

## ABSTRACT

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This mixed-design, descriptive study was conducted to identify reasons why senior-level baccalaureate nursing students seek first-time employment in intensive care settings. This study was conducted in a school of nursing at a private, Catholic university located in a northwestern Pennsylvania city. The university has between 50 and 60 senior-level baccalaureate nursing students enrolled each academic year. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a 15-item survey developed specifically for this study. Using a purposive sampling technique, surveys were distributed to 13 nursing students enrolled in a seminar course identified as a required senior-level course for nursing students only. Demographic data, used to describe the sample, and responses to closed-ended study items were analyzed using descriptive statistics and findings are reported in the aggregate. Thematic analysis of responses to the statement—*I would recommend first-time employment in an intensive care practice setting to other nursing students about to graduate because...* generated three major themes—(1) the intensive care environment itself, (2) the opportunity for professional growth, and (3) choice. Thematic analysis of responses to the statement—*I would not recommend first-time employment in an intensive care practice setting to other nursing students about to graduate because...* also generated three major themes—(1) the intensive care environment itself, (2) being clinically unprepared for ICU practice, and (3) choice. Findings can enhance the decision making process for nursing students regarding first-time employment as a registered nurse.

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