

ABSTRACT
STORIES OF STRESS: EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS
IN A SECOND-DEGREE, GRADUATE-LEVEL,
PRELICENSURE NURSING PROGRAM

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This study documented and analyzed through story, the stress-related lived experiences of students in an accelerated, second-degree, graduate-level prelicensure nursing program.

Stress among nursing students has been associated with enduring negative impacts to personal wellness, future professional practice, and patient outcomes. Accelerated, second-degree prelicensure programs are rapid, rigorous, growing in popularity, and associated with the potential to generate high levels of stress among students.

Second-degree prelicensure programs have been underrepresented in existing literature on nursing student stress with little research focused on graduate-level options such as the Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing (DEMSN). Studies on nursing student stress have also prioritized quantitative methodologies. This study chose a qualitative narrative approach to address the need for experiential data related to stress experienced by students in second-degree, graduate-level prelicensure programs. The research question was: what are the stories of DEMSN students regarding their lived experiences with program-related stress?

This study found that DEMSN students experienced stress related to overload, interrole conflict, socioeconomic vulnerability, fear of failure, and social isolation. Analysis through the practice of reframing affirmed the importance of reflective leadership practice when responding to the unique needs of this student population.

Keywords: nursing education, prelicensure, stress, second-degree, DEMSN, reframing