

## Psychological Distress among Nursing Students

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### Abstract

Psychological distress refers to a state of emotional suffering that can manifest as symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. It is a growing concern among nursing students. Nursing students often encounter multiple stressors, including academic pressures, clinical workloads, financial concerns, and a lack of social support, which may predispose them to experience higher rates of psychological distress. This psychological strain has a direct impact on their emotional well-being, academic performance, and the ability to provide quality patient care as future healthcare providers. Studies suggest that nursing students exhibit varying levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, and these levels tend to peak during critical periods such as clinical placements or examinations.<sup>1</sup>

This review aims to synthesize existing research related to psychological distress among nursing students. It will explore studies investigating levels of psychological distress, contributing factors, coping strategies, and interventions. By doing so, the review seeks to identify gaps in the literature and offer insights into effective strategies for addressing psychological distress in this vulnerable population.<sup>2</sup>

**Keywords:** psychological distress, Nursing students, Academic pressure, clinical workload, emotional well-being, coping strategies.

## INTRODUCTION

Psychological distress refers to a state of emotional suffering that can manifest as symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. It is a growing concern among nursing students. Nursing students often encounter multiple stressors, including academic pressures, clinical workloads, financial concerns, and a lack of social support, which may predispose them to experience higher rates of psychological distress. This psychological strain has a direct

impact on their emotional well-being, academic performance, and the ability to provide quality patient care as future healthcare providers. Studies suggest that nursing students exhibit varying levels of anxiety, depression, and stress, and these levels tend to peak during critical periods such as clinical placements or examinations.<sup>1</sup>

This review aims to synthesize existing research related to psychological distress among nursing students. It will explore studies investigating levels of psychological distress, contributing factors,

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coping strategies, and interventions. By doing so, the review seeks to identify gaps in the literature and offer insights into effective strategies for addressing psychological distress in this vulnerable population.<sup>2</sup>

### Reviews Related to psychological distress among Nursing students.

**Patel, M. *et al.* (2017)** conducted a Descriptive correlational study to assess the relationship between academic stress and psychological distress of 100 BSc. nursing students. The tools used for the study is Academic Stress Scale (ASS) and DASS-21. Results show that strong positive correlation between academic stress and psychological distress. The study concluded that reducing academic stress may help alleviate psychological distress among students.<sup>3</sup>

**Jones, K. & Wilson, D. (2018)** Conducted a Descriptive study to identify the impact of personal and academic factors on the emotional adjustment of 250 BSc. nursing students from two universities. The tools Used for the study is Self-reported questionnaire covering emotional adjustment, academic stress, and personal factors. Results shows that high academic workload, financial concerns, and lack of family support were significantly associated with poor emotional adjustment. The study concluded that a holistic approach addressing both academic and personal factors is essential for enhancing the emotional well-being of nursing students.<sup>4</sup>

**Kumar, R. *et al.* (2018)** conducted a cross sectional study to assess the level of psychological distress among 150 BSc Nursing students from single institution. The Tool used for the study is Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-21). The results shows that 45% of students had moderate to severe psychological distress. The study concluded that high levels of psychological distress are prevalent among nursing students, necessitating mental health interventions.<sup>5</sup>

**Sharma, P., & Verma, S. (2019)** conducted a Descriptive study to evaluate the prevalence of anxiety and depression among 200 BSc. Nursing students from multiple colleges. The Tools used for the study is Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS). Results shows that 30% exhibited symptoms of anxiety, and 20% showed signs of depression. The study concluded that Psychological distress is a significant issue in nursing education, affecting student performance and well-being.<sup>6</sup>

**Singh, A., & Gupta, R. (2020)** conducted a cross sectional study to identify factors contributing

to psychological distress of 180 BSc. nursing students. The Tools used for the study is General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12). Results shows that major factors included academic pressure, clinical workload, and lack of support. The study concluded that interventions should focus on stress management and supportive environments.<sup>7</sup>

**Reddy, S., & Rao, P. (2021)** conducted a longitudinal study to track changes in psychological distress levels over the course of nursing education of 20 BSc nursing students followed for 3 years. The tools used for the study is Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Results shows that Psychological distress peaked during clinical placements in the second year. The study concluded that continuous support and counseling are needed throughout the nursing education Journey.<sup>8</sup>

**Thomas, J., & George, K. (2022)** Conducted a Mixed-method study to explore the coping strategies used by nursing students to deal with psychological distress of 80 BSc. Nursing students. The tool used for the study is Coping Strategy Inventory and semi-structured interviews. Result shows that Common strategies included seeking social support, exercise, and time management. The study concluded that teaching effective coping mechanisms can significantly reduce psychological distress.<sup>9</sup>

### Conclusion:

Studies highlight that psychological distress is a significant concern among nursing students, with varying levels of anxiety, depression, and stress. Academic stress, clinical workload, financial concerns, lack of family support, and lack of coping strategies were identified as major contributors. Seeking social support, engaging in exercise, and employing time management are common coping mechanisms. Stress management strategies, counseling, and teaching coping mechanisms were identified as effective approaches to alleviate psychological distress. Psychological distress levels peak during clinical placements, emphasizing the need for continuous support throughout the nursing education journey.<sup>10</sup>

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