"Nursing Students' Voices And Experiences: A Qualitative Study On Academic Performance Determinants"

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores determinants of academic performance among nursing students in Kerala through focus group discussions with 30 participants aged 18-23. Thematic analysis identified key factors, including **academic challenges** (workload and time management), **support systems** (institutional and familial), **motivation and goals** (intrinsic passion and career aspirations), and **learning environment** (classroom dynamics and clinical experiences). Findings highlight the critical role of mentorship, peer support, and tailored institutional interventions in addressing challenges and fostering academic success. By amplifying student voices, the study provides actionable insights for enhancing nursing education and preparing students for professional excellence in healthcare settings.

INTRODUCTION

Nursing education plays a pivotal role in preparing future healthcare professionals to meet thecomplex demands of modern healthcare systems. Central to this preparation is the academic performance of nursing students, which not only reflects their individual achievements but also influences their readiness to provide safe and effective patient care.

This study, titled "Nursing Students' Voices and Experiences: A Qualitative Study on Academic Performance Determinants," aims to explore the subjective and personal dimensions of academic performance among nursing students. By delving into the lived experiences of these students, the study seeks to uncover the complex interplay of factors thatinfluence their academic journey. These factors may include personal challenges, support systems, teaching methodologies, and the inherent pressures of nursing education.

Qualitative research offers a unique lens through which the individual stories and perspectives of nursing students can be understood. Through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and thematic analysis, this study will illuminate the various determinants that shape academic performance from the students' viewpoints. By amplifying their voices, we aim to provide a holistic understanding of the academic environment and identify areas for potential improvement.

In the context of nursing education, where the demands are rigorous and the stakes high, understanding the determinants of academic performance is not only an academic exercise but also a pathway to enhancing student well-being and success. This study's findings will contribute to the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms tailored to the needs of nursing students, ultimately fostering a more conducive learning environment.

By focusing on the qualitative aspects of academic performance, this research underscores the importance of considering students' personal and educational experiences. It seeks to

bridge the gap between quantitative metrics and the rich, detailed narratives that provide a fuller picture of what it means to succeed in nursing education. Through this study, we hope to foster a deeper appreciation of the diverse factors that influence academic performance and to inform strategies that support nursing students in achieving their full potential.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE IN NURSING

In the realm of nursing education, understanding the voices and experiences of student nursesis crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into the factors that influence their academic performance, such as personal motivations, learning environments, and support systems. By delving into these experiences, educators and policymakers can identify barriers that hinder student nurses' success and implement targeted interventions to enhance their learning outcomes.

Moreover, exploring the voices of student nurses sheds light on their unique challenges and perspectives within the academic setting. This research not only amplifiestheir narratives but also validates their experiences, fostering a supportive environment that encourages open dialogue and mutual understanding. By acknowledging the diverse experiences of student nurses, educational institutions can tailor their programs to better meet their needs, ultimately enhancing retention rates and overall satisfaction among students.

Furthermore, studying the determinants of academic performance among student nurses contributes to the broader discourse on nursing education and professional development. It allows stakeholders to identify best practices and innovative approaches that can be adopted to cultivate a more effective learning environment. Ultimately, this research serves as a foundation for evidence-based policies and practices that aim to elevate the educational experience of student nurses and prepare them for successful careers in healthcare.

In conclusion, investigating the voices and experiences of student nurses in relation to their academic performance and determinants not only addresses current gaps in research but also informs future strategies aimed at optimizing nursing education. By prioritizing their perspectives and challenges, we can create a more supportive and enriching learning environment that empowers student nurses to thrive academically and professionally.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

"Nursing Students' Voices and Experiences: A Qualitative Study on Academic Performance Determinants":

OBJECTIVES

- To explore nursing students' perspectives regarding their academic performance.
- To identify factors influencing academic performance of student nurses.
- To understand the role of support system in nursing education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Academic performance beyond the metrics: A qualitative content analysis of nursing students' perceptions .George Oliveira Silva , Amanda Karoliny , Ferreira James , Gabrielly Stefany Loiola etal. 2023 Oct 17[1.] From the perspective of students, socio-historical aspects and constructs established in relationships with colleagues and professors at the university are directly related to their academic performance and directly influence their ability to achieve the proposed learning objectives and acquire essential competencies for their education.

Factors Associated With Undergraduate Nursing Students' Academic and Clinical Performance: A Mixed-Methods Study Ensieh Fooladi , Md Nazmul Karim , Sheila Vance etal. 2022[2]. A supportive educational environment with an interactive curriculum may enhance students' academic and clinical performance and readiness for practice. Furthermore,targeted interventions for international

students, those with lower secondary school (year 12) results, and those with a former diploma of nursing may be required to increase academic and clinical performance.

Academic Motivation in Nursing Students: A Hybrid Concept Analysis Forough Rafii , Maryam Saeedi , Soroor Parvizy 2019[3] .Academic motivation of nursing students is a broad and multi-dimensional concept that is affected by various personal, family, social, educational, and professional factors. Moreover, it is a factor in achieving academic success, better quality of learning, creativity, academic satisfaction, reduction of anxiety, continuing education, and training competent nurses. Exploring nursing students' experiences of a drop-in support-centre: A mixed-methods study Marian Martin , Lucie M Ramjan , Bronwyn Everett etal. 2018[4]. This study supports the usefulness of a Drop-In-Support-Centre in enhancing students' learning experiences and outcomes. The success of the program is highlighted by an improvement in academic performance of students who attended the DISC.

Assessing health care students' intentions and motivations for learning: the Healthcare Learning and Studying Inventory (HLSI). Lisa Baxter , Karen Mattick, Willem Kuyken. 2013[5].This study suggests that healthcare student populations have some unique intentions and motivations for learning and therefore require a bespoke inventory to ensure that important aspects are not missed. It offers a new tool for meaningful future research, the Healthcare Learning and Studying Inventory (HLSI).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative focus group discussion (FGD) approach to explore the factors influencing nursing students' academic performance in Kerala. Focus groups facilitate interactive discussions among participants, allowing for a collective exploration of shared experiences and perspectives related to academic challenges, support systems, motivation, and the learning environment.
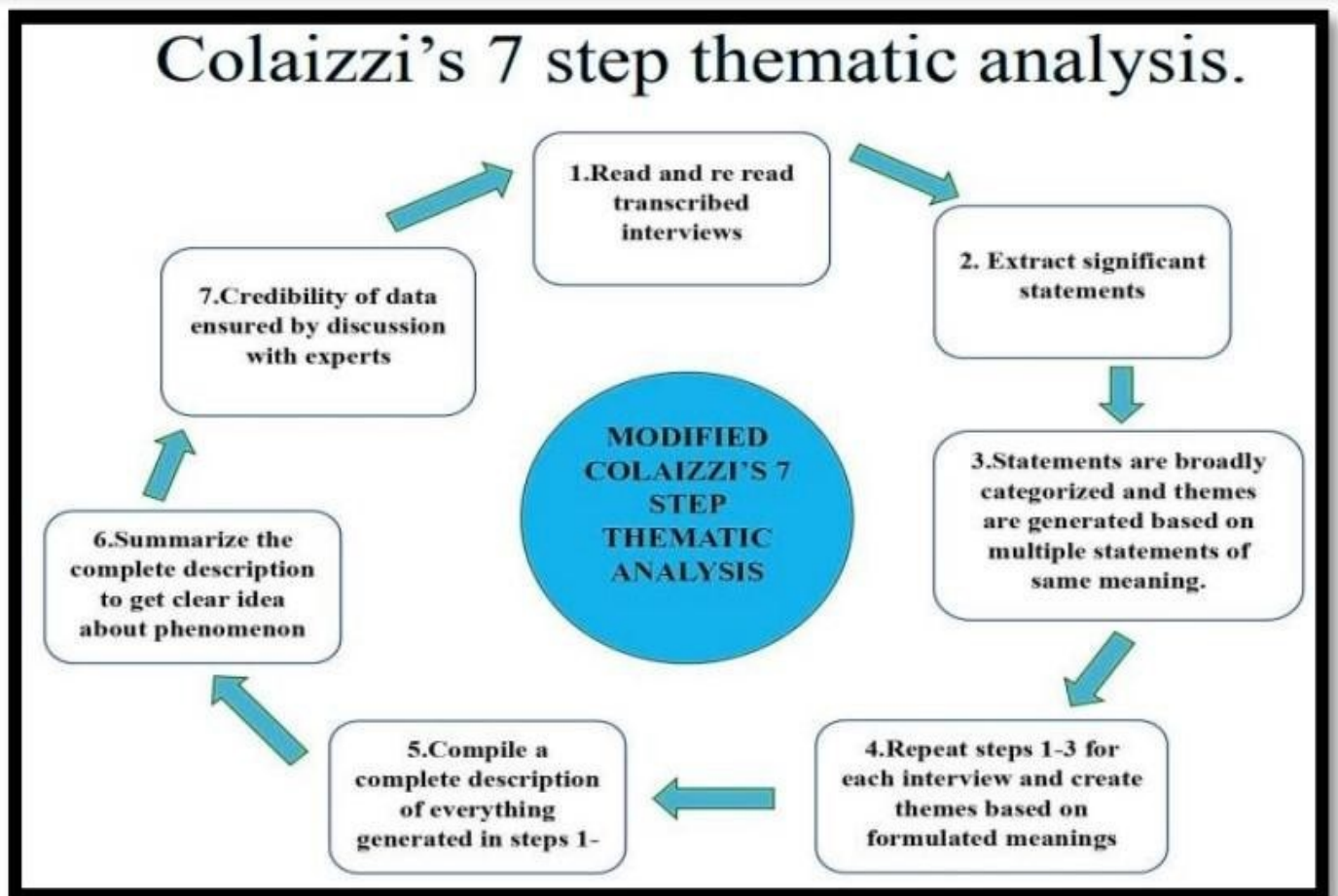
Participants

Four focus group interviews were conducted with nursing students recruited from four educational institutions across Kerala. Participants were aged between 18 to 23 years andwere selected using purposive sampling criteria based on their course of study, gender, and academic year, ensuring a broad representation of perspectives.There were in total 30 members of which 9 were boys and 21 were girls.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted via online conferencing platforms to facilitate synchronous discussions among participants. Each focus group interview session lasted approximately 60- 90 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. The discussion was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol that included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed narratives and diverse viewpoints on factors impacting academic performance.

Data Analysis

All focus group discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Data analysis followed a thematic approach, where transcripts were systematically coded and categorized to identify recurring themes and patterns across the focus groups. A modified Colaizzi's seven-step thematic analysis method was employee ensure rigor and comprehensiveness in capturing the richness of participants perspectives.

Colaizzi's 7 step thematic analysis.

1. Read and re read transcribed interviews
2. Extract significant statements
3. Statements are broadly categorized and themes are generated based on multiple statements of same meaning.
4. Repeat steps 1–3 for each interview and create themes based on formulated meanings
5. Compile a complete description of everything generated in steps 1-
6. Summarize the complete description to get clear idea about phenomenon
7. Credibility of data ensured by discussion with experts

MODIFIED COLAIZZI'S 7 STEP THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical principles throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the focus group interviews, emphasizing voluntary involvement and the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants were strictly maintained during data collection, transcription, and analysis phases. Ethical approval and oversight were obtained from relevant institutional review boards to ensure the protection of participants' rights and the ethical conduct of the research .

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Findings

Theme 1: Academic Challenges

Nursing students frequently cited academic challenges as significant barriers to their performance, particularly the heavy workload and difficulties in managing time effectively.

Group A: "Balancing clinical and theory assignments with studies is quite overwhelming. Sometimes, it's hard to keep up with assignments and study for exams."

❖ Sub theme 1.1: Workload

Group B: "The workload is intense, especially during exam times. We have multiple assignments and practical exams to prepare for simultaneously."

Sub theme 1.2: Time Management

Group C: "Managing time between lectures, clinical rotations, and personal life is challenging. Sometimes, it feels like there aren't enough hours in a day."

Theme 2: Support Systems

Participants emphasized the critical role of support systems, both institutional and familial, inenhancing their academic performance.

Group D: "Having supportive faculty who understand our challenges and encourage us makes a big difference."

❖ Sub theme 2.1: Institutional Support

Group C: "Our college provides tutoring sessions and study groups, which are really helpful.It makes learning easier when you have that kind of support."

❖ Sub theme 2.2: Familial Support

Group D:One participant from group D says that "My family has been my backbone throughout this journey. Their encouragement and belief in me keep me going."

Theme 3: Motivation and Goals

Personal motivation and career aspirations emerged as significant drivers of academic success among nursing students.

Group A:One participant says that "I've always wanted to make a difference in healthcare.That passion drives me to excel academically."

❖ Sub theme 3.1: Intrinsic Motivation

Group B:One participant says that "Seeing patients' lives improve because of good nursing care motivates me. It reminds me why I chose this profession."

❖ Sub theme 3.2: Career Aspirations

Group C: One participant says that "I always wanted to be someone more than a staff nurse.This motivated me."

Theme 4: Learning Environment

The quality of the learning environment, including classroom dynamics and clinical experiences, significantly influenced nursing students' academic experiences.

Group D: One participant says that"The classroom atmosphere and the lectures really affect my understanding and retention of the material."

❖ Sub theme 4.1: Classroom Atmosphere

Group A: "Interactive classes where we can ask questions and discuss topics make learningmore enjoyable and effective."

❖ Sub theme 4.2: Clinical Experiences

Group C:One participant says that "Clinical placements are where we apply theory to practice.It's where I feel I

learn the most."

Interpretation

The thematic analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of factors influencing nursing students' academic performance in Kerala . While academic challenges such as workload and time management
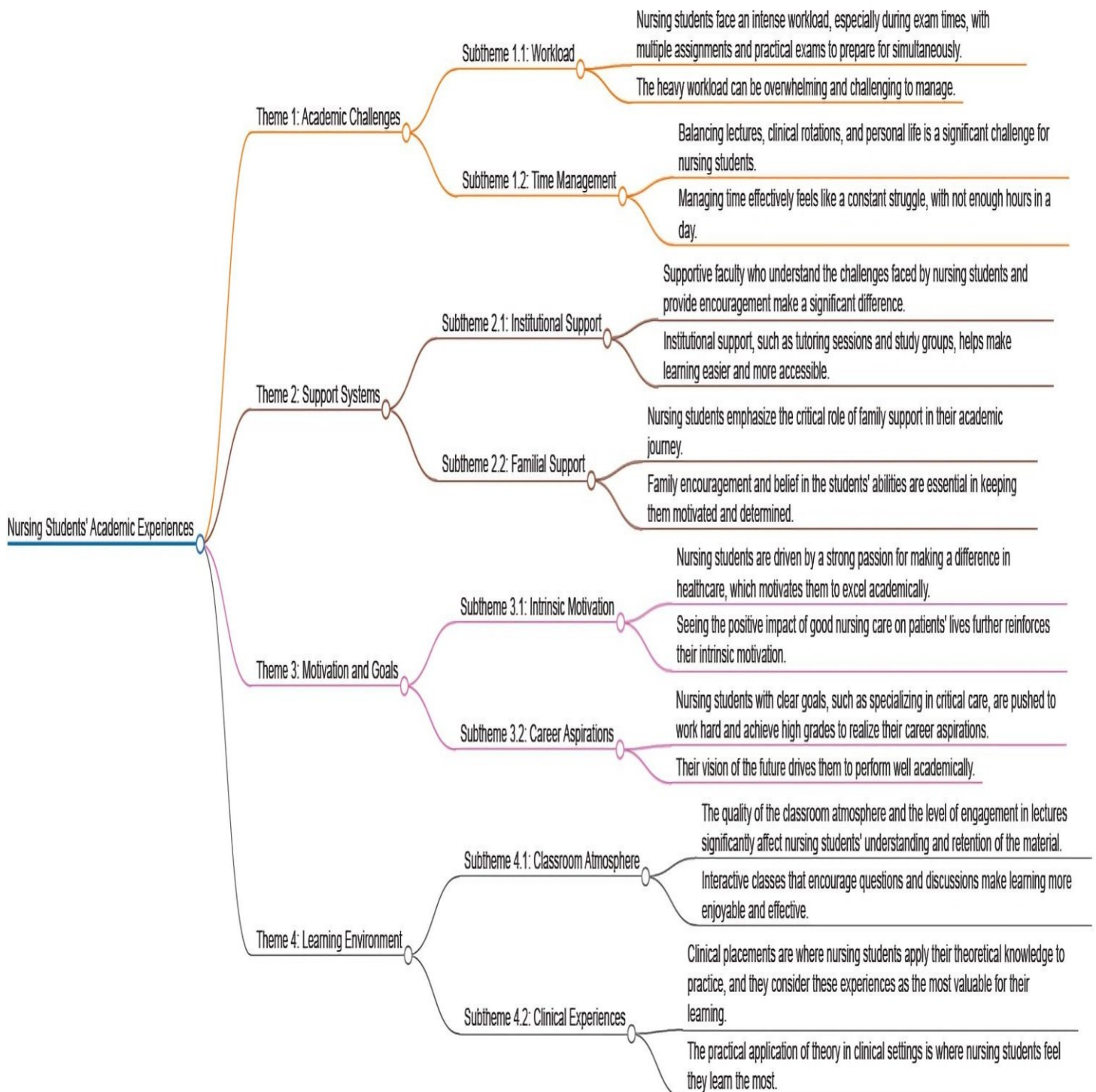
remain prevalent, strong support systems from both institutions and families play pivotal roles in mitigating these challenges. Moreover, intrinsic motivation fueled by personal passion and clear career aspirations significantly contributes to students' academic success. The quality of the learning environment, encompassing both classroom interactions and practical experiences, shapes students' perceptions and learning outcomes profoundly.

CONCLUSION

This qualitative inquiry into the experiences of student nurses has illuminated critical insights into the factors shaping their academic performance and journey. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, this study has underscored the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by student nurses, including rigorous academic demands, clinical placements, personal life pressures, and the overarching impact of support systems and coping mechanisms. One of the key findings of this research is the significant role of mentor ship and peer support networks in fostering resilience and enhancing academic outcomes among student nurses. Effective mentor ship not only provides guidance but also emotional support, helping students navigate the complexities of their education and clinical experiences. Peer support networks offer solidarity and shared experiences, creating a sense of community that is crucial for maintaining motivation and managing stress.

Moreover, the study highlights the importance of tailored support mechanisms within educational institutions. Resources such as academic advising, counseling services, and structured feedback mechanisms are essential in addressing the diverse needs of student nurses and promoting their academic success. Institutions that prioritize these support systems are better equipped to nurture competent and resilient healthcare professionals.

In conclusion, this research contributes valuable insights into the academic experiences of student nurses and provides a foundation for further exploration and improvement of nursing education practices. By listening to the voices of student nurses, we gain a deeper understanding of their challenges, strengths, and needs, thereby empowering educational institutions to implement targeted interventions that support their academic journey effectively. Ultimately, by enhancing educational experiences and support structures, we contribute to the development of competent, compassionate, and resilient nurses who will positively impact healthcare delivery and patient outcomes.

LIMITATIONS

- **Sampling Bias:** The study employed purposive sampling, which may limit the generalization of findings. Participants were recruited from educational institutions in Kerala, which might not represent the diversity of nursing students across different regions or educational contexts.
- **Language and Translation Issues**: If participants spoke diverse dialects or languages, translation could introduce nuances or loss of meaning during transcription and analysis.
- **Depth of Exploration**: Despite efforts to explore a range of factors, some determinants of academic performance among nursing students may not have been fully captured or adequately represented in the study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is recommended that nursing education institutions in Kerala enhance support mechanisms such as mentor ship programs and academic counseling to help students effectively navigate academic challenges. Strengthening clinical training opportunities and fostering a supportive learning environment can further optimize students' learning experiences and academic performance.

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