



THE IMPACT OF NURSE EDUCATORS' ATTITUDE ON NURSING STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ETHICAL GROWTH AT THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING, EASTERN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF SIERRA LEONE

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Cite this article:

Lawrence S. B., Rashid B. K., Stella F. (2024), The Impact of Nurse Educators' Attitude on Nursing Students' Academic Performance and Ethical Growth at the Department of Nursing, Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone. African Journal of Health, Nursing and Midwifery 7(2), 1-19. DOI: 10.52589/AJHNM-KFOC3ZDP

Manuscript History

Received: 9 Nov 2023

Accepted: 31 Jan 2024

Published: 19 Mar 2024

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ABSTRACT: *Introduction:* Sierra Leone faces significant healthcare challenges, including a shortage of healthcare professionals and concerns over the competence and ethical behaviour of nurses. Understanding the role of nurse educators in shaping the next generation of nurses is essential for addressing these challenges and improving healthcare delivery. *Aim:* To examine the impact of Nurse Educators' attitudes on Nursing Students' academic performance and Ethical Growth at the Department of Nursing, Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone. *Methods:* The study was a descriptive cross-sectional mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and utilised a stratified random sampling method to survey students between August and October 2023. The sample size was determined using an online Raosoft sample size calculator and the WallStreetMojo formula, ensuring a 5% margin of error at a 95% confidence interval. Data collection involved a self-designed 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, assessed for reliability and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha, with analysis conducted through descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and the chi-square test of independence, maintaining a significance level of $p \leq 0.05$. *Result:* Findings that emerged include the positive influence of educators' attitudes, commitment, and effective teaching methods, underscoring their crucial role in cultivating a conducive learning environment. Similarly, negative findings reveal apprehensions regarding clinical preparation, student participation, and the perceived influence of educators' behaviour on academic progress and motivation. Statistical analyses, including chi-square tests, reveal the statistical significance of the relationships between nurse educators' attitudes and students' academic performance and ethical growth. Qualitative themes, including respect, fairness, and equality emerged, highlighting the intricate nature of professional relationships between educators and students. *Conclusion:* The study sheds light on nurse educators' influence on students' academic performance and ethical growth, emphasising the importance of addressing both positive aspects and areas of concern for a holistic learning environment. The qualitative responses emphasised a collective desire for a supportive and respectful atmosphere and implementing the study's recommendations is seen as vital for enhancing professional relationships in nursing education.

KEYWORDS: Nurse Educator, Nurse Tutor, Clinical Instructor, Preceptors, Student Nurse, National League of Nursing (NLN)



INTRODUCTION

The cultivation of competence among student nurses is a matter of utmost importance not only for nurse educators but also for nursing regulatory bodies, employers, and ultimately, patients' well-being. While numerous teaching and learning strategies are employed to foster competence in student nurses, the actual level of competence achieved upon graduation often falls short of the anticipated standards 29 (Munangatire & McInerney, 2021).

Education and instruction play a crucial role in shaping individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and character development (Karsli, 2007). In this context, educators hold a central position as they guide and mentor students in their learning journey. The responsibilities of modern educators extend beyond traditional teaching to include organising, managing, counselling, observing, evaluating, and influencing society (Temel, 1988). Therefore, educators, including nurse educators, bear a significant responsibility in fostering students' academic success, ethical growth, and overall development.

In nursing, nurse educators are pivotal in preparing the next generation of professional nurses. Their mentorship and guidance are essential in ensuring that nursing students acquire the necessary skills and ethics required for a dynamic healthcare system. Effective nurse educators teach and serve as role models, creating a supportive and trustful learning environment (daily nurse.com, "n.d").

Nursing practice heavily relies on therapeutic communication, which involves honesty, empathy, authenticity, openness, and a personal connection. Nurse educators who establish collegial relationships with students help them develop both personal and professional competencies. However, some educators may misuse their power, leading students to feel threatened and powerless (Griffith & Bakanauskas, 1983) and this may have a negative connotation towards their academic and personal development.

Research has shown that nursing students value faculty members' competence and interpersonal skills over personality traits. Similarly, clinical nurse educators' effectiveness is attributed to their capacity to build interpersonal relationships and approachability (Labrague et al. 2020). Furthermore, nurse educators' competence in professional ethics, particularly in fairness and respect, is vital for providing ethical role models to nursing students and healthcare professionals. However, studies have revealed that educators sometimes fall short of demonstrating fairness and respect toward students' individual opinions (Salminen et al., 2017) Moreover, research studies and theories have established a direct correlation between students' self-concept and academic performance, highlighting the significant role of nurse educators in shaping the academic and ethical development of nursing students.

Sierra Leone faces significant healthcare challenges, including a shortage of healthcare professionals and concerns about the competence and ethical behaviour of nurses. The role of nurse educators in shaping the next generation of nurses is essential for addressing these challenges and improving healthcare delivery.

This research therefore seeks to examine the complex relationship between nurse educator behavior, nursing student academic achievements, and character development, with a focus on principles of educational philosophy. Understanding how nurse educators' attitudes impact nursing students' growth is essential for enhancing nursing education and the overall improvement in patient care.



THEORETICAL / CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE RESEARCH WORK

This study is grounded in educational philosophy, emphasising the significance of educators in facilitating students' acquisition of knowledge, honing their skills, moulding their attitudes, and fostering the development of their character. The philosophical and theoretical perspectives of Dewey (1916), Freire (1970), Rousseau (1762), and Buber (1958) provide a solid foundation for understanding how nurse educators' attitudes can impact the academic and ethical growth of nursing students.

John Dewey's Pragmatism, articulated in his influential work "**Democracy and Education** (Dewey, 1916): **An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education**," published in 1916, has significant relevance to nurse educators' attitudes and their impact on nursing students' academic attainment and character development. Dewey's Pragmatism is rooted in the idea that education is a dynamic, experiential process and that learning is not just about acquiring facts but also about fostering critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and ethical judgment. In the context of nurse educators, the following points from Dewey's philosophy are particularly pertinent:

Experiential Learning: Dewey emphasised the importance of learning through real-life experiences. Nurse educators can apply this by creating hands-on, practical learning opportunities for nursing students. This approach helps Students Bridge the gap between theory and practice, enhancing their academic understanding and practical skills.

Active Engagement: Dewey believed learners should actively engage with the subject matter. Nurse educators can encourage active participation, discussion, and critical reflection among students. This not only deepens their understanding of nursing concepts but also promotes ethical growth by encouraging them to think ethically and reflect on their actions.

Problem-Solving: Dewey's philosophy advocates for problem-solving as a core aspect of education. Nurse educators can incorporate case studies, simulations, and real-world scenarios into their teaching. This approach challenges students to think critically and make ethical decisions, fostering both academic and ethical development.

Ethical Development: Dewey's philosophy underscores the moral dimension of education. Nurse educators should not only teach the technical aspects of nursing but also instill ethical values and behaviours. They should be ethical role models, demonstrating empathy, compassion, and ethical decision-making.

Reflective Practice: Dewey emphasised the importance of reflection in the learning process. Nurse educators should encourage students to reflect on their experiences, including their clinical practice and ethical dilemmas. Reflective practice helps students refine their academic knowledge and develop ethical insights.

In essence, Dewey's Pragmatism aligns with the idea that nurse educators play a pivotal role in shaping nursing students' academic achievement and character development. By creating experiential, active, and reflective learning environments while embodying ethical values, nurse educators can effectively impact both the academic and ethical growth of their students, consistent with Dewey's educational philosophy from 1916.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau's educational philosophy, (Pennbrant, 2016)) as articulated in his work "Emile" published in 1762, holds relevance in understanding how nurse educators' attitudes can impact nursing students' academic attainment and character building. Rousseau's ideas emphasise the natural development of an individual's character and the role of educators as guides rather than imposing external authority. In the context of nurse educators, his philosophy is as follows:

Natural Development: Rousseau believed that individuals are born inherently good, and their natural development should be nurtured rather than suppressed. Nurse educators can apply this concept by recognising the unique potential of each nursing student. Instead of imposing rigid standards, educators should facilitate an environment where students can discover and develop their academic and ethical capacities organically.

Individualized Education: Rousseau advocated for tailored, individualised education. Nurse educators should acknowledge that each student has distinct academic strengths and ethical inclinations. They can adapt their teaching approaches to cater to these individual needs, ensuring that students receive personalised guidance for both academic and character development.

Experiential Learning: Rousseau believed that learning should be based on practical experiences and interactions with the environment. Nurse educators can incorporate experiential learning into their teaching, providing students with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in real clinical settings. This approach not only enhances academic understanding but also contributes to the development of ethical decision-making skills through real-world experiences.

Non-Authoritarian Guidance: Rousseau emphasised that educators should avoid authoritarianism and coercion. In the nursing education context, nurse educators should foster open and respectful dialogue with students. They should create an atmosphere where students feel comfortable discussing academic and ethical dilemmas, promoting character development through meaningful interactions.

Character Building: Rousseau's philosophy underscores the significance of character development. Nurse educators can actively engage students in discussions and reflections on ethical issues and values inherent in nursing practice. By encouraging ethical introspection and modelling ethical behaviour, educators can contribute to the character-building of nursing students.

Moral Autonomy: Rousseau believed in developing moral autonomy in individuals. Nurse educators should aim to empower students to make ethical decisions independently. This involves teaching ethical principles and providing opportunities for students to grapple with ethical challenges and dilemmas, fostering their moral autonomy.

In summary, Rousseau's educational philosophy outlined in "Emile" emphasises the importance of nurturing the natural development of individuals, personalised education, experiential learning, non-authoritarian guidance, character building, and moral autonomy. Nurse educators can draw from these principles to impact nursing students' academic attainment and character development positively. By creating a supportive and individualised learning environment that encourages ethical reflection and autonomy, nurse educators can



play a vital role in shaping the academic and ethical growth of their students, aligning with Rousseau's educational ideals from 1762.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, articulated in his 1970 work "**Pedagogy of the Oppressed**," (Freire, 1970) offers valuable insights into how nurse educators' attitudes can impact nursing students' academic attainment and character building. This educational theory emphasises critical thinking, social awareness, and transformation. Here's how Freire's ideas relate to nursing education:

Critical Consciousness: Freire introduced the concept of "critical consciousness," which involves questioning the status quo and developing an awareness of social injustices. Nurse educators can foster critical consciousness among nursing students by encouraging them to critically analyse healthcare practices, ethical dilemmas, and disparities in patient care. This encourages students to go beyond surface-level learning and actively engage in ethical discussions and academic inquiries.

Dialogue and Collaboration: Freire's pedagogy emphasises the importance of dialogue and collaboration between educators and students. Nurse educators can create an open and inclusive learning environment where students feel comfortable expressing their opinions and concerns. Through dialogue, educators can guide students in exploring complex ethical issues, which contributes to their character development and academic growth.

Problem-Posing Education: Freire advocated for a "problem-posing" approach to education, where students are active participants in their learning. Nurse educators can apply this by involving students in discussions about real-world healthcare challenges and ethical dilemmas. This approach not only enhances academic understanding but also encourages students to develop critical thinking skills and ethical reasoning.

Empowerment and Transformation: Freire's pedagogy is rooted in the idea of empowering individuals to become agents of change in their communities. Nurse educators can empower nursing students by teaching them the importance of advocating for ethical healthcare practices and patient rights. This empowerment can lead to students actively shaping their character and ethical values.

Reflection and Action: Freire emphasised the cyclical process of reflection and action. Nurse educators can encourage students to reflect on their ethical choices and actions in clinical settings. By facilitating structured reflection, educators help students internalise ethical principles and integrate them into their character.

Social Context: Freire's theory acknowledges the significance of the social context in education. Nurse educators should contextualise their teaching based on the unique healthcare challenges and ethical dilemmas that are prevalent in their region. This approach helps students develop a deep understanding of how societal factors influence both healthcare and character development.

In summary, Freire's critical pedagogy aligns with the idea that nurse educators play a transformative role in nursing students' academic and character development. Nurse educators impact nursing students' academic achievement and ethical growth when they promote critical consciousness, open dialogue, problem-posing education, empowerment, reflection, and consideration of the social context. Freire's approach encourages educators to



go beyond traditional teaching methods and engage students in the active exploration of ethical and academic dimensions of nursing, ultimately contributing to their holistic development.

Martin Buber's educational philosophy, particularly his concept of "**Dialogical Education**" (Buber, 1958) as presented in his 1958 work "I and Thou," emphasises the significance of genuine and respectful dialogue between educators and students. This approach to education can profoundly influence nurse educators' attitudes and their impact on nursing students' academic attainment and character building.

I-Thou Relationship: Buber's theory centres on the "I-Thou" relationship, where individuals engage in authentic, reciprocal, and meaningful connections. Nurse educators can apply this concept by fostering a deep and respectful relationship with their students. By recognising the humanity of each student and treating them as individuals rather than mere recipients of knowledge, educators create an environment conducive to academic and character development.

Mutual Respect: Buber's dialogical approach underscores mutual respect in educational interactions. Nurse educators should respect their students' perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds. This respect encourages students to actively participate in their education to foster a sense of empowerment and ethical growth.

Open and Honest Communication: Dialogical education encourages open and honest communication. Nurse educators should create a space where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, questions, and concerns. This transparent communication enables students to engage in critical discussions about ethics and academic topics.

Meaningful Interpersonal Connections: Buber's theory highlights the significance of meaningful interpersonal connections. Nurse educators should strive to build relationships with their students based on trust and authenticity. These connections can positively impact students' academic performance and character development by providing emotional support and guidance.

Active Engagement: Dialogical education promotes active engagement in the learning process. Nurse educators can engage nursing students by involving them in decision-making, ethical problem-solving and reflective activities. This active participation contributes to academic achievement and ethical maturity.

Empathy and Understanding: Buber's philosophy encourages educators to cultivate empathy and understanding toward their students. Nurse educators should seek to understand the unique challenges and ethical dilemmas students face in their nursing education and clinical practice. This empathetic approach can help students navigate these challenges effectively.

Role Modeling: Nurse Educators can become role models in the "I-Thou" relationship, demonstrating ethical behaviour, empathy, and respectful communication. By embodying these qualities, educators inspire students to emulate them, promoting character development.

Holistic Development: Buber's dialogical education aligns with the idea of holistic development. Nurse educators can recognise that academic attainment and character building



are interconnected aspects of a student's growth. By fostering meaningful dialogue and respect, educators contribute to both dimensions of development.

Concisely, Martin Buber's Dialogical Education theory emphasises the importance of authentic, respectful, and meaningful interactions between educators and students. Nurse educators who embrace this approach can positively impact nursing students' academic achievement and character development. By nurturing "I-Thou" relationships, promoting mutual respect, encouraging open communication, and fostering empathy, nurse educators create an environment conducive to ethical growth and academic excellence. Buber's philosophy underscores the idea that education is not just about transferring knowledge but also about nurturing the ethical and personal development of students, a perspective highly relevant to nursing education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area:

The study was conducted at the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone, with the faculty of Health Sciences and Disaster Management studies specifically within the Nursing Department. This setting ensures direct relevance to the population of interest - nursing students and educators

Eastern Technical University is a university located in Kenema, the third largest city of Sierra Leone with the Kenema campus, Eastern Technical University was designed as a multi-campus institution with a campus at Bunumbu in the Kailahun District, (this campus was destroyed in the Sierra Leone Civil War) another at Woama in the Kono District (this campus was planned after the war and two buildings were erected but the site has been abandoned). The college was established as a result of a merger of two prominent government institutions, the Bunumbu Teachers College and the Government Technical Institute. Both institutions had a long history of contribution towards education in Sierra Leone. The Eastern Technical University acquired legal status as a tertiary educational institution in October 2001. Before, it had put quite a wide range of programs in place, all geared towards providing educational opportunities to train as teachers, Tradesmen, Nurses, technicians and technologists.

Study Design:

The study employed a descriptive cross-sectional mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, and utilised a simple random sampling method to survey students between August and October 2023. The study included Nursing students of both genders. Only students who have at least spent an academic year in the department were targeted.

Sampling Technique:

The study targeted 580 students. Sample size estimation from the total population was done using an online Raosoft sample-size calculator software and WallStreetMojo sample size formula with 95% CI. Since there is no empirical evidence based on previous research on the



topic of the study area, a ninety per cent (90%) response rate was achieved to get the sample proportion with a 5% margin of error.

$$\text{Sample size, } n = N * \frac{\frac{z^2 * p * (1 - p)}{e^2}}{[N - 1 + \frac{z^2 * p * (1 - p)}{e^2}]}$$

Where

- N = Population size
- Z = Critical value of the normal distribution at the required confidence level
- p = Sample proportion/expected response
- e = Margin of error

The minimum sample size calculated from Raosoft was **112** nursing students out of **580** total numbers of students.

Research Instrument:

An online survey was conducted using Google Forms with responses restricted to only a single response sheet per respondent. Data was collected from a self-designed questionnaire adopted from similar studies that was validated. The first section of the form was regarding the consent to participate in the study; The second section was about demographic variables such as gender, age, sex, and level; and the third or main section consisted of statements categorized into various domains of study interest such as Educators' Attitudes at the training institutions, Preceptors Attitudes at clinical settings, Nurse Educators' Interpersonal Relationships, Learning Environment and Teaching Methods, Commitment and Role Modeling ranging from kind to rigid; Impact of that attitude on academic performance and character development and the final section included, open-ended questions to further obtain in-depth qualitative insight about educators' attitude. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used for responses ranging from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD) with each statement.

Data Collection Method:

The researcher selected participants by stratifying the student population based on academic levels (year of study) from level two onwards. Further stratification was done based on students who have had clinical experiences and those who have not and random selection of a proportional number of students from each stratum ensuring a mix of students from different academic levels and clinical exposure. The research process was explained to each participant and consent was sorted. If granted, then the student was recruited to participate. The structured online Google Forms survey questionnaires were administered to selected participants to be completed and submitted online with responses restricted to only a single response sheet per respondent. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Principal Component (PC) analysis were used with varimax rotation. The criteria for eigenvalues was set at greater or equal to 1.0. The significance of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett test allows for



EFA. Two factors were extracted that explained the overall variation. These two factors were named “**Positive Attitude**” and “**Negative Attitude**”. For the open-ended questions, responses were coded and themes were generated based on the patterns that emerged and were transcribed verbatim.

Data Reliability:

Pilot testing was done to test the reliability and internal consistency of the data and the reliability of the questionnaire data obtained was 88.8% using the Cronbach’s alpha test.

Data Analysis:

All online completed forms were generated, entered, cleaned, and organised in an Excel sheet. Data was analysed using Excel Toolpak 2016 for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics (such as frequencies and percentages) was calculated for the responses. The results were interpreted using factor analysis to observe the reliability of the designed statements and the chi-square test of independence. A p-value of 0.05 or less was considered as significantly associated with educators’ attitudes.

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Students’ Respondents

Data was collected from 112 participants. Female students constituted the majority (68%), reflecting a significant representation of women in nursing education. A large percentage of students (78.4%) fall within the age bracket of 15-30, indicating a younger demographic engaged in nursing education. Many students (60.8%) were in their third year, suggesting a relatively balanced distribution across different program levels.

Table I Socio-Demographic Characteristics of student’s respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequencies (%)
Gender	● Male	36 (32%)
	● Female	76 (68%)
Age bracket	● 15-30	89 (78.4%)
	● 31-45	23 (21.6%)
	● >45	00 (00.0%)
Program	● Diploma	51 (98%)
	● Degree	60 (2%)
	● masters	00 (00)
	● Other	00 (00%)
program level	● Year 1	00 (00%)
	● Year 2	44 (39.2%)
	● Year 3	68 (60.8%)



Results (Quantitative Analysis)

Table II: Effect of Nurse Educators' Attitude on students Academics performance (n=112)

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	X2	Sig.
Nurse educators in training institutions create a positive and inclusive learning environment.	17 (15.6%)	11 (9.6%)	12 (10.8)	21 (18.8%)	51 (45.2%)	280.94	.00*
Nurse educators in training institutions are approachable and encourage open communication	13 (12.1%)	17 (15.6%)	12 (10.8)	20 (17.8%)	49 (43.6%)	201.54	.00*
Nurse educators in training institutions provide adequate support for academic growth.	10 (8.9%)	11 (9.8%)	11 (9.8%)	30 (26.7%)	50 (44.6%)	212.84	.00*
Nurse educators in training institutions regularly provide constructive feedback to help students improve their performance.	71 (63.7%)	22 (19.1%)	06 (5.7%)	09 (7.6%)	04 (3.8%)	25.44	.00*
Nurse educators in clinical placements ensure that students are adequately prepared for clinical experiences.	52 (46.5%)	38 (34.4%)	04 (3.8%)	08 (7.0%)	10 (8.3%)	30.47	.00*
Nurse educators in clinical placements encourage active student participation in patient care.	66 (59.2%)	35 (30.6%)	05 (4.5%)	04 (3.8%)	02 (1.9%)	21.66	.00*
You are able to ask for assistance without fear of rejection and embarrassment.	10 (8.9%)	11 (10.2%)	14 (12.1)	19 (17.2%)	58 (51.6%)	179.91	.00*
Your educator ignores your progress which results in decreased motivation.	50 (44.6%)	29 (25.5%)	12 (10.8)	18 (15.9%)	03 (3.2%)	81.48	.00*
Your result (academic performance) is affected by your educators' behaviour.	03 (3.2%)	27 (24.8%)	09 (7.6%)	09 (7.6%)	64 (56.7%)	33.86	.00*

**Table III: Nurse Educators' and students' Interpersonal Relationships (n=112)**

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	X2	Sig.
Nurse educators in your training institution maintain positive interpersonal relationships with students.	22 (19.7%)	29 (25.3%)	12 (10.8%)	11 (10.2%)	38 (33.9%)	190.89	.00*
Nurse educators in clinical placements respect students' personal opinions and perspectives.	09 (8.3%)	49 (43.3%)	11 (10.2%)	24 (21.7%)	19 (16.6%)	166.58	.00*
Nurse educators in both settings treat students with dignity and respect.	09 (8.3%)	53 (47.1%)	09 (8.0%)	27 (24.5%)	14 (12.1%)	222.91	.00*
Nurse educators create an enabling and relaxed learning environment that encourages active participation.	25 (21.7%)	16 (14.6%)	08 (7.0%)	11 (10.2%)	52 (46.5%)	205.63	.00*
Nurse educators show a high level of commitment and interest in their teaching, and uses ideal teaching methods that enhance your understanding and engagement	16 (14.0%)	26 (23.0%)	10 (8.9%)	19 (16.6%)	41 (37.1%)	189.73	.00*

Table IV: Nurse Educators Attitude on ethical growth of Students (n=112)

Factors	SD	D	N	A	SA	X2	Sig.
Ethical values and professionalism are emphasized by nurse educators in training institutions.	12 (10.2%)	17 (15.3%)	12 (10.8%)	22 (19.7%)	49 (43.9%)	190.89	.00*
Ethical dilemmas and professionalism issues are effectively addressed by nurse educators in clinical placements	09 (8.3%)	30 (26.6%)	12 (10.2%)	24 (21.7%)	37 (33.3%)	166.58	.00*
Nurse educators practice the ethical principles they preach, such as approachability, accommodation, empathy, and personal interest in students' development.	20 (18.3%)	25 (22.1%)	10 (8.0%)	27 (24.5%)	30 (27.1%)	222.91	.00*



Nurse educators demonstrate fairness in their dealings with students.	23 (20.2%)	27 (24.6%)	08 (7.0%)	24 (21.7%)	30 (26.5%)	205.63	.00*
Nurse educators serve as positive role models for nursing students in terms of their attitudes and ethics	21 (19.0%)	20 (18.0%)	10 (8.9%)	19 (16.6%)	42 (37.1%)	189.73	.00*

SA= strongly agree; A= agree; N= neutral; D= disagree; SD = strongly disagree. P-value < 0.05 is considered statistically significant.

Analysis from the two-factor findings explaining overall variation:

Positive Findings:

Effect of Nurse Educators' Attitude on Academics:

- **Positive Learning Environment:** The result shows a strong agreement on Positive Learning Environment (**45.2% SA, 18.8% A**) which reflects a positive learning atmosphere, crucial for academic performance.
- **Constructive Feedback:** There was a substantial agreement on constructive feedback (**63.7% SA**) indicative of active efforts by educators in providing constructive feedback to students.

Interpersonal Relationships:

- **Positive Relationships:** findings were suggestive of Positive perceptions of maintaining positive relationships (**33.9% SA, 10.2 A**) and respecting students' opinions (**43.3% SA**) indicating a healthy interpersonal environment.
- **Commitment and Teaching Methods:** There was a strong agreement (**57.1% SA**) suggests educators' commitment and effective teaching methods positively influence student engagement.

Ethical Growth:

- **Emphasis on Ethical Values:** High agreement (43.9% SA) indicates the emphasis educators place on ethical values and professionalism.
- **Fairness and Positive Role Models:** Strong agreement (37.1% SA) suggests fairness and positive role modeling by educators.

Negative Findings:

- **Preparation for clinical experience at clinical placements:** A significant portion of students strongly disagree (**46.5% SD**) with the statement "Nurse Educators in clinical placements ensure that students are adequately prepared for clinical experiences."
- **Student's participation in patient care:** There was a high disagreement (**59.2% SD**) to the statement "Nurse Educators in clinical placements encourage active student participation in patient care" indicative of clinical staff's lack of interest in the students' active commitment and involvement in performing nursing clinical procedures.



- **Academic Progress and Motivation:** A significant portion of students (**44.6%**) opined that their educators ignore their progress, leading to decreased motivation.
- **Impact on Academic Performance:** A substantial percentage (**64 %**) feel their academic performance and ethical growth are affected by educators' behaviour.

Significance of Findings Based on Statistics:

Statistical Significance:

Approximately 64% of the students mentioned (Table 1 of the Designed Questionnaire) that their academic performance is affected by educators' behaviour. The chi-square tests also reveal statistically significant relationships between nurse educators' attitudes and students' academic performance and ethical growth, emphasising the robustness of the findings.

RESULTS (QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS)

Common Themes that emerged:

- **Respect and Positive Interpersonal Relationship:** Many respondents emphasised the importance of maintaining respect and positive interpersonal relationships between nurse educators and students.
 1. *“I suggest Nurse educators should maintain respect and positive interpersonal relationships between each other and students”*
 2. *“Our educators need to be treating us as their upcoming nurses but some are very reluctant”*

This suggests a desire for a conducive and supportive learning environment.

- **Professional Counselling and Mentorship:** respondents suggested the need for professional counsellors to address issues affecting academic performance and the establishment of mentorship programs.

“I suggest there should be students professional counsellors on issues affecting academic performance”

This indicates a desire for additional support structures beyond traditional teaching.

Fairness and Equality: The theme of fairness and equality in educators' dealings with students emerged.

3. *“The nurse educators should demonstrate total fairness in their dealings with students”*
4. *“The nurse educators should treat all students nurse with equal rights and justice”*

Respondents highlighted the importance of educators treating all students with equal rights and justice, signaling a desire for fair and unbiased interactions.

Open Communication and Regular Meetings: Suggestions were made for fostering open communication through regular meetings and creating forums where issues can be addressed.



“I suggest consideration in fostering open communication through regular meetings creating mentorship programs”

“All students and educators must have a forum where issues are addressed”

This underscores the significance of transparent and consistent communication channels.

Teamwork and Encouragement: Participants advocated for teamwork between students and nurse educators, and the encouragement of students’ participation in clinical settings.

“There should be teamwork between students and nurse educators”

“Nurse educators should encourage students to participate in clinical ward”

“Nurse educators to encourage students”

This reflects a desire for collaborative learning environments.

Time Management and Availability: Comments emphasised the importance of educators being punctual, readily available, and allocating sufficient time for students.

“Educators should always be on time and readily available to the nurses”

“The nurse educators have greater time for their students”

This suggests a desire for accessibility and time commitment from educators

DISCUSSION

This study examines the impact of Nurse Educators’ attitudes on Nursing Students’ academic performance and Ethical Growth at the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone.

Findings showed that 57% of students agreed that teachers’ positive attitudes promote academic and personality outcomes. This strong agreement on educators’ positive attitudes (kind, thoughtful, supportive, grateful, humorous, emotionally supportive, and pleasant), commitment and effective teaching methods underscores their positive influence on student engagement. The strong agreement on a positive learning environment suggests that educators contribute significantly to creating an atmosphere conducive to academic success. This is supported by the works of (Muñoz-Hurtado, 2018 a., James, 2018b.), emphasising the role of proper work environment and appropriate communication skills to develop and enhance the interest of students in their subject. Coupled with the substantial agreement on constructive feedback, highlights an active effort by educators to support students in their academic growth and this observation is supported by similar findings documented by (Ulug .et al.2011). On the other hand, negative attitude (over-strictness, harshness, ruthlessness, discrimination, insulting behaviour, criticism) by educator adds to poor academic performance, lack of confidence and low moral standards among students.

Furthermore, 64% of nursing students strongly agreed that their average result is affected by educators’ attitudes (respecting student’s opinions, effective communication, and fairness). This high percentage feeling on their academic performance and ethical growth is affected by



educators' behaviour drawing attention to the potentially far-reaching consequences of negative attitudes.

The chi-square tests done in this study also reveal statistically significant relationships between nurse educators' attitudes and various factors. This aligns with the results in the literature which observed that there exist a statistically significant association between the academic performance of students and the instructional communication abilities of educators (Matthew, 2021).

According to research, instructors were the second most common influential factor, parents being the first common, in the individual's development, these individuals take on role models during education and teachers' behaviour and attitude have an impact on their personality development (Labrague, 2020). The high agreement (43.9% SA) seen in the study indicates the emphasis educators place on ethical values and professionalism.

A significant portion of students (44.6%) reported that their educators ignore their progress, leading to decreased motivation, and close to 40% of students believed that their educators do not set an example by themselves depicting qualities like motivation, fairness, respect for students etc. Hence, a majority of them (37.1%) do not consider their educators as role models. This perspective is of utmost importance for nursing students' professional lives, as they would maintain this attitude towards the patients too in their places of work as evidenced in the work of Karima (2016).

The qualitative responses highlighted the multifaceted nature of professional relationships between nurse educators and nursing students. The recurring themes of respect, fairness, and equality underscore the significance of positive interpersonal dynamics in the educational experience. The call for additional support structures, such as professional counsellors and mentorship programs, indicates recognition of the diverse challenges students may face. Suggestions for open communication and regular forums demonstrate a desire for transparent channels where concerns can be addressed and discussed openly.

The importance of educators being punctual, available, and committing sufficient time reinforces the idea that educators play a crucial role in shaping the learning environment. Recommendations for teamwork and encouragement of student participation highlight the collaborative nature of nursing education

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The implications for research and practice based on the study findings involved a multilateral approach involving policy enforcement, collaborative efforts, provision of resources, and educational initiatives. This stresses the necessity for continuous professional development for educators, the implementation of mentorship programs, and the adoption of strategies to enhance interpersonal relationships, fairness, and equality within the academic setting. The call for professional counsellors and mentorship programs reflects an acknowledgement of the diverse challenges students may encounter, advocating for a comprehensive approach to student support. Despite the insights gained, limitations, such as the study's focus on one university and potential self-reporting bias, are recognised. Suggestions for future research aim to explore additional factors and perspectives.



CONCLUSION

The study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of nurse educators' attitudes and their impact on student's academic performance and ethical growth. Findings revealed that the majority of students agreed that teachers' positive attitudes promote academic and personality outcomes. This strong agreement on educators' positive attitudes (kind, thoughtful, supportive, grateful, humorous, emotionally supportive, and pleasant), commitment and effective teaching methods enhance their positive influence on student engagement. On the other hand negative attitudes (over-strictness, harshness, ruthlessness, discrimination, insulting behaviour, and criticism) by educators add to poor academic performance, lack of confidence and low moral standards among students. While positive aspects are highlighted, addressing areas of concern is crucial for a collective desire for a supportive, respectful, and communicative learning environment. Implementing recommendations from this study could contribute to the improvement of professional relationships within the nursing education context.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The research calls for future research endeavours in the field involving other nurse training colleges in other cities to find out additional factors influencing academic performance and incorporate educators' perspectives to avoid unnecessary resentment from tutors and students

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS: The three authors contributed equally at every stage of the development of this work

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: We acknowledge all who took part in this study and all sources cited.

FUNDING INFORMATION: No funding was solicited or received for this work

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT: The authors declare no competing interests

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS APPROVAL: Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Eastern Technical University of Sierra Leone Institutional Review Board (ETUSL-IRB) and informed consent from participants.



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