



RESEARCH ARTICLE

PERCEIVED STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG UNDERGRADUATE NURSING STUDENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

¹Mr. Puneeth, P. and ²Renukadevi, D.N.

¹Pbbsc Nursing, Nursing Tutor, JSS School of Nursing, Mysuru, India

²Msc Nursing, Principal, JSS School of Nursing, Mysuru, India

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 25th November, 2025

Received in revised form

20th December, 2025

Accepted 18th January, 2026

Published online 27th February, 2026

Keywords:

Perceived stress, coping strategies, nursing students, cross-sectional study.

*Corresponding author:

Mr. Puneeth, P.,

Copyright©2026, Puneeth and Renukadevi. 2026. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Citation: Mr. Puneeth, P. and Renukadevi, D.N. 2026. "Perceived Stress and Coping Strategies Among Undergraduate Nursing Students: A Cross-Sectional Study". *International Journal of Current Research*, 18, (02), 36188-36189.

ABSTRACT

Background: Nursing education is inherently stressful due to academic demands and intensive clinical exposure. In recent years, revised curricula and increased patient acuity have further intensified stress among undergraduate nursing students. **Aim:** To assess perceived stress levels, identify major stressors, and determine coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students. **Methods:** A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 50 undergraduate nursing students using the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) and the Brief-COPE inventory. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. **Results:** The majority of students (72%) reported moderate stress, while 16% experienced high stress levels. Clinical requirements were identified as the primary stressor (Mean score = 3.8/5). Adaptive coping strategies such as active planning and peer support were adopted by 80% of students, whereas 20% relied on maladaptive coping methods including avoidance and excessive screen use.

INTRODUCTION

The transition from nursing student to professional nurse is often associated with significant psychological stress, commonly described as "reality shock." Undergraduate nursing students are required to balance academic performance with early exposure to complex clinical environments. This dual responsibility frequently contributes to emotional strain, anxiety, and fatigue. One of the major contributors to stress is the theory-practice gap, where ideal procedures taught in skills laboratories differ from real-world clinical practice. This discrepancy may result in role confusion, fear of errors, and reduced self-confidence.

Additionally, students are exposed to the hidden curriculum of healthcare settings, including hierarchical relationships, communication challenges, and expectations from senior staff. Socio-economic and lifestyle factors such as digital fatigue, financial concerns, limited physical activity, and reduced leisure time further compound stress levels. Understanding stress and coping mechanisms in a localized academic and clinical environment is essential for developing effective student support systems. This study aims to assess perceived stress and coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students through a pilot cross-sectional approach.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive cross-sectional study.

Study Setting: A tertiary care teaching hospital and nursing college in Mysuru.

Participants: 50 undergraduate nursing students (P.B.B.Sc. Nursing).

Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling.

Data Collection Tools

- Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10): Measures perceived stress over the previous month
- Brief-COPE Inventory: Assesses adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all

participants, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

RESULTS

Levels of Perceived Stress

- Low stress: 12%
- Moderate stress: 72%
- High stress: 16%

Major Stressors Identified

- Clinical postings, particularly in critical care and emergency units
- Academic workload related to revised curriculum
- Physical exhaustion due to rotating clinical shifts
- Coping Strategies
- Adaptive coping strategies: 80% (active planning, problem-solving, peer support)
- Maladaptive coping strategies: 20% (avoidance, excessive screen time, distraction)

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that moderate stress is prevalent among undergraduate nursing students, which is consistent with existing literature. Clinical exposure emerged as the most significant stressor, highlighting the emotional and cognitive demands of patient care. Despite these challenges, the majority of students demonstrated adaptive coping strategies, indicating baseline resilience. However, the presence of maladaptive coping in a subset of students underscores the need for structured psychological support. Improving clinical preparedness and addressing stress early may enhance academic performance and professional development.

CONCLUSION

This cross-sectional pilot study indicates that undergraduate nursing students experience predominantly moderate levels of stress, mainly related to clinical exposure and academic workload. Although most students adopt adaptive coping strategies, institutional interventions are essential to further reduce stress and promote well-being. Moderate stress is common among undergraduate nursing students. Strengthening clinical preparedness and integrating structured stress-management programs may help reduce stress and promote adaptive coping.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhanced simulation-based training before clinical postings
- Structured peer mentorship programs
- Integration of regular stress-management and resilience-building sessions into the curriculum

REFERENCES

- Munirathnamma K, Sahana B. The art of unwinding: Mastering stress management—A review article. *Global Journal for Research Analysis*. 2025;14(2).
- Lathika R, Sunil Kumar D. Academic stress among JSS students in Mysuru: A cross-sectional study. *Research Connect (JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research)*. 2025.
- Chandran M. A study to assess the level of stress and coping strategies among nursing students. *RV Journal of Nursing Sciences*. 2025;6(1).
- Labrague LJ. Umbrella review: Stress levels, sources of stress, and coping mechanisms among student nurses. *National Institutes of Health (NIH)*. 2024.
- Babapour J, et al. Predictors of academic and clinical stress among nursing students. *SAGE Open Nursing*. 2024;10.
- Kudi SR, Bose BS, Lata K. Stress and coping strategies among nursing students in Northern India. *International Journal of Nursing Modern Research*. 2025;4(1).
- Saini S, Devi R. Effectiveness of laughter on academic stress among nursing students at JSS College of Nursing, Mysuru. *Journal of Nursing and Medical Research*. 2023.
- Ahmed AM, Mona S. Stress and coping strategies among nursing students: A descriptive analysis. *Gavin Publishers Nursing Journal*. 2024.
- Lazarus RS, Folkman S. Stress, appraisal, and coping. New York: Springer Publishing Company; 1984.
- World Health Organization. State of the World's Nursing 2024: Investing in education and wellbeing. Geneva: WHO Press; 2024.
