



Factors Affecting the Academic Performance of Nursing Students: A Narrative Review

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Abstract

Background: Academic performance reflects a student's ability to achieve learning and professional competencies and is influenced by study habits, motivation, and learning approaches. In nursing education, these behaviours are shaped by classroom and clinical experiences and significantly affect academic outcomes. This narrative review synthesises existing literature on factors influencing academic performance among nursing students. **Methods:** A narrative literature review using a documentary analysis approach was conducted. Relevant studies were identified through systematic searches of PubMed and Google Scholar, supplemented by manual searches of journals and reference lists. Findings were synthesised narratively, focusing on student-, lecturer-, and institutional-related factors. **Results:** Multiple factors influence nursing students' academic performance. Student-related factors such as psychological stress, burnout, poor study habits, inadequate time management, low motivation, and financial constraints hinder achievement, while self-motivation, effective study strategies, and family or peer support enhance learning. Lecturer-related factors, including poor teaching methods, limited availability, and inadequate clinical supervision, reduce performance, whereas competent lecturers, participatory teaching strategies, and supportive interactions improve outcomes. Institutional-related barriers include overcrowded curricula, insufficient resources, and a lack of mentorship, while structured orientation programs, accessible facilities, supportive policies, affordable courses, and conducive learning environments promote better performance. **Conclusion:** Nursing students' academic performance is shaped by personal, instructional, and institutional factors. Addressing barriers and strengthening supportive elements is essential for improving academic achievement and professional preparedness.

Keywords: Academic performance, Nursing students, Teaching-learning process, Factors influencing academic achievement, nursing education

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Introduction

Nursing demand has escalated worldwide due to the shortage of nurses internationally and an ageing population, stressing the need for improvements in the healthcare system, especially in nursing care (Reynolds *et al.*, 2023; Bano *et al.*, 2023).

Nursing students face various challenges during their years of study, which may hinder their academic performance. The success of nursing students is particularly important given that they must provide quality care to patients, family members, and the community (Ratanasiripong *et al.*, 2021; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022). Academic performance in nursing programs includes advances in theoretical subjects and the acquisition of practical skills in clinical settings. Studies have shown that during their training, nursing students encounter many difficulties that affect their learning skills and, consequently, their academic performance (Gripshi *et al.*, 2022).

Academic performance is a key indicator of the quality of education and plays a critical role in producing competent graduates who contribute meaningfully to society (Mohamed *et al.*, 2022). In nursing education, academic performance reflects not only students' mastery of theoretical knowledge but also their ability to apply learned skills effectively in practice (Khatun *et al.*, 2020). The overarching goal of academic institutions is to foster high academic achievement among students, which is influenced by the interplay of student, lecturer, and institutional factors (Mensah *et al.*, 2024). Study skills, time management, and effective learning strategies are particularly important determinants of

student success (Aboagye *et al.*, 2020). In addition, the competence and teaching efficiency of lecturers, as well as the learning environment and availability of resources within institutions, significantly shape academic outcomes.

Nurses represent the largest professional workforce in healthcare and play a pivotal role in promoting health and delivering quality care. Consequently, ensuring high academic performance among nursing students is crucial to maintaining a competent and effective nursing workforce (World Health Organisation, 2021). Despite extensive research, there remains no comprehensive understanding of all factors influencing academic performance, and disparities persist across different student populations and educational settings (Suleiman *et al.*, 2024).

Therefore, this narrative review aims to synthesise current literature on factors affecting academic performance among nursing students, with findings grouped into student-related, lecturer-related, and institution-related factors. Understanding these determinants is critical for informing educational policies and interventions that can improve academic outcomes and strengthen the nursing workforce.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a narrative literature review, utilising a documentary analysis approach to examine factors affecting the academic performance of nursing students. Documentary analysis involved systematically reviewing and interpreting secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, research reports,

and relevant nursing education literature, to identify themes and patterns related to student-, lecturer-, and institutional-related factors.

A systematic literature search was conducted using PubMed (which includes MEDLINE-indexed journals) and Google Scholar. The search was performed between December 2025 and January 2026. Specific keywords such as “academic performance,” “nursing students,” “teaching–learning process,” “factors influencing academic achievement,” and “nursing education” were used in various combinations to retrieve relevant studies. These terms guided the identification of literature addressing students’ academic outcomes, instructional methods, and learning environments. The search was limited to articles published in English and relevant to nursing education.

In addition to the electronic search, a manual search of relevant nursing and health-related journals was carried out. Reference lists of selected articles were further examined to retrieve additional studies relevant to the academic performance of nursing students.

The selected literature was reviewed and synthesised narratively, with emphasis on themes related to student-related factors, Lecturer-related factors and Institutional-related factors influencing academic achievement.

Results

The results of this narrative review identified three broad categories of factors influencing academic performance among nursing students: student-related, lecturer-related, and institutional-related factors.

Student-related Factors

Student-related factors significantly influence nursing students’ academic performance, operating through psychological, behavioural, and socioeconomic pathways. Evidence from multiple studies demonstrates that these factors can function both as barriers and facilitators, depending on the context.

Psychological and Emotional Factors

Psychological and emotional factors have been widely reported as key determinants of academic success. Anxiety-provoking situations in clinical practice negatively impact both academic and clinical performance (Bano *et al.*, 2023). Stress and burnout are also associated with decreased engagement and lower academic outcomes (Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, emotional support from parents and peers can enhance students’ academic achievement by reducing stress and fostering a positive learning environment (Ramasaco, 2024; Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024).

Study Behaviours and Time Management

Effective study behaviours, including consistent assignment completion, attention in class, examination preparation, and time management, positively influence academic performance (Kumar *et al.*, 2024; Thomas & Mahida, 2022). Students who utilise learning resources effectively, create lecture notes, and maintain satisfaction with study facilities demonstrate higher achievement (Thomas & Mahida, 2022).

However, several barriers within study behaviours reduce performance, such as absenteeism, low engagement in clinical practice, insufficient study time,

distractions during study hours, and conflicts with work or personal responsibilities (Gripshi *et al.*, 2022; Massally & Gogra, 2025; Chukwu & Ogbu, 2025). Poor preparations for professional examinations and irregular attendance have also been reported as contributors to weaker academic outcomes (Massally & Gogra, 2025).

Socioeconomic and Financial Factors

Socioeconomic constraints influence students' ability to meet academic demands. Lower socioeconomic status, financial hardship, and part-time employment reduce available study time and negatively affect performance (Bano *et al.*, 2023; Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024). Employment demands, transportation difficulties, and long distances from training institutions further limit class attendance and exam preparation (Gripshi *et al.*, 2022; Massally & Gogra, 2025). Conversely, financial support from parents or family members facilitates academic achievement by enabling students to focus on learning and reducing stress (Ramasaco, 2024; Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024).

Motivation, Attitude, and Self-Regulation

Motivation, attitude, and self-regulation are additional facilitators of academic performance. Strong self-motivation, confidence in academic ability, goal orientation, and active engagement enhance learning outcomes (Chukwu & Ogbu, 2025; Sandharenu & Neranja, 2022). Adjustment to academic environments, prioritisation of tasks, and desire for high grades further support effective learning. Conversely, lack of

motivation or poor self-regulation can impair achievement.

Lecturer-Related Factors

Lecturer-related factors are critical determinants of nursing students' academic performance. Evidence indicates that the competence, teaching strategies, availability, and support provided by lecturers can either facilitate learning or act as barriers, affecting students' academic outcomes.

Teaching Quality and Expertise

Several studies highlight that lecturer expertise and the quality of teaching significantly impact student performance. Subject-matter knowledge, effective teaching methods, and structured delivery of course content are associated with higher academic achievement (Bibi *et al.*, 2022; Ramasaco, 2024; Babaji *et al.*, 2023). Conversely, passive teaching methods, inappropriate use of audiovisual aids, and overly compressed coverage of multiple topics in a single class can hinder understanding and reduce academic outcomes (Bibi *et al.*, 2022; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022; Massally & Gogra, 2025).

Lecturer Availability and Student Support

The accessibility of lecturers for academic guidance, counselling, and mentorship positively influences students' performance (Shaheen *et al.*, 2020; Ramasaco, 2024). Studies indicate that when lecturers provide support in areas such as practical skill development, clinical supervision, and learning resource facilitation, students demonstrate improved academic and clinical performance (Massally & Gogra, 2025; Abubakar *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, limited availability and inadequate support

reduce opportunities for effective learning and can negatively affect outcomes (Gripshi *et al.*, 2022).

Teaching Strategies and Interaction

Effective teaching strategies, including lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and interactive engagement, are linked to better learning outcomes and skill acquisition (Kumar *et al.*, 2024; Abubakar *et al.*, 2021). Positive lecturer–student interaction fosters understanding, motivation, and academic confidence. In contrast, difficulties in communication, lack of interaction, and insufficient practical facilitation are barriers to learning and can reduce academic performance (Kumar *et al.*, 2024; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022).

Lecturer Qualifications and Competence

The qualifications and training of lecturers have been identified as essential for effective teaching. Adequately trained lecturers are more capable of delivering course content effectively, supporting student learning, and promoting higher academic achievement (Babaji *et al.*, 2023). Poorly qualified or inadequately trained lecturers can limit the quality of instruction and negatively affect both academic and clinical performance.

Institutional-Related Factors

Institution-related factors play a crucial role in shaping nursing students' academic and clinical performance. Evidence indicates that supportive institutional environments, adequate resources, and well-structured curricula can act as facilitators, while resource shortages, inadequate facilities, and rigid policies can serve as barriers to academic success.

Learning Resources and Facilities

Availability and quality of learning resources, including libraries, laboratories, computers, and clinical equipment, are strongly associated with improved academic performance (Shaheen *et al.*, 2020; Sandharenu & Naranja, 2022; Maywaka *et al.*, 2024). Institutions that provide comprehensive learning materials, accessible study spaces, and adequate physical amenities create an environment conducive to effective learning. Conversely, shortages of hospital staff, missing clinical resources, and inadequate faculty facilities can limit students' ability to acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills (Bano *et al.*, 2023; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022).

Curriculum and Academic Structure

The design and structure of the curriculum, including course content, orientation programs, and the number and scheduling of courses and examinations, significantly influence student outcomes (Fooladi *et al.*, 2022; Saadatu *et al.*, 2023; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022). Interactive, well-structured curricula with clear academic regulations enhance understanding and facilitate learning. In contrast, excessive course load, limited course offerings, and non-transparent assessment practices can hinder academic achievement (Gripshi *et al.*, 2022).

Institutional Support and Mentorship

Supportive institutional structures, including mentorship programs, guidance from staff, and effective management processes, are associated with higher academic performance (Fooladi *et al.*, 2022; Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024; Shaheen *et al.*, 2020). Institutions that provide formal and informal support, as well as accessible

policies and administrative processes, enable students to navigate academic challenges more effectively. Lack of institutional support, however, reduces students' opportunities for skill development and academic success.

Affordability and Conducive Learning Environment

Affordability of courses and provision of a positive physical and social environment are additional facilitators of academic performance (Sandharenu & Neranja, 2022; Maywaka *et al.*, 2024). Students in institutions with affordable fees, safe and supportive campuses, and adequate social amenities demonstrate better engagement and outcomes.

Discussion

This narrative review highlights that academic performance among nursing students is influenced by a complex interplay of student-related, lecturer-related, and institutional-related factors. Each of these factors can act as a facilitator or barrier, depending on the context, and their effects are often interrelated, emphasising the need for a holistic approach to supporting nursing students' learning outcomes.

Student-related factors, including psychological and emotional well-being, study behaviours, socioeconomic conditions, and motivation, emerged as central determinants of academic performance (Bano *et al.*, 2023; Ramasaco, 2024; Olabiyi *et al.*, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2024; Thomas & Mahida, 2022; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022; Massally & Gogra, 2025; Chukwu & Ogbu, 2025). Psychological stress, anxiety, and burnout appear to undermine attention, concentration, and

clinical confidence, which are essential for effective learning in nursing programs. The demanding combination of intensive theoretical instruction and clinical exposure may amplify these challenges, highlighting the importance of support systems, including peer and family networks, in mitigating negative academic outcomes.

Study behaviours and time management also significantly affect performance. Consistent preparation, engagement in class, and effective use of learning resources promote skill acquisition and knowledge retention, whereas absenteeism, low engagement, insufficient study time, and competing personal or work responsibilities disrupt learning continuity. Socioeconomic constraints, including financial hardship and employment demands, further limit students' available study time and contribute to academic stress, while financial support from family or other sources mitigates these pressures, enabling students to focus on learning. Motivation, self-efficacy, and positive academic attitudes serve as integrative factors, enabling students to adapt to academic challenges, regulate effort, and sustain engagement. Together, these findings suggest that student-related factors operate dynamically and interact with institutional and lecturer-related influences to shape academic outcomes.

Lecturer-related factors, such as teaching quality, expertise, availability, and competence, play a critical role in influencing student performance (Babaji *et al.*, 2023; Kumar *et al.*, 2024; Abubakar *et al.*, 2021; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022; Massally & Gogra, 2025). Supportive lecturer-student relationships, effective teaching strategies,

and clear communication enhance understanding, academic confidence, and engagement. Conversely, passive teaching methods, inadequate clinical supervision, limited lecturer availability, and poor use of teaching aids can exacerbate student stress and reduce learning efficacy. These findings highlight that lecturer competence and interaction directly influence the effectiveness of student learning, while also interacting with students' motivation, resilience, and study behaviours to determine overall academic performance.

Institutional-related factors, including learning resources, curriculum structure, institutional support, and the learning environment, also significantly affect academic outcomes (Shaheen *et al.*, 2020; Sandharenu & Naranja, 2022; Maywaka *et al.*, 2024; Fooladi *et al.*, 2022; Babaji *et al.*, 2023; Gripshi *et al.*, 2022). Adequate learning resources, structured orientation programs, supportive academic policies, and a conducive environment promote effective knowledge acquisition and skill development. Conversely, resource limitations, overcrowded curricula, inadequate clinical facilities, and nontransparent assessment practices hinder learning. Institutional support structures, including mentorship programs and accessible guidance, interact with student- and lecturer-related factors, enabling students to navigate challenges more effectively and enhancing overall academic performance.

The evidence from this review suggests that improving nursing students' academic performance requires interventions that address multiple levels simultaneously. Strategies targeting student well-being, self-regulation, and motivation must be

complemented by faculty development initiatives to enhance teaching quality, along with institutional investments in infrastructure, resources, and supportive policies. Holistic approaches that recognise the interdependence of student, lecturer, and institutional factors are likely to produce the most meaningful improvements in both academic and clinical outcomes.

Conclusion

Academic performance in nursing students is determined by the interconnected influence of personal, instructional, and institutional factors. Addressing psychological, motivational, and behavioural challenges, enhancing educator competence and teaching strategies, and strengthening institutional support can collectively improve learning outcomes and better prepare students for professional practice.

Recommendations

- i. Enhance student support programs: Nursing institutions should implement programs to improve students' psychological well-being, motivation, and study skills. Interventions such as stress management workshops, mentoring, and peer-support initiatives can help students cope with academic and clinical demands.
- ii. Strengthen educator development: Faculty development initiatives should focus on improving teaching quality, mentorship, and clinical supervision. Training educators in interactive teaching methods, effective communication, and student engagement strategies will support better learning outcomes.

- iii. Improve institutional resources and structures: Institutions should ensure access to adequate learning resources, supportive policies, structured curricula, and mentorship programs. Investing in libraries, laboratories, clinical facilities, and transparent assessment processes can create a conducive learning environment that facilitates both academic and clinical performance.
- iv. Encourage context-specific research: There is a need for more recent, regionally relevant studies on factors influencing nursing students' academic performance to inform evidence-based interventions and policy planning.
- v. Adopt holistic strategies: Academic performance is shaped by the interaction of personal, instructional, and institutional factors. Interventions that simultaneously address student well-being, educator competence, and institutional support are likely to yield the greatest improvements in learning outcomes.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding this study

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