

JUGGLING RESPONSIBILITIES: UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOSOCIAL STRUGGLES OF STUDENT NURSING MOTHERS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Nelson Annabel

Department of Educational Psychology/G&C, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This research explores the complex psychosocial challenges faced by student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions within Imo State, Nigeria. Balancing the demands of nursing education and motherhood, these individuals encounter unique stressors and experiences that impact their overall well-being and academic performance. Through qualitative interviews and surveys, this study delves into the multifaceted aspects of their lives, shedding light on the emotional, social, and academic hurdles they must overcome. The findings provide valuable insights for institutions and support systems aiming to better accommodate and assist student nursing mothers in achieving their educational and personal goals.

KEYWORDS

Student nursing mothers; Psychosocial challenges; Tertiary institutions; Imo State, Nigeria; Balancing responsibilities; Motherhood and education; Academic performance; Support systems

INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of higher education is a transformative journey that often demands unwavering dedication, personal sacrifices, and formidable challenges. When coupled with the responsibilities of motherhood, this endeavor becomes an intricate juggling act, especially for student nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria.

This research delves into the psychosocial complexities faced by these women as they navigate the formidable intersection of academic aspirations and the nurturing of their children.

Student nursing mothers represent a unique segment of the academic population. They are not only learners in pursuit of their professional goals but also devoted mothers responsible for the welfare of their children. This dual role presents a dynamic set of challenges and experiences that extend far beyond the traditional concerns of academic life. The pressures of examinations, clinical placements, and coursework, coupled with the nurturing of their offspring, combine to create a complex tapestry of responsibilities.

Imo State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, serves as the backdrop for this exploration. As with many regions, the state's tertiary institutions grapple with the question of how to best support and accommodate the diverse needs of their students. This study aims to contribute to the understanding of the specific challenges faced by student nursing mothers within the state's academic institutions.

Through qualitative interviews and surveys, this research seeks to unearth the emotional, social, and academic struggles these women encounter. By delving into the psychosocial dimensions of their lives, we hope to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted hurdles they must surmount. The knowledge generated from this study will not only shed light on the experiences of student nursing mothers but will also serve as a resource for educational institutions and support systems looking to create more inclusive and accommodating environments.

In the pages that follow, we embark on a journey to understand the delicate balance these women must maintain between their roles as students and mothers. We will explore the challenges they face, the coping strategies they employ, and the ways in which academic institutions and communities can better support their aspirations. By gaining a deeper understanding of the psychosocial struggles of student nursing mothers in Imo State, we can pave the way for more inclusive and supportive educational environments, ultimately contributing to their success and well-being.

METHOD

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial struggles faced by student nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria, a mixed-method approach was employed in this study. This approach allowed for a multifaceted exploration of the challenges, experiences, and coping mechanisms of these individuals. The study was conducted in three primary phases: data collection, data analysis, and interpretation.

Data Collection:

Qualitative Interviews: In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of student nursing mothers from various tertiary institutions in Imo State. These interviews aimed to capture the personal narratives and lived experiences of the participants. Open-ended questions were used to encourage participants to share their challenges, emotional experiences, and strategies for balancing their roles as students and mothers.

Surveys: A structured questionnaire was administered to a larger group of student nursing mothers. The survey included a mix of closed-ended and Likert-scale questions, covering topics such as academic performance, emotional well-being, and the level of support received from academic institutions and social networks. The survey allowed for quantitative data analysis and provided insights into broader trends and patterns within the participant group.

Data Analysis:

Qualitative Analysis: Transcripts from the interviews were subjected to thematic analysis. Emerging themes related to the psychosocial challenges faced by student nursing mothers were identified, coded, and organized. This qualitative approach helped in capturing the nuances and depth of the participants' experiences.

Quantitative Analysis: Data from the surveys were analyzed using statistical software. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize key findings, while inferential statistics, such as correlations and regression analysis, were employed to explore relationships between variables. This quantitative analysis provided a broader perspective on the psychosocial experiences and the impact of various factors on the well-being and academic performance of student nursing mothers.

Interpretation:

The findings from both qualitative and quantitative analyses were synthesized to provide a comprehensive understanding of the psychosocial struggles of student nursing mothers in Imo State. These insights were used to draw conclusions, identify common challenges, and propose recommendations for academic institutions and support systems seeking to enhance the experience of this unique demographic. The interpretative phase of the study aimed to offer a holistic view of the participants' experiences, challenges, and resilience in balancing the demands of motherhood and education within the Nigerian context.

RESULT

The research findings suggest that student nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria, face a multitude of psychosocial struggles as they navigate the demands of motherhood alongside their academic and clinical responsibilities. These struggles are multifaceted and encompass various aspects of their lives, including time management, emotional well-being, social support, and their overall educational experience.

One key result is that a significant number of student nursing mothers reported experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety due to the constant juggling of their roles as mothers and students. The study also found that many of them struggled to secure reliable childcare support, which further exacerbated their stress levels. In addition, participants expressed feelings of isolation and inadequacy, as they often felt different from their non-parent peers and faced challenges in fully participating in academic and social activities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the complex psychosocial struggles faced by student nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria, and have important implications for both academic institutions and policymakers.

One major discussion point is the need for improved support systems for student nursing mothers. This includes developing on-campus childcare facilities or subsidies for childcare services, flexible class schedules, and targeted counseling services to help them cope with the stress and emotional challenges they face. Additionally, fostering a sense of community and understanding among peers and faculty can help mitigate feelings of isolation and inadequacy.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that addressing the psychosocial struggles of student nursing mothers is not only a matter of gender equality but also an investment in the healthcare sector. These individuals, with the right support, can play a pivotal role in addressing nursing shortages in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for proactive measures to support student nursing mothers in Imo State, Nigeria. The psychosocial struggles they face can have a profound impact on their academic success and overall well-being. Institutions of higher education, healthcare organizations, and policymakers must collaborate to create an environment that facilitates the dual roles of being a student and a mother.

Efforts should include providing accessible and affordable childcare options, developing mentorship programs, and offering mental health support tailored to the unique challenges faced by this demographic. By doing so, we can empower student nursing mothers to excel academically, contribute effectively to the healthcare system, and set a precedent for a more inclusive and equitable society.

It is essential that these findings serve as a catalyst for change, with a collective commitment to providing student nursing mothers the support they need to succeed in their academic pursuits and the nursing profession.

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