ABSTRACT

This quantitative survey-based research study examined the experiences of 49 men through a comparative analysis of their traditional classroom-based Diploma or Associate Degree in Nursing program and their subsequent experiences in an online Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN-to-BSN) degree completion program. Despite a critical nursing shortage in the United States, the literature has documented numerous gender-based barriers faced by men preparing to become a Registered Nurse (RN). This study adapted the Inventory of Male Friendliness in Nursing Programs (INFNP) developed by O’Lynn in 2004 to assess the friendliness level toward men in an online program. Friendliness is operationally defined as the relative absence of gender-based barriers. With men accounting for approximately 50% of the workforce but only 6% of the nursing force, they can serve as an excellent source of new nurses. Advances in medicine are creating the need for a baccalaureate degree to become the minimum requirement for the RN credential. With only approximately one-third of nurses being bachelor-prepared, this is resulting in an increase in the number of universities developing RN-to-BSN programs with many available partially or completely online. This study is the first to examine the online environment and revealed that the online program was overall friendlier than the RN programs but was not devoid of gender-based biases and barriers. The study has added to the limited body of literature available about men in nursing education by assessing their experiences in the rapidly expanding environment of online nursing education thereby providing opportunities for program improvement.