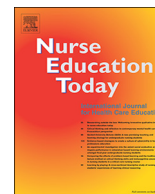




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Quality of life of nursing students from nine countries: A cross-sectional study



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ABSTRACT

Background: Nursing student life is stressful as a result of the work they exert to learn concepts ranging from basic to complicated issues and health concerns for maintaining overall human health. Hence, assessing the quality of life (QOL) of nursing students is important to determine if they have excellent well-being levels as they go through the learning process.

Objectives: This study measured and compared QOL of respondents by country of residence, and identified the QOL predictors of students.

Design: Descriptive, cross-sectional design.

Settings: A multi-country study conducted in Chile, Egypt, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United States of America.

Participants: A convenience sample of 2012 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students.

Methods: A self-administered questionnaire containing demographic characteristic items and the World Health Organization QOL-BREF (WHOQOL-BREF) was used to gather data from respondents.

Results: The highest overall QOL was recorded in the physical health domain, whereas the lowest was in the social health domain. The perceived highest and lowest QOL dimension varied between countries. Age, country of residence, and monthly family income showed statistically significant multivariate effect on the aspects of QOL.

Conclusions: Considering their stressful lives, the present study underscores the importance of ensuring the highest level of well-being among nursing students. The maintenance of high levels of well-being among nursing students should also be prioritized to maximize their learning and ensure their satisfaction in their student life.

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1. Introduction

Quality of life (QOL) can be defined instinctively and felt differently across varying environment, health status, and psychosocial situations. Studying nursing requires students to have a balance on these aspects to establish quality in their daily lives, but nursing student life can be overwhelming due to the amount of work they exert to learn concepts ranging from basic to complicated issues and health concerns to maintain overall human health. The rigorous education nursing students undergo one of the many reasons the nursing profession regarded as one of the most challenging professions. Nursing students face abundant stress in their daily lives, such as stress through the caring of patients, assignments and workloads, and negative interactions with staff and faculty (Labrague et al., 2017). Also, as university students, they are in their developmental period, assuming additional responsibilities with increased independence (Yildirim et al., 2013), such as moving away from home, dealing with peer pressure, independently managing finances, and navigating challenges of personal relationships (Bhandari, 2012). Wolf et al. (2015) identified problematic relationships and time management issues as the major stressors among nursing students in the US.

Moreover, nursing students deal with academic stress. According to Por (2005), student nurses experience more stress compared with other health science students and the general population. In a systematic review, Pulido-Martos et al. (2015) found the most common stressor nursing students experience is related to academics. They have heavier academic workloads, regularly deal with anxiety related to examinations or assessments (e.g., fear of failing and dropping out), and extensively navigate the educational environment (e.g., relationships with instructors and preceptors). The clinical side of nursing education also causes them stress due to their lack of knowledge and skills leading them to fear committing mistakes in caring for patients. They also report experiencing stress related to communicating with physicians and nursing staff during clinical rotations (Gibbons et al., 2011; Pulido-Martos et al., 2015). Eswi et al. (2013) presented baccalaureate Saudi nursing students reported their most commonly experienced stressors as responsibility overload (57%), having lower grades than hoped for (43%), not having enough sleep (43%), and too many requirements from them at the same time (42%).

The studies presented above suggest nursing students' stress may influence their QOL. The learning environment of nursing students, which includes extensive classroom and clinical time, problematic teacher-student encounters, the absence of leisure time and areas, inadequate sleep, rest and eating habits, lack of exercise, and academic pressures, may affect their lifestyle. These factors may, in turn, influence their QOL (Arronqui et al., 2011).

The concept of QOL is subjective and multidimensional as it is influenced by factors regarding education, socioeconomic status as well as socio-cultural aspects according to Orley and Kuyken (1994). Quality of Life (QOL) has been generally defined by scholars as an individual's perception of the general and constant state of well-being (Zullig et al., 2005). The philosopher Aristotle stated people conceive good life or well-being to be the same as happiness. The World Health Organization (WHO, 1998) defined QOL as the "individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns." (p. 1). This demarcation has been closely associated with the concept of health, which extends the notion of the absence of disease to broader concepts of physical health, psychological health, independence, social relationships, environmental domain, and spirituality. Thus, QOL is a subjective measurement of one's physical and mental health and covers multiple domains such as physical, psychological, economical, spiritual, and social well-being (Wong et al., 2001).

These domains are commonly mentioned in QOL research across diverse cultures and populations (Lam, 2015; The WHOQOL Group, 1998). Specifically, for nursing students, it can be defined as having a safe learning environment that also welcomes the idea of student leisure time, availability of support and resources to manage stress situations experienced, an appreciation of learning activities engaged in, sufficient time to engage in the nursing course, and good student-professor relationship (Arronqui et al., 2011).

QOL assessment is essential to determine if nursing students have excellent well-being levels as they go through the learning process. Souza et al. (2012) suggested educational institutions assess students' QOL to improve the quality of education they provide. For instance, in a cross-sectional study that conducted using the WHOQOL-BREF among preclinical medical students in Saudi Arabia, high academic performance of students was positively associated with their QOL, particularly on their physical health, psychological health, social relations and environment domains (Shareef et al., 2015). Furthermore, Goldin et al. (2007) observed that QOL is related to student attrition rates and academic achievements and QOL starts to decline as they progress in their medical studies. In the studies conducted by Saube et al. (2004) and Oliveira and Ciampone (2008), nursing students suggested negative impacts on their QOL. Yildirim et al. (2013) reported nursing students' life satisfaction is directly correlated with QOL. Souza et al. (2012) indicated nursing students who experienced highly intense depression symptoms were more likely to report negative QOL scores. However, further exploration of the QOL among nursing students in different perspectives is urgent as stressful situations have been continuously linked to student's poor perception of QOL in multiple studies (Lee et al., 2014; Song, 2012). Thus, this study is the first multi-country study examining nursing students' QOL perception, which can provide evidence on how QOL varies across countries. This study provides insights into the increasing demand to ensure excellent well-being of nursing students that can be attributed to better academic performance and a more sound and holistic process of immersing one's self in the practice of professional nursing in the future.

2. Aims of the Study

This study aims to measure the QOL of nursing students from nine countries. Specifically, it (1) measured the QOL of the respondents in terms of physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental domains, (2) compared the QOL of the respondents by country of residence, and (3) identified the QOL predictors of students.

3. Methods

3.1. Study Design, Sample and Settings

This descriptive, cross-sectional design included a convenience sample of 2012 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students from nine countries, namely, Chile, Egypt, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United States of America (USA). Chile and Hong Kong have 5-year BSN program with the 5th year in the program focused on clinical internship, while the rest of the countries have 4-year BSN program. Participants were recruited from the researchers' respective colleges of nursing. Students were invited to participate if they met the following inclusion criteria: (1) enrolled in the BSN program of participating schools, (2) full-time student, (3) registered in the 1st to 4th year of the nursing program, and (4) hold nationality in the country of residence. Students directly supervised by the researchers were excluded in this study. The sample size was entered in a post hoc statistical power analysis using the G*Power version 3.1.9.2 software to identify the power achieved by the sample. The analysis revealed that

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