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## Original Article

### Cognitive Appraisal and Psychological Health among Nursing Students

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#### ABSTRACT:

**Background:** University students are faced with a whole range of stressful problems and situations. The present study was conducted to determine cognitive appraisal, and psychological health among nursing students. **Materials & Methods:** The present study was conducted on 380 nursing students of both genders. GHQ score was recorded 3 months before, at examination and after examination. **Results:** Out of 380, males were 120 and females were 260. There was significant difference in GHQ score in males and females ( $P < 0.05$ ). GHQ score at examination period is highly correlated to self-efficacy, threat, challenge and stakes. **Conclusion:** GHQ score system is an effective method of recording stress among students. However, large scale studies are required to substantiate the results obtained in this study.

**Key words:** Cognitive Appraisal, GHQ score, Psychological Health, Nursing, Stress.

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#### INTRODUCTION

University students are faced with a whole range of stressful problems and situations. New developmental demands, the need for adaptation to a new and demanding educational process, the relationships with other students, as well as anxiety regarding future perspectives and career, are situations highly distressing for the student population.<sup>1</sup> Students also have to deal with a series of difficulties, such as assignments, examinations, and other study demands during daily academic life.<sup>2</sup> These difficulties are often related to the development of a series of psychological problems, such as depressive symptoms, poor self-esteem, anxiety, procrastination and drop-out.

According to this approach, stress is rather a process in which a person evaluates the situation and influences in an active way the part of a stressor through behavioural, cognitive and emotional strategies. Stress is the condition

that results when person-environment transactions lead the individual to perceive a discrepancy between the environmental and his co-workers.<sup>3</sup>

Many origins of stress have been identified when talking about intern nurses; these origins may include insufficient salaries, staff shortages, heavy workloads and unfortunate work environments because of inadequate materials and supplies in governmental health settings.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Researchers postulated that the psychological effect of nursing dying or critically ill patients is also a significant source of stress to the just graduate nurses. Another important source of stress in the internship experience is that providing comprehensive care for patients may expose the new nurses to be involved in their patients' emotional distress as well as their physical difficulties.<sup>5</sup> The present study was conducted to determine cognitive appraisal, and psychological health among nursing students.

**MATERIALS & METHODS**

The present study was conducted in the Selected College of Nursing, Faridkot, Punjab. It comprised of 380 nursing students of both genders. All were informed regarding the study and written consent was obtained. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to the study.

General information such as name, age, gender etc. was recorded. Psychological health was assessed by the 28-item version of the General Health Questionnaire (Table

III).GHQ is a well known and extensively validated screening questionnaire, and it provides a global index of psychological health. Self-efficacy expectations for dealing with the examination period were measured by a 10-item questionnaire comprising of two factors. GHQ score was recorded 3 months before, at examination and after examination. Results thus obtained were subjected to statistical analysis. P value less than 0.05 was considered significant.

**RESULTS**

**Table I: Distribution of subjects**

	<b>Total- 380</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Number	120	260

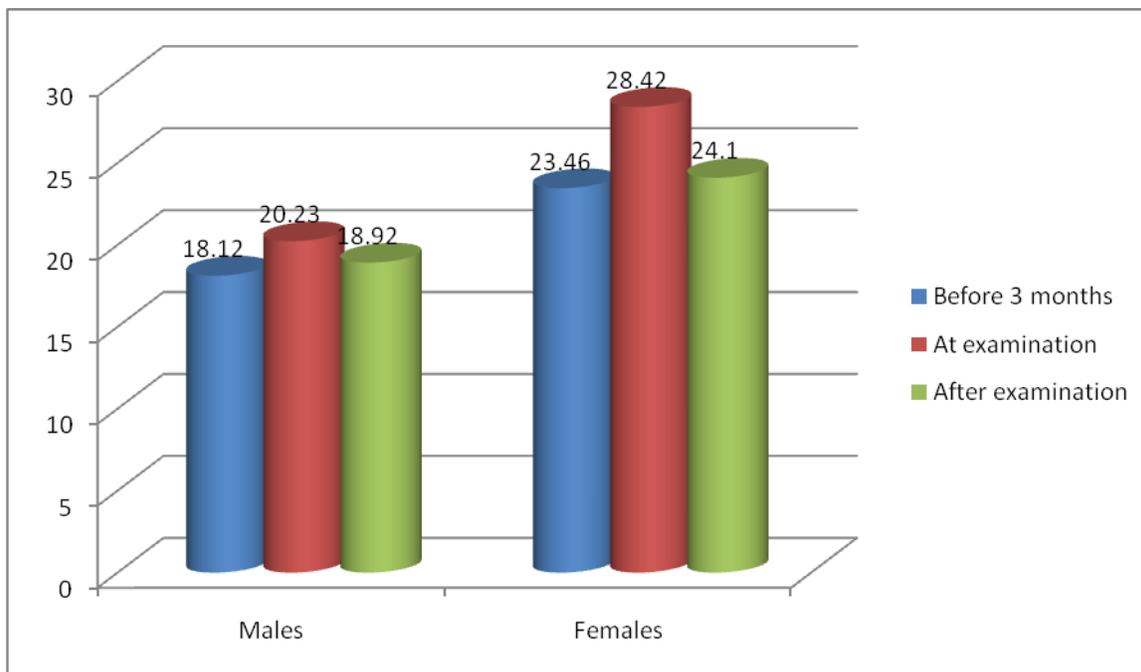
Table I shows that out of 380, males were 120 and females were 260.

**Table II: Recording of GHQ score**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>GHQ score</b>			<b>P value</b>
	<b>Before 3 months</b>	<b>At examination</b>	<b>After examination</b>	
Males	18.12	20.23	18.92	0.02
Females	23.46	28.42	24.10	

Table II shows that there was significant difference in GHQ score in males and females ( $P < 0.05$ ). GHQ score at examination period is highly correlated to self-efficacy, threat, challenge and stakes.

**Graph I: GHQ score**



**Table III: GHQ questionnaire used in study**

No.	Questionnaire
1	Lost much sleep over worry
2	Felt constantly under strain?
3	Been able to concentrate on what you are doing?
4	Felt that you are playing useful part in things?
5	Been able to face up to your problem?
6	Felt capable of making decisions about things?
7	Felt you could not overcome your difficulties?
8	Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?
9	Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?
10	Been feeling unhappy or depressed?
11	Been losing confidence in yourself?
12	Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?

## DISCUSSION

The General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) is widely used internationally and locally to measure mental health status especially in detection of emotional disorders such as distress. Since Goldberg introduced the GHQ in 1978, it has been translated into 38 different languages, testament to the validity and reliability of the questionnaire.<sup>6</sup> Reliability coefficients of the questionnaire have ranged from 0.78 to 0.95 in various studies. It has four versions based on the number of items; GHQ-60, GHQ-30, GHQ-28 and the shortest version GHQ-12. Each item is accompanied by four responses, typically being 'not at all', 'no more than usual', 'rather more than usual' and 'much more than usual'. There are two recommended methods for scoring the GHQ. The first scoring method ranged from 0 to 3 respectively.<sup>7</sup>

In present study, there were 120 males and 160 females. We observed that there was significant difference in GHQ score in males and females ( $P < 0.05$ ). GHQ score at examination period is highly correlated to self-efficacy, threat, challenge and stakes. We found that Between GHQ score before and after the examination period there is a Pearson  $r = 0.57$ ,  $P < 0.001$ . Both examination and study self-efficacy expectations are positively related to positive approach.

Ciarrochiet al<sup>8</sup> conducted a study in which sixty volunteer sports studies dissertation students (male:  $n = 29$ ; female:  $n = 31$ ) completed an adapted Cognitive appraisal of health scale and brief COPE on 4 occasions over the 6 weeks before dissertation submission. Repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance indicated a significant main effect for gender, with no main effect for changes over time and no significant interaction effect. Results demonstrated that males perceived the dissertation to be significantly more threatening and less challenging than females. With regard to coping, males used more active coping, positive reframing, planning, and acceptance of the stressor, with lower scores for self-blame, venting of emotions, and behavioral disengagement. The results

suggest that, for this student population, the dissertation did not become increasingly stressful in the period before submission. Clear relationships were also evidenced between primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and coping.

Studies suggested that the cognitive appraisal of a stressor involves both primary and secondary appraisals that occur at virtually the same time and interact to determine the significance and meaning of events with regard to well-being. During primary appraisal, an individual considers the personal significance of a situation with regard to their own values, personal beliefs, situational intentions, and goal commitments. Primary appraisal considers the implications of a stressor for well-being through interpreting situations in one of three ways: (a) irrelevant, where there are no implications for well-being; (b) benign/positive where the demands of the task are perceived as not threatening and it is possible to preserve or enhance well-being; (c) stressful where the demands of the task are perceived to threaten well-being.<sup>9,10</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Authors found that GHQ score system in effective method of recording stress among students. However, large scale studies are required to substantiate the results obtained in this study.

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