

Learning Stress as Perceived by Students and Coping Strategies Adopted by Them to Overcome It in Selected Nursing College of Haldwani

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Abstract

Stress is a feeling of emotional and physical tension that can occur at any event which makes students feel frustrated, angry, nervous and anxious. Nursing students are always at risk of stress because they are being a part of skill training programme and provide direct care to the patient. Whereas, learning stress is mental distress for students with anticipated disappointment associated with failure to expected academic performance and also ignorance to the possibility of such failure. The present study aimed to compare the learning stress as perceived by Nursing students and coping strategies adopted by them to overcome learning stress in a selected nursing college of Haldwani, Nainital, Uttarakhand. Quantitative research approach with descriptive comparative design was used. The simple random sampling technique was used for selection of 94 BSc Nursing 2nd year students. Data collection questionnaire consisted of demographic variable a structured stress scale developed after focus group interview to assess learning stress, and modified CIS to assess coping strategies adopted by nursing students. The result revealed that maximum (n=36, 76.60%) of nursing students were within the age group of 18-21 year. Maximum (n=40, 81.10%) were female, most of nursing students (n=22, 46.80%) lived in hostel. Overall perceived stress of learning stress among nursing students was at moderate level. Nearly 81.10 percent students in college A fell in moderate level of learning stress whereas, college B students had 93.60 percent moderate level of learning stress. The findings related coping strategies adopted by nursing students of college A and college B were inadequate. Comparing the level of stress between two colleges, the mean and SD value of college A nursing students was 159.04±31.55 and for college B students it was 165.55±26.04, with the mean difference of 6.51 which was statistically not significant at $p \leq 0.005$. To conclude, nursing students encounter moderate to high level of learning stress and also adopted different coping strategies. However, management should take measure to overcome academic stress by taking stress management session, training on active coping and helping to eliminate maladaptive coping strategies.

Key words: Learning stress, coping strategies, Nursing students

Stress is a feeling of emotional and physical tension that can occur at any event which lets frustrated, angry, nervous and anxious. In short bursts. Stress can be positive such as it helps to avoid danger. Meanwhile when stress lasts for an extended period of time, can cause harm to your health (Kumar & Nancy, 2011).

As an individual perceives a situation as a potential threat in daily life, one adopts various coping strategies to overcome stress. Students undergo different stresses, such as the stress of learning with the responsibility for fulfilling

purpose and meeting future expectations. The perceived stress among the students may contribute to their physiological and psychological well-being undermining academic achievements and confidence (Zocolillo et al, 1986).

Nurses are the backbone of health-care system and need hours and days of extensive training since the 1st day of nursing profession as a student. Whereas, during their training nursing students are often subjected to stressful situations because of academic expectations, adjustment to college and hostel life, separation from family, role transition; dealing with different kinds of patients put a great threat on the health of the students (Cherkil et al, 2013).

The most common type of stress faced by nursing student is academic or clinical stress.

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Learning stress confronted by students are hesitation in content and curriculum, lack of guidance from teachers, unhappiness with instructional methods, preparation for exams and passing theoretical exams (Torres et al, 2015). However, stress can affect health of students (physical and emotional health) and show symptoms of physical illness, poor academic performance and withdrawal from the course (Delaney et al, 2016).

Coping strategies adopted by Nursing students help handle stress. Students who have high level of stress are not able to cope effectively. Consequently, it causes physical and psychological health issues (Ho et al, 2015). Therefore, identified coping strategies for nursing students are important for early intervention which can help them maintain their physical and mental health as well as the quality of care provided by them.

Need of the Study: There has always been rivalry between student's internal and external factors; students face more stress than ever, be it related to studies, examination, teachers, requirements, self, study habits, friends, influence, and health. Stress is responsible for causing fatigue in our bodies as we adjust to our continually changing environment. Stress forces us to action. However, it can result in feelings of rejection, anger and depression, leading to health problems such as headaches, insomnia, high blood pressure, heart diseases etc. Students may use healthy or unhealthy methods to cope up with stress.

Review of Literature

Nebhinani et al (2020) conducted a descriptive study on stress and coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students in Rajasthan. Standardised Student Nurse Stress Index and brief cope scale were used to assess stress and coping strategies. The result revealed that nearly 82.4 percent of the students reported moderate level of stress. Interface worries (mean score 17.88 ± 4.9) and academic load (mean score 17.6 ± 4.78) were the major source of perceived stress. Students considered attitude of other professionals towards nursing, lack of free time, and fear of examination as most likely reasons of their distress. Active coping was the most commonly used coping strategy. Level of stress was found to have significant association with the interest of students in nursing. The study concluded that interface worries and academic-related concerns were the major source of stress. A positive trend was evident in the use of adaptive coping strategies over succumbing meekly.

Emad et al (2018) conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study to determine the type of stress and coping strategies among nursing students. A total of 184 samples were selected through convenient

sampling technique. The level of stress was evaluated through Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and type of coping strategies were assessed by use of Coping Behaviors Inventory (CBI). The results revealed that students perceived moderate level of stress, most commonly attributed to assignments and workload, teachers and nursing staff, peers and daily life, and taking care of patients. The most frequently used coping mechanism was problem solving. The study found a moderate level of stress among students that illustrates the need for stress management programmes and the provision of suitable support.

In a comparative study of perceived stress and coping strategies among psychology and non-psychology students in the United Arab Emirates, Vally et al (2018) selected 114 students through convenient sampling technique. Data were collected through Brief COPE questionnaire and the Perceived Stress Scale. The result revealed that the complete sample engaged in help-seeking behaviour, though distinct differences between groups were evident. Perceived stress was pervasive. Students employed a range of coping strategies but showed a clear preference for emotion-focused strategies.

Objectives

The present study aimed to compare the learning stress as perceived by nursing students in different Nursing colleges and coping strategies adopted by them to overcome learning stress in selected Nursing Institutions of Haldwani (Uttarakhand).

Material and Methods

The study was conducted on nursing students in selected Nursing institutes of Haldwani, Nainital (Uttarakhand) between March 2022 to May 2022. Quantitative research approach and descriptive comparative design was used to assess the learning stress and coping strategies adopted by Nursing students. The sample size was calculated by Slovin's formula and the simple random sampling technique used for selection of 94 Nursing students (47 from each Nursing college, which were college A and B) who were studying in BSc Nursing 2nd year in selected institutes of Haldwani.

The samples were selected according to inclusion criteria such as age group between 18-25 years and had completed one academic year of their course. The exclusion criteria included those unwilling to participate in study. Samples were aware of their right to withdraw at any point of time and anonymity of the information was ensured. The present study was delimited to BSc Nursing 2nd year students in selected institutes of Haldwani. Ethical approval for the study was taken from ethical committee of selected institutes of nursing and written consent obtained from each of them.

Pre-testing of the tool was done to check its clarity, practicality and feasibility. It took 30-35 minutes to fill the questionnaire and it was found clear and feasible. Reliability of the tool II and III was established by test re-test method through Karl Person's formula and it was found 0.80 for tool-II and 0.86 for tool-III. The permission for data collection was obtained from Principal of selected college of Nursing. After taking demographic data of samples, the self-structured questionnaire to assess the learning stress and modified CIS coping strategies were administered to the samples.

The final data was collected and transferred to IBM SPSS statistics 24 version. The data was analysed by descriptive and inferential statistics; calculation was carried out by using Microsoft excel and statistical package for social sciences. Data collection questionnaire consisted of the three main components.

Tool I: Demographic data which include age, gender, health professional in their family and attended stress management programme/counselling.

Tool II: Structured stress scale was developed after reviewing review of literature and focus group interview to assess learning stress in students; it consisted of 60 items which consisted of following areas such as learning stress related to teacher (13 items), stress related to requirements (7 items), stress related to self (11 items), stress related to study habits (11 items), stress related to friends, influence (6 items), stress related to examination (4 items).

Tool III: Modified CIS (Coping Inventory Strategies) to assess coping strategies adopted by nursing student; it consisted total 60 items which include Problem-focused coping (16 items), Humour (1 item), Active coping (6 items), Religious coping (4 items), Problem-avoiding (8 items), Mental disengagement (9 items), Emotional express (4 items), Substances abuse (2 items), Acceptance (6 Items), Emotion-focused coping (4 items). The scoring of CIS scale was done according to statement in each categories and each statement was scored by 1-5, based on this, the total statements were 60. Thus, the maximum score for each statement were 5 and minimum was 1. Therefore,

total score of CIS 300 based on median 1-150 was considered inadequate coping strategies adopted by students and; median 151-300 score was consider adequate coping strategies adopted by them.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the participants

Table 1 shows that maximum i.e. 36 (76.60%) of nursing students were within the age group of 18-21 years. Whereas, maximum i.e. 40 (81.10%) were female, most of nursing students (n=22, 46.8%) lived in hostel. Maximum (n=43, 91.48%) nursing students' parents were not in health profession and only 2 (4.2%) students had attended counselling session for stress management.

Level of learning stress perceived by Nursing students

In College A, maximum (81.10%) had moderate level of learning stress and 10.60 percent reported that they have sever level of academic stress, whereas only 4.30 percent were having mild level of academic stress. In college B most of nursing students (93.60%) were having moderate level of academic stress (Table 2). Whereas, 4.3% percent were having severe and only 2.10 percent nursing students had mild level of academic stress.

Level of learning stress perceived by nursing students related to teacher

Fig 1 shows that in College A, maximum student (70.20%) had moderate level of stress and 10.60 percent reported sever stress, whereas 19.10 percent were having mild level of stress related to

Table 1: Frequency and percentage wise distribution of socio-demographic characteristics of participants in College A and College B (N=94)

S. No.	Characteristics	College A		College B	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Age (years)				
	18-21	36	76.60	28	59.57
	22-25	11	23.40	19	40.42
2	Gender				
	Male	7	14.89	08	17
	Female	40	81.10	39	83
3	Residential area				
	Living with parents	20	42.5	17	36.17
	Hostel	12	25.5	22	46.80
	PG	15	32	08	17.02
4	Health professional in the family				
	Yes	08	17	04	8.51
	No	39	83	43	91.48
5	Attend stress management counselling				
	Yes	02	4.2	00	00
	No	45	95.7	47	100

Table 2: Stress Levels of nursing students in A & B colleges (N=94)

S. No.	Level of Stress	College A (47)		College B(47)	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Mild	2	4.3	1	2.1
2	Moderate	40	81.1	44	93.6
3	Severe	5	10.6	2	4.3

teacher. While in college B most of 76.60 percent nursing students were having moderate level of stress. Whereas, 17 percent were having severe and only 6.40 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to teacher.

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to requirements

In College A, nursing students had maximum (51.10%) level of stress and 38.30 percent mentioned that they were have moderate stress, whereas only 10.60 percent were having mild level of stress related to requirements. In college B most of 68.10 percent nursing students were having moderate level of stress. Whereas, 27.10 percent were having severe and only 4.20 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to requirements (Fig 2).

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to Self

In College A maximum students (76.60%) had moderate level of stress and 14.90 percent reported mid stress, whereas only 8.50 percent were having severe level of stress related to self (Fig 3). While in college B most of nursing students (78.70%) were having moderate level of stress. Whereas, 17 percent were having severe and only 4.30 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to self.

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to study habits

Fig 4 shows that in College A, maximum (83%) nursing students had moderate level of stress and 14.90 percent reported severe stress, whereas only 2.10 percent were having mild level of stress related to study habits. In college B most of nursing students (78.70%) were having moderate level of stress. Whereas, 19.10 percent were having severe and only 2.10 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to study habits.

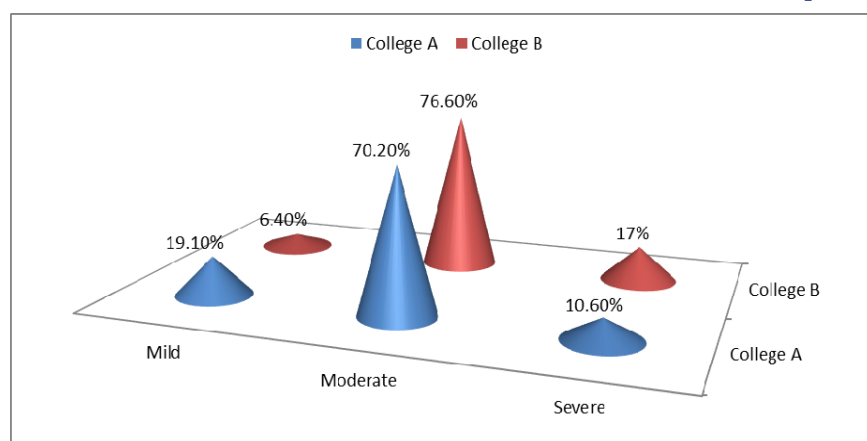


Fig 1: Academic stress related to teacher.

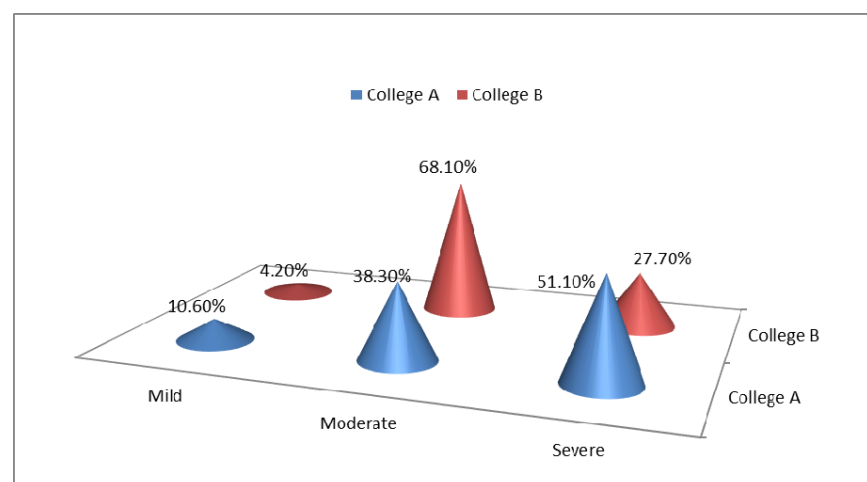


Fig 2: Cone diagram showing percentage distribution of stress level related to requirements of Nursing students.

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to friend's influence

In College A, maximum (63.80%) had moderate level of stress and 23.40 percent reported mild stress, whereas 12.80 percent were having severe level of stress related to friends influence. In college B most of 63.80 percent nursing students were having moderate level of stress (Fig 5). Whereas, 21.30 percent were having mild and only 14.90 percent nursing students had severe level of stress related to friends influence.

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to examination

Fig 6 shows that in College A, maximum (57.40%) students had moderate level of stress and 36.20 percent reported sever stress, whereas only 6.40 percent were having mild level of stress related to exam. In College B, most of 72.30 percent nursing students were having moderate level of stress. Whereas,

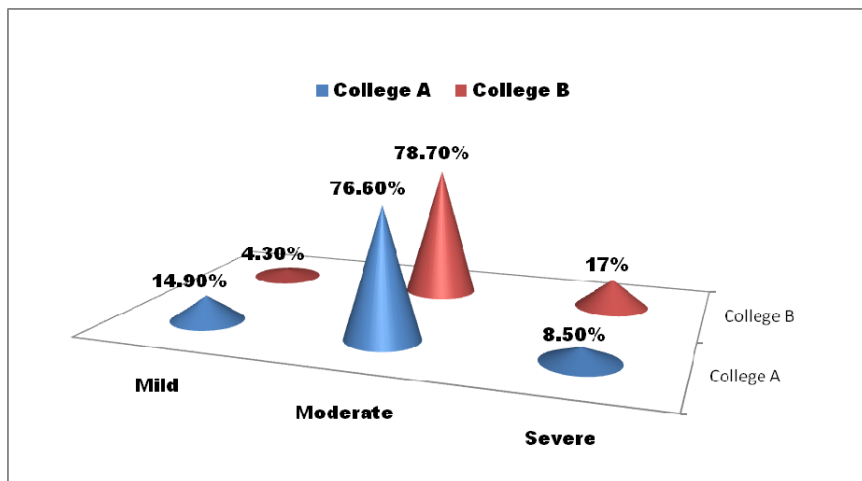


Fig 3: Percentage distribution of level of learning stress related to self of College A and College B Nursing students.

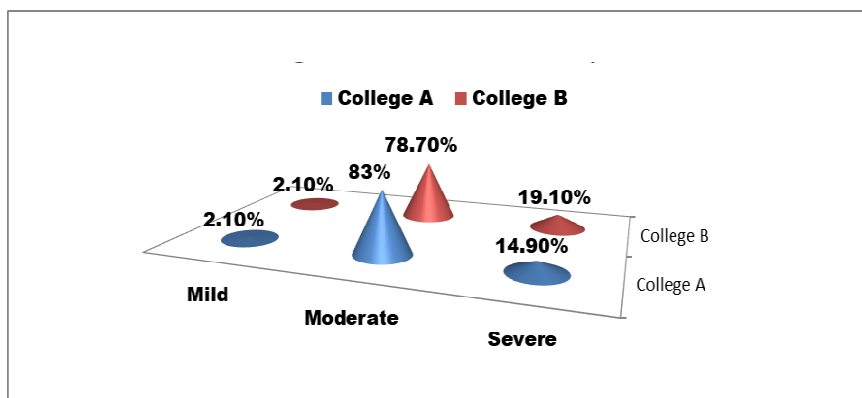


Fig 4: Percentage distribution of level of learning stress related to study habits of College A and College B Nursing students.

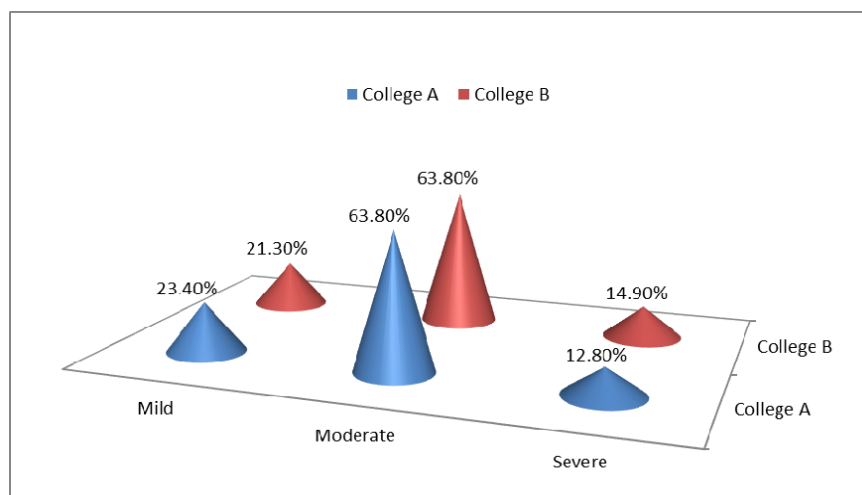


Fig 5: Percentage distribution of level of learning stress related to friend's influence of College A and College B Nursing students.

21.30 percent were having severe and only 6.40 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to examination

Learning stress perceived by Nursing students related to health

In College A, maximum (55.30%) students had

moderate level of stress and 36.20 percent reported severe stress, whereas 8.50 percent were having mild level of stress related to health (Fig 7). While in College B most of 61.70 percent nursing students were having moderate level of stress. Whereas, 27.70 percent were having severe and only 10.60 percent nursing students had mild level of stress related to health.

Distribution of Coping Strategies adopted by Nursing students in College A and College B

Table 3 shows that in College A, maximum (80.90%) students had inadequate coping strategies and 19.10 percent reported adaptive coping strategies, while in college B most of 74.50 percent nursing students were having inadequate coping strategies. Whereas, 25.50 percent used adaptive coping strategies.

Table 4 reveals the comparison of level of stress between College A and College B nursing students. The mean and SD value of college A Nursing students was 159.04 ± 31.55 and College B nursing students were having mean and SD values 165.55 ± 26.04 , with the mean difference of 6.51 which was statistically not significant at $p < 0.005$.

Discussion

Study of stress received attention in recent few year because increasingly, students are exposed to various types of stressor during their learning period such as stress related to teacher, requirements, examination and the responsibility for fulfilling purpose and meeting future expectations. These can cause physical, psychological and behaviour problems in students if they are not able to cope with these stresses. Whereas, if they used appropriate coping strategies it helps nursing students to manage stress related to

learning effectively.

The present study was conducted in selected nursing institutes of Haldwani to compare the perceived learning stress and coping strategies adopted by them to overcome learning stress. Overall perceived level of learning stress was of moderate

among Nursing students. Nearly 81.10 percent students in college A fall in moderate level of learning stress whereas, college B students had 93.60 percent moderate level of learning stress. Similar studies conducted at Pune, India by Sheroun et al (2020) also reported 82.67 percent of the participant's experienced moderate perceived stress.

The findings of the current study identified major factors of learning stress among nursing students related to teacher, requirements, self, study habits, friend influence, examination and health of self. Whereas, College A students had 70.20 percent (moderate) stress related to teacher compared to college B students who had 76.60 percent moderate level of stress. About 51.10 percent students mentioned that they had severe stress due to requirements whereas; College B students reported 68.10 percent i. e. moderate stress. Stress related to staff was 76.60 percent and fell in category of moderate; College students B reported 78.7 percent moderate level of stress.

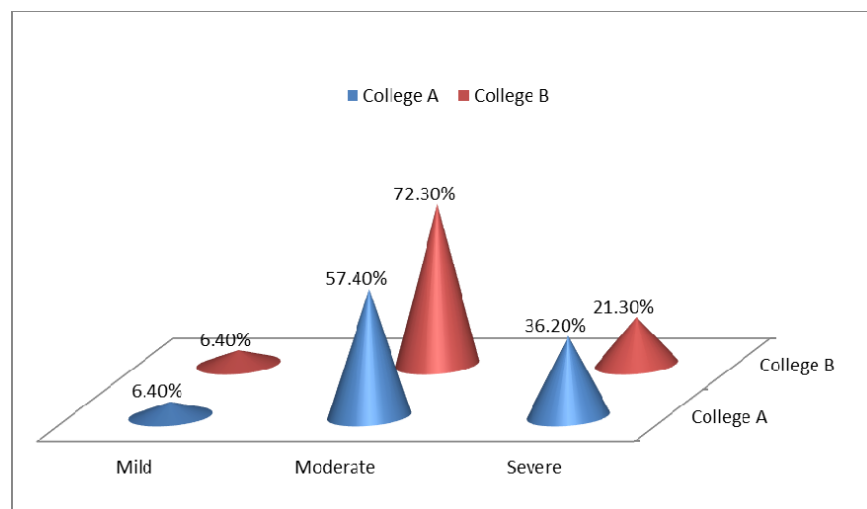


Fig 6: Percentage distribution of level of learning stress related to exam among College A and College B Nursing students.

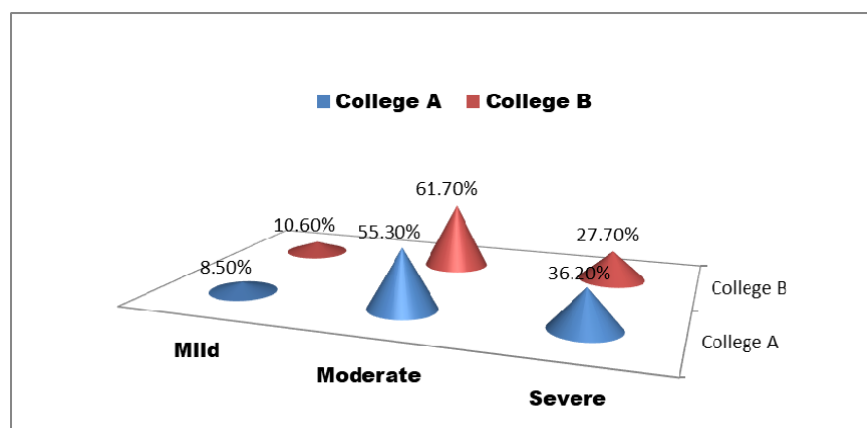


Fig 7: Percentage distribution of level of learning stress related to health of College A and College B Nursing students.

Meanwhile, stress related to study habits (83%) of College A students had moderate level of stress and 78.7 percent students of college B were having moderate level of stress. Out of 97 students in college A and B mentioned 63.80 percent of moderate level of stress regarding friends, influence. Stress related to examination were found in college A and B students respectively at 57.40 percent and 72.30 percent and 55.30 students in College A students and 61.70 percent College B students reported stress due to personal health status. The present study findings consistent with the findings of previous studies by Shdaifat et al (2018) on stress and coping strategies among nursing students. The study result revealed that reported most common sources of stress were assignments and workload, teachers and nursing staff, and finally stress from taking care of patients were the most common source of stress.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of coping strategies adopted by Nursing students in College A and College B (N=94)

S. No	Coping strategies	College A (47)		College B (47)	
		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Inadequate	38	80.9	35	74.5
2	Adequate	9	19.1	12	25.5

Table 4: Comparison of learning stress between College A and College B Nursing students (N=94)

Group	N	df	Mean score	SD	Mean difference	SE	t	p value	Sig
College A	47		159.04	31.55					
College B	47	92	165.55	26.04	6.51	5.94	1.09	0.27	NS

df = 92 (tab. value is 1.99 at p<0.05)

The findings related to coping strategies adopted by nursing students of the current study showed that maximum (83%) students of College A used 'problem avoid' coping strategies and only 46.80 percent students reported that they use religious coping strategies whereas, in College B, 68 percent students adopted acceptance coping strategies and only 40.50 percent students reported substance abuse used as a low category of coping strategy to overcome learning stress. Partial consistent study conducted by Onieva-Zafra et al (2020) revealed that most frequently coping strategy used by students was problem-solving followed by social support, cognitive restructuring, wishful thinking social support and social withdrawal.

Recommendation

- ♦ Stress management programme should be applied as a measure to address stress, and its effectiveness should be checked longitudinally, with consideration of families and peers as well as nursing students themselves.
- ♦ Further researches should explore what particular factors aggravate stress among students relative to curriculum design. Nursing educators and curriculum designers should consider the optimisation of curriculum to offer a less stressful experience for students (e.g. ensuring low-intensity academic requirements when students undertake clinical placements).
- ♦ An evaluative study to determine the effectiveness of (a) counselling and (b) relaxation therapy in reducing the stress levels of students may be conducted.
- ♦ A comparative study to assess the stress and coping methods of students of two different universities can be done.

Limitations of the study

- ♦ The study was limited to a restricted group of nursing students from Haldwani Colleges in Nainital.
- ♦ The researcher used a comparative study strategy for the current study due to resource availability.

Conclusion

According to present study findings nursing students encounter stress during study period and also adopted different coping strategies, depending on situation. In order to resolve stressful event, they tried to deal with stressful situation by using active and problem focus coping strategies. Whereas, when they felt stress beyond their control, they avoided or accepted and emotional express it. However, management should take measure

to overcome Learning stress by taking stress management session, training on active coping and helping to eliminate maladaptive coping strategies as recourse to mental disengagement.

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