

4.3.1 THEME 1: Challenges related to teaching and learning

The learner-centred approach and teaching and learning strategies used had an impact on RPL candidates' studies as they were used to a teacher-centred approach. Some participants stated that there use of technology is required, and most of them were unfamiliar with computers and the use technological approaches during studies. Some of the participants stated that they dislike working in groups because they can work more effectively on their own. The study also revealed that most of the participants were terrified of getting terminated if they were unable to achieve the academic demands and the desired outcomes. The participants complained that the workload was excessive and that the time allocated for individual subjects was insufficient, as they were usually taught three subjects per week. Some participants had challenges with certain subjects like anatomy and physiology that they found difficult to understand as they did not have any background with physics and chemistry.

Study challenge was different for all participants. Some expressed difficulty in absorbing the information as they had not study for some time and that it was difficult to comprehend specific content which led to poor academic performance. Most of the time, participants were placed in clinical facilities where certain outcomes could not be accomplished, which made it difficult for them to meet learning objectives. Participants had transport challenges since they were assigned to clinical facilities that were far from their homes and often in areas with limited transportation which affected their studies. One of the issues highlighted was English proficiency. Most of the participants were unable to meet their academic obligations because all subjects were taught in English, which they failed to comprehend.

4.3.2 THEME 2: Personal challenges

The majority of the participants faced age-related issues since they were allowed study to leave when they were older, and they took longer to understand the subject material, making it difficult for them to study.

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The lecturers' approach was different towards RPL candidates and other students, and they were given negative feedback when asking questions when compared to young students. The participants felt exposed because of their age.

Participants faced financial difficulties since they had to travel frequently, went to many institutions and had to spend a lot of money. Participants had difficulty reconciling study and family responsibilities because they were expected to conduct their family tasks while also concentrating on their studies, which made it difficult to meet the requirements of both study and family.

4.3.3 THEME 3: Coping methods

Most participants sought advice from relevant lecturers who taught the subject, and some lecturers were willing to help to improve academic results. Some candidates created a study group together with young students and they tried to help as they understood the information faster than RPL candidates.

To cope with their academic performance, several participants used various study resources such as the campus library, different textbooks and internet resources. Some participants emphasized the importance of family support, stating that their families were supportive of them while they were studying. Most of the participants utilised peer support to achieve their academic results.

4.3.4 THEME 4: Suggestions regarding RPL students

Participants recommended that for them to become computer literate, they should be provided with technological support, computer classes, and visits to a computer laboratory. Participants recommended that to cope with academic responsibilities, they should be provided with teaching and learning support by being given enough time to prepare for formative and summative assessments. Some participants suggested that RPL students who wish to continue their education be counselled and prepared so that they can adjust to academic challenges.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher made recommendations based on the research findings and some were highlighted by the participants during data collection. Recommendations were done in relation to nursing management, nursing education and nursing practice.

4.4.1 Nursing management

Most participants in this study felt that orientation was insufficient and not done adequately in preparation for the training. Nursing education institutions should conduct an orientation program for new RPL candidates to be orientated about the course and how to prepare for it before starting training. Most of the teaching and learning strategies are done through technology, thus nursing management should provide RPL candidates with computer training before commencement.

Most participants stated that they spend a lot of time traveling, as they do not have accommodation close to the institution where they do clinical practice. The researcher suggests that management should assist RPL students with accommodation close to the NEI or the clinical facility. That will enable them to consult with their peers and lecturers if they have challenges during studying, and it will also save on travel expenses.

The researcher suggests that NEIs should collaborate with stakeholders to review and revise RPL standard operating procedures, selection criteria and RPL policies. It might be important to take age, technological skills, and language proficiency into consideration during selection processes. The researcher also proposes that clinical facilities provide three months of rotation to different units for potential RPL candidates before they begin training to gain more knowledge that will help them cope with academic demands. The researcher suggests that the RPL candidates be subjected to assessment criteria similar to external candidates for proper selection of potential candidates and to reduce challenges that might be encountered during training.

4.4.2 Nursing education

Due to workload, the participants in this study found it difficult to meet their academic demands. The researcher suggests that the RPL candidates should be given additional time to prepare for classes to prevent stress and ease their workload. The timetable should be compiled in such a way that there is enough time between classes for students to prepare for all classes and subjects equally. Nurse educators should identify students who are having difficulty learning and help them improve their skills through extra classes and remedial. The

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researcher suggests that nurse educators should encourage RPL candidates to interact with younger students or non-nursing students because they learn and retain knowledge quicker, allowing them to aid and support learning.

The researcher suggests that that RPL candidates should attend peer tutoring as it will assist them in coping and achieving their learning outcomes. Nurse educators should encourage RPL candidates to seek clarification and explanation of any topic that they do not grasp. Participants in this study stated that English proficiency was one of the most difficult challenges because all the subjects were taught in English. Nurse educators should use the students' preferred language if possible, during consultation to ensure that the content is understood and grasped. The researcher suggests extra English classes for the RPL candidates to be able to comprehend all the subjects and communicate effectively.

Most participants experienced challenges in the use of technology during training as some of the teaching and learning strategies are done through technology. Due to students' unfamiliarity with the teaching style, they faced difficulties with connectivity and technology use during facilitation. Students should get training in accessing and using online classes because they might be unfamiliar with the method. RPL candidates also need training in academic writing, writing of assignments, accessing literature and use of technology to study and present assignments.

4.4.2 Nursing practice

Participants identified several issues with clinical placement, including the need for them to be treated equally to non-nursing students. Financial strain and absenteeism were mentioned as some of the obstacles to clinical learning by participants. The researcher suggests that students should be placed according to their geographical area to prevent transport challenges, absenteeism, and enhancement of learning. Clinical lecturers should support the students on regular basis to meet their learning outcomes. Students should be placed in the clinical facility based on specific learning outcomes to meet their objectives.

Facility managers should encourage professional nurses in the units to acknowledge and meet their responsibilities of teaching of students in achieving their learning outcomes and improving quality nursing care to patients. Facility managers should foster a safe working environment for all students by ensuring that they have all the resources they need to accomplish their learning outcomes. Unit managers should provide orientation on current practices and interpersonal relationships to nursing staff, nurse educators, and students to

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improve relationships and create a conducive working and learning environment in the facilities. Participants have stated a desire for assistance in dealing with their clinical learning outcomes. Clinical nursing personnel should assist students in accomplishing their clinical learning objectives on a continuous basis. Students who are unable to integrate theory and practice and are unable to cope with clinical academic demands should be counselled by facility administrators and clinical nurse educators. Clinical nurse educators should accompany students on a regular basis to ensure that learning outcomes are met.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further quantitative and qualitative research into the RPL candidates' challenges in other NEIs and provinces of South Africa is recommended. More generalizable results can be obtained by conducting research using a quantitative design to cover more RPL candidates in all NEIs of South Africa. All South African NEIS can be included in a comparable study on the problems faced by RPL candidates.

4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research will help to improve the RPL policies and system's deployment in NEIs as well as the RPL system's overall effectiveness. Strengthening the NEIs' support for RPL candidates could increase academic achievement and interpersonal interactions between nurse educators and peers, as well as promote a positive learning environment.

4.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study's findings were derived from ten participants in unstructured interviews at one NEI in Gauteng, using a descriptive qualitative approach. The participants were all female RPL candidates There was also racial disparity, with only black females included in the sample. Other groups may have different experiences.

4.8 CONTRIBUTION TO THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

The study will contribute to the improvement of selection criteria based on age of the RPL candidates as it has impact on their performance because of social roles and responsibilities. Information technology in-service training should be provided prior admission and continuously for RPL candidates to adjust to their studies and improve academic performance.

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4.9 FINAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe challenges experienced by RPL candidates in a NEI of South Africa. The research was qualitative in nature, and data was gathered and analysed using phenomenological methods. It is possible to conclude that the study's objectives were met based on the findings. It is critical that guidelines for supporting and assisting RPL students in completing their nursing education, are developed. The researcher has made recommendations based on the inputs highlighted by participants during data collection.

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ANNEXURE A: APPROVAL CERTIFICATE FROM ETHICS COMMITTEE

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Health Sciences

2 October 2020

Approval Certificate
New Application

Ethics Reference No.: 580/2020
Title: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Mrs GM Udeagha

The **New Application** as supported by documents received between 2020-09-01 and 2020-09-30 for your research, was approved by the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee on 2020-09-30 as resolved by its quorate meeting.

Please note the following about your ethics approval:
- Ethics Approval is valid for 1 year and needs to be renewed annually by 2021-10-02.
- Please remember to use your protocol number (580/2020) on any documents or correspondence with the Research Ethics Committee regarding your research.
- Please note that the Research Ethics Committee may ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification, monitor the conduct of your research, or suspend or withdraw ethics approval.

Ethics approval is subject to the following:
- The ethics approval is conditional on the research being conducted as stipulated by the details of all documents submitted to the Committee. In the event that a further need arises to change who the investigators are, the methods or any other aspect, such changes must be submitted as an Amendment for approval by the Committee.

We wish you the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr R Sommers
MBChB MMed (Int) MPharmMed PhD
Deputy Chairperson of the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of Pretoria

The Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Act 61 of 2003 as it pertains to health research and the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 and 46. This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes, Second Edition 2015 (Department of Health)

Gloria Moraba Udeagha – Dissertation

ANNEXURE B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT GAUTENG COLLEGES

Reference no. 2/6/1

GAUTENG PROVINCE
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SG LOURENS CAMPUS

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

**CHECK LIST FOR PROSPECTIVE RESEARCHER/S FOR REQUESTING PERMISSION
TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

Researcher/s' particulars : Ms Gloria Udeagha

Institution : University of Pretoria

Degree : Masters in Nursing Education

Title :"Challenges experiences by the Recognition of Prior Learning students in a Nursing Education Institution of South Africa"

DOCUMENTS	YES	NO
An application letter of the researcher/s with all contact details: email address, cell phone number, fax and or land line where applicable	√	
A completed research proposal	√	
Ethical clearance letter from the Gauteng Department of Health	√	
Ethical clearance letter from Provincial Department of Health with NHRD reference number	√	
Ethical clearance letter from the Institution where the researcher/s are pursuing their studies	√	
A consent form for the research participants/subjects	√	
Information leaflet for the participants/subjects	√	

APPROVED   √   NOT APPROVED:

Dr. RG Malapela
(Chairperson Research Committee
SG Lourens Campus)

SG Lourens Campus, Private Bag X755, Pretoria, 0001 Tel: (012) 319 5600 Fax: (012) 319 5699   Page 1 of 1

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ANNEXURE C: APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GAUTENG PROVINCE
HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Outcome of the provincial protocol review committee

RESEARCHER'S NAME (PI)	UDEAGHA GM
ORGANIZATION/INSTITUTION	UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
RESEARCH TITLE	CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA
CONTACT NUMBER	0723582255
PROTOCOL NUMBER/ PROPOSAL NUMBER	GP _202010_ 032
SITES	SG LOURENS CAMPUS

Your permission to conduct the above-mentioned research has been reviewed by the Province and the permission has been granted.

It is requested that you submit the research report on completion of your study and present the findings and the recommendations to the Gauteng Department of Health.

YES   Permission granted

Recommended

Serongwa

Mr LR Serongwa
Acting Director: Nursing Research and Compliance
Date: 11|12|2020

Scanned with CamScanner

ANNEXURE D: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET AND INFORMED CONSENT

STUDY TITLE: CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Participant

Dear Mr. / Mrs. .... date of consent procedure …......./…....../….......

1)   INTRODUCTION

You are invited to volunteer for a research study. This information leaflet is to help you to decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part in this study you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions, which are not fully explained in this leaflet, do not hesitate to ask the investigator. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy about all the procedures involved. Please take note that no remuneration will be awarded for participation in this study

2)   THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

You are invited to take part in a research study. The aim of this study will be to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges experienced by nursing candidates allowed through RPL in a Nursing Education Institution in South Africa. You are considered as being a very important source of information and are thus requested to volunteer to take part in this study. The following two (2) objectives are proposed to achieve the aim of this study:

- Explore and describe the challenges experienced by RPL nursing candidates at a Nursing Education Institution in Gauteng Province.
- Propose recommendations for RPL nursing candidates at a Nursing Education Institution, in Gauteng province, based on the findings of this study, with reference to nursing practice, nursing education and nursing research

3)   EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES AND WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM PARTICIPANTS

 RPL nursing candidates studying at the NEI in South Africa are requested to participate in the study. This study involves unstructured interviews. The researcher will ask you some questions about your experiences in the nursing profession. The interview will be recorded with your permission, notes will be taken also just review the answers and ask more question as the need to clarify arises.

4)   POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORT INVOLVED.

There are no risks in participating in the study.

The interview will take about 45-60 minutes of your time.

5)   POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY.

Gloria Moraba Udeagha – Dissertation

Although you will not benefit directly from the study, the results of the study will enable us to understand experiences of RPL nursing students in the Nursing Education.

Institution.

6) COMPENSATION

You will not be paid to take part in the study.

7) YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You will be allowed to withdraw from participation in the study or stop at any time without giving any reason. You will not incur any penalty from withdrawal from the study.

8) ETHICAL APPROVAL

The Faculty of Health Sciences' Research Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria and your Nursing Education Institution has given written approval for this study. The study has been structured in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (last updated: October 2013), which deals with the recommendations guiding nurses in research involving humans. A copy of the Declaration may be obtained from the investigator should you wish to review it. Please feel free to contact the Research Ethics Committee, if you need any clarification pertaining to ethical approval. Faculty of Health Sciences University of Pretoria's Office: Tel: 012 356 3084 or 012 356 3085.

9) INFORMATION

If you have any questions concerning your participation in this study, you should feel free to contact the principal researcher: Gloria M Udeagha   Cell: 072 204 6903

Email address: gloriamodutoane@gmail.com

Or contact my supervisors   : Dr M Moagi   076 675 4266

                                    : Dr A van der Wath   084 506 3142

10) CONFIDENTIALITY

All records obtained whilst in this study will be regarded as confidential. Your input into this study will also be kept strictly confidential. Results and reports will be published in accredited scientific journals and presented in such a manner that your identification as a participant will remain anonymous.

11) CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

The content and meaning of this information leaflet have been explained to me. I agree that the person asking my consent to take part in this study has told me about the nature, process, risks, discomforts, and benefits of the study. I have also received, read, and understood the above written information (Information Leaflet and Informed Consent) regarding the study. I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details, will be anonymously managed into study reports. I am participating willingly. I have had time to ask questions and have no objection to participate in the study. I understand that there

is no penalty should I wish to discontinue with the study and my withdrawal will not affect me in any way. I hereby volunteer to take part in this study.

I have received a copy to sign this informed consent agreement.

....

Participant's name (Please Print)   Date

....

Participant's signature   Date

....

Investigator's name (Please Print)   Date

....

Investigator's signature   Date

....

Witness's name   Date

....

Witness's signature

ANNEXURE E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Main question for the interview

What are your experiences in learning as an RPL candidate?

Examples of probing questions

What are your challenges as an RPL candidate with regard to the academic demands?

How do you cope with the academic demands?

How can current students and others who wish to further their studies in future through the RPL process be supported?

What do you think can be done to improve this?

In closure:

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Are there any other questions that you think I should have asked?

Do you mind if I contact you again, in the event of additional questions come to mind after reflecting on the information?

Or in case interpretations of the information need to be verified.

Gloria Moraba Udeagha – Dissertation

ANNEXURE F: INDEPENDENT CODER AGREEMENT LETTER

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Master in Nursing Education

GLORIA MORABA UDEAGHA

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

Dr Hester (Rina) Cathina de Swardt has co-coded the following qualitative data:

10 Individual Qualitative Interviews

For the study

'CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING CANDIDATES IN THE NURSING EDUCATION INSTITUTION OF SOUTH AFRICA'

I declare that the candidate and I have reached consensus on the major themes and subthemes and codes reflected by the data during a consensus discussion and that adequate data saturation was achieved as evidenced by the repeating themes. I further undertake to keep the shared data confidential.

Dr HC de Swardt

HC de Swardt
D Litt et Phil; Nursing Education

Rina.deswardt@gmail.com

Gloria Moraba Udeagha – Dissertation

© University of Pretoria

ANNEXURE G: EXAMPLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

Responded no 1 Level 3

Interviewer

Good morning mam, how are you?

Responded

I am good and you and your mam?

Interviewer

I am fine. My name is Gloria Udeagha a student from university of Pretoria. I am doing my master's degree in Nursing Education. My topic is Challenges experienced by Recognition of prior learning candidates the Nursing Education institution of South Africa.

Interviewer

How are you today

Responded

I am fine mam

Interviewer

As you have already signed the consent form, do you allow me to continue with our interview today?

Responded

Yes mam

Interviewer

Do you want to say something before we start with our interview?

Responded

Something like is it going to be confidential?

Interviewer

Yes, whatever that we are going to discuss in here it will remain confidential, and your name is not going to be mentioned anywhere in my studies.

Responded

Ok thank you

Interviewer

Do you allow me to continue?

Responded

Yes, you can continue

Interviewer

Do you want me to address you as Miss or Mam?

Responded

Mam is ok

Interviewer

So, tell me mam, what are your experiences in learning as an RPL candidate?

Responded

Man being an RPL student is very difficult because some of us we learned under a tree and this English is not our language. My experience is some of us cannot speak English well and they take us when we are old. They take time to grant us study leave and when we are old is when they grant us study leave and then we to go to school and things are not easy by that time. Like myself, I spend 10 years being an Enrolled Nurse and then is now that I am coming to school so things are not easy. Things are changing. I am also computer illiterate mam. Being a computer illiterate, here at school, a lot of things is done on a computer. We type a lot because we have to submit a typed copy on most of the assignments. We spend a lot of money doing those printings. Another thing that I have notices is that in being an RPL is not nice when you are old because you used to work and in one place and now you are travelling in all institutions in the name of learning. Again, my experience is that we are granted study leave when we are old. I am now 47 years with a 19-year-old student in the same class and those children are too intelligent, coming to us is also very difficult to match a 19-year-old mentality and intelligence

Interviewer

Mam, you're saying, and your experiences is that your computer illiterate and there are lot of work that must be done on the computer and you also talked about the age that you are 47 years old and attending with younger and they are intelligent.

Responded

Yes, and we travel a lot going to different institutions and I used to be stationed in one institution when I come from. We use a lot of money. Another thing is the issue of books my books are very expensive because as an RPL I must buy my own books and they say that I'm getting paid every month and that money that I used to do things. That money that I am buying books, is the money that used to do things at home. Now I am taking it to by books and then you are running shot of things at home because of me being at school as an older student.

Interviewer

Ok, so mam is it their other expenses that you can tell me besides the one that you just told me?

Responded

I think I am done Mam.

Interviewer

What are your challenges as a recognition of prior learning candidate with regard to academic demands?

Responded

There is big challenge, as I said we are at the same class with 19 years old, they are very intelligent mam. Here at school, we present a lot and then sometimes I even fear to go and present because they laugh at my broken English because they speak a good English, they are very intelligent and the workload mam is too much and find that the same day you're doing two or more subject and at the end of the week I must study for a test. They don't give us a demarcation, so the workload is too much. Myself I am a mother, a wife and also a student I find that they stress, the fact that you must come and consult and then with myself staying very far at Soshanguve. I find it difficult to go and consult because by the time the school is out, I must then go and consult   and at the same time I must be at home doing

my motherly chores and then you are expected to study at night and also the husband is here, and in the morning, I wake up and come to school is very challenging mam

Interviewer

You about the workload can you tell me more about this workload?

Responded

Mam you find that you are doing Midwifery Nursing Science (MNS)and then you find that you are doing 3 or more topics a day, those topics are different and then I must master them all by the end of the day because tomorrow is another one, just like that.

Interviewer

What do you think would happen if you don't catch-up with your workload?

Responded

It's a fail because there is no mercy, if you don't do a work then it's a fail. I just have to stay the whole night study and then try to catch-up from where I didn't understand, I must and go and consult.

Interviewer

You also told me that if you don't cope with your workload, it will be a fail, tell me more about this fail part?

Responded

Fail is when you are failing the subject. Another thing that is challenging is that here at the institution, your given only one chance to repeat and then if you fail, you repeat, and you fail again you're out of the college. So, you will be a failure in life, failure at school. You will be a failure because even if when I go back to work, they will love at me saying she went there and came up with a fail so it's not nice

Interviewer

You are saying if you fail you will be out of the college can you elaborate on that? What do you mean you say out of the college?

Responded

Here at college, they gave you one chance, you repeat only once and should fail again the second time again then you get expelled and then with me, you go back to where were you came from and when I come from, they may expect me to come being a Professional Nurse. I came back home empty handed then they will laugh at me also that's why is causing a lot of stress in most of the RPLs.

Interviewer

So, tell me how do you cope with your academic demands?

Responded

It's difficult and is not the matter of coping is the matter of pushing hard because at home I also have a child to take care of and also have the chores to do at home and then I must amalgamate this thing so that I can succeed at the end of year. So, with the presentations, I sometimes opt for the young ones to prepare the presentations and because they are lazy to prepare, too intelligent and they present on my behalf because I have prepared the presentation. I take do 50% and they do another 50% of presentation and our group is covered. With the submission of assignments, I end up putting more money, going to the internet for typing and printing for me and submit. In that way I am doing the college work so at the end of the be covered.

Gloria Moraba Udeagha – Dissertation

Interviewer

Oh, what more do you do or what method do you use to study for you to cope with the academic demands?

Responded

We created the study group with these young ones, and they try to help me a lot because sometimes I just come with a question and then ask of them and they will sit down and try to show me how to tackle it and we discuss up until I understand. But sometimes they think that your lazy to do the work and they end up saying words like we are tried this one is lazy and doesn't study she is benefiting from us not knowing that you are struggling with that subject but some of them they help a lot because study group is helping me a lot. We also created Whatsapp because I just type and ask them how I can tackle this and they answer back, some answer with a voice note then they say tackle it like this. With a voice note is simpler when they do that, I appreciate them a lot.

Interviewer

So, what other resources do you use to come with these academic demands?

Responded

I go to the library and take books and try to compare the information write the information back and then study the information because the books are written by many authors, then I compare. Some authors their English is understandable, some the English is very difficult but when I compare the two, I come up with solutions and I know what to do then I succeed.

Interviewer

Ok, how can a current student and other who want to further their studies in future through RPL process be supported?

Responded

I Think Mam because of the issue of staying far, we should be given accommodation at school premises and also, they should be offered computer classes or maybe they say once a week to go to computer lab every now and then so that they must be computer literate because we are going to work on assignments and assignments must be typed and then if they don't know computer lesson, they are going to struggle like I did. They are going to pop out money now and then for somebody to type for them and then it will strain their budget Also and the issue of rotating the institutions, I think it will be better if we are placed in one institution that is near our residence because you're going study a lot it will I not strain your budget in that way.

Interviewer

Any other things that you like to tell me?

Responded

The issue of demarcation, I think they can guide us in class to look where when preparing for class. It will be better; the workload will be a little much lesser. That's all I think of now.

Interviewer

So, is there any other question you think I should have asked except the one I have asked?

Responded

No.

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Interviewer

Ok mam, do you mind if I contact you again in case additional questions to mind after reflecting on the information?

Or incase interpretations of information need to be verified?

Responded

I don't mind as long as they are not going to disturb my studies because I said I am a slow learner still getting my feet on.

Interviewer

I will make sure that I will not interfere with your studies, do you mind if I contact you again? Do you mind if I contact you in case interpretations of information need to be verified?

Responded

No, I don't mind

Interviewer

Thank you mam for your time, for honouring this day for our interview.is there anything else you like to tell me before we close? Thank you so much.

Responded

Nothing I can think of now you so much.

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ANNEXURE H: EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

B-Square Synergy Consultants

Tax no: 93 087 48 228

Consulting with precision

Acknowledgment of editing

I hereby acknowledge receipt of **Gloria Moraba Udeagha's Masters in Nursing Education (MCur) document that was duly sent to me via email.**

Gloria wanted her Masters dissertation to be edited for spelling, outlay, grammar and to check her references.

I edited the whole of her dissertation and made comments or suggestions while working through her dissertation.

I sent her the edited version, from which she could accept/reject the comments that I made in text and as comments made in text.

I wish Gloria all of the best in her career. Well done!

Kind regards
Dr. Liesl Brown
Managing Director: B Square Synergy Consultants

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