

## Academic stress and self-esteem among Nursing Students

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** Academic stress in nursing students is a common mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration that is associated with academic failure which may be due to examination pressure, assignment load as well as challenges of clinical practices. And self-esteem reflects a person's overall subjective emotional evaluation of his or her own worth and is an important predictor of stress coping. Continuous high level of stress may influence learning process and self-esteem as well. The main objective of this study is to assess the academic stress and self-esteem among nursing students.

**Methods:** A descriptive, cross sectional research design was adopted. Probability simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample which was 118 medical nursing students studying in the Yeti Health Science Academy, Kantimargh, Maharajgunj. Data was collected by using structured questionnaire including Student Academic Stress and Rosenberg self-esteem scale. Data analysis was done by descriptive statistic and inferential statistic with the help of (SPSS) version 20. (9)

**Results:** Regarding the level of academic stress, about half of the respondents ( 50.8 %) had moderate academic stress followed by 31.4 % slight stress, 12.7 % high stress and 1.7 % extreme stress. And while assessing level of self-esteem, a majority of the respondents (83.9 %) had high self-esteem and 16.1 % had normal self-esteem.

**Conclusion:** Based on findings academic stress in nursing students is about half of the Respondents. Therefore, intervention to reduce the academic stress should be carried out by identifying the causes of stress, stress reducing measures, counseling program and by developing a variety of skills to cope with negative aspects of stress so as to produce professionals who are confident, efficient and having clear vision about their future.

**Keywords:** Academic Stress, self - esteem, Student Academic Stress Scale and Rosenberg self-esteem scale.

### Introduction

Stress affects every individual and has a powerful impact on the mind and on an individual's health and well-being. (Lewis & Shaw, 2007). Stress affect individuals in different ways and is considered a cause of physical, emotional and psychological ill health. (Ortqvist Wincent,2008). One form of stress that is constantly being experienced by college students is stress in relation to academic concerns. "Academic stress is the product of a combination of academic

related demands that exceed the adaptive resources available to an individual" (Wilks,2008). Students face many challenges and stressors, however as a "nursing student" they are likely to experience even more stress as compared to their friends and colleagues who are enrolled in other programs. High levels of stress are believed to affect students' health and academic functions. (Bruke & Shiver, 2000). According to the Morris Rosenberg, "Self-esteem is a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value".<sup>(9)</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that stress-related disorders will be one of the leading causes of disability by the year 2020. One-third of nursing students experience stress severe enough to induce mental health problems such as anxiety and depression (Prymachuk & Richards, 2007). While assessing depression, anxiety and stress among nursing students in Sri Lanka, the majority of the respondents reported mild to extremely severe symptoms of depression (51.1%), anxiety (59.8%) and stress (82.6%) (Rathnayake, 2016).<sup>(11)</sup> Likewise a study conducted in Malaysia showed that 41.9% of the medical students were found to have psychological stress, which was significantly associated with depression.<sup>(10)</sup>

In recent years, there is a growing appreciation of the stresses involved in nursing training. So, the need for the knowledge on prevalence of psychological distress and psychological well-being among nursing students emphasize the requirement of this study.

#### **Academic Stress and Self- esteem in different country**

High levels of stress are believed to affect students' health and academic function (Bruke & Shiver, 2000). While assessing self-esteem among nursing students in College of Nursing, University of Mosul, Iraq, 54.7% of them had Moderate self-esteem level, 29% had High level and 16.3% had low level of self-esteem (Ibrahim, 2015).<sup>(6)</sup>

Nursing student's self-esteem is negatively affected by stress during the education period (Boey, 1998, Edwards et al., 2010) and self-confidence and self-esteem are essential factors in coping with stress. Many psychological problems such as depression and suicide occur as a result of low self-esteem (Ghatol, 2017).

When assessed academic stress among nursing student at SRM college of nursing, Kattankulathur majority of the students ( 82.5%) had moderate level of academic stress and 7.5% students had severe academic stress. (Anchala, 2016).<sup>(5)</sup>

Increased levels of stress may lead to poor academic performance, burn-out, and the development of inadequate coping mechanisms (Lewis & Shaw, 2007; Gibbons, 2010).

Slightly more than half (52.4%) of nursing students in Greece experienced depressive symptoms (34.7% mild, 12.9% moderate and 4.7% severe) (Papazisis, Tsiga, Papanikolaou, Vlasiadis, Sapountzi-Krepia, 2008).<sup>15</sup> A study showed that nursing students mental distress scores were higher than the overall population. (Asti et al., 2005, Beser Gordeles and Inci, 2010, Tanrıverdi and Ekinci 2007).<sup>(8)</sup>

#### **Methods**

A descriptive, cross-sectional study design was adopted to assess academic stress and self-esteem among nursing students of Yeti Health Science Academy from July 2017 to December 2017. Probability simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample which was 118 medical nursing students studying in the same college. Structured questionnaire including Student Academic Stress and Rosenberg self-esteem scale was used for data collection. Data analysis was done by descriptive statistic and inferential statistic method with the help of (SPSS) version 20.<sup>(9)</sup>

#### **Results**

Out of 118 female medical nursing students, more than one third of the respondent 47 (39.8%) had extreme stress of worries about results after examinations as a major stressor. Results further supported the notion that academic factors led to stress in the nursing student population. More than half of the respondents 60 (50.8 %) had moderate academic stress followed by 37 (31.4 %) slight stress, 15 (12.7 %) high stress and 2 (1.7 %) extreme stress. Majority of the respondents 99 ( 83.9 %) had high self-esteem followed by 19 (16.1 %) of the respondents who had normal self-esteem.

Table 1. Measure on academic stress (n=118)

Statement	No Stress	Slight Stress	Moderate Stress	High Stress	Extreme Stress
Teachers make too many extra demands on students.	12 (10.2%)	37 (31.4%)	44 (37.3%)	16 (13.6%)	8 (6.8%)
Poor interest in some subjects.	11 (9.3%)	36 (30.5%)	33 (28.0%)	13 (11.0%)	6 (5.1%)
Progress reports to parents	35 (29.7%)	36 (30.5%)	20 (16.9%)	31 (26.3%)	11 (9.3%)
The teacher is not humors towards us.	42 (35.6%)	28 (23.7%)	27 (22.9%)	36 (30.5%)	8 (6.8%)
Lack of concentration during study hours.	6 (5.1%)	39 (33.1%)	31 (26.3%)	44 (37.3%)	11 (9.3%)
Difficulty in remembering all that is studied.	0	19 (16.1%)	39 (33.1%)	24 (20.3%)	24 (20.3%)
Worrying about the examinations.	3 (2.5%)	15 (12.7%)	23 (19.5%)	23 (19.5%)	33 (28.0%)
Lack of self-confidence	16 (13.6%)	35 (29.7%)	34 (28.8%)	21 (17.8%)	9 (7.6%)
The teachers do not listen to our ideas.	19 (16.1%)	37 (31.4%)	35 (29.7%)	21 (17.8%)	4 (3.4%)
Conflict with friends/college authorities.	30 (25.4%)	43 (36.4%)	22 (18.6%)	33 (28.0%)	2 (1.7%)
Teachers give more punishment in the class.	26 (22.0%)	36 (30.5%)	24 (20.3%)	18 (15.3%)	11 (9.3%)
Worry about results after examinations.	2 (1.7%)	17 (14.4%)	19 (16.1%)	24 (20.3%)	47 (39.8%)
Hesitate to ask the teacher for detailed explanation.	18 (15.3%)	44 (37.3%)	32 (27.1%)	22 (18.6%)	6 (5.1%)
Biased attitude of the teacher.	23 (19.5%)	27 (22.9%)	19 (16.1%)	35 (29.7%)	25 (21.2%)
Inadequate space or room for study at home.	28 (23.7%)	36 (30.5%)	28 (23.7%)	17 (14.4%)	4 (3.4%)
Not knowing how to prepare for the examinations.	8 (6.8%)	24 (20.3%)	31 (26.3%)	13 (11.0%)	20 (16.9%)
Lack of assertiveness (confidence) in the class.	24 (20.3%)	32 (27.1%)	40 (33.9%)	16 (13.6%)	5 (4.2%)
Lack of opportunity to meet teachers.	32 (27.1%)	39 (33.1%)	32 (27.1%)	25 (21.2%)	2 (1.7%)
Teacher shows socio-economic status on students.	44 (37.3%)	30 (25.4%)	15 (12.7%)	34 (28.8%)	13 (11.0%)
Slow in getting along with the curriculum.	14 (11.9%)	31 (26.3%)	39 (33.1%)	32 (27.1%)	9 (7.6%)
Exam papers are tough and not valued well.	4 (3.4%)	27 (22.9%)	34 (28.8%)	22 (18.6%)	19 (16.1%)
Unable to complete the assignment in time.	3 (2.5%)	22 (18.6%)	31 (26.3%)	28 (23.7%)	30 (25.4%)
Lack of communication between teachers and students.	13 (11.0%)	40 (33.9%)	36 (30.5%)	21 (17.8%)	7 (5.9%)
Monotonous (boring or tedious) teaching style by the teacher.	9 (7.6%)	26 (22.0%)	33 (28.0%)	9 (7.6%)	22 (18.6%)
Not enough discussion in the class.	15 (12.7%)	39 (33.1%)	39 (33.1%)	15 (12.7%)	4 (3.4%)
Lack of mutual help among classmates.	25 (21.2%)	39 (33.1%)	37 (31.4%)	20 (16.9%)	8 (6.8%)
Lack of fluency while speaking the language other than the mother tongue.	24 (20.3%)	31 (26.3%)	42 (35.6%)	17 (14.4%)	6 (5.1%)
Difficulty in public speaking.	21 (17.8%)	45 (38.1%)	28 (23.7%)	29 (24.6%)	4 (3.4%)
The teacher is fast and does not use blackboard legibly.	26 (22.0%)	38 (32.2%)	26 (22.0%)	30 (25.4%)	11 (9.3%)
Teachers lacking interest in students.	23 (19.5%)	28 (23.7%)	26 (22.0%)	22 (18.6%)	12 (10.2%)
Examination syllabus is too heavy in some subjects.	5 (4.2%)	19 (16.1%)	34 (28.8%)	33 (28.0%)	30 (25.4%)
Feeling of inferiority.	19 (16.1%)	21 (17.8%)	42 (35.6%)	34 (24.8%)	14 (11.9%)
Unable to discuss Academic failures with parents.	16 (13.6%)	19 (16.1%)	31 (26.3%)	41 (34.7%)	19 (16.1%)
Not able to grasp the subject matter.	10 (8.5%)	25 (21.2%)	34 (28.8%)	36 (30.5%)	15 (12.7%)
Incomplete and confusing study material.	5 (4.2%)	24 (20.3%)	35 (29.7%)	23 (19.5)	13 (11.0%)
Eleventh hour preparation for the examinations.	4 (3.4%)	19 (16.1%)	38 (32.2%)	27 (22.9)	21 (17.8%)
Importance of the subject matter.	14 (1.9%)	34 (28.8)	42 (35.6%)	31 (26.3%)	5 (4.2%)
Inadequate subject knowledge of the teacher.	11 (9.3%)	34 (28.8)	32 (27.1%)		14 (11.9%)
Inadequate lab and library facilities.	8 (6.8%)	23 (19.5%)	42 (35.6%)		14 (11.9%)

(\*The figure inside the parenthesis represent percentage value of the total number of respondents) .

Among the academic stress related items, more than one third of the respondent (39.8%) had extreme stress of worries about results after examinations as a major stressor. Results from this table further supported the notion that academic factors led to stress in the nursing student population. (Table=1).

**Table 2: Measure on self-esteem (n=118)**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	31 (26.3%)	77 (65.3%)	9 (7.6%)	1 (0.8%)
At times, I think I am no good at all.	17 (14.4%)	39 (33.1%)	47 (39.8%)	15 (12.7%)
I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	27 (22.9%)	83 (70.3%)	6 (5.1%)	2 (1.7%)
I am able to do things as well as most other people.	26 (22.0%)	78 (66.1%)	12 (10.2%)	2 (1.7%)
I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	5 (4.2%)	37 (31.4%)	65 (55.1%)	11 (9.3%)
I certainly feel useless at times.	7 (5.9%)	41 (34.7%)	46 (39.0%)	24 (20.3%)
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	20 (16.9%)	69 (58.5%)	27 (22.9%)	2 (1.7%)
I wish I could have more respect for myself.	40 (33.9%)	64 (54.2%)	11 (9.3%)	3 (2.5%)
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	8 (6.8%)	12 (10.2%)	64 (54.2%)	34 (28.8%)
I take a positive attitude toward myself.	52 (44.1%)	58 (49.2%)	5 (4.2%)	3 (2.5%)

(\*The figure inside the parenthesis represent percentage value of the total number of respondents).

This table measures self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self.

Items 1, 3, 4, 7, 10 are positive feelings whereas items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are negative feelings which is reverse scored. (Table=2).

**Table 3: Level of academic stress and self - esteem (n=118)**

Level	Frequency	Percent
No Stress	4	3.4
Slight Stress	37	31.4
Moderate Stress	60	50.8
High Stress	15	12.7
Extreme Stress	2	1.7
High Self-esteem	99	83.9
Normal Self-esteem	19	16.1

\*(Rajendran and Kaliappan, 1990, Self esteem, Rosenberg, 1965). 17

More than half of the respondents (50.8 %) had moderate academic stress followed by (31.4 %) slight stress, (12.7 %) high stress and (1.7 %) extreme stress. And a majority of the respondents (83.9 %) had high

self-esteem followed by (16.1 %) of the respondents who had normal self-esteem. (Table3).

### Discussion

This study showed that about half of the respondents (50.8 %) of nursing students had moderate academic stress followed by (31.4 %) slight stress, (12.7 %) high stress and (1.7 %) extreme stress whereas in a study conducted on a nursing college in Punjab showed (34%) of the respondents involved in the study were having moderate stress and (33%) each were having mild and severe stress. In contrast to this study, another similar study conducted on nursing institute situated in Punjab revealed that ( 97%) of the respondents had moderate level of stress whereas (3%) had severe stress.

Discussing the level of self-esteem, the majority of the respondents (83.9 %) had high self-esteem followed by (16.1 %) of the respondents who had normal self-esteem which was slightly consistent with the study conducted among nursing students of the Institute of Medicine that showed (7.31%) had have very high, (67.5%) had high and (23.34 %) students had moderate self-esteem and only (1.74%) had low self-esteem.

In contrast to this study, a study conducted by Ibrahim (2015) in College of Nursing, Iraq showed that (54.7%)

of them had normal self-esteem level, (29%) had high level and (16.3%) had low level self-esteem.<sup>(6)</sup>

Another co relational study on academic stress and self-esteem among higher secondary students in selected schools of Udupi district found that 80.20% students had moderate stress, 13.5% have mild stress and 6.2% have severe stress. Among the subjects 82.30% were having normal self - esteem and 6.2% were having low self- esteem whereas in this present study more than half of nursing students had moderate academic stress and only 1.7 % had extreme stress. And a majority of respondents (83.9 %) had high self-esteem and remaining (16.1 %) had normal self-esteem.<sup>(7)</sup>

Thus, this suggests that intervention to lower the academic stress and increase the self-esteem should be carried out so that the learning of students will be efficient.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the findings, it was concluded that half of the respondents had moderate level of academic stress. Nursing students feel academic stress most often due to large amount of content to study in short period of time, grade competition, limited time for assignment submission and too heavy examination syllabus. Likewise, while assessing the level of self-esteem more than two third of the respondents had high self-esteem whereas less than one third of the respondents had normal self-esteem.

Hence academic stress is found in about half of the study population, it is the responsibility of college/ medical institution and concerned authorities in particular to identify the causes of stress and take stress reducing measures so as to produce professionals who are confident, efficient and having clear vision about their future.

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