



# Absenteeism Among Nursing Students: A Case Study at University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria

Emmanuel Okechukwu Chukwu<sup>1, \*</sup>, Nafisa Haruna Yakubu<sup>2</sup>, Habu Haruna<sup>2</sup>, Dathini Hamina<sup>2</sup>,  
Terkuma Chia<sup>3</sup>, Terna Mesuur Fiase<sup>1</sup>, Esther Iornengen<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>School of Nursing Mkar, Gboko, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing Science, College of Medical Science, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Department of Human Anatomy, College of Medical science, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, Enugu, Nigeria

<sup>4</sup>School of Midwifery Mkar, Gboko, Nigeria

## Email address:

emmanwaguy42@yahoo.com (E. O. Chukwu)

\*Corresponding author

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**Abstract:** Absenteeism from clinical areas and lectures among nursing students is a significant problem that if not addressed will adversely affect the quality of nursing care. This cross-sectional descriptive survey design was to assess factors influencing absenteeism among nursing students in University of Maiduguri. A total of 270 respondents were selected using convenient sampling technique after stratified sampling technique was used to ensure that all levels (class) of the nursing students were represented. Data were collected through the use of self-constructed questionnaire which was administered by the researchers and trained assistants. Collected data were presented in frequency and percentage. Mean scores were used to analyze the data. 2.50 was chosen as the bench mark ( $\geq 2.5$  as criteria of acceptance). Inferential statistics (chi-square) [x2] was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study findings revealed that majority of students do absent themselves from lectures and clinical postings. Ill-health, nursing a baby, participation in other roles besides academic activities and transportation difficulties are important contributions to absenteeism. Poor grades and carry-over are effects of absenteeism. The researchers recommends among other things that; clinical supervision and attendance list should be taken serious during lectures and clinical posting. The school management board should provide free transportation to clinical areas and accommodations should also be provided for students within campus. Lecture halls and theaters should be made as conducive as possible.

**Keywords:** Absenteeism, Nursing, Students, University, Maiduguri

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## 1. Introduction

Absenteeism appears to be a major problem confronting the school system in Nigeria. Absenteeism is not only an epidemic peculiar to the universities, but to all public and private schools in the developed and developing countries. A central assumption in the learning process is that an individual student's presence in an educational environment is a prerequisite for the student to gain from that environment [1]. The magnitude of the problem can be appreciated when one consider the issues and concern raised by individuals and

groups in many public gatherings and information media [2]. [3] examined absenteeism trends among 110 third year nursing students in Ireland and discovered that voluntary absence was a major feature of this group and occurred more frequently for lectures than the clinical environment. This authors maintained that a total of 1567 days were lost through absenteeism over 123 weeks, although the most frequency recorded absence from both wards and lectures were mostly of short duration. [4] find that chronic absenteeism affects up to 15 percent of the national student population, or 5 million to 7.5 million students each year;

with students of color and students living in poverty being most disproportionately affected.

Studies have shown that the reasons proffered by students as explanations for non-attendance to lectures include family, social and work commitment, illness, faking illness, and family emergencies [2]; [5]; [6]. Nurses absenteeism from lectures and clinical practices post a great concern to the society since some aspect of nurses curriculum effects public safety and can result in inadequate learning on the part of those learning especially in the aspect of drug calculations and administrations which could result in drug over dose and poisoning [7]; [8]; [9]. Students showed a high degree of poor academic performance and lower achievement due to absenteeism. It make students stay longer in school and parents are stressed financially. [10] finds that the number of school days present significantly affects multiple measures of achievement and indicates that attendance is a robust predictor of student academic achievement. [11] reported that most school drop out move to a life of misdemeanor, which has a negative impact on the society. If academic standard is not maintained, increased absenteeism will adversely affect the quality of nursing care (health care delivery) and contribute to increase morbidity and mortality rate in the society.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

- 1) Determine the prevalence of absenteeism among nursing students.
- 2) Identify factors influencing absenteeism among the students.
- 3) Determine the effects of absenteeism on the student's performance.

## 3. Study Hypotheses

- 1) Nursing students do not miss their lectures.
- 2) There are no factors influencing absenteeism among the nursing students.
- 3) There are no effects of absenteeism on the students' academic performance.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Study Design

This study is a cross-sectional descriptive survey used to assess absenteeism among nursing students of University of Maiduguri, Borno State.

### 4.2. Setting for the Study

The setting of this study was the Department of Nursing Science, College of Medial Sciences, University of Maiduguri Borno State. The University is one of the federal universities in the North-Eastern region of Nigeria. It is located in Maiduguri, the capital city of Borno State. The department of nursing has preclinical students which

comprised of 100 to 200 level and clinical students which comprised of 300 to 500 level students who usually go for clinical posting in the University of Maiduguri Teaching Hospital with other Government Peripheral Hospitals for speciality posting.

### 4.3. Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Following stratified random sampling technique which ensured that all the class of the nursing students were represented in the study, simple random sampling technique was used to select 50 nursing students each from year two to year five and 70 students from year one due to their larger number in class. A total of 270 students constituted the sample size for this study.

### 4.4. Instrument for Data Collection

A self-constructed questionnaire was used for this research work for data collection. It was made up of different sections, which contained the following; Section A: Socio-demographic data of respondents, Section B: Prevalence of absenteeism among students, Section C: Factors responsible for absenteeism, and Section D: Effects of absenteeism on student's performance.

### 4.5. Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed to the selected nursing students in their lecture areas and were asked to fill the questionnaire which was collected on same day following its completion.

## 5. Result Presentation

*Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents n=270.*

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
SEX:		
Male	87	32.2
Female	183	67.8
TOTAL	270	100
AGE:		
≤20 years	24	8.9
21-30	198	73.3
≥31	48	17.8
TOTAL	270	100
MARITAL Status		
Single	231	85.6
Married	39	14.4
TOTAL	270	100
PRE-ENTRY Qualification:		
Sec. Sch. Cert	207	76.7
Registered nurse	48	17.8
Others (BSc./HND/ND )	15	5.5
TOTAL	270	100
PLACE OF RECIDENT:		
Campus	189	70
Renting outside campus	48	17.8
Leaving with parent/guardian	33	12.2
TOTAL	270	100

On the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, table 1 above showed that, majority of the respondents (67.8%) are female while 32.2% are male. On the age distribution of the respondents, majority of the respondents (73.3%) were between the age of 21-30 years while 17.8% were 31 and above. Only 8.9% of the respondents were below 20 years. Majority of the

respondents (85.6%) are single with only 14.4% married. On the entry qualification, majority of the respondents (76.7%) had only secondary certificate, 17.8% are registered nurses while 5.5% are having BSc. / HND / ND in other fields of study. Majority of the respondents (70%) reside on campus, 17.8% reside off campus while 12.2% reside with parents.

**Table 2.** Prevalence of absenteeism among students.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
1.	Students absent themselves from school	189	57	18	6	3.59	
2.	Students absent themselves from clinical posting	136	119	11	4	3.47	
3.	Student attend all classes for a semester	47	51	69	103	2.16	
4.	Student miss duty during clinical posting	88	97	53	32	2.82	
5.	Student rarely miss classes or clinical posting	114	67	65	24	2.90	
	CLUSTER MEAN					2.99	

Note: < 2.50 means negative, > 2.50 means positive

From table 2 above, almost all the items in the table have mean scores above 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.99 shows that there was high prevalence of absenteeism among the nursing students.

**Table 3.** Factors responsible for absenteeism.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
1.	Illness causes students to be absent from classes and clinical posting	87	136	39	8	3.12	
2.	Long distant cause student to be absent from classes and clinical posting	98	88	61	23	2.97	
3.	It is nursing mothers that miss classes and clinical posting	104	89	63	14	3.05	
4.	Lack of transport fare causes students to be absent from clinical posting	107	95	59	9	3.11	
5.	Lack of interest cause to be absent from classes and clinical posting	23	66	84	97	2.06	
6.	Non-payment of school fees causes absenteeism to classes and clinical posting	22	67	85	96	2.06	
	CLUSTER MEAN					2.73	

Note: < 2.50 means negative, > 2.50 means positive

From table 3 above, most of the items in the table have mean scores above 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.73 shows that reasons for absenteeism among the nursing students are multifactorial.

**Table 4.** Effect of absenteeism on students' academic performance.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	REMARK
1.	Absenteeism causes student to perform bad in academics	124	111	32	3	3.32	
2.	Absenteeism does not cause student poor performance	7	11	138	114	1.67	
3.	Students like poor grade obtained from school	1	3	108	158	1.43	
4.	Students would like to follow best learning method(s) that will help them pass well	134	132	3	1	3.48	
	CLUSTER MEAN					2.48	

From table 4 above, the mean score of 3.32 on the first item is a clear indication that absenteeism had a very negative effect on the academic performance of the nursing students.

#### TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Nursing students do not miss their lectures

**Table 5.** Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) test on prevalence of absenteeism among students.

O	E	(E-O)	(E-O) <sup>2</sup>	(E-O) <sup>2</sup> /E = $\chi^2$
189	114.8	74.2	5505.64	47.96
57	78.2	-21.2	449.44	5.75
18	43.2	-25.2	635.04	14.70
6	33.8	-27.8	772.84	22.80
136	114.8	21.2	449.44	3.91
119	78.2	40.8	1664.64	21.29
11	43.2	-32.2	1036.84	24.00

O	E	(E-O)	(E-O) <sup>2</sup>	(E-O) <sup>2</sup> /E = X <sup>2</sup>
4	33.8	-29.8	888.04	26.27
47	114.8	-67.8	4596.84	40.04
51	78.2	-27.2	739.84	9.46
69	43.2	25.8	665.64	15.41
103	33.8	69.2	4788.64	141.68
88	114.8	-26.8	718.24	6.26
97	78.2	18.8	353.44	4.52
53	43.2	9.8	96.04	2.22
32	33.8	-1.8	3.24	0.10
114	114.8	-0.8	0.64	0.01
67	78.2	-11.2	125.44	1.60
65	43.2	21.8	475.24	11.00
24	33.5	-9.8	96.04	2.84
Total				401.89

The calculated X<sup>2</sup> = 401.89

The tabulated X<sup>2</sup> = 21.03

Since the Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test (calculated) = 401.89 is greater than the tabulated value = 21.03, there is therefore no statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis (Ho). This means that nursing students miss lectures.

Hypothesis 2: There are no factors influencing absenteeism among the nursing students

Table 6. Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test on factors responsible for absenteeism.

O	E	(E-O)	(E-O) <sup>2</sup>	(E-O) <sup>2</sup> /E = X <sup>2</sup>
87	14.5	72.5	5256.25	362.50
136	22.7	113.3	12836.89	565.50
39	6.5	29.5	870.25	133.88
8	1.3	6.7	44.89	34.53
98	14.5	83.5	6972.25	480.84
88	22.7	65.3	4264.09	187.85
61	6.5	54.5	2970.25	456.96
23	1.3	21.7	470.89	362.22
104	14.5	89.5	8010.25	552.43
89	22.7	66.3	4395.69	193.64
63	6.5	56.5	3192.25	491.11
14	1.3	12.7	161.29	124.07
107	14.5	92.5	8556.25	590.09
95	22.0	72.3	5227.29	230.28
59	6.5	52.5	2756.25	424.04
9	1.3	7.7	59.29	45.61
23	14.5	8.5	72.25	4.98
66	22.7	43.3	1874.89	82.59
84	6.5	77.5	6006.25	924.09
97	1.3	95.7	9158.49	7044.99
22	14.5	7.5	56.25	3.88
67	22.7	44.3	1962.49	86.45
85	6.5	78.5	6162.25	948.04
96	1.3	94.7	8968.09	6898.53
Total				21229.1

The calculated X<sup>2</sup> = 21229.1

The tabulated X<sup>2</sup> = 25.00

Since the Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test (calculated) = 21229.1 is greater than the tabulated value = 25.00. There is therefore no statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis (Ho). This means that there are factors influencing absenteeism among the nursing students.

Hypothesis 3: There are no effects of absenteeism on the students' academic performance

Table 7. Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test on effect of absenteeism on student academic performance.

O	E	(E-O)	(E-O) <sup>2</sup>	(E-O) <sup>2</sup> /E = X <sup>2</sup>
124	31.0	93.0	8649.00	279.00
111	27.8	83.2	6922.24	249.00
32	8.0	24.0	576.00	72.00
3	0.8	2.2	4.84	6.05
7	31.0	-24.0	576.00	18.58
11	27.8	-16.8	282.24	10.15
138	8.0	130	16900.00	2112.50
114	0.8	113.2	12814.24	16017.80
1	31.0	-30.0	900.00	29.03
3	27.8	-24.8	615.04	22.12
108	8.0	100	10000	1250.00
158	0.8	157.2	24711.84	30889.80
134	31.0	103.0	10609.00	342.23
132	27.8	104.2	10857.84	390.56
3	8.0	-5.0	25.00	3.13
1	0.8	0.2	0.04	0.05
Total				51692.00

The calculated X<sup>2</sup> = 51692.00

The tabulated X<sup>2</sup> = 16.92

Since the Chi-square (X<sup>2</sup>) test (calculated) = 51692.00 is greater than the tabulated value = 16.92. There is therefore no statistical evidence to accept the null hypothesis (Ho). This means that there are effects of absenteeism in the academic performance of the nursing students.

## 6. Discussion of Findings

### 6.1. Prevalence of Absenteeism Among Nursing Students

On the prevalence of absenteeism among students, this study finding revealed high prevalence of absenteeism among the nursing students. The cluster mean of 2.99 as presented in table 1 showed that there was high prevalence of absenteeism among the nursing students. These findings implied that there is a high prevalence of absenteeism to both lectures and clinical postings among nursing students of

university of Maiduguri Borno state. This finding agrees with that of [12], who conducted a study on prevalence and factors contributed to absenteeism among nursing students at faculty of nursing sciences, university of Khartoum –Sudan with finding which showed prevalence rate of 29.4%. Studies by [13]; [14]; [15]; [16]; [4] lend their support to the findings of this study. Study by [7] also supported the study as their study in Ireland on attitude to absenteeism among diploma nursing students in Ireland revealed absenteeism as a potential problem among nursing student and most of the respondents agree that students attendance at both the practical and theoretical aspect of basic is a problem.

### 6.2. Factors Influencing Absenteeism Among Nursing Students

This study finding revealed that, illness, long distance to school, nursing a baby, lack of interest in lectures and clinical experience, lack of transportation, and non-payment of school fees are contributing factors to absenteeism among nursing students. As shown in table 3, most of the items have mean scores above 2.50. The cluster mean of 2.73 showed that reasons for absenteeism among the nursing students are multifactorial. The findings of this study is supported by [17]; [12] whose studies revealed that contributing factors to absenteeism among students are multifactorial. The findings of this study is further supported by [18] whose study on Causes and structural effects of student absenteeism: a case study of three South African Universities revealed a multifactorial cause. Studies by [19]; [20] also lend their support to the findings of this study.

### 6.3. Effects of Absenteeism on the Academic Performance of Students

This study finding showed that many of the student nurses have experienced academic set-back as a result of absenteeism from either lecture or clinical posting. The types of academic setback experienced include; poor grade, carry-over, and repeat of a class. From table 4 above, the mean score of 3.32 on the first item is a clear indication that absenteeism had a very negative effect on the academic performance of the nursing students. Studies by [17]; [11]; [1]; [21]; [22]; [10]; [23] lends strong support to the findings of this research work. [3] also reported absenteeism from teaching area and clinical setting as a potential problem among nursing student.

## 7. Implication to Nursing

The nursing profession is a profession that has a crucial and direct impact in the care of patients. It is important that during the training of students, a strict guideline is to be established and students are to always attained and pay key interest in patient's management. Absenteeism of any kind will lead to having nurses who will not take patient care with seriousness and such nurses will be setbacks to the profession.

## 8. Conclusion

This study is written on absenteeism among nursing students in University of Maiduguri. The study tried to establish the prevalence of absenteeism among students, factors contributing to absenteeism and the effects of absenteeism among the students. This was achieved by the use of questionnaire which was distributed among the students.

The following conclusion can be drawn from the findings of this study;

- i. Majority of students do absent themselves from lectures and clinical postings.
- ii. Participation in other roles besides academic activities and transportation difficulties are important contributions to absenteeism.
- iii. Poor grades and carry-over are effects of absenteeism.

## Recommendation

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made.

- a) The department of nursing science should endeavor to make clinical experience as interested as possible.
- b) Clinical supervision and attendance list should be taken serious during lectures and clinical posting.
- c) The school management board should provide free transportation to clinical areas and accommodations should also be provided for students within campus.
- d) Lecture halls and theaters should be made as conducive as possible.

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