

PP 23

Prevalence and factors associated with stress, anxiety, depression among undergraduate nurses in KAATSU International University (KIU), Sri Lanka during COVID-19 pandemic

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Background: Nurses play a crucial role as front-line professionals in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and rapid changes in the health sector may impact all dimensions of their health, nursing skills, and education. Prompt identification of challenges that affect nurses' psychosocial health is vital to improve the productive period in their own life and health sector.

Objective: The study aimed to identify the prevalence and factors associated with stress, anxiety, and depression among undergraduate nurses in KIU, Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods & Materials: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among undergraduate nurses using the simple random sampling method. A pre-tested web-based questionnaire consisting of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale 21 (DASS-21) was used to measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety, and stress. Data were collected from November to December 2020 and the response rate was 32%. Descriptive analysis and Chi-square test were performed. SPSS version 25.0 was used as the analysis tool. The study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of KIU, Sri Lanka. $P < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results: The mean age of the study sample ($n=90$) was 30.96 ± 3.48 years, and the majority was female (91.1%), married (58.9%), belong to less than 30 years old age category (56.7%), and had clinical experience less than five years (53.3%). The reported prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress were 13%, 7%, and 3% respectively. The working experience was associated with depression ($p < 0.001$) anxiety ($p = 0.006$), and stress ($p = 0.011$), while age was associated with the level of anxiety ($p = 0.006$) and depression ($p = 0.016$).

Conclusion: Considerable level of depression, anxiety, and stress is reported during the study period among nursing undergraduates who studied at KIU, Sri Lanka. Periodically surveys are encouraged to identify the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.