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Assessing the perception of nursing students on the barriers that constrain their ability to study in higher education

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Abstract
Student profiling is a very significant exercise in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as it enables the lectures to know their students by capturing the important levels of learning individuality before they commence with their studies. Through student profiling lecturers are able to identify the students' personal and educational needs and will prepare teaching strategies that render the appropriate support for each student.

The study has used a quantitative approach to draw conclusions on the barriers that students face to study effectively in Higher Education. A of cross-sectional study survey form, through Google drive, was virtually sent to twenty-second-year nursing to students where fifteen agreed to take part in the study.

Keywords: Higher Education Institutions, Student Profiling, Quantitative Approach, Higher Education

1. Introduction

Student profiling is a very significant exercise in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as it enables the lectures to know their students by capturing the important levels of learning individuality before they commence with their studies (Sibanda, Mbukusa, Kwembeya, 2021). Through student profiling the lectures will be able to identify the students' personal needs and prepare their teaching strategies to render the appropriate support for each student. The purpose of student profiling is to gather information on my students to be aware of their needs and any barriers that might constrain their ability to study in higher education effectively (Desai, Shah and Dhodi (2016). As teachers in higher education, getting to know our students enables us to increase the trust and engagement of the students. Also profiling help higher education teachers to decide on the different teaching and learning strategies that would include all students keeping in mind their learning needs.

Brief Literature review

Ekstrom (1972) categorized barriers to effective study as institutional, situational, and dispositional in her review of literature on women's participation in post-secondary education. These thoughts have been expounded by Root, Henehan, and Voelkel (2021). Insitutional barriers are described as factors such as admission practices, financial aid and types of curriculum services adopted that emanate from the institutions, limiting participation in post-secondary education. Situational barriers were presented as constraints arising from family and community obligations and personal finances limiting access to post-secondary education. Situational barriers can include finance, transportation, childcare, family support, employer support, and significant life events (Eckstrom, 1972; Bergman, Cudney, Harding, He, & Saraiva, 2019). The dispositional barriers were noted as person specific characteristics, including fear of failure, attitude toward intellectual activity and level of aspiration (Mbukusa, 2009 and Hunter-Johnson, 2017). These sentiments were shared by Bergman, Cudney, Harding, He, & Saraiva (2019) and Bergman, Olson & Associates (2019). Falcon (2015) indicated that families without college experience may not understand the

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required time and support needed by students and this results in lack of support from the families. Therefore, students need support to go through their educational system and most of the time the parental support is lacking as well as support from the institutions. The support from parents can be emotional, physical, financial and spiritual. Students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face external barriers, such as job and family responsibility, or internal barriers to studying, such as lack of motivational, cognitive and metacognitive abilities, all of which have been shown to impact academic success and retention Clement (2016). Clement (2016) further showed that students find less time for their studies due to family responsibilities as a huge challenge for them to study effectively. In support, In addition, Zalaquet (2016) reported that the Latin students lacked adult guidance in making proper educational choices due to the fact that the families lack experience with higher education and are unable to draw from their previous experiences.

A study done by Grant (2015) focusing on the institutional barriers concluded that barriers such as overcrowding in classrooms, inadequate institutional resources, lack of access to information and the registration process can hinder the students to study adequately. Therefore it is very important to provide students with enough information during the orientation process as well as an accessible student support. On the other hand, Mtebe and Raisamoi (2014) reported that in Tanzania the students had challenges with accessibility and availability of internet connection as well as the broadband coverage for them to study effectively.

Cawthon and Cole (2010) found out challenges faced by the students with learning disabilities at the HEIs as the use of accommodation and the obstacles in gaining access to the services, as well as lack of awareness of the campus resources to enable them to use them properly. Hence the need of proper orientation programs and continued support to students with learning disabilities. Another obstacle is the limited vocabulary especially for those students that are not fluent in English (Zalaquet, 2016.

Kerthu and Nuujoma (2019) reported that the nursing students in Namibian HEIs faces challenges in intergrading theory in to practice, limited resources in clinical settings, discriminatory attitudes and communication barriers. The challenge of lack of resources in local Health facilities in Namibia is a great concern and students find it very difficult to learn since the resources they are meant to use are not available especially in public sectors. Therefore, the main research question that guided the study is: *"What are the barriers that affect students to study effectively in Higher Education?"*

3.0 Research methodology

The study has used a quantitative approach to draw conclusions on the barriers that students face to study effectively in Higher Education. A survey type in the form of cross-sectional study was used to collect data will be from Welwitchia University students. Second year nursing students were approached and asked to complete a student profiling instrument for the study purposes. Twenty second year nursing students from Welwitchia University were approached and fifteen agreed to take part in the study. The selection of the sample can be based on probabilistic or non-probabilistic methods. For this research, non-

probability sampling, specifically, purposive sampling was used to come up with a sample size. This method was used because it is most appropriate where the population is very small and specific like in this case the second year students at Welwitchia is composed of few people. With this sampling technique the researcher was able to select the participants that were suitable for the study based on their knowledge, skills and experiences. Mauk (2017) mentioned that even though purposive sampling is intentional, the participants should be volunteers and willingly provide information. Consent was obtained from the participants and they were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time with no punishment. The researcher developed the questionnaire on Google drive and send the forms virtually to the students and they also replied online. The form only took about 15 minutes to complete. Questionnaires were used to collect data in this research. A standard questionnaire with multiple pre-set answers for each question was sent out to the sample participants of this research. The aim was to collect numerical data in relation to barriers to effective learning and be able to formulate trends and perception. Quantitative data was analyzed using inferential statistics, specifically the ANOVA table was used.

4.0 Results

The research findings were presented in this chapter. The data analysis was made in two forms where the first section covers the demographic characteristics of the collected data. The proceeding section focuses on the data analysis of the research findings.

4.1 Section A: Participants Information

This section of the questionnaire covered the respondents' age, gender and marital status of the respondents. The researcher established that students face different barriers to effective learning in relation to their age groups, gender and marital status.

4.1.1 Analysis of age group and marital status

90% of the students who are between 26 and 28 years of age indicated that situational barriers, such as constraints arising from family and community obligations, is one of the major barriers to effective learning. Most of these students under the mentioned age group indicated that they are married and have kids to take care of that will compromise on their time that they dedication to learning. 10% of these students indicated that barriers to effective learning stems from institutional barriers.

80% of the students who are between the age of 24 to 26 indicated that they are not yet married and their major barriers to effective learning are dispositional barriers such as fear of failure attitude toward intellectual activity and level of aspiration. 20% of these students under the mentioned age indicated that situation barriers prevent them from learning effectively.

95% of the students who are between 20 and 24 years of age indicated that institutional barriers such as lack of financial aid, admission practices and types of curriculum services adopted by the institution are preventing them from learning effectively. However, 5% of these students pointed out that constraints arising from family and community obligations are limiting them from learning effectively.

4.1.2 Analysis of gender

Gender of respondents	Percentage
Males	40
Females	60
Total	100%

As shown above, 60% of the participants were females and 40% were males. 98% of the females indicated that their major barrier to effective learning comes from family responsibilities. They indicated that house responsibilities limit their school time. The other 2% of the females pointed out that learning was not effective because of other reasons that comes from institutional and dispositional barriers.

90% of males indicated that their major barrier to effective learning come from dispositional and institutional barriers. While only 10% of male students indicated that their barriers to effective learning can be categorized as situational barriers.

4.2 Section B: Learning Barriers

4.2.1 Learner frustration with technology

Response	Frequency	Percentage
N/A=Did not experience	6	40
Small extent	2	13
Large	5	33
Moderate	2	13
Total	**15**	**100**

Learners were also presented the opportunity to indicate the level of frustration they experienced with the use technology in their studies. This item used a six-point scale based on the extent this was experienced (0=did not experience, 1= Small Extent, 5=Large Extent). Responses to this question were summarized in the table above. Over 60% of learners indicated they experienced either a small or small to large extent of frustration with the technology whereas another 40% indicated they did not experience any frustration at all.

4.2.2 Effectiveness of course delivery

A study of a higher education setting outlined in the literature review indicated lack of interaction and feelings of isolation may lead learners to have a negative attitude towards learning (Menchaca & Bekele, 2008). The questionnaire asked learners to specify on a five-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree) as to whether the course delivery was effective or not, specifically how they felt there were enough opportunities provided to interact with the facilitator and other learners during the course. Responses indicated 82% either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement and the other 18% indicated that they do not agree or strongly dis-agree with the statement.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	6	40
Strongly Agree	6	40
Disagree	1	7
Strongly disagree	2	13
Total	**15**	**100**

4.2.3 Availability of learning materials and financial aid.

80% of the students mentioned, in an interview conducted that financial barriers to buy study materials is one of the biggest challenges to effective learning. It is very important for students to have sufficient learning materials, because they can significantly increase student achievement by supporting student learning (Grant, 2015). Another challenge that was raised by 70% of students is the lack of personal computers and proper access to internet connection. Especially now during the pandemic of COVID-19 the globe is challenged with the Institutions had no choice but to divert their learning strategies to virtual learning and this poses a lot of challenges to students that do not have proper internet access. Some of the responses given were provided below.

"I find it difficult to study online with no access to internet or my own personal computer"
"I don't have access to internet I am really missing out on a lot, this is a big challenge for me"
"I have the mobile internet provided by UNAM, but most of the time is not working"

4.2.4 Time constraints

Time management was another barrier that was raised. 75% of the students mentioned that they do not have enough time to complete the tasks they are given for assessment and this is due to other responsibilities they have at home and or at work.

"I really do not find enough time for my studies because I am very busy with work nowadays due to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic"

5.0 Conclusions and recommendations

The study revealed students face challenges such as ineffectiveness of course delivery, use of technology, lack of internet access and time management. Most students mentioned that they find it difficult to complete their assessment tasks sometimes due to lack of time. Not having internet access especially now during the virtual learning the students miss out on some learning activities. About 60% of the students raised concerns of not easily get connected to electricity and thus finding it difficult for them to study and unable to use any electrical devices

Based on the findings of the study students need more support from parents, families as well as the institutions of higher education. The lectures should identify the weakness of their students for them to provide the necessary support. Students should also be provided with internet gadgets for them to learn effectively. Also, students should be encouraged to consult their lecturers or student support services in case they need any assistance. Student profiling should be carried out beforehand for lectures to know their students' needs and plan their teaching strategies accordingly.

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