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The Predictive Validity of Nursing Admission Measures: A Meta-Analysis

Every year baccalaureate nursing educators are faced with the daunting task of reviewing many applications and deciding which prospective nurses will be successful in their program. A critical outcome is passing the licensure test, the NCLEX-RN. This creates two key needs. The first is selecting future students who are more likely to pass. The second is identifying and developing current students who are at risk of failure. A host of predictors have been proposed. Although many have studied the efficacy of different admission and diagnostic measures, small sample sizes limit the interpretability of the research literature and have led to inconsistent findings. We use meta-analysis to statistically combine the studies, thus raising the overall sample size and providing an opportunity to examine likely sources of study variability.

Meta-analyses were conducted on the predictive validities of ACT, SAT, pre-nursing GPA, overall nursing GPA and nursing school GPA with the NCLEX-RN licensure test. The correlations were positive and sizable for all of the selected measures. Nursing grades were highly predictive of NCLEX-RN success eclipsing the commonly reported predictive validity for some assessment tests (e.g., NLN, Mosby). The strongest admissions predictor of NCLEX-RN success was the ACT social science score. The overall nursing GPA and the second year of nursing school GPA were the strongest predictors of success. Most of the variability in the literature appears to be due to sampling error rather than substantive moderators. In conclusion, nursing GPA and nursing admission measures are very predictive of NCLEX-RN success. Development of additional predictors may improve the accuracy of admissions decisions. Further research is needed to examine other variables as well as examine the inter-correlations between variables.



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