



Determination of Student-Related Factors Influencing the Perceived Academic Performance of Nursing Students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Nigeria

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Abstract

Student-related factors are important in influencing the academic achievement of nursing students and eventually influence their clinical competence and professional readiness. To design effective educational interventions aimed at improving learning outcomes, these elements need to be identified. The study was to examine factors affecting the perceived academic achievement of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone of Kogi State, Nigeria. A descriptive cross sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised 281 nursing students recruited using a disproportionate stratified selection procedure from two nursing schools in Kogi East Senatorial Zone. Data were obtained by a standardised self-administered questionnaire validated by experts and showing good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80–0.90). Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were employed to summarise the data. Most respondents were 18–25 years old (70.8%), female (78.3%), single (92.5%), and in their third year of school (66.9%). Most of the respondents were sponsored by their parents (91.5%) and 69.8% of the respondents attended Grimard Catholic College of Nursing Sciences. The major factors that positively influenced perceived academic performance were motivation to succeed academically (mean = 3.3 ± 0.58), regular attendance of lectures and practical sessions (mean = 3.2 ± 0.67), parental and family support (mean = 3.2 ± 0.74), good study habits (mean = 3.1 ± 0.57), dedication to study (mean = 3.1 ± 0.62), and good physical, mental and social health (mean = 3.1 ± 0.64). Good time management (mean = 2.8 ± 0.70) and availability to learning resources (mean = 2.6 ± 0.81) were also beneficial factors. Negative peer influence (mean = 1.8 ± 0.88) and stress and anxiety (mean = 2.2 ± 0.73) were related with inferior perceived academic achievement. The mean score obtained for the student related factors was 2.8 ± 0.69 , suggesting a moderate effect of these factors on perceived academic success. Academic motivation, consistent attendance to class, effective study habits, commitment to learning, parental support and excellent health status are significant drivers of perceived academic achievement among nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone. Educational interventions that promote motivation, study skills, student well-being and family and institutional support may assist to boosting academic achievement and better preparing future nursing professionals.

Keywords: Academic performance; Nursing students; Student-related factors; Motivation; Study habits; Nursing education; Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Education is widely recognised as a basic component of national development and human capital development and it provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, values and competencies needed for individual development and socioeconomic development [1]. Nursing education in the health sector, in particular, plays a key role in producing competent professionals who are able to provide safe, evidence-based and patient-centred care. Thus, the academic performance of nursing students is an important aspect of educational quality and professional preparedness, as it reflects the extent to which students acquire the theoretical knowledge, clinical skills, critical thinking ability and professional attitudes required for effective nursing practice [2]. Academic performance refers to the extent to which students have achieved the pre-determined educational goals measured by their performance in tests, continuous assessment, clinical evaluation and other learning outcomes [3]. Perceived academic performance is students' self-evaluation of their academic progress, learning experiences and overall educational attainment [4], in addition to objective academic achievement. This view is especially important since it affects students' self-efficacy, learning motivation, confidence, academic engagement and persistence, all of which are important predictors of learning success.

Among the many elements linked with academic achievement, student-related characteristics have repeatedly been found to be some of the strongest predictors of academic performance. These elements are intrinsic behaviours and qualities that influence directly the learning process and include motivation, study habits, time management, class attendance, self-discipline, learning techniques, emotional wellbeing, stress management, self-efficacy and personal commitment to learning [5]. Students with good learning behaviours, consistent attendance, excellent time management in their studies, and high intrinsic desire likely to obtain higher academic results than those with poor learning habits and low academic engagement.

The impact of motivation on student achievement in school is considered one of the most important factors. Motivated students are likely to engage actively in classroom activities, spend appropriate time on independent study, ask questions when they encounter academic hurdles, and persist in the face of learning difficulties. Likewise, good study skills, attendance to classes, sufficient preparation for tests and favourable learning attitudes has a major impact on academic performance [6]. Poor academic performance of nursing students in some educational contexts has been connected with poor time management, procrastination, examination anxiety, low self-confidence, financial stress, excessive use of social media and poor study abilities (Yusoff et al., 2010).

Teacher-related, institutional, socioeconomic and government-related factors also influence academic performance; however, evidence from various studies suggests that student-related factors are the more proximal and modifiable factors of learning outcomes because they directly influence students' engagement in the teaching and learning process. This is especially essential in the area of nursing education since academic competence is closely linked to clinical competence, patient safety, professional confidence and quality of treatment.

Worldwide, falling academic performance of nursing students has alerted educators and policymakers to find out the underlying causes of low educational outcomes. This is evident in Nigeria by the recurrent low scores achieved in national educational evaluations and professional eligibility tests. Results of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) and the professional examinations of the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) indicate that many students are still facing academic challenges, raising concerns about the readiness of future healthcare professionals [7].

These challenges may be more severe in Kogi East Senatorial Zone where nursing students are often faced with financial constraints, poor access to learning resources, psycho-social stress, transportation challenges, family responsibilities and other personal circumstances that may have negative impact on their academic engagement and perceived academic performance. Challenges associated to students might decrease motivation, distract focus, diminish effective study time and eventually damage learning results and professional competence [8].

There is rising interest in the determinants of academic performance of nursing students. However, most of the previous research looked at academic performance using broad categories of determinants or focused on institutional, teacher-related or environmental factors. There are few research that have particularly explored the influence of student-related factors to perceived academic achievement of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Nigeria. Such gap restricts the availability of context-specific evidence for constructing effective student-centred educational interventions. It is important to identify student-related aspects related to perceived academic performance in order to design focused interventions that will raise students motivation, improve effective learning behaviours, improve academic support services and attain successful educational outcomes. This research will help nursing educators, institutional administrators, counsellors, and policy makers to design interventions that will enhance students' academic progress and eventually contribute to the development of competent nursing professionals.

Therefore this study was conducted to evaluate the student related factors influencing perceived academic performance of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to investigate the student-related factors influencing the perceived academic performance of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Kogi State, Nigeria. The cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because it enabled the collection of data from a representative sample of participants at a single point in time and facilitated the examination of relationships between the study variables without manipulating the study environment. Similar designs have been successfully used in previous studies investigating determinants of academic performance among nursing students.

Study Setting

The study was conducted in two accredited nursing training institutions located in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Kogi State, North-Central Nigeria:

- United Evangelical Church (UEC) College of Nursing, Ochadamu, Ofu Local Government Area.
- Grimard Catholic College of Nursing Sciences (GCCONS), Anyigba, Dekina Local Government Area.

Kogi State, popularly known as the "Confluence State," is situated in North-Central Nigeria where the Rivers Niger and Benue converge. Kogi East Senatorial Zone comprises nine Local Government Areas: Ankpa, Bassa, Dekina, Ibaji, Idah, Igalamela-Odolu, Ofu, Olamaboro, and Omala.

At the time of the study, UEC College of Nursing had a total enrolment of 313 students across three academic levels, whereas GCCONS had 524 students enrolled in its Basic Nursing and Basic Midwifery programmes. These institutions were selected because they are among the major nursing training institutions within the study area and provide adequate representation of nursing education in Kogi East Senatorial Zone.

Study Population

The study population comprised all Basic Nursing and Basic Midwifery students enrolled in the selected colleges during the study period. The total study population was 837 students, consisting of 508 student nurses and 329 student midwives distributed across first-, second-, and third-year classes.

Sample Size Determination

The minimum sample size was determined using Cochran's sample size formula for finite populations. Based on the estimated study population of 837 students, a minimum sample size of 289 participants was obtained (Appendix III). During data collection, 281 completed questionnaires were retrieved, representing a 97.2% response rate, which was considered adequate for statistical analysis.

Sampling Technique

A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure adequate representation of all academic levels and professional programmes despite differences in stratum sizes.

Initially, participants were stratified according to institution, programme (Basic Nursing and Basic Midwifery), and year of study. Sample allocation within each stratum was performed proportionately while ensuring adequate representation of smaller strata to facilitate meaningful comparisons. Thereafter, eligible participants were selected using systematic random sampling within each sampling unit.

This approach minimized sampling bias and enhanced the representativeness of the study sample.

Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were eligible for inclusion if they:

- were registered Basic Nursing or Basic Midwifery students in either of the selected colleges;
- were available during the period of data collection;
- voluntarily agreed to participate by providing informed consent; and
- were physically and mentally fit to complete the questionnaire.

Exclusion Criteria

Students who declined participation, submitted incomplete questionnaires, or were absent during the study period were excluded from the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered, web-based questionnaire adapted from the instrument developed by Alshammari et al. (2022) for assessing factors affecting academic performance among nursing students.

The questionnaire consisted of 37 items organized into five sections:

Section A: Socio-demographic characteristics (7 items)

Section B: Student-related factors (10 items)

Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale:

- Strongly Agree = 4
- Agree = 3
- Disagree = 2
- Strongly Disagree = 1

Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the statements measuring each study construct.

Validity of the Instrument

Face and content validity were established through expert review. The questionnaire was independently evaluated by the project supervisor, two senior academics in Nursing Science, and a statistician from the University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

Their comments and recommendations were incorporated to improve the clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness, and appropriateness of the questionnaire before data collection commenced.

Reliability of the Instrument

A pilot study involving 26 nursing students (approximately 10% of the study sample) was conducted at Nana College of Nursing, Anyigba, which was not included in the main study.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The questionnaire demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.80 to 0.90, indicating that the instrument was highly reliable for measuring the study variables.

Data Collection Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Kogi State Ministry of Health (Approval No. MOH/PRS/465/V.1/146) before commencement of the study.

Administrative permission was subsequently obtained from the management of the participating colleges through an introductory letter issued by the Department of Nursing Sciences, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus.

Eligible students were informed about the objectives, significance, procedures, potential benefits, and voluntary nature of the study. The questionnaire link was distributed electronically through official class WhatsApp platforms with the assistance of class representatives.

An electronic informed consent form preceded the questionnaire, and only participants who provided consent were permitted to continue with the survey.

Participants completed the questionnaire independently to minimize information bias. Responses were submitted electronically, ensuring complete anonymity and reducing data entry errors.

Data collection was conducted over a four-week period. Reminder messages were periodically sent to improve participation. At the end of the study, 281 valid questionnaires had been successfully completed and analysed.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Kogi State Ministry of Health (Approval No. MOH/PRS/465/V.1/146).

Permission to conduct the study was also obtained from the authorities of the participating institutions.

Participation was entirely voluntary. Written informed consent was obtained electronically before participation. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, privacy, and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty or adverse consequences.

No identifying information was collected, and all data were stored securely and used solely for research purposes in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and study variables.

Composite mean scores were calculated for each study domain, namely student-related, teacher-related, institutional, and government-related factors.

Using the midpoint of the four-point Likert scale (2.50) as the decision criterion, mean scores were categorized as follows:

High influence: Mean score > 2.50

Low influence: Mean score $\leq$ 2.50

Perceived academic performance was dichotomized into:

Satisfactory academic performance (coded as 1)

Unsatisfactory academic performance (coded as 0)

Associations between categorical variables were examined using the Chi-square test of independence.

Binary logistic regression analysis was subsequently performed to determine the independent predictive effects of student-related, teacher-related, institutional, and government-related factors on perceived academic performance while controlling for potential confounding variables.

Statistical significance was established at $p < 0.05$, and all tests were two-tailed.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio- Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n= 281)

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Age group	18-25	199	70.8
	26-35	59	21
	36-45	16	5.7
	46 and above	7	2.5
Sex	Male	61	21.7
	Female	220	78.3
Marital status	Single	260	92.5
	Married	21	7.5
Year of Study	First Year	48	17.1
	Second Year	45	16
	Third Year	178	66.9
Institution	UEC	85	30.2
	GCCONS	196	69.8
Sponsor	Self	21	7.5
	Parent	257	91.5
	Government	3	1.1
	No formal education	18	6.4
Parental educational status	Primary	13	4.6
	Secondary	66	23.5

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Most (70.8%) were aged 18–25 years, followed by 26–35 years (21.0%), 36–45 years (5.7%), and 46 years and above (2.5%). Females constituted 78.3%, while males were 21.7%. The majority (92.5%) were single, and 7.5% were married. Most respondents (66.9%) were in their third year, 17.1% in first year, and 16.0% in second year. About 69.8% were from GCCONS, while 30.2% were from UEC. Parental sponsorship accounted for 91.5%, self-sponsorship 7.5%, and government 1.1%. Regarding parents' education, 23.5% had secondary education, 6.4% primary, and 4.6% had no formal education.

Table 2: Student-related factors associated with academic performance (n=281)

Variables	SD	D	A	SA	Mean ± SD
Study habit	3(1.1)	31(11)	197(70.1)	50(17.8)	3.1±0.57
Dedication and Commitment to study.	1(0.4)	41(14.6)	176(62.6)	63(22.4)	3.1±0.62
Motivation to succeed academically.	0(0)	17(6)	156(55.5)	108(38.4)	3.3±0.58
Physical, mental, and social health status	1(0.4)	41(14.6)	165(58.7)	74(26.3)	3.1±0.64
Negative Peer influence on concentration	132(47)	86(30.6)	52(18.5)	11(3.9)	1.8±0.88
Effective time management between academics and other activities.	6(2.1)	79(28.1)	153(54.4)	43(15.3)	2.8±0.7
Regular and punctual attendance at lectures and practical sessions.	1(0.4)	37(13.2)	149(53)	94(33.5)	3.2±0.67
Access to the necessary learning resources like textbooks and ICT devices	25(8.9)	87(31)	134(47.7)	35(12.5)	2.6±0.81
Negative effects of stress and anxiety	47(16.7)	151(53.7)	74(26.3)	9(3.2)	2.2±0.73
Parental and Family support	7(2.5)	30(10.7)	130(46.3)	114(40.6)	3.2±0.74

Mean student-related factors 2.8 ±0.69

SD= Strongly disagree, D= Disagree, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree; M=mean; SD= Standard deviation

Decision Rule: Items with mean (M) ≤ 2.5 were accepted as perceived student-related factors associated with academic performance

Table 2 shows student-related factors associated with academic performance. Most respondents agreed that *motivation to succeed* (55.5%) and *regular attendance to lectures* (53%) positively influenced performance, with means of 3.3 ± 0.58 and 3.2 ± 0.67 respectively. Similarly, *study habit* (70.1%) and *dedication to study* (62.6%) also showed positive effects (M = 3.1 each). *Parental support* was rated high by 46.3% (M = 3.2 ± 0.74). However, *negative peer influence* (47%) and *stress and anxiety* (53.7%) had low mean scores (1.8 ± 0.88 and 2.2 ± 0.73), indicating negative impacts. The overall mean of 2.8 ± 0.69 suggests that student-related factors moderately affect academic performance.

DISCUSSION

The present study studied the student-related factors that influence perceived academic performance of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone, Nigeria. The results provide crucial insights into the characteristics of the study population and the influence of personal attributes and actions in affecting students' academic success. Socio-demographic features of the respondents The majority of the participants were young individuals between 21-25 years old, mostly females, single and Christians. Most of the participants were in their 2nd and 3rd years of their nursing school. This demographic pattern is in accordance with the present profile of nursing education in Nigeria whereby females still comprise the higher share of nursing students. The prevalence of young adults may be a benefit as people in this age range tend to have higher cognitive flexibility, learning capacity, and adaptation to the hard academic and clinical demands of nursing education. However, this era of life is also characterised by psychosocial, socioeconomic, and academic demands that may influence students' learning experiences and academic progress. These findings are in agreement with [9] who reported that nursing students in Nigerian colleges are mostly young, unmarried females in their most academically productive ages.

The results also found that student-related characteristics were important drivers of perceived academic achievement among nursing students. Specifically, respondents listed motivation, study habits, time management, consistent attendance in class, self-discipline, financial stability, and physical and mental health as significant variables affecting their academic achievement. These findings highlight the importance of individual learning behaviour and personal commitment in educational success. Students with motivation and discipline are more likely to participate in classroom learning, spend enough time on independent study, finish academic activities within a certain period and show resilience in the face of academic challenges[10]. On the other hand, bad study habits, poor time management, lack of motivation, financial hardship and physical or psychological well-being may diminish concentration, limit academic engagement and adversely affect learning outcomes[11].

The strong effect of motivation found in this study is consistent with well-established educational theories, especially Self-determination Theory. This theory suggests that learners who are intrinsically motivated tend to be more persistent, more engaged, and more successful academically than learners who are primarily motivated by external factors. Students' motivation is a driving force for engaging themselves into learning activities, seeking academic support when needed and to continue their efforts despite the hurdles faced during their training[12].

Also, good study habits and frequent attendance in classes appeared to be strong determinants of reported academic performance. The training of a nurse requires acquisition of a lot of theoretical knowledge and practical clinical skills. Therefore, students who attend lectures regularly, check learning resources often and apply good study techniques are more likely to connect theoretical ideas with clinical practice. The results are congruent with the findings of [13] who stated that disciplined study habits and regular attendance of lectures greatly increase academic achievement among nursing students.

Also, the present study revealed that physical and mental health significantly affected perceived academic achievement. Stress, weariness, worry and poor physical health can weaken concentration, impair memory and diminish the ability to participate successfully in academic and clinical activities. Nursing education is academically difficult and extended exposure to stress without appropriate coping methods may severely influence learning and academic performance. The results are in line with [14] who observed that psychological well-being is significantly related to nursing students' academic engagement, satisfaction with learning and educational achievement.

Financial restrictions were also cited as a significant challenge affecting the student's academic success. Financial constraints may restrict students' purchase of textbooks, use of online learning resources, participation in clinical training and travel and accommodation[15]. Students may experience psychological stress and less time for academic activities due to different sources of financial support. This conclusion is reflective of the socio-economic realities that many nursing students in Nigeria experience and underscores the need for better financial help, scholarships and institutional support programmes[16,17].

The favourable effect of self-discipline, as found in the current study, highlights the importance of students' abilities to control their behaviour, prioritise their academic duties and be consistent in their learning activities [18]. Self-Discipline Students who have good self-discipline are better able to manage the competing demands of school and their lives outside of school, resulting in more effective learning and higher academic achievement. Similar findings were reported by [19,20], who found self-efficacy, resilience, and disciplined learning practices to be important predictors of academic performance and clinical competence among nursing students.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that student-related factors are still the most immediate and controllable drivers of perceived academic achievement of nursing students in Kogi East Senatorial Zone. Many of these factors, rather than structural or policy-related challenges, are amenable to change through targeted interventions such as academic mentoring, study skills training, counselling services, time management workshops, peer-support programmes, stress management interventions and student wellness initiatives. Strengthening these support mechanisms may result in increased student engagement, better perceived academic achievement and eventually contribute to the creation of competent nursing professionals offering high quality patient care.

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