UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES OF NURSING MOTHERS ON DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME AT AGOGO COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

KWARTENG SAMUEL

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**A dissertation in the Department of Educational Foundations,
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DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I certify that the whole work is the result of my individual effort, and that no part of it has ever been presented in any university elsewhere.

KWARTENG SAMUEL

Signature: ………………………….

Date: …………...............

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of long essay laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Dr. Yayra Dzakadzie

Signature:………………………………

Date: ……………………

DEDICATION

To my late mother, Comfort Yaa Animah of Domeabra, and my lovely wife Abigail Achiamaa. Also, to my son Nhyiraba Asiedu Kwarteng and my Daughter Winifred Nsonowaa Kwarteng

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Student mothers in distance education programmes in Ghana have to combine family roles with work and academic pursuits. Therefore, this study sought to find out the academic challenges of nursing mothers on distance education programme at Agogo College of Education. The study employed descriptive survey design. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 40 conveniently sampled student mothers attending Agogo College of Education. The data collected was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. It was found out that, the student mothers had a lot of academic challenges in relation to time management, concentration and study skills. Again, the coping strategies they employed were, that student mothers either gets assistance from their husbands or hire the service of a domestic paid worker to assist them in the home to be able to strategize themselves and do well in their academic work. The study recommended that management and administrators of the various colleges of distance education should have counselling unit for these student mothers, who get mentally and psychologically troubled to seek assistance from the counselling unit to help them have a stabled and a concentrated mind for studies.
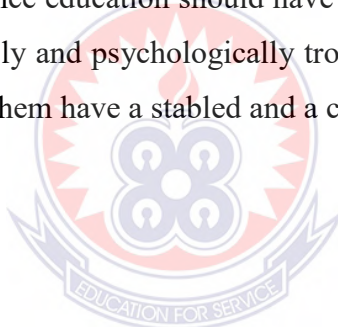
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Education in the first place is believed to provide knowledge and resources that holds potentials for economic empowerment for better livelihood and social development (World Bank and Ministry of Planning and Investment of Vietnam, 2016). For this reason, access to education has been the prime objective of many nations. This also explains why education is seen as a fundamental human right (Adofo, 2013). Higher education seeks to build highly individualized and flexible programs of learning and makes use of largely untapped resources for teaching and learning. Thus, higher education can be viewed as a means of acquiring knowledge that will enable the individual keep up with the rapid social, cultural, economic, political, industrial and technological changes taking place in the environment in which the individual finds himself (Kazeem, 1998; Olomukoro, 2005).

According to Thompson (2008), higher education in Ghana needs to be equitable and democratic for several reasons. Among some of the reasons are facilitating the development of human capital which increases a nation's capacity for economic growth. It also provides individual opportunities for learning and self-growth, and enables wider social and institutional change by bridging theory and practice through critical reflection and action. Digeorgio-Lutz (2002), affirms that institutions of higher education have come to be viewed as essential for a democratic society and as a gateway to good life. Institutions of higher learning are viewed as promoting the social good, not only for individuals who attend but also for society at large. It is the responsibility of institutions of higher education to ensure that these

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opportunities and resources are available and that impediments to growth are minimized.

The recent trend in the world economy has made it necessary for women to act as co-breadwinners of the family and therefore must be educated to gain employment so as to earn a living. As a result of these trends, it has become necessary for women of today to be educated so that they will be equipped with the skills, knowledge and attitudes to fit into the ever-growing global economy (Dolphyne, 1991).

The Ghana educational policies and programmes over the years, which are before and after independence, have all emphasized on the education of the female child (Aboagye 1998). Ghana was a signatory to the UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which came into force in September 1981. Ghana again, was among the first state to sign the UN convention on the right of the child. In addition, Ghana- further established Science Technology and Mathematics Education Program (STMK) for girls and also development of programs aimed at revising the JHS syllabus (Takyi, 2011). Females constitute fifty-one percent of the Population of Ghana according to the 2010 population census

In as much as women are encouraged to take up higher positions in the educational sector in the country, women, most especially nursing mothers, who are trying to further their education become strong contestants and go through a lot of experiences hence opt for distance education. Some nursing mothers whose love for their kids remain unchangeable no matter what, even curse their creator and even regret being born women. For many women, combining the acquisition of education and fulfillment of their roles within the family becomes very difficult. Moving to a confined environment to acquire education led to a total neglect of family roles.

Distance education may fill the gap by affording opportunities to combine studies with other areas of responsibilities. However, in seeking to combine education with their family roles, women face array of challenges right from application for admission till their exit from the school. Many women in order to balance roles end up deferring their course and continue the next year. Many of them who will manage to complete end up scoring low grades and low-class division. This study is therefore seeking to explore the academic challenges of nursing mothers on distance education programme.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The major theories of distance education that is relevant to this study are; theory of autonomy and independence, theory of interaction and communication, and the theory if industrialization.

Theory of autonomy and independence was developed by Holmberg, Wedemeyer, Delling, and Moore. This theory of distance education placed the learner in the middle of the educational process (Keegan, 1996; Saba, 2003). The centrality of the learner is one of the distinguishing features of distance education. Understanding this fact is essential for discerning why it is essentially different from other forms of education (Saba, 2003). The theory focuses on the independence of the student learner (Keegan, 1996, Saba, 2003).

In 1986, Holmberg developed a theory of distance education that fits into the classification of a communication theory. He formed his ―normative teaching theory" from the assumptions that distance teaching will support student motivation, promote learning pleasure and make the study relevant to the individual learner and his/her needs, creating feelings of rapport between the learner and the distance – education

institution (its tutors, counselors, etc.), facilitating access to course content, engaging the learner the activities, discussions and decisions and generally catering for helpful real and simulated communication to and from the learner. (Holmberg, 1986, p. 123).

In 1985, Holmberg developed an expanded and more comprehensive theory of distance education, and it is divided into eight different parts. This new theory incorporates concepts, such as the idea of the centralized learner, student freedoms and independence, the concept of free access to learning opportunities and equity, mediated communication and deep learning, personal relationships, study pleasure and empathy between students and instructors, and the idea of serving conceptual learning and problem solving (Holmberg, 1985). The new theory also emphasizes that ―distance education is open to behaviorist, cognitive, constructivist, and other modes of learning" (Holmberg, 1995, p 7-8). Peters (1998), stated the theory of industrialization which incorporates the idea that distance education is an industrialized method of teaching and learning, which can reach a mass audience (Hanson et al, 1996; Saba, 2003). He compares distance education to the industrial production of goods, and in 1988, he introduced new terminology to be used in analysing distance education which are rationalization, division of labour, mechanization, assembly line, mass production, preparatory work, planning, organizing, scientific control method, finalizing, standardization, change of function, objectification, concentration and centralization.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Ghana, the government has not been able to produce the requisite quantity and quality teachers because of financial constraints and a large backlog of qualified candidates cannot gain admission into the teacher training colleges and universities

due to limited resources (Cobbold, (2015). According to Bampo (2008), women form the greatest percentage of the number of teachers in the country. Women who are mothers (student mothers) and tend to seek academic excellence do not only play the role of being a mother but also play the role of being a worker and a student. The challenges include, ineffective time management, ineffective study skills and lack of concentration in class. As a result of these challenges, they are sometimes unable to achieve their educational aims since most of them either quit or defer some of their courses. There has therefore been a continuous search for an alternative for mothers who want to pursue further study so that they may be able to achieve the academic success. The current need for knowledge update as well as taking care of the home has promoted distance learning among mothers (Bratton & Gold, 2003). Distance education gives opportunity to the mother to combine her professional role with being student, a wife, and a mother. However, unlike the main stream where the mother leaves home and resides on campus to undertake her studies, women in distance education reside at home and combine their traditional roles with academic pursuit. These situations are likely to present a number of challenges to these student mothers. Studies have been done on women mothers combining studies with the discharge of their family roles. However, little have been done in investigating the challenges nursing mothers face while perceiving academic success. Though these academic challenges have received little attention but have caused so many mothers quitting or differing their course along the way, or causing them scoring low grades and subsequently scoring low class division. It is therefore pertinent to investigate what these challenges are, their effects and how these student mothers are coping with them as they try to climb the academic ladder.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to assess the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo college of Education.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Examine the academic challenges relating to time management, concentration and study skills confronting nursing mothers in distance education programme.

2. Investigate the effects of the academic challenges faced by nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo college of Education.

3. Explore possible coping strategies to address the academic challenges confronting nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo College of Education.
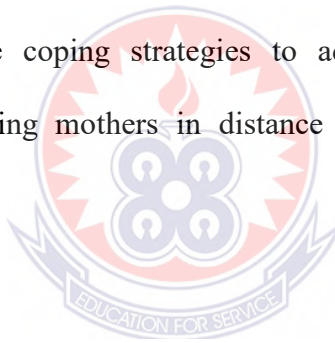
1.5 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the academic challenges confronting nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo college of Education?

2. What are the effects of the academic challenges faced by nursing mothers in distance education?

3. What are the coping strategies to address the academic challenges nursing mothers face in distance education at Agogo College of Education?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study would broaden the understanding of the academic challenges confronting nursing mothers in distance education programme and its effects on their performances. Traditional view of women in education is very narrow, since women's place are known to be in the kitchen, the study will add to existing body of knowledge which could be helpful for universities and other tertiary institutions.

The finding of the study will again benefit policy makers in the field of education so that policies and programmes in the education sector will plan in other to also benefits nursing mothers.

Nursing mothers who will come into contact with this study will be aware of the inevitable challenges they will go through, so that they prepare themselves very well before they enroll for a programme.

The findings of the study will help the Colleges of Education and other tertiary institutions running distance education programmes to improve on their distance education programme especially for nursing mothers to reduce the challenges confronting women in distance education. It will help Colleges of Education to examine the major challenges associated with its distance education programmes effects on nursing mothers and for it to employ strategies to address them to make them more effective. In this era of competition from other universities in running distance education programmes, the findings will help the Agogo College of Education to re-examine its operations and repackage itself to attract more students to be able to remain competitive.

The study will also help academic and other researchers to make use of the research outcome because it will help them to identify the challenges confronting women in

distance learning programs. This study may aid researchers and policy makers by providing a more precise understanding of challenges confronting nursing mothers on educational programmes in tertiary institutions.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This work has been organized into five chapters. The first chapter contains the introduction of the study which consists of background of the study, theoretical framework, problem statement, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study and organization of the study.

The chapter two deals with the literature review which examines the concept of distance education and its benefits, challenges confronting women in distance education programme and its effects on their academic performances.

Chapter three deals with the research methodology which includes, the research approach, sample and sampling techniques, validity, reliability, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

The fourth chapter for this study consists of the presentation of data analysis and discussion of data. The chapter five for this study focuses on the of summary of results, conclusion of the study and recommendation.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the academic challenges of nursing mothers on distance education. The literature is reviewed under the following themes; the concept of distance education, merits and demerits of distance education, challenges of student nursing mothers relating to time management, study skills and concentration and coping strategies of nursing mothers.

2.2 The Concept of Distance Education

Distance education is an education system that teaching and learning actions have been performed via communication technologies and mailing services by the teachers and students being different environment (Isman & Dabaj, 2005). Alkan (1998) defines the distance education as _it is a teaching method provided through varied environment and teaching units that interaction and communication between the planners and practitioners of educational activities and students have been specifically prepared in conditions that traditional teaching and learning methods limit the application of classroom activities." Basic reasons of popularity of distance education in this era, and the adoption of developing information communication technologies to the distance education have been listed by Isman & Dabaj, (2005) as; teachers and students are in different places, the use of communication technologies, the use of mailing services, school attendance is not compulsory, special teaching methods, one-way and two-way communication, special programs, special tools and supplies. According to Gurol & Atici (2001), Distance education has 6 indispensable features; teachers and students are in

different places, existing of students and institution relationship, the use of environment and tools such as printed materials providing communication between students and institution, possibility of face-to-face education at certain times, preparation towards the realization of two-way communication between students and institution and combining working life with education.

Teaching processes are carried out in three-dimensional approaches in distance education method (Gül, Ö. (2015). Teaching with printed materials, teaching through publications and Face to face teaching Implementation of distance education methods are applied in two ways as synchronous and asynchronous (Gül, Ö. (2015). Synchronous communication is a face-to-face communication that occurs at the same time but people do not have to be at the same place during that period. In the field of distance education, this communication type is based on sharing data and information by implementing two or more computers' connections with each other over a computer network. As an example, communication proceeds with written text, audio tools, video and other techniques. In asynchronous applications, course content is presented to students as one way, and interaction is extremely limited. TV broadcast systems or materials such as books, CD ROMs, and video tapes are used in this application. (Jonassen, 2000)

2.3 Merits of Distance Education

The most important advantage of distance education is to make lifelong learning easy. Advantages of distance education have been stated as below (Kaya, 2002);

1. Provides different education options

2. Facilitates mass education

3. Provides information from the first source

4. Gives individuals responsibility for learning

5. Provide individual and independent learning

6. Provides a rich learning environment for students

7. Reduces the cost of education.

8. Provides a standard in education program.

9. Minimizes the inequality of opportunity

2.4. Demerits of Distance Education

Besides the advantages of distance education, it has also some limitations. Limitations of distance education are listed as below (Kaya, 2002; Yurdakul, 2005);

1. Lack of individual assistance.

2. Block's socialization of individuals.

3. Lack of immediate feedback.

4. Lack of communication and interaction.

5. Depends on access facilities and communication technologies.

6. Not effective for all lessons.

7. Has limitations in terms of face-to-face communication and interaction.

8. Limitations in communication due to excess number of students.

9. Although it is effective in cognitive acquisition, it is limited in developing of affectional and psychomotor behaviors.

10. Difficulties in the realization of application studies.

11. Not useful for students not having independent study habit.

2.5 Challenges of Student Nursing Mothers

Mothers leave home to further their education, they do not neglect their family roles all together. In an attempt to continue performing her role as a student and mother she encounters numerous challenges. The task of combining motherhood with the

demands of an academic life is difficult for most women. Even though these women are still in school, they still have primary responsibilities for homework, childcare and for instilling cultural values on her children. In the absence of the mother as it can be in a situation of a student nursing mother, the child may feel lonely and neglected in terms of maternal control, supervision and training. This may affect the emotions of the mother while at school. Jarvis (1995) also found out that adults who were over-stimulated or anxious do not learn as well as those who are stimulated to respond to their learning situation in a normal way. Anxiety according could impede even the mastery of new motor skills, it tended to interfere with and inhibit original thought. One major challenge that affects student mothers is the time table for lectures, tutorials and other academic programmes on campus. According to Dallas's (1998) undergraduate studies, especially, are time structured and inflexible, such that a woman would have to attend classes when they are offered not when they fit into her day. She has to study before exams, read and prepare for her assignments, and shift her focus to these tasks she does. University studies, unlike a 9 am to 5 pm job, do not allow one to punch out at a certain hour and leave work behind, but often occupy one's thought and emotions throughout the day. Another area of importance is the effect of women's education on their relationships with husband and family. Several problems are created in family management when mothers combine schooling with their responsibilities in the home. These student mothers are often tired because of the double workload and this may affect her relationship with her husband and children. She may not be able to give them enough attention and motherly love. Apart from not being able to meet their family need adequately, their studies outside the home too may suffer. They may not be able to put up their best and mostly unable to keep up with colleagues who either had no children or husband.

Motherhood and academia do not blend well for most student mothers. Many mothers say, that juggling the stresses of schooling with the responsibilities of home leave then overworked, overstrained and always wake up from bed already tired. When women spend long hours away from their babies, the babies do not get what they need most; the time and attention of their mother. No one can fulfil a mother's role as well as mother can. A substitute figure can alleviate a child's need for its mother but cannot take her place. Student nursing mothers therefore faces the challenge of combining their roles as mothers and or wives with their academic work effectively if the above problems persist. Breastfeeding of babies is also one of the challenges that are encountered by most students who are nursing mothers especially those with newly born babies. There are a lot of benefits of breastfeeding to mothers as well as the baby involved. Breastfeeding, like birth empowers women not only in accomplishment in themselves and their abilities. Breastfeeding protects infants against numerous infectious diseases including otitis media, respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Breastfeeding also lowers children's risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and cardiovascular risk factors (Chen & Kaplan, 2003). The production of milk in the mother burns down calories, helping with weight loss after pregnancy. A by-product of breastfeeding production has a relaxing effect on mother and stimulates maternal instincts. Recent research findings suggest that women who breastfeed have a reduced risks of pre-menopausal breast cancer, cervical cancer and osteoporosis. Breastfeeding according to Robotti (1998) is the most natural and nutritious way to encourage a baby's development, it has also been found out that breastfed babies have fewer ears, respiratory and intestinal infection, they are less likely to have childhood diabetes and amphora as well as learning disabilities. Babies who do not have the chance of being breastfed by their mothers as it is in the case of

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some student mothers are likely to die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or ―crib death". They are also likely to become obese, lack emotional security as well as suffer poor mouth and tooth development of oral muscles and facial bones. There is extensive evidence on the short term and long-term health benefits of breastfeeding for infants and mothers. In 2003, the World Health Organization recommended that, wherever possible, infants should be fed exclusively on breast milk until six months of age. In a study in helping women to breastfeed, (Britton et al., 2007) concluded that most educated mothers do not breastfeed for long and cannot practice exclusive breastfeeding as it can be seen in the case of student nursing mothers even though breastfeeding is known to develop healthier children, thus reduce health care in the society. Aside the fact that it is not easy to go to school after a long break in education which may be due to marriage or bearing children and caring for the family. Baun and Tomori (1979) also points out the fact that adult learners also have poor memory and as a result find it difficult to memorize. These authors continue to say that the adult goes through physiological changes, which may result in his sight and learning becoming less acute and in some, loss of physical dexterity. Banda (2000) researched on Challenges in Distance Education: Experiences of Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the program as the cause of the child's death. In addition, teacher learners who bring babies reported that they do not have

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thorough preparations for examinations. They lack concentration on their studies or actual writing of examination papers. Sometimes it happens that one is sitting for an examination, and hears a cry of her baby just outside the examination hall. Such a person loses concentration. Banda, (2000) in his research further found that other challenges associated with teacher-learners who bring babies to college are inadequate space in the hostels and inappropriate food for the babies. The college hostel rooms were designed to accommodate two students. However, although distance education teacher-learners are allowed to bring babies, they use the same rooms that were meant for residential students. Therefore, they are forced to squeeze into the same rooms. Thus, a room, which was meant for two people, takes in six: two teacher-learners, two babies and two nannies. Such an environment is not good for the babies who have their own demands. Female teacher learners with babies are accommodated in one hostel and the author was impressed to see how they were managing the whole situation. Nevertheless, there is a need to explore mechanisms that would solve the problems these teacher-learners are encountering. For instance, establishing a baby care centre. The problems found by Banda (2000) is not peculiar to student nursing mothers offering distance education programmes alone but could also happen to residential students of other tertiary institutions. It is clear therefore that there is the need for some policy framework by the tertiary institutions that could help address the predicaments of this category of students who also have the right to education. Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and women's biological clocks coincide. Williams (2007) states that graduate school is a space and places where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support

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comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than challenges to be managed by individual women. Hensel (1990), argue that the verdict is clear— "having children is detrimental to a woman's career success". Hensel points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have ―uninterrupted" time (Hensel, 1990). Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (Williams, 2007). Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their new born babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and level of achievement (Egenti and Omoruyi, 2011). The challenges faced by student nursing mothers cannot be overestimated. According to Hordzi (2008) for distance education programme the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those of them who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. He goes on to state that the

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situation at times becomes so desperate for the mothers such that it is uncommon to see a mother carrying her baby on the shoulders of one hand while using the other hand in answering the examination questions. In such a situation one wonders how effectively the student nursing mother will be able to write the exam.

2.6 Academic Challenges Facing Nursing Mothers on Distance Education

When mothers leave home to further their education, they do not neglect their family roles all together. In an attempt to continue performing their role as a students and mothers they encounter numerous challenges. The task of combining motherhood with the demands of an academic life is difficult for most women. Even though these women are still in school, they still have primary responsibilities for homework, childcare and for instilling cultural values on her children. In the absence of the mother as it can be in a situation of a student nursing mother, the child may feel lonely and neglected in terms of maternal control, supervision and training. This may affect their concentration, time management and their study skills.
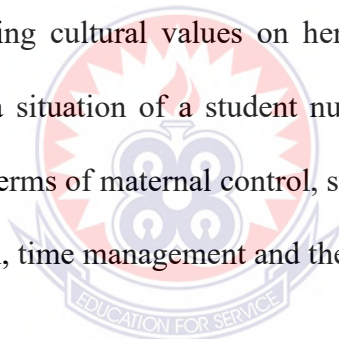
2.7 Student Nursing Mothers and Time Management

A lot of popular literature, based on the anecdotal evidence, suggested that the way students manage their time may influence their academic performance, (Kearns & Gardiner, 2007). It is important to allocate time and meet deadlines, especially when it comes to the higher education setting (Al Khatib, 2014), illuminating these student`s responsibilities may lead to expulsion, dropout, as well as high levels of physical and psychological stress. Being a university, a college student may turn out to be quite stressful for students especially nursing mothers. In comparison with school the amount of reading and self-study time are rapidly increasing, the assignment submission deadlines become stricter and may affect the final marks.

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Students' inability to participate in extracurricular activities, volunteering or work for income and relevant experience emerges. Students have to priorities among all the activities (Meeuwisse, Born & Severiens, 2013). Little wonder then those students find it difficult to allocate their time among all their needs and obligations, which leads to last minute preparation for exams, feeling of being unsatisfied with the results of their learning process and being stressed (Macan, et. al., 1990). These time pressures make students feel not only stressed, but in some cases even depressed. (Nonis, 1997, Mirsa & McKean, 2000, Al Khatib 2014), as well as (Ganguly, Kulkarni & Gupta, 2017) suggested that time management could be one of the strategies that might help students to cope with stress and stress-related outcomes. Zulauf & Gortner, (1999), questioned the existing research literature and raised the important problem of having no stable results in terms of the relationship between time management and academic performance. They suggested that this relationship is fragile and requires more rigorous testing. They also tried to determine if time, spent on studying, matters and came to the conclusion that it does. However, they underlined the fact that the study time should be increased very intensively, which is beyond students' willingness or capacity, as there is already not enough time in their lives (Kearns & Gardiner, 2007). Therefore, it is important that students including nursing mothers can spend their study time efficiently, so that do not need to increase it. (Van der Meer et al., 2010)

Time management as a quality of study time, which is the extent to what time is managed skillfully. (Zulauf and Gortner, 1999). They drew attention to the fact that most of the previous research studies did not include the quantity of time spent on studying, as they believed that no matter how skillfully time is managed, so there may be simply not enough time spent studying. Time management is the strategies

that help to increase academic performance and enhance academic achievements by starting doing the tasks well in advance, breaking them into small parts and doing them continuously in accordance with the developed plan (Mirsa and McKean (2000). They supported the idea of multidimensionality of time management that has initially been expressed and suggested by Macan (1994). The dimensions that Mirsa & McKean (2000) proposed similarly to other researchers were setting goals, making priorities, doing lists of tasks, as well as perceived control of time.

When students have the working knowledge and ability to use their time effectively and efficiently, they can accomplish several things such as good grades, a healthy social life, and a well-balanced list of extra-curricular activities. An approach of a daily diary was used to investigate the role of achievement in mothers' patterns of time use in the academic and social domains. This study found that high achieving students spend more time studying without spending less time with their friends than lower achieving students (Witkow, 2009).

2.8 Students Nursing Mothers and Study Skills

Significant difficulty for mothers who are students is lack of time to spend with their children, partners, extended families and friends, and to study and complete assignments (Lidgard, 2004). The research concludes that single student mothers face many challenges which have potential to disrupt their academic success and performance.

With higher standards and expectations placed on the current generation of student mothers to excel in school, schools should be setting students up to succeed. There is a breadth of support backing the employment of psycho-education groups for mothers within the school setting. Examples of psycho-educational groups appropriate for mothers include, but are not limited to, communication skills, peer

helping, group discussions, role play, and self-concept. These examples are the most commonly used groups within schools (Bowman, 1987; Dansby, 1996).

A substantial amount of research has examined the role of students' study skills and their attitudes to study on academic performance. The usefulness of imbibing in the student's study habit, as a means of enhancing their academic performance, revealed a high correlation between study habits and students' academic performance (Osa-Edoh & Alutu, 2012). This suggests that it is only when students imbibe or cultivate proper study habits that their academic performance can be improved upon.

Similarly, Nuthana & Yenagi (2009) found significant correlation between study habits and academic achievement. It further revealed that reading and note-taking habits, habits of concentration, and preparation for examination had significant correlation with academic achievement. The authors pointed out that students who are better in reading and note-taking, well prepared for examination and have concentration may have better academic achievement. An association between study skills and academic performance also has been found to prevail among undergraduate students. (Fazal et al., 2012) in their study identified the various study skills used by learners and ascertain which study skills is more related to academic achievement. Results of the study indicate significant relationship of time-management skills, reading and note-taking skills with academic achievement. Students with higher academic achievement used a wide range of study skills as compared to students with lower academic achievement.

Another study was conducted using a Q factor analysis to understand the study behavior and habits of undergraduate students. The Q factor analysis was used to classify students as either proactive learners with well-organized study behavior or

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disorganized procrastinators based on their self-reported study behavior. Findings of the study showed a significant difference in the academic performance of the two groups of students. Student type was found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement beyond and above students' attribute variables (Yang, 2004). Nonis & Hudson (2010) also conducted a study on performance of college students-impact of study time and study habits in which they found that some study habits had a positive direct relationship on student performance but others had a negative direct relationship.

Hassanbeigi et al., (2011), in their study of the relationship between various study skills and academic performance of university students, noted that the study skills scores of students with GPA of 15 and above (out of 20) were statistically higher than those students with GPA of less than 15 in all of the seven skills (time management and procrastination, concentration and memory, study aids and note-taking, test strategies and test anxiety, organizing and processing information, motivation and attitude, and reading and selecting the main idea).

Because of the importance of study habits and attitudes on academic performance, some researchers have proposed strategies that will help students develop effective study habits and attitudes. For example, the study of Demir et al., (2012), which examined the effect of development of efficient studying skills curriculum on academic achievements and studying skills of learners, found that students can acquire efficient studying skills by means of curriculum for developing efficient studying skills. The students were able to organize the study environment and use specific methods effectively, such as efficient reading, listening lectures, note-taking, efficient writing and doing homework. It further revealed that those students

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where the curriculum was implemented have increased academic achievement as compared to the group of students on which the curriculum was not implemented. Mutsotso & Abenga (2010) also propose a paradigm shift in study methods and suggest strategies for both lecturers and the students in universities towards improved learning and performance. It is based on the ―distributed learning approach" that adequately cater for individual differences that exist among the students. The model will address the study space needs and the efficiency and effectiveness of study methods.

To sum up, the literatures cited point to the importance of study habits and attitudes to academic performance or success of students.

2.9 Nursing Mothers and Concentration

Banda (2000) researched on Challenges in Distance Education: Experiences of Female Teacher-Learners at Domasi College of Education in Malawi and found that Teacher-learners with babies bring baby sitters most of whom are not matured enough to take good care of the babies. Consequently, some teacher-learners miss classes as they are expected to attend to crying babies just within the teaching area, sometimes. Some babies get sick and thus, put pressure on the mothers, as they have to take them to hospitals. One teacher-learner lost a child in 2002 during the residential session and her spouse blamed her participation in the program as the cause of the child's death. In addition, teacher learners who bring babies reported that they do not have thorough preparations for examinations. They lack concentration on their studies or actual writing of examination papers. Sometimes it happens that one is sitting for an examination, and hears a cry of her baby just outside the examination hall. Such a person loses concentration. Banda's research

further found that other challenges associated with teacher-learners who bring babies to college are inadequate space in the hostels and inappropriate food for the babies. The college hostel rooms were designed to accommodate two students. However, although distance education teacher-learners are allowed to bring babies, they use the same rooms that were meant for residential students. Therefore, they are forced to squeeze into the same rooms. Thus, a room, which was meant for two people, takes in six: two teacher-learners, two babies and two nannies. Such an environment is not good for the babies who have their own demands. Female teacher learners with babies are accommodated in one hostel and the author was impressed to see how they were managing the whole situation. Nevertheless, there is a need to explore mechanisms that would solve the problems these teacher-learners are encountering. For instance, establishing a baby care centre. The problems found by Banda (2000) is not peculiar to student nursing mothers offering distance education programmes alone but could also happen to residential students of other tertiary institutions. It is clear therefore that there is the need for some policy framework by the tertiary institutions that could help address the predicaments of this category of students who also have the right to education. Caplan (1993) notes that the academic tenure clock and women's biological clocks coincide. Williams (2007) states that graduate school is a space and places where real changes can begin to enact different policies, build a different community, draw on functioning and effective support systems, and make inclusiveness and diversity a reality. These changes can happen only if support comes from all fronts, only if graduate students who are mothers are not the only ones making all the sacrifices, and only if children and family life are coded in the academy as symbols of encouragement rather than challenges to be managed by individual women. Hensel (1990), also argue that the verdict is clear—

"having children is detrimental to a woman's career success". Hensel points out how difficult it is for women to pursue academic careers and family life. Academic life assumes that people have ―uninterrupted" time (Hensel, 1990). Therefore, choosing to become a mother gives the appearance that a woman is unmotivated, less committed, less interested in doing what she must do to get to the next step on the ladder (Williams, 2007).

Egenti & Omoruyi (2011) write that the stress or trauma which student mothers have to go through makes them feel psychologically ill-disposed towards the programme. This has led some of their colleagues to drop out of the programme. As mothers, they are bothered about their babies. In addition, some have to contend with pregnancy while others nurse their new born babies alongside their studies. Some have had to put to bed in the course of their studies or even during examinations. This further increases their burden and has made some to fail their exams while some have had to even abandon their examinations. Some come late for lectures because of their marital demands or even stay away from lectures for a reasonable period as a result of home pressure or demand. All these affect their learning and level of achievement. (Egenti & Omoruyi, 2011).

The challenges faced by student nursing mothers cannot be overestimated. According to Hordzi (2008) for distance education programme the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those of them who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. He goes on to state that the situation at times becomes so desperate for the mothers such that it is uncommon to see a mother

carrying her baby on the shoulders of one hand while using the other hand in answering the examination questions. In such a situation one wonders how effectively the student nursing mother will be able to write the exam.

2.10 Coping strategies of Nursing Mothers on Distance Education

Writing on the need to provide enough support for student nursing mothers to breastfeed their babies, Fricke (2010) mentioned that women and men should be treated equally. However, when treating men and women equally results in inequity, they should be treated differently. A prime example is pregnancy; women get pregnant and men don't. In order for women to have equal opportunities, their reproductive capacities need to be taken into consideration. If the law and society as a whole do not take these issues into consideration, the circumstances will force women to be relegated to the private sphere if they choose to exercise their reproductive right to have children. Many women give birth and then return to the public sphere, whether it is work or school. Women may desire to continue to breastfeed due to the great benefits; breastfeeding provides health benefits for both mother and baby, as well reduces costs, and promotes an emotional bond between mothers and babies. If the public sphere does not accommodate a woman's decision to breastfeed, by allowing her to express her milk throughout her work/school day, she will be forced to either leave the workforce or school, or more likely stop breastfeeding, depriving her infant of its many benefits. A writing on Educational opportunities and academic performance: A case study of university student mothers in Venezuela by Pinilla & Muñoz (2005), shows that the academic performance of student mothers is lower than that of other groups of university students. In practice, student mothers participate as part-time students, although this category is not officially recognized by most Venezuelan public universities. Almost all the life

circumstances of student mothers negatively affect their academic performance. The only circumstance that contributes positively to the performance of a student mother is the help provided by her extended family in taking care of her children. The fact that student mothers are able to participate in higher education is mainly due to the help they receive from their extended family (Pinilla and Muñoz, 2005). Responding to questions on how student teachers who bring babies to college could be assisted some had the following suggestions: Provide spacious accommodation for the student nursing mother that can contain any other person that will be around to assist her. Provide them with regular transport to hospital whenever their babies or nannies are ill. Abolish fee for nannies. They are only there to assist the mothers.

Accommodate sick teacher-learners in a separate room, that is, a sick bay. Encourage teacher-learners to use contraception (Banda, 2000). The provision of breast-feeding rooms in the various universities will go a long way to ease the challenges faced by student nursing mothers as provided by some universities in the United States. For example, Columbia University provides lactation rooms to support nursing mothers returning to work, school, or campus. Each room offers a clean, secure, and private space for women who need to express breast milk during their time on campus. All of the rooms are equipped with a table, chair, and lock from the inside; some contain refrigerators and sinks. Where rooms do not have a refrigerator, student mothers are recommended to bring a cooler to store their breast milk. (http//www.worklife.columbia.edu/breastfeeding-support). Though the usage of such facilities is for a fee the benefits derived by the users cannot be overemphasized. Such breast-feeding rooms are usually used under strict guidelines. For instance, the use of the breastfeeding room by staff and students of Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick reads as follows:

The Mother and Baby Room is locked at all times and may be accessed by requesting the key and swipe card which will be issued by the Main Reception staff. The Mother and Baby Logbook at reception will have to be signed to log use of the room. The facility is provided as a private and sanitary room for breastfeeding staff and students to express their milk during work hours. Persons using the mother and Baby Room are required to respect the privacy and security of the room and to agree to schedule their use with other mothers using the room. It is important that all staff and students using the room ensure that it is clean and locked as they leave (Fricke, 2010).

Equally important is the realization that guidance and counseling is as crucial as extra tuition for the female learners (Mensa et al., 2008).

Hodgson (1993), underscored the importance of counseling. To him, counseling may be helpful for the students to develop their skills and be able to cope with the combination of part time study, work and family life. The research by Najjuma & Kyarugah, (2006) established that student mothers are challenged by the triple role, i.e., productive, reproductive and community service, which is likely to bring stress, anxiety, and some time, may lead to disease. It is therefore recommended that efforts should be made by university administrators to provide counseling services specifically to student mothers in order to manage better the hassles brought about by the challenges they face. Availing of space by the Universities, for mothers to share their experiences can also be helpful in helping them to identify steps that can improve their learning. The problem of lack of facilities featured as another issue that prevent mothers from concentrating on their studies as they have to think about their babies that they have left somewhere. The university authorities should

consider accommodation of student nursing mothers at the university or by introducing daycare centres at the university premises so as to cater for those with young babies (Najjuma & Kyarugah, 2006).

The most significant way to combat these inherent disadvantages for student nursing mothers is the provision of on-campus child care. Research has shown that graduation rates are significantly higher for student parents when campus child care is provided, and further, students are more likely to remain in school, graduate in fewer years, and earn higher grades (Kappner, 2002 cited in Gasser & Ray F. Gasse, 2010).

On top of these relatively simple gestures of support for student parents, another important initiative is to simply help student nursing mothers develop a campus support system or network among student nursing mothers on campus. This can take the form of a student organization, a support group, or even a play group (Gasser & Gasser, 2010). Schools and other care centres have recently emerged to address partially problems confronted by working mothers. Some of these crèches accept infants as young as six months and have vehicles, which convey them to and from homes to the school every day. Kwagala (1992) cited by Najjuma & Kyarugah (2006), found out that some women either take their children with them, use paid domestic workers, leave children with neighbors, relatives, older siblings, paid child minders or take them to day care centres. Another suggestion worth considering was the provision of hostel facilities that could accommodate nursing mothers so that those who are capable and willing to stay on campus could do so. This result confirms the findings of Onsongo's (2004) research on Promoting Gender Equity in Selected Public Universities of Kenya which revealed that when students were asked

what can be done to improve the situation of student mothers on campus the students interviewed mentioned the following:

- The university should provide accommodation for student mothers on campus.
- A day care centre for student mothers should be set up in the campus for student mothers to access at a cost.
- Lower the fees for student mothers, especially the health fees charged for their sick children.

One coping strategy that cannot be ignored is the support from the family, especially, husbands, grandparents and other relatives in Africa. It is evident from the results that participants have their friends and family members supporting them to manage their dual roles. Griffiths (2002) concurs that having available people who positively support them in this respect, including extended family members, friends and partners, seems vital in determining how well mothers cope with these experiences.

Writing on coping strategies used by student mothers to succeed in Occupational Therapy School which revealed that physical support from husbands was used by all the participants. Emotional support from husband and peers and time management strategies was used by 93.3% of the participants. Findings concluded that 100% of the participants who had their first child in school reported that they used emotional and physical support from their husband and parents and time management strategies. (Grohman & Lamm , 2009)

Finally, despite all the challenges Dallas (1998), postulates that student mothers may

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attempt to redefine their own roles as mothers, or their expectations of themselves as students or they may try to re-negotiate the support they receive from family and friends. They may even redefine how they see the university system, and their role within it. A student mother may try any or all of these strategies at one time or another.

2.11 Summary of Literature

The related literature was reviwed in areas of the concept of distance education, the merits and demerrits of distance education, challenges faced by student nursing mothers, academic challenges facing nursing mothers on distance education, nursing mothers and study skills, nursing mothers and time management, nursing mothers and concentration and coping strategies of nursing mothers on distance education. All these areas have direct or indirect relation and implication on the study.

Literature show that a lot of study have been done on the effects of mother's education on their children. Britton (2007) concluded that most educated mothers did not breastfeed for long and cannot practice exclusive breastfeeding as it can be seen on case of student nursing mothers even though breastfeeding is known to develop healthier children thus reduce health care in society.

Not much information is available through research on academic challenges of nursing mothers relating to study skills, concentration and time management.

Findings by researchers on coping strategies seem not to be effective for these nursing mothers.

This study therefore seeks to explore the academic challenges of nursing mothers in areas of time management, concentration and study skills and other coping strategies that may help them to improve their performance.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methods used to conduct the study. It specifies the research approach, research design, population and sample and sampling techniques, validity and reliability, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical issues.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach guides the direction of the collection and analysis of data. It focuses on the collection and analysis of data. Mixed approach was adopted for the study. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone (Creswell, 2006).
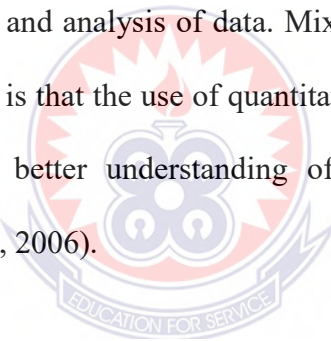
3.3 Research Design

The design used for the study was a descriptive survey. Quartey & Awoyemi (2002), stated, a descriptive survey design, as the process of gathering data in order to answer research questions or test hypothesis which concerns the existing status of a phenomenon. This type of survey attempts to provide an accurate and objective description of a picture of an on-going situation or real-life situation. Koul (1997) indicated that, survey studies are conducted to collect detailed description on existing phenomenon with the intent of employing data to justify current conditions, practices or make more intelligent plans for improving them. He further explained that, in addition to analyzing, interpreting and reporting on the status of an

organization for future guidance, descriptive surveys can be used to determine the adequacy of an activity by comparing results to established standards. It also has another advantage of producing a good number of responses from a wide range of people. The descriptive survey design is ideal because this study was composed to examine the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education at the Agogo College of Education. Despite the above advantages, the descriptive survey design is not without weakness. Marczyk et al., (2005), observes that survey designs, like all non-experimental designs, no matter how convincing the data may be, cannot rule out the influence of extraneous variables on the study. This is because descriptive survey designs do not have control over the variables and the environment that they study. Meaning findings from surveys are most often influenced by factors other than those attributed by the researcher. Seifert & Hoffgung (1991) also identify problems of survey designs to include the possibility of producing untrustworthy result because they may delve into people's private matters. Again, since descriptive survey designs most often make use of questionnaires, it becomes limited to respondents who are literate. However, attempts have been made to minimize the limitation(s) of survey design in this study. These include avoiding issues which respondents considered sensitive and personal. Also, all members of the target group were literates and the researcher used very simple language to make the items easy to understand and answer. The qualitative approach was used because of the nature of the research questions set for this study, the kind of data required and the instrument employed.

3.4 Population

The target population for the study consists of all student nursing mothers of the Agogo College of Education Centre. The accessible population encompasses those

nursing mothers that were met nursing their babies during lectures.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study was forty (40) student nursing mothers from the Agogo College of Education. The reason for this sample size is as a result of difficulties in getting the population due to the outbreak of the Corona Virus Pandemic.

Purposive sampling technique was used for selecting 40 women who are nursing mothers for the study. This technique was used because I needed the women who shared the same feature of nursing their babies.

This technique enabled the researcher to use his personal judgment to select the student nursing mothers who could provide him the information on the challenges they encounter as nursing mothers and at the same time pursuing tertiary education. With regards to the homogeneous type of purposive sampling, one decides to include people or sites in your study because they have a common trait or characteristics (Cresswell, 2006). The strategy requires that you, first, establish the traits that you are interested in and look for people who exhibit such traits for the study (Kusi, 2012). The homogeneous purposive sampling strategy was very appropriate since the main characteristic trait that the researcher required was nursing mothers who were furthering their education. Forty (40) respondents were selected through a purposeful sampling. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for in depth study. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of inquiry (Patton, 2002, p.230). In this study the main focus was to find out the challenges and coping strategies of student nursing mothers in tertiary institutions.

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3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The instrument used to gather data was a semi-structured questionnaire. The semi-structured questionnaire was considered appropriate for the study because respondents were a category of students who were difficult to get. They moved from their house to lectures and always rush back home hasting to attend their family. It became obvious that giving them the questionnaire to fill at their spare time was the most appropriate approach. The questionnaires consisted of three sections namely sections A, B and C. The section A consisted of questions based on challenges faced by student nursing mothers in the areas of academic work activities, challenges with childcare and their economic situations, section B consisted of questions based on the effects of the challenges and section C was made up of questions that could elicit responses on the coping strategies adopted by student nursing mothers to handle the challenges identified. The semi-structured questionnaire had both open and closed ended questions. The close ended questions enabled the researcher to collect standardized information from the respondents while the open-ended questions enabled the researcher to ask follow-up questions and the respondents to offer further explanations to questions.

3.7 Validity

To ensure validity, the questions were strictly based on the objectives of the study. In addition, a competent supervisor who is experts on research reviewed the questions to ensure that the questionnaire contained relevant questions that could elicit information on the stated topic and objectives.

3.8 Reliability

Reliability is the degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the

attribute it is designed to measure (Polit & Hungler, 1993). Since many factors can influence results at different points in time, a test-retest was used in measuring the reliability of this study. This was done issuing instruments to five nursing mothers two months before the study. Results were analysed and compared to the results of the study to determine the research reliability.

3.9 Administration of Instrument

Data was gathered through the self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to the respondents to take home, fill them and return them in two weeks' time. This became more relevant as most of the student mothers hardly had time for the interview and requested to fill the questionnaire on their own. The return rate of the questionnaire was about (84%) out of the total sample size of the twenty (40). The researcher received most of the questionnaires easily because of the readiness of the assistance received from some of the student nursing mothers, while the few that were left were obtained with much difficulty. It was detected after receiving the questionnaires that two of the respondents did not provide answers to some of the items and the researcher had to make another visit to those respondents concerned. However, at the end of the two weeks as scheduled all the questionnaires were retrieved.

3.10 Data Analysis Procedures

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics using percentages and frequency counts. According to Borg & Gall (1984); descriptive statistics does not only allow the researcher to use numbers but also provides the researcher with data that allow for inferences on the population and directions for answering the research questions. Secondly, descriptive narrative method was used to analyse the qualitative

responses generated through the open-ended questions. The data was transcribed, coded and analysed manually, and presented narratively.

3.11 Ethical Issues

Consent was sought from respondents and permission to administer the questionnaire. Respondents were ensured of confidentiality of their responses, and were informed about the character of the research and their right to withdraw at any time to avoid harmful consequences. I further requested of them to decide on their convenient venues for the completion of the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to investigate the academic challenges of nursing mother at Agogo College of Education. Specifically, the study looked at the academic challenges faced by the nursing mothers in pursuant of their education, the effects of these challenges and coping strategies of these students. This chapter focused on the results and the discussion from the analysis. The results have been presented in the tables according to the three research questions posed. Moreover,

4.2 Demographic Distribution of the respondents

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age range (years)	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
21-25	6	15
25-30	16	40
31-35	8	20
36-40	8	20
40 and above	2	5
Total	**40**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2022)

Majority of the respondents, 32 (80%) were within the ages of 26 and 40. This shows that most of the student mothers were young ladies who might have been married for not more than a decade; and are still in their childbearing age and by extension, the possible pressure from their husbands to have additional child (ren) as the need arose.

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Table 2: Marital status

Status	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	40	100
Single	-	-
Divorced	-	-
Total	**40**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table2 clearly shows that all the twenty respondents were all students who are married and therefore desire to give birth.

Programme of Study

These ambitious ladies desiring to achieve higher academic laurels were into different programmes including Diploma in Basic Education (DBE), Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Education (DPF), Diploma in Science and Mathematics Education (DSME), and Diploma in Management Studies (DMS).

Table 2 gives the clue that relatively few of them enrolled in Management's studies programme while DBE was the favourite of the majority. The inference is that most of the respondents were being trained to become basic school teac

Table 3: Programme of study

Programme	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Diploma in Basic Education	20	50
Diploma in Psychology and Foundations of Education	12	30
Diploma in Science and Mathematics Education	6	15
Diploma in Management Studies	2	5
Total	**40**	**100**

Source: Field Data (2022)

Table 4: Level of Students

Level	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
100	6	15
200	10	25
300	24	60
Total	**40**	**100**

A reason that could be associated with having 24 (60%) student mothers in the final year (Level 300) is that, perhaps, as they were about to complete their programme of study, they could get pregnant and manage their ways through the last year

4.3 Research Question One

What are the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education in at Agogo college of Education?

Table 5: Time Management

Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)
More time reading my preferred subject	10	25	20	50	6	15	4	10	40	100
Hate studying difficult subject	6	15	30	75	4	10	0	0	40	100
Less time to study major subjects	4	10	10	25	26	65	0	0	40	100
Not able to study up to three hours	34	85	4	10	2	5	0	0	40	100
Lack of personal time table	0	0	10	25	26	65	4	10	40	100
Inability to study alone constantly	4	10	28	70	8	20	0	0	40	100
Other things take most of my time	20	50	14	35	6	15	0	0	40	100

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Table 5 is a presentation of the numerous academic challenges of nursing mothers relating to their skills in studies. It could be seen that the 30(75%) of these student mothers either strongly agree or agree that the time they spend on reading preferred subject is more than other subjects with 10(25%) disagree to that effect. It also shows that 36 of these respondents which represent 90% agree that they dislike reading difficult subjects.

With enough time allotted for reading major subjects, 26(65) either strongly disagree or disagree which means that 14(35) agree that they have less time reading major subjects. Higher percentages are recorded on the items agreeing to affect their

academic work.

These time pressures make students feel not only stressed, but in some cases even depressed. (Ganguly et al., 2017) suggested that time management could be one of the strategies that might help students to cope with stress and stress-related outcomes. This study affirms the research work of the above authors showing that these student mothers have challenges with their time management which affect their academic performance.

Table 6: Concentration

Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)
Unable to bring all my attention on the subject when I read	26	65	6	15	8	20	0	0	40	100
The place I do my private studies is most often noisy which disturb my concentration	0	0	10	25	18	45	12	30	40	100
Television and browsing attract my attention when I sit down to study	4	10	22	55	14	35	0	0	40	100
Difficulties in bringing back the mind when the it begins to wander	10	25	28	70	2	5	0	0	40	100
Unable to read more than 30 minutes at a time	0	0	8	20	16	40	16	40	40	100
Worrying about personal things when studying	16	40	18	45	6	15	0	0	40	100
Falling asleep when seated to study	10	25	22	55	8	20	2	5	40	100

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Concentration is key as far as reading and academic excellence is concerned. However, from the results gathered in table 6, it could be clearly seen that most of the respondents have a challenge with their level of concentration which is likely to affect their academic excellence. 32 (80%) of these respondents either strongly agree

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or agree that their concentration really affect them they sit to study. Their role as mothers really affects their concentration which in a way influence their level of performance. 30 (75%), and 16(80%) disagree to learn in a noisy environment and unable to read for more than 30 minutes respectively.

According to Hordzi (2008) for distance education programme the main problem of some of the women during examination is how to get peace of mind from their babies to concentrate and write the examination. This is because those of them who are nursing mothers find it difficult to concentrate during examination as a result of disturbances from their babies. This show that on the generally student nursing mothers are challenged with concentration in studies agreeing to Hordzi in 2008.

Table 7: Study Skills

Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)
Inability to assemble all items needed for studies	6	15	18	45	6	15	8	20	40	100
Keeping magazines and phones on table while studying	4	10	28	70	8	20	0	0	40	100
Failure to plan what to be studies before sitting down	4	10	14	35	6	15	8	20	40	100
Usually don't answer questions at the end of a notes read	10	25	20	50	6	15	4	10	40	100
Failure to look for the meaning of words I don't understand from the dictionary	18	45	18	45	4	10	0	0	40	100
Skipping over graphs, pictures, charts and tables in reading	18	45	20	50	4	10	0	0	40	100
I do not take time to read through and understand materials assigned to me	26	65	12	30	2	5	2	5	40	100
No effort in doing further studies beyond my lecture notes	8	20	26	65	6	15	6	15	40	100

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

It is very obvious that most students sit read or study without adequate knowledge on the skill to be adopted in studies. This affects the level output produced by students after every assessment. The table above clearly depicts the various academic challenges faced by student nursing mothers of the Agogo College of Education.

30(75%) of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they are directly faced with challenges in their skills. 22(55%) of the respondents are able to assemble their items needed in studies when they sit to study with the remaining 18(45%) not being able to assemble their items. With effective planning to study, 18(45)of the respondents are not able to plan for what to study at what time with 32(55%) who are able to plan effectively for their studies. It is however clear that most of these student mothers are not able to demonstrate effective study skills for excellent academic performance.

4.4 Research Question 2

What are the effects of the academic challenges faced by nursing mothers in distance education?

Table 8: Effects of the challenges

Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)
Scoring of low grades	2	5	18	45	16	40	4	10	40	100
Trailing of many paper	0	0	14	35	26	65	0	0	40	100
Having so many deferred papers ahead to register and write	4	10	4	10	22	55	6	15	40	100
Mentally and physically troubled as a resulting from numerous roles performed	14	35	16	40	8	20	2	5	40	100

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

The academic challenges discussed have both direct and indirect effects on the

student nursing mothers who go through them. The table above show that students score low grades, trail many of their papers written, have many deferred papers to register and write. Others too go through a lot of physical and psychological trauma. Sixteen 32(80%) either strongly agreed or agreed that they score low grades as a result of the academic challenges discussed with 8(20%) disagreeing to that.

On the effect of trailing a paper, 14(35%) agreed that they have trailed paper(s) to write with 26(65%) disagreeing to that effect.

The numerous roles performed by these nursing mothers and the challenges they face as students cause some of them to defer some of their papers to be registered and written later. From the table above, 8(20%) of the respondents either strongly agree or agree that they have paper(s) deferred to be registered and written later. However, 32(80%) disagree that thy have a deferred paper to be registered and written. 30 (75) of the respondents agree to be affected mentally and psychologically as a result of the numerous roles they perform. Generally, it could be understood from the data that the nursing student mothers score low grades is the major effect followed by being troubled mentally and psychologically and student(s) having trialed papers to write is the next major effects.

Students have the working knowledge and ability to use their time effectively and efficiently and can accomplish several things such as good grades, a healthy social life, and a well-balanced list of extra-curricular activities. An approach of a daily diary was used to investigate the role of achievement in mothers' patterns of time use in the academic and social domains.

On the general terms, the study revealed that students are always mentally and psychologically unstable and hence giving them numerous academic challenges

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leading to scoring of low grades and also deferring some courses. It therefore becomes very necessary for tertiary schools to have counselling unit to train the mind of these students' mothers in order to have a stable mind to concentrate on their academic work.

4.5 Question 3

What are the coping strategies to address the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education?

Table 9: Coping Strategies

Challenges	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)	No	(%)
Seeking the support from my husband	6	15	14	35	10	25	14	35	40	100
Employing the service of a paid domestic worker	14	35	16	40	6	15	4	10	40	100
Employing the service of a family member when attending a face-to-face lecture	14	35	22	55	4	10	0	0	40	100
Leaving a child to sleep on a mat in the lecture room during lectures	0	0	6	15	30	75	4	10	40	100
Pleading for course tutors' help	0	0	6	15	16	40	16	40	40	100

Note: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Table 9, indicate that nursing mothers in the course of climbing the academic calendar encounter numerous challenges. These nursing mothers trying to balance their role as mothers and students adopt strategies. The table above presents the various coping strategies gathered from these mothers.

20(50%) of the nursing mothers disagree that their husband supports them in doing their assignments and giving them lifts to campus while on the counter side 20(50%) disagree that their husband supports them in coping with the challenges discussed above. From the table this strategy that works perfectly for them is the employment of the service of a paid domestic worker and the employment of the service of a family member when attending a face-to-face lecture. 30(75%) of the respondents agreed that they employ domestic paid worker while 36(90%) agreed that they employ the service of a family member (mother, sister, aunt etc) to take care of their baby when away for face-to-face lecture.

It is shown from the data that student mothers who have assistance from either husband, family members or a paid domestic worker seems to be content and seems not to be troubled with their academic work. However not all student's mothers will have a dedicated and a committed husbands to assist them that way. Also, not all student mothers will have that financial capability to afford the service of a paid domestic worker.

4.5 Strategies for Coping with Concentration

The study revealed that in other to deal with the challenge of academic work in relation to concentration, student mothers seek for assistance from their husbands, family members and other domestic paid workers. These students have family members keeping company with them when they attend face to face lectures. Others also have hired domestic workers who take care of their babies when they are attending face to face lectures. 36(90%) of the respondents were in agreement to this strategy working perfectly for them.

Table 10: Effectiveness of Strategies

4.6. Effectiveness of Strategies

Respondents	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Yes	16	40
No	24	60
Total	**40**	**100**

Respondents were asked whether their coping strategies were effective or not. In all sixteen 16(40%) admitted that their strategy was perfect and effective for them with 24(60%) not sure of their strategy being effective. All these 24(60) respondents admitted they are willing to change their strategy since it does not work perfectly for them. However, few of them admitted that their strategy is good for them and for that matter they would not like to change it.

Griffiths (2002) concurs that having available people who positively support them in this respect, including extended family members, friends and partners, seems vital in determining how well mothers cope with these experiences. Those who are able to employ the service of family members to assist them in the home perform better compare to those who carry their babies to the lecture hall and seek lecturers' favour.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the study, draws conclusion and makes appropriate recommendations based on the findings.

5.2 Summary

Formal education is a necessity for every good life, and in Africa, it was initially a special package or prerogative for men only (Raftery & Valiulis, 2011). However, over the years, the pressures of life and the complex dynamics of society have made it a must for women to also go through formal educational system and work to support their men or husbands in taking care of the home financially, among other things. Despite the important roles that higher formal education plays in the lives of women, their gender roles and modern life styles have made it extremely challenging for women to have access to higher formal education or even if they have access, successful completion becomes very difficult. Women who force their way out have to combine their family roles with work and the academic pursuit. The combination of these roles poses some difficulties to both their academic and family lives. This study, thus, sought to find out the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo College of Education. The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

a. What are the academic challenges of nursing mothers in distance education at Agogo College of Education?

b. What are the effects of the academic challenges faced by nursing mothers in distance education?

  c. What are the coping strategies to address the academic challenges nursing mothers faced in distance education?

Relevant literature related to the study was reviewed. These comprised of the concept of distance education, merits and demerits of distance as well as concepts related to the issue under consideration which have been documented by some authorities, educationists, and researchers. The study employed descriptive survey and collected data through the use of questionnaire. Per my operational definition of ―student mothers", only 40 respondents were used for the study. The data collected were analysed, discussed and presented using, percentage tables.

5.3 Major Findings of the Studies

The main findings of the study on academic challenges of student mothers on time management are: Majority of the student mothers spend more time reading only preferred subjects. Most students spend on other things more than reading their notes. Most students are not able to study up to three hours

The study revealed that; most students are unable to bring all their attention on the subject when reading. Television and mobile phone take most of the time of these students nursing mothers. Most students fall asleep when seated to study

Most students lack the basic skills of studying hence affecting their academic performance.

Most students have many deferred papers to write. Most students get troubled with the numerous roles they performed outside academic work.

Most student mothers seek the support from their husbands.

5.6 Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made:

It was found that the student mothers had a lot of academic challenges in relation to time management, concentration and study skills. These challenges are as a result of laborious non-academic activities that they performed daily in their homes. It is therefore concluded that CoDE student mothers have very limited time for their personal study, lack concentration and also lack basic skills in studies.

It was concluded that most of these student mothers become mentally and psychologically troubled as a result of the numerous roles they perform in the house.

On research question three, it was concluded that student mothers who get assistance from their husbands or are able to hire the service of a domestic paid worker or get assistance from family members to assist them in the home are able to strategize themselves and do well in their academic work.

It was also concluded that most of these student mothers see their strategies not effective and would like to change it.

5.7 Recommendations

On the bases of the findings of this study and the conclusions made, the following recommendations are made;

1. Student mothers should delegate or sharing their responsibilities with their partner/husband and any other person they deem fit. Their husband(s)/partner(s) or the persons they deem fit, should in turn give their full support to the student mothers so as to reduce their daily schedules and chores to get time for their studies.

2. Student mothers should endeavour to explain the consequences of enrolling in the CoDE programme to their families, especially, partner/husband for them to fully understand their actions so as to offer the necessary assistance when the need arises.

3. The management and administrators of the various colleges of distance education should have counselling unit for these student mothers. Students who get mentally and psychologically troubled could seek for an assistance from the counselling unit. This would help them to get a stable and a concentrated mind for studies.

4. In order to save the student-mothers from the overwhelming challenges they face, husbands of student nursing mothers must be willing to assist these them in the home.

5.8 Limitations of the Study

The following are some of the limitations of the study. The random sample was drawn from the list of students of UCC at the Agogo College of Education Centre. Results was from students only of Agogo College of Education center may have limitations to generalizing to other colleges. The major challenge was the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic which made it difficult to have access to the respondent.

5.9 Areas for Further Research

Further studies will be required from other universities running programmes on the distance mode to corroborate the findings of the present study and to ensure their generalization.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONAIRE

Dear Respondent,

This form is meant to collect information about the challenges faced by Student Nursing Mothers in the Agogo College of Education, effects of the challenges and the coping strategies to mitigate them. It will be appreciated if you complete this form accurately and truthfully. The information provided is for academic purpose only. You are thereby assured of complete confidentiality of information you provide.

Thank you.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Age (in years): 20-25 [   ]   26-30 [   ]   31-35 [   ]   36-40 [   ]   40 and above [   ]

2. Marital status: Married   [   ]   Single   [   ]   Divorced   [   ]

3. Programme of study: ……………………………………………………

4. Level of programme: Level 100   [   ]   level 200   [   ]   level   300   [   ]

5. How   many   children   do   you   have? …………………………………………..

SECTION B: challenges faced by student nursing mothers.

Each section contributes greatly to finding out the extent of quality of your way of studying. On the right side of the item, there is a row of boxes. Indicate in one of the boxes a tick (√) to show how the item applies to you.

Items	SA	A	D	SD
TIME MANAGEMENT				
6. I spend more time reading the subjects I like and very little time for other subjects.				
7. I hate studying subjects I find difficult.				
8. I do not give enough time to study my major subjects.				
9. I am not able to study up to three hours a day.				
10. The subjects I dislike, do not receive much of my stud time.				
11. I do not have a personal study time table.				
12. Even though my desire is to study on my own constantly, I find it difficult to do so.				
13. Within a week, I spend far more time on others things than on my studies.				
CONCENTRATION				
14. Whenever I read, I am unable to bring all my attention on the subject.				
15. The place I do my private studies is most often noisy. This disturbs my concentration.				
16. I am easily attracted to the television and other activities such as browsing whenever I sit to study.				
17. When my mind begins to wander, while studying, I find it difficult to bring it back to the subject.				
18. I am unable to read for more than thirty minutes at a time.				
19. When I am study, I tend to stop and worry about personal problems.				
20. I am fond of day dreaming during my studies.				
21. Whenever I take a book to read, I fall asleep.				
STUDY SKILLS				
22. I tend to start my studies when all my books, pens, note books have not been assembled.				

23.I do not keep away magazines or phones from my table while studying.				
24.I do not plan whatever I want to study before I begin studying. This wastes my study time.				
25.I usually do not answer questions at the end of a chapter of a book I read.				
26.When I do not understand a word I do not look it up from the dictionary.				
27.When I meet graphs, pictures, charts and tables in my reading I tend to skip them.				
28.I don't take my time to read through and understand materials assigned to me.				
29.I do not exert myself to do any further readings or studies beyond what my tutors give.				

SECTION C: EFFECTS OF THE CHALLENGES

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (√) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about the effects of the challenges faced by student nursing mothers.

NO	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
30	I score low grades				
31	I have many trailed papers to write				
32	I have deferred papers ahead of me to register and write				
33	I am mentally and psychologically troubled as a result of my numerous roles				

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SECTION D: Coping Strategies

Using a continuum of Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD), please select by ticking (√) the appropriate number to indicate your level of agreement or disagreement to each of the following statements about your coping strategies as a student mother.

NO	STATEMENT	SA	A	D	SD
34	Constantly seeking for support from my husband (e.g. he helps in my assignments and gives a lift to campus and back home)				
35	Employing the service of a paid domestic work				
36	Skipping lectures to sometimes take care of my child				
37	Employing the service of a family member when attending face-to-face lecture				
38	Leaving a child to sleep on a mat in the lecture room during lectures				
39	Pleading for course tutors' help (e.g., asking course tutors to just give me a pass mark)				

40. Suggest other coping strategies that you employ.

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41. Are your coping strategies effective?

[   ] Yes   [   ] Uncertain   [   ] No

42. Do you wish to change your strategies?

[   ] yes   [   ] No

43. Give reason(s)

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