Abstract

Depression, Anxiety and Stress among Undergraduate Nursing Students in a Public University in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Background: Nursing students face tremendous stressors during their student life that lead to physical and mental health problems and poor academic performance. But, evidence relating to stress, anxiety and depression in this population in Sri Lanka is limited.

Objective: The aim of this study was to examine depression, anxiety and stress and associated factors among undergraduate nursing students in Sri Lanka.

Methodology: This cross-sectional study was conducted at Department of Nursing, Faculty of Allied Health Sciences, University of Peradeniya. A purposive sample of 92 undergraduate nursing students completed a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire. Depression, anxiety and stress were measured by the Sinhala version of Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale.

Results: The sample consisted of 30.4% male and 69.6% female students. The mean age was 24.1 years ($SD \pm 1.6$). The majority of the respondents reported mild to extremely severe symptoms of depression (51.1%), anxiety (59.8%) and stress (82.6%). It showed a significant positive relationship between depression and anxiety ($r = .689$, $p < .001$), depression and stress ($r = .785$, $p < .001$) and anxiety and stress ($r = .763$, $p < .001$). The factors associated with depression were age, academic year of the students, satisfaction with the nursing program, physical well-being factors, possible stressors, self-rated physical health and self-rated mental health; the factors associated with anxiety were age, self-rated physical health and self-rated mental health and the factors associated with stress were possible stressors, self-rated physical health and self-rated mental health.

Conclusion: Depression, anxiety and stress are highly prevalent among undergraduate nursing students and correlations between these variables are positive. Self-rated physical health and self-rated mental health are the factors most closely related to negative emotional states. The improvement of mental health among nursing students is essential. The findings call for initiation of stress management interventions and increased counseling facilities for nursing students.

Key words – Depression, anxiety, stress, nursing students, Sri Lanka