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Titolo tesi: Academic Failure and Success in Nursing Students

ABSTRACT

Introduction. Academic failure, which represents the other side of the coin of academic success, is defined differently by many international authors. In the Italian context, the definition of academic failure/success is the ability (or otherwise) of nursing students to graduate within the expected duration of the Nursing Degree Program applies. The many definitions of academic success/failure provided conflicting evidence about academic success and the interactions between associated factors and outcomes related to the phenomenon. This doctoral thesis wants to fill some gaps in the literature by considering the nursing degree program students' failure/academic success. The objectives of the doctoral work were: 1) to identify the socio-demographic and academic predictors of academic failure/success; 2) to evaluate the effect of academic self-efficacy and burnout on failure/academic; 3) to validate an instrument to measure Moral Distress in Nursing students

Methods. In the first research work, a longitudinal research design was used to study two cohorts (academic year 2011-2012 and 2012-2013) of students from twenty-one teaching sites of the Nursing Degree Program. The first data collection was carried out at the beginning of the first year (T0), followed at the end of the first year (T1), at the end of the second year (T2), and at the end of the third year (T3). The follow-up of these two cohorts ended in the 2017-2018 academic year. Socio-demographic variables (age, gender, ...) and academic variables (evaluation of admission tests and professional internships, ...) were considered. To describe the socio-demographic and academic characteristics of the sample and to evaluate associations between the studied variables descriptive, inferential and correlation statistics were used. In the second research work, a secondary cross-sectional analysis was conducted, on data collected longitudinally, on students enrolled in the third year from different educational sites of the Nursing Degree Program. Socio-demographic variables and other measures, such as academic self-efficacy, burnout, and success, were considered. In the third research, a sample of undergraduate nursing students who had failed to complete the course within the normal duration was enrolled between May and April 2020. The Moral Distress Scale (It -ESMEE), has been validated after translation and cultural adaptation. The analysis was divided into two phases: in the first phase the ESMEE instrument was culturally translated, and in the second phase the psychometric properties (validity and reliability) of the instrument were evaluated.

Findings. One-third of students enrolled in the Nursing Degree program graduate within the pre-established time frame. The evaluation of the professional internships of the 2nd and 3rd year and the student's grade in the admission test predict academic failure/success. Significant associations between academic failure/success, an older age, female gender, employment status, and the type of high school diploma achieved were found. The results of the counterfactual mediation model showed that higher levels of academic self-efficacy significantly increase the likelihood of academic success of the nursing student. A low level of self-efficacy produced high levels of burnout and, consequently, a lower probability of success. Finally, the

results showed that the Moral Distress Scale (It-ESMEE) is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring moral distress in Italian nursing students.

Conclusions. The results presented in this doctoral work add new knowledge. First, the academic failure/success was documented through a longitudinal approach, and the variables of the evaluation of the professional internships of the 2nd and 3rd year of the course were identified as predictors of failure /academic success. Second, this is the first study that investigates academic self-efficacy, burnout, and academic success in Nursing Degree Program students. Third, they are the first to document the validity and reliability of the It-ESMEE tool in students of the Nursing Degree Program. The results provide helpful knowledge for all actors involved in the training that could be applied in the educational context for identifying students at risk of academic failure and for increasing the academic success of students in the Nursing Degree Program.

Keywords. Academic failure; academic success; nursing students; academic self-efficacy; academic burnout; moral distress.