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Stress and coping among Icelandic Nursing students

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Introduction: Stress is a common problem among university students, including nursing students. The sources of stress among nursing students has been related to clinical studies and academic workload.

Aim & Objective: The purpose of this study was to explore nursing students': 1) Mean stress score on the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) 2. Evaluation of their physical and mental health 3) Most common coping strategies when faced with stress 4) Perceived need for professional mental health services and the most common obstacles to seeking help.

Methods: The study design was descriptive, quantitative, and cross-sectional. An online questionnaire was sent to all undergraduate nursing students enrolled at the University of Iceland during the spring semester 2016. The response rate was 30%. The questionnaire consisted of the PSS in addition to questions about physical and mental health, background variables and coping strategies. The final sample consisted of 99 undergraduate students. They were females, mostly of age between 19-29, and 80% of them were employed part-time.

Results: The results of the study revealed that participants' mean stress score on the PSS was 18,30 which was higher than among the general population. Seventy three percent felt their physical health was good or very good, however only fifty four point five percent felt their mental health was good or very good. Thirty six percent of the sample felt they needed professional help because of their mental health but only 28 % of those who felt they needed help actually received the professional help. The main barriers to help seeking was cost and lack of time. The most common coping strategies used when confronted with stress were to talk to someone, eat sweets/snacks and self-critize. The results, which will be presented in more detail at the conference, demonstrate the importance of developing affordable and accessible interventions for university nursing students who are dealing with stress. Nurses are in a key position to develop and provide such interventions.

Biography

Johanna Bernhardsdottir completed her MS degree in psychiatric nursing from the University of Minnesota and her Ph.D. from the University of Iceland. She is the Chair and Director of research and development in Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing at the Landspítali-University Hospital, Department of Psychiatry and an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Nursing, University of Iceland. Her main research area is university students' mental health and cognitive behavioral therapy.

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