



Personal and Cognitive Factors Influencing Student Nurses' Preparedness for Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor

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ABSTRACT

Timely and adequate preparation for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses (PQEFGN) is undeniably necessary because passing it is a major criteria for registration and licensure to practice professionally as a Nurse. The study assessed the personal and cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the PQEFGN in School of Nursing, Agbor, Delta State. A descriptive survey research of 70 third year student nurses of the Basic Nursing programme were selected using convenience sampling technique. Data collected using the researchers-developed questionnaire were summarized with simple frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Average mean scores of 3.83 and 3.48 indicated that personal and cognitive factors respectively influenced student nurses' preparedness for PQEFGN. There was no significant association between gender and personal cum cognitive factors influencing preparedness for PQEFGN. Personal and cognitive factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for the PQEFGN. It was recommended that adequately equipped library/e-library and information resources that will encourage the development of self-study and reading culture among the student nurses should be provided by the School management.

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INTRODUCTION

Every educational structure consists of an examination system through which the qualities and abilities of the students are assessed (Saima and Quadir, 2011). Examination is an organized activity aimed at determining the cumulative or broad knowledge in a students' educational development (Tobih, 2012). Kazin, Edward and Rothman (2011) explained that examination of any kind is an educational assessment intended to measure a test taker's knowledge, skill or aptitude. Some professional bodies demand that their students undertake standardized tests which will serve as an objective assessment of their knowledge and skills prior to registration and licensure. The Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria organizes professional qualifying examinations

for various basic and post basic nursing specialties in Nigeria through its examination division. The Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses (PQEFGN) is unarguably one that every student nurse attending an approved nursing training institution in Nigeria anticipates because passing it is a major criterion which must be met to be registered and licensed to practice as a professional nurse in Nigeria (Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, 2016).

Timely and adequate preparedness of student nurses' for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses cannot be overemphasized. In fact, candidates who diligently prepare for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses are often better practitioners. The preparedness of student nurses' involves physical, psychological,



financial, academic preparations, and sometimes spiritual efforts. According to Samuel *et al.* (2016), personal and cognitive factors are among the several factors perceived to influence nursing students' preparedness for the professional qualifying examination for General Nurses. Personal factors include reading habit and reading plan, time management, interest, determination, anxiety, laziness or apathy. The cognitive factors include memory, goals, internalized motivation, intelligence quotient, teaching and learning method as well as, initiative.

A student's preparation for an examination determines the performance of that student. Although the importance of students' preparation by their teachers is obvious, personal and cognitive factors play a role in the preparedness of students for the examination (Michael *et al.*, 2011). In preparation for the qualifying examination for General Nurses, students are required to attend grueling revision lectures, conduct research, perform assignments, attend clinical postings, and engage in self and group study to complete the general nursing curriculum. Considering how overwhelming all the activities surrounding the preparation for the Qualifying Examination for General Nurses could be, the researchers decided to assess the personal and cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the PQEFGN in State School of Nursing, Agbor, Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the personal factors influencing the preparedness of student nurses' for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor?
2. What are the cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study

1. There is no significant association between gender of the student nurses' and the personal factors influencing their preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor?
2. There is no significant association between gender of the student nurses' and the cognitive factors influencing their preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor?

METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive survey. A descriptive survey research design allows the use of instruments such as questionnaire to collect data from a representative sample on existing or specific variables at a given time, without manipulating them, and to generalize the findings in a population (Omair, 2015).

The study was conducted in State School of Nursing, Agbor, Delta State. The school was purposively selected because it is one of the oldest and highly patronized schools of Nursing which has produced quite a number of qualified nurses in the State. The school is located in a densely populated urban area of the State within Ika South Local Government Area, in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State, Nigeria.

The population of the study consisted of all the third year student nurses of the Basic Nursing programme attending State School of Nursing, Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria in the 2020/2021 academic session. Out of the 84 third year student nurses, 70 students were willing to participate in the study.

The Questionnaire on Personal and Cognitive Factors Influencing Student Nurses' Preparedness for Qualifying Examination for General Nurses (QPCFISNPQEGN) developed by the researchers was used for data collection in this study. QPCFISNPQEGN contains a total of sixteen (16) items in three (3) sections. Section A contains four (4) items on personal data, section B contains seven (7) items on personal factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses and, section C



contains five (5) items on cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for Qualifying Examination for General Nurses. Sections B and C were designed into five-point rating scale namely: Strongly Agree (SA) = 5points, Agree (A) = 4points, Uncertain (U) = 3points, Disagree (D) = 2points and, Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1point. Two (2) experts, lecturers in Nursing Science from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi and Measurement and Evaluation unit from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka validated the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established through test-retest method using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation which yielded a coefficient of 0.86.

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Principal of the State School of Nursing, Agbor, Delta State. Informed consent was also obtained from the student nurses who voluntarily participated in the study. The respondents were assured that their anonymity,

confidentiality and privacy would be maintained during and after data collection.

Copies of the questionnaire were administered face to face by the researchers in the classroom during lunch break. The completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved on the spot and there was 100% return rate. The data collection lasted for a period of one (1) day.

Data collected from QPCFISNPQEGN were summarized using simple frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. The research questions were answered using mean. Mean score of 3 and above indicated an agreement and a mean score below 3 indicated a disagreement. However, the standard deviation was used to determine or establish the extent to which each individual mean response varies or disperses from each other. The hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. All the results were presented in tables.

RESULTS

Table 1: Respondent's Personal Data n = 70

S/N	Variable	Classification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Age	18-25	55	81.7
		26-33	13	15.9
		34-45	2	2.4
2.	Gender	Male	12	15.9
		Female	58	84.1
3.	Religion	Christianity	70	100
		Islam	-	-
		Traditional	-	-
		Others	-	-
4.	Ethnicity	Ika	25	34.1
		Ukwani	9	11.0
		Ibo	18	22.0
		Aniocha	2	2.4
		Etsako	5	6.1
		Others	11	24.4

Table 1 shows that majority 55 (81.7 %) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 18-25 years. Among the respondents,

58 (84.1%) were females, all practiced Christianity and, most 25 (34.1%) were of Ika ethnicity.



Table 2: Personal Factors Influencing Student Nurses' Preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor n = 70

S/N	Personal Factors	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1.	My preparation was poor until I understood the gravity of the professional qualifying examination for general nurses	3.81	1.29	Agree
2.	The feeling of over confidence in my examination preparation style affects the way I study for the exam	3.56	1.26	Agree
3.	Poor time management affects the way I prepare for the exam	4.33	.96	Agree
4.	I cannot study well for the qualifying examination for general nurses because I feel anxious	3.56	5.87	Agree
5.	I cannot read for the exam when I feel unwell	3.49	1.27	Agree
6.	Inability to cope with stress and fatigue affects the way I prepare for the exam	4.01	.98	Agree
7.	My goal is to pass the qualifying examination for general nurses and this sustains my motivation to study for it	4.06	4.6	Agree
Cluster mean and standard deviation		3.83	2.32	Agree

Table 2 shows the responses of the student nurses in state school of nursing, Agbor on the personal factors that influenced their preparedness for the PQEFGN. The findings revealed that preparation was poor until students understood the gravity of the professional qualifying examination for general nurses with mean score = 3.81, being overconfident with mean score = 3.56, poor time management with mean score = 4.33, anxiety with mean score =

3.56, feeling unwell with mean score = 3.49, inability to cope with stress and fatigue with mean score = 4.01, and personal goal of passing the exam with mean score = 4.06 influenced their preparedness for the PQEFGN. Average mean score was 3.83 indicating that personal factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses.

Table 3: Cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor n= 70

S/N	Cognitive Factors	Mean (x)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Decision
1.	Inability to join other students in group reading sessions affects the way I study for the qualifying examination for general nurses	2.77	1.408	Disagree
2.	Inability to understand what I have read affects the way I study for the exam	3.93	1.235	Agree
3.	Inability to recap what I read previously prevents me from reading further for the exam	2.84	1.310	Disagree
4.	Performing a lot of tasks at the same period affects the way I study for the exam	3.94	1.137	Agree
5.	I am preparing well for the exam because of the reading culture I have developed during my training in this school	3.95	1.143	Agree
Cluster mean and standard deviation		3.48	1.25	Agree



Table 3 shows the responses of student nurses in State School of Nursing, Agbor on the cognitive factors that influenced their preparedness for the PQEFGN. The findings revealed that inability to understand what has been read with mean score = 3.93, performing a lot of tasks at the same period with mean score =

3.94, and the reading culture developed during the period of training in the school with mean score = 3.95 influenced their preparedness for PQEFGN. Average mean score was 3.48 indicating that cognitive factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for Qualifying Examination for General Nurses.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Association between gender of the student nurses and personal factors influencing their preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	T	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Male	9	.56	.242					
Female	61	.53	.187	68	.346	.730	0.05	Not associated

Table 4 reveals that the t-value is .346 while the probability value is .730. The p-value is higher than 0.05. This implies that there is no

significant association between gender of the student nurses and the personal factors influencing their preparedness for the PQEFGN.

Table 5: Association between gender of the student nurses and cognitive factors influencing their preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses

Gender	N	Mean	SD	DF	T	p-value	Alpha	Decision
Male	9	.67	.316					
Female	61	.51	.274	68	1.52	.133	0.05	Not associated

Table 5 reveals that the t-value is .152 while the probability value is .133. The p-value is higher than 0.05. This implies that there is no significant association between gender of the student nurses and the cognitive factors influencing their preparedness for the PQEFGN.

especially during examination preparation. The findings from a study conducted by Samuel *et al.*, (2016) who reported that a good number of students were affected by personal factors such as reading habit and reading plan, time management, interest in a course, procrastination, lack of desire, decision and determination, fear, anxiety, laziness or apathy in a University in Akure is in line with this study. Another study by Patrick (2017) stated that the challenges of having to manage limited time between attending classes, trying to make sense of a mound of course notes and ignoring external distractions as well as overcoming examination anxiety impacted students' preparation for examinations.

DISCUSSION

The cluster mean score of 3.83 in Table 2 revealed that personal factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for QEFGN in State School of Nursing, Agbor. In their opinion understanding of the gravity of the exam, being overconfident, poor time management, anxiety, feeling unwell, inability to cope with stress and fatigue, and a personal goal to pass the exam influenced their preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses. Boudoukha, Bonnaud-Antignac, Aciera and Chailloua (2011); Karilaa, et al. (2011) observed that students' reaction and stress levels are high during tertiary level of training and

The cluster mean score 3.48 in Table 3 revealed that cognitive factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for QEFGN in State School of Nursing, Agbor. In their opinion, inability to understand what has been read, doing a lot of tasks at the same time, and the type of training in

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school influences preparedness for Qualifying Examination for General Nurses affected their preparation for the examination. According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2016) cognitive factors affecting students' preparedness for examination are related to their degree of comprehension and concentration during the course, memory capacity, mastery of the language and previous knowledge specific to each module of the course. Furthermore, Samuel *et al.*, (2016) reported that cognitive factors such as memory, intelligence quotient, initiative and use of imagination had the least influence on students' preparedness for examinations. Another study by Michael *et al.*, (2011) showed that getting ready for an exam is difficult when voluminous textbooks and inadequate teaching are offered to students who are not especially good information processors.

There was no significant association between gender of the student nurses and the personal factors influencing their preparedness for the PQEFGN. Bandalos, Yates & Thorndike-Christ (1995) observed that female students reported a higher expected level of test anxiety than their male counterparts for oral presentations and multiple choice questions (mcqs). Although oral presentation (Viva Voce) and mcqs are major constituents of the PQEFGN, this finding contradicts the finding of this study. In the opinion of Nunez-Pena, Suarez-Pellicionic and Bonoa (2016) there are two explanations proposed for the gender differences in test anxiety. One attributes it to the difference in social roles assigned to men and women, based on the idea that females are under greater pressure to succeed academically than are males, making them more afraid of failing in any test situation. The other explanation suggested that males are more defensive than females when it comes to admitting anxiety, because doing so may be perceived as threatening their manliness.

There was no significant association between gender of student nurses and the cognitive factors influencing their preparedness for the PQEFGN. Fergusson and Horwood (1997) reported that there was a pervasive difference in the school achievement of males and females with males having lower scores on

all standardized test. The study indicated that males were cognitively less able than females especially in the areas of reading and written expression and, more often left school without qualifications. According to Okebukola (2004), reading habit is an important factor affecting intellectual and emotional growth. It is a means for widening mental horizons and for multiplying opportunities of success such as gaining employment. In the opinion of Ladipo and Gbotosho (2015) undergraduate students can be successful in their studies, if they are able to acquire efficient reading habit with great comprehension. In the opinion of the researchers nursing students are expected to read very widely and at the same time be able to reproduce much of what they read otherwise they will not become registered Nurses.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Personal and cognitive factors influenced student nurses' preparedness for the Professional Qualifying Examination for General Nurses. There was however no association between gender and the personal cum cognitive factors influencing student nurses' preparedness for the PQEFGN. It was recommended that adequately equipped library/e-library and information resources that will encourage the development of self-study and reading culture among the student nurses should be provided by the School management. Also, parents and tutors should help students realize their roles in their own success in the PQEFGN.

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