Assessment on the Effects of Learning Environment on Students' Academic Performance at Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery Damaturu

Bello Muhammad Jajere[1], Asma'u Bukar Jumbam[2], Hauwa Abubakar Abdullahi[3], Muhammad Bukar[4], Muhammad Yunusa Audu[5], Ibrahim Adamu[6]

[1,2,3,4,5]School of Basic Midwifery, ShehuSule College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu, Nigeria
[6]Umar Sulaiman College of Education Gashua, Nigeria

Abstract: - **The study was carried out at Shehu Sule College of Nursing and Midwifery, Damaturu, Yobe State with the aim of assessing the effects of learning environment on students' academic performance. The design adopted for this study was 'descriptive design', and the target population comprises of all students (335 students) and staffs (70) of college making a total of 405 populations. A sample size of 80 was derived using 20% of the study population for the study. The technique for drawing the samples from the target population was 'stratified random sampling'. The findings show that the dominant home language of the respondents is Hausa, and the learning environment has a positive effect on students' academic performance. However, collaborative learning, allowing students to brain storm and bring out their learning objectives and integrating computer technology into academic learning are most effective means of promoting learning. It is recommended that the selection of students into Nursing and Midwifery programs should be strictly adhered to College edict so as the candidates should not be over populated; and also various strategies should be introduced in other to maintain quality assurance in higher education. An educational audit should be carried out after every block, or whenever the need arises.**

Key words: **Learning, Learning Environment, Students, Academic Performance**

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning environment is one of the challenges that most of the educational systems around the world especially under developed countries face.

Harvey & kamvounias, (2008) stated that a major challenge that faces higher educational institutions around the world on how to achieve quality outcome for students is an increasingly globalised and competitive environment

Nursing education prepares the students from different cultures and beliefs to be delivering professional nursing care to people of all ages, in all phases of health and illness confidently (Ojo, 2012). Nursing students need to be acquired with relevant skills and knowledge in all aspects of health which include medical, behavioural, biological sciences as well as physical sciences, the rapidly changing health care system requires nurses to possess increasing knowledge, clinical competency, greater independence and autonomy in clinical judgments (Clara, 2012).

In the pre-colonial era, the standard of nursing education was lower than the apprenticeship type of training. People recruited had no formal education other than being loyal to their masters. The training was carried out at various mission post, which later become the training schools (Ndatsu, 2014). Following Crimean war, Florence Nightingale initiated and sustained a campaign for nurses all over the world to have an organized and formal training; this had a positive influence in Nigeria (Clara, 2012).

Nursing education in Nigeria continues to struggle with its content-over-load curricula that attempts simultaneously to prepare nurses to practice in a biomedical oriented disease care system and to educate nurses to be responsible health care professionals committed to the social changes necessary for health promotion and disease prevention.

All students learn in different ways, there might be some factors that may either hinders or promote their ability to learn and their experience. So, in order to facilitate learning it is important to identify these factors and accorded due importance. A quantitative study found that learning environment, educational behaviour of instructors and individual factors of the students influence the learning of nursing students (Ajibade, 2014). Nurse tutor have a role beyond this in encouraging students to link theory with practice, and practice with theory. Therein lies a challenge for nurse tutors to ensure they remain credible within the clinical setting and continue to provide education and support, which is firmly grounded in both practice.

According to Brown, Kirkpatrick, Greer, Matthias, Swanson (2009), learning is acquiring knowledge and skills and having them readily available from memory so you can make sense of future problems and opportunities. Professional nurses enter the nursing programme with different expectation of what is to be learnt, different intellectual skills, levels and types of motivation and different interest.

Effect of Learning Environment on Students' Academic Performance

Frankel, (2009) the learning environment has been recognized as either encouraging or impeding a positive learning experience for professional nurses.

The influences of teaching –leaning environments on the quality of the learning outcomes start from extensive observation of current structures and practices (Entwistle, 2009). Nursing faculties are challenged to provide learning experiences for students that are as authentic as possible, in order to represent the complex and dynamic nature of contemporary patient care setting (DeBourgh, 2008). Nursing students need the appropriate knowledge and skills to enable them to deliver safe and competent care to their patients (Leufer, 2007). Furthermore, Artelt (2005), states that surface and deep approaches to learning are considered to be reactions to learning environment. Similarly, university of technology in Sydney (2008), states that students' perceptions of the environment that is established for their learning will influence whether they will adopt a deep or surface approach to learning.

Wong et al. (2011), diversity experiences, which include peer interaction, are related to learning outcomes, such as the use of active thinking, intellectual engagement and motivation, academic skills, regardless of students' academic, socio-economic or racial and ethnic background. Contrarily, rather than reflecting and adapting to reconcile differences, teaching activities may proceed as initially planned, independent of evidence of student learning (Ramsden, 2003).

Leufer, (2007) Results yielded from a study carried out on factors affecting the learning environment, indicated that noise was the most notable, as 70% of students had problems hearing what had been said in class, whilst 41% had difficulty in concentrating in class.

Additionally, colleges and universities must cope with the growing demand to provide infrastructural support for learners' personal technologies, such as wireless, laptops, PDAs and IPods (Barton, 2015).

Strategies of Promoting Learning

Professional nurse educators have struggled to develop teaching strategies that undergraduate nursing students find engaging and meaningful (Dayad, 2016).

Ramsden (2003), the conventional one-hour lecture frequently represents a rigidity teacher centered concept of teaching and learning. Due to the diversified student population, traditional methods of teaching no longer seem to be working (Hewson & Hewson, 2003).

Kember & Leung (2006), found that instructional strategies that integrate students' prior knowledge and students' acquisition of scientific concepts. Professional nurse educators should therefore explore innovative technologies, which maximize the characteristics of millennial learners, who are comfortable with technology and proffer interactive classrooms with individual feedback and peer collaboration (Revell & McCurry, 2011).

Wright, (2016) Integrating computer technology into academic learning aims at helping students gain more opportunity and interest in exploring learning contents.

Leufer (2007) encourages the use of resources based learning, which involves a collaborative learning environment, where students utilize a variety of information resources to solve problems under supervision of teachers and librarians, whilst also collaborating within their peer group.

Information resources include books, journals, television, online databases, radio, Internet and CD-ROMs.

Wong, Seago, Keane & Grumbach (2008) collaborative learning is an effective means of increasing student achievement and cognitive development. The learner's potential performance level is increased in a community of learners.

Diseth, (2002) lectures should provide a culturally supportive learning environment, by applying the art of posing effective questions and not asking too few cognitively demanding questions, especially to those students of whom they have low expectations. Inviting students to actively participate in the learning environment, they take more responsibility for their performance in the course (Judith, 2017).

Mazur, (2017) when they have an opportunity to make decisions about what they learn and how they use that knowledge, students see a course as more valuable and more directly related to their goals, example includes, brainstorming learning objectives

Eric (2017), in his view facilitate independent, critical, and creative thinking by asking students to analyze, synthesize or apply material both during lectures and in assignments. Some examples include: case-based problem solving exercises, debate.

II. METHODOLOGY

In this study the designed that was used is descriptive research design, and the target population comprises of all students (335 students) and staffs (70) of the college making a total of 405 populations. A sample size of 80 was derived using 20% of the study population for the study.

Stratified random sampling technique was used in the selection 80 respondents from students and academic staffs of college. The researcher used questionnaire method to obtain information on

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Eighty (80) pieces of questionnaires were administered to the academic staffs and students at Shehu Sule College of nursing

and midwifery by the researcher with the aid of assistants for the period of 3-4days by face-to-face basis. 75 questionnaires were retrieved which account for 94% response rate. The data collected was organised and analyzed using simple frequency distribution tables and percentage

III. RESULT

Section A: Demographic Data

TABLE 1

S/N	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
1	**SEX**		
	Female	59	78.7
	Male	16	21.3
	Total	75	100
2	**CATEGORY**		
	Student	63	84
	Staff	12	16
	Others	0	0
	Total	75	100
3	**QUALIFICATION**		
	Midwife educator	5	41.7
	Nurse educator	4	33.3
	Lecturer	3	25
	Total	12	100
4	**YEAR OF STUDY**		
	First year	39	61.9
	Second year	17	27
	Third year	7	11.1
	Total	63	100
5	**HOME LANGUAGE SPOKEN**		
	Hausa	45	71.4
	English	2	3.2
	Others	16	25.4
	Total	63	100

The above table shows the demographic data of the respondents, whereby majority of the respondents were females 78.7% (59) and 21.3%(16) are males. Also, the result indicates that 84%(63) of the respondents are students and only 16% (12) are staffs. The result also shows that 41.7% (5) of the respondents are midwife educators, 33.3%(4) are nurse educators and 25% (3) are lecturers.

According to the table also, 61.9% (39) of the respondents are in the first year of their study making the majority, 27%(17) are in their second year and 11.1% (7) are in their final year representing the minority of the respondents.

The last item on the table shows that, the dominant home language of the respondents is Hausa 71.4%(45) followed by other languages such as Kanuri, Kare-Kare and Fulani, only 3.2% (2) of the respondents speaks English as their home language.
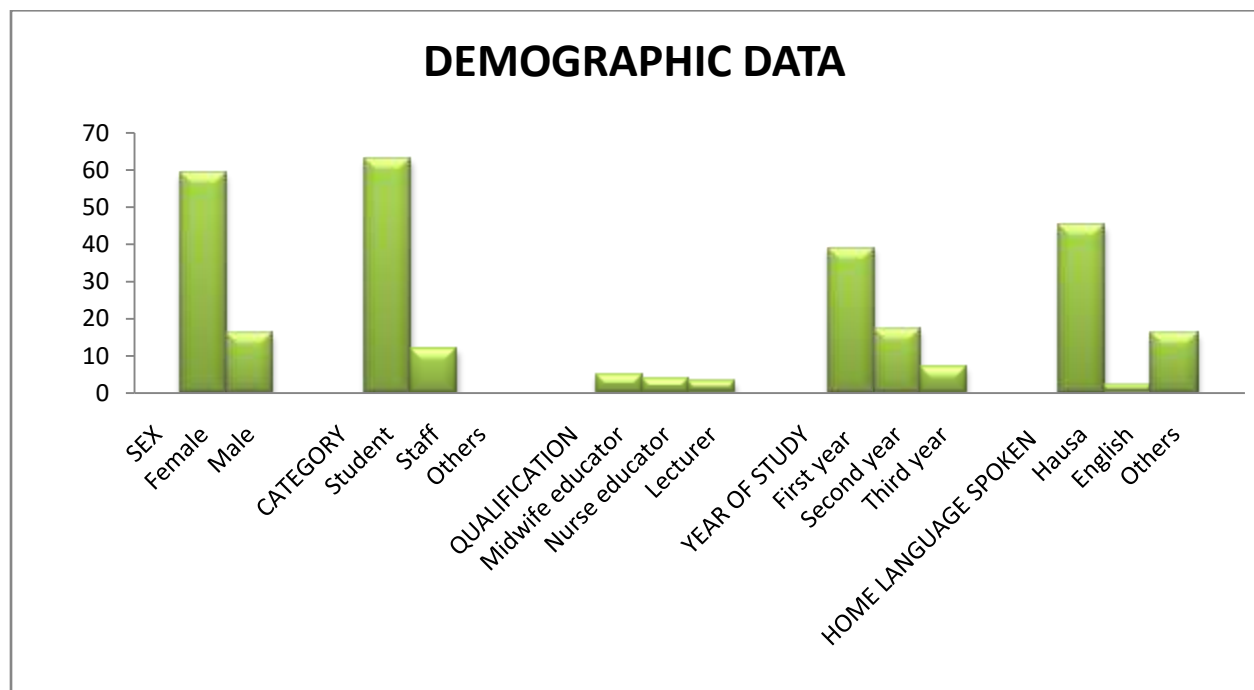

FIGURE 4.1: Column representing the demographic data of the respondents.

*Section "B" Effect of Learning Environment on Students' Performance*

TABLE 2

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
18	The learning environment is conducive for learning	29	34	8	4	3.17	Accepted
19	I often use the library	7	25	21	10	2.46	Rejected

The above table indicates that the respondents accepted item 18 as the response means is above 2.5, however the learning environment is said to be conducive for learning. Contrarily, the respondents rejected item 19, as the response mean is less than 2.5, this shows that the respondents do not often use the library.

TABLE 2 ACCESS TO THE INTERNET

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Yes	34	45.3
No	41	54.7
Total	75	100

The above table shows that 54.7% (41) do not have access to the Internet in the e-library and 45.3% (34) have access to the Internet in the e-library.
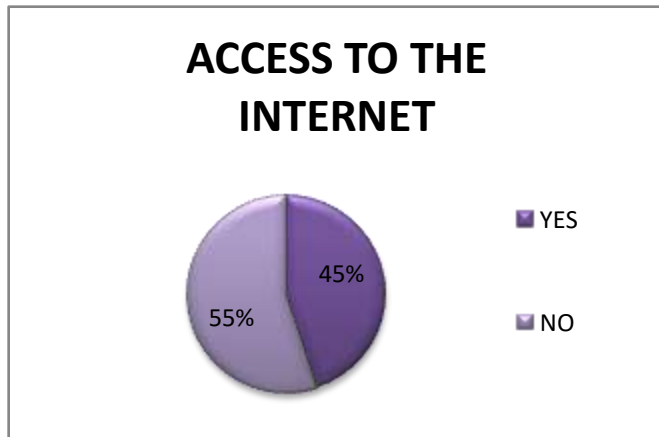

FIGURE 2: Pie chart showing the access of respondents to the Internet in the e-library.

TABLE 3 USE OF THE INTERNET

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Always	3	9
Most times	1	3
Seldom	7	20.4
Never	23	67.6
Total	34	100

The above shows that majority 67.6% (23) of the respondents never use the Internet, 20.4% (7) seldom use the Internet, 3% (1) and 9% (3) of the respondents most times and always use the Internet respectively.
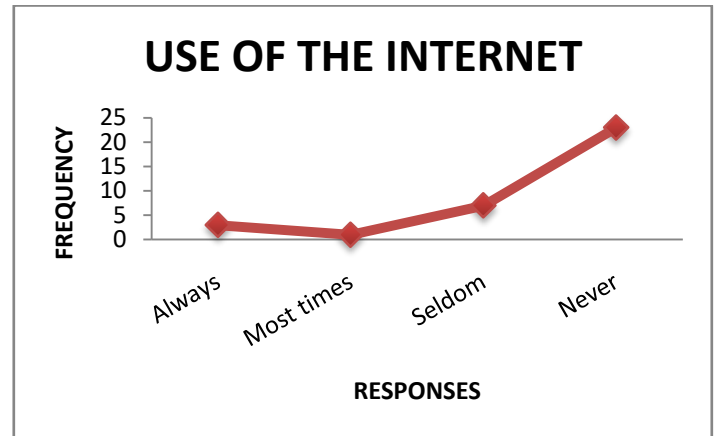
FIGURE 3: Line graph representing the use of Internet by the respondents.

Section "C" Strategies For Promoting Learning

TABLE 4

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
22	Collaborative learning is an effective means of increasing students' achievement	31	22	18	4	3.06	Accepted
23	Allowing students to brainstorm and bring out their learning objectives can promote learning.	30	28	7	10	3.04	Accepted
24	Integrating computer technology into academic learning helps students gain more opportunity and interest in exploring learning contents.	17	29	11	18	2.60	Accepted

Grand mean =2.9

The above table indicates a grand mean of 2.9, which suggest general acceptance of the items in this section. Analysis of the responses indicates the respondents agreed with the items in the section as they all have mean response of above 2.5. Therefore, this shows that all the items can be a strategy for promoting learning.

Other Ways of Promoting Learning

This was an open-ended question to which 49% (37) of the respondents responded and 51% (38) did not respond.

These responses were categorized as follows;

1. Use of library, computer center and Internet

24.3% (9) of the respondents indicated that learning could be promoted through the use of the library, ICT centers and the Internet as a source of getting information as well as consulting the lecturers for any difficulties.

2. Integrating seminar presentation, group discussion and paper presentation

46% (17) of the respondents indicated learning can be promoted by allowing students to participate in seminars, presentation, assignment and group discussion. Also, some indicated that active student centered learning and always asking students question at the end of lectures. Some indicated that involving students to participate during lecture and any learning activity could promote learning.

3. Study method and approaches

29.7% (11) of the respondents indicated that study method and approaches need to be changed so as to improve learning outcomes, some indicated that students should be motivated to achieve their goals. Also, some indicated that guidance and counseling is important in helping students to study well as well supervising the lecturers and students during lectures to draw out some points of corrections if any.

Some indicated that adequate lecturers should be employed to meet the demand of the students and others responded that the timetable and curriculum should be in line with the objectives of the programme.

TABLE 5 OTHER WAYS OF PROMOTING LEARNING

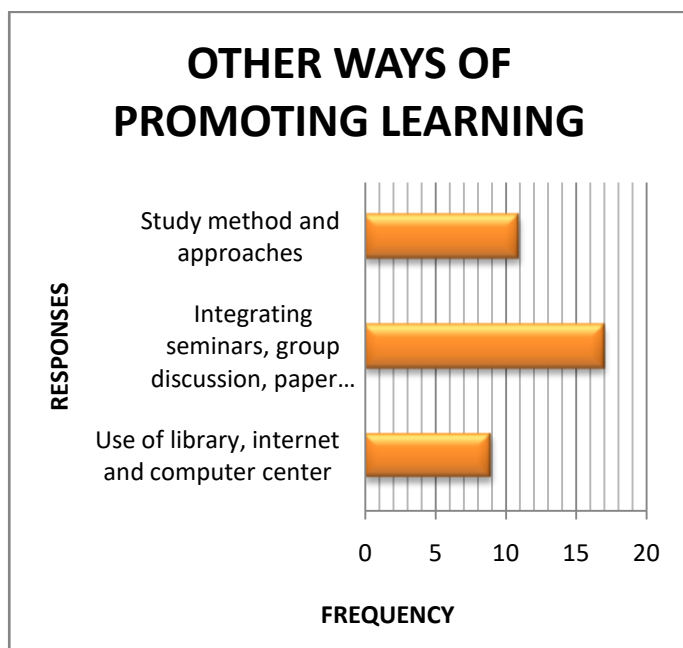| RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Use of library, internet and computer center	9	24.3
Integrating seminars, group discussion, and paper presentation	17	46
Study method and approaches	11	29.7
Total	37	100

FIGURE 5: Bar chart representing other ways of promoting learning

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings show that majority of the respondents are females making and minority are males. As nursing is predominantly a female profession, these is aligned with a study conducted by Meadus and Twomey (2007), which reported that men were deterred from entering nursing, due to the following reasons: public perceptions, images of nursing, the value of nursing to the society, sex stereotypes and patient preferences.

The result also showed that, the largest groups of the respondents were in their first year followed by second year and third year. A study conducted by Fulbrook (2009), showed that first year students indicated that they needed more guidance and support. In the same study, the final year level students reported that they were more pressurized by the quantity of academic work, but had become accustomed to taking responsibility for their own learning, and felt that they had acquired the necessary skills to do that.

The dominant home language of the respondents is Hausa 71.4%(45) followed by other languages such as Kanuri, Kare-Kare and Fulani, only 3.2% (2) of the respondents speaks English as their home language.

Effect Of Learning Environment On Students Performance

The result shows that the learning environment has a positive effect on students' academic performance as indicated by the learning environment being conducive with a mean response of 3.17. Contrarily, the study conducted by McCurry and Martins (2010), which showed that the millennial students reported that they would prefer to see faster and more interactive online course management systems, such as Web CT and Blackboard activities. A study conducted by Singh et al (2016) reveals that there is a positive and statistically impact of learning facilities, communication skills and proper guidance from parents on students' academic performance.

Strategies for Promoting Learning

As seen from the evidence in the study, collaborative learning, allowing students to brain storm and bring out their learning objectives and integrating computer technology into academic learning are all means of promoting learning as indicated by the grand mean of 2.90. A study conducted by Aliobu (2005) in her research work identified that inadequate infrastructural facilities (such as class room, furniture) contribute to poor performance of students. Also, this study was in line with the findings of Leufer (2012) who encourages the use of resources based learning, which involves a collaborative learning environment, where students utilize a variety of information resources to solve problems under supervision of teachers and librarians, whilst also collaborating within their peer group.

Other ways of promoting learning are: use of library, computer and Internet, Integrating seminar presentation,

group discussion and paper presentation and study and learning approaches.

With regard to the implication with the findings, learning environment has a positive effect on students' academic performance as indicated by the learning environment being conducive. Contrarily, the study conducted by McCurry and Martins (2010), which showed that the millennial students reported that they would prefer to see faster and more interactive online course management systems

V. CONCLUSION

The findings show that the dominant home language of the respondents is Hausa**,** and the learning environment has a positive effect on students' academic performance**.** However, collaborative learning, allowing students to brain storm and bring out their learning objectives and integrating computer technology into academic learning are most effective means of promoting learning. Analysis of the data showed that students did not spend sufficient time on their studies per day. Language had being a barrier to their learning. Students need motivation for their learning and study. It is recommended that the selection of students into Nursing and Midwifery programs should not be rushed, as this will result in unsuitable candidates being selected; and also various strategies should be introduced in other to maintain quality assurance in higher education. An educational audit should be carried out after every block, or whenever the need arises.

In addition, English as a Second Language should be encouraged to students to adopt a strategic approach in learning it. This should help them to experience the satisfaction of short term wins, which should consequently result in a better self esteem and in their studies becoming more appealing, due to higher self motivational levels. Criteria for recruitment should be adhered to. Students who do not meet the criteria should not be accepted into the programme.

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