

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Depression among nursing students in an Indian nursing college

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ABSTRACT

Background: Depression is a major public health threat that can affect anyone including health professionals and nursing students. Nursing students are susceptible to a higher risk of depression. Recognition of depression, assertiveness and the relationship between them is important since if a relationship exists, probably enhancing the level of assertiveness can reduce depression in this high risk group. **Aims and Objectives:** We aimed to investigate depression levels and the relationship between them nursing students of College of Nursing, Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. **Materials and Methods:** This analytical, cross-sectional study was conducted among 98 nursing students in the college of nursing, Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India from July 2022 to August 2022 after getting approval from the Institutional Ethical Committee. Template was

generated in MS excel sheet and analysis was done on SPSS. **Results:** In the present study majority 72 (73.47%) nursing students belong to 17-19 years of age. In our study, 48 (48.98%) nursing students reside at rural areas, 28 (28.57%) nursing students reside at urban areas. Moderate depression was present in 15 (15.31%) nursing students and 7 (7.14%) nursing students were suffering from severe depression. **Conclusion:** It is imperative that the psychological condition of nursing students be viewed as an important aspect to be considered, particularly within the Indian population and others in which there is a paucity of data.

Keywords: Depression, Nursing Students, Beck Depression Inventory

Introduction

Depression is a serious public health problem in the modern world. It can significantly contribute to physical, financial, and interpersonal problems for people suffering from the condition, as well as for their families and the societies in which they live.¹ Depression is a mood disorder which includes negative signs and symptoms, such as sadness, despair, anxiety, sleep disturbance, psychomotor disturbance, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness, or recurrent thoughts of death.²

In Europe, 12% of males and 15% of females were found to be mildly depressed in a study conducted among UK university students.³ Depression can affect an individual in any phase of life but the prevalence among college students is increasing significantly.⁴

Several researchers suggest factors which either cause or contribute to depression in students.^{5,6} These include:

- Character traits, such as perfectionism
- Lack of perceived control and mastery
- Workload
- Study problems
- Isolation due to relocation
- Lack of peer support
- Financial worries
- Examination stress.

There can be many negative outcomes of being depressed, ranging from a lack of productivity to various bodily harms, suicide being the gravest of all. According to the American Association of Suicidology, suicide is ranked as the third leading cause of death, following accidents and homicides, within the youth age group of 15–24 years.⁷ Of course, college students usually fall within this range. It is estimated that more than 1000 college students commit suicide every year and one in twelve of them make a clear plan to attempt to commit suicide.⁷

In addition, for many young people, the initial days of college life make up a transitional period parallel to entering adulthood, whereas the older students can face the challenge of balancing educational demands with family life. Research on students in higher education often shows a high prevalence of psychological distress and depression.^{8,9} Recent research has shed more light on occupational and mental health and the psychological wellbeing of nursing students. The process of education in nursing is aimed at increased productivity and effectiveness in the profession. However, it can also be a stressful experience which is

significantly linked with depression and may contribute to a poor quality of life resulting in less productivity and suicidal ideation and attempts.¹⁰ However, it is difficult to get scientific data regarding the magnitude of the problem in the Indian population.

Therefore, it is of the utmost necessity to study depression in relation to stress and other psychological factors among this vulnerable population of nursing students. Although few studies have indicated the high prevalence of depression among nursing students (approximately 50%, taking into account mild depression), yet the factors responsible along with possible interventions that could improve the situation have not been explored.^{11,12}

India is a highly populous country that needs a sizeable number of nursing staff in the healthcare system. The students who joined in this course come from various socioeconomic backgrounds with different family structures, customs, beliefs and religions, along with various value judgements within their families. The purpose of joining this course is also different among these students. Some have a genuine interest in the nursing profession but others select this profession simply to secure their livelihood. The second group can find they suffer from a tug-of-war between their mental makeup and the demands of nursing. Personal daily living of nursing staff may be hampered because of the long working hours, night-shift working and also the insufficient pay structure among a major proportion of nurses in India.¹³ These professional hazards also generate stress during Indian nurses' student period as they learn about the day-to-day experience of their senior fellows and become increasingly aware of the hazardous profession they will be entering in their near future. The recruitment situation after completion of the course is also not very favourable in India (for example, students may not be able to obtain government posts in their desired field, or may have to relocate long distances for a post), which gives rise to dissatisfaction among the student nurses vying for jobs. To combat the negative impact of these factors among nursing students, regular psychological support, in any form whether formal or informal, is very much needed in India. However, this support is not currently available throughout the country. Collectively, these factors affect the overall outcomes in the nursing profession, both in the private and government sectors—the care and support that nurses are able to provide can only be improved by better mental wellbeing for nurses.

With all of this in mind, the present study was conducted to find out the prevalence, as well as the level of depression, among the nursing students in a nursing college located in West Bengal, India

Methods:

The study was conducted after receiving approval from the ethical committee of Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India

Study Design : Analytical, cross-sectional study.

Study Population: The study comprised of 98 nursing students of nursing college.

Place of study: College of Nursing in collaboration of Dept of Psychiatry, Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India.

Study Period: study was conducted from July 2022 to August 2022.

Sample Size: 98 nursing students of nursing college after applying exclusion criteria.

Inclusion Criteria : Students giving consent to participate in the study.

Exclusion Criteria : Students declined to participate in the study.

The purpose of the study was explained and written, informed consent was obtained. In addition to the basic purpose of the study, nursing students were also explained about the objective,

methodology and of course the confidentiality of their responses in order to increase their confidence about participating in the study.

Data collection

The data were collected by means of a predesigned, pretested, self-administered, semi-structured and anonymous questionnaire. It included structured Beck depression inventory (BDI) for assessing depression (Beck et al, 1961).¹⁴

- Normal/no depression (1-10)
- Borderline (11-16)
- Mild (17-20)
- Moderate (21-30)
- Severe (30–39)
- Very severe (≥40).

Statistical Analysis: Ethical consent for the study was obtained from the Ethics Review Board (ERB) of the institute. The collected data were compiled in a spreadsheet. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were computed in appropriate situations. For categorical data, Chi-square test (χ^2) was done.

Results

This cross sectional study was conducted among 98 nursing students of College of Nursing, Gouri Devi Institute of Medical Science, Durgapur, West Bengal, India from July 2022 to August 2022. Template was generated in MS excel sheet and analysis was done on SPSS software.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants according to age.

Age (years)	Frequency	Percentage
17 - 19	72	73.47
20 - 22	18	18.37
23 - 25	08	8.16
Total	98	100

In the present study majority 72 (73.47%) nursing students belong to 17-19 years of age, 18 (18.37%) belong to age group of 20-22 years and 8 (8.16%) belong to age group of 23-25 years. (Table 1)

Table 2: Distribution of the participants according to habitat.

Habitat	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	48	48.98
Urban	28	28.57
City	22	22.45
Total	98	100

In our study, 48 (48.98%) nursing students reside at rural areas, 28 (28.57%) nursing students reside at urban areas and 22 (22.45%) reside at city areas. (Table 2)

Table 3 : Distribution of the participants according to BDI scores (Beck Depression Inventory).

BDI score	Frequency	Percentage	Mean ±SD
Normal (1 - 10)	39	39.80	11.25 ± 1.80
Borderline (11 – 16)	11	11.22	3.16 ± 0.95
Mild (17 – 20)	26	26.53	7.50 ± 1.47
Moderate (21 – 30)	15	15.31	4.32 ± 1.11
Severe (31 – 39)	07	7.14	2.00 ± 0.75
Total	98	100	

In our study after applying Beck Depression Inventory method 39 (39.80%) nursing student were suffering from normal depression. Borderline depression was present in 11 (11.22%) of nursing students, 26 (26.53%) nursing students were suffering from mild depression. Moderate depression was present in 15 (15.31%) nursing students and 7 (7.14%) nursing students were suffering from severe depression. (Table 3)

Discussion

The present study revealed that 48.98% of the nursing students participating had some degree of depression. The figures are similar to the findings of Rafati and Ahmadi (2004)¹⁵, who found 60% of the nursing students in their sample to be depressed. Melissa-Halikiopoulou et al (2011)¹⁶ found 43% of nursing students in their study suffered from depression, even though only a small percentage of them had a severe form of it, which is similar to the findings in the authors’ study. Mean BDI score was found to be 14.1 by Rafati and Ahmadi (2004)¹⁵ on the other hand our study’s finding it was 5.64; though Ahmadi et al (2004)¹¹ found a score of 10.4. In this study, it has been observed that depression was significantly and negatively correlated with the subjects’ year.

With the highest value of BDI in the first year students. This result might be owing to factors such as the higher standard students becoming more adjusted to the demands of their studies and accepting their decision to continue in this field. However, Papazisis et al (2008)¹⁷ in Greece showed that first-year students exhibited the lowest depression scores compared with second- and third-year students. This might be a result of the high degree of pressure from studies in later years resulting in a positive correlation between being a university senior and having depressive symptoms.

Nursing students are entering into this field of study during a vulnerable period of their life when the feelings of responsibility towards their families and society, their feelings of self-identity and their personal lives, and anxiety around the security of their future are at the forefront of their minds. Different studies (Ross et al, 2005; Andrews et al, 2006; Modabber-Nia et al, 2007)^{12,18,19} revealed that students were prone to have more psychiatric problems including depression because of their interpersonal and emotional conflicts as well as economic and academic problems.

In this study, the factors found to significantly influence depression among the nursing students were familial disharmony, disinterest in the course and insecurity about future placement. These psychosocial factors are generating anxiety and depression among this group at a vulnerable time of their lives. In addition, many of these students are studying this course not because of their own wishes, but are compelled to by their parents/families for reasons to do with social status or future

financial support. This has also been reflected in other studies conducted in India. Porreddi et al (2012)²⁰ found that only 33.3% of their study population enrolled in nursing out of their own interest and to improve their financial situations. Again, the reason for entering into nursing studies is likely to be an important influence on the level of stress in first-year students. Dissatisfaction with career choice has a strong relation with depression and one's career satisfaction is inversely correlated with burnout and depression (Alshallah, 2004; Becker et al, 2006)^{21,22}. Many students cannot get the jobs of their personal choice, which usually disturbs their personal daily living in the future. This picture is reflected in studies such as Kane (2009) in Maharashtra, India.¹³ Their study also reflected the fact that placement insecurity generates stress among those nurses who do not get permanent employment. Student nurses are very aware of this and it may be a cause of their insecurity about the future. There is a scarcity of research in India to highlight the factors behind the causation of depression among nursing students in order to compare the findings of the present study. However, an attempt to do this has been made with the few studies the authors have located.

Limitations of the study :

Due to time limitation, study was conducted in few number of nursing students. Further study may be conducted with large number of patients with involvement of more nursing colleges.

Conclusion :

The findings of the present study indicate that depression is a serious problem among nursing students. In this Indian study, the determinants which seem responsible for this depression are mostly psychosocial factors. Sincere attention must be paid to these issues as these students are entering into a very stressful time of their lives. Proper pre-admission counselling might have been beneficial for those students being admitted to the nursing programme. Generating awareness among faculty members regarding the mental health status of the nursing students may also be a positive approach to this problem. A proper system to help with the regular placement of these students in their profession is essential so that they do not feel such high levels of anxiety about the future. A holistic approach is needed for the psychological health and wellbeing of these students. The role of family and social support cannot be ignored in this respect.

Patient consent

Duly informed written consent was taken from the patients.

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Nil.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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