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Academic Engagement in Undergraduate Nursing Students in Swat

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important factors affecting students' learning outcomes, overall growth, and academic achievement is academic engagement. Engagement is particularly important in nursing education because it has a direct impact on the development of critical thinking, clinical decision-making, and patient care abilities. **Objective:** To measure the level of academic engagement among nursing students in Swat. **Methods:** A cross-sectional study methodology was utilized, encompassing 218 nursing students from five private nursing colleges in Swat. Students enrolled in the 4th, 5th, and 8th semesters were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Data were collected using the Academic Engagement Scale, which consists of 14 items covering three subscales: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The scale uses a seven-point rating system, with scores ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0, including descriptive statistics and frequency tables. **Results:** The research indicated that 89.4% of participants were male, and 89% of the students were aged 20 to 24 years. The average academic engagement score was 70.57 out of 98, indicating a relatively high level of engagement among the students. **Conclusions:** It was concluded that nursing students in Swat display a considerable degree of academic engagement, achieving an average score of 70.57 out of 98. This indicates active involvement in academic activities, which is crucial for the development of key skills necessary for nursing practice.

INTRODUCTION

Student engagement investigates the interest, passion, focus, and active participation demonstrated by students during the learning process. It shows the depth of students' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement in the learning process [1, 2]. One perspective stresses students following the rules, another emphasizes their emotional commitment to learning and active involvement, which is the main focus here. Decisions about the distribution of resources, the content of courses, and their delivery can be influenced by an understanding of engagement and disengagement in postsecondary institutions, which is essential for evaluating student performance, advancement, and retention [3]. Additionally, three components of behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement are thought to be combined to form the flexible, multifaceted concept of student engagement [4]. Moreover, student intellectual engagement is a requirement for L2 learning, according to research. Disengagement is linked to school dropout, but academic engagement is linked to students' increased academic accomplishment. Along with this, according to self-determination theory (SDT), fostering student engagement in a blended learning environment differs greatly from that in a typical classroom setting [5]. This is achieved by meeting three basic needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. To meet the needs of the three learners, related studies have focused on teacher help rather than digital support [6]. Furthermore, it claims that an essential

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component of effective learning is student engagement [7]. Engaging student's entails more general conduct, such as showing up to class and taking part in extracurricular activities [8]. In addition, research indicates that a crucial precondition for optimal and profound learning is student engagement. Additionally, motivated pupils have better long-term employment opportunities [9]. In addition, daily interactions are imperative to foster student engagement, given its importance for both present and future achievement. However, maintaining classroom discipline and teaching a subject while simultaneously getting pupils interested in the material is, to put it bluntly, a challenging and demanding task [10]. Newer interactive teaching approaches are being investigated by nurse educators to increase pupil engagement, learning levels, and academic self-concept. By offering a variety of engaging learning activities and venues that today's students prefer, nursing educators can create this possibility [11, 12]. For nursing students, this is particularly vital since their education directly affects patient care. Factors that influence engagement, nursing schools can design interventions to improve academic success, reduce dropout rates, and increase graduation rates.

This study aims to measure the level of academic engagement in nursing students in Swat.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study design was used in 5 different nursing colleges in Swat. The study population includes Nursing students currently enrolled in the 4th 5th and 8th semesters. The study was conducted in 3 months from September 2024 to November 2024. A convenient sampling technique was used. Moreover, the sample size was calculated through Open EPI version 3 with a 95% confidence interval. The inclusion criteria were students currently enrolled above the 4th Semester in a private nursing college in Swat who volunteered to take in the research. Additionally, students must have a minimum attendance rate of 75% in their classes and clinical placements. The exclusion criteria were students who were unable to provide informed consent due to medical or psychological conditions. As well as those who have not completed at least four semesters in the nursing program. First, we obtained permission from the principal of the Night Angle Institute of Nursing and Health Sciences with reference number (NINHS/Admin/300-10/24). We then sought consent from the selected nursing colleges in Swat before distributing the questionnaires and collecting the data. SPSS version 26.0 was used to analyze the data. An academic engagement measure with 14 items was employed in this study. This scale consists of three subscales: vigor (VI), devotion (DE), and absorption (AB). A seven-point frequency rating system was used to provide a score to each item, where 1 denotes never and 7 denotes always [13]. The tool's overall score was 98. This tool's reliability is 0.90. Additionally, 10% of the entire sample size was used for pretesting this tool. The Cronbach alpha value that was computed was 0.95.

RESULTS

The table provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the study participants. Out of a total of 218 participants, 195 (89.4%) were male and 23 (10.6%) were female, indicating a predominantly male sample. In terms of age, the majority of participants, 194 (89%), were aged 20-24 years, while 24 (11%) were aged 25-29 years. The participants were distributed across various academic semesters, with the highest representation from the 5th semester (103, 47.2%), followed by the 4th semester (61, 28%), 8th semester (30, 13.8%), 6th semester (18, 8.3%), and 7th semester (6, 2.8%). Regarding marital status, most participants were unmarried or single (192, 88.1%), while 22 (10.1%) were married, and 4 (1.8%) were divorced (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (n=218)

Variables	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	195 (89.4%)
	Female	23 (10.6%)
Age	20-24 Years	194 (89%)
	25-29 Years	24 (11%)
Semester	4th Semester	61 (28%)
	5th Semester	103 (47.2%)
	6th Semester	18 (8.3%)
	7th Semester	6 (2.8%)
	8th Semester	30 (13.8%)
Marital Status	Unmarried/Single	192 (88.1%)
	Married	22 (10.1%)
	Divorced	4 (1.8%)

Students scored an average of 70.57 out of 98. This suggests a relatively high level of engagement, as 70.57 is a significant portion of 98 (Table 2).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variable

Variable	Mean + SD	Total Score
Academic Engagement	70.57 + 13.75	98

DISCUSSION

Students' learning experiences, academic achievement, and future professional competence are all significantly influenced by their level of academic engagement [14]. Engagement is particularly important in nursing education because it has a direct impact on the development of critical thinking, clinical decision-making, and patient care, among other crucial skills [15]. The purpose of this study is to degrees of academic engagement among Swat's undergraduate nursing students. The current findings show that the majority of the participants (89.4%) were

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male. In contrast, another study found 71% of the students were female [16]. The current findings show scored an average of 70.57 out of 98. This suggests a relatively high level of engagement. In this regard, another study found the mean score of 55.69 suggests moderate engagement [5]. Additionally, another study found that (45%) were found to be extremely engaged [17]. Moreover, another study found the degree of engagement was moderate overall. Also, this study concluded that academic attainment was significantly impacted by student motivation, facilitating settings (such as engagement-fostering elements), and student engagement. The results of this study are intended to serve as quality indicators that guide educational institutions in their pursuit of nursing education excellence [18]. Furthermore, a study found that nursing students outperformed students in other professions (mean=55.22 or 56.14) in several areas of intellectual engagement, with a mean score of 58.71 [19]. In this regard, another study found that participating in class, turning in required essays, and paying attention to the teacher's advice are all indicators of academic engagement. Because they can both be causes or effects of one another, burnout and engagement are ideas that are adversely connected [16]. In addition to this, another study recommended that teaching formulas that will engage and promote learning for Generation Z students may include creative lectures that integrate relevant visual visuals, audience involvement, simulation, films, and case studies [20]. Students are more likely to attain greater learning outcomes when they are actively involved in the process, enjoy what they are doing, and derive practical value from it [21]. Prior research has demonstrated that raising students' levels of academic engagement may improve their desired academic achievement and performance [3].

CONCLUSIONS

It was concluded that with an average academic engagement score of 70.57 out of 98, the results demonstrate that students are generally well-engaged in their studies. This number indicates that, on average, students are actively engaged in their academic work because it makes up a sizable amount of the possible score.

Authors Contribution

Conceptualization: MA, AB
Methodology: AA, ZA, FA, AH, F, BS
Formal analysis: AA, SK, AI
Writing review and editing: ZA, FA, AH, BS

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

All the authors declare no conflict of interest.

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