

## Factors Affecting Quality Academic Performance of Student Nurses of Kokofu Nursing Training College in Ghana

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### Abstract

*This study aimed to investigate the factors affecting quality academic performance of student nurses of Kokofu Nursing Training College, Ghana. The sample comprised randomly selected 210 nursing trainees from the college across all levels. A quantitative-descriptive design was used for the study. Self-reporting questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. Average weighted mean was used to determine the level of impact of the different factors affecting the respondents' academic performance. The study revealed that several factors pose a high impact on the quality academic performance of student nurses of Kokofu Nursing Training College, Ghana. In this study, all the indicators in the students-related factors were discovered to have higher impact on student nurse's quality academic performance except one indicator which was found to have lower impact with the lowest mean. On the other hand, with indicators included in the category of school-related factors, two (2) were considered to have a very high impact, the next two (2) were highly impactful while the last two (2) indicators had a lower impact. In all, the study revealed that three (3) of the factors, school-related factors, teacher-related factors and student-related factors had a higher impact on quality academic performance of student nurses with student-related factors having the highest mean followed by school-related factors, teacher-related factors and home-related factors as the lowest*

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*mean indicating a lower impact. Based on the empirical findings, appropriate conclusion and recommendations for practice were offered.*

**Key words:** Quality Academic performance, Student Nurses, Home-related factors, Student-related factors, School-related factors, Teacher-related factors

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A major challenge faces higher educational institutions around the world on how to achieve quality outcomes for students in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment (Harvey & Kamvounias, 2008). Hopkins (2008) posited that nursing institutions continue to face growing concerns about lower academic achievement and higher attrition rates amongst associated degree and diploma nursing students. Nursing education is designed to educate and train nursing students to become competent and qualified professional nurses (Mellish, Brink & Paton, 2009). In order to provide skilled nursing care, professional nurses must be educated and trained to master certain skills and be knowledgeable about the science of nursing (Mellish *et al.*, 2009). According to Leufer (2007), student nurses need the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to deliver safe and competent health care to their patients. Gillespie (2012) also argue that professional nurses enter the nursing program with different expectations of what is to be learnt, different intellectual skills, types and levels of motivation, and different interests. Furthermore, professional nursing students also come from different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds as a result, professional nurse tutors, who are responsible for educating and training these students, have a challenging task.

In the USA, about 15% of nursing graduates taking examination for the first time fail (RCN, 2012). In Ghana, according to Nursing and Midwifery Council Research Report (2013), a large number of students who sit for the Nursing and Midwifery Council examination fail on their first attempt. With a national average of 50% pass rate, governmental efforts at producing quality nurses to address key areas of the sustainable development goals appear to be threatened. For example, only 51.8% of the 2439 candidates who

wrote the Nursing and Midwifery Council examination in 2013 passed. Even though this represents about 1.8% improvement over the previous years, the situation is still unacceptable. The situation is quite pronounced in Ashanti region where only 43.7% of the 437 students presented for the licensure examination passed. One school in fact had 100% of students failing in the examination (Nursing and Midwifery Council examination report, 2013). Factors contributing to this poor academic performance are however poorly defined in Ghana. These factors may be student-related, school-related, teacher-related and home related factors (Tomul & Polat, 2013). Failure to understand these factors will prevent the design of remediating interventions to help students who are at risk of failing their examination. Key among the efforts to strengthening health systems is the development of a committed, well prepared, skilled, and knowledgeable public health workforce (United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, 2009). The provision of healthcare in Ghana is not an easy task, as services must combat illnesses associated with poverty and lack of education (World Health Organisation, 2010). Ghana's growing population coupled with inadequate funding and low numbers of resources both human and material cause much stress on the healthcare system.

During the latter part of the 1990's, nursing education had moved from the hospital-based training to institutional education. More Nursing Training Colleges have been established by the Government to increase the number of nurses in the country. Despite the increase in intake at all training institutions in Ghana during the past few years, one problem continually surfaces: there are not enough faculty members to accommodate the rise in students as a result training of nurses has therefore been a major challenge hence affecting the quality academic performance among student nurses (Wilmot, Kumfo, Danso-Mensah & Antwi-Danso, 2013). Evidence suggest that nursing as a profession is still faced with a number of challenges, which ranges from education and training, coaching and mentoring, the image of the profession, limited facilities for clinical placement of students (Professional nurses Update, 2008). These challenges inevitably influence the academic performances of students and ultimately threaten the nursing profession. The findings of a study by Prymachuk, Easton and Littlewood (2008) indicated that student nurses who only had the minimum entry qualifications are

less likely to pass their exams and complete school, than those with higher entry level qualifications. For instance, Leufer (2007) noted that the typical learning environment comprises of the number of students in the classroom, the academic environment, teaching strategies and the perceptions of the impact of group size on the learning experience have negative implications on quality academic performance. Wolkowitz and Kelley (2010) also posited that learning environment plays an important role in captivating the student's interest and in maintaining it. It is therefore important to consider how student nurses experience learning in the school and clinical environment (Hannifin, Parvizi and Joolae, 2012).

Trofino (2013) stated that the academic performance of students in most nursing training colleges has become an object of inquiry of researchers nowadays. It has become a top priority among educators and health tutors who have vowed to make a difference locally, regionally, nationally and globally (Ali, Haider, Munir<sup>1</sup>, Khan & Ahmed, 2013). Tomul and Polat (2013) also posited that such education trainers and researchers have long been interested in finding out which factors contribute to the poor academic performance of learners. These factors are both external and internal. Internal factors are mostly student-related while external factors contributed to the external environment of students that are beyond their control (Tomul & Polat 2013). Thus, the quest to know which factors affect student's quality academic performance is paramount to researchers and policy makers. According to Mullan (2011), while many students compete aggressively to enter into nursing schools, those who succeed have no guarantee they will be successful in their examinations. A study by Adeoye (2011) revealed that achieving quality academic performance had been one of the most widely used indicators of nursing programme quality. Failure of the students to pass their examinations not only limits the supply of nurses, but also causes emotional and financial hardships for the students (Poorman & Webb, 2012). Ghana Health Service (2012) also reported that the present mass failure among nursing students may stand in the way of achieving key public health policies like reducing child and maternal mortality, increasing vaccine coverage and battling epidemics like HIV/AIDs. This situation will prevent the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (World Health Organisation, 2011). It is therefore imperative to understand the factors that predict

successful outcomes of good academic performance among students undergoing nursing education in various nursing training colleges. A decline in academic performance of students, specifically at the nursing college has been observed by many health tutors and researchers which adversely influence the overall output of students. Poorman & Webb (2012) further posited that possible factors may exist which may be influencing quality academic performance. Therefore, it has become essential to investigate possible factors influencing learning of students at specific nursing colleges (Tomul and Polat, 2013). However, there are not enough empirical evidence of the factors that precipitate the high academic failure rate among nursing students in the country. Nursing students in Kokofu Nursing Training College are among the student nurses who suffer from quality academic performance. For instance, Ayisah (2018) revealed that student nurses in Kokofu Nursing Training College are likely to face challenges while writing their exams owing to several factors which may be School-related, Student-related, teacher-related and home-related factors. With these and other challenges within the college, the nursing students are at a high potential for experiencing poor academic performance. Even though there are growing number of literature on the factors affecting quality academic performance, its prevalence and influence according to the literature differ.

Despite the growing evidence of literature on factors affecting quality academic performance in nursing training colleges, empirical work to understand the factors that affect quality academic performance among student nurses of Kokofu Nursing Training College is missing. Empirical evidence is needed to inform policy to address the current unacceptable failure rate among student nurses. Based on this, it is important to investigate the factors that affect quality academic performance among nursing students of Kokofu Nursing Training College. As such the variations in literature and findings, many studies suffer from methodological challenges and these findings may not truly reflect the factors that affect quality academic performance among student nurses. It is undeniable fact that a good policy cannot be based on research findings that suffer from methodological weaknesses. Thus, our study aim at bringing out empirical findings through systematic and generally accepted methodological approach.

This study seeks to investigate the factors that affect quality academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College. Our study differs from previous studies in many ways. Firstly, our study provides in-depth explanation to the factors that affect quality academic performance from the perspectives of student nurses in Kokofu Nursing Training College. Secondly, it provides empirical evidence of how these factors affect students' academic performance. This study has a number of theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly, this study adds to the literature by providing empirical evidence from the perspectives of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College thereby widening the scope and applicability of the factors that affect quality academic performance literature. It may also serve as useful literature for future researchers in this field. In terms of practical contributions, the findings of this study may inform the management of Kokofu Nursing Training College about the extent to which different factors affect students' quality academic performance. In addition, the findings may benefit the students to better understand the factors that can affect their academic performance and develop strategies to improve their performance. For the teachers, this study may help them to identify problems encountered by the students and may find alternative actions on how to handle their students. The findings of this study may help parents to understand and help their children regarding their academic performance and give them the needed support. Again, the findings may inform administrators of the school regarding the factors that affect quality academic performance of their students. Thus, the findings of this study is intended to influence future policy of the school.

The rest of the paper was organised as follows: section two dealt with materials and methods. Section three focused on results and discussions. Finally, section four dealt with conclusions and recommendations.

## **2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **2.1 Variables**

The two main variables used in this study are student nurse's quality academic performance, which is the dependent variable, and factors that affect quality academic performance among student nurses

(factors), which is the independent variable. Factors that affect quality academic performance among student nurses can be grouped into four areas: school-related factors, student-related factors, teacher-related factors and home-related factors (Wilmot, et al., 2013).

## **2.2 Research Design**

Quantitative type of research was used in this study. The researchers employed the descriptive-survey method in the conduct of the study.

## **2.3 Participants**

The participants of the study comprise 210 nursing students out of 594 students in Kokofu Nursing Training College, Ghana. The participants were selected using proportionate random sampling. This allowed equal representation of students across all levels to fully understand the factors that affect their academic performance. 64.3% of the participants were females and 35.7% were males. In addition, 38.6% were first year students, 30% were second year students while 31.4% were third/final year students.

## **2.4 Instruments**

Questionnaires were the main instruments used for this study. According to Abawi (2013), questionnaires allow for collecting objective data in a large sample of the study population (such as the one used in the study) in order to obtain results that are statistically significant especially when resources are limited. Self-reporting questionnaire was used to gather data on the factors affecting nursing students along home-related factors, school-related factors, teacher-related factors and student-related factors. These sets of self-reporting questionnaires were used for the study due to: (1) its established validity and reliability; (2) suitability for the participants of the study; and (3) comprehensiveness in measuring the variables used in this study. As such its validity and reliability, the instrument is already used by Bastian (1995) and used as a reference by Chadya (2008) in a research.

## **2.5 Data Gathering Procedure**

Permission was sort from the Kokofu Nursing Training College before the actual data collection. Two weeks later, the researchers collected the data from the participants. Data collection took a week. All ethical

considerations involving the research and the participants were ensured. This allowed the researchers to clarify the misunderstandings that arose during the data collection.

### 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Factors Affecting Quality Academic Performance of Student Nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College

Table 1 shows the set of four factors with their indicators. The indicators for each category were arranged from highest to lowest mean.

**Table 1. Factors affecting Quality Academic Performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College.**

	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
<b>Home-Related Factors</b>		
1. Lack of frequent monitoring of students' progress by parents	3.75	HI
2. Financial problems	3.56	HI
3. Inadequate support and proper guidance from parents	3.48	HI
4. Lack of assistance from family members	2.72	LI
5. Lack of parental advise and encouragement	2.64	LI
Gen. wtd. Mean	3.23	LI
<b>School-Related Factors</b>		
1. Inadequate library facilities	4.16	VHI
2. Inadequate resourced skills laboratory	4.12	VHI
3. Inadequate Tutors	3.90	HI
4. Un conducive learning environment	3.89	HI
5. Inadequate classrooms and location of classrooms	3.27	LI
6. Lack of fast internet access in the library and classrooms	3.20	LI
Gen. wtd. Mean	3.76	HI
<b>Teacher-Related Factors</b>		
1. Tutors have mastery of subject matter	4.30	VHI
2. Lack of professional qualification by tutors	3.94	HI
3. Tutors use audio-visual aids in teaching	3.92	HI
4. Tutors are frequently absent from class	3.86	HI
5. Inadequate skilled and experience tutors	3.84	HI
6. Tutors give assignments and quizzes each session of lecture	3.76	HI
7. Lack of strict supervision by tutors	3.68	HI
8. Tutors use lecture method only	3.15	LI
9. Tutors are always late to class	2.90	LI
Gen. wtd. mean	3.71	HI
<b>Student-Related Factors</b>		



1.	Lack of understanding of subject content	4.20	HI
2.	Poor study habits	4.10	HI
3.	Peer pressure and indiscipline	4.09	HI
4.	Disturbed when studying	3.96	HI
5.	Feeling lazy to study	3.89	HI
6.	Study only when there are quizzes and exams	3.87	HI
7.	Difficulty in hearing and seeing in class	3.68	HI
8.	Feeling sleepy in class	3.48	HI
9.	Copy assignments from friends	3.25	LI
Gen. wtd. Mean		3.84	HI

**Legend:**

<u>Statistical limit</u>	<u>Description</u>
4.2 -5.0	Very High Impact (VHI)
3.4 - 4.1	High Impact (HI)
2.6 - 3.3	Low Impact (LI)
1.8 - 2.5	Very Low Impact (VLI)
1.0 - 1.7	No Impact (NI)

**3.1.1 Home-Related Factors**

In the Home-related factors, the indicator with the highest mean was ‘Lack of frequent monitoring of students’ progress by parents’ with high impact. This confirms with the study by Hayes (2008) who opined that frequent monitoring of students’ progress by parents is a good measure to check the academic performance of the students and suggested there should be strong home-school relation in order to keep track on the academic performance of students. Meanwhile, the indicator with the lowest mean was ‘Lack of parental advice and encouragement’ which was found to have the lowest influence on the academic performance of the student nurses. In general, home-related factors were discovered to have low impact on the quality academic performance of student nurses of Kokofu Nursing Training College.

**3.1.2 School-Related Factors**

Among the school-related factors, two indicators fell in the range of very high impact with ‘Inadequate library facilities’ as the highest mean followed by ‘Inadequate resourced skills laboratory’. According to Adeoye (2011), provision of library facilities with adequate and updated reference books and teaching materials with student being oriented on proper utilization positively affect students’ academic performance. Bodil, Washil, Liss & George (2009) in their study also posited that nursing colleges without a well-resourced skills laboratory will have students with less practical knowledge hence

affecting their quality academic performance. Again, two indicators, 'Inadequate classrooms and location of classrooms' and 'Lack of fast internet access in the library' were found to belong to the low impact range with 'Lack of fast internet access in the library' posing as less impactful. In totality, school-related factors were found to have high influence on quality academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College. This is evident in the work of Wilson (2010) and Adeoye (2011) which revealed that availability and quality of learning facilities such as the library, computers and fast internet, skills laboratories, class rooms as well as the learning environment of the school mostly have students with quality academic performance. Wilson (2010) further posited that schools without these basic facilities and resources often have low academic performance among their students.

### **3.1.3 Teacher-Related Factors**

In the teacher-related factors, the item 'tutors have mastery of the subject matter' had the greatest mean with a very high impact. This agrees with the findings of Bodil, Washil, Liss & George (2009) which stated that lack of mastery of subject matter by the teachers lead to frustration among the students and when their expectations are not fulfilled their academic performance is compromised hence affecting their quality academic performance. Two of the indicators, 'tutors use lecture method only' and 'tutors are always late to class' were found to be low impact with 'tutors are always late to class' having the lowest mean. The rest of the indicators were deemed to be of high impact on the quality academic performance of students nurses. In general, teacher-related factors were found to have high impact on quality academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College.

### **3.1.4 Student-Related Factors**

For the items included in the student-related factors, almost all were found to be highly impactful with the indicator 'Lack of understanding of subject content' having the highest mean followed by 'poor study habits'. This is in agreement with the findings of Farooq, Chandhry & Shafiq (2011) which revealed that many research findings have proved that students with good understanding of subject contents mostly achieve good academic performance. This again, confirms a

study by Jafta (2013) which discovered that students without clear understanding of subject content are most likely to perform poorly in academics. Again, a study conducted by Ellis (2010) revealed that student who exhibited good study habit performed creditably in their exams. This is also evident in a study by Alos, Caranto & David (2015) which came to light that good study habit has impact on the quality academic performance of student nurses. Though, almost all were found to be highly impactful, one indicator 'I copy the assignments of friends' was discovered to belong to the lower impact range with the lowest mean. Again, this is consistent with the findings of Alos, Caranto & David (2015) which revealed that the item "I copy the assignments of friends' has low impact on the academic performance of student nurses.

### **3.2 Summary of Factors Affecting Quality Academic Performance of Student Nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training School**

Table 2 shows the summary of the factors affecting academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College, Ghana. The results show that the set of factors with the highest influence on the academic performance of student nurses are the student-related factors with the highest mean. It is followed by school-related factors and teacher-related factors; all are rated as highly impactful. However, the set of factors found to have low impacts is home-related factors.

**Table 2. Summary of the Set of Factors Affecting the Academic Performance of Student Nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Descriptive Equivalent</b>
Student-Related Factors	3.84	HI
School-Related Factors	3.76	HI
Teacher-Related Factors	3.71	HI
Home-Related Factors	3.26	LI

### **4.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn. From the findings, the study concludes that several factors pose a high impact on the quality academic performance of student nurses of Kokofu

Nursing Training College. Firstly, all the indicators in the student-related factors were discovered to have higher impact on student nurse's quality academic performance except one indicator 'I copy the assignments of friends' which was found to have lower impact with the lowest mean. On the other hand, with indicators included in the category of school-related factors, two (2) were considered to have a very high impact, the next two (2) were highly impactful while the last two (2) indicators had a lower impact. Secondary, among the indicators in the teacher-related factors, one (1) was found to have a very high impact and six (6) were discovered to have high impact on the quality academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College. On the contrary, in the same teacher-related factors, one (1) of the indicators was found to have lower impact. Again the first three (3) indicators in the home-related factors were found to be of high impact. However, the last two (2) indicators in the same category were found within the low impact range. In all, the study revealed that three (3) of the factors, school-related factors, Teacher-related factors and student-related factors had a higher impact on quality academic performance of student nurses at Kokofu Nursing Training College with student-related factors having the highest mean followed by school-related factors and teacher-related factors with home-related factors having the lowest mean indicating a lower impact.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made. Firstly, Government and Health training institutions should provide a conducive learning environment and spacious classroom for students. The management of Kokofu Nursing Training College should provide well equipped skills laboratories, well-resourced library facilities with fast internet access for students. Parents should provide adequate support and guidance for their children both at home and in school. Parents should provide adequate financial support for their children when in school. The Government of Ghana should continue to provide the students allowance and if possible try to increase the current amount offered to student nurses. Secondly, Health training institutions especially, Kokofu Nursing Training College should make sure they employ skilled and experienced tutors, have adequate teaching staff with the needed professional qualification. Tutors should make sure they have mastery of subject matter before going to teach. Both tutors and parents should ensure

strict monitoring of students' academic records and supervision of students. Lastly, Students should always make sure they understand the subject contents of all courses taught in class. Student should be discipline and at the same time develop good study habits. More so students should avoid peer influence and should not feel lazy to study. Students are however advised to study all the time but should not wait to study only when there are quizzes and exams.

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