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Research Article

**INVESTIGATING THE LEVEL OF STRESS IN POST (RN) B.Sc
NURSING STUDENTS DURING EXAMS**Noreen Malik¹, Afzal Khatoon², Sajeda Naseem³¹Charge Nurse at Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan, noreenmalik129@gmail.com²Head Nurse at Punjab Institute of Mental Health Lahore, Afzalkhatoon2015@gmail.com³Head nurse & Assistant Nursing Instructor at College of nursing & Midwifery Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore, sajedanaseem808@gmail.com**Abstract:**

Introduction: The time of examination is a stressful period where stress is on its highest levels. To some extent, low level of stress can help in motivating the students, however on the contrary more stress can be discouraging. It will make students exhausted, overwhelmed and confused.

Objective: To investigate the level of stress among Post RN (BSC Nursing) students during exams at Sheikh Zayed College of Nursing, Rahim Yaar Khan.

Materials & methods: It was descriptive, quantitative, cross-sectional study in nature in which 100 nursing nursing students included. Self-administered questionnaires were used to collect the data from the participants.

Results: There were 100 study participants included in the study having age range 18 years to 26 years old. 69% reported that they were not able to concentrate fully while preparing for examination most of the time and 31% respondents were disagreed. 87% participants reported that they prepare examination only when the examination were near and only 13% were disagreed with the statement. Overall, result findings depicted that 17% participants reported low level of stress, 69% reported moderate level of stress and remaining 14% revealed high level of stress during exam.

Conclusion: Some participants reported to be low level of stress and some of them reported to be high level of stress during exams. Lack of time to revision the course, unfamiliar course contents or inadequate learning skills and time management skills, lack of understanding with some portions of the curriculum and family pressure having high grade seems to be prime factors causing stress among nursing students. Overall, majority of study participants reported to be moderate level of stress during exams.

Keywords: Stress, nursing students, Post RN, exams etc.

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INTRODUCTION:

The prevalence of stresses was increasing among students in recent years (**Kadayam G, Gomathi A, Jayadevan S., 2013**). Stress brings advantages and disadvantages depending on nursing students coping. On one hand, stress can cause students to feel distress or can motivate student for better achievement (**Singh C, Sunita S and Sharma R., 2011**). Exams or formal assessment were designed to test the performance, giving an indication of student's ability to cope under pressure in a fixed time. Moderate level of stress was motivating and can improve their test performance, however high level stress will hinder and interfere their academic performance (**Vitasari P et al., 2010**).

Students experience increased tension prior to their written examination especially their finals. Other potential sources of stress were excessive assignments, assignment submission deadlines, unclear assignments and relations with faculty members (**Kadayam G, Gomathi A, Jayadevan S., 2013**). The factors leading to academic stress were preparation for exams, receiving negative feedback from teachers in the clinical environment, passing theoretical exams or assessments, dissatisfied with instructional methods, uncertainty about content and curriculum, gaps between theory and practice and lack of guidance from teachers (**Akhu-Zaheya, Shaban, & Khater, 2015**).

The most important academic sources of stress among nursing student were to the preparation of examination, not availability of resources on illness in Nursing library and dis-satisfied with instructional method which were not only compromise the delivery of patient care, also affected the health and clinical practice of nursing students (**Sharif, 2015**). Examination stress was considered a situation-specific trait which predisposes the students to respond with increasing stress to an exam. The examination was a complex process which can increase stress and anxiety and has a direct influence on exam performance. Most researchers have found that there was a strong relationship between examination stress and performance in academics (**Xiao J., 2013**).

Examination stress may affect students exam results; teachers have an important role to play in identifying the factors affecting examination stress and take appropriate steps to prevent it, so that the students could achieve better results in examinations. Stress reactions were perceived as threatening in many situations. Nursing students have to overcome many stressors as they face competitive and grueling

nursing curriculum (**Edelman M, Ficarelli C., 2005**).

Stress was considered an important factor in exam performance. Mild degree of stress can be beneficial as it compels to focus and perform given task energetically (**Kumari A, Jain J., 2014**). It created powerful inspiration to avoid failing, encourages strategies and techniques of studying and use of effective time management (**Pekrun R, et al., 2002**).

An acceptable level of test stress motivated students to work hard (**Chapell MS et al., 2005**). It also provided students with positive consequences (**Dordi Nejad FG et al., 2011**). Studies have also reported factors like inefficient study, studying previous night before exams, lack of review and no revision before exams, emotional factors, student's inability to enhance their learning, complaints of not having enough time to prepare for the exams or learn the course materials, family responsibilities and family pressure influence exam stress (**Singh I, Jha A., 2013**). In view of the above, current study carried out at Sheikh Zayed College of Nursing, Rahim Yaar Khan regarding investigation of stress level among Post RN (BSC Nursing) students during exams.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The word stress was defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a state of affair involving demand of physical or mental energy". A condition or circumstances which can distribute the normal physical and mental health of an individual. Stress was the tension and pressure that result when an individual views situation which present a demand that threatens to exceed his or her capabilities or resources (**Aldwin, Corolyn M., 2007**).

(**Sangiriy SS, Bhosle M, Dutta AP., 2005**) carried out a research work to investigate the stress level and found that 70% had mild stress, 30% had moderate stress and 10% had high degree of exam stress. The study identified factors like time management and strategic studying influence examination stress and anxiety.

(**Simran G et al., 2015**) showed in their research work that too much course load, lack of time to do a revision before the exam, lack of systematic studies, expectations from parents and lack of time for other activities like exercise and extracurricular activities contributed to exam stress.

(**Ahmed HA., 2016**) administered a research work regarding exam stress and anxiety among nursing students to explore the relationship between exam stress level and academic achievement. It has been reported that students with low exam stress were

3.8% and severe exam stress 33.1%. Moderate exam stress was observed among 63.1% students.

(Li N, Li B, DOU J, Wang X., 2015) carried out a study among 1527 nursing students found that 10.09% had mild stress, 45.06% with moderate stress and 44.86% had severe stress during exams. Six factors identified were examination reform, others opinion, worry of future, physical and psychological discomfort, confidence and previous academic record lead to stress and anxiety.

(Sharma N, Kaur A., 2011) conducted a study among nursing students reported majority (97%) of samples had a moderate level of stress, 3% samples were with the highest level of stress during exams. The components like motivation, commitment (40%) interpersonal variables (30%) can influence stress. The academic components had 19% commitment while the intrapersonal components helped negligibly.

(Neemati N, Hooshangi R, Shurideh A., 2014) investigated key factors affecting stress level during exams and found that difficult level of exam, environment of examination hall, invigilation; personal and emotional factors played an important role in exam performance.

(Charlet Jasmine Vaz et al., 2018) carried out a research work to determine level of stress among 341 undergraduate nursing students enrolled in selected colleges of nursing. Majority (90.3%) of the samples were females. Most (61%) of subjects were normal or had no exam stress, 25% had mild exam stress, 12% had moderate exam stress, and 2% subjects had severe exam stress. Factor analysis identified four factors (Learning Process, Perceptions related to examination, Learning pattern, Over expectations related to learning outcome) that influence examination anxiety and stress among nursing students.

(Amol Bhagwat Kanade, Shravan Raut, 2020) conducted a study in which 100 nursing students participated. Majority 85% of nursing students had moderate mental stress, 12.5% of them had severe mental stress during exams. It was clear from the results of this study that student nurses were exposed to moderate amount of stress. Effectively managing stress was a priority for failure student nurses. There were unique interpersonal and environmental stressors for student nurses. Stressors specific to nursing college students can be addressed by educational administrators.

In view of the above, some researchers reported moderate level of stress among nursing students during exams while others reported mild level of stress found among nursing students during exams. Researchers investigated key factors affecting stress level during exams included difficult level of exam, environment of examination hall, invigilation; personal and emotional factors played an important role in exam performance.

METHODOLOGY:

Study design:

A cross-sectional study design.

Study setting:

The study was conducted at Sheikh Zayed College of Nursing, Rahim Yaar Khan with collaboration of Bahawalpur Institute of Medical Sciences, Bahawalpur.

Duration of study:

The study completed in 6 weeks (from 01-01-2023 to 15-2-2023).

Study Population:

Nursing students of Sheikh Zayed College of Nursing, Rahim Yaar Khan.

Sample size & sampling

In the population of 133 nursing students following sample was drawn for the study by using listed below formulae:

$N = \text{Population} = 133$; $n = \text{Sample Size}$; $E = \text{Margin error} = 0.05$

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(E)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{133}{1 + 133(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{133}{1 + 133(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{133}{1 + 0.3325}$$

$$n = \frac{133}{1.3325}$$

$$n = 99.81$$

Thus a more suitable sample of $n = 100$ considered for the study.

Sampling Technique:

Convenient sampling technique.

Eligibility Criteria:**Inclusion Criteria:**

- Nursing students having age from 18 years to 26 years old included in the study.
- Only nursing students of Post RN (BSC Nursing) included in the study.
- Nursing students of 1st year & 2nd considered for the study.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Nursing students less than 18 years and above than 26 years excluded from the study.
- Nursing students other than Post RN (BSC Nursing) program excluded from the study.

RESULTS:

A descriptive, cross-sectional study carried out at Sheikh Zayed College of Nursing, Rahim Yaar Khan regarding assessment of level of stress among Post RN (BSC Nursing) students during exams in which 100 nursing student appeared having age range 18 years to 26 years old. There were 23% participants belonged to age group (18-20) years; 33% respondents were from (21-23) years and remaining 44% belonged to age group of (24-26) years old. There were 23% respondents were from 1st year and 77% were from 2nd year as displayed in the (Table no. 4.1. & figure 4.1-4.2.).

Table 4.1. Demographic data of study participants (n=100)

Variables	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-20 years	23	23.00
21-23 years	33	33.00
24-26 years	44	44.00
Total	100	100.00
Year of study		
1 st year	23	23.00
2 nd year	77	77.00
Total	100	100.00
Gender		
Male	0	0.00
Female	100	100.00
Total	100	100.00
Family income		
Rs. 5000-Rs.10000	8	8.00
Rs. 10001-Rs.15000	65	65.00
Rs. 150001-Rs.20000	27	27.00
Total	100	100.00

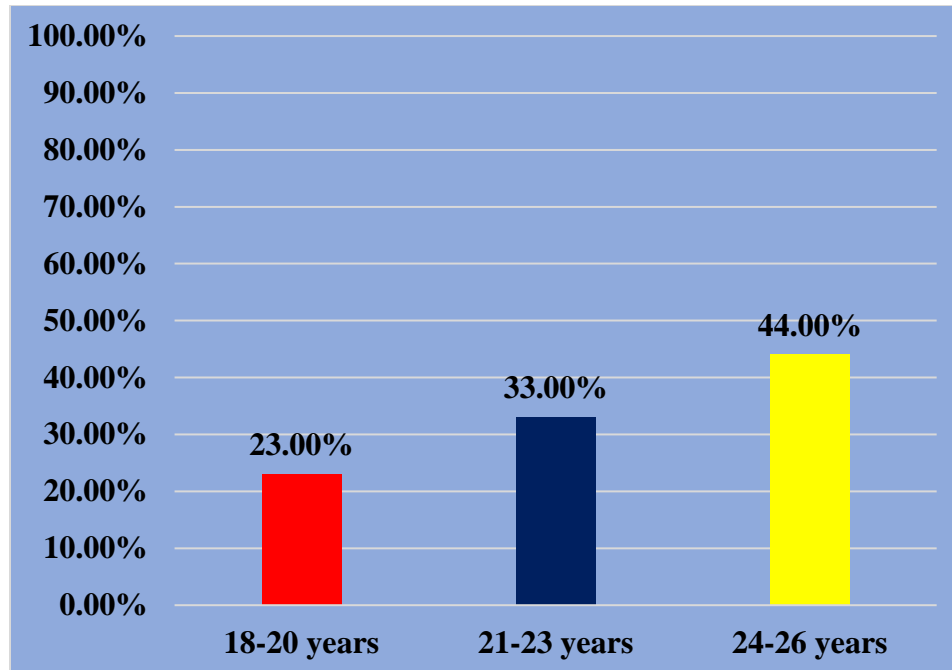


Figure no. 4.1. Age of study participants

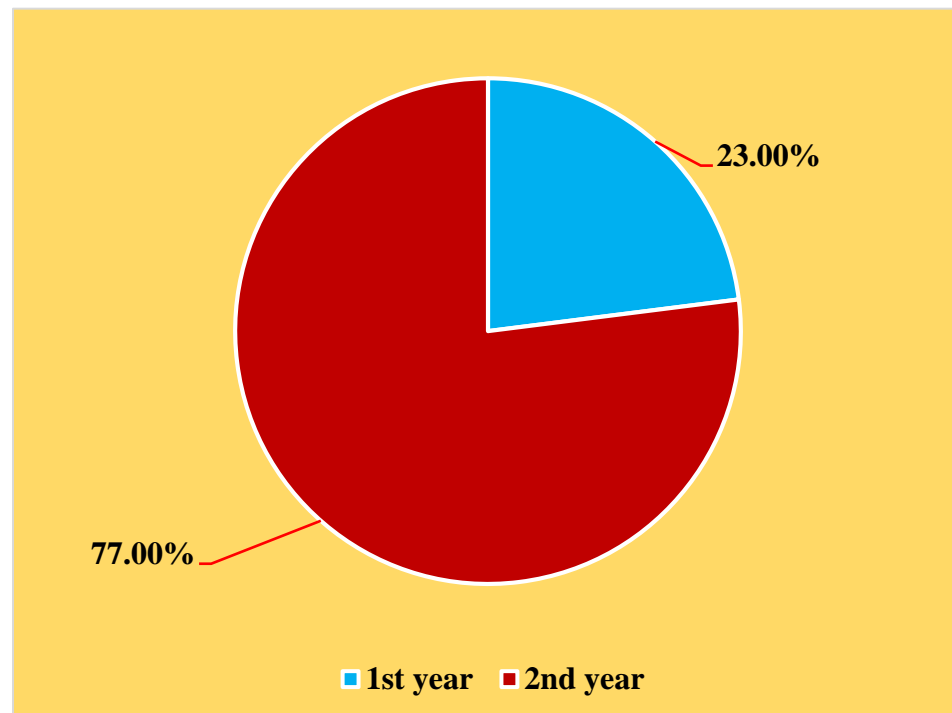


Figure no. 4.2. Year of study of respondents

As Likert Scale was used to assess the level of stress among respondents and in the sample of 100 participants, 69% reported that they were not able to concentrate fully while preparing for examination most of the time and 31% respondents were disagreed. 87% participants reported that they prepare examination only when the examination were near and only 13% were disagreed with the statement as shown in the table no. 4.2.

Table 4.2. Assessment of level of stress among Post RN (BSC Nursing) students during exams (n=100)

Sr. No.	Statements	Responses				
		Agree (f) %	Disagree (f) %	Neutral (f) %	Strongly agree (f) %	Strongly disagree (f) %
1	I am not able to concentrate fully while preparing for examination most of the time.	35 (35%)	14 (14%)	5 (5%)	34 (34%)	12 (12%)
2	I spend time on less important things while I am supposed to prepare for the examination.	22 (22%)	32 (32%)	10 (10%)	19 (19%)	17 (17%)
3	My first priority is to finish the academic works at the earliest.	41 (41%)	13 (13%)	4 (4%)	21 (21%)	21 (21%)
4	While studying, I get diverted by chats/texting/phone calls, etc.	32 (32%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	41 (41%)	17 (17%)
5	I collect all the study materials well in advance.	20 (20%)	31 (31%)	7 (7%)	17 (17%)	25 (25%)
6	I face examination without adequate preparation.	41 (41%)	12 (12%)	6 (6%)	29 (29%)	12 (12%)
7	I prepare for examination only when the examination is near.	51 (51%)	5 (5%)	5 (5%)	36 (36%)	3 (3%)
8	I prepare for the examination well in advance.	20 (20%)	19 (19%)	7 (7%)	31 (31%)	23 (23%)
9	I skip portions that are difficult for me to understand.	61 (61%)	10 (10%)	2 (2%)	20 (20%)	7 (7%)
10	I lack the confidence to face the written examination.	42 (42%)	9 (9%)	6 (6%)	39 (39%)	4 (4%)
11	I feel uncomfortable in a big examination hall.	21 (21%)	12 (12%)	4 (4%)	45 (45%)	18 (18%)
12	I usually become very anxious during the examination.	18 (18%)	23 (23%)	11 (11%)	31 (31%)	17 (17%)
13	Unfamiliar questions in the examination make me anxious.	38 (38%)	7 (7%)	4 (4%)	44 (44%)	7 (7%)
14	I need to do a thorough revision to recollect the portion.	55 (55%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)	30 (30%)	10 (10%)
15	If I don't score good marks, others might get a bad impression about me.	49 (49%)	3 (3%)	4 (4%)	40 (40%)	4 (4%)
16	I am afraid that parents will scold me if I score low marks.	21 (21%)	7 (7%)	6 (6%)	54 (54%)	12 (12%)
17	It makes me tensed when my parents compare my marks with others.	51 (51%)	8 (8%)	6 (6%)	26 (26%)	9 (9%)

As there were 100 participants included in the study out of which 82% participants reported that unfamiliar questions make them anxious and 18% were disagreed. 85% participants reported that they need to do a thorough revision to recollect the portion and 15% were disagreed. Overall, result findings depicted that 17% participants reported low level of stress, 69% reported moderate level of stress and remaining 14% revealed high level of stress during exam as indicated in the table no. 4.2. & figure no. 4.3.

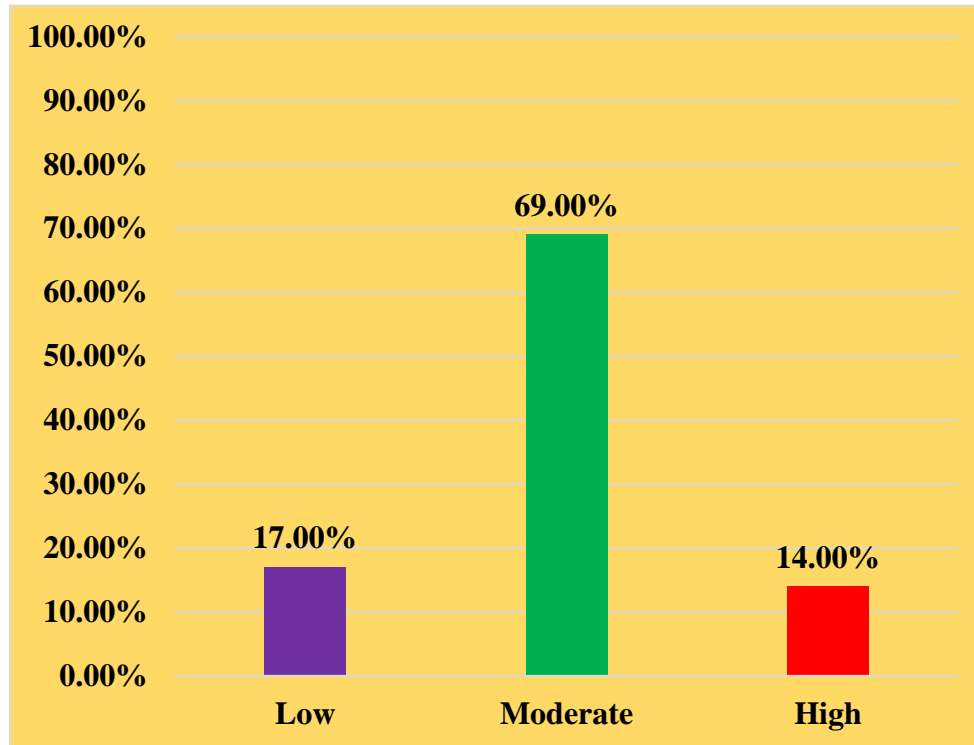


Figure no. 4.3. Levels of stress among nursing students

CONCLUSION:

Some participants reported to be low level of stress and some of them reported to be high level of stress during exams. Lack of time to revision the course, unfamiliar course contents or inadequate learning skills and time management skills, lack of understanding with some portions of the curriculum and family pressure having high grade seems to be prime factors causing stress among nursing students. Overall, majority of study participants reported to be moderate level of stress during exams.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ◆ Educate nursing student about stress coping strategies to overcome with the difficult situations.
- ◆ Nursing instructors should cooperate with the nursing students to reduce the stress level during exams.
- ◆ Family members of nursing students should also understand their feeling and have a conversation to overcome stress during exams as stress is a

natural and occur when someone didn't meet the external environment demands.

- ◆ Nursing student should do preparation prior to exams not one month or one day before exams.

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