



Psychosocial Problems Among Diploma Nursing Students: A Descriptive Study

Nirva Rantesigi*, Agusrianto, Jein Sriani Suharto

Department of Nursing, Poltekkes Kemenkes Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia,

*Corresponding Author: varantesigi@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Psychosocial problems among nursing students have become a significant concern in healthcare education. High academic demands combined with clinical practice pressures create vulnerability to mental health issues. This study aimed to describe psychosocial problems among D-III nursing students in Poso.

Methods: This descriptive study was conducted among 111 nursing students using the SRQ-29 questionnaire. Data were collected through online forms and interviews over three days. The study focused on identifying neurosis-related psychosocial problems among respondents.

Results: The findings revealed that 57 students (51.4%) experienced neurosis problems, while 54 students (48.6%) showed no significant psychosocial issues. Female students showed higher prevalence (52.7%) compared to males (48.6%). The highest proportion of neurosis cases was found among third-year students (56.3%) and those aged 16-17 years (71.4%).

Conclusion: More than half of nursing students experience psychosocial problems, primarily neurosis. These findings highlight the need for mental health support programs and counseling services within nursing education institutions.



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INTRODUCTION

Psychosocial problems represent conditions affecting individuals that encompass both psychological and social aspects, significantly impacting mental health and overall well-being (Alyousef, 2019; Ratanasiripong et al., 2022; Satria Fitriawan et al., 2023). Among adolescents and young adults, these issues manifest in various forms including depression, psychosexual changes, peer influence, high-risk behaviors, identity formation failures, moral development disorders, and stress during adolescence (Dresen et al., 2025; Horton & Lawson, 2024; Komariah et al., 2025).

The global burden of psychosocial problems among adolescents is substantial. In Indonesia, the 2018 Basic Health Research (Riskesdas) revealed that 6.1% of individuals aged ≥ 15 years experience depression, with the 15-24 age group showing a higher prevalence of 6.2%. Particularly concerning is Central Sulawesi Province, which recorded the highest rate at 12.3% (Kementrian Kesehatan Republik Indonesia, 2018). Severe depression often leads to self-harm tendencies and suicide, with 80-90% of suicide cases resulting from untreated depression and anxiety (Badillo-Sánchez et al., 2025; Feyzbabaie, Rajai, Alizadeh, & Azizi, 2025; Kobelski, Naylor, Kobelska, & Wysokiński, 2024).

Common depressive symptoms among young populations include negative self-perception, concentration difficulties, loss of interest in activities, and sleep disturbances (Al-Nawafleh &

Altarawneh, 2023; Sonmez, Akdemir, Meydanlioglu, & Aktekin, 2023). The predominant issues among subjects experiencing or at risk of depression typically relate to dissatisfaction with appearance, poor academic achievement, and unpleasant social interactions (Alyousef, 2019; Aryuwat, Holmgren, Asp, Radabutr, & Lövenmark, 2024; Prasetyo & Triwahyuni, 2022; Ratanasiripong et al., 2022). Various factors contribute to emerging psychosocial problems among adolescents, particularly psychosocial stressors such as residential environment, school conditions, family economic status, and interpersonal relationships (Abu Liel, 2023).

Nursing students face unique challenges that exacerbate their vulnerability to psychosocial problems. The demanding nature of nursing education, characterized by rigorous academic requirements and emotionally charged clinical experiences, creates significant psychological pressure (Abu Liel, 2023; Arulappan, 2016; Candra Kirana, Mutyah, & Rinarto, 2020). Previous research indicates that nursing students frequently encounter stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues due to these combined pressures (Alyousef, 2019; Aryuwat et al., 2024). Limited social support from family, friends, and colleagues further compounds these psychosocial challenges (Yosep et al., 2025).

Preliminary observations at Poso Nursing Program identified frequent academic pressure and clinical practice demands among students, potentially leading to stress, anxiety, and other psychosocial issues. This study therefore aims to describe psychosocial problems among D-III nursing students in Poso, providing baseline data for developing appropriate mental health support interventions within nursing education institutions

METHODS

Study Design and Setting

This descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted at the Poso Health Polytechnic, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The research was carried out over a three-day period in 2022, utilizing both online and face-to-face data collection methods to ensure comprehensive participant engagement.

Population and Sample

The study population comprised all active D-III Nursing students at Poso Health Polytechnic. A total of 111 students participated in the study, representing various academic levels and demographic backgrounds. The sample size was determined through total sampling method, including all willing participants who met the inclusion criteria.

Data Collection Instruments

The primary research instrument was the SRQ-29 (Self-Reporting Questionnaire) developed by the World Health Organization. This standardized tool has been validated in various settings and consists of 29 items designed to identify psychosocial problems, particularly focusing on neurosis symptoms including anxiety, depression, and somatic complaints. Data were collected through structured online questionnaires using Google Forms, supplemented by brief interviews to clarify responses when necessary.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board of Poso Health Polytechnic. All participants provided informed consent before participating in the study. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymous data collection, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using frequency distributions and percentages to characterize the study population and identify patterns of psychosocial problems. Data were analyzed based on demographic characteristics including age, gender, and academic

level. The SRQ-29 scoring system was applied, with a cut-off point of ≥ 6 positive responses indicating significant psychosocial problems requiring further attention.

Quality Control

To ensure data quality, the research team conducted preliminary training on data collection procedures. The SRQ-29 questionnaire was administered in Indonesian language with proper cultural adaptation. Regular monitoring during data collection ensured completeness and accuracy of responses.

RESULTS

This section presents the key findings of the study derived from the data collected from 111 nursing students. The results are organized into the following subsections: the characteristics of the study population, the prevalence of psychosocial problems, and the distribution of these problems across different demographic factors.

Table 1. Characteristics of Study Participants (N=111)

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
16-17 years	7	6.3
18-21 years	99	89.2
>22 years	5	4.5
Gender		
Male	37	66.7
Female	74	33.3
Academic Level		
First Year	46	41.4
Second Year	49	44.1
Third Year	16	14.4

The study included 111 nursing students from the D-III Nursing Program at Poso Health Polytechnic. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The majority of participants were aged 18-21 years (89.2%, n=99), with female students comprising 66.7% (n=74) of the sample. Regarding academic level, second-year students represented the largest group (44.1%, n=49), followed by first-year (41.4%, n=46) and third-year students (14.4%, n=16).

Table 2. Distribution of Psychosocial Problems Among Nursing Students

Psychosocial Problems	n	%
Neurosis	57	51.4
Without Neurosis	54	48.6

As shown in Table 2, the SRQ-29 assessment revealed that 57 students (51.4%) exhibited symptoms indicative of neurosis-related psychosocial problems, while 54 students (48.6%) did not show significant psychosocial issues based on the established cut-off point

Table 3. Distribution of Psychosocial Problems by Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	Psychosocial Problems			
	Neurosis		Without Neurosis	
	n (57)	% (51.4)	n (54)	% (48.6)
Age				
16-17 years	5	71.4	2	28.6
18-21 years	47	47.5	52	52.5
>22 years	0	0.0	5	100
Gender				
Male	18	52.7	35	47.3
Female	39	48.6	19	51.4
Academic Level				
First Year	24	52.2	22	46
Second Year	24	49	25	49
Third Year	9	56.3	7	16

Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of psychosocial problems across different demographic variables. The highest prevalence of neurosis was observed among students aged 16-17 years (71.4%, n=5), followed by female students (52.7%, n=39) compared to male students (48.6%, n=18). Third-year students showed the highest proportion of neurosis symptoms (56.3%, n=9) among all academic levels. The findings indicate that psychosocial problems are prevalent among nursing students, with specific demographic groups showing higher vulnerability to neurosis-related symptoms.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals a high prevalence of psychosocial problems among nursing students at Poso Health Polytechnic, with 51.4% of respondents exhibiting neurosis-related symptoms. The findings align with previous research indicating that nursing students face significant psychological challenges due to the demanding nature of their academic and clinical training (Ratanasiripong et al., 2022). The high percentage of affected students underscores the urgent need for mental health support systems within nursing education institutions (Horton & Lawson, 2024). The predominance of neurosis symptoms, particularly anxiety and stress, among nursing students can be attributed to multiple factors. The rigorous academic curriculum combined with clinical practice responsibilities creates a high-stress environment that may overwhelm students' coping mechanisms (Al-Nawafleh & Altarawneh, 2023). Furthermore, the transition from classroom learning to clinical settings often generates additional psychological pressure as students adapt to real healthcare environments (Aryuwat et al., 2024).

Gender Differences in Psychosocial Problems

Our findings indicate that female students reported higher rates of neurosis (52.7%) compared to male students (48.6%). This gender disparity is consistent with existing literature showing that female healthcare students often experience higher levels of psychological distress (Alyousef, 2019). Biological factors, including hormonal differences, combined with socio-cultural expectations may contribute to this pattern. Female students may also be more likely to acknowledge and report psychological symptoms, whereas male students might underreport due to social stigma (Komariah et al., 2025).

Age and Academic Level Variations

The highest prevalence of psychosocial problems was observed among younger students (16-17 years) and third-year students. Younger students' vulnerability may stem from their recent transition from high school to professional education, requiring adaptation to new academic and social environments. Meanwhile, third-year students face the pressure of completing their clinical requirements and preparing for professional practice, which may explain

their elevated neurosis rates (56.3%). The absence of neurosis symptoms among students over 22 years suggests that maturity and life experience may serve as protective factors against psychosocial problems (Russell, Rodney, Peterson, Baker, & Francis, 2025; Sacikara, Kocoglu-Tanyer, & Dengiz, 2025). Older students likely possess more developed coping strategies and better emotional regulation skills acquired through previous life experiences.

Our findings are consistent with research by (Prasetio & Triwahyuni, 2022), who reported significant psychosocial challenges among nursing students in Indonesia. However, the prevalence rate in our study (51.4%) is higher than some previous reports, possibly due to regional variations, different assessment tools, or the unique challenges faced by students in Central Sulawesi. The use of SRQ-29, a validated screening tool, enhances the reliability of our findings and allows for comparison with international studies.

The high prevalence of psychosocial problems among nursing students has important implications for educational institutions. There is a critical need to integrate mental health support services into nursing education programs. Regular mental health screenings, counseling services, and stress management workshops could help identify at-risk students early and provide appropriate interventions. Additionally, curriculum modifications that incorporate resilience-building activities and psychological support mechanisms may enhance students' coping capacities.

Limitations and Cautions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional design prevents establishing causal relationships between variables. The relatively small sample size from a single institution may limit generalizability to other nursing education settings. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track psychosocial changes throughout nursing education and include qualitative methods to explore the underlying factors contributing to mental health challenges.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track psychosocial problem progression throughout nursing education. Qualitative methods should explore lived experiences and coping mechanisms. Expanded geographical scope would enhance findings generalizability, while intervention-based research should develop and evaluate evidence-based mental health support programs. Investigation of protective factors and broader psychosocial dimensions would provide more holistic understanding of student well-being.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates significant prevalence of psychosocial problems among nursing students at Poso Health Polytechnic, with more than half exhibiting neurosis-related symptoms. Female students, younger age groups, and third-year students show particular vulnerability to psychosocial challenges. These results underscore substantial mental health burden carried by nursing students during their educational journey.

The identification of these psychosocial issues calls for immediate attention from nursing education institutions. Implementing comprehensive mental health support systems, including regular screening, counseling services, and stress management programs, is essential to safeguard students' psychological well-being. Curriculum enhancements incorporating resilience training and coping strategy development could significantly improve students' ability to manage academic and clinical pressures.

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