

Perceived Level of Stress and Coping Strategies among International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Nursing Students

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Abstract: Nursing students are experiencing stress on a daily basis due to their academic challenges. The effective use of coping strategies is important in handling stress and academic achievement. This study aims to identify the perceived level of stress, and their coping strategies among IIUM nursing students as well as their academic achievement. A descriptive cross-sectional design was used and the data were collected from 2nd, 3rd and 4th year nursing students from IIUM Kuantan (N=128). A set of questionnaires with sociodemographic data, Perceived Stress Scale and Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences were used as the instruments. The data were analysed by using SPSS version 19.0 with descriptive and inferential statistic (Chi square test). 7 (5.5%) of students have low level stress, 109 (85.1%) moderate level, and 12 (9.4%) high level stress. Under twelve domains, the students used different coping strategies and it showed 119 (93%) never smoke, 94 (73.4%) never used drugs, 83 (64.8%) never stay away from home, 82 (64.1%) seek spiritual support by talking to rabbi and praying in times of having stress. For academic performance, 1 (0.8%) of students have CGPA 3.51-4.00, 25 (19.5%) have CGPA 2.51-3.00, 102 (79.7%) with CGPA 3.01-3.50. No significant association between stress level and academic performance (CGPA) with p-value > 0.05 (0.447). However, 102 (86.9%) of students with moderate stress level have moderate CGPA (3.01-3.50). Majority of them apply positive and avoid negative behaviours. The students with stress still have their academic achievement and it may depend on individual students, and the use of coping strategies in facing stress, thus further study is recommended in the related area.

Keywords: stress, coping strategy, academic performance, CGPA.

INTRODUCTION

Everyone has faced different types of stressors and has experienced different level of stress in their life time. Stress is a normal feeling for human beings especially when they recognizes stress as a threat or endanger to their life. Many things can trigger stress response, either positive or negative changes in life in which they may have real or perceived threats. Managing their stress and facing the daily challenges with realistic expectations may lead a person to a happy and healthy living as well as a rewarding lifespan. It is inevitable for the students to have a constant demand of dealing with examinations, assignments, presentations and things to be completed on time. Thus, stress is part of the students' life and the good or bad results of it will be followed based on how the individual students cope with their stress.

According to [1], stress is more predominant in public service industries, such as education like health and social care; and public administration and defence. In the document issued by Health and Safety Executive, the Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimated that total

number of cases with the total number of cases of work related stress, depression or anxiety in 2015/16 was 488,000 cases, a prevalence rate of 1510 per 100,000 workers. 2009 mtvU AP report on Economy, College Stress and Mental Health Poll is stated that the impact of stress can be seen across all areas of students' lives, affecting from both academically and socially. According to this report, six out of ten students felt so stressed and they could not perform their work on one or more occasions with 41% once or twice, and 19% several times, 53% of students report having felt so stressed they didn't want to hang out with friends on one or more occasions with 35% once or twice and 18% several times. It is mentioned that concerns over finance and the economics may lead to stress in college students.

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Kumar & Bhukar [2] defines stress as a physiological response to perceived threat. It therefore

has negative effects on life's pressures and events and can generally be viewed as a set of neurological and physiological reactions that serve an adaptive function. Stress indicated that any life change that requires numerous readjustments can be perceived as stressful. Stress occurs through the life span of an individual. Numerous stressors experienced in life can affect people in different ways and with varying degrees of intensity. Many of these stressful life events are related to one another and repeated throughout the life course. According to Amposah [3], anxiety, academic alienation and future academic prospects and unfamiliarity with the educational and cultural norms added to their difficulties. Regardless of the stage of development, how one copes with the stress is determined in greater extent by the coping mechanisms developed from previous similar experiences. Thus, this study was conducted among the IIUM students with the key purpose of identifying the stress, stressors and their coping strategies. This research also investigates the relationship between the level of stress that they have experienced and their academic performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Kuantan Campus in Kulliyah of Nursing. A survey was conducted and a total of 128 from 2nd, 3rd year and 4th year students were selected to the survey.

A descriptive cross-sectional study design was used to identify the socio-demographic characteristics, perceived level of stress and coping strategies among nursing students, meanwhile the association between perceived level of stress and academic performance is identified using inferential statistic which is Chi-Square test. The sampling method of this study was universal sampling. The researchers explained briefly about the purpose of the study and the respondents need to answer all the questions. The questionnaires were collected after respondents had completed the questionnaires.

There is a set of questionnaires used as the instruments in this research. The tools used for data collection were Socio-demographic profile sheet,

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) develop by Dr. Cohen [4] was used to assess the level of stress among students based on their feelings and thoughts in a last one month and Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (ACOPE) developed by Patterson & Mc Cubbin [5] was used to assess the coping strategies used by students to overcome stress. The reliability mentioned was 0.85 as the questionnaire is done by another researcher before. Besides, the pilot study is done by asking the respondents understanding of the questionnaire.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to commencing the study, ethical approval was obtained from Kulliyah of Nursing Research Committee (KNRC) and International Islamic University Malaysia Research Ethics Committee (IREC). The students participated in the study were also asked permission to collect the data and the written informed consent were taken from them.

STATISTICS

Statistical analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Studies (SPSS) version 19.0. Questionnaires were scored and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Chi-square test was used to determine the association between level of stress and academic performance among IIUM Nursing students.

RESULTS

The socio-demographic data of respondents were classified according to gender, level of study and latest CGPA. Based on the data obtained, there were 22 (17.2%) respondents were males and 106 (82.8%) respondents were females. In regard to level of study, out of total participants (N=128), 30 (23.4%) are from 2nd year, 57 (44.5%) from 3rd year and 41 (32%) are from 4th year students. In term of latest CGPA, only 1 (0.8%) respondent have CGPA 3.51-4.00, 102 (79.7%) of the respondents have 3.01-3.50 CGPA and 25 (19.5%) of the respondents were 2.51-3.00 CGPA, there is no student under CGPA 2.01- 2.50 Table I below showed the detailed distribution of socio-demographic data among the respondents.

Table-1: Distribution of students according to socio-demographic variables

Socio-demographic variables	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	22	17.2
Female	106	82.8
Education level (Year)		
Second	30	23.4
Third	57	44.5
Forth	41	32.0
Latest CGPA		
2.51- 3.00	25	19.5
3.01- 3.50	102	79.7
3.51- 4.00	1	0.8

Perceived level of stress among IIUM Nursing Students

The nursing student's stress was measured by using Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) as shown in table 2. Majority of students reported that sometimes during the last month, they remain upset of something happened 63 (49.2%), unable to control important things of life 66 (51.6%), could not cope up with all the things 57 (44.5%), exhibit anger because of things outside of control 55 (43.0%) and felt difficulties about accomplishing things 64 (50.0%), difficulties were

piling up so high that you could not overcome them 64 (50.0%) and felling nervous and “stressed” in the last month 44 (34.4%).

However, majority of students reported that they fairly often use their ability to overcome personal problems 58 (45.3%), and they also reported that sometimes they are able to control irritation 66 (51.6%), feel that things are going their way 65 (50.8%), and they were on the top of the things 81(63.3%).

Table-II: Perceived level of stress among IIUM Nursing Students, N=128

Items	Never n (%)	Almost Never n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Fairly Often n (%)	Very Often n (%)
1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0 0	14 (10.9)	63 (49.2)	33 (25.8)	18 (14.1)
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	5 (3.9)	16 (12.5)	66 (51.6)	34 (26.6)	7 (5.5)
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed”?	0 0	7 (5.5)	44 (34.4)	60 (46.9)	17 (13.3)
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	1 (0.8)	10 (7.8)	5 (39.8)	58 (45.3)	8 (6.3)
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	2 (1.6)	7 (5.5)	65 (50.8)	47 (36.7)	7 (5.5)
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	4 (3.1)	30 (23.4)	57 (44.5)	34 (26.6)	3 (2.3)
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	1 (0.8)	13 (10.2)	66 (51.6)	37 (28.9)	11 (8.6)
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	3 (2.3)	27 (21.1)	81 (63.3)	13 (10.2)	4 (3.1)
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	6 (4.7)	26 (20.3)	55 (43.0)	29 (22.7)	12 (9.4)
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	7 (5.5)	25 (19.5)	64 (50.0)	21 (16.4)	11 (8.6)

Furthermore, the total scores of the all the subjects were categorized into three: Low (0-13), Moderate (14-26) and High (27-40). The findings revealed that out of 128 nursing students, 7 (5.5%) had

low, whereas 109 (85.1%) and 12 (9.4%) fall in the category of moderate and high stress respectively as shown in the table III.

Table-III: Level of Stress among IIUM Nursing Students, N=128

Level of Stress	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Low (Score from 0-13)	7	5.5
Moderate (Score from 14-26)	109	85.1
High (Score from 27-40)	12	9.4
Total	128	100

Coping strategies among IIUM Nursing students

The coping strategies used by nursing students to overcome stress were measured by using ACOPE. It

contains 12 domains such as; ventilating feelings, seeking diversions, relaxing, self-reliance, developing social support, solving family problem, avoiding,

seeking spiritual support, investing in close friends, seeking professional support, engaging in demanding

activities, and being humorous.

Table-IV: Stress Level Based on Socio Demographic Changes among IIUM Nursing Students, N=128

Demographic data	Low Stress Level N (%)	Moderate stress Level N (%)	High Stress Level N (%)
Gender			
Male	0	19 (14.84)	3 (2.34)
Female	7 (5.47)	90 (70.31)	9 (7.03)
Year of Study			
Second	1 (0.78)	25 (19.53)	4 (3.13)
Third	4 (3.13)	45 (35.16)	8 (6.25)
Fourth	2 (1.60)	39 (30.47)	0
Latest CGPA			
2.51-3.00	1 (0.78)	24 (18.750)	0
3.01-3.50	6 (4.69)	84 (65.63)	12 (9.38)
3.51-4.00	0	1 (0.78)	0

In areas of using coping strategies through ventilating feelings, students sometimes cope with stress by saying mean things to people be sarcastic 51 (39.8 %), swear 49 (38.3%), let off by complaining to friends 52 (40.6%) and cry 37 (28.9%). But they hardly get angry and yell at people 52 (40.6%), and let of by complaining to family 42 (32.8%). In regard to seeking diversions, most of the time the students like to listen music, stereo or radio 48 (37.5%) and sleep 65 (50.8%), but they never used drugs to deviate their stress 112 (87.5%). Moreover, 36 (28.1%) reported they tend to watch TV often, and sometimes go to movie 52 (40.6%), read a book 44 (34.4%), and shopping 49 (38.3%). But they hardly play video games to reduce stress 36 (28.1%).

For relaxation, students sometimes work on their hobby 52 (40.6%), engaged in day dream 52 (40.6%) and ride around in car 52 (40.6%). However, 56 (43.8%) of them tend to eat food often, and 46 (35.9%) eat most of the time. In the area of self-reliance, majority of them involve in good things 59 (46.1%), make own decisions 61 (47.7%), organize their life to do things 63 (49.2%) most of the time. And sometimes they work harder 66 (51.6%), involve in school activities 55 (43.8%), and think problems are not important 50 (39.1%).

In developing social support, sometimes students apologize 60 (46.9%), help others 67 (52.3%), and make friends 55 (43%). 63 (49.2%) of them often say nice things to others and 75 (58.6%) of them hardly blame to others. But, no students reported for never helping others, not making new friends, or not saying nice things to others. And 47 (36.7%) of them sometimes, 44 (34.4%) of them often, and most of the

time 19 (14.8%) talk to their friends to express their feelings.

In solving family problem, most of the time students prefer to share problem with their mother 39 (30.5%) contradicted to their father 2 (1.6%). 75 (58.6%) of them hardly talk to father. However, sometimes 49 (38.3%) of them compromise with parents, 55 (43%) going along parents' request, 51 (39.8%) do things with family, 38 (29.7%) share with brothers and sisters. In use of avoiding mechanism, it is reported that majority of them 119 (93%) never smoke, 94 (73.4%) never used drugs, 83 (64.8%) never stay away from home. And 45 (35.2%) reported that most of the time they try to see good things in their life.

To seek spiritual support, same percentage of students 82 (64.1%) talk to rabbi and pray in times of having stress. In regard to investing in close friends to reduce stress, 44 (34.4%) stated they are close with someone they care about, and 44 (34.4%) reported for never being with boyfriend or girlfriend. In seeking professional support, 64 (50%) of them never receive professional counselling, and 68 (53.1%) never talk to a counsellor.

In order to cope with their stress by engaging in demanding activities, students often reported that they figure out their problems 47 (36.7%), improve themselves 51 (39.8%), and work harder 50 (39.1%). And 57 (44.5%) of students stated that they sometimes perform strenuous activities. Lastly, being humorous in facing the stress, they often make a joke and keep a sense of humour 53 (41.4%) and try to be funny and make light of it 49 (38.3%) to cope with the stress they have been experiencing.

Table-V: Coping strategies among IIUM Nursing students

1. Ventilating feelings	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of time n (%)
• Say mean things to people be sarcastic	14 (10.9)	44 (34.4)	51 (39.8)	15 (11.7)	4 (3.1)
• Swear	25 (19.5)	43 (33.6)	49 (38.3)	7 (5.5)	4 (3.1)
• Let off steam by complaining to your friends	7 (5.5)	22 (17.2)	52 (40.6)	40 (31.3)	7 (5.5)
• Get angry and yell at people	39 (30.5)	52 (40.6)	34 (26.6)	3 (2.3)	0
• Let off steam by complaining to family members	29 (22.7)	42 (32.8)	32 (25.0)	17 (13.3)	8 (6.3)
• Cry	11 (8.6)	23 (18.0)	37 (28.9)	35 (27.3)	22 (17.2)

2. Seeking diversions	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Go to Movie	25 (19.5)	24 (18.8)	52 (40.6)	22 (17.2)	5 (3.9)
• Play Video Games	31 (24.2)	36 (28.1)	26 (20.3)	20 (15.6)	15 (11.7)
• Use Drugs	112 (87.5)	12 (9.4)	4 (3.1)	0	0
• Listen to Music, Stereo or Radio	1 (0.8)	8 (6.3)	33 (25.8)	38 (29.7)	48 (37.5)
• Read	19 (14.8)	41 (32.0)	44 (34.4)	17 (13.3)	7 (5.5)
• Go Shopping, Buy Things You Like	10 (7.8)	19 (14.8)	49 (38.3)	32 (25.0)	18 (14.1)
• Watch TV	10 (7.8)	29 (22.7)	30 (23.4)	36 (28.1)	23 (18.0)
• Sleep	0	3 (2.3)	13 (10.2)	47 (36.7)	65 (50.8)

3. Relaxing	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Work on a hobby	4 (3.1)	12 (9.4)	52 (40.6)	37 (28.9)	23 (18.0)
• Eat food	0	4 (3.1)	22 (17.2)	56 (43.8)	46 (35.9)
• Day dream	9 (7.0)	24 (18.8)	53 (41.4)	26 (20.3)	16 (12.5)
• Ride around in the car	17 (13.3)	31 (24.2)	52 (40.6)	18 (14.1)	10 (7.8)

4. Self-reliance	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Get a job or a work harder	19 (14.8)	19 (14.8)	66 (51.6)	19 (14.8)	5 (3.9)
• Try to think of good things	0	4 (3.1)	31 (24.2)	59 (46.1)	34 (26.6)
• Try to make your own decisions	0	5 (3.9)	35 (27.3)	61 (47.7)	27 (21.1)

• Organize your life that what you have to do	0	2 (1.6)	30 (23.4)	63 (49.2)	33 (25.8)
• Get more involved in activities in school	4 (3.1)	25 (19.5)	55 (43.0)	33 (25.8)	11 (8.6)
• Tell yourself that problem(s) is not important	7 (5.5)	33 (25.8)	50 (39.1)	27 (21.1)	11 (8.6)

5. Developing social support	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Blame others for what's going on	20 (15.6)	75 (58.6)	26 (20.3)	5 (3.9)	2 (1.6)
• Apologize to people	3 (2.3)	14 (10.9)	60 (46.9)	37 (28.9)	14 (10.9)
• Try to help other people solve their problems	0	9 (7.0)	67 (52.3)	42 (32.8)	10 (7.8)
• Try to keep up friendships or make new friends	0	8 (6.3)	55 (43.0)	52 (40.6)	13 (10.2)
• Say nice things to others	0	4 (3.1)	46 (35.9)	63 (49.2)	15 (11.7)
• Talk to friends about how you feel	1 (0.8)	17 (13.3)	47 (36.7)	44 (34.4)	19 (14.8)

6. Solving family problems	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Talk to your father about what bothers you	27 (21.1)	75 (58.6)	26 (20.3)	5 (3.9)	2 (1.6)
• Try to reason with parents and talk things out, compromise	19 (14.8)	29 (22.7)	49 (38.3)	17 (13.3)	14 (10.3)
• Go along with parents' request	2 (1.6)	8 (6.3)	55 (43.0)	52 (40.6)	13 (10.2)
• Do things with your family	2 (1.6)	8 (6.3)	51 (39.8)	49 (38.3)	18 (14.1)
• Talk to a brother or sister about how you feel	16 (12.5)	31 (24.2)	38 (29.7)	28 (21.9)	15 (11.7)
• Talk to your mother about what bothers you	11 (8.6)	22 (17.2)	27 (21.1)	29 (22.7)	39 (30.5)

7. Avoiding	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Smoke	119 (93.0)	2 (1.6)	1 (0.8)	3 (2.3)	3 (2.3)
• Use drugs prescribe by doctors	94 (73.4)	15 (11.7)	7 (5.5)	5 (3.9)	7 (5.5)
• Try to stay away from home as much as possible	83 (64.8)	24 (18.8)	14 (10.9)	5 (3.9)	2 (1.6)
• Try to see the good things	7 (5.5)	4 (3.1)	31 (24.2)	41 (32.0)	45 (35.2)
8. Seeking spiritual support	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Talk to minister, priest or rabbi	0	1 (0.8)	6 (4.7)	39 (30.5)	82 (64.1)
• Pray	0	1 (0.8)	6 (4.7)	39 (30.5)	82 (64.1)

9. Investing in close friends	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Be close with someone you care about	1 (0.8)	5 (3.9)	36 (28.1)	42 (32.8)	44 (34.4)
• Be with a boyfriend or girlfriend	44 (34.4)	22 (17.2)	30 (23.4)	17 (13.3)	15 (11.7)

10. Seeking professional support	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Get professional counselling	64 (50.0)	52 (40.6)	7 (5.5)	3 (2.3)	2 (1.6)
• Talk to counsellor at school about what bothers you	68 (53.1)	48 (37.5)	11 (8.6)	1 (0.8)	0

11. Engaging in demanding activities	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Do a strenuous physical activity (jogging, biking etc)	8 (6.3)	16 (12.5)	57 (44.5)	27 (21.1)	20 (15.6)
• Try, on your own, to figure out how to deal with your problems and tensions	0	0	47 (36.7)	52 (40.6)	29 (22.7)
• Try to improve yourself (get body in shape, get better grades, etc.)	2 (1.6)	0	49 (38.3)	51 (39.8)	26 (20.3)
• Work hard on school work or school projects	4 (3.1)	6 (4.7)	51 (39.8)	50 (39.1)	17 (13.3)

12. Being humorous	Never n (%)	Hardly n (%)	Sometimes n (%)	Often n (%)	Most of Time n (%)
• Joke and keep a sense of humour	0	8 (6.3)	39 (30.5)	53 (41.4)	28 (21.9)
• Try to be funny and make it light of it all	2 (1.6)	5 (3.9)	42 (32.8)	49 (38.3)	30 (23.4)

Association between Perceived Level of Stress and Academic Performance

Table-VI: Distribution of stress and Academic Performance (Latest CGPA)

	Low Stress n (%)	Moderate Stress n (%)	High Stress n (%)
Latest CGPA			
2.51-3.00	1 (0.78)	24 (18.750)	0
3.01-3.50	6 (4.69)	84 (65.63)	12 (9.38)
3.51-4.00	0	1 (0.78)	0

Chi-Square Tests

	Value
Chi-square, X ²	3.709
Significance value, p	0.447

The table above depicts the relationship of stress level of nursing students to the academic performance as measured by their latest CGPA. It shows that stress level of nursing students is found not significantly associated with their academic performance (p= 0.447). Based on this study, it can

conclude that there were no association between level of stress and academic performance (p> 0.05).

DISCUSSIONS

Findings revealed that out of 128 nursing students 109 (85.1%) had moderate stress whereas 7 (5.5%) had low stress and 12 (9.4%) had high stress. It

was contradicted with the study conducted at private nursing institute of Punjab by R. Kumar & Nancy [8] on 180 students in which stress level is not much different among nursing students; moderate stress (34%), low stress (33%), and high stress (33%). Moreover, stress level of junior nursing students is found to be slightly higher than senior nursing students[9] stated in research that senior student nurses which is in third year and fourth year showed lower levels of stress in comparison with junior student nurses. It might be related to the fact that as students get into a higher level, they were able to adapt and modify to the academic and clinical requirements of the program, have already developed mastery in nursing skills needed in their clinical experience. Nonetheless, the stress level of the students in this research is not much different based on their level of study.

Coping with stress for a student nurse is a dynamic and continuing process, aimed at survival, growth and maintenance of the individual integrity. In the present study, the students used different coping strategies and it showed 119 (93%) never smoke, 94 (73.4%) never used drugs, 83 (64.8%) never stay away from home. Moreover, most of the time 82 (64.1%) of the respondents seek spiritual support by talking to rabbi and praying during facing the stress. Although many studies have found high smoking and drinking rates among students, these rates are low in IIUM Kuantan students as they are Muslims. Every Muslim learns prayer from childhood and prays five times daily, and these negative behaviours are forbidden as part of their belief. Then, as stated by Borchard [3], most of the time student cope with stress by "pray" (64.1%). It shows that religion and faith provide social support, a consistent element of happiness and good health.

In the area of seeking diversions, the majority of students reported most of the time "sleep" 65 (50.8%) respondents, it is supported by [10] changes in sleep were significantly moderated by the individual's coping style done in thirty-six undergraduate students (28 women and 8 men) majoring in psychology participated in the study. Moreover, music is one of the coping strategies to reduce stress, and in this study the students 48 (37.5%) used music, stereo, or radio as a way of their seeking diversion. In addition, in a research "The Effect of Music on the Human Stress Response" mentioned that those participants who listened to relaxing music prior to a stress task would show different stress responses in comparison to non-music control groups [11].

In term of getting the professional support, the results show nursing students never "getting professional counselling" 64 (50.0%) and "talking to a teacher or counsellor" 68 (53.1%). Agramovich, Hoskins, Gutierrez, & Bartlett [12] recommend that professional school counsellor's most unique role in the school setting is in the provision of direct counselling

services to students. One of the reasons students not seeing the counsellor might be their fear of people assumption they are problematic or weak students. American Psychological Association stated that people could benefit from social and emotional support from the counsellor by improving their self-esteem and sense of autonomy. They will be more able to cope with their problems with the strong social support they are receiving.

Out of 128 respondents, 56 (43.8%) of them often used to relieve their stress by eating food. Eventhough certain food helps reduce stress, as in the study of Martin *et al.* [13] which stated that participants with chronic stress have reduced urinary cortisol (an indicator of physiological stress levels) after eating 40 g/day of dark chocolate for two weeks as cited in study by [14]. Since unhealthy or uncontrolled diet could lead to obesity, and other chronic diseases, it need to make sure that the food they are consuming is well-balanced and have adequate nutrition.

The students used variety of coping mechanisms in dealing with stress which include both negative coping mechanisms that (ways that do more harm than good) and positive ways to manage stress (ways that benefit our lives). In this study, majority of the students tend to adopt positive behaviors and avoid negative behaviors. There are very few students say mean things to others 4 (3.1%), swear 4 (3.1), let off steam by complaining to friends 7 (5.5), and by complaining to family 8 (6.3) most of the time but they tend to apply positive ways often as working harder 50 (39.1), improve oneself 51 (39.8), think about good things 59 (46.1), make an own decisions when facing the stress 61 (47.7), organize their life when doing things 63 (49.2). By applying positivity, students will be able to concentrate more on their studies and achieve good grades rather than spending their energy in unproductive behaviours and unnecessary worries [15].

Moreover, this study aims to identify the relationship between level of stress and academic performance, and it was hypothesized that there is no relationship between nursing student's stress level and academic performance. The result showed relationship between stress level and academic performance of the respondents as referring to the table, level of stress is shown to be not significantly correlated to academic performance ($p > 0.05$). These finding are in line with the previous study conducted by [16] that which stated that there is no relationship between undergraduate students' stress level and academic achievement in their research "Stress and Academic Achievement among Undergraduate Students in Universiti Putra Malaysia".

CONCLUSION

In this study, 7 (5.5%) of students have low level stress, 109 (85.1%) moderate level, and 12 (9.4%) with high level stress. The students used different

coping strategies under the twelve domains. For academic performance, 1 (0.8%) of students have CGPA 3.51-4.00, 25 (19.5%) have CGPA 2.51-3.00, 102 (79.7%) with CGPA 3.01-3.50. It is noted that, out of students with moderate stress level, 102 (86.9%) students have moderate CGPA (3.01-3.50). However, the findings revealed that there is no significant association between stress level and academic performance (CGPA) with p-value (0.447). Even though, most of the students in this study have the moderate level of stress, their CGPA is varied depends on the individual students. This results are based only on the quantitative study and it was conducted in only one Nursing Kulliyah of the public University. Thus, further study are recommended to be conducted in other Universities. And, it is also suggested to use different methodologies to explore more about the relationship between coping mechanisms and students' academic performance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

IIUM - International Islamic University Malaysia
PSS - Perceived Stress Scale
ACOPE- Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences
KNRC – Kulliyah of Nursing Research Committee
IREC – IIUM Research and Ethics Committee
CGPA - Cumulative Grade Point Averag

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