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THE STRESS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS OF HOLY FAMILY

NURSING AND MIDWIFERY TRAINING COLLEGE, BEREKUM

SUBMITTED BY:

ASAMOAH AKOSUA SIKA - 5645421

ASAMOAH DERRICK - 5646121

[HOLY FAMILY NURSING AND MIDWIFERY TRAINING COLLEGE, BEREKUM]

**AFFILIATED TO KNUST, KUMASI
HOLY FAMILY NURSING AND MIDWIFERY TRAINING COLLEGE, BEREKUM**



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ASAMOAH AKOSUA SIKA	-	5645421
ASAMOAH DERRICK	-	5646121

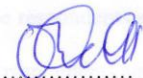
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DECLARATION


We hereby declare that this submission is our work towards the Diploma in General Nursing and that, to the best of our knowledge, it contains no material previously published by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of the diploma of the University, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Asamoah Akosua Sika  11/05/23

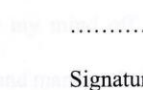
5645421 Signature Date

Asamoah Derrick  11/05/23

5646121 Signature Date

Certified by: Joseph Appiah  11/05/2023

(Supervisor) Signature Date

Monica Nkrumah  11/05/2023

(Principal) Signature Date

ABSTRACT

The study focused on the stress and academic achievement of students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery training college, Berekum. A descriptive study design was used to collect indepth information for the study. The sample population was obtained using a convenient sampling technique. A total of 40 students were sampled for the study. The data for the study was collected by administering the questionnaire to the participants.

The study found that majority (80%) of the respondents agreed stress has caused them to miss deadlines for assignments. Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress has led to lower grades in their courses. Majority (85%) of the respondents agreed that stress affects their ability to take exams and perform well. Most (70%) of the respondents agreed that they take time for self-care activities, such as reading or taking a bath, to manage stress. More than half (60%) of the respondents agreed that they engage in physical exercise to manage. More than fifty percent (55%) of the respondents disagreed that they talk to friends or family members about their stress. Less than half (40%) of the respondents agreed they seek professional help, such as seeing a therapist or counselor, to manage stress. Most (70%) of the respondents agreed that they engage in hobbies or interests to take my mind off of stress. Majority (70%) of the respondents agreed that they try to prioritize and manage their time effectively to reduce stress. More than fifty percent (95%) of the respondents disagreed that they try to maintain a healthy diet to help manage stress. Majority (90%) of the respondents disagreed that they engage in mindfulness practices, such as yoga to manage stress. Majority (95%) of the respondents agreed that stress has had a significant impact on their academic performance. The study recommended that students should be encouraged to find a healthy balance between academic work and other activities, such as hobbies or socializing, can help reduce stress and promote overall well-being. The school could consider reducing the workload for students, such as by eliminating unnecessary assignments. This could help alleviate stress related to academic demands and

allow students to focus on quality learning rather than quantity of work. The school could offer stress management programs to teach students techniques to manage stress, such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, and deep breathing exercises. The school could offer access to mental health resources, such as counselling services and support groups, to students who may be struggling with stress or other mental health issues.

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ABBREVIATION

MMDA	Municipal and District Assemblies
RGN	Registered General Nursing
RM	Registered Midwifery
PBM	Post Basic Midwifery
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the study

Stress is a common experience among students, and it can have a significant impact on their academic achievement. Stress can be defined as a psychological and physiological response to perceived threats or challenges (American Psychological Association, 2017). Studies have shown that stress can have negative effects on cognitive functioning, such as memory and attention, which can negatively impact academic performance (McEwen, 2018).

Academic achievement is a complex construct that can be measured in various ways, including grades, standardized test scores, and graduation rates (Jin, 2019). Studies have consistently found that there is a negative relationship between stress and academic achievement (KaltialaHeino, 2019).

It is important to note that stress is not always negative and can be beneficial in some situations, such as when it helps to motivate students to study or when it helps to improve performance on a test. However, chronic stress can have negative effects on academic achievement (Kim, 2017)

Stress is a common experience among students, and it can have a significant impact on their academic achievement. Stress can be defined as a psychological and physiological response to perceived threats or challenges (American Psychological Association, 2017). Studies have shown that stress can have negative effects on cognitive functioning, such as memory and attention, which can negatively impact academic performance (McEwen, 2018).

When there is a change in life, we adjust ourselves to fit in the new condition but for a student, stress may be caused by failure in academic or sports, financial problems, health problems or loss of a family member or close friend. Such events that bring stress are called stressors (McEwen, 2018). A sudden change in life or stressors may affect a person's life style or even his/her physical and mental health. The impact of a stressor leaves on a person depends on how the person takes the tension. If the person takes the event positively by accepting it as a part of challenge in life and find ways to deal with it, the stress will fade away and gone when he/she gets over it but the consequence may leave the person a prolonged emotional disturbance (McEwen, 2018).

University provides students' tertiary education and psychosocial development (Tao et. al, 2020). Besides pursuing knowledge in university, a student also gets to socialize with different kinds of people and undergo psychological development. Studies show that entering university may bring strain or stress (Gall, Evans & Bellerose, 2020). This is because university students face a changing education system, lifestyle, and social environment. University students need to reach certain levels of academic achievement to graduate. The academic achievement is determined by their performance during classroom activities, assignments, presentations and examinations (Ong, Bessie & Cheong, 2019). This means that they are evaluated throughout the semester. Besides, most students have moved out from home and they have to be wise in managing their time and activities. They now meet people of different ages and backgrounds, thus interpersonal skills are needed to socialize with the people around them.

Past research shows that some undergraduate students significantly experience stress (Brown et al., 2019). First-year university students were found to be particularly prone to stress and experience high levels of stress due to the college life transition (Towbes & Cohen, 2018). Many of them face culture shock as university life is different from school life. Failing to cope with the stressors during the transition may cause deterioration of academic performance and

increase of psychological distress (Dwyer & Cummings, 2021). The increase in stress during the first year predicted the decrease of overall adjustment and lower grade point average (GPA) (Wintre & Yaffe, 2020). Students tend to lose self-confidence having to establish new social relations and at the same time trying to cope with the increasing academic demands (Dwyer & Cummings, 2021). A list of ten sources of stress was identified among the medical students and the stressors include tests and examinations, the big range of content to be learnt, lack of time to do revision, poor marks, having self-expectation, insufficient skill in medical practice, fail to follow the reading schedule, heavy workload, having difficulty in understanding the content and fail to provide answers to teachers' questions (Yusoff et al., 2020). Many researches were

conducted to assess the relationship between stress and academic achievement of undergraduate students and it is found that stress affects students' academic achievement (Arthur & Hill, 2017). Students complained of feeling stressed academically when it comes to facing exams and grade competition and having too much information to study yet insufficient time to master the knowledge (Carveth, Gesse & Moss, 2019). Bennett (2019) reported a similar finding that stress is significantly correlated with poor academic performance in his study of business undergraduates. Nonetheless, few studies have been done in the Malaysian context. The need to embark on this study is thus justified. For this research, stress is defined as happenings and experiences that provoke anxiety and academic achievement is measured by undergraduate students' grade point average (GPA) for the previous semester.

According to an American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment survey, three in four college students self-reported feeling stressed, while one in five college students reported stress-related suicidal ideation (American Psychological Association, 2020). Studies show that a stressor experienced in college may serve as a predictor of mental health

diagnoses (Liu et al., 2019). Indeed, many mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorder, begin during this period (Reddy et al., 2018).

Stress experienced by college students is multi-factorial and can be attributed to a variety of contributing factors (Karyotaki et al., 2020). A growing body of evidence suggests that academic-related stress plays a significant role in college (Pascoe et al., 2020). For instance, as many as 87% of college students surveyed across the United States cited education as their primary source of stress (American Psychological Association, 2020). College students are exposed to novel academic stressors, such as an extensive academic course load, substantial studying, time management, classroom competition, financial concerns, familial pressures, and adapting to a new environment (Freire et al., 2020). Academic stress can reduce motivation, hinder academic achievement, and lead to increased college dropout rates (Pascoe et al., 2020).

Academic stress has also been shown to negatively impact mental health in students (Green et al., 2021). Mental, or psychological, well-being is one of the components of positive mental health, and it includes happiness, life satisfaction, stress management, and psychological functioning (Green et al., 2021). Positive mental health is an understudied but important area that helps paint a more comprehensive picture of overall mental health (Margraf et al., 2020). Moreover, positive mental health has been shown to be predictive of both negative and positive mental health indicators over time (Margraf et al., 2020). Further exploring the relationship between academic stress and mental well-being is important because poor mental well-being has been shown to affect academic performance in college (Freire et al., 2019).

Perception of academic stress varies among different groups of college students (Lee et al., 2021). For instance, female college students report experiencing increased stress than their male counterparts (Lee et al., 2021). Male and female students also respond differently to stressors (Verma et al., 2021). Moreover, compared to their cisgender peers, non-binary

students report increased stressors and mental health issues (Budge et al., 2020). The academic year of study of the college students has also been shown to impact academic stress levels (Wyatt et al., 2017). While several studies indicate that racial/ethnic minority groups of students, including Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian American students, are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, and suicidality than their white peers (Kodish et al., 2022), these studies are limited and often report mixed or inconclusive findings (Kodish et al., 2022). Therefore, more studies should be conducted to address this gap in research to help identify subgroups that may be disproportionately impacted by academic stress and lower well-being.

Cotton, Dollard and DeJonge (2018), competition for grades, the need to perform well, relationships, career choices and many other aspects of the university environment are sources of stress. Before condemning stress outright, we need to understand that stress is only harmful when it is excessive. Much of the stress that we all know is helpful and stimulating. The challenges of life tend to be stressful and an attempt to avoid stress completely would lead to a rather boring existence. The problem arises when you feel too much stress. Although some reactions to stress are part of deeper and more serious emotional problems, many are not and can be treated with relatively simple counselling and stress management techniques. This study focuses more on the harm than good stress does to students in relation to their academic performance at school. It is common for students, individually or in groups, to interact with their environment, these experiences in one way or another affect their academic performance (Chemers, Hu & Garcia 2021). Stress has generated a lot of interest in recent years. It has been of great concern to members of the academic world and other researchers. For most people, stress is bad and should be avoided, but this position is not always true.

Sharma, Parasar and Mahto (2017) define stress as the mental response and action by hormonal signalling, the perception of danger triggers an automatic response system, known as response

to fight or flee. Generally, stress refers to two things, the psychological perception of pressure, on the one hand, and the body's response to it, on the other, which involves multiple systems, from muscle breakdown to memory. Stress demands high expectations of oneself, which causes a feeling of tension and pressure (Goedert, Cuenda, Craxton, Jakes & Cohen 2017). Certain tensions set us in motion and are good for us without any tension. Many say that our lives would be boring and possibly meaningless (Wilson, 2017). However, when stress undermines our psychological and physical health, it is bad. Students are subject to different types of stressors, such as pressure from academics with the obligation to succeed, an uncertain future and difficulties integrating into the system. Students also face social, emotional, physical and family problems that can affect their ability to learn and their academic performance (Rogers & Yassin, 2019). Too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems, low student self-esteem, and can also affect students' academic performance (Niemi & Vainiomaki, 2019). For students currently attending university, however, the process is often stressful and frustrating. According to Cotton, Dollard and DeJonge (2018), competition for grades, the need to perform well, relationships, career choices and many other aspects of the university environment are sources of stress. Before condemning stress outright, we need to understand that stress is only harmful when it is excessive. Much of the stress that we all know is helpful and stimulating. The challenges of life tend to be stressful and an attempt to avoid stress completely would lead to a rather boring existence. The problem arises when you feel too much stress. Although some reactions to stress are part of deeper and more serious emotional problems, many are not and can be treated with relatively simple counselling and stress management techniques. This study focuses more on the harm than good stress does to students in relation to their academic performance at school. It is common for students, individually or in groups, to interact with their environment, these experiences in one way or another affect their academic performance (Chemers, Hu & Garcia 2021). Stress has generated a lot of interest in recent years. It has been of great concern to members of the academic world and other

researchers. For most people, stress is bad and should be avoided, but this position is not always true.

Yates (2019), stress in sufficient quantity is a necessary ingredient for anyone whose life will show vitality. Stress must be managed, not simply avoided. Therefore, this study is designed to analyze the effect of stress on students' academic performance using the University Of Cape Coast School Of Business as a case study. Ivancevish (2020) pointed out that to say that stress causes performance degradation is rather simplistic as to the starting position. Therefore, there must be an optimal level of stress tolerated to achieve performance. This point of view makes stress a complex concept which does not lead to a simple definition. Mc-Garth (2021) defined stress in terms of conditions necessary for it in the following way: it is a potential for stress when it is perceived that the environmental situation presents a demand which threatens to exceed capacities of the person. The same is true of the harmful effects on their well-being, their health and even the care of their students. Some negative effects of stress are increased absenteeism, heart disease, late classes and poor health. Stress can have both positive and negative consequences for the individual. Optimal stress can lead to maximum efficiency, create satisfaction, a feeling of well-being and accomplishment, and another reward for success (Mensah, Fosu, & Oteng, 2017).

1.1 Problem Statement

Academic pressure is one of the factors that causes students to fail. Sharma, Parasar and Mahto (2017) define stress as the mental response and action by hormonal signalling, the perception of danger triggers an automatic response system, known as response to fight or flee. Generally, stress refers to two things, the psychological perception of pressure, on the one hand, and the body's response to it, on the other, which involves multiple systems, from muscle breakdown to memory. Stress demands high expectations of oneself, which causes a feeling of tension and pressure (Goedert, Cuenda, Craxton, Jakes & Cohen 2017). Certain tensions set us in motion and are good for us without any tension. Many say that our lives would be boring and possibly meaningless (Wilson, 2017). However, when stress undermines our psychological and physical health, it is bad. Students are subject to different types of stressors, such as pressure from academics with the obligation to succeed, an uncertain future and difficulties integrating into the system. Students also face social, emotional, physical and family problems that can affect their ability to learn and their academic performance (Rogers & Yassin, 2019). Too much stress can cause physical and mental health problems, low student self-esteem, and can also affect students' academic performance (Niemi & Vainiomaki, 2019).

Therefore, this research is being conducted to investigate the stress and academic achievement of students at Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum to identify the causes of stress among students, to know how students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum manage stress and to find out the effects of stress on the academic achievement of students. The results of this study will provide valuable insights for educators, counsellors, and student affairs professionals in developing effective stress management programs for college students.

1.2 General Objective

To investigate the stress and academic achievement of students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum.

1.3 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the causes of stress among students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum.
2. To know how students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum manage stress.
3. To find out the effects of stress on the academic achievement of students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum.

1.4 Operational definition of terms

Stress: Any type of changes that cause physical, emotional and psychological strain.

Academic achievements: It is the extent to which a student attains their short term or longterm educational goals.

Management of stress: It includes problem focused coping strategies and emotion focused strategies used to by students to cope with stress on campus.

Financial constraint: Insufficient funds which tend to impede the efficiency of the researcher in sourcing for the relevant information and in the process of data collection.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter contains a review of relevant literature related to the research topic. The sources of information include books, journals, online articles, and research reports.

2.1 Overview

There are a variety of stress meanings and several occurrences which can lead to stress. People claim they are stressed when taking an exam, when facing a stressful job situation, or when experiencing problems in relationships. Stressful situations can be regarded as harmful, dangerous or difficult (Perrewé & Zellars, 2019). It is difficult, with so many factors contributing to stress. The definition of stress is difficult to describe. Hans Selye (1919) proposed the first and most generic definition of stress "as a non-specific response of the organism to any request for change.

Folkman (2019) suggested stress occurs when people perceive external situational demands to exceed their ability to adapt. "Stress is a state of mind that represents certain biochemical reactions in the human body and is projected by a sense of anxiety. Jit (2018), Tension and depression, caused by environmental or internal factors that cannot be met by the person's resources.

2.2 To identify the causes of stress among students

Levi (2017) claimed that "stress is triggered by a multitude of demands (stressors), a disparity between what we need and what we can, what our world offers us and what it demands of us.

Stress happens when the person has a burden that exceeds his or her available assets. If the stress is severe and prolonged, it can reduce academic performance, impede the ability of a student to become involved and contribute to campus life, and increase the likelihood of abuse of substances and other potentially destructive behaviours (Richlin, Klonsky & Hoe 2019). Vermunt and Steensman, (2017) conducted a study and defines stress as the perception of the incongruity between the environmental burden (stressors) and a person's ability to fulfil them. Researchers typically describe stress as the unpleasant reaction people experience under intense pressure or some other form of strain imposed upon them. Stress occurs when a person faces a situation he recognizes as irresistible and cannot cope with (Khan, Altaf, & Kausar, 2019).

Students are subjected to stress (Smith, Johal, Wadsworth, Smith & Peters 2020) in an advanced educational organization like the University, where the burden imposed on students is based on the time limit and the difficulty of standing out in tests or exams. Research has identified stress symptoms, such as energy loss, high blood pressure, depressed mood, increased desire, focus trouble, impatience, nervousness, and anxiety (Agolla 11 & Ongori, 2019). The Person-Environment model is a valuable model for understanding stress in university students (Misra & McKean, 2020). This model suggests people might view stressful events as demanding or frightening.

Research has shown that there are many factors that can contribute to stress among students. Academic demands, financial concerns, social pressures, and personal issues are among the most common causes of stress among students (Kuppens, Realo, Allik, & Allik, 2018).

Academic demands, such as heavy workloads, difficult coursework, and high expectations for performance, can be a major source of stress for students (Li, Zhu, & Chen, 2021). Financial

concerns, such as the cost of tuition and the burden of student loan debt, can also contribute to stress among students (Li et al., 2021).

Social pressures, such as the need to fit in with peers, navigate romantic relationships, and deal with bullying, can also be a source of stress for students (Li et al., 2021). Personal issues, such as mental health conditions, family problems, and trauma, can also contribute to stress among students (Li et al., 2021).

Other factors like lack of sleep, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity and technology overuse also can add up to stress (Chen & Chang, 2016, 2017). It is important for students to have access to resources and support to help them manage and reduce stress, such as counselling services, financial aid, and time management and stress-reduction strategies (Li et al., 2019; Kuppens et al., 2018).

Academic stress has been identified as the primary cause of these alarming figures. Lee & Larson (2020) explain this stress as an interaction between environmental stressors, student's appraisal and reactions for the same. It has now become a grave reality that is termed as a "career stopper" (Kadapatti & Vijayalaxmi, 2017). It therefore becomes a significant cause of concern as it is symptomatic of rising mental health concerns in India (Nadamuri & Ch, 2021).

Depression, anxiety, behavioural problems, irritability, etc. are few of the many problems reported in students with high academic stress (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). Incidences of depression were also found among stressful adolescents as it is linked with inability to concentrate, fear of failure, negative evaluation of future, etc. (Busari, 2012). Adolescents were also reported to be indulging in various risky behaviours such as increased consumption of alcohol and drugs, unprotected sexual activities, physical inactivity, poor eating and sleeping patterns (American College Health Association, 2019). The pressure these students face to

perform is so severe resulting in five-fold increase in suicide attempts. It becomes imperative to also understand that low stress does not necessarily ascertain that students will perform better, but in fact under these circumstances, they would perceive the task as unchallenging and may also get easily bored (Uchil, 2017). Though certain levels of stress push students towards optimum performance, when it is not managed efficiently due to inadequate resources to cope with the stress, it can have dismal consequences for the student as well as the institution.

The stress response elicited by every individual is identical regardless of the trigger causing. For example, marital stress, exam anxiety, work stress, etc. would elicit identical physiological responses from the body. This happens primarily due to the adreno-medullary system, which is part of the sympathetic division of our nervous system and the adrenocortical axis (Bourne & Yaroush, 2017) resulting in the “fight or flight” reaction. Some of the physiological changes that can be observed in the body are changes in heart rate (HR), blood pressure (BP), respiratory rate, increased blood flow towards skeletal muscles, etc.

While the stress response may be identical, the sources of stress reported by individuals vary. These differences would be seen in the causes, sources and consequences of stressors. Some of the common stressors reported in an academic setting include excessive assignments, poor time management and social skills, peer competition, etc. (Fairbrother & Warn, 2017). These results are consistent with studies conducted in India as well as reported by (Sreeramareddy, Shankar, Binu, Mukopadhyay, Ray & Menezes 2017).

Other individual specific factors include problems in financial management, changes in living atmosphere, difficulties managing personal and academic life, etc. (Byron, Brun & Ivers, 2018; Moscaritolo, 2019).

The educational system also plays an enabling role subsequently leading to increased stress levels experienced by students. Some of the sources include overcrowded lecture halls, semester grading system, inadequate resources and facilities (Awing & Agolla, 2018), vastness of syllabus (Agrawal & Chahar, 2017), long hours and expectations of rote learning (Deb et al., 2017). Parents and institutions relentlessly instill the fear of failure which affects their self-esteem and confidence. Ang & Huan (2020) reported increased expectations as one of the factors responsible for increased stress levels.

Personality variables also affect people's reactions to potential stressors. Some people are simply not bothered by situations that other perceives to be stressful (Glavin et al, 2021). Stress occurs in academic areas due to different reasons. Researchers have identified a number of stressors in academic institution such as many assignments, competition with other students, failures, lack of pocket money (Fairbrother & Warn, 2017), poor relationship with other students or teachers, family or problems at home. Institutional (University) level stressors are overcrowded lecture halls, (Awino & Agolla, 2018), semester system, and inadequate resources to perform academic work (Erkutlu & Chafra 2020).

2.3 To know how students manage stress

Research has shown that there are a variety of strategies that students use to manage stress. Some common strategies include engaging in physical activity, practicing relaxation techniques, seeking social support, and using positive coping mechanisms (Lu et al., 2018).

Physical activity, such as exercise and sports, has been shown to be an effective way for students to manage stress (Lu et al., 2018). Relaxation techniques, such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing, have also been found to be effective in reducing stress among students (Lu et al., 2018).

Seeking social support, such as talking to friends and family members, has been found to be a helpful way for students to manage stress (Lu et al., 2018). Positive coping mechanisms, such as reframing negative thoughts and focusing on one's strengths, have also been found to be effective in managing stress among students (Lu et al., 2018).

Additionally, time management and setting realistic goals, seeking professional help, and practicing mindfulness have also been found to be effective in managing stress (Gregory & colleagues, 2017).

It is important for students to have access to resources and support to help them manage and reduce stress, such as counselling services, stress management workshops and peer support groups.

Pakdaman, Ganji, Ahmadzadeh (2017) also stated that life skills training helped in the improvement of the academic conditions of the subjects. In addition, this was because of this training, with growing different skills of the students, helping the students know their strengths and weaknesses, and overall, help the individuals move from weaknesses and skill deficits to capable and strong skills. Therefore, this could provide the students with better educational conditions. In explaining their similar finding, Shafi-Abadi (2018) stated that teaching life skills, including stress management skills, are one of the ways to improve the mental health of the individuals of the community and to prevent harms. In fact, these teachings protected the health and mental hygiene of the society and protected it against diseases, disabilities, and disturbances in human relations. As a result, the feeling of security and solidarity increased among the members of the society, and then their senses of happiness, vitality, and health increased.

The findings showed that stress management skills' training has a significant impact on the psychological well-being and it was consistent with the multiple studies of

(QadiriBahramabadi F, 2018). In explaining their similar findings, Qadiri-Bahramabadi (2018) stated that facing numerous stresses required teaching and learning of appropriate stress management skills. In other words, during stress, individuals must know the necessary coping skills to reduce the effects of stress, and if the pressure was managed and the effective coping skills were applied, the person would be able to get along better with the needs and challenges of his/ her life. Therefore, the intervention of stress management led to the formation of good feelings about oneself, as well as a positive performance in the stable world. It created interest and motivation in people's lives as well as increasing the self-confidence of the individuals. As a result, it increased the psychological well-being.

In explaining their similar finding, Qanbari Habibi and Shams-Aldini (2017) stated that with the help of multiple strategies to manage stress such as relaxation, and muscular relaxation, stress and anxiety could be reduced. The individuals identified the somatic symptoms, and with mastering the ways to acquire relaxation, which was inconsistent with stress, reduced their anxiety and unpleasant feelings, thus increasing the psychological well-being. Also, in explaining their similar finding, Chubforushzadeh, Kalantari and Molavi (2019) stated that stress management treatments make multiple changes in the individual's beliefs, feelings, and behaviours. Therefore, improving the individual's evaluations and coping skills, and the provided practices to integrate the learned separations with real life situations could lead to a decrease in the perceived stress and an increase in the psychological well-being.

The main contribution of this study lies in the analysis of student coping strategies using a person-centered focus. Traditionally, research on coping strategies has attempted to determine the suitability of a given strategy, evaluating the benefit or harm that it produces for the individual. This variable-centered approach assumes that certain coping mechanisms are universally adaptive or maladaptive, an argument that has been called the "fallacy of uniform efficacy" (Bonanno and Burton, 2018).

The very characterization of coping strategies as responses to a specific challenge demonstrates their situational specificity. This has led in recent years to the adoption of an approach based on the flexibility of coping, under the supposition that a single individual can combine different strategies, using one or the other depending on the specific situation they are facing (Kobylińska and Kusev, 2019). In this vein, the benefits provided by approach coping strategies are maximized if the individual employs problem-focused coping strategies (e.g., planning and seeking instrumental support) or emotion-centered strategies (e.g., positive reappraisal and seeking emotional support) based on the perceived controllability of the stressor facing them (Siltanen et al., 2019). In contrast, people who are less flexible in their coping have a smaller repertoire of strategies, which are less effective adjusting to the specific demands of the situation (Cheng and Cheung, 2017).

Studying individuals' profiles in light of the flexibility of their coping is therefore adopting a person-centered focus (Laursen and Hoff, 2018), making it possible to identify subgroups of students characterized by high internal similarity in their repertoire of coping strategies, who differ from the way that other students combine their strategies. An additional advantage over the traditional, variable-focused approaches is that studying profiles of flexibility of coping makes it possible to identify specific groups of individuals who can be prioritized in the design of interventions (Kaluza, 2020).

Considering a perspective based on coping flexibility, the research question we posed in this study was whether the different student profiles in the way they combine their coping strategies would be related to significantly different levels of general self-efficacy. In the university context, various studies have demonstrated that, in comparison to those with less flexible profiles, students who are more flexible in their coping demonstrate lower vulnerability to stress (González Cabanach et al., 2018) and to depressive symptomatology (Hasselle et al., 2019), as well as greater psychological well-being (Freire et al., 2018).

2.4 To find out the effects of stress on the academic achievement of students

There is a significant body of research on the effects of stress on academic performance in students. According to a meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (Kirschbaum, Klauer & Filipp, 2019), stress and anxiety have a negative impact on academic performance in students. Another study published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (Henderson & Mapp, 2022) found that stress and anxiety are related to lower grades and test scores in high school students. Additionally, a study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* (Hankin, Mermelstein, & Roesch, 2017) found that stress and anxiety were associated with lower academic achievement in college students.

Academic-related stress and burnout includes exhaustion, depersonalization, cynicism and inefficacy or reduced accomplishment (Walburg, 2019). Academic-related stress is strongly related to decreased student academic motivation (Liu & Lu, 2021) and academic disengagement (National Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA) United States of America, 2017). The relationship between academic-related stress, motivation and dropout does not appear to be culturally specific, with similar findings shown from a number of international studies (Walburg, 2019).

In 298 Chinese secondary school students, academic-related stress in Grade 10 negatively predicted intrinsic academic motivation and positively predicted lack of motivation in Grade

12. This indicates that decreasing academic-related stress might preserve students' ongoing intrinsic academic motivation (Liu & Lu, 2021). Similarly, in 495 Japanese students in junior secondary school, self-reported academic-related stress was found to negatively relate to feelings of self-growth and academic motivation (Shinto, 2018). A recent literature review highlights how stress and burnout can also affect academic achievement by increasing the risk for school dropout (Walburg, 2019). This was particularly true for students who experience

more stressful life events of a more severe nature, as well as students who do not seek support from their parents or other family members as well as students from ethnically diverse groups (Hess & Copeland, 2021).

School dropout is associated with a lifelong reduction in earning capacity and secure employment (Lamb & Huo, 2017). Individuals with lower education levels report having poorer mental health and more illness than those with higher levels of education (Turrell, Stanley, de Looper, & Oldenburg, 2006). Early dropout from school has also been reported to contribute to inter-generational issues including unemployment, poverty and less academic achievement (Lamb & Huo, 2017).

Academic achievement and completion of secondary school leads to greater employability, less reliance on social welfare support and a higher likelihood of participation in further education (Noble, Wyatt, McGrath, Roffey, & Rowling, 2018). These outcomes in turn increase the likelihood of sustainable employment, adequate income and self-sufficiency (Noble et al., 2018), which can save Governments hundreds of millions of dollars every year (Lamb & Huo, 2017).

Previous research indicates that self-reported stress is associated with the presentation of anxious states and lower well-being (Kessler, 2017). The recent above-mentioned OECD survey reports that secondary students who self-report higher levels of academic-related stress also report lower well-being, measured using psychological, social, cognitive and physical components (OECD, 2018). A systematic review of 13 studies showed that in individuals undertaking higher education, self-reported levels of stress are associated with poorer quality of life and well-being (Ribeiro et al., 2017). Ongoing stress also precipitates the development of more serious mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Kessler, 1997; Moylan,

Maes, Wray, & Berk, 2019). The prevalence of anxiety is as high as 35% in tertiary students (Bayram & Bilgel, 2018) and the prevalence of depression is 30% (Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2019). The reciprocal relationship between stress and depression and anxiety is well established (Maes, 2018). Indeed, major stressful life events are one of the best predictors of the onset of depression (Kessler, 2017). Accordingly, in young people the first onset of depression is often preceded by major life stressors (Lewinsohn, Allen, Seeley, & Gotlib, 2019).

Aside from impairing overall health and well-being, depression and anxiety symptoms can further adversely affect academic achievement (Bernal-Morales, Rodríguez-Landa, & PulidoCriollo, 2015). In undergraduate university students from the United States, those with higher self-reported anxiety and depression symptoms were found to achieve poorer grades on examinations (Hass, & Rowland, 2019). A longitudinal study of Hawaiian secondary school students showed that self-reported depressive symptoms resulted in subsequent poor academic achievement (Chang & Hishinuma, 2019). This is consistent with the findings of Humensky et al. (2020) who found that self-reported depressive symptoms were associated with concentration difficulties and trouble with completing school tasks, in 83 students from the United States between the ages of 14–21, and at-risk for major depression (Humensky et al., 2020).

In a sample of Finnish students aged 13–17, self-reported depression severity was associated with concentration difficulties, and poorer social relationships, self-learning, poorer academic performance, and worse reading and writing outcomes (Fröjd et al., 2018). Therefore, it is not surprising that young people with depression, particularly males, are less likely to undertake higher education, as shown in a 15-year longitudinal study of Swedish adolescents (Jonsson et al., 2020). Importantly, adolescent depression can also result in longer-term poor employment outcomes, as demonstrated by a 25-year longitudinal study of New Zealand children (n = 982).

This study found that people who had depression at ages 16–21 had greater rates of welfare dependence and unemployment, demonstrating that the impact of poor mental health in adolescence can have long-lasting impacts (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2017). Enhancing support in the education setting may improve the mental health of young people. A national telephone survey of United States households showed that the incidence of depression in college students decreases if students have positive adjustments to academic life as well as adequate social support (Ross & Mirowsky, 2018). Indeed, an Australian randomized control trial reported that a gamified online cognitive behaviour therapy intervention was effective in reducing depressive symptoms in 540 final year secondary students (Perry et al., 2017). This study demonstrates the potential of education settings in mediating the impacts of academic related stress on young people's mental health.

There is a significant body of research on the effects of stress on academic performance in students. According to a meta-analysis published in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* (Kirschbaum, Klauer, & Filipp, 2019), stress and anxiety have a negative impact on academic performance in students. Another study published in the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* (Henderson & Mapp, 2021) found that stress and anxiety are related to lower grades and test scores in high school students. The *Journal of Adolescent Health* (Hankin, Mermelstein, & Roesch, 2017) published a study and it was found that stress and anxiety were associated with lower academic achievement in college students.

CHAPTER THREE

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter details, the study area and study population, study design, sampling techniques, data collection method and instrument, data analysis techniques, ethical consideration, and the limitations of the study.

3.1 Study area

The study was conducted at the Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, a tertiary institution in Berekum. The college is situated in the Berekum East Municipal which is one of the 261 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in Ghana, and forms part of the 12 Municipalities and Districts in the Bono Region.

Geographically, the Municipality can be located in the western part of Ghana in the Bono Region. The school shares boundary with the Holy Family Hospital, Berekum and Freeman Methodist School. The college consists of students of both genders coming from the sixteen regions of the country. The college offers three programs that is Registered General Nursing, Registered Midwifery and Post NAC/ NAP Midwifery. With the exception of the Post NAC/ NAP Midwifery program that is offered in two years the rest are three (3) year programs.

The most spoken languages are English and Twi. The school shares boundary with the Holy Family Hospital, Berekum and Freeman Methodist School. The College has a student population of 675 students comprising 100 males and 575 females. There are 28 teaching staff and 55 nonteaching staff.

3.2 The study population

The target population is the nursing and midwifery students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum whereas the accessible population is all second-year students of the College.

3.3 Study design

A descriptive study design was used for the study. This design was used for the study because there was the need to describe the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied. The design also allows for us to observe the students in their natural and unchanged environment. The data collection in descriptive research allows for the gathering of in-depth information about the research problem.

3.4 Sampling technique and Size

A convenience sampling technique was used to select samples for the study. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where participants are selected based on their easy accessibility and availability to the researcher. In this method, the researcher selects the individuals who are readily available and willing to participate in the study, without any specific criteria for selection.

The accessible population for the study is all second-year midwifery students with a population size of 80. The sample size for the study was 40 students. The second-year students that were readily available and willing to participate were chosen for the study. This method was chosen because it is an extremely speedy, easy, readily available, and cost-effective sampling method.

3.5 Data collection methods and instruments

Data collection was done through the use of structured questionnaires consisting of closed ended questions for easy expression of views and ideas. This was chosen as the method of data collection because it is relatively cheaper, avoided embarrassment on the part of the respondents, and the complete anonymity of respondents. Questionnaires were shared with the students in their various classrooms during the class period. We explained to them how the questionnaires were to be filled. Each student used a maximum of 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

3.6 Data analysis techniques

The data obtained from the study were checked for accuracy, utility, and completeness. The data were coded and analyzed using SPSS version 27 and the results were presented in tables or figures.

3.7 Ethical consideration

An introductory letter was obtained from the College before we conducted the study. The respondents were well informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was sought. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality by not providing any form of identification on the questionnaire. However, identification codes were used to represent the respondent according to their chronologic entry into the study. Respondents were allowed to participate and withdraw from the study voluntarily at any time without any penalty.

3.8 Limitation of the study

The limitations to this study were, the limited time with which we had to complete the study and the smaller sample size that was chosen for the study. Because the sample size was small, we could not generalize the study findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.0 Data Presentation & Analysis

This chapter deals with analysis of data collected from the field of study and the results obtained from the analysis. The data collected was analysed using Microsoft Excel. Descriptive statistical measures, such as tables with averages and percentages, along with graphs are used to show the occurrence of different observations as investigated in the study.

4.1 Student's Demographic Variables

Table 1: Student's Demographic Variables

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-22	16	40
	23-27	10	25
	28-32	8	20
	above 32	6	15
Marital status	Married	10	25
	Single	30	75
	Divorced	0	0
Program	RGN	0	0
	RM	40	100
	PBM	0	0

Table 1 above represents the demographic variables of the respondents. Majority (40%) of the respondents were between 18-23 years, over twenty-five percent (25%) of the respondents were between the ages of 23-27 years with (20%) of them falling within 28-32 years and just (10%) of them were within above 32 years. Most (75%) of the respondents were single, over thirty percent (25%) were married and none of the respondents were divorced. Majority (100%) of the respondents were RM's.

4.2 The causes of stress among students

Table 2: Respondents on the causes of stress among students

Statement		Agree	Disagree	Do not Know
I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have to do	n	21	10	9
	%	52.5	25	22.5
I feel a lot of pressure to succeed academically	n	22	18	0
	%	55	45	0
Worrying about my future causes me a lot of stress.	n	20	18	2
	%	50	45	5
Financial stress has a significant impact on my performance	n	30	10	0
	%	75	25	0
Stress related to relationships causes me a lot of anxiety	n	12	20	2
	%	30	50	5
I am able to cope with the stress of college life	n	25	15	0
	%	62.5	37.5	0

Table 2 above shows respondents on the causes of stress among students, more than half (52.5%) of the respondents agreed that they feel overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do, a few (47.5%) of the respondents either disagreed or were not sure about the aforementioned statement causing stress. Over half (55%) of the respondents disagreed that they feel a lot of pressure to succeed academically, a few (45%) agreed that they feel a lot of pressure to succeed academically. Half (50%) of the respondents agreed that worrying about their future causes them a lot of stress while close to fifty percent (45%) of the respondents disagreed to the worrying about their future causes them a lot of stress and just 5% did not know. Majority (75%) of the respondents agreed that financial stress has a significant impact on their performance while only 25% disagreed. Most (50%) of the respondents disagreed that stress related to relationships causes me a lot of anxiety and only 30% of the respondents agreed while a few did not know. Majority (62.5%) of the respondents also agreed that they are able to cope with the stress of college life with just 37.5% disagreeing to the statement.

4.3 How students manage stress

Table 3: Respondents on how students manage stress

Statement		Agree	Disagree	Do not Know
I engage in physical exercise to manage stress	n	24	10	6
	%	60	25	15
I take time for self-care activities, such as reading or taking a bath, to manage stress	n	30	10	0
	%	75	25	0
I talk to friends or family members about my stress	n	18	22	0
	%	45	55	0
I seek professional help, such as seeing a therapist or counselor, to manage stress	n	16	24	0
	%	40	60	0
I engage in hobbies or interests to take my mind off of stress	n	28	12	0
	%	70	30	0
I try to prioritize and manage my time effectively to reduce stress	n	28	12	12
	%	70	15	15
I try to maintain a healthy diet to help manage stress	n	2	38	0
	%	5	95	0
I engage in mindfulness practices, such as yoga to manage stress	n	4	36	0
	%	10	90	0

Table 3 shows respondents on how students manage stress, more than half (60%) of the respondents agreed that they engage in physical exercise to manage stress while a few (35%) disagreed and (15%) did not know. Most (70%) of the respondents agreed that they take time for self-care activities, such as reading or taking a bath, to manage stress. More than fifty percent (55%) of the respondents disagreed that they talk to friends or family members about their stress, only (45%) agreed to that statement. Less than half (40%) of the respondents agreed they seek professional help, such as seeing a therapist or counselor, to manage stress while more than fifty percent (60%) disagreed to the statement. Most (70%) of the respondents agreed that they engage in hobbies or interests to take my mind off of stress, only (30%) disagreed to that statement. Majority (70%) of the respondents agreed that they try to prioritize and manage their time effectively to reduce stress and just a few (15%) disagreed to the statement and did not know. More than fifty percent (95%) of the respondents disagreed that they try to maintain a healthy diet to help manage stress, only (5%) agreed to that statement. Majority (90%) of the respondents disagreed that they engage in mindfulness practices, such as yoga to manage stress, only (10%) agreed to that statement.

4.4 The effects of stress on the academic achievement of students

Table 4: Respondents on the effects of stress on the academic achievement of students

Statement		Agree	Disagree	Do not Know
Stress has a negative impact on my academic performance	n	24	16	0
	%	60	40	0
I find it difficult to concentrate on my studies when I am stressed	n	22	18	0
	%	55	45	0
Stress affects my ability to remember information for exams	n	26	14	0
	%	65	35	0
	n	24	12	4

I find it difficult to complete assignments when I am stressed	%	60	30	10
Stress has caused me to miss deadlines for assignments	n	32	8	0
	%	80	20	0
Stress has led to lower grades in my courses	n	26	14	0
	%	65	35	0
I find it difficult to stay motivated and engaged in my studies when I am stressed	n	34	6	0
	%	85	15	0
I find that stress affects my ability to take exams and perform well	n	22	14	4
	%	55	35	10
Stress has caused me to miss classes or drop a course	n	22	14	4
	%	55	35	10
Overall, stress has had a significant impact on my academic performance	n	38	2	0
	%	95	5	0

Table 4 shows respondents on the effects of stress on the academic achievement of students, Most (60%) of the respondents agreed that stress has a negative impact on my academic performance with just 40% disagreeing to the statement. More than half (55%) of the respondents agreed that they find it difficult to concentrate on my studies when they stressed while a few (45%) disagreed to the aforementioned statement. Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress affects their ability to remember information for exams while a few (35%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents agreed that they find it difficult to complete assignments when they stressed while only (30%) of respondents disagreed to the statement. Majority (80%) of the respondents' agreed stress has caused them to miss deadlines for assignments while a few (20%) disagreed to the aforementioned statement. Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress has led to lower grades in their courses while just (35%) disagreed to the aforementioned statement. More than

half (55%) of the respondents agreed that they find it difficult to stay motivated and engaged in their studies when stressed. Majority (85%) of the respondents agreed that stress affects their ability to take exams and perform well and only 15% disagreed to this statement. More than half (55%) of the respondents agreed that stress has caused them to miss classes or drop a course with 35% of the respondents disagreed to the statement and just a few did not know. Majority (95%) of the respondents agreed that stress has had a significant impact on their academic performance with just 5% disagreeing.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the data analyzed in chapter four were interpreted based on scientific evidence. The findings are briefly discussed with references to support the study.

5.1 Discussions

5.1.1 The causes of stress among students

The current study found that more than half (52.5%) of the respondents agreed that they feel overwhelmed with the amount of work they have to do. Similarly, Vermunt and Steensman, (2017) conducted a study and defines stress as the perception of the incongruity between the environmental burden (stressors) and a person's ability to fulfil them.

Half (50%) of the respondents agreed that worrying about their future causes them a lot of stress while close to fifty percent (45%) of the respondents disagreed to the worrying about their future causes them a lot of stress and just 5% did not know. This finding is similar to the findings of Li, Zhu, & Chen, 2021 who found out that academic demands, such as heavy workloads, difficult coursework, and high expectations for performance, can be a major source of stress for students.

Li et al., (2021) found that financial concerns, such as the cost of tuition and the burden of student loan debt, can also contribute to stress among students. Similarly, the current study found that majority (75%) of the respondents agreed that financial stress has a significant impact on their performance while only 25% disagreed.

Most (50%) of the respondents disagreed that stress related to relationships causes me a lot of anxiety and only 30% of the respondents agreed while a few did not know. On the contrary, Li et al., (2021) found that social pressures, such as the need to fit in with peers, navigate romantic relationships, and deal with bullying, can also be a source of stress for students. Personal issues, such as mental health conditions, family problems, and trauma, can also contribute to stress among students.

5.1.2 How students manage stress

More than half (60%) of the respondents agreed that they engage in physical exercise to manage stress while a few (35%) disagreed and (15%) did not know. Similarly, in a study by Lu et al., (2018) reported that physical activity, such as exercise and sports, has been shown to be an effective way for students to manage stress.

Majority (90%) of the respondents disagreed that they engage in mindfulness practices, such as yoga to manage stress, only (10%) agreed to that statement. On the contrary a study by Lu et al. (2018) reported that relaxation techniques, such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing, have also been found to be effective in reducing stress among students.

Seeking social support, such as talking to friends and family members, has been found to be a helpful way for students to manage stress (Lu et al., 2018). Contrary, in the current study, More than fifty percent (55%) of the respondents disagreed that they talk to friends or family members about their stress, only (45%) agreed to that statement.

Less than half (40%) of the respondents agreed they seek professional help, such as seeing a therapist or counselor, to manage stress while more than fifty percent 60% disagreed to the statement. On the contrary, Gregory and colleagues (2017) reported that time management and setting realistic goals, seeking professional help and practicing mindfulness have also been

found to be effective in managing stress. Similarly, Majority (70%) of the respondents agreed that they try to prioritize and manage their time effectively to reduce stress and just a few (15%) disagreed to the statement and did not know.

5.1.3 The effects of stress on the academic achievement of students

Most (60%) of the respondents agreed that stress has a negative impact on my academic performance with just 40% disagreeing to the statement. Similarly, Kirschbaum, Klauer and Filipp (2019) reported that stress and anxiety have a negative impact on academic performance in students.

Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress affects their ability to remember information for exams while a few (35%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. Similarly, Henderson and Mapp (2022) found that stress and anxiety are related to lower grades and test scores in high school students.

Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress has led to lower grades in their courses while just (35%) disagreed to the aforementioned statement. Similarly, Hankin, Mermelstein and Roesch (2017) found that stress and anxiety were associated with lower academic achievement in college students

A study by Walburg (2019) reported that stress and burnout can also affect academic achievement by increasing the risk for school dropout. In the current study, More than half (55%) of the respondents agreed that stress has caused them to miss classes or drop a course with 35% of the respondents disagreed to the statement and just a few did not know.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the analysis of data obtained from the field, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. Majority (95%) of the respondents agreed that stress has had a significant impact on their academic performance.
2. Most (60%) of the respondents agreed that stress has a negative impact on my academic performance.
3. Most (65%) of the respondents agreed that stress affects their ability to remember information for exams.
4. Majority (80%) of the respondents agreed stress has caused them to miss deadlines for assignments.
5. Majority (75%) of the respondents agreed that financial stress has a significant impact on their performance.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been made.

1. Students should be encouraged to find a healthy balance between academic work and other activities, such as hobbies or socializing, can help reduce stress and promote overall well-being.
2. The school could consider reducing the workload for students, such as by eliminating unnecessary assignments. This could help alleviate stress related to academic demands and allow students to focus on quality learning rather than quantity of work.
3. The school could offer stress management programs to teach students techniques to manage stress, such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, and deep breathing exercises.

4. The school could offer access to mental health resources, such as counselling services and support groups, to students who may be struggling with stress or other mental health issues.

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Our Ref.

Your Ref.

February 9, 2023

Date

Joseph Appiah
Holy Family NMTC
Post Office Box 21
Berekum

Dear Mr. Appiah

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

With reference to your Memorandum dated February 7, 2023, I write to notify you that the students listed below have been granted permission to conduct their research in the College on the topic 'Stress and Academic Achievement among students of Holy Family Nursing and Midwifery Training College, Berekum.'

1. Asamoah Sika
2. Asamoah Derrick

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Rev. Sr. Margaret Afrifa
Academic Coordinator for Nursing
For: Principal

ACADEMIC CO-ORDINATOR - NURSING
HOLY FAMILY NURSING & MIDWIFERY
TRAINING COLLEGE - BEREKUM