

Students Stress in Nursing School

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Abstract: ***Introduction:** Stress is a situation that provokes negative feeling to people. The aim of this study is to compare the stress levels among the students in a school of Nursing, to find out the source of stress and its impact in academic level. **Material and Methods:** This descriptive study was conducted in the Nursing School in Tirana, Albania during a period November 2013 through February 2014. Sixty students were enrolled in the study including those earning a degree diploma in the General Nursery education. **Results:** The students in the third year of studies, 50 percent manifested perceived stress often compared with the first and second year students. The academic performance consists stressful in 50 percent of students in the first year and increased in 55 percent of the students in the third year. Meanwhile the stress shown during relationship with the school teaching staff and personnel was higher in the first year of the students' studies and decreased in the third year by 35 percent. **Conclusion:** The findings of this survey confirm that nursing students experience high levels of stress. For this reason, there is need of a good collaborative according faculty staff and preceptors.*

Keywords: stress, nursing student, study, questionnaire, professional ability

1. Introduction

Stress is an unpleasant state of emotional and physiological arousal that people experience in situations that they perceive as dangerous or threatening to their well-being. The word "stress" means perception or sensation different to different people. Some people define stress as events or situations that cause them to feel tension, pressure, or negative emotions such as anxiety and anger. Others see the stress in response to these situations. The response includes physiological changes, such as the addition of heart rate and muscle tension, as well as emotional and behavioral changes. It is a part of life. Stress is an element and a parcel of the human lifestyle. It can serve as a driving force in terms of obtaining results. However, non-stop stress can act as a killer in terms of performance [1].

It is a known fact that students are subjected to different kinds of stressors, such as the pressure of academic achievements with an obligation to succeed, an uncertain future, and difficulties of integrating into the system [2]. Also, the other stress factor, for example is the time management, financial problems, sleep disorders, social activities, being a parent, eating manner, age, the role of academic staff and personnel, the role of preceptors, and other factors.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that stress-related disorders will be one of the leading causes of disability by the year 2020 [3]. Nursing schools are now recognized as a stressful environment that often exert a negative effect on the academic performances and psychological well-being of the students[4]. Studies from the United Kingdom and India have shown increasing levels of stress among nursing students [5,6].

The *first* goal of this study is to compare the stress level among the students in our School of Technical and Medical Science, according to the academic studies and the different stress among male and female students.

Second, the study has intended to point the source of stress to students and how the stress would impact their academic achievements.

2. Material and Methods

This descriptive study was conducted in the School of Nursing, Tirana, Albania during a period November 2013 through February 2014. 60 students were enrolled in the survey, including those students seeking to graduate with a General Nursery Diploma degree (20 students for each academic year). Students were explained about the nature and purpose of the survey, and they were asked to complete questionnaires, which were distributed by authors in the classrooms just after the completion of the classes. The questionnaire was distributed randomly among the students, taking into consideration an equal gender basis. The questionnaire was focused, except for the standard information, in 5(five) categories: academic performance, relation with the faculty, relation with clinic and patients, personal life and professional practice. Thus, academic performance means average of marks obtained in the subjects performed; relationships with the faculty mean relations with the school's staff and personnel including but not limited to secretary and professors.. Relations with the clinic and patient communication means and the problems that can be encountered with referenced nurses in different clinics, as well as communication with patients during practical manipulations. Personal life means different factors such as the economic status, family problems, various social problems and others. Lastly, professional practices mean that many students feel being capable committing fraud during cycle during teaching practice in various hospital services. The scale of stress perception in questionnaire varied from "0" to "4", in which "0" equaled "never", "1" equaled "almost", "2" equaled "rarely", "3" equaled "sometime", "4" equaled "often". In the end, the questionnaire provides a section for student to express his/her own comment as well as a thank you note for his/her input in the questionnaire. The

materials used in order to conduct the questionnaire were prepared through the statistical program SPSS 19.

3. Results

The study revealed that among students a perceived stress was more in the first year, less in the second year and increased again during the third year of the student's education. During the first year, 45 percent of students manifested perceived stress occasionally, while in the third year 50 percent of students showed perceived stress frequently (Figure 1).

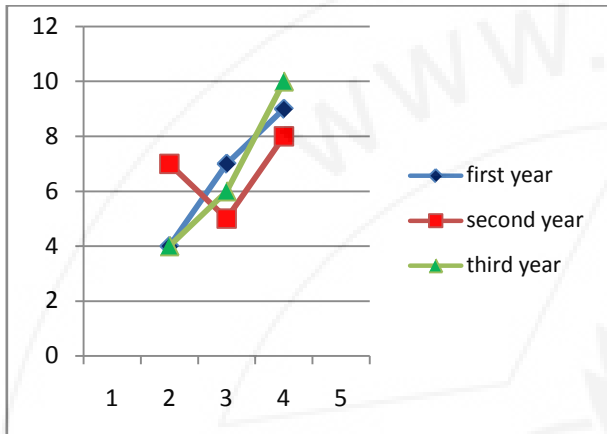


Figure 1: Stress differences according to years of study

In the meantime, the stress level changed gradually year after year. The study indicated that the most stressing factors for students were their academic performance, interaction with the clinical assignments and patients, and the student's professional ability. Academic performance consists of stressful in 50 percent of students in the first year and increased to 55 percent of students during the third year. While the students' stress presented during their interaction with the faculty staff was higher during the first year, it decreased in the third year with 35 percent. As for the third year students, 60 percent of the asked students demonstrated a higher stress in clinical assignments and their professional ability (Figure 2).

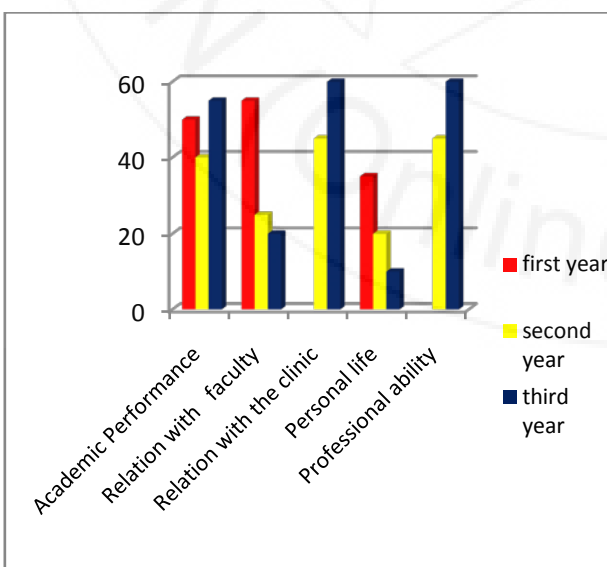


Figure 2: Stress factors according to years of study

The difference of stress perception between female and male students resulted equal during the second year of studies, as for the first and third years, female nursing students showed 10 percent more stressful signs than their male students. Female students resulted to become more stressful than their male students in the first year in scale of: *personal life and academic achievements*, while in the third year in *academic achievements, clinic assignments and professional ability*. (Figure 3)

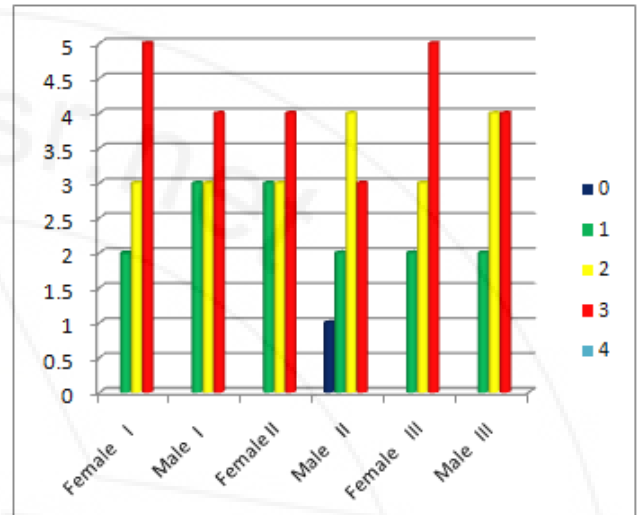


Figure 3: The change of stress level towards the year of education, according to gender

4. Discussion

Appreciation of the academic performance of the students, part of the present survey, in various education institutions is achieved throughout a system of grade point average (GPA). Many studies showed the connection between the stress factors and its effects related to GPA results.

Stress creates a double-edged effect. Either it can stimulate and motivate students to peak academic performance, or it can reduce students' effectiveness [7,8]. Previous studies have shown that nursing education exerts considerable amount of stress on students [8]-[13].

If a student is under a tremendous amount of perceived stress, he/she would tend to think that his/her GPA's results would suffer. Pursuant to relevant academic literature, many studies found that certain factors could greatly affect student's GPA results. Health-related issues like nutrition and sleep deprivation are found to be a great deal of influence to students [14]. Other factors, such as working a full or part-time job are thought to affect substantially student's academic achievement [15]. Social activities such as fraternity or sorority activities, various personal issues in personal relationship have shown to create a negative impact in the academic achievement [16].

The most significant impact of the present study is about the findings from the author, who, while attending college has gone through a similar stressful experience like the students subject to this survey. As a result, the author's own experience in dealing with the stress on a daily basis provided her with a great deal of insight on the research

and the preparation of the survey. The author also is entirely aware of the impact that the work and sleep deprivation could have on student's academic achievements.

Other studies [17]-[20] indicate that female nursing students are more at risk of suffering the effects of stress than male students. The present survey found no statistically significant difference between genders. Presently, approximately half of all nursing students are female, and there is a larger representation of women in the academic staff of the school. Perhaps, this has alleviated some of the pressures previously experienced by women to equalize or even to outperform their male counterparts in order to prove their impact and role in what used to be male-dominated field.

Another study by Murphy *et al.* [21] reveals that medical, dental and nursing students are most stressed out by grades and performance on examinations. This is consistent with another high stress situation - the fear of failing a course or licensing examination.

In the present research was observed that stress levels are higher among female nursing students. This finding can be attributed to differing patterns of psychological morbidity, as males are simply less expressive of their emotions and concerns [10],[13]. This is in contrast to another study⁹ which reported that males perceived more stress than female students.

The research showed that a majority of the nursing students were not confident enough to handle their personal problems. Only a few of them were able to manage stressful situations diligently, whereas other students felt that difficulties piled up so high that they could not overcome them. This is a reflection of their psychological and emotional immaturity. Interventions at this stage would enable them to handle stress in a much better way in the future.

5. Conclusion

The findings of present study indicate that nursing students in the Nursing School experienced high levels of stress. Factors related to the School are a stress issue among students. Majority of the students showed a high stress in relation to the School as well as to clinical assignments in different hospitals and other health centers. For this reason, there is a need for a closer collaboration among the Secretary of the School, lecturers and the preceptors

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