



Coping Strategies Used by Student Nurses during COVID-19 Pandemic: A Narrative Literature Review

Molato BJ*, Racoco K and Thwala NR

Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, School of Nursing Science, North-West University, South Africa

Abstract

Background: During COVID-19 pandemic, student nurses were faced with lot of challenges at both clinical and teaching and learning environment. As a result, they had to adopt different coping strategies to overcome the predicament that they were trapped in.

Objectives: To explore and describe the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19.

Methods: This article used narrative literature review to explore literature review from the following databases namely Web of Science, Google Scholar, African Journal (Previously known as SAE publication), EBSCO Delivery Service (EDS) and Ebscohost. The terms that were used to search for literature are: 'Coping strategies' OR 'Coping mechanisms' 'student nurses', OR 'nursing students' AND 'COVID-19 pandemic'.

Results: The reviewed literature revealed five themes namely psychological support, religion, consistent use of the internet, use of positive skills and effective problem-solving skills.

Conclusion: The review of literature further demonstrated that student nurses can adopt the best effective coping strategies to improve the psychological, emotional, physical, and mental well-being during public health emergencies.

Keywords: Coping strategies; Student nurses; COVID-19; Pandemic

Introduction

Nursing is a noble clinical profession that aims to care for people to promote health, restore health and prevent illnesses. Therefore, clinical competence of student nurses is pivotal in nursing education and it is determined by being consistently placed at the clinical learning environment to acquire more clinical skills [1]. The student nurses are more susceptible to multiple sources of stressful situations at the clinical learning environment, and they are expected to handle the predicaments that they are faced with swiftly so. Moreover, complex situations that student nurses find themselves in during clinical training include working as a team to manage the outbreaks whereby they play a fundamental role in curbing the infection [1]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, student nurses did not feel comfortable working in clinics due to a lack of protective equipment and were therefore afraid of infection [2]. A cross sectional study conducted in Israel have revealed that 50% of student nurses who were in the clinical learning environment experienced a shortage of protective equipment [3].

A descriptive correlational study conducted by revealed that 86.7% of the student nurses had worries about COVID-19 pandemic, 74.6% of them reported to have fears that their immediate families might contract COVID-19 infection and the mental health of 70.3% was negatively affected by being at home because of COVID-19 pandemic [4]. Student nurses have reported that there was little chance of learning to train their skills due to the problems of the epidemic; patient admission was limited to emergencies and COVID-19 cases to avoid complications in the health system [5]. Due to the infectious and highly dangerous COVID-19 condition, as well as the lack of medication and treatment for the virus, this has led to an increase in stress levels for student nurses that have affected their coping strategies [6].

Based on the above discussion, it is still unknown on how student nurses coped with the aforementioned stressful situations during COVID-19 pandemic. The transactional theory of coping posits that coping is an evolving process that changes in response to context, to manage different internal and external demands [7]. Accordingly, the transactional theory of coping presumes that successful coping involves an ability to adjust and change coping strategies in a way that facilitates

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*Correspondence:

Molato BJ, Department of Nursing and Health Sciences, School of Nursing Science, North-West University, 212 Airport view Mmabatho 2745, Mahikeng, South Africa, Tel: 0827426401;

E-mail: Boitumelo.molato@nwu.ac.za

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positive outcomes. Up to this pointing time, the recent frameworks that mainly focus on coping have shift their attention on the flexibility of coping, an alternative way learning coping that actively extract a person's capability to revamp their coping manners according to intensity of the circumstances [8].

Regarding coping strategies, it is described as attempts to normalize mental action, the manner in which individuals conduct oneself towards and how he/she respond to the stressors of the environment where they live in [9]. Therefore, it is imperative for individuals to possess a great number of coping strategies that they will use when they are faced with stressful situations [7]. The study conducted by revealed that student nurses were battling to adopt a healthy coping strategy to deal with situations that they were faced with during COVID-19 pandemic [1]. Some of the conditions that exposed them to the afore-mentioned situation include working long hours of duty which was caused by high number of people who were infected by COVID-19 virus [1]. Furthermore, online classes were disrupted by connectivity challenges and the study further revealed that majority (64.4%) of student nurses were not having electricity at their respective places to be in the position to access online classes [1]. Based on the above discussion, it is evident COVID-19 pandemic had negative impact on the coping strategies of student nurses. Regardless of studies conducted to explore the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic, the afore-mentioned discussion points out the need to review literature about the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve the aim of the study, the following review question was asked:

- What are the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic?

Materials and Methods

Aim

The study aimed to explore and describe coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic reported in the literature.

Design and methods

This study used achieved by narrative literature review to explore and describe coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. The review of literature plays a significant role by assisting researchers to communicate the findings by sharing the context, guide the scientific process, reduce plagiarism literature and make sure that ethical standards are maintained [10]. The sole purpose of literature is to provide the synopsis of the context whereby the research is essentially different and to expose the areas where there is a need for empirical study to be conducted [11]. The purpose of this narrative literature review is to provide comprehensive narrative syntheses of previously published information [12]. Furthermore, this review aims to gather information from different sources and follow a specific scientific process to assemble the evidence in a readable format [12]. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers adopted the steps of narrative literature review to make sure that the review is error-free, detailed, honest and reliable [12]. This study adopted the narrative literature as suggested by to respond to the review question [12]. The steps include title, structured abstract, introduction, methods, discussion, conclusion, acknowledgements, references, tables and. For more details, see in Figure 1 [12].

Literature review steps

Step 1: The title selected for this review is coping strategies used

by student during COVID-19 pandemic: A narrative literature review. The reason for writing narrative literature review is for readers to deeply understand the research design for this study [12].

Step 2: The abstract is a summary of the review that provide readers with structured summary of the article that offers the reader a short presentation of the review [13].

Step 3: The argument on the introduction covers the purpose for reviewing the literature and the identification of knowledge gap. The researchers reviewed the existing literature regarding the selected topic and realized that there is dearth in literature related to the topic [12].

Step 4: The narrative literature review design was adopted to explore and describe the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. To search literature, this study considered various methodologies and designs that mainly focus on the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. Researchers focused on studies that were published between 2020 and 2021 in English. The following electronic databases were utilized to search for literature namely Web of Science, Google Scholar, African Journal (Previously known as SAE publication), EBSCO Delivery Service (EDS) and Ebscohost. The terms that were used to search for literature are: 'Coping strategies' OR 'Coping mechanisms' 'student nurses', OR 'nursing students' AND 'COVID-19 pandemic (Green, Johnson & Adams, 2006:108). See in Table 1 for more details [12].

Step 5: The gathered literature is discussed and supported by the relevant literature from empirical studies. This includes literature that supports the discussion and disagrees with the discussion and at the same time researchers summarized by giving out their opinions regarding the discussion [12].

Step 6: The limitation of the study is adequately addressed.

Step 7: Summary of the study is provided and recommendations for future research is also done.

Step 8: The researchers who actively contributed to the success of this study are acknowledged.

Step 9: The articles reviewed on this study are cited. Furthermore, the researchers adhered to the author guidelines of the journal to arrange reference list and to cite the authors [12].

Step 10: The tables are used to indicate electronic databases used to search for literature and to give a brief of description of articles used. See in Table 2 for more details.

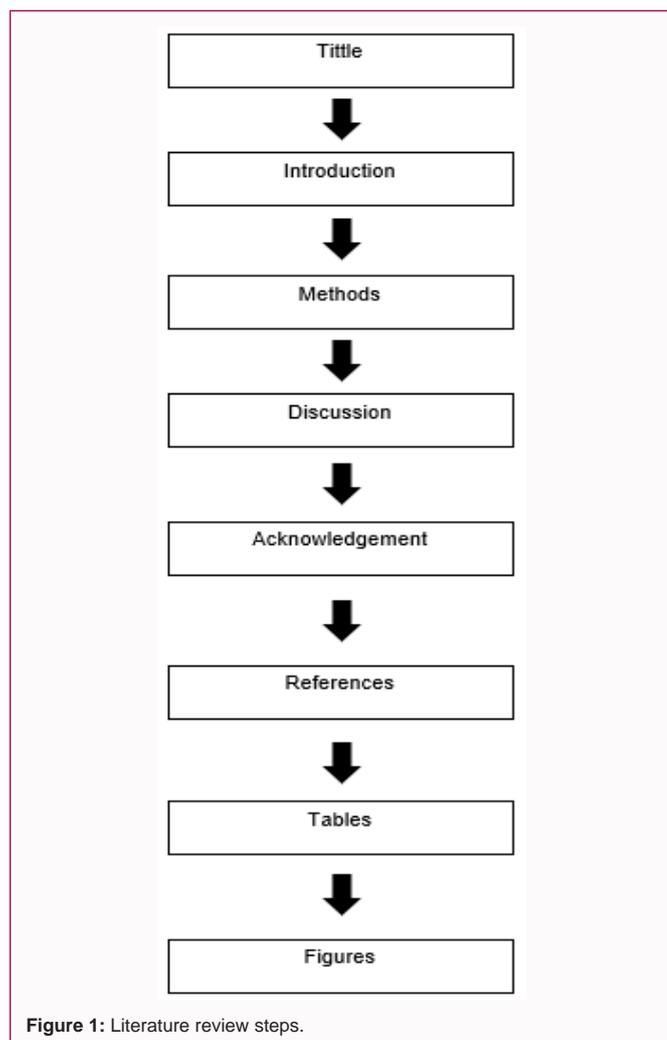
Step 11: The figures are used to give illustration of Prisma and steps of narrative literature review followed on this study.

Ethical considerations

This is the first manuscript that has been sent for publication nor duplication of any published study [14]. All authors who have contributed on this article have been well acknowledged and their contributions are clearly indicated [15].

Results

Five themes emerged from this narrative literature review namely psychological support, religion, consistent use of the internet, use of positive skills and effective problem-solving skills. See the search strategy in Figure 2 [16].



Psychological support

The first theme reported that some of the student nurses resorted to stay connected with family and friends as a coping strategy to overcome the hindrances that they were faced with during COVID-19 pandemic [17]. They further utilized lockdown period to their advantage because they were staying most of the time together [17]. There was a toll-free number that was initiated to support people who were not coping well with the pandemic. The student nurses used the services of the psychological helpline to their advantage as a coping strategy during COVID-19 pandemic [18]. Psychological interventions with a focus on emotional regulation strategies may be an effective method to prevent and adjust mental health issues. Even though face-to-face intervention is not possible during this pandemic, psychological support through the internet and telephone can ensure that students are getting the help that they need [19].

Religion

The second theme revealed that student nurses whose age ranging from 17 to 20 was in the possession of maximum coping strategies. One of the factors identified on literature to have been used by student nurses as a coping strategy during COVID-19 pandemic include religion [20].

Similarly, a qualitative study conducted in Malawi that explored how student nurses coped during COVID-19 pandemic revealed

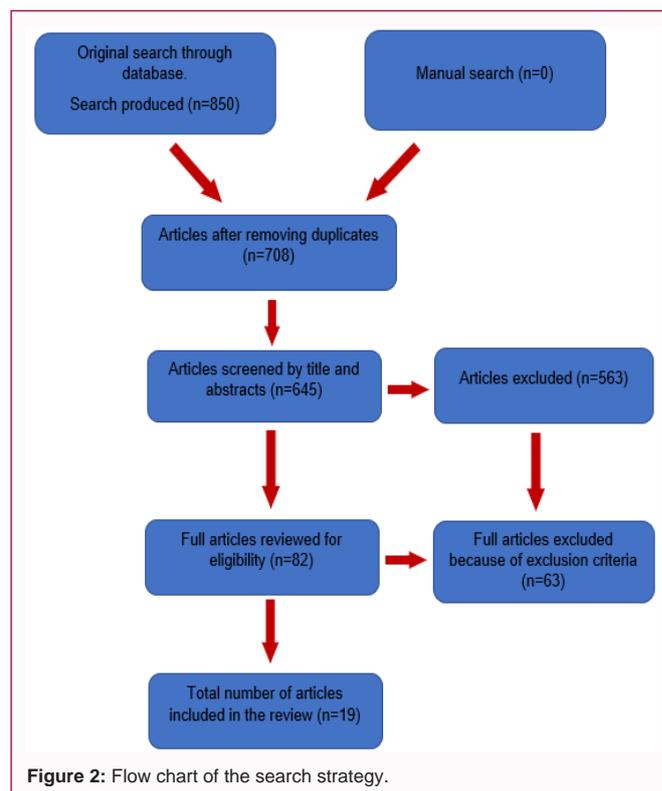


Table 1: Literature search.

Databases	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Web of Science	English studies focusing on coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic	Newspapers Conference reports Other databases not mentioned in this study
Google Scholar		
African Journal (Previously known as SAE publication)		
EBSCO Delivery Service (EDS)		
Ebscohorst		
Science Direct		

that they felt that nursing is a calling they therefore belief that they were send by God to study nursing. In this regard, God will not forsake them in this difficult time of the time he will protect them unconditionally [21].

Consistent use of the internet

The third theme reported that student nurses adopted various coping strategies that include the consistent use of internet [22]. The study conducted by which is a scoping review that was focusing on stressors and coping strategies among student nurses during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that 48.1% of the student nurse’s utilized eating habit and majority (77.8%) of them spend most of their time on the internet [1]. The cross-sectional study by revealed that student nurses who were not using online platforms to communicate with their beloved friends during COVID-19 pandemic were susceptible to stress than those who were spending most of their time online communicating with beloved friends [23].

Use of positive skills

The fourth theme indicated that staying positive and optimistic

Table 2: Description of articles used.

Author (s)	Year	Methods	Data analysis
Kerbage, Garvey, Willetts & Olosoji	2021	Cross-sectional descriptive design	IBM SPSS version 28 (Quantitative); Content analysis (Qualitative)
Savitsky, Findling, Erel, & Hendel	2020	Cross-sectional study	Statistical and factor analysis
Sheroun, Dapple, Wankhar, Devrani, Lissamma, Gita & Chatterjee	2020	Cross-sectional descriptive study	Statistical analysis
Temiz	2020	Cross-sectional study	SPSS 20.0
Hamadi, Nazik, Zakari, Jibreel, Faisal Nami, Jamel, Smida & Haddad	2021	A repeated-measures study design	Statistical analysis
Majrashi, Khalil, Elham Nagshabandi & Majrashi	2021	A scoping review methodology	PICOT
Banstola, Shakya & Sharma			
Zhu, Wang & Wang	2021	Online cross-sectional study	SPSS version 22
Mishra, Samanta, Panigrahi, Dash, Behera & Das	2021	Online cross-sectional study	SPSS version 21

enhanced the psychological adaptation of student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic [1]. They used the afore-mentioned strategy to deal with fear of the unknown of getting COVID-19 infection. The findings of the study conducted in Turkey revealed that two-third of student nurses used positive coping skills during COVID-19 pandemic to cope with the hindrances they were faced with [24]. These include going through the old photo albums with family members and reflecting on it. Some of the coping strategies employed by student nurses are reading novels to keep the mind busy and forgetting about the pandemic, starting the vegetable gardens and spend more time on taking care of it by watering it [24]. The study conducted by revealed that student nurses used exercises as a coping strategy during COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, some of them took a break from academic activities so that they can have adequate time to rest [25].

Likewise, five studies reported that student nurses identified exercise, meditation and reading as a coping behavior during COVID-19 pandemic and identified the need for self-care through physical activities, reading, and meditation [26]. Additionally, literature revealed that confidence and always remaining positive assisted student nurses to tackle all hindrances they had during COVID-19 pandemic and being objective on what they want to achieve [1]. A cross-sectional online survey conducted in Bhubaneswar, India revealed that student nurses used active coping skills as preventative measures to depression [27-30]. This simply means that student nurses were acting decisively by adopting positive approach to curb depression during COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective problem-solving skills

The fifth theme stated that the ability to apply positive skills assisted student nurses in overcoming stressful situations [4]. Likewise, these also denotes that the same student nurses who possesses the high momentum to deal with the circumstances also provide adequate support to student nurses who were lacking behind to solve challenges that they were faced with. Moreover, the student nurses a descriptive cross-sectional study that was conducted by revealed that student nurses never surrender when faced with catastrophes during COVID-19 pandemic they rather approach the situation with positive mind [2].

Discussion

This narrative literature review aimed to explore and describe the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. A narrative literature review design and methods were used to respond to the researchers' review question. To respond to

the review' question, the researchers managed to review eight articles that are more appropriate to respond to the researchers' concern on the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic [1,4,17,21-25]. These studies revealed that psychological support, religion, consistent use of the internet, physical activities, use of positive skills and effective problem-solving skills.

The results of this study are supported by the findings of the study conducted by reported that student nurses staying with family members were coping psychologically as compared to those who were at students' residences [20]. The same author further reported that student nurses who were staying at home were displaying minimum coping than those who were staying with family members [20]. However, the researchers are of the view that the author's findings about student nurses staying at home not displaying maximum coping is not clear whether students were staying alone at home or with family members. Literature revealed that some of the student nurses utilized counseling services as a strategy to cope with hindrances they were faced with during COVID-19 pandemic [17]. About the religion, the findings of this study are consistent with a qualitative study conducted in Barcelona.

One of the students who belong to Muslim religion reported that consistent praying was of assistance during the pandemic [18]. Similarly, the study conducted by revealed that religion had the highest mean score among 14 coping strategies that were used during COVID-19 pandemic [30]. It has been reported that Saudi Arabia's Muslim religion played a pivotal role in the lives of student nurses in improving their mental well-being [30]. Conversely, the cross-sectional study conducted in Israel revealed that religiosity among student nurses were presenting with high level of anxiety [3]. The researchers are of the view that the motive behind these findings is that the imposed lockdown regulations restricted people not to attend churches as they were regarded as super spreaders of the COVID-19 virus.

This study revealed that student nurses consistently used internet to cope during COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by a qualitative study conducted in Barcelona that revealed that social media platforms particularly WhatsApp as a source of support to connect students from different angles of the world to support each other [31]. Regarding the use of positive skills, the findings of this study is consistent with the cross-sectional descriptive design conducted in Australia that revealed that student nurses were using formulation of daily rooster as a coping strategy to enhance their level of positivity [17]. The study conducted by support the findings of this study that clearly indicate that student nurses used problem solving

skills effectively as a coping strategy during COVID-19 pandemic [1]. To elaborate more on the use of problem-solving skills, the author further reported that student nurses used setting of objectives to overcome the hindrances they were faced with and to implement interventions that they used to solve their problems previously [1].

Limitations

The literature about the phenomenon in the South African context is limited.

Implications and Recommendations

This section addresses three aspects namely nursing practice, nursing research and nursing education. Firstly, under nursing practice, policies, guidelines and protocols should be designed that outline the coping strategies to be used during pandemics. Secondly, further quantitative studies should be conducted to quantify the statistics of effective coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, coping strategies must be incorporated in nursing curriculum for student nurses to be taught on the coping strategies that can be used during stressful situations due to disaster.

Conclusion

The researchers feel like this is the first study published in the South African context to explore and describe the coping strategies used by student nurses during COVID-19 pandemic using narrative literature review. The findings of this study demonstrated that student nurses were trapped in a predicament during COVID-19 pandemic and as a result they were compelled to adopt different coping strategies to overcome the circumstances that they were faced with. The review of literature further demonstrated that student nurses can adopt the best effective coping strategies to improve the psychological, emotional, physical, and mental well-being during public health emergencies.

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