

Attitude towards stress management among nursing students at international school of nursing and midwifery institute- Maya, Wakiso district: A descriptive cross-sectional study.

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Abstract

Introduction: In Uganda, stress management is a critical component of nursing education, as nursing students often face high levels of stress due to academic and clinical demands yet many fail to manage their stress. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to assess attitudes, regarding stress management among nursing students at International nursing and Midwifery institute Maya, Wakiso district.

Methodology: A descriptive cross-sectional study design was employed for this study. The Kish Leslie's method was used and a sample of 80 nursing students was selected using stratified random sampling technique. Quantitative data was collected using a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed into frequency and percentages and then later presented into tables and figures.

Results: The attitude was positive with 90% of the nursing students considering stress management to be "very important" or "important". 60% of the participants disagreed that effective stress management can improve academic and clinical performance and 60% feeling "very confident" or "confident" in their ability to manage their stress. 77.5% were willing to participate in stress management programs.

Conclusion: The main barrier to effective stress management was lack of time 50%. Nursing students were knowledgeable about the definition of stress, common stress management techniques and the causes of stress, their attitude was generally positive with most of them considering stress management very important for nursing students to improve their academic and clinical performance.

Recommendation: The government should incorporate mandatory courses on stress management and mental health awareness into the nursing curriculum such as through encouraging co-curricular activities in medical training.

Keywords: Attitude, Stress Management, Nursing Students, International School of Nursing and Midwifery, Maya

Background of the study

Stress can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation (WHO, 2023). There are numerous reasons that can lead to stress like work overload, bad health, poor nutrition, inadequate sleep, financial limitations, bad interpersonal relationships, constant negativity seen in news, among other (Rehman & Zenis, 2021). Medical education has been reported throughout the world as one of the most stressful academic curricula, which negatively affects the physical and mental health of medical students. Fear of examination, high parental expectation, peer pressure, lack of leisure time, financial problems, relationship disharmony, and aspirations of higher studies are some of the many factors that contribute to development of stress in undergraduate medical students. Stress in medical students is inevitable due to the nature of training, therefore stress management methods should be embraced by students to reduce on the effects of it. According to (Schulte, Delongis, & Reese, 2016), stress management refers to a range of efforts and interventions aimed at improving an individual's ability to cope with stressful experiences and it includes activities and techniques such as relaxation, exercises, time management, and problem-solving strategies.

Globally, perceived stress prevalence among medical students ranges from 31.0% to 63.5% (Alwhaibi, Ameerah, & Budoor, 2023). In a study conducted by (Masilamani, Myat, Aung, Aini, & Tan, 2019) in Australia, 70% of nursing students experienced moderate to high levels of stress, with concerns about academic performance and clinical competences contributing to their stress. Many Australian nursing students reported seeking assistance from university counselors, psychologists, or mental health services to address stress related issues (Stallman, Ohan, & Chiera, 2017). Furthermore, in a study conducted in Bandung Indonesia by (Evelyn & Rosnancy, 2023) reported that most nursing students (45.9%) used emotion focused coping strategies to manage their stress levels. In Africa Specifically Sub-Saharan Africa, a study conducted by (Elsharief, 2023) in Gezira University, Sudan indicated that the most common academic stressor was unclear assignments (19.4%) and students reported that the most common coping strategies in facing stress among respondents is sleeping (32.9%),

only 1% of the respondents use counselling as coping strategies and others used substance abuse (tobacco, smoking and alcohol use). Furthermore, a study conducted among undergraduate medical students in Jimma University in Ethiopia revealed that more than third of the participants had a high level of perceived stress and the majority of them were practicing effective means of coping with stress such as denial, self-blame, planning and religious means so as to cope up with their stress (Awoke, Mamo, Abdu, & Terefe, 2021).

In East Africa, a study conducted by (Muliira, Natarajan, & Van, 2018), in Tanzania found that approximately 14% of medical students reported high levels of stress and many nursing students utilize relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, and yoga to alleviate stress and promote mental well-being whereas others turn to religious or spiritual beliefs as a source of comfort and resilience in times of stress.

A study conducted among nursing students at a Ugandan university in 2023 reported that 56.5% of the students experienced moderately to severe stress levels which primarily attributed to academic pressures, clinical training demands and personal issues (Oye & Ssendikaddiwa, 2023). According to (Kabukye, Katende, & Majalija, 2016), Most Ugandan nursing students reported using effective time management skills, including prioritizing tasks and setting realistic goals to reduce stress levels whereas others reported engaging in religious practices and beliefs as a coping mechanism for stress.

International School of Nursing and Midwifery is a training institution that offers training for nurses and midwives at certificate and Diploma levels. These students experience a lot of stress but no research has ever been conducted at International Nursing and Midwifery Institute Maya to find out how these students manage stress. Therefore, the study needs to conduct a study on Attitudes towards stress management among students.

Methodology

Study Design

The researcher used a descriptive cross-sectional study design employing quantitative methods of data collection. The cross-sectional study design was used to obtain data from a population at a specific point in time. This study design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to describe the two variables and the relationship between them. Quantitative methods of data collection, i.e., questionnaires, were employed to collect the required data and data was analyzed statistically into tables and figures.

Study Area

The study was conducted at International Nursing and Midwifery Institute is found in Wakiso district, Maya along Kampala- Masaka Road in Uganda. The programs offered include; Certificate in Nursing, Certificate in Midwifery and Diploma in Nursing.

Study Population

The study targeted all students doing Certificate in Nursing at International Nursing and Midwifery Institute- Maya.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size determination was calculated using the sample size formula by Kish Leslie 1965. z is standard deviation usually set at 1.96 for maximum sample at 95% confidence interval. P is the expected rate of particular attribute which is 0.5 q is $1-P$ d is the degree of accuracy desired 0.1 n is sample size estimate

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 * 0.5 * (1.0.5)}{0.11^2}$$

$n = 80$ participants

Sampling Procedure

The researcher used a stratified random sampling method. The researcher divided nursing students into strata basing on the classes that they are studying to create 5 groups, then the researcher selected respondents to make a total number of 80 respondents. Respondents were chosen at random from each strata to ensure that the sample is a representative of all the respondents in the stratum. The researcher made 5 strata and from each 16 respondents were selected at random.

Data Collection Tool

A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents. It was written in English since it is the official language used to pass on instructions in medical education and all respondents were able read and write. The questionnaire was subdivided into four (4) sections: social-demographic, knowledge attitude and practices which are written mainly in closed-ended questions and some open-ended questions.

Data Collection Procedure

Permission was sought from the school administration with an introductory letter from International Paramedical Institute research committee. The researcher then went to the administration of International School of Nursing and Midwifery who granted permission to carry out the study. The researcher explained the purpose and procedure of data collection to the respondents who signed a consent form. Every student filled the questionnaire alone with clarification from the researcher where he/she didn't understand. The process took a week.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable was Stress Management among nursing students.

Independent Variables

The independent variables were Knowledge, Attitude and Practices of nursing students.

Quality Control

The questionnaire was pretested among a few Students at Double Cure School of Nursing and Midwifery, which helped the researcher to assess the validity and reliability of the tool before being applied to the actual study participants.

Inclusion Criteria

The study included students doing a certificate in Nursing in each semester who were available on the days of data collection. Nursing students who filled consent forms to participate in the study.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The data collected was checked for completeness, then questionnaires were coded. The coded questionnaires were then entered using developed themes which were used to enter data into the Microsoft Excel then analyze data into frequencies and percentages and later presented in the form of tables and figures.

Ethical Consideration

Permission was sought from the director International School of Nursing and Midwifery-Maya.

Study Limitations

There was limited time because of the various activities that took place at the institution during the same period of time. This was solved by drawing a work plan that was strictly followed.

Results

Social demographic characteristics of respondents.

Variable	Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-20 Years	48	60
	21-24 Years	20	25
	>24 Years	12	15
Gender	Male	24	30
	Female	56	70
Year of Study	First Year	32	40
	Second Year	32	40
	Third Year	16	20

From the table, 80 nursing students participated in the study making a response rate of 100%. Concerning age, most of the participants 48(60%) were in the age group of 18-20years and the least 12(15%) were in the age group of > 24 years. Furthermore, majority 56(70%) were females and the least 24(30%) were males. And finally, most of the participants 32(40%) were in first and second and a few 16(20%) were in third year.

Attitude of nursing students regarding stress management.

Table 3: Showing attitudes of nursing students regarding stress management

Variable	Category	Frequency(f)	Percentage (%)
Whether stress management is important for nursing students.	Very important	48	60
	Important	24	30
	Neutral	8	10
	Unimportant	0	0
	Very unimportant	0	0
Whether effective stress management can improve academic and clinical performance.	Strongly agree	40	50
	Agree	32	40
	Neutral	8	10
	Disagree	0	0
	Strongly disagree	0	0
Confidence in the ability to manage stress.	Very confident	12	15
	Confident	36	45
	Neutral	24	30
	Not confident	8	10
	Not confident at all	0	0
Students' willingness to participate in stress management programs	Yes	62	77.5
	No	18	22.5

Firstly, more than half 48(60%) of the participants believed that stress management is very important for nursing students, while just a few 8(10%) believed that stress management is neutral for nursing students. Furthermore, half 40(50%) of the participants strongly agree that managing stress effectively can improve academic and clinical performance of the nursing students while 8(10%) of the nursing students were neutral on whether managing stress effectively can improve academic and clinical performance. In addition, more than half 62(77.5%) were willing to participate in stress management programs whereas 18(22.5%) of the nursing students were not willing to participate stress management programs. Lastly, regarding their confidence in their ability to manage stress, 36(45%) of the participants were confident in their ability to manage stress while 8(10%) of the participants were neutral in their ability to manage stress.

Discussion

Attitude of nursing students towards stress management

The analyzed data from this study revealed that 90% of students considered stress management to be “Very important” or “Important”. The overwhelming majority of students recognize the importance of stress management. This positive attitude is crucial as it indicates that students are aware of the potential impact of stress on their academic performance and overall well-being. The high level of importance placed on stress management suggests that students are likely to be receptive to interventions and training aimed at improving their stress management skills.

However, the challenge lies in translating this recognition into consistent and effective practice.

These results are in agreement with the findings of (Jimenez, Navia-Orsorio, & Diaz, 2017).

Results from this study show that 40% of the nursing students strongly agreed that effective stress management improves academic and clinical performance. This means that more than half (50%) of the nursing students disagree that effective stress management improves academic and clinical performance. These results contrast sharply with the findings of Muhammad (2023), who reported significant positive impact of stress management on academic performance among nursing students in Nigeria. This study highlights a strong belief among Nigerian nursing students in the benefits of stress management, contrasting with the skepticism observed in my study

The results from this study revealed that 60% of students reported being “Very confident” or “Confident” in their ability to manage stress. This indicates that while the majority of students feel confident in their ability to manage stress, there is still a significant portion (40%) who are either neutral or lack confidence. This finding highlights a potential area for improvement. These results disagree that confidence in stress management can be enhanced through structured training and support (Chaabane, Karima, Sapna, & Amit, 2021). Providing students with more opportunities to learn and practice stress management techniques could help boost their confidence and improve their overall ability to handle stress.

Results from this study showed that 62% of students expressed interest in participating in stress management programs if offered. This means that the high level of interest in stress management programs indicates a strong demand for such initiatives among nursing students. This finding is in disagreement with (Dias, et al., 2024), which revealed that 80% of the nursing students are more interested, 15% are somewhat interested and 5% are not interested in participating in stress management programs. The challenge for educational institutions is to design and implement programs that are accessible, engaging, and tailored to the specific needs of nursing students. By addressing these needs, institutions can help students develop effective stress management skills and improve their overall well-being.

Conclusions

The study specifically sought to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of nursing students towards stress management at International School of Nursing and Midwifery, Maya Wakiso district therefore the study concluded that;

The majority of students were knowledgeable about the definition of stress, common stress management techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness meditation among others and the causes of stress among nursing however their knowledge was inadequate on the advanced stress management techniques such as cognitive-behavioral strategies and progressive muscle relaxation. The attitude was generally positive as the majority of the students agreed that stress management is very important for nursing students and managing stress would improve academic and clinical performance of nursing students. However, the practices of stress management were limited and often ineffective, with many relying on ineffective stress management techniques such as social withdrawal, substance use among others.

Recommendations

To the MOH: The ministry should incorporate mandatory courses on stress management and mental health awareness into the nursing curriculum such as through encouraging co-curricular activities in medical training.

To the administration of International School of Nursing and Midwifery Institute: The administration should establish or enhance counseling office within the institute to provide professional mental health support to nursing students.

The administration should also create designated relaxation spaces within the institute where students can manage their stress.

To nursing students: The nursing students should ensure to break down tasks and assignments into manageable pieces to avoid excessive workload.

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List of Abbreviations

- IPI:** International Paramedical Institute
ISNM: International School of Nursing and Midwifery Institute
UAHEB: Uganda Allied Examinations Board
WHO: World Health Organization

Source of Funding

The study was primarily self-funded by the researcher, with financial support from her parents to cover costs related to printing, internet access, and data collection activities.

Conflict of Interest

The researcher declared no conflict of interest in the conduct and reporting of this study.

Author Contributions

Namale Jovia conceptualized the study, developed the proposal, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared the final research report under the supervision of Ms. Flavia Nabuuma.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the research report. Additional data may be obtained from the researcher upon reasonable request.

Ethical Approval

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the administration of the International School of Nursing and Midwifery–Maya. Authorization was granted before data collection commenced.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Only students who voluntarily signed the consent form were included in the study.

Author Biography

Namale Jovia is a student of the International Paramedical Institute–Maya, pursuing a Diploma in Clinical Medicine and Community Health under the Uganda Allied Health Examinations Board (UAHEB). This research was conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the diploma.

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