

Integrating Religious Values and Coping-Stress Education to Strengthen Nursing Students' Mental Health

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Nursing students often encounter high levels of stress that can negatively affect their mental health and academic performance. Integrating religious values into coping and stress management education has emerged as an innovative approach to strengthen students' resilience and well-being. **Method:** This community service activity involved 208 fourth-semester nursing students selected through total sampling. A 90-minute session included lectures, class presentations, and educational videos on religious-based coping and stress management. Knowledge levels were measured using a validated 20-item questionnaire administered before and after the session. **Results:** Pre-test results indicated that most students had low to moderate knowledge about religious-based coping and stress management. Post-test findings demonstrated a significant improvement, with increased high and moderate knowledge levels and a decline in low knowledge scores ($p < 0.05$, Wilcoxon signed-rank test). **Conclusion:** Integrating religious values with coping-stress education effectively enhances nursing students' mental health knowledge, supporting their readiness to manage stress in clinical and academic settings. Future programs should adopt culturally relevant frameworks to ensure sustained impact.

Keywords: *Coping education; mental health; nursing students; religious values; stress management*

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is a critical aspect of nursing students' overall well-being and academic performance. Nursing education is inherently demanding, often exposing students to high levels of stress, clinical anxiety, and emotional fatigue (Pulido-Martos et al., 2012). Persistent stress and insufficient coping strategies may lead to burnout, decreased empathy, and even mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety (Sharma et al., 2020). Therefore, implementing effective interventions to enhance nursing students' coping capacities is essential for their professional development and personal resilience. An integrative approach that combines psychological and spiritual dimensions is increasingly recognized as impactful.

Religious values have long been identified as a protective factor against mental distress, providing individuals with hope, meaning, and a framework for acceptance and endurance (Koenig, 2012). In the context of nursing students, embedding religious perspectives within stress management programs may promote inner peace and moral grounding. Such integration encourages students to draw

strength from faith-based practices such as prayer, meditation, or communal support (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015). Moreover, aligning coping mechanisms with students' spiritual beliefs can enhance the relevance and acceptability of mental health interventions (Purnell et al., 2019). Consequently, the synergy between religious values and educational interventions may offer a holistic strategy to mitigate stress and anxiety among nursing students.

Coping-stress education focuses on equipping students with knowledge and practical skills to identify stressors and implement adaptive coping strategies (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). Techniques commonly emphasized include problem-solving, emotional regulation, time management, and cognitive reframing. When religious teachings are incorporated, these techniques are enriched by cultural and moral contexts familiar to the students (Kaur et al., 2021). This culturally congruent approach may foster higher engagement and sustained behavioral change. Thus, a coping-stress education program grounded in students' religious backgrounds can cultivate resilience and mental well-being more effectively.

Given these considerations, this community service initiative aims to develop and deliver an intervention integrating religious values and coping-stress education tailored for nursing students. By doing so, it addresses the growing concern over mental health challenges in nursing education and responds to students' cultural and spiritual needs. The program includes structured workshops, group discussions, and practical exercises that emphasize both psychological and spiritual coping resources. It is expected that students who participate will demonstrate improved stress management abilities, enhanced coping confidence, and strengthened mental resilience. Ultimately, this initiative aspires to contribute to the formation of competent, compassionate, and mentally healthy future nurses.

METHOD

A community engagement activity aimed at enhancing nursing students' mental health through a religious perspective and coping-stress education was implemented on June 20, 2023, at the Undergraduate Nursing Program, Faculty of Health Sciences, Kusuma Husada University, Surakarta. The session lasted for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participants included all fourth-semester undergraduate nursing students, with a total sampling technique employed to recruit 208 students. The educational intervention involved direct lectures, in-class presentations, and the use of informational videos focusing on religiously-informed coping strategies and stress management skills. A self-developed questionnaire consisting of 20 validated and reliable items was utilized to evaluate student knowledge on the subject matter.

Student knowledge was assessed at two points: before and after the educational session. Pre-test and post-test questionnaires were administered to measure understanding of religious-based coping and stress management. The knowledge levels were then categorized into three groups: high, moderate,

and low. Descriptive statistical methods and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test were applied for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A religious-based coping and stress management awareness program was conducted for 208 nursing students. The pretest results showed that 118 students (56.7%) had a low level of knowledge; these students were not familiar with the definition, benefits, and objectives of religious-based coping and stress management, while 85 students (40.9%) demonstrated a moderate and 5 students (2.4%) high level of knowledge. The post-test results indicated an overall improvement in students' understanding of religious-based coping and stress management. Based on the post-test findings, no students remained at a low knowledge level; there was an increase, with 63 students (30.3%) achieving a high level of knowledge and 111 students (53.4%) demonstrating a moderate level of knowledge. Although 34 students (16.3%) still showed a low level of knowledge, there was a clear overall improvement when comparing pretest and post-test results. The following diagram illustrates the comparison of knowledge levels before and after the intervention.

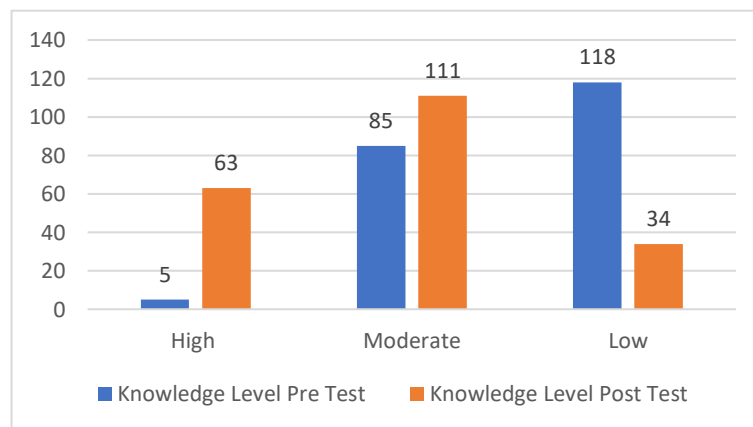


Figure 1. Students' Knowledge Levels of Religious-Based Coping and Stress Management: Pretest and Post-test Results

Comparison of nursing students' knowledge levels regarding religious-based coping and stress management before and after the educational intervention. The results show a notable increase in the proportion of students with high and moderate knowledge levels after the program, accompanied by a substantial decrease in the number of students with low knowledge levels.

Nursing education presents unique psychological challenges, with students frequently exposed to stressful academic and clinical situations (Choi et al., 2020). Excessive stress without adequate coping resources may lead to mental health deterioration, reduced academic performance, and increased dropout rates (Mantri et al., 2021). This study's findings confirm that a substantial proportion of students initially possessed insufficient knowledge about effective coping strategies and stress management rooted in religious values. Similar studies have highlighted a lack of coping literacy among nursing undergraduates globally (Kim & Lee, 2021). Thus, innovative interventions that address both cognitive and spiritual dimensions are urgently needed.

The integration of religious values into stress management education provides an additional layer of support by aligning coping techniques with students' personal beliefs (Rahim et al., 2021). Evidence suggests that spiritual practices, such as prayer and meditation, can significantly lower perceived stress and foster emotional stability (Lee & Miller, 2022). The increase in high knowledge levels after the intervention indicates that students resonate more with culturally familiar concepts (Abdullah et al., 2020). This aligns with findings by Aziz et al. (2022), who demonstrated that religious-based stress interventions enhanced students' coping confidence. Therefore, religious context should be considered a valuable component in mental health promotion.

Education interventions should not only impart theoretical knowledge but also encourage the application of coping strategies in daily life (Han et al., 2020). Combining lectures with engaging videos and discussions, as applied in this project, has proven to be an effective method for increasing understanding and retention (Hwang & Choi, 2021). Recent studies emphasize the role of multimedia and interactive modules in mental health education (Park et al., 2023). By integrating religious narratives, students may find deeper motivation to internalize and practice stress management skills (Yusoff et al., 2020). Continuous reinforcement through follow-up sessions is recommended to maintain long-term benefits.

This study's outcome aligns with the theoretical framework that resilience is strengthened through personal meaning and cultural congruence (Lim et al., 2021). Religious coping, as part of broader spiritual health, has been linked to lower anxiety and depression rates among nursing students (Tan et al., 2022). Additionally, culturally sensitive stress management interventions have been shown to reduce burnout and compassion fatigue (Singh et al., 2021). The current findings further support implementing holistic educational approaches that consider the cultural and spiritual contexts of learners (Rahman et al., 2021). This holistic model can potentially be adapted to other health professions education settings.

While the results are promising, there are limitations to consider. The study relied on self-reported knowledge assessments, which may be subject to bias (Kumar et al., 2022). Furthermore, the single-

session design limits insights into long-term retention and behavior change. Future studies should incorporate longitudinal designs and include measures of actual stress management behaviors and psychological well-being (Lim et al., 2023). Collaboration with religious leaders and mental health professionals could also enhance program credibility and reach (Ali et al., 2020). Broader implementation and evaluation in diverse nursing schools are recommended.

In conclusion, the significant improvement in students' knowledge highlights the feasibility and value of integrating religious principles into coping and stress management education. Such interventions align well with students' cultural identities and enhance their readiness to manage academic and clinical stressors (Zainuddin et al., 2022). Institutions should institutionalize similar programs and provide ongoing support through workshops, counseling, and peer mentoring (Fadzil et al., 2021). Building resilient nursing graduates is crucial for sustaining quality patient care and workforce stability (Noor et al., 2023). Future community engagement should continue to innovate by combining evidence-based strategies with cultural sensitivity to maximize impact.

CONCLUSION

This community service initiative demonstrated that integrating religious values into coping-stress education significantly improved nursing students' knowledge and awareness regarding effective stress management strategies. The findings underscore the importance of culturally relevant mental health education to foster resilience and well-being among nursing students. Sustained and structured interventions, supported by institutional policies and community collaboration, are vital to ensure the long-term success of such programs. Future research should expand the approach to other settings and evaluate its effects on students' psychological outcomes and academic performance. This model can serve as a best practice for promoting holistic mental health support in nursing education.

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