CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO DEPRESSION AMONG NURSING STUDENTS

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Purpose: The college lifestyle and nursing curriculum is stressful, and can lead to depression. The purpose of this study is to discover which factors correlate with depression in the hopes of adding to our knowledge about depression in nursing students. This study aims to answer the following questions: What is the frequency of depressive symptoms in men vs. women nursing students? Which variables have the strongest relationship with depressive symptoms?

Methods: The Patient Health Questionnaire Symptom Checklist (PHQ-9) was used to evaluate depression and its contributing factors specifically in college nursing students. Factors studied include: gender, GPA, age, classification, sexual orientation, relationship status, and employment status. It was conducted using a sample of nursing students attending The University of Texas at Austin. The tool was administered using a proctor that is not affiliated with the nursing school to ensure anonymity. Students were given a hard copy of the survey to complete along with a cover letter explaining the study. A correlational statistical analysis was used for this study. The variables were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics version 19.0.

Findings: A total of 63 participants filled out the survey; 9 males and 53 females. However, one survey was omitted due to incomplete data. 34% of the total population who participated had mild depressive symptoms. 44% of the men (n = 4) and 34% of the women (n = 18) who participated in the study had mild depressive symptoms. Variables found to correlate significantly with depression were relationship status and grade point average (GPA). Being in a relationship was negatively correlated with total depression score (r = -.25; p = .05). GPA also had a negative relationship with PHQ-9 scores when scores were categorized into those with depression and without (r = -.26; p = .04).

Conclusions: The high percentage of men with mild depressive symptoms may be due to studying in a mostly female dominant career. The validity of the percentages may be skewed by the lack of male participants and small population sample. The variable found to have the strongest relationship with total score in depressive symptoms was relationship status. This study suggests that being in a relationship is associated with having a lower depressive symptom score. Those with a higher GPA were less likely to be categorized into the group with depression based on PHQ-9 scores. However, it cannot be concluded that being in a relationship or GPA were the cause of the lowered depressive scores.