

ACADEMIC AND CLINICAL STRESS AMONG B.SC. NURSING STUDENTS: A NARRATIVE REVIEW OF CAUSES, EFFECTS, AND COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Academic and clinical stress is a major challenge among B.Sc. Nursing students due to the demanding nature of nursing education. Nursing students are required to balance theoretical learning with practical clinical exposure, which often leads to physical, emotional, and psychological stress. The present narrative review aimed to identify the major causes, effects, and coping strategies related to academic and clinical stress among nursing students. Relevant literature published between 2015 and 2024 was reviewed using databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, and CINAHL. The findings revealed that academic workload, examinations, fear of clinical errors, lack of confidence, time management difficulties, and clinical responsibilities are major contributors to stress. Stress negatively affects students' physical health, emotional wellbeing, academic achievement, and clinical performance. Common symptoms include fatigue, anxiety, sleep disturbances, poor concentration, and reduced motivation. Effective coping strategies such as relaxation techniques, counseling, social support, physical activity, and proper time management were found to reduce stress levels among students. The review concludes that institutional support, faculty guidance, counseling services, and stress management interventions are essential for promoting the wellbeing and professional development of nursing students.

Keywords: Nursing students, academic stress, clinical stress, burnout, coping strategies, mental health

INTRODUCTION

Nursing education is recognized as one of the most challenging professional educational programs because it combines theoretical instruction with practical clinical training. B.Sc. Nursing students are expected to acquire knowledge, develop technical skills, and provide patient care simultaneously. This demanding educational environment exposes students to various forms of stress throughout their academic and clinical training.

Academic stress among nursing students mainly arises from examinations, assignments, project work, presentations, continuous internal assessments, and extensive syllabus requirements. Clinical stress occurs during hospital postings where students interact with patients, perform nursing procedures, and work under supervision in unfamiliar healthcare settings. Fear of making mistakes, lack of clinical experience, communication difficulties, and instructor evaluations further increase stress levels.

Stress among nursing students not only affects their academic achievement but also influences their emotional wellbeing, clinical competency, and professional growth. Persistent stress may lead to

burnout, anxiety, depression, lack of confidence, and reduced interest in the nursing profession. Therefore, understanding the causes, effects, and coping strategies of stress among nursing students is essential for improving educational outcomes and student wellbeing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted using a narrative literature review design to explore academic and clinical stress among B.Sc. Nursing students. Relevant literature was collected from electronic databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, and CINAHL. These databases were selected because they provide extensive nursing and healthcare-related research articles.

The literature search was performed using keywords such as "nursing students," "academic stress," "clinical stress," "burnout," "coping strategies," and "nursing education." Different combinations of these keywords were used to identify studies relevant to stress among nursing students.

The review included studies published between 2015 and 2024 to ensure inclusion of recent and updated evidence. Articles included in the review were studies related to nursing students, academic and clinical stress, and stress management strategies. Only peer-reviewed

English-language articles were included.

Non-English publications, duplicate articles, incomplete studies, and studies unrelated to nursing students were excluded from the review.

The selected studies were reviewed thoroughly and analyzed thematically. The findings were categorized under causes of stress, types of stress, effects of stress, signs and symptoms, and coping strategies among nursing students.

RESULTS

The review findings revealed that B.Sc. Nursing students experience significant levels of academic and clinical stress due to the demanding nature of nursing education. Stress was associated with multiple academic, clinical, personal, social, and psychological factors.

Academic stress was mainly related to examinations, assignments, project submissions, presentations, continuous assessments, and extensive syllabus burden. Students frequently reported difficulty balancing academic requirements with clinical responsibilities, resulting in mental exhaustion and decreased concentration.

Clinical stress was identified as another major contributor to student stress. During hospital postings, nursing students are expected to provide patient care while applying theoretical knowledge in real clinical settings. Fear of making mistakes, anxiety during nursing procedures, communication difficulties with patients, lack of experience, and evaluation by clinical instructors significantly increased stress levels.

The review also showed that stress affects students physically, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally. Common physical symptoms included fatigue, headache, sleep disturbances, and loss of appetite. Emotional manifestations included anxiety, irritability, frustration, depression, and mood swings. Cognitive effects included poor concentration, memory problems, and impaired decision-making abilities. Behavioral symptoms such as social withdrawal, reduced participation in activities, and lack of motivation were also observed among stressed students.

Stress was found to negatively influence academic performance and clinical competency. High stress levels

reduced students' confidence during clinical procedures and affected their ability to perform patient care effectively. Persistent stress also contributed to burnout and emotional exhaustion among nursing students.

Various coping strategies adopted by nursing students were identified in the literature. Time management and proper planning of academic and clinical activities helped students reduce workload pressure. Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, deep breathing exercises, and mindfulness practices were effective in reducing anxiety and improving emotional stability. Participation in physical activities and recreational programs also promoted mental wellbeing.

Social support from family members, friends, peers, and faculty members played an important role in helping students cope with stress. Students receiving emotional encouragement and guidance demonstrated better coping abilities and improved confidence. Counseling services and mentoring programs within nursing institutions were also found beneficial in stress reduction.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present review indicate that academic and clinical stress is highly prevalent among B.Sc. Nursing students. Similar to previous studies, academic workload, examinations, clinical responsibilities, and fear of errors were identified as major stressors affecting nursing students.

Clinical training environments expose students to emotionally challenging situations where they are expected to perform nursing procedures and interact with patients despite limited experience. Fear of negative evaluation and lack of confidence further increase anxiety levels during clinical practice. These findings are consistent with studies reporting that nursing students often experience stress due to clinical performance expectations and patient care responsibilities.

The review findings also suggest that stress negatively affects students' physical health, emotional wellbeing, concentration, and academic performance. Prolonged stress may result in burnout, emotional exhaustion, and reduced interest in the nursing profession. Therefore, early identification and management of stress are

essential in nursing education.

The literature highlighted the importance of coping strategies such as relaxation techniques, social support, counseling services, physical activity, and effective time management in reducing stress among nursing students. Supportive faculty behavior and positive clinical learning environments also contribute significantly to improving students' confidence and emotional wellbeing.

Nurse educators play a vital role in helping students manage stress through mentoring, constructive feedback, and supportive supervision. Educational institutions should establish counseling services and stress management programs to promote students' mental health and academic success.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study highlights that academic and clinical stress negatively affects the wellbeing, academic performance, and clinical competency of B.Sc. Nursing students. The findings emphasize the need for stress management programs, counseling services, and supportive learning environments in nursing institutions. Nurse educators and administrators should focus on promoting students' mental health and providing proper guidance during clinical training.

CONCLUSION

Academic and clinical stress among B.Sc. Nursing students is a major concern affecting students' wellbeing, academic performance, and clinical competency. Stress arises from academic workload, examinations, clinical responsibilities, fear of mistakes, and lack of confidence. Effective coping strategies such as counseling, social support, relaxation techniques, physical activity, and time management can significantly reduce stress levels. Institutional support, faculty guidance, and stress management interventions are essential for promoting the mental health and

professional development of nursing students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stress management programs should be included in nursing education.
- Counseling and mental health support services should be available for students.
- Nurse educators should provide supportive supervision during clinical practice.
- Students should be encouraged to practice relaxation techniques and time management.
- Nursing institutions should create a positive and supportive academic environment.

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