

A Quality Improvement Initiative to Explore Barriers Facing Associate Degreed Nurses Obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree

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Description of the Problem

In 2020, the State of Texas had a total of 340,015 active Registered Nurses (RNs), 32% being Associate Degree nurses (ADN) versus 50% being Bachelor Degree nurses (BSN) (Texas Board of Nursing, 2021). While the percentage of BSN-prepared nurses is larger, it still has not met the goals set forth by the Institute of Medicine for the number of BSN nurses in practice. In the past 10 years, the percentage of BSN-prepared nurses in Texas has only risen by 10% (Texas Board of Nursing, 2021).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quality improvement project was to administer a data-gathering survey to identify the barriers ADN-prepared face when navigating toward the BSN degree.

Specific Aims

Aim 1: Obtain 100% response rate from ADN nurses currently employed who received the survey.

Aim 2: Determine the most common barriers ADN nurses identified in their survey responses as being problematic in their pursuit toward a BSN degree and prioritize according to frequency.

Clinical Question

What are the perceived barriers for ADN-prepared nurses progressing towards or obtaining their Bachelor’s degree?

Synthesis of Evidence

- A systematic review with a focus of how BSN nurses impact patient outcomes (Haskins and Pierson, 2016) used meta-analysis for data synthesis, concluding that an increase in the number of BSN-prepared nurses in a hospital improved 30-day mortality rates and decreased the instances of failure-to-rescue.
- Clifford and Jurado (2018) conducted a quantitative descriptive study using a web-based survey to identify the barriers for ADN nurses, concluding that the most common barriers included financial constraints, relevance to the profession and sacrifices in their personal life.
- Another study used a large, urban hospital setting to conduct an anonymous, cross-sectional survey sent to all RNs within the facility to identify barriers, motivators and benefits for going back to school for a BSN degree. The response rate was 24.6%, similar to this project. The most common barriers were time committed to school, financial expenses, and lack of support from the organization with tuition reimbursement (Sarver et al., 2015).



Project Description

Conceptual Framework

The quality improvement model that was used for this project was the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle, created by Dr. W. Edwards Deming. The cycle is a continuous, on-going cycle that can be conducted multiple times. Plan (P) involves looking at the goal or purpose, Do (D) involves implementing the plan, Study (S) involves looking at outcomes and addressing problems or improvement areas, and Act (A) involves incorporating what was learned from the process as a whole and adjusting as needed (The W. Edwards Deming Institute, 2021).

For this project, the PDSA cycle was:

P: identifying barriers for ADN nurses to obtaining a BSN

D: distribute online survey to nursing staff

S: analyze responses from nursing staff and areas of improvement for the survey

A: change methods of how to survey nursing staff

Because the PDSA model is a never-ending loop, identifying barriers was the first PDSA cycle. The next cycle will be to implement a plan to address the barriers identified.



Design of the Project

This quality improvement project used a survey distributed to ADN-prepared nursing staff to obtain their perceptions of the barriers they face when attempting to enroll in or complete a BSN degree while working full-time or part-time in the facility. This method was chosen because it allowed staff members to voice their thoughts and opinions individually and anonymously.

Setting and Participants

- Suburban, community-based, 154-bed hospital in SE Texas
- Inclusion criteria: Employees classified as full-time or part-time nursing staff in the hospital setting with ADN degree as highest degree
- 142 Registered Nurses, 61% ADN-prepared, n=86

Implementation

- 8-question anonymous survey on Google Forms
- Closed-ended questions or select all that apply
- Given in a 3 week timeframe (Oct. 8th – Oct. 30th, 2021)

Data Collection

The type of data collected included survey responses from the nursing staff. Information was collected from Human Resources to obtain the number of ADN-prepared nurses versus BSN-prepared nurses within the facility. I collected all of the data using the Google Forms platform, which converted the data into Excel spreadsheets. The survey was distributed and given a three week completion timeframe. A follow-up email was automatically sent to participants who successfully completed the survey, thanking them for their time.

Data Analysis

The data collected was the responses from nursing staff who completed the survey. The data was counted and recorded with Microsoft Excel. The method of prioritizing the results from the question regarding barriers was from most common responses to least common responses. For Aim 1, the percentage of ADN nurses that participated in the survey was calculated using Microsoft Excel. For Aim 2, the amount of each barrier choice provided was tallied and prioritized from the number of selections made for the particular choices listed.

Results

Demographics

142 Registered Nurses:

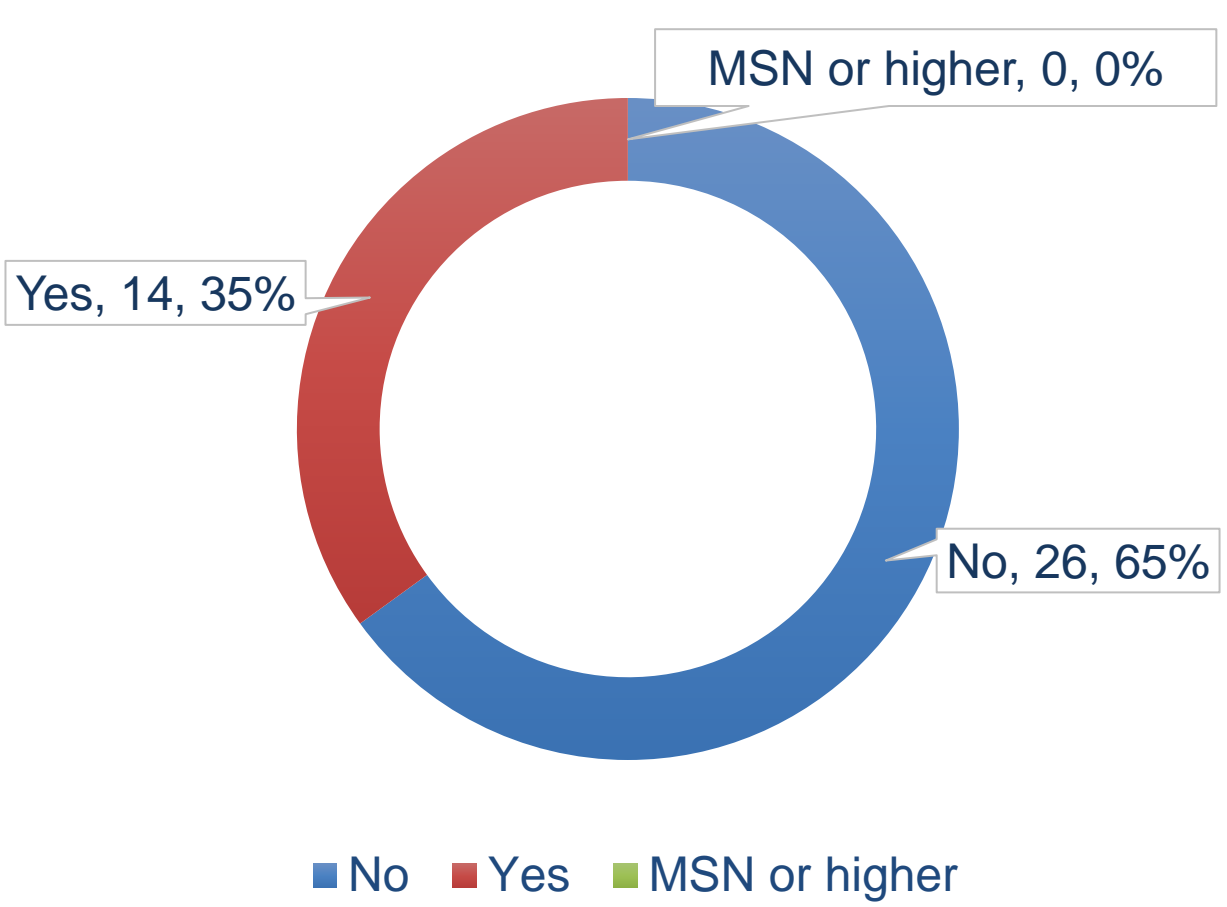
- 86 ADN-prepared nurses
- 52 BSN-prepared nurses
- 4 MSN-prepared nurses.



Aim 1

A total of 142 registered nurses received the survey. A total of 40 nurses responded to the survey, making the response rate 28.2%, with only 26 of those nurses being ADN-prepared.

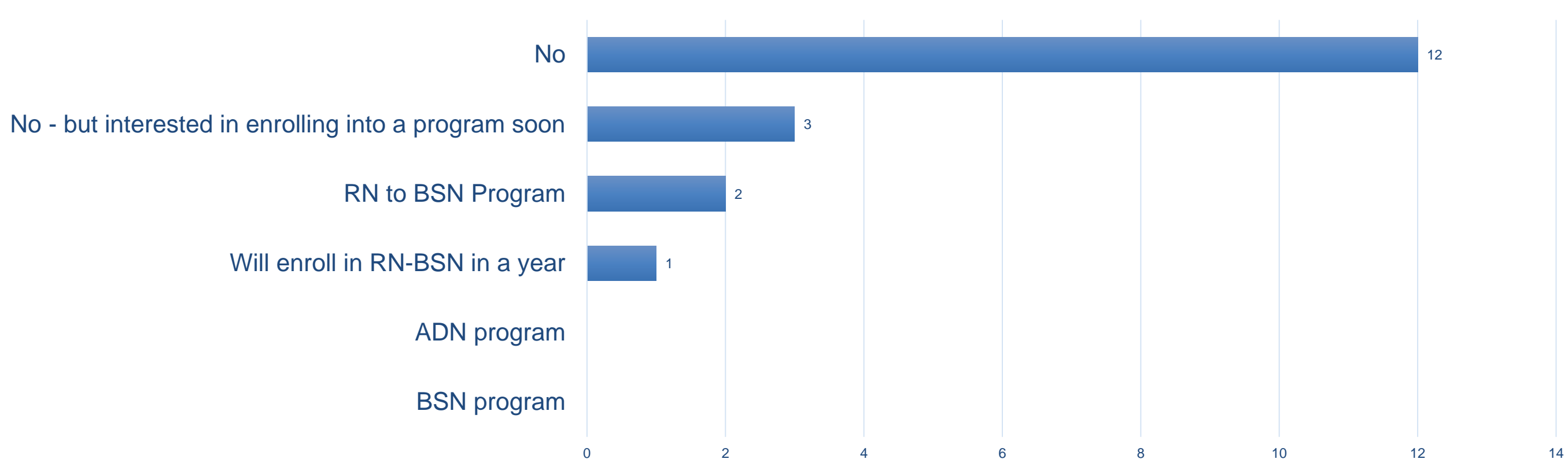
Do you currently have your BSN degree?



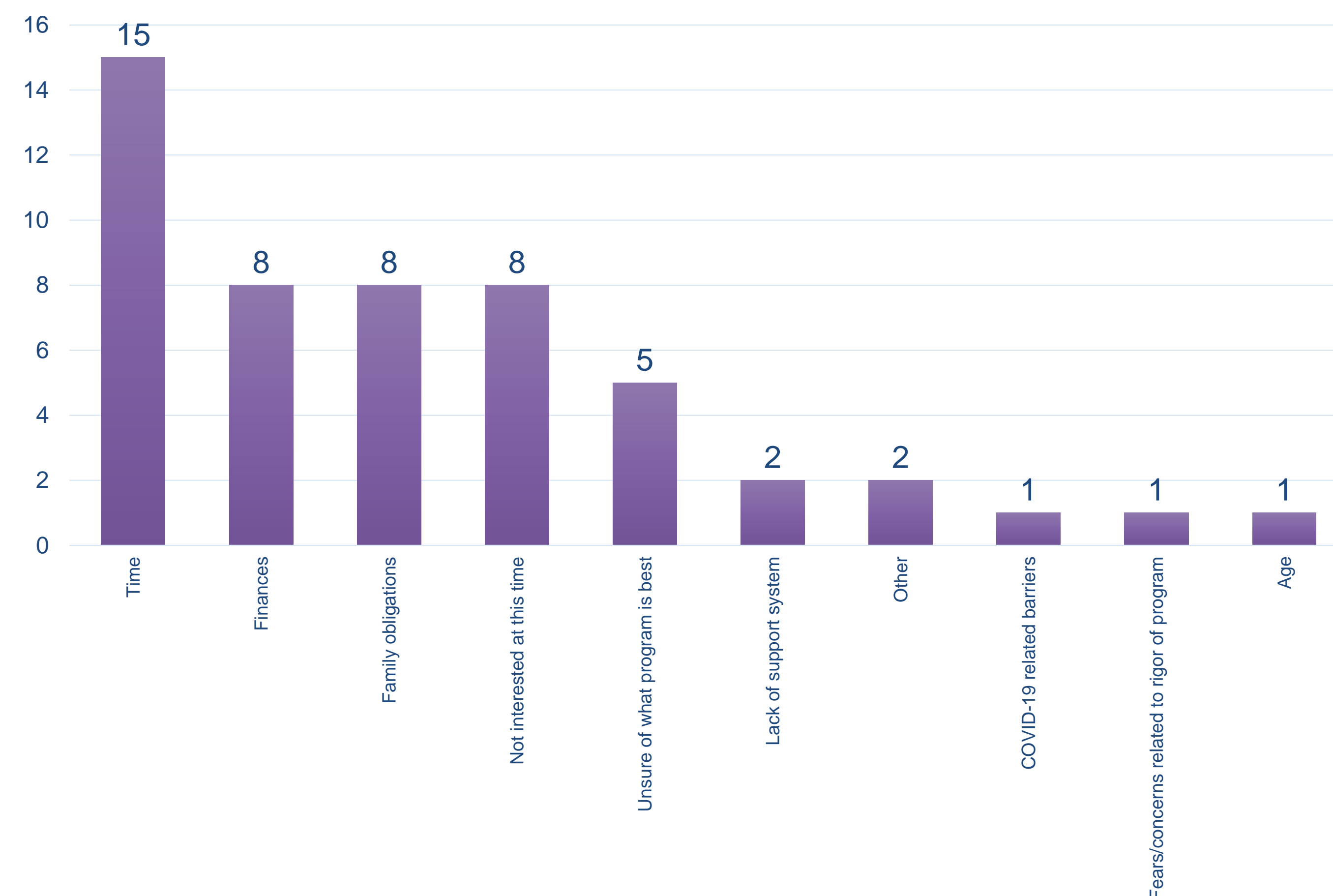
Aim 2

The top barriers the ADN nurses identified included time constraints, financial constraints, family obligations and not interested in pursuing a bachelor’s degree.

Are you currently enrolled in an ADN program, RN to BSN program, or BSN program?



Are there any barriers preventing you from enrolling in or completing an education program to advance to a BSN? (Select all that apply)



Implications for Practice

Recommendations

- Engage staff early on before administering a survey by attending huddles, staff meetings and posting announcements on staff information boards.
- Offer incentives to staff member for successful survey completion.
- As time is listed as the number one barrier for ADN nurses, reviewing how to incorporate a work-school balance schedule is recommended.

Sustainability of Practice Change

Identifying the barriers ADN face will assist in finding opportunities for degree advancement, including resources already available to staff and finding new areas of growth to relieving some of the barriers, which aims to increase the percentage of BSN-prepared nurses.

Policy Implications

Possible policy implications for facilities related to this project include the requirement of obtaining a BSN degree within a specific timeframe for employment upon hire.

Takeaway Message

Discovering the barriers ADN-prepared nurses face when pursuing a bachelor’s degree can aid facility leadership in allowing staff to voice their opinions and find opportunities to overcome the challenges that can occur when advancing a degree while working full or part time.



References

Reference list available upon request.

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