

## Research Article

## Students' Perception on Teacher- Student Relationship in Association to Their Academic Grades in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

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**Abstract: Aim:** The aim of this study is to assess students' perception on student-teacher relationship and its effect on academic grades. **Methods:** The present cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in the Department of Nursing Science University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria in October, 2018. The questionnaires were distributed to 180 students during the examination period in order to obtain a full response. It consisted of items on different aspects of student-teacher relationship for which the responses were measured on a 2-point scale, Yes/No. The response rate was about 83%. **Results:** The current relationship between the student and the teacher was evaluated as very positive and good by 83.2% of the respondents. The responses were associated with their grades. Fifty six percent of students with higher and above average grades felt that the teachers treated them with respect, and their responses were significantly associated with their grades. Both students with high and above score and those with average and low scores strongly agreed that teacher's attended to them after class hours which affected significant to their grades. The responses to most of the items by the students were not independent of their grades. **Conclusion:** This study concludes that student-teacher relationship was good in a nursing school and the views of students on this relationship were not independent with their academic grades. Further study with other medical program includes for undergraduate students is required to give a broader view of student-teacher relationship in a medical school.

**Keywords:** Student-teacher relationship, Undergraduate nursing education, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION:

There are two important components in the process of education and learning, the teacher and learner. It does seem that the best teachers will promote the greatest amount of learning in students. Yet, the process of learning is so complex that teachers, even the best teachers, may play only a minor part in students learning (Jonhendro, 2012, Nageswari, 2010). Performance is one of the processes that can be influenced by student – teacher relationship. The teacher's success in facilitating learning is directly related to the quality of the relationship (Täht, and Must, 2013). Teacher- Learner relationship is an interaction between the teacher and the student which ultimate results in the achievement of specific learning objectives (Peleg, 2005). The relationship between the teacher and the learner could be positive or negative; Roorda (2011) on the one hand describes supportive teacher- student relationship as an communication, as well as emotional and academic support that exists between students and teachers. It is a form of relationship that is characterized by mutual acceptance,

understanding, warmth, closeness, trust and cooperation (Roorda, 2011). Hence, the classroom is more than just an academic setting; it also involves humanistic values to learn about life. A negative teacher-learner relationship on the other hand is one that constrains the achievement of specific educational objectives. It is a prevalent relationship system in the present day teaching and learning process as positive teacher-student relationships are now very scarce and is obviously lacking in the educational system of many countries (Bernstein-Yamashiro, 2013). The more teachers know about their students, the better the rapport the teacher has with the students, the more likely they are to benefit from the teacher's experience of the world. This teaching is inherently interactive because it depends on interacting with active, growing minds (Bernstein-Yamashiro, 2013). However, studies have revealed that there is a positive correlation between teacher- learner relationship and students' academic grade (Anyanwu, 2014). These studies were carried out to assess student-teacher relationship, by examining students' views on their teachers, their

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attendance in class, the class environment, and various aspects of the relationship. The present study was also designed to assess the association between students' grades and their views on teacher-student relationship.

**SUBJECT AND METHOD**

This study was conducted at the Department of Nursing, University of Port Harcourt in Nigeria, in October, 2018. The Department of Nursing enrolls an average of 80 students annually and graduates an average of 60 every year. The study subjects were the second year to fifth year students in the clinical years, during which they study the basic and advanced nursing sciences courses. At the time of the student total number of students in enrolment were 184.

**METHODS:**

The study design was a cross-sectional descriptive survey. The 22 questions in the questionnaire exploring student-teacher relationships elicited information on the academic year and grade of the student, his/ her views on teachers and their teaching, class control, current relationship, their perception of what constitutes the best relationship, and its current influence on academic attainment. All the questions were close-ended except for the two final open-ended questions. The cumulative grades of the

students (Maximum of 5 and minimum of 2) were considered and classified in two groups as "higher and above average grades" (5.0 to 3.75) and as "average and lower grades" (3.74 to 2.0). The data was analyzed using SPSS, version 21.0 packages. Descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage distribution and Chi-square test were used to determine the association between teacher –student relationship and academic grade variables.

**RESULTS**

One hundred and eighty (180) students were enrolled in this study. Ninety six (96) were from second and third year and their response rate was 85.3%. The remaining 84 were fourth and fifth -year students and their response rate was 91.6%. The total response rate was 88.3%. The students' perception and ideas on their teachers in the clinical nursing Sciences years in relation to their grades were assessed and observed by only one question "treat students respectfully" was significantly associated with their grades. The higher proportion of students (56.52%) with higher and above average grades felt that the teachers treated them with respect compared with students (43.%) with average and low grades. The responses to other questions were not associated with their grades.

**Table 1 Students' general perception on student-teacher relationship based on level of study in association with their academic grades:**

Student Perceptions	Levels	Of	study		
	200	300	400	500	Total
Perceived teacher-learner positive relationship	33 (82.5%)	27 (81.8%)	40 (81.6%)	53 (57.6%)	
Perceived teacher-learner negative relationship	17 (17.5%)	6 (3.44%)	9 (18.4%)	9 (42.4%)	
General Perceptions on the effect on the academic grade	Positive	N=153 (83.2%)	Negative	N=31 (16.8%)	N=184 (100%)

Almost all the students agreed that the teacher- learner relationship was positive and it affected their academic attainment and the responses of students were uniformly distributed across grades.

**DISCUSSION**

Teacher –learner relationship is the connection that exists between the teacher and the student in an academic environment or climate (Peleg, 2005). According to Bernstein-Yamashiro (2013), teacher-learner relationship demonstrate the nature and quality of learners' relationships with the teacher plays a critical role and it is central in motivating and engaging students to learn. This relationship emerged as a strongly positive influence on clinical learning experiences in nursing education. The inherent qualities of the relationship (caring, knowing, trust, and mutual respect) and the teacher's rapport with the students resulted in a classroom environment where students were affirmed and supported to achieve their full potential as learners and clinicians (Gillespie, 2002). Student-teacher relationship influenced the focus and scope of the student's learning and consequently, the development of his/her professional identity as a

clinician. The task of gathering students' views on student-teacher relationship in a department of nursing education, was important as incorrect or poor responses were likely to affect the validity of the information. This study had a high response rate. The second to fifth years students had gone through at least through the teaching of core nursing courses, and so were able to express their perceptions on the relationship with their teachers in those years. In this study, a precise questionnaire was used inducing the students to respond positively. It was necessary to find out whether students' perception on their relationship with their teachers were dependent on their academic grades.

Students with higher and above average grades indicated that their teachers treated them with respect. This showed that these students interacted with teachers better than students with average and low grades. Almost all students thought that student-teacher

relationship could not affect their academic attainment. This was not supported by the finding which showed association between the student-teacher relationship and the students' grades. This implies that their grades were dependent on their views towards student-teacher relationship. This could be explained by the influence of the student-teacher relationship on the psychosocial condition of the student, as well as their academic achievement drive. In addition, majority of students irrespective of their grades observed that attendance of the students at lectures could have a bearing on student-teacher relationship. An assessment of the current relationship indicated that about two thirds of the students evaluated the relationship as positive. A high proportion of the students stated that teachers help students outside class hours. The relationship between the teacher and students was influenced significantly by the help teachers gave students outside lectures. It was assumed that previous or senior students' opinions had an effect on the junior students' views towards their teachers. Surprisingly, our study showed that all students were not influenced by the opinions of the students ahead of them of their teachers, but found no significant association with their grades. This can be explained by the fact that the experience of the senior students was more trustworthy than their own experiences, which is more common in nursing school.

#### CONCLUSION

In the present study, students in the Department of Nursing Science University of Port Harcourt clearly expressed their perceptions on student-teacher relationship. It showed that student academic grades and their views on student-teacher relationship were not independent and that to maintain this relationship in a nursing program, the views of all students should be accepted and considered significant

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