Psychosocial Challenges of Student Nursing Mothers in Tertiary Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria

**C. Onyeka Gospel-Tony[1], A. Nelson-Okartar Ezinne[1]
and U. Obinna-Akakuru Annabel[2*]**

[1]*Department of Psychology, Imo State University, Owerri¸ Nigeria.*
[2]*Department of Educational Psychology/G&C, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Nigeria.*

Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author UOAA designed the study, performed the statistical analysis, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors COGT and ANOE managed the analyses of the study. Author COGT managed the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This research investigated the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in Imo State. The study employed survey research design. The population of this study consisted the entire nursing mothers studying in regular programmes in all the tertiary institutions in Imo State (Imo State University Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Federal College of Land Resources Technology Oforola, Owerri and Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri) in the 2015/2016 academic session, which were 521 in number. The sample size for the study was 248, which is 50% of the entire population. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The face and content validity of the instrument was established by two experts in Educational Psychology and two experts in Measurement and Evaluation, all from Imo State University. The Reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.88. It was established through test-retest method of the Pearson product moment correlation co-efficiency. The data gathered was analyzed using frequency counts, mean, standard

Corresponding author: Email: anniemagma@gmail.com;

deviations and z-test statistics. Findings revealed the nature of psychosocial challenges which nursing mothers in tertiary institutions face and also indicated that these challenges negatively affect the academic performance of these students. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made which includes that School management should ensure that they always have a well prepared school calendar which must be adhered to and make it easily accessible to students especially nursing mothers. Also, Lecturers should show concern by informing students how and when assessments will be and make study materials/resources readily available so as to enable students nursing mothers prepare adequately for improved academic performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries of the world today have held the training of their citizenry as their principal industry. In most states of Nigeria, education is the single establishment that employs the greatest number of the workforce. According to [1], it not only brings about change and knowledge in a person but inabilities to think and to acquire habits, skills, interest, and attitudes, the major characteristics of a person who is socially accepted and personally adjusted. Since Education is responsible for bringing up youths and providing the workforce in the countries, its efficacy has always been of public concern. It is against this background that [2] wrote that for any person to hope of occupying a meaningful position in future, he or she must embrace good education as the first instrument. Abraham Lincoln, an American political philosopher and leader wrote that education kills the "bright diseases": ignorance, superstition, fear, and poverty. He went on to urge learners not to give up on education, but to aspire to the zenith to get the certificate first then the available job later [3].

Nowadays, women including nursing mothers are no longer willing to compromise their chances for higher education. As fast and changing our society is, as complex as its nature is and with the present economic depression or economic meltdown, one area that needs attention which perhaps has not gotten the desired attention is the education of married women, especially the nursing mothers in the institution of higher learning [4]. Nigerian women by the day are growing strong in knowledge acquisition. There are today women professors, lawyers, doctors, engineers and others [5]. It is observable that the 21st century woman has a passion for higher and quality education regardless of their marital status and responsibilities, especially childbearing and rearing, a responsibility which is clearly difficult and tasking to most women. [4]

described the recent development in the quest for higher education among women as a welcomed development, as it enables women contributes meaningfully not only to the family but the society at large. [6] stated that graduate school is a space and a place where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than problems to be managed by individual women [7].

According to Okeke in [2], the challenges of childcare are the first natural function of any woman and others, however, are secondary. According to [7] the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards school programme. This has led some of them to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their children. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their newborn babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Continuing, [6] further stated that if mothers do not consider child rearing as a natural assignment, the children will suffer from lack of care, neglect, abandonment and improper feeding [8]. Consequently, nursing mothers who develop a positive attitude towards combining childbearing and care with studies in higher institution have an uphill task and most of the time, role conflict [4]. Some mothers gain entry into the tertiary institution as nursing mothers;

others become nursing mothers after coming into the tertiary institution. However, most tertiary institutions do not make provisions for this category of students. There is hardly any existence of adequate welfare programmes for nursing mothers in our tertiary institutions, a situation that could militate against their effort and their academic performances [9]. Hence, the need and interest of the researcher to investigate the psychosocial challenges these student nursing mothers face, in tertiary institutions in Imo state, Nigeria with the view of proffering useful solution on how to reduce the influence of these psychosocial challenges.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the researcher:

1. What are the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions in Imo State?
2. What is the influence of the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers on their academic performance?

Table 1. Number of nursing mothers in the regular programmes of each tertiary institution

S/N	Tertiary institution	No. of nursing mothers
1	Imo State University, Owerri	106
2	Federal University of Technology	25
3	Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education	312
4	Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri	62
5	Federal College of Land Resources Technology, Oforola	16
	Total	**521**

Table 2. Sample of nursing mothers in regular programmes of each tertiary institution

S/N	Tertiary institution	No. of nursing mothers
1	Imo State University, Owerri	53
2	Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education	156
3	Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri	31
4	Federal College of Land Resources Technology, Oforola	8
	Total	**248**

3. METHODS

The study employed survey research design. This is so because the researcher seeks to link some already existing influence and effect/observations of the students' nursing mothers' psychosocial challenges as causative agents to some variable(s) (their academic performance). Also, the study did not require manipulation of any variable rather describe the situation (i.e. identification of psychosocial challenges of students' nursing mothers, their levels, influences on their academic performance among others). The investigation was carried out in Imo State, Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of all nursing mothers studying in regular programmes in all the tertiary institutions in Imo State namely: Imo State University Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Federal College of Land Resources Technology Oforola, Owerri and Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri in the 2015/2016 academic session, totaling 521. Course representatives helped to ascertain those who are nursing mothers in the five tertiary institutions at the degree and Higher National Diploma Level (HND). The population spread in the tertiary institutions is shown on Table 1.

The sample size of 248 was obtained through the random sampling technique. Owing to the small number of the population, the researcher used 50% of the entire population which is 248 nursing mothers from four tertiary institutions in Imo State. It is so because; Federal University of Technology, Owerri which has a population of 25 nursing mothers was eliminated in the sampling because it was used for the pilot study (Table 3).

The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire tagged "Influence of Psychosocial Challenges of Student Nursing Mothers on their Academic Performance Questionnaire" (IPCSNMAPQ). It was made up of two sections i.e. one and two. Section one comprises the school name of the respondent and her babies age bracket. Section two contains four clusters: A, B, C and D. Cluster A contains of 12 items structured in a four-point modified Likert scale of; Strongly Agree (SA) (4-point); Agree (A) (3-point); Disagree (D) (2-point) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1-point). Cluster A seeks to determine the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers. Cluster B is made up of 12-items and is designed to determine the extent the student nursing mothers are being faced by the identified challenges. Also, it yields data which reveals the influence of the age of the

baby on the levels of psychosocial challenges of the student nursing mothers. It is structured in the four-point scale of Very Great Extent (VGE) (4-point); Great Extent (GE) (3-point); Low Extent (LE) (2-point); and Very Low Extent (VLE) (1-point). Cluster C and D contains 13 and 10 items respectively. Both are structured on a four-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA) (4-point); Agree (A) (3-point); Disagree (D) (2-point) and Strongly Disagree (SD) (1-point). Cluster C provides data on the influence of the psychosocial challenges on the academic performance of the student nursing mothers while cluster D seeks to determine the possible ways of ameliorating these challenges.

The face and content validity of the instrument were established by two experts in Educational Psychology and another two experts in Educational Measurement and Evaluation, all from Imo State University. The Reliability coefficient over time of the instrument for data collection determined was 0.88. It was established through test-retest method of the Pearson product moment correlation coefficiency. The researcher administered copies of the questionnaire to 15 respondents from Federal University of Technology, Owerri. The researcher used FUTO because; it was eliminated in the sampling.

In order to ensure proper administration of these instruments of research, the researcher made several personal visits to the tertiary institutions and with the help of the course representatives who were 40 in number were trained by the researcher to serve as research assistants; they helped the researcher to identify the married students who are really nursing mothers. At each visit, with the help of the course representatives the researcher administered the instrument face to face. This method was used to ensure clarification of questions, words and phrases that needed to be clarified. This afforded the researcher the opportunity to recover all the 247 copies of the instrument except one copy which was recovered but lacked proper response. Therefore, only 247 copies of the instrument were properly administered.

The data gathered were analyzed using frequency counts, mean, standard deviations and z-test statistics and presented in tables. Mean scores of approximately 1, 2, 3 and 4 at the nearest whole number were allocated to indicate that the respondents strongly disagree (SD),disagree (D) agree (A) and strongly agree (SA), very great extent (VGE), great extent (GE), low extent (LE) and very low extent (VLE) respectively for that particular item.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Research Question 1: What are the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions?

Table 3. **Psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions**

S/N	Student nursing mothers are usually faced with:	4	3	2	1	$\dot{x}$	SD	Dec
01	Depression	190	47	10	-	3.73	0.53	SA
02	Anxiety	62	90	95	-	2.87	0.79	A
03	Stress	247	-	-	-	4.00	0.00	SA
04	Low self esteem	55	102	90	-	2.86	0.75	A
05	Fear of poor performance	200	47	-	-	3.81	0.39	SA
06	Lack of moral support from parents, in-laws and/or relations	92	115	40	-	3.21	0.70	A
07	Domestic violence such as gossips, quarrels, etc.	132	77	38	-	3.38	0.74	A
08	Inability to relate properly with their lecturers due to their status.	181	60	6	-	3.71	0.51	A
09	Inability to associate freely with their course mates	70	98	79	-	2.96	0.78	A
10	Nursing mothers are often avoided by their course mates	120	80	47	-	3.30	0.77	A
11	Trauma of not having adequate time for her studies due to her status	176	71	-	-	3.71	0.45	SA
12	Trauma of not having a conducive home environment to study.	198	49	-	-	3.80	0.40	SD

Table 3 shows the frequency of the opinion of the respondents, mean and standard deviation per item on the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions. The table also reveals the decision taken per item. Each of the items with serial number 01, 03, 05, 11 and 12 obtains a mean value of approximately equal to four (i.e. to the nearest whole number). This means that they strongly agree (SA) that those items are indeed psychosocial challenges faced by student nursing mothers. The table also shows that each of the items with serial number: 02, 04, 06, 07, 08, 09 and 10 has mean value approximately 3 (i.e. to the nearest whole number) indicating also the psychosocial challenges faced by nursing mothers in tertiary institutions.

Research Questions 2: What is the influence of the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers on their academic performance?

Table 4 shows the frequency of the opinion of the respondents, mean values and standard deviation and decision taken per each item. The table reveals that the respondents strongly agree that the identified psychosocial challenges are responsible for not being punctual to school, not being punctual to class/lessons, sleeping in classrooms, inability to submit assignment on time, being distracted in the class, not having adequate time to participate in extra-curricular activities, contributing poorly in class discussion, being always worried each time test/examination is mentioned; depending on their course mates for note taking and explanations, inability to study very well at home. It is very clear that the psychosocial challenges negatively affect the academic performance of the students. The clusters mean is approximately 4. This implies that generally the respondents strongly agree that the psychosocial challenges negatively influence their academic performance.

Table 4. Influence of psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers on their academic performance

S/N	Items: The Psychosocial challenges are the reason why student nursing mothers:	4	3	2	1	ẋ	SD	DEC
	N = 247							
13	Are not punctual to school	201	46	-	-	3.82	0.39	SA
14	Are not punctual to class/lesson/lecture	211	36	-	-	3.85	0.35	SA
15	Often sleep in the class due to fatigue	198	49	-	-	3.80	0.40	SA
16	Are unable to meet up with deadlines to submit assignment.	192	55	-	-	3.78	0.42	SA
17	Often leave the class before time	200	47	-	-	3.81	0.39	SA
18	Are often distracted during classes due to their attention to their babies	223	24	-	-	3.90	0.39	SA
19	Have inadequate time to participate in extra-curricular/social activities	247	-	-	-	4.00	0.00	SA
20	Do not participate actively in group assignment/project work	50	168	29	-	3.09	0.56	A
21	Contribute poorly to class discussion due to lack of time to research on the topic of the study	193	54	-	-	3.78	0.41	A
22	Are inadequately financed to take care of both their babies and education	50	152	45	-	3.02	0.62	A
23	Always worried each time test or examination is mention because they are ill-prepared	216	31	-	-	3.87	0.33	SA
24	Depend on their course mates for note taking and explanations, etc.	198	49	-	-	3.80	0.40	SA
25	Hardly study at home due to lack of support and time.	213	34	-	-	3.86	0.35	SA
	Cluster Mean and Standard Deviation					3.72	0.38	SA

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

The negative influence of the psychosocial challenges of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions on their academic life or performances calls for serious attention. Therefore, if nothing proactive is done to reduce these undesirable psychosocial challenges, the low academic performance of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions will continue to persist. Based on the findings and their implications, the following recommendations are made:

1. School management should ensure that they always have a well-prepared school calendar which they must adhere to and make it easily accessible to students.
2. Lecturers should show concern by informing students how and when the test will be and make study materials/sources readily available and be considerate on giving the time for submission of the assignment.
3. School management should give orientation to student nursing mothers on how they could manage psychosocial challenges.
4. Husbands and relations of the student nursing mothers should ensure that the student nursing mothers are given adequate financial and moral support.
5. Husbands and relations of the student nursing mothers should ensure that they are assisted in caring for the baby, ensuring child spacing and doing domestic work.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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