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Perceived Stress, Coping Strategies and Emotional Intelligence among Nursing Students at School of Nursing Colombo

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Introduction: Nursing students experience high levels of stress during their study period which lead to psychological distress, poor academic outcomes, and high attrition rates. Coping strategies are used to deal with stress during their studentship. Emotional intelligence helps reduce stress and lessen effects of stress and found to be strongly associated with academic achievement, critical thinking, peer learning and help-seeking.

Objective: To assess perceived stress, coping strategies and emotional intelligence among nursing students at school of Nursing, Colombo.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 382 second- and third-year nursing students. Data were collected by online self-administered questionnaires. Validated Perceived Stress Scale, Brief Cope Scale and GENOS concise Inventory were used to collect perceived stress, coping strategy and emotional intelligence among participants respectively. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: Nearly 72% of the participants had the moderate levels of stress and 52% of the participants had lower levels of emotional intelligence. The participants reported the use of adaptive, rather than maladaptive coping strategies. A significant negative correlation was found between perceived stress and emotional intelligence ($r = -0.322$, $p=0.001$). Statistically significant differences were identified between level of emotional intelligence and gender ($p =0.049$).

Conclusions: Study shows a moderate level of stress and low level of emotional intelligence among Nursing students. Also, students used adaptive coping strategies more often than maladaptation. Future research is needed to explore the development, application, and evaluation of strategies to reduce stress and enhance emotional intelligence in nursing education.

Keywords: Perceived stress, Coping, Emotional intelligence, Nursing students, Sri Lanka