

# A STUDY TO ASSESS THE MENTAL HYGIENE PRACTISES AMONG THE STUDENTS OF A SELECTED NURSING COLLEGE.

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## Abstract

### **Background**

As per WHO mental health is defined as a state of well being in which every individual realises his/her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Mental health improves the quality of life and its outcomes. Mental hygiene practises like meditation, adequate rest, studying and learning, self reflection helps free an individual from influences which may be harmful to his mental growth and therefore hamper the full development of his potentialities.

The need of mental hygiene in the world today, ridden by delinquency, dependency and mental disorders, inefficiency and unrest are increasing. Mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety, affect our ability to participate in healthy behaviours. This study aims to assess the mental health score and the best responses of the students to various day to day problems faced to evaluate their mental health practises.

### **Objective**

Objective of the study - To assess the mental hygiene practises among the students of a selected nursing college.

To assess and compare the mental hygiene practises among the students.

### **Methods**

A quantitative non experimental descriptive cross sectional study design was followed. 50 nursing students studying in I, II and III year were selected through non probability convenient sampling. Consent was taken and self administered structured questionnaire was administered, which were answered under supervision of researcher. The questionnaire included three parts which assessed 07 socio demographic variables, mental health score of the students and mental hygiene practises.

### **Results**

Study revealed that majority 55(61.1%) of the students have good mental health 33(36.7%) had fair mental health whereas only 2 (2.2%) have poor mental health. Among mental health practises 44.4% will slap back in response to physical abuse, while 6.6% will verbally abuse the abuser. 51.1 % believe in daily praying while 2.2% never pray. Majority of the students(42.2%) stop talking to others in stress, while 35.5% find solution by themselves, 13.3% ask for help, 5.6% eat unusually and only 3.3% throw articles in stress. 72.2% have adequate sleep, 2.2% wake up at night due to nightmares. 65.6% of students are able to study after a stressful situation while 8.9% do not study at all, or go to sleep after praying. 36.7% think about what is going to happen as soon as they wake up in the morning.

### **Conclusion**

Majority of the students have good mental health scores. Assessment of Mental Health practises reveals that majority of the students follow healthy practises like discussing of their problems, maintaining personal hygiene, daily exercise etc. These nursing students are able to better face challenges and stressful situations in clinical areas and have healthy lifestyle habits.

## Introduction

### To be healthy as a whole, mental health plays a role.

According to WHO, mental health is defined as a state of well being in which every individual realises his/her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. Mental health describes a level of psychological well being or an absence of a mental disorder. It is the psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioural adjustment.

Mental Hygiene refers to - The need of mental hygiene in today's world is unquestioned. In the face of rising delinquency, dependency and mental disorders, inefficiency and unrest are increasing rather than diminishing.

Mental hygiene directs its attention to the prevention, cure and alleviation of social evils, and hence it is winning popular support. It aims to free an individual from influences harmful to his mental growth and therefore hamper the full development of his potentialities. It includes practises like –

1. Meditation
2. Getting Rest
3. Learning
4. Self Reflection
5. Exercising your imagination
6. Removing technological distractions

Research studies have shown that when people receive appropriate mental health care the use of medical care services declines. A study on people with anxiety disorder showed that after psychological treatment, the number of medical visits decrease by 90%, laboratory cost decrease by 50% and overall treatment costs dropped by 35%. Other studies show that people with untreated mental health problems visit a medical doctor twice as often as people who receive mental health care.

Nursing is a stressful profession and student nurses undergo rigorous training to become skilful trained professionals. Most of the students stay in the hostels away from their homes for the four years of their training. Student nurses work in the hospital wards alongside with nurse professionals and share their load of work in the wards. They perform night duties in the hospitals and perform basic care as well as advanced nursing procedures for the patients. Daily witnessing of illness and death puts a toll on their emotional health, and with that the added burden of tests, assignments and course requirements of a graduate programme.

Nurses as they spend maximum time with the sick, require to be emotionally stable and strong so as to be able to deal with them confidently and professionally. The need of the study was felt considering the emotional toll on the young student nurses who are not yet capable to handle the stresses of being professional nurses.

## Objectives

The objectives of the study - To assess the mental health and hygiene practises among the students.

## Methods

A nursing college with an affiliated tertiary care hospital in an urban area was selected for the study. Students of First, Second and Third Year were included in the study. Fourth year students were excluded as they were assumed to be more prepared and emotionally stable after three years of their training and also as they were part of the data collection team. A non experimental quantitative descriptive cross sectional research approach was adopted. Consent was taken and data was collected while the students were in their hostels, during the evening

hours. Sampling technique followed was convenient sampling. Sample size was 120 students with 40 students from each batch included in the study. The students were administered the questionnaire under the supervision of researchers. Data collected was tabulated and analysed.

The tool was a questionnaire which included three parts. Section I – Questionnaire on sociodemographic variable of the selected students. Section II – included a questionnaire to assess the mental health score of the students. Section III had questions to assess the mental hygiene practises among the students.

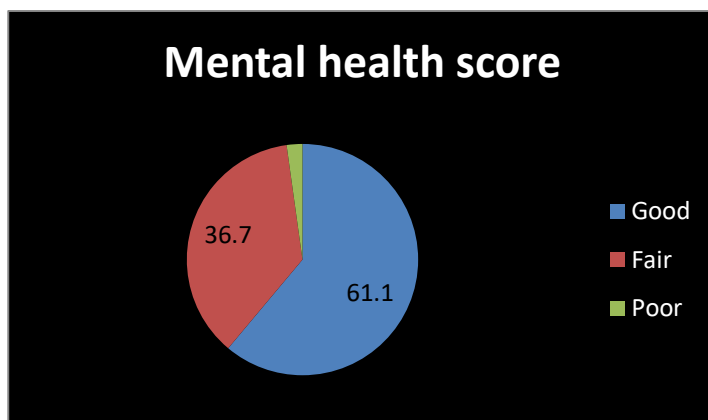
## Results

Description of sociodemographic variables of the selected students is as described in table – 1.

Table -1 – Description of nursing students as per demographic data :-

S No	Variables	Percentage
1	Age 17-20 21-24 24-27	67.8 31.1 31.1
2	Education before joining the course 12 <sup>th</sup> Degree Any Other	96.7 3.3 Nil
3	Year of Study 1 2 3	33.3 33.3 33.3
4	Birth Order 1 2 3 >3	65.6 27.8 06.7 Nil
5	No of Siblings 1 2 >2 None	52.2 35.6 05.6 06.7
6	Religion Hindu Muslim Christian Sikh Any other	77.8 05.6 13.3 02.2 1.1
7	Details of Parents Staying Together Divorced Forced Separation Demise of a parent Orphan	88.9 Nil 04.4 06.7 Nil

Mental Health Score of the selected students were as follows –



Mental Hygiene practises among the students reveal that -

1) On students reaction when their classmates laugh at them – 48.9% said that they laugh along with them, 38.9% said that they avoid the friends, 1.1% ask for the reason and fight and 10.1% show anger to their friends. 2) On their response to physical abuse 44.4% said they will slap back at the abuser, 27.8% will walk off from the place, 21.1% will ask for a reason and 06.6% will verbally abuse the person. 3) 51.1% pray daily, 15.6% pray only before facing any difficult situation, 2.2% never prays, 25.5 pray sometimes, 5.5% only pray before they have to achieve something. 4) Description of students response to stress reveals that 3.3% throw articles, 42.2% stop talking to others, 13.3% ask others for help, 35.5% find a solution by themselves, 5.6% eat more or less than usual when stressed. 5) On asked about their response when a known person smiles at them 85.5% acknowledge back, 2.2% show anger, 7.7% ignore the person, 4.4% do not show any reaction to them. 6) Students reaction when multiple activities have to be performed at a time, 2.2% keep the work for someone else, 28.9% procrastinate the work, 62.2% prioritise the work and 6.7% sit & cry over fate. 7) On their reaction towards failure 2.2% blame others, 53.3% work hard for next time, 26.7% become sad, 17.8% said it doesn't matter to them. 8) 72.2% have sound sleep at night, 16.7% sleep with interruptions, 8.9% fall asleep only late in the night, and 2.2% wake up in the night due to nightmares. 9) 16.7% exercise 5 times a week, 21.1% exercise daily, 2.2% do not exercise at all, 12.2% exercise rarely, 47.8% exercise only during compulsory PT and games. 10) On matters of personal hygiene 86% students bathe daily, 14% bathe only when they feel like.

31.1% pray for a while on waking up , 18.9% check mail & whatsapp, 12.2% plan for the day ahead, 36.7% think about what is going to happen and 1.1% think about what happened yesterday and brood over it. Description of students reaction to an exam the next day revealed that 65.6 students will study as much as possible, 8.9% do not study at all, 10% feel stressed about the exam, 8.9% go to sleep after praying, and 6.7% study the whole night.

## Discussion

The results reveal that among the selected nursing students majority had good mental health score, 2.2 % only had poor mental health score. The mental hygiene practises of the students in prayers and exercise show that though many of the students practise them daily , there are students who do them only when required or don't do them at all. This trend might be as the nursing students are in the adolescent age and might not spend much time in spiritual and healthy activities. On questions regarding response to physical abuse and their reaction to classmates laughing at them, few students responded that they will show anger at the friend, fight back, slap back at the person or verbally abuse the person. The students response to stress show that many still follow unhealthy practises like throw articles, fight with someone or have eating disorders. These are the typical unhealthy practises seen in adolescent students. The stress of nursing curriculum also adds up on the pre existing conditions and makes it more difficult for the students to cope up. On having to complete multiple activities, majority of students reveal a negative attitude towards completing work by procrastinating or keeping work for someone else. The large

amount of nursing curriculum or the unpleasant work to be completed in the clinical or academic area could be the reason for the students to not complete their work on time.

Sleep which is an important indicator of mental health, exposes that there are students who wake up with nightmares in the night, and those who are not able to sleep comfortably in the night. These might be because of the student's unhealthy sleep hygiene habits, excessive use of mobile phones, any worries about their personal life, stress of the profession etc. On habits followed as soon as they wake up, many of the students as seen in the present day adolescent children, check their whatsapp and emails. This shows the excessive dependence of the students on technological gadgets.

### Conclusion

Nursing is a stressful profession and grooming of nursing students to be excellent professionals requires them to be fit physically as well as mentally. Adolescence and the stress of the nursing curriculum add upon the burdens to the young nursing students making it difficult for them to complete the course successfully. This study highlights the mental health scores of the students and also the various practises of the students in different daily life situations. These responses of the students can be evaluated for their appropriateness and acceptability. The students who give unacceptable responses can be counselled and encouraged to follow healthy practises.

**Keywords** – Nursing students, Mental Hygiene, Mental hygiene practises.

**Conflict of Interest** – Nil

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