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## Student Nurses Perception of Poor Academic Performance in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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# Student Nurses Perception of Poor Academic Performance in Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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**Abstract** This research was conducted to examine the causes of poor academic performance by student nurses in the Bayelsa State School of Nursing in Nigeria, using the descriptive survey. The population consisted of 206 student nurses. As a result of their small size, they were all adopted for the study. However, only a total of 201 of the student nurses who completed their questionnaires participated in the study. A researcher-designed instrument named 'Student Nurses' Academic Performance Questionnaire' (SNAPQ) was employed in generating data for the study. The instrument was validated and a reliability index of 0.87 was obtained. The instrument was analyzed using simple percentages and t-test statistics. Results showed that the five perceived causes of poor academic performance among student nurses included: giving the students too many assignments, parents' inability to provide all the text books needed, student nurses lacking all their basic needs, lack of library and internet facilities and students' inability to understand the science subjects. The t-test employed showed a statistically significant difference in students nurses' perception of causes of poor academic performance on the basis of class level. The recommendations included provision of counselling services for the students and teachers, restructuring the nursing curriculum and reducing the number of assignments given to the students by their teachers, students' formation of study groups, provisions of library and internet facilities, amongst others.

**Keywords:** student nurses, reorientation, poor academic performance, counselling, nigeria.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The standard of education in Nigeria is frequently brought to focus by stake holders in the education industry. This is obviously due to the emphasis placed on education by every nation as a means of economic, social and political development. The public outcry of the dilapidating scenario, arouses researchers' curiosity to uncover the root cause of the problem. For example, Imogie (2002) expresses great concern as regards the declining quality of education of Nigerian graduates with little technical know-how. This was considered as a serious setback in the industrial development of Nigeria.

According to Mac-Farlane (2002), academic performance is the ability of students to cope with their studies as well as how various tasks assigned to them

by their instructors are accomplished. It also includes the ability to study and remember facts and to be able to express such knowledge gained either verbally or in writing (Mac-Farlane, 2002). While Aremu (2003) describes poor academic performance as a performance that is adjudged by the examiner as falling below an expected standard, Adesemowo (2005) decries the poor academic performance in specialized basic sciences such as Mathematics and English especially in tertiary institutions.

Academic failure is not only frustrating to the students and parents but leaves a devastating effect on the society in terms of shortage of manpower in all spheres of the economy and the nation's health challenges (Aremu, 2000). Education at the tertiary level is expected to be the peak and crown towards higher knowledge, an instrument used to achieve a more rapid economic, social, political, technological, scientific and cultural development of any country (Aremu, 2000).

### a) Statement of the Problem

The role of the nursing education is to prepare student nurses for professional competence in the field. Nursing education is described as 'a planned educational programme which provides broad and sound foundation for effective practice of nursing (Adeoye & Popoola, 2011). However, in a situation where this is lacking as a result of poor academic performance, there are likely to be problems at subsequent levels outside the four walls of the institution, especially when the students do not possess adequate knowledge needed to enhance professional skills required in executing basic nursing procedures for health. This study has become necessary, meriting scholarly attention in part because all the student nurses trained would eventually work in the hospitals where precious lives of the patients are deposited in their care. Therefore, a poorly trained nurse becomes a threat to the lives of the patients he/she might be responsible for, which could result to loss of lives and compound the poor state of the health sector in Nigeria.

Furthermore, a lot of emphasis have been placed on the academic performance of students over the years by researchers, and that deterioration had occurred in all fields of education in the society (Mendezabal, 2013). Previous research asserts that poor academic performance may be as a result of intermittent non-payment of teachers' salaries, poor

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remuneration of teachers, poor reading habits, problems caused by parents, society, as well as poor funding (Ajila & Olutola, 2007). Others include low retention, association with peers, a teacher's non-use of verbal reinforcement strategies and laziness of students (Aremu & Soka, 2003; Aremu & Oluwole, 2001; Morakinyo, 2003; Rowe, Stewart & Patterson, 2007). These studies were carried out in different locale, using secondary school subjects. A similar study carried out in Niger Delta University investigated the relationship between anxiety and poor academic performance of student nurses. It found that physiological anxiety was one of the factors responsible for their poor performance while there was no significant difference between male and female students regarding the causes of their poor academic performance (Afolayan, Donald, Onasoga, Adeyanju & Agama, 2013). This study used such variables as gender with special attention to physiological and psychological anxiety syndrome. However, the focus of the present study is on such variables as class level of the student nurses in determining their perception of poor academic performance.

Available information from the Bayelsa State School of Nursing Admissions and Records (2011) indicates that as the admission rate increases, the passing rate decreases. Therefore, this study sought to find out the main causes of the poor performance reported by the authorities.

#### b) Purpose of the Study

The study was carried out to:

1. examine the causes of poor academic performance as perceived by student nurses in Bayelsa State School of Nursing, Nigeria
2. determine the differences in the causes of poor academic performance of student nurses on the basis of their class levels.

#### c) Research Questions

The research questions posed by the study were as follows:

1. What are the main causes of poor academic performance as perceived by student nurses in Bayelsa State School of Nursing?
2. What are the perceived causes of poor academic performance between Year 1 and Year 3 student nurses?

#### d) Research Hypothesis

The following hypothesis guided the study:

1. There is no statistically significant difference between Year 1 and Year 3 students' perception of the causes of the poor academic performance of student nurses in Bayelsa State School of Nursing.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### a) Research Design

The study adopted the descriptive survey method. The method is appropriate because Nwankwo (2006) posits that the general purpose of survey research is to reveal current condition or provide a factual descriptive picture of the situations as they exist in their natural setting and also reveal the need for change. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to do an in-depth study on the sample with a view to unearthing the major characteristics among a set or unit. Thus, survey design was considered as the most appropriate method in finding out the perceived causes of poor academic performance among student nurses in Bayelsa State School of Nursing, Nigeria.

### b) Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 206 student nurses (Bayelsa State School of Nursing Admissions and Records, 2011). This comprises 84 males and 122 females from Year 1-3.

*Table 1* : Population Distribution of the student Nurses (N=206)

S/N	Class/Level	Male	Female	Total
1.	Post PTS	37(38.1)	60(61.9)	97
2.	(Year 1)	30(49.2)	31(50.8)	61
3	Year 2 Year 3	17(35.4)	31(64.6)	48
	<b>Total =</b>	84	122	206

Source: Bayelsa State School of Nursing Admissions and Records, 2011

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage values.

### c) Sample and Sampling Technique

As a result of the small number of student nurses in the school, the sample was purposively selected, made up of all the 206 student nurses from Year 1-3. This consisted of 97 (Year One); 61 (Year Two) and 48 (Year Three) student nurses respectively. Of the 206 student nurses, 84(40.8%) were males and 122(59.2%) were females. The age of the students ranges from 22-37years. However, only 201 correctly filled questionnaires were considered suitable for the analysis. This is because 5 of the students did not respond to some of the statements.

### d) Instrumentation

A researcher-designed instrument named Student Nurses Academic Performance Questionnaire (SNAPQ) was employed in generating data for the study. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A sought the demographic details of the respondents such as age, sex, class level, etc; and Section B was made up of 14 statements on the perceived causes of poor academic performance of the students. The items of the questionnaire were derived from review of related

literature on the causes of poor academic performance of students. The response pattern used was 'Yes' and 'No'.

*e) Validity and Reliability of the Instrument*

The instrument was assessed by two experts in Sociology and Counselling and they ascertained the content validity of the instrument which indicated that the instrument measured what it was intended to measure. Thus, the contributions made by the assessors were integrated in the final draft of the questionnaire. The test re-test reliability index obtained was 0.87 using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (*r*).

*f) Data Administration and Collection Procedure*

The Researchers sought the permission of the school authority indicating the purpose of the study.

Upon receiving a letter of consent from them, the aim of the study was explained to the students who unanimously agreed to participate voluntarily. The instrument was thereafter administered on the respondents by the researchers and collected back as soon as the respondents finished. This was made possible with the help of one research assistant per class/level. At the end, 201 copies which were correctly filled were used for the analysis.

*g) Data Analysis Technique*

In analyzing the data from the respondents, frequency counts and simple percentages were employed. Furthermore, ranking order was used to determine the most and least important factors responsible for the poor academic performance of student nurses; and a t-test for differences in the students' responses on the basis of their class levels.

### III. RESULTS

*Table 2* : Causes of Poor academic Performance by the Respondents

Statement	F	%	Rank Order
Student nurses perform poorly in academics because:			
1. Students are saddled with too many assignments.	107	53.2	1 <sup>st</sup>
2. Parents do not provide all the text books needed.	18	9.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
3. Student nurses lack most of their basic needs.	16	8.0	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4. There are no library or internet facilities.	14	7.0	4 <sup>th</sup>
5. Student nurses do not understand the sciences.	9	4.5	5 <sup>th</sup>
6. The male nurses believe that nursing is for females only.	8	4.0	6 <sup>th</sup>
7. Most students start the programme when advanced in age.	7	3.5	7 <sup>th</sup>
8. Student nurses live in poor hostel environment.	6	3.0	8 <sup>th</sup>
9. Student nurses are not given tutorials	5	2.4	9 <sup>th</sup>
10. The teachers do not explain the lessons well.	3	1.5	9 <sup>th</sup>
11. Student nurses whose parents are less educated perform poorly	3	1.5	11 <sup>th</sup>
12. Parents do not provide extra lessons for students.	2	1.0	12 <sup>th</sup>
13. The school lacks well trained teachers.	2	1.0	12 <sup>th</sup>
14. Student nurses are not supervised by their parents.	1	0.4	14 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Total=</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100</b>	

Table 2 shows that the top five perceived causes of poor academic performance among student nurses included: giving the students too many assignments (53.2%), parents' inability to provide all the

text books needed by the student nurses (9.0%), student nurses lack all their basic needs (8.0%), lack of library and internet facilities (7.0%) and students' inability to understand the science subjects (4.5%).

*Table 3* : t-test Analysis comparing the Perceived Causes of Poor

Class Level	N	X	SD	Df	Calculated t	Critical t	Decision
Year One	97	30.0	15.1	153	5.42*	1.96	Rejected
Year Three	48	19.0	9.2				

- Significant;  $P < 0.05$

Table 3 indicates that the calculated t-test of 5.42 is greater than the critical t of 1.96 at the 0.05 level of significance. Based on the result, the hypothesis was rejected, meaning that there is a statistically significant difference between year one and year three respondents' perception of the causes of poor academic performance of student nurses.

### IV. DISCUSSION

This study revealed that five main causes of poor academic performance of student nurses as perceived by the respondents were giving the students too many assignments, parents' inability to provide all the text books needed for studying, students lacking basic needs, lack of library and internet facilities and

students' inability to understand the science subjects.. Others include the belief that nursing is meant for the females only, age of entry of the students into the programme, poor hostel environment, etc.

As regards giving students too many assignments, the researchers are of the view that when students are busy with too many assignments, it will not give them sufficient time to read their books, which invariably results into poor academic performance. The finding as it relates to the poor living conditions indicated by the respondents agrees with previous study by Isangedighi (2008) who reports that the unattractive environment of learners was capable of de-motivating them in achieving good academic results. This was considered as 'learners' environment mismatch' (Isangedighi, 2008). . Similarly, Bakare (1994) observes earlier that school location and the physical building militates against good academic achievement.

In view of the finding that poor academic performance of student nurses was related to the inability of parents to provide all their basic needs, it corroborates a previous report which posits that lack of basic nutrition could affect the academic standard of students (Bakare, 1994). In the same vein, factors militating against good academic performance could be resident in the family such as cognitive stimulation by care givers and the ability of parents to encourage the development of basic cognitive skills in children during the first 2 years of life (Bakare, 2004). Similarly, the finding is consistent with the submissions of Morakinyo (2003) which reports that a relationship exists between the socio-economic status of parents and the academic achievements of individuals. In other words, the level of parents' socio-economic status determines the availability of instructional as well as all other necessary materials for learning. The students' view of nursing as a profession for females alone could be one major factor of student nurses' abysmal academic performance.

Furthermore, in trying to weigh the responses of year one and year three student nurses as regards the causes of their poor academic performance, it revealed that they were significantly different. This could be because the year one students are saddled with more assignments than the year three who are involved in more practical work. Experience has shown that the curriculum content of first year students have more of theoretical than practical work.

## V. CONCLUSION

The major obstacles hindering good academic performance of the student nurses were found to include the way teachers in the profession assign too many home works to the student nurses, poor facilities, provision of inadequate basic needs by parents, students' perception, especially the idea that nursing is meant for the females, amongst others. The perception

of the respondents that nursing is meant for the females is very important in drawing the conclusion that they might have opted for the nursing profession as a last resort. It therefore stands to reason that the way humans perceive a thing would influence their likeness and performance at the task. The role of parents in providing the needed encouragement for the students was also associated with increased academic performance of the student nurses.

## VI. COUNSELLING AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

The outcome of this study will enable school counsellors to organize a symposium for parents, school administrators, nursing teachers and students themselves. Counselling services should be extended to this group of people because counselling enables people to overcome anxieties and worries. Parents for instance would be enlightened by knowing that adequate provisions of students' basic needs are vital to their academic performance.

The study will expose school administrators on the need to provide a conducive environment for the student nurses, and the teachers would also realize that giving too many assignments is detrimental to students' academic performance. This is because the students may not have the time to read. Finally, the students themselves should be orientated into forming study groups and given some tips on effective study habit techniques. This will enable them to realize their individual roles in enhancing good academic performance. Therefore, counsellors should utilize group and individual counselling techniques in bringing this about. More importantly, the students need academic counselling in helping them develop rational ideas about the nursing profession rather than relating performance to gender differences.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proffered:

- i. The nursing academic curriculum should be restructured and made flexible to provide adequate space for practical learning and interaction by the students. In this regard, the lecture hours should be reduced to give the students opportunity for personal study.
- ii. Student nurses themselves must have adequate time to form their own personal study time table and engage in group studies in order to improve their academic performance.
- iii. The school administrators should ensure that adequate or conducive environment with library and internet facilities are available to encourage the students to learn.

- iv. The provision of guidance and counselling services by the government will also improve the all round performance of the students, not only academically, but socially, psychologically and morally.

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