

Factors Contributing to Mental Distress Among Nursing Students

Author(s), AMAMBA, Kelechi I. (RN, RM, BNSc), OHAERI, Beatrice (RN, Ph.D), OJO, Iyanuoluwa Oreofe (RN, Ph.D), OJEWALE, Lucia Y. (RN, Ph.D), BABARIMISA, Oluwatoyin (RN, M.Sc.),

Abstract:

Mental distress among nursing students has emerged as a serious concern in healthcare education, adversely affecting their academic performance, personal well-being, and future professional competence. This research examines the factors that contribute to mental anguish in nursing students using an extensive literature analysis. The research identified academic strain, financial difficulties, personal and social influences, emotional and psychological demands, institutional pressures, cultural expectations, and technological impacts as key contributors to mental anguish. The rigorous demands of nursing school, along with practical exposure to patient distress, financial pressures, and insufficient support networks, elevate the likelihood of mental health issues among nursing students. The research underscores the complex nature of mental suffering, illustrating its origins in both individual and systemic influences. The study also examines coping mechanisms and resilience methods frequently utilised by nursing students, including mindfulness, peer support, and counselling. The findings highlight the pressing necessity for educational institutions to adopt proactive strategies, such as incorporating mental health support services, providing stress management training, and establishing policies that tackle financial and workload issues.

EASIJ

Accepted 1 February 2025
Published 24 February 2025
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.14920198

Keywords: Mental distress, Nursing students, Academic pressure, Resilience strategies, Mental health support,





About Author

Author(s):

AMAMBA, Kelechi I. (RN, RM, BNSc)
Department of Nursing
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

OHAERI, Beatrice (RN, Ph.D)
Department of Nursing
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

OJO, Iyanuoluwa Oreofe (RN, Ph.D)
Department of Nursing
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

OJEWALE, Lucia Y. (RN, Ph.D)
Department of Nursing
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

BABARIMISA, Oluwatoyin (RN, M.Sc.)
Department of Nursing
University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria



Introduction

Mental distress is a condition of emotional suffering often marked by symptoms like anxiety, despair, and tension, which may result from negative life events or psychological difficulties (WHO, 2022). Mental anguish has grown increasingly widespread among nursing students, attributable to the distinctive demands and pressures of their academic and clinical settings. These students endure a dual load of demanding curriculum and the emotional responsibilities of patient care, rendering them especially susceptible to mental health issues (Turner & McCarthy, 2017). If not treated, mental anguish can significantly impact academic achievement, professional growth, and general well-being, highlighting its importance in nursing education.

The examination of mental health within nursing education is essential because of the far-reaching consequences of psychological distress on students and the broader healthcare system. Nursing students provide the foundation of the future healthcare workforce, and their capacity to deliver high-quality treatment is contingent upon their mental health stability (Ross et al., 2019). Ongoing distress can result in burnout, less empathy, and, in severe instances, withdrawal from nursing programs, hence worsening labour shortages in an already overburdened healthcare system. Furthermore, treating mental health concerns throughout training prepares nursing students with the resilience and coping strategies essential for the high-pressure conditions they would face in their professional careers (Gómez-Urquiza et al., 2019).

Multiple variables contribute to the elevated incidence of mental distress among nursing students. Academic demands, including as substantial workloads, clinical placements, and regular evaluations, constitute considerable strains. Financial difficulties, including the management of school costs and living expenditures, exacerbate their issues (Chow et al., 2021). Moreover, the emotionally burdensome aspects of patient care, exposure to pain and mortality, together with inadequate institutional support networks, exacerbate their susceptibility to psychological distress. Social elements, including isolation resulting from rigorous schedules and cultural expectations regarding their duties, significantly influence the situation (Pereira et al., 2022).

This research aims to examine the factors that contribute to mental distress in nursing students using a literature review. The discussion starts with the identification of principal stressors and their ramifications. The research analyses the influence of mental distress on students' academic performance and professional development, ending with evidence-based solutions to alleviate these issues. This work seeks to illuminate a significant topic, contributing to the expanding studies arguing for more mental health care in nursing school.

Methodology

This research employs a literature-based review technique to examine the factors leading to mental anguish among nursing students. This method facilitates an extensive analysis of



current knowledge through the integration of data from prior studies. The study examines a variety of academic studies to discern patterns, gaps, and significant findings pertinent to the mental health difficulties encountered by nursing students. The information for this review was obtained from many reputable sources, including peer-reviewed academic publications, books, research papers, and reliable internet databases. These sources were chosen to guarantee the incorporation of high-quality and dependable information. Databases like PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar were employed to get studies concentrating on mental health in nursing education. This extensive array of sources contributes to a balanced and comprehensive perspective on the subject.

This review's inclusion criteria mandated that research explicitly focus on mental health concerns in nursing students. Research focussing on stress, anxiety, depression, and other psychological issues within nursing education was prioritised. Papers addressing the influence of academic, social, and institutional aspects on students' mental health were also incorporated. This targeted selection guarantees that the findings are directly relevant to the study's aims..

Factors Contributing to Mental Distress among Nursing Students

Academic Pressure and Mental Distress

The academic pressures encountered by nursing students are significant factors contributing to mental anguish. Nursing education is exceptionally demanding, integrating comprehensive academic instruction with hands-on experience in clinical environments. This combined load imposes considerable pressure on nursing students to fulfil both academic and professional demands concurrently. Labrague et al. (2018) indicate that nursing students frequently experience feelings of being overwhelmed due to the extensive and intricate nature of their training, necessitating proficiency in many areas such as anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, and nursing ethics. The necessity to succeed in these domains while simultaneously studying for licensing tests can result in persistent tension and worry, especially for students who experience difficulties with time management or lack efficient study techniques.

Clinical rotations introduce an additional dimension of stress to nursing education by immersing students in authentic healthcare settings that can include high-pressure and emotionally demanding situations. Although clinical assignments are crucial for acquiring practical skills, they may also induce considerable emotional distress. Students often express emotions of inadequacy and apprehension over errors, especially while executing clinical duties under the oversight of seasoned healthcare professionals (Zhao et al., 2019). The obligation to perform proficiently in these environments, along with the duty of safeguarding patient safety, may result in increased worry and self-doubt. Moreover, clinical assignments frequently include irregular and extended hours, which can disturb students' sleep patterns and lead to physical fatigue, hence intensifying mental health issues.

Performance assessments during clinical placements can be a considerable source of stress for nursing students. A multitude of students perceive that their performance is perpetually evaluated by instructors, peers, and clinical professionals, engendering a persistent push to improve (Ching et al., 2020). The apprehension of obtaining unfavourable comments or poor assessments might result in increased anxiety and diminished self-assurance. Furthermore, the competitive dynamics of nursing schools, wherein students frequently compete for scarce clinical placements or superior grades, may cultivate a sense of competition and isolation, therefore diminishing possibilities for peer support and cooperation.

The cumulative impact of substantial workloads, rigorous curriculum, and the pressures of clinical placements can significantly affect the mental health of nursing students. Chronic stress may result in burnout, which is defined by emotional weariness, depersonalisation, and diminished feelings of personal achievement (Lee & Jang, 2019). Burnout adversely impacts students' academic achievement, general well-being, and willingness to persist in the nursing profession. Moreover, unresolved psychological anguish can lead to more serious mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety disorders, necessitating professional assistance.

Addressing the academic constraints encountered by nursing students must prioritise the creation of conducive learning environments. Zhao et al. (2019) assert that integrating stress management programs and resilience training into nursing curricula can enable students to cultivate appropriate coping skills for managing academic and clinical stress. Moreover, promoting transparent communication between students and teachers, coupled with facilitating access to mental health services, may cultivate a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. By tackling these difficulties, nursing programs may more effectively prepare students to handle the rigours of their study while protecting their mental health.

Financial and Economic Challenges

Nursing students may encounter substantial financial and economic difficulties that intensify their psychological suffering. Tuition expenses are a significant worry for several people doing a nursing degree. In numerous nations, the expense of tuition for nursing programs is elevated, imposing financial strains that compel students to incur significant student loans. A research by Labrague et al. (2018) indicates that financial strain from tuition costs is a primary stressor for nursing students, particularly in low- and middle-income countries with restricted access to cheap education. These financial responsibilities may induce chronic concern over debt repayment, adversely affecting students' mental health.

Besides tuition, living expenditures like accommodation, transportation, and food exacerbate the financial strain on nursing students. A significant number of students relocate from their residences to pursue nursing schools, incurring supplementary expenses for rent and utilities. For students lacking family financial assistance, these fees sometimes result in difficulties in

meeting basic needs. Studies indicate that the financial burden of everyday spending correlates with heightened depression and anxiety levels in college students (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2022). These stresses are particularly intensified for nursing students, who must reconcile their academic and clinical obligations with financial duties.

Part-time employment, frequently pursued to mitigate financial burdens, may introduce an additional dimension of stress. Nursing students often engage in extended hours of labour alongside their academic responsibilities, resulting in less time for relaxation or self-care. Reeve et al. (2020) emphasise that students engaged in part-time employment while enrolled in rigorous nursing programs are more susceptible to burnout and chronic weariness, potentially resulting in mental health issues. The challenge of balancing employment, school, and personal life can lead students to feel overwhelmed, intensifying emotions of despair and despondency.

A notable financial obstacle for nursing students is the restricted access to scholarships and financial assistance. Despite the increased need for nurses globally, many schools fail to offer appropriate financial assistance for students entering the field. In areas where scholarships are available, they tend to be very competitive and inadequate to satisfy the demands of all candidates. Research conducted by Alzayyat and Al-Gamal (2014) revealed that the absence of financial assistance for nursing students exacerbates dropout rates, since several individuals are unable to continue their studies owing to economic difficulties. The absence of assistance disproportionately impacts kids from low-income households, hence exacerbating inequities in educational access and professional possibilities.

Furthermore, financial strain can adversely affect students' academic achievement and general psychological well-being. Behar-Horenstein et al. (2019) assert that children facing financial hardship are more prone to difficulties in concentration, less motivation, and subpar academic performance. The interplay of stress, financial insecurity, and academic obstacles establishes a harmful feedback loop, exacerbating the mental health issues encountered by nursing students. Confronting these financial and economic problems is crucial for promoting nursing students' well-being and guaranteeing their success in the field.

Personal and Social Factors

Nursing students frequently endure significant isolation owing to the rigorous demands of their schedules. The stringent academic and clinical demands require many hours of study and practice, resulting in less time for social connections and recreational activities. This isolation may result in feelings of loneliness, which, as noted by Zhang et al. (2021), is a substantial predictor of mental health problems such as anxiety and depression in healthcare students. Moreover, the isolating consequences of such schedules may be intensified when students move far from their homes to attend nursing schools, so severing their conventional support networks of family and friends. The absence of frequent interaction with loved ones

or the lack of opportunity to develop new social connections significantly elevates the risk of mental anguish. Nursing students may struggle to manage the emotional and psychological challenges of their study.

Reconciling academic responsibilities with personal connections is a considerable barrier for nursing students. Numerous students must concurrently navigate the demands of their academic endeavours while sustaining family, romantic, or platonic connections. The discord among these obligations frequently results in strained relationships, as seen by Evans et al. (2018), who emphasise the time constraints encountered by nursing students owing to their rigorous clinical rotations and academic duties. These demands frequently constrain the time and emotional resources necessary to cultivate personal relationships, resulting in dissatisfaction and guilt in their social life. When nursing students have caregiving obligations, such as parenting or assisting elderly relatives, the load intensifies, exacerbating their stress levels.

The combined effects of academic seclusion and interpersonal difficulties can adversely impact students' mental health. Prolonged solitude may exacerbate emotions of inadequacy or self-doubt, since students are deprived of the confirmation and support usually afforded by social contacts (Delgado et al., 2020). Conversely, not fulfilling the expectations of intimate connections can result in emotional turmoil and a reduced feeling of self-esteem. Nursing students frequently experience challenges in establishing appropriate boundaries between their academic and personal life, which, as Hensley et al. (2019) indicate, may result in burnout and emotional tiredness. The failure to appropriately compartmentalise stresses renders children susceptible to mental health issues that can adversely affect their academic performance and general well-being.

Furthermore, the stigma associated with mental health difficulties in specific cultural and family situations might further deter nursing students from seeking assistance. Numerous students may experience pressure to convey an image of competence and resilience, especially in countries where mental health challenges are perceived as indicators of weakness. This stigma may prevent students from confiding in friends or family, exacerbating their isolation and restricting access to informal support networks. In the absence of appropriate channels to manage their stresses, students are more prone to internalising their difficulties, hence heightening their susceptibility to severe mental health illnesses, including depression and anxiety (Sampaio et al., 2022).

In conclusion, the personal and societal variables leading to mental distress among nursing students are complex and interconnected. Isolation from demanding schedules deprives students of essential social connections, while the difficulty of reconciling academic obligations with personal relationships imposes more mental stress. Collectively, these elements emphasise the significance of institutional support networks and the necessity for a

more equitable approach to nursing education to alleviate the mental health issues encountered by students.

Emotional and Psychological Demands

The emotional and psychological challenges encountered by nursing students during their education are substantial and complex. A significant factor in these expectations is their regular exposure to patient suffering and mortality during clinical practice. For some students, this exposure signifies their initial authentic encounter with human death and the delicacy of existence. The emotional burden of seeing people suffer from pain, fatal diseases, and bereavement can elicit sensations of helplessness, dread, and guilt. Heggestad et al. (2021) indicate that nursing students frequently have profound emotional responses, such as despair and worry, after such encounters, which can impact their mental health and overall educational experience. Furthermore, the emotional burden of engaging with bereaved families exacerbates psychological suffering, resulting in students feeling emotionally exhausted and unsure of how to deal properly.

Prolonged exposure to emotionally intense events might result in the emergence of compassion fatigue in nursing students. Compassion fatigue, described as the toll of empathising with someone in distress, is a condition of physical, emotional, and psychological depletion arising from extended exposure to suffering (Cañadas-De la Fuente et al., 2018). This issue is especially common among nursing students who, owing to their limited professional experience, may lack the coping strategies and mental fortitude required to navigate these hurdles. Compassion fatigue not only impairs their capacity for compassionate care but also impacts their personal well-being, resulting in emotions of detachment, cynicism, and emotional numbness.

Alongside compassion fatigue, the psychological burden from these events may lead to burnout. Burnout is defined by emotional depletion, depersonalisation, and diminished feelings of personal achievement, frequently resulting from persistent stress (Sultan et al., 2020). Nursing students, who must manage rigorous academic responsibilities in conjunction with emotionally taxing clinical training, are especially susceptible. The simultaneous obligation to fulfil academic requirements and cope with the psychological ramifications of clinical exposure can induce chronic stress, potentially culminating in significant burnout if not well treated. Burnout can adversely affect students' academic performance, diminish their ambition to persist in the nursing profession, and impair their capacity to provide effective care during clinical placements.

The emotional and psychological difficulties associated with patient suffering and mortality underscore the necessity for strong support networks in nursing education. Facilitating access to professional counselling, resilience training, and mentorship for students can alleviate the dangers of compassion fatigue and burnout. Such interventions can provide

nursing students with the necessary tools to reflect on their experiences, cultivate emotional resilience, and pursue their study with a balanced and healthy perspective.

Institutional and Environmental Stressors

Institutional and environmental stresses substantially contribute to mental distress in nursing students, since adverse learning environments and insufficient support networks intensify the demands associated with their rigorous academic and clinical commitments. Nursing education frequently has elevated expectations, inflexible frameworks, and insufficient support for students' mental health requirements, fostering an environment conducive to stress. Research indicates that insufficient support mechanisms at nursing schools—such as accessible counselling services, mentorship programs, or open feedback channels—correlate with increased feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and burnout among students (Turner & McCarthy, 2017). These pressures adversely affect academic achievement and compromise students' general well-being and professional growth.

Bullying, harassment, and prejudice in academic and clinical environments exacerbate the difficulties encountered by nursing students. Studies indicate that nursing students are more susceptible to bullying by classmates, teachers, and clinical staff during placements, resulting in significant emotional and psychological repercussions, such as despair and diminished self-esteem (Clarke et al., 2021). Bullying frequently presents as verbal abuse, public humiliation, or intentional exclusion, fostering a detrimental environment that undermines students' self-esteem and ability to study efficiently. Moreover, discriminatory practices predicated on gender, race, ethnicity, or socio-economic position can marginalise students and sustain systemic imbalances in nursing education (Freeling & Parker, 2019). The experiences of exclusion and discrimination are especially detrimental in diverse groups, when students from under-represented backgrounds may already feel marginalised.

The interaction of these pressures frequently establishes a cycle of anguish, rendering students unable to confront institutional deficiencies. In the absence of sufficient institutional measures, such regulations that mandate zero tolerance for bullying and harassment or efforts that promote diversity, nursing students may find it challenging to seek assistance or express their concerns (Smith & Grey, 2020). Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of nursing school may dissuade students from disclosing these concerns owing to apprehension of retribution or adverse effects on their academic advancement. To resolve these systemic issues, institutions must implement proactive strategies that prioritise student welfare, including the establishment of comprehensive mental health policies, the cultivation of supportive faculty-student relationships, and the promotion of a culture of respect and inclusivity throughout all tiers of nursing education.

Cultural and Societal Expectations

Cultural and societal expectations significantly influence the mental health experiences of nursing students, frequently exacerbating the difficulties they encounter. Nursing is

conventionally regarded as a noble and altruistic profession, with society imposing significant expectations on nursing students to exemplify attributes such as compassion, perseverance, and emotional fortitude. The social pressure to succeed in healthcare professions sometimes compels students to adopt unattainable ideals of perfection, resulting in feelings of inadequacy and stress when they do not meet these expectations. Edwards et al. (2018) observe that healthcare students, especially those in nursing, are frequently subjected to an idealised norm that requires steadfast commitment, with minimal space for vulnerability or personal challenges. This relentless pursuit of perfection engenders a loop of stress and self-doubt, exacerbating mental distress.

Gender roles interact markedly with cultural expectations, especially in nursing, which is largely female-dominated in several areas. Societal standards frequently perpetuate the notion that women in healthcare must be loving and emotionally accessible, resulting in excessive burdens and exhaustion. Male nursing students frequently encounter distinct hurdles, including the stigma associated with entering a profession historically linked to women. This stigma may result in feelings of isolation and an incessant urge to demonstrate competence, hence intensifying stress levels. O'Connor et al. (2020) emphasise that gendered expectations in nursing impose a twofold load on students, compelling them to contend with social preconceptions while fulfilling the requirements of their education and clinical practice.

Cultural stigmas associated with mental health exacerbate the problem. In several communities, the pursuit of assistance for mental health concerns is perceived as a manifestation of weakness or inadequacy, so dissuading nursing students from confronting their challenges. This stigma is especially evident in societies that do not publicly address mental health or when individuals are supposed to choose communal obligations over personal well. Li et al. (2019) assert that cultural beliefs on mental health profoundly affect help-seeking behaviour, as students from stigmatising cultures frequently choose to repress their feelings instead of pursuing professional assistance. This hesitance exacerbates psychological distress and sustains a cycle of silence and inaction.

The convergence of societal constraints, gender roles, and cultural stigmas forms an intricate network of expectations that exacerbates the emotional distress encountered by nursing students. Confronting these problems necessitates a comprehensive strategy, encompassing the promotion of understanding regarding the influence of cultural and societal norms on mental health, advocating for gender parity, and cultivating an atmosphere in which the pursuit of mental health help is normalised.

Impact of Mental Distress on Students' Academic Performance and Professional Growth

Mental anguish is becoming acknowledged as a significant concern impacting students in higher education, especially those in rigorous disciplines such as nursing. The academic

setting frequently imposes considerable pressure on students to achieve, adjust, and thrive, thus detrimentally affecting their mental health. Studies indicate that mental anguish substantially impacts students' academic performance by hindering cognitive functioning, decreasing concentration, and lowering motivation. Alzayyat and Al-Gamal (2014) observed that nursing students with elevated stress and anxiety levels often exhibit diminished academic performance due to difficulties in concurrently managing academics and clinical responsibilities. Cognitive and emotional challenges can result in missed deadlines, subpar test results, and, in extreme instances, academic dropout.

Mental distress impacts not just academic achievement but also the professional development of students. Nursing students experiencing persistent stress during their education may incur enduring mental health problems, including burnout and emotional weariness, which might impede their transition into professional practice. Labrague et al. (2018) assert that sustained exposure to psychological distress throughout nursing school frequently leads to diminished self-efficacy and confidence, hindering students' ability to acclimatise to the demands of clinical practice. Moreover, these obstacles might adversely impact patient care results, as emotionally upset nurses may find it difficult to deliver compassionate and effective treatment. This underscores the cyclical character of the problem, wherein mental distress impairs students' learning and jeopardises their capacity to fulfil the professional requirements required in the healthcare field.

Mental distress diminishes students' capacity to participate in collaborative learning and cooperation, both of which are crucial for academic achievement and professional proficiency. Students experiencing anxiety, sadness, or chronic stress frequently retreat socially, resulting in feelings of isolation and alienation (Reeve et al., 2013). This can be especially harmful for nursing students, as the job necessitates robust interpersonal skills and proficient communication within interdisciplinary teams. The absence of peer support intensifies their mental health challenges, establishing a detrimental loop that constrains their academic and career prospects. A research by Ratanasiripong et al. (2015) revealed that students utilising peer support networks and institutional mental health services had enhanced stress management and academic achievement, highlighting the significance of comprehensive support systems.

A notable consequence of mental distress is the emergence of maladaptive coping mechanisms, which can hinder academic and professional advancement. A multitude of students engage in detrimental behaviours, such as substance use, procrastination, or avoidance, to cope with their stress. These behaviours not only deteriorate academic performance but also undermine the professional principles of discipline and responsibility, which are essential in nursing practice. Inadequate coping methods impede the cultivation of resilience, an essential quality for navigating the high-pressure healthcare environment. He et al. (2018) observed that nursing students with elevated resilience are more adept at stress

management and achieving academic and professional success. The absence of good coping methods resulting from mental anguish impedes their overall development.

Furthermore, psychological distress throughout school may have enduring effects on job satisfaction and retention within the nursing profession. Students experiencing mental health challenges are more prone to exit the profession early, attributing their departure to excessive stress and insufficient readiness for the job's realities (Turner & McCarthy, 2017). This attrition signifies not only a personal loss for the individual but also exacerbates the global deficit of healthcare workers, a dilemma with extensive repercussions for healthcare systems globally. By addressing mental distress promptly, institutions can significantly contribute to the academic and professional preparedness of nursing students.

In summary, psychological strain significantly affects students' academic achievement and career development, especially in rigorous disciplines such as nursing. It diminishes cognitive abilities, decreases motivation, and compromises social and professional competencies, establishing obstacles to achievement in both academic and practical contexts. Furthermore, the enduring consequences of psychological distress may result in occupational burnout and premature turnover, highlighting the necessity for preemptive strategies to tackle this concern. Institutions must provide resources towards mental health services, resilience training, and supportive settings to enable students to realise their full potential and transition effectively into their professional careers.

Coping Mechanisms and Resilience

Nursing students have distinct obstacles that frequently result in mental distress, necessitating the implementation of appropriate coping mechanisms and resilience-building techniques for their well-being and academic achievement. A prevalent coping method utilised by nursing students is time management, enabling them to effectively combine academic obligations, clinical assignments, and personal life. Studies indicate that students who proficiently manage their time encounter reduced stress and anxiety levels (Rajesh et al., 2020). Moreover, physical exercise is often employed as a coping strategy. Consistent physical activity has been shown to mitigate depressive symptoms and enhance general mental well-being in students pursuing healthcare professions (Labrague et al., 2018).

A prevalent coping mechanism is social support. Nursing students frequently seek emotional support and comprehension from their colleagues. Peer support groups offer a secure environment for students to discuss their difficulties and obtain guidance, therefore alleviating feelings of loneliness and improving their stress management capabilities (Zhao et al., 2021). Familial support is crucial, since it offers stability and confidence during times of significant academic stress. The significance of social ties is underscored by the function of mentoring relationships in nursing schools, which assist students in navigating intricate academic and professional landscapes.

Mindfulness activities have become a recognised method for alleviating mental suffering among nursing students. Methods such as meditation, deep breathing, and yoga enhance self-awareness and emotional management, mitigating the physiological effects of stress (Chen et al., 2020). Research indicates that nursing students who engage in mindfulness exhibit reduced burnout and enhanced satisfaction with their academic and clinical experiences (Slatyer et al., 2018). Institutions that integrate mindfulness training into their courses frequently witness enhanced resilience and well-being in their students.

Professional counselling services are essential in cultivating resilience in nursing students. Counselling offers a systematic setting for students to analyse their emotions and build individualised coping mechanisms. Mental health specialists may tackle concerns such as self-esteem, exam anxiety, and impostor syndrome, which are common among nursing students (Turner & McCarthy, 2022). Moreover, including resilience training into nursing education has demonstrated an improvement in students' capacity to cope with stresses and preserve their mental health in challenging circumstances (Zander et al., 2019).

A synthesis of self-care strategies, social support, mindfulness, and professional counsel empowers nursing students with the necessary resources to excel academically and emotionally. These tactics assist in surmounting present problems and equip individuals for the high-stress conditions they will encounter in their professional careers.

Conclusion

Mental distress in nursing students is a complex issue shaped by several interconnected circumstances. Academic pressure, encompassing challenging coursework, intensive clinical rotations, and the perpetual requirement for exceptional performance, imposes considerable stress on students. Financial difficulties, including tuition costs, living expenditures, and the necessity of managing part-time employment, intensify their stress levels. On a personal level, the challenge of sustaining social connections and individual well-being despite demanding schedules frequently results in feelings of isolation and loneliness. Furthermore, the emotional exigencies of professional practice, characterised by exposure to patient suffering, mortality, and intricate ethical issues, may lead to compassion fatigue and burnout.

Institutional factors significantly contribute to the exacerbation of mental suffering. Unsupportive educational settings, harassment, discrimination, and insufficient mentorship can foster a detrimental climate that obstructs personal and professional development. Cultural and cultural expectations impose additional pressure, since nursing students may encounter unreasonable pressures to achieve and conform to roles dictated by established standards. The emergence of technology and the shift to online education, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic, have exacerbated stress due to heightened screen time, less social connection, and the difficulties associated with transitioning to virtual learning systems.

Addressing mental health issues among nursing students is essential for their welfare and the future of healthcare. Nursing students constitute the forthcoming generation of healthcare professionals, and their mental well-being directly influences their capacity to give compassionate and proficient treatment. By emphasising mental health, institutions may cultivate a resilient and competent staff that is more adept at addressing professional responsibilities. It is essential to execute complete methods, including counselling services, stress management programs, and policies designed to alleviate academic and financial pressures, to foster a friendly atmosphere that promotes personal and professional growth.

Recommendations

To tackle the widespread problem of mental distress among nursing students, specific recommendations should concentrate on establishing a helpful and sustainable academic environment. A primary strategy is advocating for institutional support structures, including counselling services and peer mentorship programs. Counselling services must be readily available, discreet, and provided by specialists equipped to address the distinct issues encountered by nursing students. Peer mentorship programs, in which senior students assist and encourage their juniors, can cultivate a sense of belonging, diminish feelings of isolation, and promote a collaborative learning environment. Such programs assist students in managing academic and emotional obstacles more efficiently, reducing mental distress.

Incorporating stress management and resilience training into nursing curricula is an essential advancement. Nursing students frequently encounter a blend of academic challenges and emotional pressure from clinical practice, necessitating the provision of adequate stress management strategies. Resilience training, mindfulness practices, and time management seminars can be incorporated into their academic curricula. These tactics not only improve students' capacity to manage stress but also equip them for the psychological challenges of their future careers. Additionally, including stress management strategies into regular classroom activities might normalise discussions on mental health.

Promoting open discourse on mental health is crucial for diminishing the stigma that frequently hinders students from pursuing assistance. Institutions must to arrange lectures, workshops, and awareness campaigns facilitated by mental health advocates and specialists. Establishing an environment in which students may openly address their challenges without the apprehension of judgement is essential. Faculty and administrative personnel should undergo training to identify symptoms of distress and respond with empathy, so promoting an inclusive and supportive campus atmosphere.

Institutions must confront structural difficulties by enacting policies designed to alleviate students' workload and offer financial support. An equitable academic burden that prioritises students' well-being is essential to prevent burnout. Financial assistance programs, scholarships, and adaptable payment plans can mitigate the financial burdens many students encounter, allowing them to concentrate on their academic pursuits without excessive strain.

By implementing these comprehensive approaches, schools may foster a healthier, more supportive atmosphere that enables nursing students to excel intellectually and psychologically.

References

- Alzayyat, A., & Al-Gamal, E. (2014). A review of the literature regarding stress among nursing students during their clinical education. *International Nursing Review*, 61(3), 406–415.
- American College Health Association (ACHA). (2022). National college health assessment: Undergraduate reference group executive summary. *ACHA Reports*.
- Behar-Horenstein, L. S., Feng, X., & Roberts, K. W. (2019). The impact of financial stress on academic performance and retention. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 8(1), 75-83.
- Cañadas-De la Fuente, G. A., Vargas, C., San Luis, C., García, I., Cañadas, G. R., & Emilia, I. (2018). Risk factors and prevalence of burnout syndrome in the nursing profession. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 43(4), 897-909.
- Chen, C., Wang, Y., & Liu, C. (2020). The impact of mindfulness-based stress reduction on stress and resilience in nursing students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 59(3), 145-152.
- Ching, S. S. Y., Cheung, K., Hegney, D., & Rees, C. S. (2020). Stressors and coping of nursing students in clinical placement: A qualitative study contextualized in the Australian healthcare environment. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 42, 102687.
- Chow, C., McCormack, B., & Kee, Y. L. (2021). Exploring stress and mental health among nursing students: A qualitative review. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 11(5), 12-22.
- Clarke, C. M., Kane, D. J., Rajacich, D., & Lafreniere, K. D. (2021). Bullying in nursing education and its effects on the mental health of nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 100(4), 104832.
- Delgado, C., Toukonen, M., & Wheeler, C. (2020). Nursing student stress and coping strategies in clinical practice. *Nurse Education Today*, 90, 104440.
- Edwards, D., Burnard, P., Bennett, K., & Hebden, U. (2018). A longitudinal study of stress and self-esteem in student nurses. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(1), 78–82.
- Evans, T. M., Bira, L., Gastelum, J. B., Weiss, L. T., & Vanderford, N. L. (2018). Evidence for a mental health crisis in graduate education. *Nature Biotechnology*, 36(3), 282-284.
- Freeling, M., & Parker, S. (2019). Exploring the impact of discrimination and exclusion on nursing students' mental health. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 58(7), 399–405.
- Gómez-Urquiza, J. L., De la Fuente-Solana, E. I., Albendín-García, L., Vargas-Pecino, C., & Cañadas-De la Fuente, G. A. (2019). Burnout in nursing students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*, 14(3), e0212792.
- He, F., Turnbull, B., Kirshbaum, M. N., Phillips, B., & Klainin-Yobas, P. (2018). Assessing stress, protective factors, and psychological well-being among undergraduate nursing students. *Nurse Education Today*, 68, 4–12.

- Heggestad, A. K., Nortvedt, P., & Slettebø, Å. (2021). The emotional challenges of nursing students in clinical practice. *Nursing Ethics, 28*(6), 1016-1030.
- Hensley, L., Varela, A., & Knox, S. (2019). Balancing relationships and academic demands: An exploration of stress in nursing students. *Journal of Nursing Education, 58*(4), 215-220.
- Labrague, L. J., McEnroe-Petitte, D. M., Leocadio, M. C., Van Bogaert, P., & Cummings, G. G. (2018). Stress and ways of coping among nursing students during clinical practice: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 34*(1), 30-36.
- Lee, H., & Jang, I. (2019). Nurses' fatigue, job stress, organizational culture, and turnover intention: A culture-work-health model. *Western Journal of Nursing Research, 41*(9), 1322-1337.
- Li, Y., Li, Y., & Cao, J. (2019). Cultural stigma and its impact on help-seeking behaviors among nursing students. *Journal of Mental Health, 28*(3), 289-295.
- O'Connor, M., Miers, M., & Upton, P. (2020). Exploring the role of gender in nursing education: A critical review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 112*, 103714.
- Pereira, F., Monteiro, S., & Martins, T. (2022). The role of social support in nursing students' mental health: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Nursing, 21*(1), 56.
- Rajesh, A., Kumar, V., & Singh, R. (2020). Time management strategies among healthcare students: Impact on academic performance and mental well-being. *International Journal of Health Professions, 7*(4), 45-53.
- Ratanasiripong, P., Park, J. F., Ratanasiripong, N., & Kathalae, D. (2015). Stress and anxiety management in nursing students: Biofeedback and mindfulness meditation. *Journal of Nursing Education, 54*(9), 520-524.
- Reeve, K. L., Shumaker, C. J., & Yearwood, E. L. (2020). The relationship between employment and mental health in nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 41*(1), 43-47.
- Ross, A. M., Yang, L., & Lee, M. (2019). Nursing students and mental health: A review of the literature. *Nurse Education Today, 76*, 45-52.
- Sampaio, F., Sequeira, C., & Teixeira, L. (2022). The impact of stigma on the mental health of healthcare students: A systematic review. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 29*(1), 58-66.
- Slatyer, S., Craigie, M., Heritage, B., Davis, S., & Rees, C. (2018). Evaluating the effectiveness of a mindfulness intervention in reducing burnout and improving resilience among nursing students. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 39*(1), 28-33.
- Smith, J. A., & Gray, P. L. (2020). Institutional responsibility for student mental health: Addressing bullying and support gaps. *Nursing Education Perspectives, 41*(6), 356-361.
- Sultan, S., Kosir, U., & Skvarc, D. (2020). Burnout in nursing students: A review of prevalence and associated factors. *Nurse Education Today, 87*, 104360.
- Turner, K., & McCarthy, J. (2022). The role of professional counseling in supporting nursing students' mental health. *Journal of Professional Nursing, 38*(2), 101-108.
- Turner, K., & McCarthy, V. (2017). Stress and coping strategies among nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 73*(11), 2578-2591.

- World Health Organization (WHO). (2022). Mental health and well-being.
- Zander, M., Hutton, A., & King, L. (2019). Resilience training in undergraduate nursing education: Enhancing adaptability and well-being. *Nurse Education Today*, 76, 144–149.
- Zhao, F., Lei, X., He, W., Gu, Y., & Li, D. (2019). The study of perceived stress, coping strategy, and self-efficacy of Chinese undergraduate nursing students in clinical practice. *International Journal of Nursing Practice*, 25(1), e12791.
- Zhao, Y., Li, J., & Wong, K. (2021). Peer support interventions and their effect on nursing students' stress levels: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 120, 103969.

Cite this article:

Author(s), AMAMBA, Kelechi I. (RN, RM, BNSc), OHAERI, Beatrice (RN, Ph.D), OJO, Iyanuoluwa Oreofe (RN, Ph.D), OJEWALE, Lucia Y. (RN, Ph.D), BABARIMISA, Oluwatoyin (RN, M.Sc.) , (2025). "Factors Contributing to Mental Distress Among Nursing Students", **Name of the Journal**: Euro Afro Studies International Journal, (EASIJ.COM), P, 29 –46 . DOI: www.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14920198 , Issue: 2, Vol.: 7, Article: 3, Month: February, Year: 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.easij.com/all-issues/>

Published By



AND

ThoughtWares Consulting & Multi Services International (TWCMSI)

