

# **PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF PREGNANCY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCES OF FEMALE NURSING STUDENTS IN IMO STATE UNIVERSITY OWERRI. NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was on perceived effects of pregnancy on the academic performances of female nursing students in Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State. Nigeria. The objectives of this study was to determine the level of awareness of challenges of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students, types of academic challenges due to pregnancy and the effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students in IMSU. Three research questions were formulated to guide the work. Literature was reviewed based on the objectives. A descriptive survey design was used in which 62 respondents were selected using census survey. Questionnaire was used to collect data that was analyzed using frequency, percentages and charts. Pilot study was conducted and reliability coefficient of 0.8 was obtained. The study revealed that 50 (80.6%) of the pregnant nursing students are aware of the challenges of pregnancy on academic, the students experience challenges such as physical discomfort in 24(38.7%), reduced concentration span in 17(17.7%) and missing of lectures in 53 (85.5%). These affect their academics as they result in (30.6%) absenteeism, (27.4%) low academic performance, (24.2%) difficulty adjusting to motherhood as pregnant students and (17.7%) rewriting of courses.

Conclusion was drawn based on the findings. Recommendations and suggestions were made for further studies were made.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY***

Education is a lifelong process that enables the continuous development of a person's capability as an individual and as a member of the society (Effle, 2011). It is central to the development of young people as it prepares them for the world of work and life (Sibeko, 2012).

Academic performance is the outcome of education simply meaning the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goal.

In educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well a student meets standards set by the institution. Sophie, Benedikt and Tomas (2011) stated that “students with higher mental ability as demonstrated by IQ tests tends to achieve highly in academic settings” thus, academic performance is how students deal with their studies and how they cope with or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers

As career competition grows more fierce in the working world, the importance of students doing well in school has caught the attention of parents, legislators and government education departments alike. It has become imperative that areas of achievement and failure in student’s academic career be evaluated to foster improvement and make full use of learning process.

Performance in school is evaluated in a number of ways such as written and oral tests, presentations, homework’s and participating in class activities and discussions.

Pregnancy is a condition when a child bearing mother is having a developing fetus or embryo insider her. Mfuh, Umma and Sunday (2013) described this as: “the most rewarding experience of a woman’s life which can also be a tremendous challenge. This is a period a woman undergoes several hormonal changes accomplished by discomfort, distraction and physiological transformation which may interfere with her studies in conjunction with her responsibilities at home as a wife for the married. Recent research in South Africa discovered that more than thirty percent (31 .5%) of girl at age 18 have given birth at least once (Karra and lee, 2012). This statistics according to them shows that pregnancy especially that of the teenager is becoming more and more a barrier to girls education. Marteleto, Lam and Ranchord (2008) continued to note that school girls pregnancy has been one of the major hindrances to the educational success of women. To which Changach (2012) concluded that this imposes long term consequences on the career development of these young mothers and hence is likely to lead to transmission of poverty from generation to generation.

Kanku and Mash (2010) also affirmed that falling pregnant while still at school happen at the wrong time for a girl as it affect very much their education and often ends up ruining their future.

According to Lynch and Ghosh (2008), “cultural norms prescribes different role for mothers (pregnant or nursing women) in all societies irrespective of their age, so as to be able to perform their varied care taking role in the family. With these responsibilities and the need to meet up the expectations from the academic field so as to fulfill ones career and destiny, Mngoma (2010) said that most pregnant students drop out of school or had to repeat grades several times. They may also not be socially and personally mature enough to assume the new role of parenthood (Boltin in Sibeko, 2012) together with being a student at same time. Also the emotional impact of the crisis of pregnancy which may in some instance end in the termination of the pregnancy could also result in the student experiencing post- abortion stress symptoms. These might have a

detrimental effect on the student's bio-psychosocial well-being, relationships and ultimately affect her academic performance.

In Nigeria universities the increase rate of students involving in prenatal sex has predisposed the student to unwanted pregnancies either by their fiance or boy friend as is rampant in the various institutions Pandy, Makiwane, Ranched and Letsoalo (2009) opined that as young people spend longer periods in education, as part of the natural course of development, sexual experimentation and maturity is increasingly coinciding with them. More so, the number of years spent by the nursing student in the institution seems to trigger the inability to control their urges for marriage until after graduating as registered nurses (RN).

As the pregnant student are also expected to meet a minimum rate of academic progress which means passing 50% of the credit units for the subjects enrolled over the duration of the course, this paper therefore, proposes to explore how pregnancy affects the academic progression of nursing student in Imo state university.

### *STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM*

US department of education (2013) reported that pregnancy is consistently the most common reason given by female student for dropping out of school. Data collected by the National centre for education statistics in (2004), showed that 27.8% of the female students in 2002 and subsequently dropped out due to pregnancy. Similarly, a 2006 report found that, of 467 survey respondents age 16 through 25 who dropped out of public high schools in 25 different locations across the country, 26% of young men and young women combined, one—third of young women said that becoming a parent was a major factor in their decision to leave school to which they reported doing reasonably well in school before becoming pregnant.

Being a student nurse requires high academic effort with utmost attention to meet with the high expectation of the student. This is time consuming and life exhausting in itself talk more combining it with the demand of pregnancy. Before now, every student nurse is restricted from furthering her course at least for one session after her 6months puerperium to enable her take care of her baby, recover fully and set properly to face her academic squarely, meaning that the student misses one whole year and join the junior class.

The knowledge of family planning exposed through the course offered within the institution, the fact that information about sexuality issues and contraceptive methods are widely available provides all that every married or single female student nurse can apply to hold pregnancy from occurring until when ready.

The threat and trauma of stepping down starring the nursing students on the face each session should be enough to scare every student away from any form of distraction to total devotion to academic work, yet the increase in pregnancy among the nursing students of IMSU keeps booming.

The above observations and considerations have given the researcher concern being a nursing student of the same institution; she deemed it worthy to investigate on the effect of pregnancy on the academic performance of the female nursing students in IMSU to fulfill the following objective.

### *PURPOSE / OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY*

The purpose of this study is to evaluate how pregnancy affects the academic performance of the nursing student in IMSU. In line with this, the following objectives will be addressed;

- 1 To determine the level of awareness of challenges of pregnancy on academic performance among nursing students in IMSU.
- 2 To ascertain the types of academic challenges due to pregnancy faced by nursing students in IMSU.
- 3 To determine the effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students in IMSU.

### *SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY*

This study will reveal the impact pregnancy have on the academic performance among the selected pregnant nursing students.

This result obtained will be useful in helping the other female students in choice of marriage and prevention of pregnancies while in school to avoid disruption or distraction in academic progression.

This study will also help the nursing profession and administration to see the need for a counselor and offering of counseling services to the nursing students and the need for more emphasis on how to avoid pregnancy and family planning. This study will help reduce the frustration of students and families experiencing emotional stress and academic struggles as a result of unwanted pregnancy among student mothers.

The finding will help the nursing profession in reducing of occurrences of student pregnancy which will invariably promote a complete devotion to academic requirement and production of responsible graduate nurses who will represent the profession anywhere in the world.

This finding also, will add to existing sparse literature surrounding the academic performance of pregnant nursing students.

### *RESEARCH QUESTION(S)*

The key questions that will be answered in this study are;

- 1 What is the level of awareness of challenges of pregnancy among the pregnant nursing students in IMSU?
- 2 What are the types of academic challenges due to pregnancy faced by the nursing students in IMSU?
- 3 What are the effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students in IMSU?

### *SCOPE OF THE STUDY*

The scope of this study is all female students of nursing science in Imo State University (IMSU) who are pregnant or have been pregnant during the course of their study. The study is also delimited to their academic performance and how it is affected by pregnancy.

### *OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS*

**Pregnancy:** This is a condition when a woman is carrying a child in her womb.

**Academic Performance:** This is how student deal with their studies and how they cope or accomplish different tasks given to them by their teacher.

**Effect:** The way an action or a condition makes impact in ones life either positive or negative.

**Female Nursing Student:** This is an individual who has applied to be trained in the school of nursing so as to obtain the certificate to practice.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the literature review would be discussed under the following headings;

- Concepts of studentship and motherhood.
- Academic challenges of faced by pregnant nursing students.
- Effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students.
- Empirical Review
- Theoretical Framework.

### *CONCEPTS OF STUDENTSHIP AND MOTHERHOOD*

Studentship entails studying at a tertiary institution in order to attain a degree or a diploma. It involves a transition from high school to college life. Thus, students have to adjust to college life

in order to appropriately fit into the new situation and experience (Education Encyclopedia in Mamhute, 2011).

Roxburgh et al in Mamhute (2011) described motherhood as central to a woman's life while Magwaza in same write up referred mothering as a gendered practice and a woman's prerogative. The society expect mother to be gentle, loving and caring enough to devote all their life fulfilling her role in the family. But Luttrell in Mamhute (2011) refutes the idea of the "Myth of maternal omnipotence". According to her, mothers do not solely exist to gratify their children's needs. In fact, they may have wishes, needs and desire contrary to their children's needs.

Collage life make new academic demands such as lengthier assignment, more frequent written work and higher standards. Gushing in Mamhute (2011) asserted that in spite of these requirements, the student must exert herself so as to achieve the required levels in order to pass.

Motherhood as an institution is fraught with challenges such as anxiety, stress, indecision, frustration and fear such challenges are compounded by educational challenges in instances where the mother is a student.

Schreiner (n.d) opined that Nursing student learn a plethora of medical information requiring a well developed study skill to make learning and retention of information easier. He further stated that these students have to balance a hectic course schedule while training (P.2). Additionally, in many nursing programs timeliness is required and students can be expelled for accruing an excessive number of absence. Further more, success in nursing school requires dedication to course of study and individuals who have numerous family commitments will likely struggle to keep up on their classes. According to him, even the best intentioned nursing student can struggle with balancing their school work and their current responsibilities (including pregnancy demand).

Luttrell had this to say in Mamhute (2011) "when a female learner becomes pregnant she bids farewell to youth and has to contend with realities and responsibilities of adulthood. She also adds the status of mother to her academic role". Yet more often than not, the demand of motherhood and studentship are incompatible. The pregnant student has to put effort in balancing the two roles. In her struggle to serve two "masters", the student may fail to satisfy both said Mamhute (2011).

### ***ACADEMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY PREGNANT NURSING STUDENTS***

Merill asserted in Mamhute (2011) that pregnant and nursing learners experience challenges due to the competing and conflicting demands of their mothering roles and studentship. According to her, these challenges can be physical, social or administrative. Sekgobela (2008) added that these challenges have a negative effect on academic progress and achievement (Mamhute, 2011) also

affirmed that some challenges are peculiar to pregnant students. These challenges relating to their academics could be physical, social and administrative peculiar to pregnant students.

“When a female student becomes pregnant, her physical and mental states might adversely affect her studies” opined Sekgobela (2008). Luttrell also recognized that pregnancy is a unique condition in that it is the only state which affords two people to line under one skin. This two-in-one state affects the physical well-being of the mother. Some of the physical problems cited by Sekgobela (2008) include; nausea, vomiting, bleeding, dizziness, tiredness, cephalo-pelvic disproportions, preeclampsia toxemia etc.

Canterbury Christ Church University (2010) views pregnant learners as at risk students who should not be exposed to “significant physical activities....chemicals, paints and radiation. Thus, pregnancy curtails students’ working capabilities thereby affecting their self esteem. Study by Luttrell in Mamhute (2011) also showed an expressed sentiment by pregnant girls indicating that school life was a struggle. However, pregnant students experience their pregnancy differently. While some find it easy to study, others find it almost impossible to study while pregnant (Pankhurst, 2010). According to the study by Sekgobela (2008). The pregnant nurses confirmed that the physical, social and academic challenges they faced made it difficult for them to study. Netshikweta in Mamhute (2011) opined that although some pregnant student have positive attitude towards their pregnancies, they acknowledged experiencing physical discomfort. In her study, Netshikweta also noted that 89% of her respondents experienced physical discomfort. For Luttrell, she stated that during pregnancy the body undergoes changes and sends signals which the student must pay attention to. Some such signals are backache, morning sickness, muscle cramps, heart burn and hypertension.

Physical discomfort tends to negatively affect academic performances. Academic progress is held back as coping strategies and attention spans reduces. Netshikweta in Mamhute (2011) in agreement with the above sentiments stated that working abilities of students are affected by pregnancy. Luttrell further affirmed that one of the reasons pregnant students in the USA were expelled from school in the early century was that they were not able to function in an academic situation. Besides, the physical demands placed upon the student can cause stress which also has a detrimental effect in their studies. (Adam in Mamhute, 2011). It is in the light of such challenges that Canterbury Christ Church University (2010) advised the pregnant students to communicate with their programme directors so that they can get the necessary assistance.

Similarly, emotional dispositions impact negatively on pregnant student’s academic progress. Roxburgh et al in Manhute (2011) also echoed same sentiments contending that the mismatch between what is expected in parenthood and the actual reality of parenthood combined with student ship can cause stress as the new parent tries to adjust.

Also, society seems to view pregnant learners negatively. Teacher sentiments indicate that for pregnant learners, education is a responsibility and not a right (Luttrell in Manhute, (2011).



Differential attitudes towards pregnant learners protected by different members of the society tend to affect their self-esteem (Sweetman in Mamhute, 2011). Most participants felt that their lecturers made life difficult for them. Lecturers failed to offer appropriate guidance and support, thereby negatively impacting in these students endeavor to achieve their intended goals. (Van den Berg and Mamhute, 2013). They also reported that lecturers often intimidated, ridiculed and belittled these students through their comments and actions. This did not contribute to creating a positive self-concept in the students. (Crous et al in Van den Berg & Mamhute, 2013). It is believed that pregnant students' chances of success could be enhanced if lecturers showed care and concern for them. Positive comments could assist the development of self-confidence, self-respect and feelings of adequacy.

Even when provision is made for these learners to study separately from the non- pregnant, they become apprehensive. In the USA, the establishment of the prednunt programme for pregnant teens (PPPT) was seen by the pregnant girls as segregatory rather than an act of goodwill. Society's refusal to treat such learners with dignity and the concomitant inability to assist them causes anxiety. Anxiety, according to Hybels and Weaver (2004) can create psychological disturbances of the mind leading to confusion. This is a barrier' to communication and consequently to academic achievement.

Brook field in Mamhute (2011) indicated that mutual respect among learner is one of the conditions for successful learning. Disrespecting and embarrassing pregnant learners negatively affects their learning.

The realization of these effects has led the Zimbabwe community to expect female learners to complete high school and tertiary education before starting a family. (The Saturday Herald, 2010).

Kambanji (2010) opined that the psycho-social issues that mothering learners have to deal with make it undesirable for girls to fall pregnant while studying.

The realization of the incompatibility of parenting and study has in some instances forced governments, schools or colleges to formulate policies or regulation that would cater for the welfare of mothering students (Mamhute, 2011). Though a gesture of goodwill, the policies in most cases, lack clear guidance or how student mothers should be treated, they instead offer guidelines.

In America, according to Washington D.C (2013), Title IX of Education Amendment of 1972 sanctioned the inclusion of all female learners, including school aged mothers to equal education opportunities however. As late as the 21st century, New York City schools experienced 70% teenage-mother drop out partly due to stigmatization and inadequate support within and outside their schools. (Hearing Testimony, 2010).



Lack of viability and commitment by the authorities to ensure that policies are implemented led to the closure of some schools established for pregnant and nursing learners in New York (Hearing Testimony, 2010).

In Australia, the women's employment, Education and Training project (WEETAG) found out that social stigmatization of young women can result in negative self images which tend to limit their future options. (Bullen, Kenway and Hay in Mamhute, 2013). This realization they said has led the British Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to recommend the consideration of the particular needs of teenage parents in the study programme and attendance requirement. Similarly, policy makers should consult pregnant and nursing students so that policy supports can uphold the development of positive image. Though, according to Kambanji (2010), policy targets can achieve the opposite if not well defined. Hence, policies can act as barriers to self — actualization for the student mothers. Over the year, policies have been set by college principals and responsible authority to expel pregnant students. Such student has to rejoin college after weaning their babies. However, the advent of a new policy that allows pregnant learners to go on maternity leave for three months ushers in an era of hope for pre and nursing adult learners (Murape, 2010). The study on social — education challenges of pregnant student revealed that the college administration did very little in terms of supporting them. The entire participant in the study felt that although the administration was aware of pregnant students among its student population, they refused to give them the necessary support.

### *EFFECTS OF PREGNANCY ON THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE NURSING STUDENT*

According to Gaant and Hallman (2006), although, pregnancy and motherhood do not always interrupt school girls education they can introduce a new set of circumstances that influence future decision related to the girls education. For Pandy, Makiware, Ranchod and Letsoala (2009), school girls pregnancy can have a profound impact in the mother and child by placing limits on her education achievement and economic stability as well as predisposing her to single parent hood. Duncan (2011) on the National campaign to prevent teen and unplanned pregnancy asserted that “whether the opportunity for education is lost or delayed, unplanned pregnancy often makes life harder for those trying to achieve the “dream” of a collage education”. She further stated that there are a wide of serious consequences for the young men and women especially those who are unmarried who experience an unplanned pregnancy, as well as for children born as a result of such pregnancies. From the stand point, the consequence may be especially compelling because they can distract, delay or derail student from reaching their education goals. (Duncan 2011)

Kara and Lee (2012), also pointed that pregnancy places a student at an educational and economic disadvantage. She may take longer to complete her studies.

Pregnant students are also known to be often absent from school for a variety of reasons related to their pregnancy (Rangiah, 2013).

Mamhute (2012) affirmed that pregnancy is a unique condition as it is the only state affording two people to live under one skin which invariably affect the physical well being of the mother. To her, some of the most common physical problems associated with pregnancy are nausea and vomiting, dizziness, tiredness and edema which may prevent the girl from going to school.

A pregnant school may miss some classes during the day when she is not feeling well. School days are missed when the pregnant school girl has to visit a clinic or doctor and during the final stage of her pregnancy, delivery and after the birth of the baby. (Bezuidenhout, 2013).

In their opinion Chigona and Chetty (2007) opined that being frequently absent from school results in pregnant students missing a lot of school work (Lectures, Assignment, Tests etc)

Beesham in Sibeko (2012) asserted that educators reported a decrease in academic performance during and after pregnancy when compared to the performance of the student before pregnant. Changach (2012) also noted the various research studies confirmed that due to their pregnancy, students are often absent from school because they do not feel well or had to visit the clinic or the doctor. Being absent causes the pregnant student to miss school work such as lesson, test and assignments and most of the time, she falls behind in their school work.

Van den Berg and Mamhute (2013) also articulated that “over the years, large numbers of pregnant students have failed to write their examination because they gave birth during examination period and had to take their examinations the following year.” To drive their point further, they reported that in November 2010, a pregnant student failed to do a music practical examination because she gave birth in the eve of the examination day and no arrangement were made to enable her to take her examination after giving birth. We have had cases where the pregnant students start experiencing labor in the midst of hospital final examination. Another student was not allowed to write professional Council examination after qualifying in the pre-council examination because she delivered a night to the first paper and was not able to leave the hospital ward for the examination hall.

Kramer and Lancaster (2010) in agreement with Lynch (2008) opined that in most Africa cultures, women are expected to subordinate their needs and desire to those of their children and families. Thus, students with infant have to grapple with the role of motherhood and studentship. As a student mother, the student blends two identities the role of which conflicts. To be a good student, one needs to be fully committed to the academic demands.

### *EMPIRICAL REVIEW*

A study on “Effect of educational challenge on academic performance of pregnant learners” carried out by Mamhute (2011) in South Africa with 6 participants reported that the interview

with the pregnant students showed that they missed a number of lectures. Even though they collected note from their classmates, most of these lecture notes were incomprehensible as students were fond of using short hand, reported participant y3 and y1. Participant y3 openly admitted that her academic performance was deteriorating which she felt was due to the varied effects of her pregnant state. It was now and rarely before that did she fail most of the course work assignment. In her study one of the participants confessed that “I feel my pregnancy is responsible. Had it not been for it, I would have put more effort and I would not have failed. Apart from failing assignments, these participants were no longer active in class. Participant y2 summed their predicament when she said “...pregnancy slackens my learning pace even participation in lecture, I just sit and try to listen”.

In a research carried out by Bhana, Morrel, Shefer and Ngabaza (2010), it was discovered that the presence of a pregnant girl in a classroom is not only a threat to their own academic achievement but also to the collective academic performance of the class as well as the classroom harmony. Further more, most pregnant school girl are not able to cope with the schools academic demands

Also in a research carried out on “Challenge of pregnant students Van den Berg and Mamhute (2013) reported a particular commentary stating “because I am pregnant, I have so many rewrites”

Another research by Sibeko (2012) on the “Effect of pregnancy on a school girls education” reported that more than ninety percent (92%) of the participant in the research acknowledged that pregnant students are frequently absent from school. Majority of the respondents (88%) agreed that pregnant student perform poorly in school. A large percentage (98%) of the respondents said that pregnant student have to repeat courses.

### ***THEORETICAL FRAME WORK***

In this study, Maslow’s hierarchy of need is considered to help us ascertain the reason for students’ pregnancy and how the need can be met without or limited occurrence of pregnancy within the period of schooling to avoid the negative impact on they sort to meet their needs.

Based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, Maslow identified that sex is one of the basic physiological need that takes precedence over higher level need. This need is usually expressed directly or indirectly which is manifested in the incidence of pregnancy while still in school such as in the current study. As one of the essential need of human, student tends to exploit sex to satisfy this need which if not met according to Maslow, can lead to pervasion like excessive sexual language, masturbation, exposure of sexual organs etc. Also, others flirt or redirect sexual need to physical exercise, over eating or over-working. This exploit and need to satisfy the sexual need result to engagement in risk lifestyles such as partying, indiscriminate sexual relationship as well as early marriage or negligence to family planning or use of contraceptive that result to pregnancy while in school. In as much as sex is a basic need, if not handled

appropriately, it could bring about unplanned pregnancy with its implications to the student academic welfare as she struggles to combine pregnancy with academics.

Maslow also recognized the need for love and belonging. This being the third level in the hierarchy indicated that people generally need to feel that they are loved by family and are accepted by friend and other citizen of their society. As long as the need for security and safety is ensured, an individual would be in willing to socialize to satisfy the need for love and belonging. Thus, when a student is connected or meets an opposite sex who can offer the love and belonging, sexual involvement which can lead to pregnancy ensues. However, when a student becomes pregnant, due to wrong timing, she can experience isolation as she is excused from so many social activities with course mates.

In self esteem, Sibeko (2013) noted that an adult learners self-concept should be congruent to her potential in order to actualize it. Hybels and Weaver (2014) defined self-concept as how one thinks and feels about oneself which could be enhanced by the learning environment that enable the student to be conscious and accept their feeling and experience. (Sibeko, 2013) further cited Crouse et al, stating that “one requires positive regard from others to reaffirm ones self-esteem. Care and appreciation as well as respect and approval from others are essential in the development of a good self-esteem. Ones self-esteem if positive enhances her chances to function as a self-directed learner.(Bruggerman, 2005). Consequently, ones chances to succeed in attaining a career are increased. On the contrary, when a student gets pregnant in the course of studies and is predispose to the struggle of meeting both needs of academic and pregnancy, she is bound to have set a back which plays a trick on her self esteem as people begin to view her as a failure in the area of academics. She also could start undermining her abilities which could have negative impact on her self-worth as the struggle continues. This of course, hinders the realization of other needs such as self actualization since one cannot claim to have actualized her life dream and satisfaction when she has not been able to complete an attempt in acquiring a degree. However, building students self-esteem would enable them note how important their career or academic achievement is and the need to acquire it first before venturing into pregnancy. Or at least learn to place priorities according to their conceived needs. It would help them discover their self importance independently without falling into the prey of men who would implicate their further by impregnating them.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter deals with the methods used by the researcher in carrying on the study.

### *RESEARCH DESIGN*

The research design has been defined by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as “a plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of the phenomenon of interest”. All the decision made by the researcher in planning the study constitutes the design of the research (Mamhute, 2011). For

Chinweuba, Iheanacho and Agbapuonwu (2014), it entails the steps used in generating data and converting such data into meaningful forms.

The researcher adopted descriptive survey method. This design was used because the study deals with analysis of information that will enable the researcher to describe the effect of pregnancy on the academic performance of female nursing students in Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State.

### *RESEARCH SETTING*

This study was conducted in Imo State University. The school comprises of two campuses. One in Owerri and the other in Umuna Community, Orlu L. G. A. in Imo State.

The Owerri campus is located in the heart land (Central Zone) of Owerri. A common road (Orji) that leads from Douglas where the largest market (Ekeonunwa) is situated towards Okigwe road. At the school Junction Commonly called IMSU junction, is a fly-over beside which a round-about is situated. This junction leads towards the main campus into the Faculty of health sciences where the nursing students have their lectures.

### *TARGET POPULATION*

The population of the study was the female nursing students who were pregnant at the time of study or who have been pregnant within the course of their study as nursing student in Imo State University Owerri.

### *SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES*

Chinweuba, Iheanacho and Agbapuonwu (2014) affirmed that when the population size is small and accessible to the researcher, he may decide to use all members as subjects for that study. This they further explained is known as census survey.

The researcher therefore, used the total population of 62 female nursing students who were pregnant at the time of their study as nursing students. The researcher identified students who were visibly pregnant. For those students who have delivered and those whose pregnancy was not visible, the researcher asked the visibly pregnant students to identify them.

However, the 100 level class was not included. This is because they have not really come into the department as nursing students.

### *INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION*

The instrument the researcher used was questionnaire which was constructed by the researcher and structured so as to ascertain the effect of pregnancy on academic performance of female nursing students. This consists of total number of 16 items, which were made up of close ended questions.

The questionnaire consists of two (2) sections:

Section A tried to elicit information on the demographic data of the respondents

Section B elicited information on Challenges of pregnancy and Effects of pregnancy on academic performance.

### *VALIDITY OF INSTRUMENT*

Validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving the instrument to expert who went through it and certified that it is suitable for the study

### *RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENT*

The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method. A pilot study was conducted among 10 students from mid-wifery class. These students did not participate in the actual study. This group of respondents has similar characteristics with the population of this study. The answers from the first test were collected and after ten days, the same instrument was re-administered to the same respondents. The instrument reliability co-efficient was calculated using Pearson's product moment correlated coefficient. The reliability coefficient was 0.8 which was highly reliable. The test confirmed that the instrument was suitable for the study.

### *METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION*

A letter of approval was received from the school (I-head of the Department). A letter of consent was also written to the respondents to obtain their consent after some explanations about the nature and purpose of the study. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents in their various classes the first day. Second, third and fourth visits were made within the month for greater coverage of the study populations in each class. The researchers administered a total of 62 questionnaires to the pregnant students and those who have been pregnant during their course of study that were present in school as at that time of study. The questionnaires were administered directly and all the completed questionnaires were collected.

### *METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS*

Data were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of frequency, percentage. Data were presented using tables, pie chart, bar charts and histogram.

### *ETHICAL CONSIDERATION*

During the course of this study, the researcher took into consideration the entire ethical principles governing the conduct of a research. The researcher took permission from the Head of Department of Nursing Science and a written consent was attached to the questionnaire with

reasons, and the procedures explained to the respondents. All the information gathered was treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity maintained during the course of this work.

The researcher tried her best not to subject the respondents to any harm, both physically and psychologically.

The respondents were free to withdraw from the research at any point in time. In the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that only relevant questions were asked, and confidentiality of the response assured and their privacy strictly maintained by using the information obtained only for the purpose of the study.

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

This chapter discussed in detail the data collected using questionnaire from the respondents. Each item contained in the questionnaire was critically analyzed using frequencies, percentage, and were presented using tables and charts.

### *SECTION A*

**Table 1: Demographic Data**

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	19	30.6
26-33	35	56.5
34-41	8	12.9
42-49	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	7	11.3
Married	55	88.7
Separated	-	-
Divorced	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		



Christianity	62	100
Islamic	-	-
Others	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Current level of Respondents</b>		
200	11	17.7
300	5	8.1
400	12	19.4
500	34	54.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

### *RESULT*

Table I shows that 19 (30.6%) of the respondents were between 18-25 years, 35 (56.5%) between 26-33 years, 8 (12.9%) between 34-41 years while 0 (0%) was between 42-49 years. 7 (11.3%) of the respondents were single while 55 (88.7%) were married. All the students 62 (100%) were Christian. 11 (17.7%) of the respondents were in 200 level, 5 (8.1%) were in 300 level, 12 (19.4%) were in 400 level while 34 (54.8%) were in 500 level.

### *SECTION B*

#### **AWARENESS OF CHALLENGES OF PREGNANCY AND EFFECTS OF PREGNANCY ON ACADEMICS**

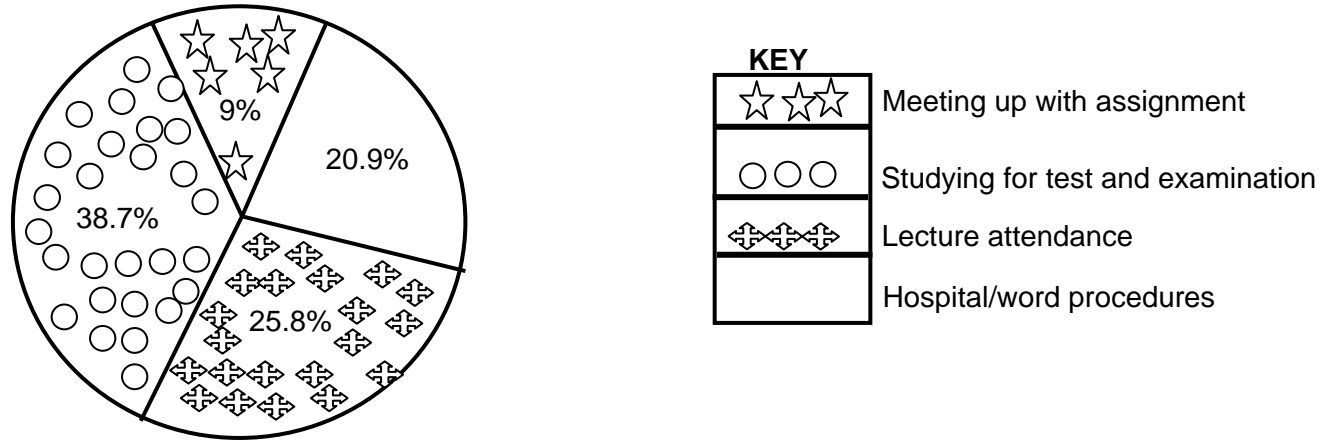
**Research Question One:** What is the level of awareness of challenges of pregnancy on academic performance among the pregnant nursing students in IMSU?

**Table 2: Showing students affirmation that pregnancy has effect on academics.**

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	50	80.6
No	12	19.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

**RESULT**

From the above, 50 (80.6%) of the respondents agreed that pregnancy has effect on their academics while 12 (19.4%) do not agree.



**Fig I: Showing areas where students experience effects of pregnancy on academics**

**RESULT**

The above figure shows that 24(38.7%) of the students experience the effects of pregnancy on the area of lecture attendance, 16(20.8%) in hospital ward procedures, 13 (20%) in meeting up with assignment, while 9(14.5%) experience it in the area of studying for text or examination.

**Table 3: Showing how often the students meet up with class lecturer before pregnant**

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Not Often	3	4.8
Quite often	17	27.4
Very often	42	67.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

**RESULT**

From the above, 3 (4.8%) do not often meet up with class lectures before pregnancy, 17 (27.4%) were quite often in class while 42 (67.7%) meet up with their class very often.

**Table 4: Showing how often the students meet up with class lectures when pregnant**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not Often	31	50
Quite often	24	38.7
Very often	7	11.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

The above shows that when pregnant, 31 (50%) respondents do not often meet up with their classes, 24(38.7%) quite often meeting while 7(11.3%) very often meet up with their classes.

**Table 5: Showing students affirmation of missing lectures because of antenatal visits or other pregnancy demand.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	53	85.5
No	9	14.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

The above table shows that 53(85.5%) miss lectures sometimes for antenatal visit or other pregnancy demanded while 9 (14.5%) do not.

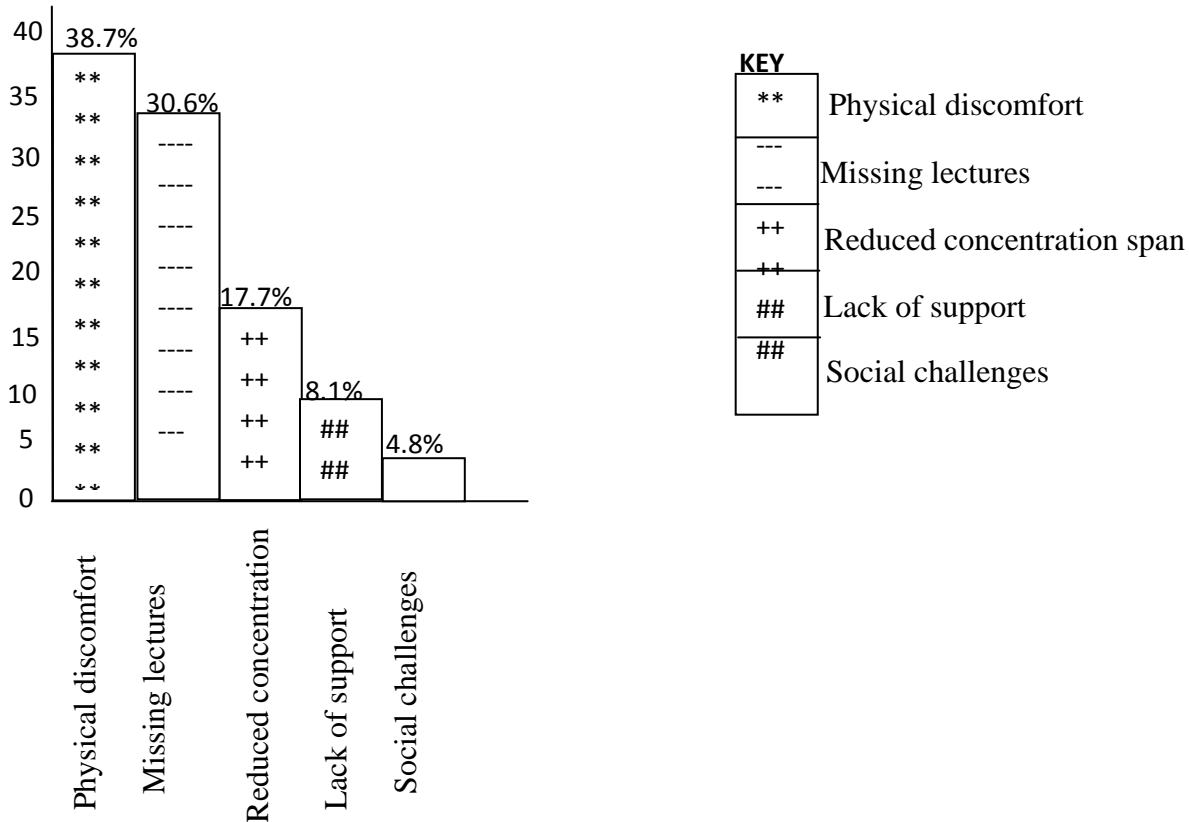
**Research question Two: What are the types of academic challenges due to during pregnancy faced by the nursing students in IMSU?**

**Table 6: Showing students affirmation of having academic challenges during pregnancy**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	51	82.3
No	11	17.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

**RESULT**

From the above, 51(82.3%) agrees to have academic challenge during pregnancy as a student while 11 (17.7%) do not.



**Fig II: Showing the challenges students nurses face while pregnant**

**RESULT**

The figure above shows that 24(38.7%) had physical discomfort as a challenge while pregnant, 19(30.6%) missed lectures, 11(17.7%) had reduced concentration span, 5(8.1%) lacked support while 3(4.8%) had social challenges.

**Research Question Three:** What are the effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of nursing students in IMSU?

**Table 7: Showing students’ affirmation that missing lectures affects academic performance.**

Options	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	51	82.3%

No	11	17.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

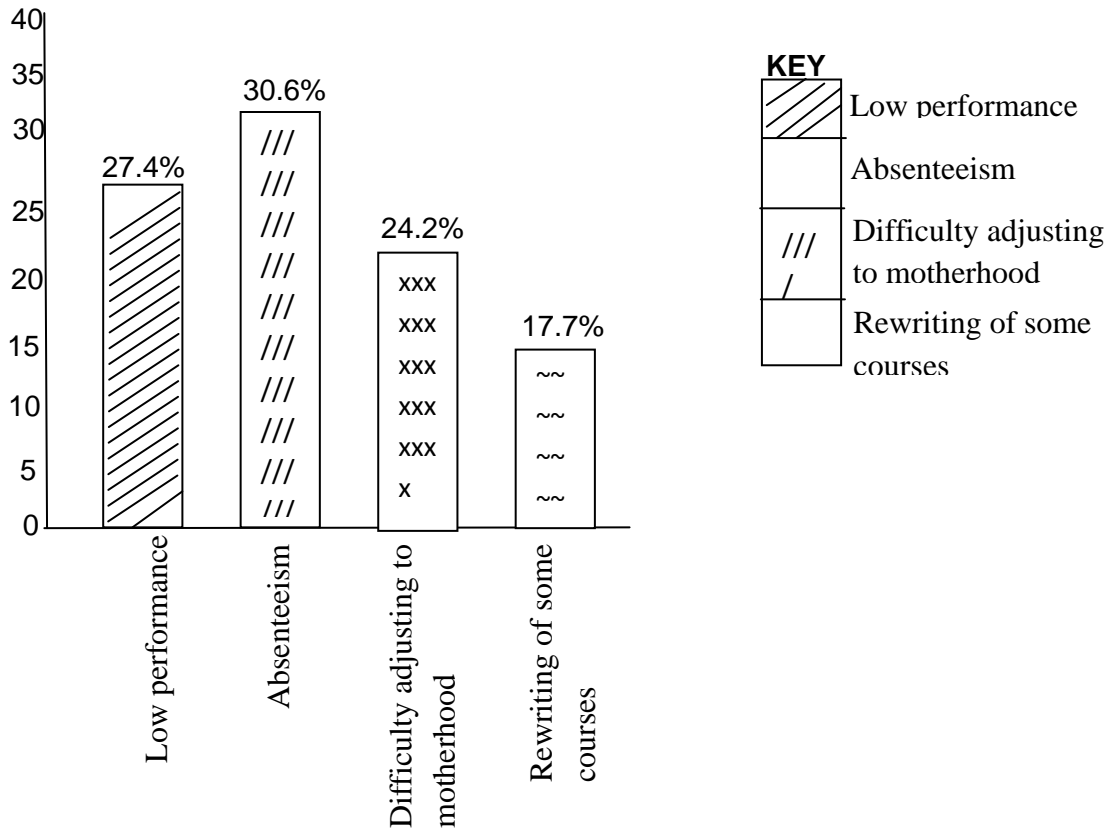
From the table above, 51 (82.3%) agrees that missing lectures affects their performance academically, while 11(17.7%) did not agree.

**Table 8: Showing students affirmation that pregnancy affects their studying pattern.**

<b>Options</b>	<b>No of Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	48	77.4
No	14	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

The above table shows 48(77.4) of the respondents agree that pregnancy affects their stud while 14 (22.6%) did not agree.



**Fig III: Showing the perceived effects of pregnancy on academic performance of nursing students in IMSU.**

*RESULT*

The figure above shows that 19(30.6%) experiences low performance, 15(24.2%) difficulty adjusting to motherhood as a pregnant student while 11(17.7%) rewriting of some courses due to the fact they were pregnant.

**Table 9: Showing rewrites of assignment or examination as a result of pregnancy.**

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	30	48.4
No	32	51.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

From the above table, 30 (48.4%) had to rewrite an assignment or examination as a result of pregnancy while 32 (51.6%) did not.

**Table 10: Showing the frequency of those who would take the chance of another pregnancy while in school.**

Options	No of Respondent	Percentage
Yes	24	38.7
No	38	61.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>100</b>

*RESULT*

From the table above, 24(38.7%) indicated to take another chance of pregnancy in school while 38 (61.3) would not.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

This chapter deals with the discussion of major findings, implications of the study, Conclusion and recommendations. Discussion of the findings of this study was discussed according to the research questions.

**Research Question One:** What is the level of awareness of challenges of pregnancy on academic performance among the pregnant nursing students in IMSU?

**Table 2,3,4,5 and Fig I** answers the above question.

The result shows that 50 (80.6%) recognized that pregnancy has effect on their academic while 12(19.4%) did not. Among those who recognized these challenges, 24(38.7%) saw the effect in the area of studying for test or examination, 16(25.8%) in the area of lecture attendance, 13(20.6%) in hospital/ward procedure, while a smaller number 9(42.5%) in meeting up with assignment. Also, most of the respondents 42(67.7%) who were very often in meeting up with lecture before pregnancy decreased to 7(11.3%) when pregnant. While 3(4.8%) who were not often meeting up with class before pregnancy increased to 31(50%) when pregnant. 53 (85.5%) agreed that they sometimes misses lectures due to antenatal visits or other pregnancy demand.

From the above, it could be inferred that majority of the respondents recognizes that pregnancy has challenges on academics which is seen mostly in area of preparing for a test or examination



and reduction in meeting up with lecture as the need for antenatal and other pregnancy demand arises.

This findings corresponds with the result gotten from a study carried out by Sibeko (2012) on “Effect of pregnancy on a school girls education”, 92% of the respondents in the research sample agreed that pregnant students are frequently absent from school in order to visit the clinic or doctor, when not feeling well and for the birth of the baby. Mamhute (2012) also reported that the pregnant students in her study showed that they missed a number of lectures to which they admitted that their academic performance was deteriorating. Zwolak (2008) pointed out that pregnant students felt they could not cope with the demand of pregnancy. Pregnant student nurses find it difficult to care for their patients. (Netshikweta in Sekgobela, 2008)

**Research Question Two: What are the types of academic challenges due to pregnancy faced by nursing students in IMSU?**

**Table 6 and Fig II answers the above question.**

The result of the findings shows that majority 51(82:3%) of the respondents admitted have academic challenges due to pregnancy. These challenges include physical discomfort experienced by 24(38-7%), missing of lectures in 19 (30.6%) respondents and reduced concentration span in 11(17.9%), The findings shows that most of the pregnant students undergo certain challenges such as physical discomforts of pregnancy which makes studying difficult and unavoidably missing some lectures which exposes then to failure. This finding corresponds with the result gotten from a study carried out by Mamhute (2011) with 6 pregnant nursing students which inferred that physical discomforts of pregnancy were obstacles which impacted negatively on their studies. Participant y3 openly admitted that the varied effects of her pregnant state affected her academic performance. This student declared that her pregnancy slackens her learning pace. While Sekgobela (2008) affirmed that pregnancy can cause undue tiredness and reduce the student’s concentration span. Sibeko (2012) in his study also affirmed that it has been found that during pregnancy, school girls were often absent because they felt sick as proved by 92% of respondents agreeing to be frequently absent from school as a result of pregnancy. According to Lynch (2008), pregnant students experience challenges due to the competing and conflicting demands of their mothering roles and studentship. The challenges can be physical, social, financial and administrative.

**Research Question Three: What are the perceived effects of pregnancy on the academic performance of Nursing Students in IMSU?**

**Table 7, 8, 9, 10 and Fig III answers the above question.**

The result of the findings shows that majority, 51(82.3%) agreed that missing lectures affects their performance academically and most 48(77.4%) acknowledged that pregnancy affects their studying pattern. Their experiences showed that pregnancy leads to low performance in 19

(30.6%), increases absenteeism in 19 (30.6%), makes it difficult adjusting to motherhood as a pregnant student in 15 (24.2%) and brings about rewriting of some courses in 11(17.7%). 32(51-6%) did not rewrite any assignment as a result of pregnancy while 30 (48.4%) did. On whether they would take another chance of pregnancy while in school, 38 (61.3) would not while 24(38.7%) would do so.

The above result shows that pregnancy has a profound effect on academic performance. As these students miss lectures, experience challenges in study pattern and try to struggle with adjusting to motherhood as a pregnant students. Most begin to experience rewrites of courses and assignments and low performance in their academics. Even though many agreed on taking another chance of pregnancy in school which may be related to the fear of their age at school and fear of reaching menopause before graduating, as one indicated that she would have to struggle, most would not give it another chance. This finding supported Mamhute (2011) who wrote that as a result of challenges of pregnancy; most of the participant's experienced low academic performance. And all the 3 pregnant participants felt that studying while pregnant was not only difficult, but a never to be repeated experience. In agreement, Sibeko (2012) reported that the majority of the respondents (88%) agreed that pregnant students perform poorly in schoolwork. While large percentage (93%) said that pregnant students have to repeat grades. In Sekgobela (2008) opinion, "the challenges the pregnant students face have a negative effect on academic progress and achievement."

## **IMPLICATION FOR NURSING**

From the findings made by the researcher in this study, it is the role of the nurses be it in the hospital or in the school to give the students correct information and orientation to help them realize the implication of pregnancy while studying before they actually get into it.

Nurses should organize health education sessions, workshops, seminar and conferences for student nurses to increase the awareness of effect of pregnancy on the student's performance.

The nursing college administration should further establish an office for proper counseling and support for both non and pregnant students in their academic performance and in choice making.

Nurses should be encouraged to conduct more studies on the effect of pregnancy and child rearing on the academic performance of students.

The finding will serve as a contribution to the existing body of knowledge in this area of study and useful as reference for future researchers in nursing profession.

Nurses should make more emphasis on family planning and appropriate arrangement for sexuality education.

The professional body should set policies that will guide the students in area of pregnancy and studying.

## **SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES**

This study is subject to criticism from other researcher to validate its claims.

- Similar studies should be carried out in other universities in Imo State as well as universities in other states of the federation and beyond.
- Research should be carried out on the effects of marriage and pregnancy on the academic performance among nursing students.
- Research should also be done on the academic challenges of pregnant student nurses for broader coverage.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of this study, the researcher assert that majority of the pregnant nursing students in Imo State University are aware of challenges of pregnancy on academics, the students experience challenges such as; physical discomfort, reduced concentration span and missing some lectures which result in low performance, absenteeism, difficulty adjusting to motherhood as a pregnant student and rewriting of some courses (carry over).

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