

A GENDER BASED ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INT'L STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN NOVA SCOTIA

Chika Otulugbu and Dr. Samiul Islam, Cape Breton University, Sydney, NS.
cbu21mdy@cbu.ca , Samiul_Islam@cbu.ca

Abstract

Over the past few years, Nova Scotia has seen significant growth in its international student population, who contribute positively to the province's economy but face various challenges. These challenges including environmental, cultural, academic, financial, employment-related, and housing issues impact their academic and social experiences and overall integration. This study aims to analyze historical and current trends of international students in Nova Scotia and explore the specific challenges they face, with a focus on female students. Data was collected through surveys and interviews from international students enrolled in Nova Scotia's university (Cape Breton University). Using Tableau and MS Excel, the study conducted data cleaning, visualization, and analysis. The findings provide insights into the challenges faced by these students and offer policy recommendations to improve their experiences.

Introduction

Canada has become a top destination for international students due to its diverse culture, economic stability, and inclusive education environment. In the context of globalization, understanding complex migration trends is essential for informed decision-making.

This study aims to analyze international student migration to Canada, focusing on the factors influencing this trend and the challenges faced by students, particularly in Nova Scotia. By examining comprehensive immigration data, the study explores patterns, trends, and characteristics of student migration, with an emphasis on gender distribution and country of origin. The research seeks to inform policymakers and higher education practitioners about the experiences and gender-based challenges of international students, providing actionable recommendations to improve support during their studies.

Research Questions

1. What is the trend of international students in Nova Scotia?
2. What are the experiences of international students in Nova Scotia?
3. What gender-based challenges do international students face in Nova Scotia?
4. What can policy makers and higher education practitioners learn from the migration patterns of international students in Nova Scotia?
5. What recommendations can policy makers implement to improve support for international students during their university studies?
6. How can universities further help to improve international students' experiences in their community?

Methods

The targeted population has been limited to international students enrolled at the Cape Breton University, Sydney, Nova Scotia. A questionnaire using a five-point semantic differential scale (Likert or Likert-like) is used to establish respondents' endorsement of a particular opinion with respect to their experiences in Nova Scotia. The questionnaires for this exploratory study are administered in person to all participants. A set of questions is given regarding the demographic information, and academic experiences. Students' responses are fetched and categorized in different challenge domains, such as academic challenge, environmental and cultural challenges, accommodations, financial and job challenges.

The secondary dataset is taken from Temporary Residents Study Permit Holders-Monthly IRCC Update. It has data on all the study permit holders coming to Canada under different categories of education from January 2015 to December 2023. Link for the data: <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/90115b00-f9b8-49e8-afa3-b4cff8facee>. The dataset has been cleaned using MS Excel and Tableau to make it analyzable.

Results

Figure1. International Students Trend in Nova Scotia (2015-2024)

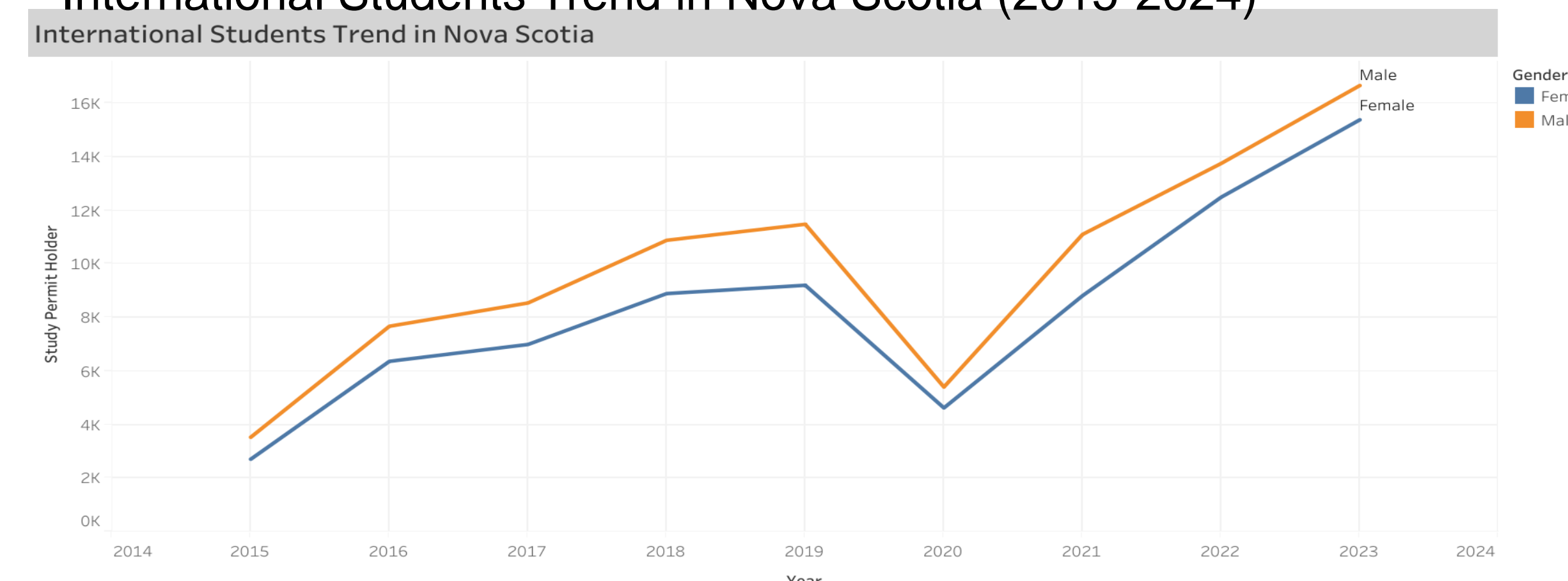
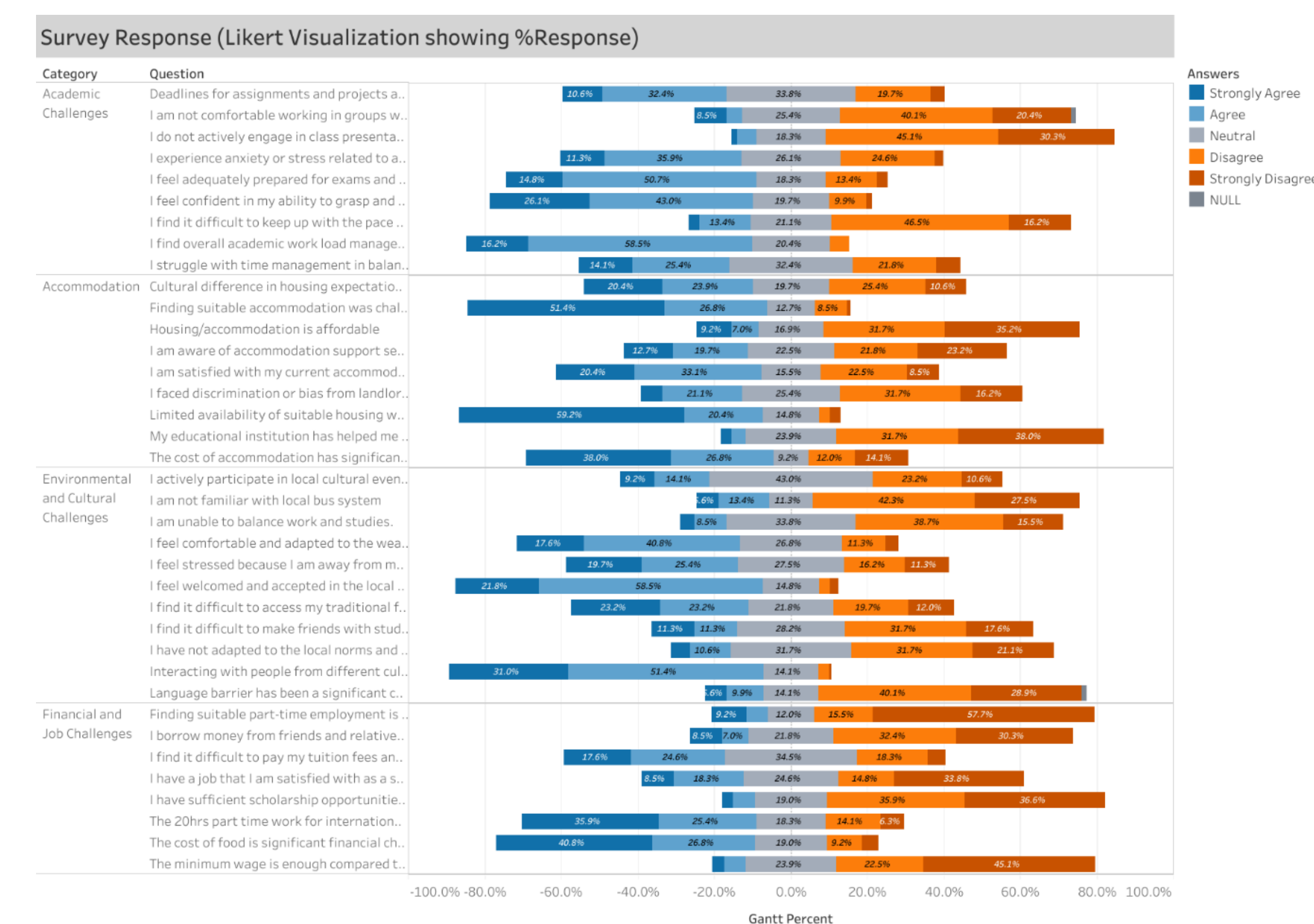


Figure2. Survey Result



Discussion

The findings highlight the critical need for enhanced support systems to address academic, cultural, accommodation, financial and some employment challenges faced by international students in Nova Scotia.

Availability and Affordability of Accommodation: 79.6% of respondents struggle with limited availability and 66.9% find housing unaffordable.

Institutional Support: 69.7% reports unawareness/lack of support from educational institution.

Part-time Employment: 73.2% agree to finding it difficult to secure suitable part-time job.

Access to traditional food: A large fraction 46.4% of respondents find it difficult to access traditional food and ingredients

Separation from family: 45.1% feel stressed being away from family and friends.

Anxiety and Stress: 47.2% experience anxiety related to academic evaluations.

Conclusions

This study underscores the multifaceted challenges faced by international students in Nova Scotia, including academic, environmental, cultural, accommodation, financial and employment related issues. The findings highlight the significant stressors these students encounter, which can adversely affect their academic performance and social integration. Despite the growing number of international students contributing to the province's economic and cultural diversity, their experiences reveal substantial areas needing improvement. A deeper understanding of these challenges, especially those experienced by female students is crucial for developing effective support mechanism and policies to enhance their overall experience in Nova Scotia.

Key Recommendations:

- Enhanced Academic Support Services and Awareness Creation
- Offer more frequent workshops/tutoring on time management, study skills and stress reduction techniques to better equip students for academic success.
- Develop cultural exchange programs and events to foster a sense of community and help students feel more accepted and integrated.
- Partner with local business and community organizations to improve access to traditional foods/ingredients for international students.
- Enhanced institutional support for accommodation issues including creating dedicated office or help line.
- Establish job placement services to collaborate with companies and help identify and supply talents from CBU.

References

- Alkhatib, Asem, Weizi Wu, Hoda Alshikh Ahmad, Ratee Pakwan Suwal, Zhao Ni, and Xianhong Li. "The experiences of menstrual symptom changes among international students studying in China during the acculturation period: A phenomenology study." *International Journal of Nursing Sciences* 10, no. 2 (2023): 221-229.
- Banner, Betsy J. "Global Trends in Transnational Education." *International Journal of Information and Education Technology* 6, no. 1 (2016): 80.
- Brace, Ian. *Questionnaire Design: How to Plan, Structure and Write Survey Material for Effective Market Research*. Kogan Page Publishers, 2018.
- Chen, Liang-Hsuan. "Moving Forward: International Students' Perspectives of Online Learning Experience During the Pandemic." *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 5 (2023): 100276.
- Cheng, Yi'En, Brenda Yeoh, and Peidong Yang. "Virtual student mobility on Zoom: digital platforms and differentiated experiences of international education and (im) mobilities in a time of pandemic." *Mobilities* (2023): 1-16.
- Doan, Vy, and Laura D. Russell. "Implicit theories of relating: A phenomenological investigation of first-year international students' expectations for and experiences of connection." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 90 (2022): 155-164.
- Dimandja, Oluwafolake Ogunbowo. "We Are Not that Different from You": A Phenomenological Study of Undergraduate Muslim International Student Campus Experiences. University of Colorado Colorado Springs, 2017.
- Eden, Amye, Nayia Cominos, and Julie-Anne Fleet. "Agency in change: Learning experiences of international midwifery students in South Australia." *Women and Birth* 36, no. 2 (2023): 143-150.
- Eden, Amye, Julie-Anne Fleet, and Nayia Cominos. "The learning experiences of international students in nursing and midwifery programs: A literature review." *Nurse Education in practice* 52 (2021): 103027.