

## Cross-sectional study

# Coping strategies and resilience in students should be supported by nursing curricula

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**Commentary on:** Drach-Zahavy A, Goldblatt H, Admi H, *et al.* A multilevel examination of nursing students' resilience in the face of the COVID-19 outbreak: a cross-sectional design. *J Adv Nurs* 2021.

## Implications for practice and research

- ▶ There is a need to ensure that student nurses are not unduly exposed to the risk of developing psychological distress before entering the workforce.
- ▶ Future research should focus on the most effective resilience building interventions for student nurses.

## Context

COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating in several domains of human life. One area that has been impacted is the healthcare workforce (which also includes nursing students undergoing training). Drach-Zahavy *et al*'s study examined nursing students' stress and coping with the pandemic. The authors focused on how different levels of resilience have enabled nursing students to improve their well-being and reduce strain symptoms during the pandemic.<sup>1</sup>

## Methods

A cross-sectional design was used to examine relative contribution of different levels of resilience in improving nursing students' well-being and decreasing their strain symptoms. The study tested four hypotheses, these were the relationship between nursing students' perceived stress, trait resilience, problem-solving and engagement in emotion coping strategies, their perception of the university's support as well as their trust in national policymakers on their strain symptoms. Sample was drawn from five universities and colleges across Israel.<sup>1</sup> Established tools were used to measure perceived stress, coping strategies, resilience and strain symptoms.<sup>1</sup> Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple hierarchical regression analysis.

## Findings

The study findings suggest that personal resilience was an important factor that enabled nursing students to maintain their well-being as well

as reduce the impact of strain symptoms during the pandemic. Nursing students experienced less strain symptoms and improved well-being, knowing that the government had measures to manage the pandemic. Equally, there was a higher level of resilience expressed knowing that their universities were well prepared to locally handle the pandemic.

## Commentary

The study examined the relative contribution of different levels of resilience in improving nursing students' well-being and reducing strain symptoms during COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Resilience is described as positive adaptation or ability to maintain mental health (MH), despite experiencing adversity.<sup>2</sup> This study is important in terms of preparing the nursing workforce of the future. Psychological distress (PD) exists among the general population during adverse events. Nursing students are not immune to these events; however, there is an added level of stress that is present within this population, which increases their risk factors.<sup>3</sup> The quality of patient care provided has been associated to the level of well-being of nurses providing care.<sup>4</sup>

Risk factors for PD include stress and lack of inner and external resources (resilience).<sup>5,6</sup> This study reported that nursing students' resilience was significantly and negatively linked to perceived symptoms and factors such as the response of the students' institution to the pandemic and trust in policymakers as contributing to the level of resilience and strain symptoms experienced by the students.<sup>1</sup>

There is a need to develop effective resilience building interventions such as resilience training incorporated into the curriculum. There is a role for universities training nursing students to help reduce their risk of PD, especially given the fact that PD is implicated in the development of future MH problems. Beyond the development of crisis plans, it is important to engage students in regular activities that would promote overall well-being in the absence of a pandemic. The pandemic has highlighted the need for MH promotion within the future nursing workforce which is paramount for a sustainable workforce.

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