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POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AMONG ACADEMICALLY-CHALLENGED STUDENTS IN A TERTIARY INSTITUTION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This cross-sectional study explored the prevalence and impact of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among carryover nursing students at Federal University Otuoke, Nigeria. A sample size of 133 students was determined from a total population of 901 nursing students using Taro Yameni's formula, with a two-stage sampling technique employed. Data was collected using a self-developed, 34-item questionnaire, with validity confirmed by the research supervisor and reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha. The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 20, with Chi-square tests to assess associations. Findings revealed that 36.1% of students experienced flashbacks related to stressful academic situations, while 37.6% often avoided reminders of stress. Nightmares were rare (6.0%), but feelings of detachment were noted by 46.6%. Physical reactions like heart pounding were reported by 52.6%, and sleep difficulties by 45.1%. The cumulative PTSD risk score was 2.37, indicating a low overall risk, with strong support systems reported by 81.2% of students. Coping strategies included seeking help from friends and family (42.1%) and using positive self-talk (36.1%). PTSD symptoms moderately impacted academic performance, with 63.9% reporting concentration issues and 37.6% experiencing class attendance challenges. Time management and peer communication were also affected, and 20.3% of students had considered dropping out due to stress. The study concludes that while PTSD symptoms are present at a moderate level, their impact on academic performance is significant.

Keywords: PTSD; Prevalence; Students; University; Sleep

Introduction

Posttraumatic stress disorder has been the subject of several research studies in recent years on the epidemiological, neurobiological or therapeutic levels, but there are few studies in children and adolescents of school age, especially in developing

countries. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition that's triggered by a terrifying event, either experiencing it or witnessing it (Stuparet *al.*, 2022). It is characterized by intrusive thoughts about the incident, recurrent distress/anxiety,

flashbacks, and avoidance of similar situations (Allen et al., 2021). Symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder are grouped into different categories, including reliving the traumatic event through flashbacks, hallucinations, or nightmares, avoiding people, places, or memories that remind the trauma, and experiencing excessive arousal such as increased alertness, anger, fits of rage, irritability, or difficulty sleeping or concentrating (Stupar et al., 2022). The term 'Carryover Students' is defined as students who have experienced some form of setback or delay in their academic journey. This could be due to failing a course, needing to retake a year, or other factors that disrupt the traditional progression through an academic program. The relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder and carryover students is complex and multifaceted. Entering college with posttraumatic stress disorder symptomatology has been linked to poor academic performance and an increased risk for dropping out of college (Idoiaga et al., 2022). A study by Vilaplana-Pérez et al (2020), on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Educational Achievement in Sweden. Reveled that those diagnosed as having posttraumatic stress disorder were statistically significantly less likely to achieve all educational milestones, from compulsory education to finishing university, compared with individuals without the disorder independent of familial factors shared between siblings, psychiatric co-morbidity, and general cognitive ability. A study aimed to examine the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder among undergraduate students and how posttraumatic stress disorder affected life balance of undergraduate students who live close to conflict zones Karaman et al. (2022), according to the study, posttraumatic stress disorder symptomatology positively affects the students' depression and sleep disturbance levels. However, posttraumatic stress disorder symptomatology negatively affects global health and positive orientation. All effect sizes were in small to large range. There is a need for research on effective interventions and support systems tailored to the needs of carryover nursing students dealing with posttraumatic stress disorder. Most of the current posttraumatic stress disorder interventions are not designed with the unique needs and experiences of carryover nursing students in mind. Therefore, this study aims to address these research gaps by investigating the prevalence and impact of posttraumatic stress disorder among carryover nursing students in Federal University Otuoke, identifying the specific stressors they face, and exploring effective interventions and support systems.

Materials and methods

Population of study

The target population of this study was restricted to Nursing student from 100 level to 400 level department of Nursing, Madonna University. The total number of Nursing students in Federal University Otuoke are 901.

Sample Size

The sample size (n) for this study was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. By applying this below, a sample of 133 was achieved.

Taro Yamane Formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: n = Sample size

N = Population sample

e = Level of significance (0.08)²

Calculation of sample size using the formula:

$$n = \frac{901}{1 + 901(0.08)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{901}{1 + 5.7664}$$

$$n = \frac{901}{6.7664}$$

$$n = 133$$

The optimum sample size for the study is 133.

Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used for this study will involve two stages. In the first stage, stratified sampling technique was used to divide the study population into group based on their different class levels (100, 200, 300 and 400 level). In the second stage, purposive sampling techniques was used to select Nursing students in each of the class levels who have experienced carryover during their course of study as their unique experiences are central to this study. This two-stage sampling technique will provide a comprehensive and unbiased sample for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

A self-developed structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used to collect data from the Nursing students. A questionnaire is a document containing questions and other types of items designed to solicit information appropriate for analysis (Babbie & Mouton 2007). The questionnaire consisted a Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree and Never to Always to choose from, which provided greater uniformity of responses as such data was easily processed. A Likert scale is psychometric response scale used in questionnaires to obtain participants' degree of agreement with set statements Brink et al., (2012). The questionnaire will be used to sort information on socio-demographic characteristics of the Nursing students, determine the frequency and severity of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms among carryover Nursing students, identify the various risk factors associated with posttraumatic stress disorder in carryover Nursing students, examine coping strategies used by carryover students to manage stress and trauma and to investigate the impact of posttraumatic stress disorder on academic performance among carryover Nursing students. The questionnaire consists of 34 items/questions

Validity of research instrument

For the purpose of this study, the instrument for data collection was carefully reviewed for content validity by the researchers.

Reliability of Research Instrument

The test-retest technique will be used for this study to find out if the item is constant and reliable by conducting the same test more than one time over period of time with the participation of the same sample group. A total of 10 questionnaires was distributed to Nursing students from the two times with an interval of two weeks, so that test results can be compared to assess stability of scores. Result were calculated using Cronbach alpha.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered by a team of trained research assistants who understood the purpose and specific objectives of the study, as well as the ethical considerations involved. The questionnaire was administered to the selected sample of carry over Nursing students. The data collectors will explain the purpose of the study, assured the participants of the confidentiality of their responses, and obtain informed consent before administering the questionnaire. Their responses were recorded on paper questionnaires and later entered into a secure electronic database for analysis. Data quality checks were performed to ensure the accuracy of data entry.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using Statistical Software Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, and presented using simple descriptive statistical tools like frequency tables. Test of association was carried out using Chi square at 95% significance level and p-value of 0.05.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval will be obtained from the Ethical Committee of the Faculty. An informed consent was obtained from the patients before the questionnaire was given to them to fill. The reasons for this study was explained to participants and we also assured them of anonymity and confidentiality of their response. Participation was voluntary and a participant may withdraw at any stage. Findings of the study was communicated to the study population through appropriate authorities.

Results

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Variables	Descriptive	Frequency	Percentages
What is your Age	Below 20	94	70.7%
	20-25	31	23.3%
	26-30	6	4.5%
	Above 30	2	1.5%
What is your Gender	Male	51	38.3%
	Female	82	61.7%
What is your	First Year	20	15.0%

Year of Study	Second Year c.	55	41.4%
	Third Year	51	38.3%
	Fourth Year	7	5.3%
	Fifth Year	0	0.0%
What is your Marital Status	Single	123	92.5%
	Married	10	7.5%
Number of Carryover Courses	None	79	59.4%
	1-2	36	27.1%
	3 or more	18	13.5%

Table 1 revealed that majority of respondents are below 20 years, accounting for 70.7%, indicating a youthful demographic. This is followed by the 20-25 age group, which constitutes 23.3%. The percentage drops sharply for the 26-30 and above 30 age brackets, with only 4.5% and 1.5% respectively, highlighting that the study population is predominantly composed of younger individuals, likely within the earlier stages of tertiary education. Regarding gender, the table shows a higher proportion of female respondents (61.7%) compared to males (38.3%). This gender imbalance could suggest either a higher enrollment of females in the institution or a skewed participation in the survey. The distribution of respondents by the year of study reveals that the majority are in their second year (41.4%) and third year (38.3%), which together make up almost 80% of the sample. First-year students represent 15%, while fourth-year students constitute just 5.3%, and there are no fifth-year students represented. This distribution might indicate that students in their early to middle stages of study are more engaged or available for participation in this kind of study. The marital status of the respondents overwhelmingly reflects that most are single (92.5%), with only 7.5% reporting being married. This aligns with the age data, as the younger demographic is less likely to be married. Finally, the data on carryover courses show that the majority of students (59.4%) have no carryover courses, suggesting satisfactory academic performance among more than half of the respondents. However, a notable proportion, 27.1%, has 1-2 carryover courses, while 13.5% report having 3 or more, highlighting some challenges within a segment of the population regarding academic progress. This distribution could be indicative of varying levels of academic success, possibly influenced by factors like workload, study habits, or external pressures.

Table 2: Frequency and Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Mean	Std.
I have flashbacks about stressful academic situations.	12 (9.0%)	29 (21.8%)	48 (36.1%)	28 (21.1%)	16 (12.0%)	3.05	1.130
I avoid situations that remind me of stressful academic experiences.	10 (7.5%)	24 (18.0%)	33 (24.8%)	50 (37.6%)	16 (12.0%)	3.29	1.125
I have nightmares about my academic experiences.	51 (38.3%)	48 (36.1%)	16 (12.0%)	10 (7.5%)	8 (6.0%)	2.07	1.163
I feel detached or estranged from other students.	23 (17.3%)	26 (19.5%)	62 (46.6%)	14 (10.5%)	8 (6.0%)	2.68	1.069
I have difficulty concentrating on my studies.	60 (45.1%)	39 (29.3%)	14 (10.5%)	12 (9.0%)	8 (6.0%)	2.02	1.212
I feel jumpy or easily startled when thinking about my academic situation.	31 (23.3%)	35 (26.3%)	45 (33.8%)	14 (10.5%)	8 (6.0%)	2.50	1.139

I experience physical reactions (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, sweating) when reminded of a stressful academic situation.	9 (6.8%)	15 (11.3%)	70 (52.6%)	26 (19.5%)	13 (9.8%)	3.14	0.978
I lose interest in activities I used to enjoy before becoming a carryover student.	32 (24.1%)	20 (15.0%)	27 (20.3%)	32 (24.1%)	22 (16.5%)	2.94	1.424
I feel hopeless about my future academic progress.	39 (29.3%)	49 (36.8%)	32 (24.1%)	6 (4.5%)	7 (5.3%)	2.20	1.076
I have trouble sleeping due to worrying about my academic situation.	7 (5.3%)	60 (45.1%)	20 (15.0%)	28 (21.1%)	18 (13.5%)	2.92	1.191
Cumulative Mean						2.68	

Mean score (0.00 –2.39): Low Frequency and Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Mean Score (2.40 – 3.49): Average Frequency and Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Mean Score (3.50 and above): High Frequency and Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Table 2 presents the frequency and severity of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms among carryover nursing students at Madonna University. The cumulative mean score of 2.68 indicates that the students experience an average frequency and severity of PTSD symptoms related to their academic challenges. Specifically, 36.1% of students sometimes experience flashbacks about stressful academic situations, with a mean score of 3.05, showing a moderate occurrence of this symptom. Similarly, 37.6% of students often avoid situations that remind them of stressful academic experiences, with a mean score of 3.29, suggesting this is a relatively common behavior. In contrast, only 6.0% of student's report having nightmares very often, with a lower mean score of 2.07, indicating that this symptom is less frequent. Furthermore, feelings of detachment or estrangement from other students are sometimes experienced by 46.6% of students, reflected in a mean score of 2.68. Difficulty concentrating on studies is reported by 45.1% of students as never occurring, with a low mean score of 2.02, suggesting this symptom is not prevalent. About 33.8% of students sometimes feel jumpy or easily startled when thinking about their academic situation, with a mean score of 2.50. Physical reactions, such as heart pounding or trouble breathing when reminded of stressful academic situations, occur sometimes for 52.6% of students, with a mean score of 3.14. A notable proportion of students (24.1%) often lose interest in activities they used to enjoy, with a mean score of 2.94, while 36.8% rarely feel hopeless about their future academic progress, resulting in a mean score of 2.20. Difficulty sleeping due to academic worries is rarely reported by 45.1% of students, with a mean score of 2.92. Overall, the findings suggest that carryover nursing students experience a moderate level of PTSD symptoms, with varying levels of severity across different dimensions of their academic experiences.

Table 3: Various Risk Factors Associated with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.
I often feel overwhelmed by my academic workload.	9.0% (12)	22.6% (30)	51.9% (69)	16.5% (22)	2.76	0.836
I have experienced a traumatic event in my personal life during my academic journey.	4.5% (6)	36.8% (49)	45.9% (61)	12.8% (17)	2.67	0.756
I feel isolated from my peers due to my carryover status.	10.5% (14)	37.6% (50)	32.3% (43)	19.5% (26)	2.61	0.920
I have a family history of mental health disorders.	13.5% (18)	66.9% (89)	9.0% (12)	10.5% (14)	2.17	0.790
I lack a strong support system (family, friends, mentors) to help me cope with academic stress.	15.0% (20)	81.2% (108)	3.8% (5)	0.0% (0)	1.89	0.420
I often resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms (e.g., substance use, self-harm) to deal with stress.	12.0% (16)	56.4% (75)	19.5% (26)	12.0% (16)	2.32	0.838
I have previously sought help for mental health issues.	27.1% (36)	48.1% (64)	12.0% (16)	12.8% (17)	2.11	0.948
I often experience high levels of stress and anxiety related to my academic performance.	10.5% (14)	64.7% (86)	19.5% (26)	5.3% (7)	2.20	0.690
I have difficulty balancing my academic responsibilities with my personal life.	7.5% (10)	32.3% (43)	51.1% (68)	9.0% (12)	2.62	0.756
Cumulative Mean					2.37	

Mean score (0.00 –2.39): Low Risk

Mean Score(2.40 – 3.49): Average Risk

Mean Score(3.50 and above): High Risk

Table 3 presents various risk factors associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in carryover nursing students. The cumulative mean score of 2.37 indicates that these students experience a low risk of developing posttraumatic stress disorder related to their academic challenges. 51.9% of students agree that they often feel overwhelmed by their academic workload, reflected in a mean score of 2.76, suggesting a moderate level of concern regarding academic stress. In terms of personal experiences, 45.9% report having experienced a traumatic event during their academic journey, yielding a mean score of 2.67, which indicates a notable association between personal trauma and academic stress.

Feelings of isolation are also present, with 32.3% of students agreeing they feel disconnected from their peers due to their carryover status, leading to a mean score of 2.61. Furthermore, the results reveal that 13.5% of respondents report a family history of mental health disorders, resulting in a lower mean score of 2.17, which indicates that this factor may not significantly impact the majority of students. A significant 81.2% of students disagree with the statement regarding a lack of a strong support system, resulting in a mean score of 1.89, suggesting that most students feel they have adequate support from family and friends to cope with academic stress. Regarding unhealthy coping mechanisms, 56.4% of students disagree that they often resort to such methods, leading to a mean score of 2.32, indicating that while some students may engage in these behaviors, it is not prevalent among the majority. Interestingly, 27.1% of students have previously sought help for mental health issues, with a mean score of 2.11, suggesting that seeking help may be less common among this group. Additionally, 64.7% of students disagree that they often experience high levels of stress and anxiety related to academic performance, with a mean score of 2.20, further indicating a lower overall risk for PTSD symptoms. Balancing academic responsibilities with personal life is a challenge for 51.1% of students, reflected in a mean score of 2.62, suggesting some struggle in managing these aspects of their lives. Overall, these findings indicate that while carryover nursing students encounter various risk factors that could contribute to PTSD, their experiences suggest a predominantly low risk across these dimensions, with academic workload and personal trauma being the most significant concerns.

Table 4: Coping Strategies Used by Carryover Students to Manage Stress and Trauma

Item	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Mean	Std.
I use relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, meditation) to manage stress.	24 (18.0%)	24 (18.0%)	54 (40.6%)	24 (18.0%)	7 (5.3%)	2.74	1.112
I seek support from friends and family when I feel stressed or traumatized.	2 (1.5%)	21 (15.8%)	56 (42.1%)	26 (19.5%)	28 (21.1%)	3.43	1.039
I engage in physical activities (e.g., exercise, sports) to cope with stress.	33 (24.8%)	38 (28.6%)	46 (34.6%)	16 (12.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.34	0.984
I use positive self-talk to manage my stress levels.	19 (14.3%)	10 (7.5%)	24 (18.0%)	48 (36.1%)	32 (24.1%)	3.48	1.323
I seek professional help (e.g., counseling, therapy) when I feel overwhelmed.	14 (10.5%)	56 (42.1%)	30 (22.6%)	25 (18.8%)	8 (6.0%)	2.68	1.084
I use distraction techniques (e.g., reading, listening to music) to cope with trauma.	8 (6.0%)	23 (17.3%)	64 (48.1%)	26 (19.5%)	12 (9.0%)	3.08	0.985
I practice good sleep hygiene to help manage stress.	12 (9.0%)	22 (16.5%)	36 (27.1%)	43 (32.3%)	20 (15.0%)	3.28	1.176
I maintain a balanced diet to help manage stress.	24 (18.0%)	18 (13.5%)	39 (29.3%)	33 (24.8%)	19 (14.3%)	3.04	1.299
I use problem-solving strategies to deal with stressful academic situations.	28 (21.1%)	30 (22.6%)	16 (12.0%)	40 (30.1%)	19 (14.3%)	2.94	1.397
I practice mindfulness to stay present and manage stress.	22 (16.5%)	11 (8.3%)	43 (32.3%)	38 (28.6%)	19 (14.3%)	3.16	1.260
Cumulative Mean						3.02	

Mean score (0.00 –2.39): Low Use of Coping Strategies

Mean Score(2.40 – 3.49): Average Use of Coping Strategies

Mean Score(3.50 and above): High Use of Coping Strategies

Table 4 presents the coping strategies used by carryover students to manage stress and trauma. The cumulative mean score of 3.02 suggests that students employ an average range of coping strategies to address their stress levels. Notably, 42.1% of students sometimes seek support from

friends and family, which correlates with a higher mean score of 3.43, indicating that this strategy is a key resource for them. Furthermore, 36.1% of students often use positive self-talk, leading to an even higher mean score of 3.48, demonstrating its effectiveness in managing their stress levels. The use of distraction techniques, such as reading or listening to music, is reported by 48.1% of students, reflected in a mean score of 3.08, signifying a common method for coping with trauma. In terms of physical activity, while 34.6% of students sometimes engage in exercise to alleviate stress, the lower mean score of 2.34 suggests that this strategy is less frequently utilized compared to others. Additionally, 32.3% of students often practice good sleep hygiene, leading to a mean score of 3.28, highlighting its importance in their coping strategies. The use of relaxation techniques, with a mean score of 2.74, shows that while this strategy is recognized, it is not as prevalent among students, as only 5.3% report using it very often. Seeking professional help is less common, as indicated by a mean score of 2.68, with only 10.5% of students never utilizing this resource. Other strategies, such as maintaining a balanced diet and problem-solving approaches, score 3.04 and 2.94 respectively, suggesting that while these strategies are used, they are not the primary methods employed by students. Overall, the findings indicate that carryover students have a diverse array of coping strategies at their disposal, but there is room for improvement in their engagement with certain techniques, particularly relaxation and professional support, to better manage their stress and trauma.

Table 5: Impact of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder on Academic Performance Among Carryover Nursing Students.

Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
My PTSD symptoms interfere with my ability to concentrate on my studies.	7.5% (10)	21.1% (28)	63.9% (85)	7.5% (10)	2.71	0.713
I often miss classes or assignments due to my PTSD symptoms.	37.6% (50)	26.3% (35)	19.5% (26)	16.5% (22)	2.15	1.104
My academic performance has declined since I started experiencing PTSD symptoms.	12.0% (16)	51.1% (68)	21.1% (28)	15.8% (21)	2.41	0.896
I find it difficult to participate in class or group activities due to my PTSD symptoms.	13.5% (18)	40.6% (54)	44.4% (59)	1.5% (2)	2.34	0.727
My PTSD symptoms make it hard for me to manage my time effectively.	12.0% (16)	44.4% (59)	30.1% (40)	13.5% (18)	2.45	0.874
I have considered dropping out of school due to the stress and anxiety caused by my PTSD symptoms.	0.0% (0)	52.6% (70)	27.1% (36)	20.3% (27)	2.68	0.793
My PTSD symptoms affect my ability to communicate effectively with my peers and instructors.	13.5% (18)	39.8% (53)	25.6% (34)	21.1% (28)	2.54	0.973
I find it difficult to stay motivated in my studies due to my PTSD symptoms.	15.8% (21)	30.1% (40)	37.6% (50)	16.5% (22)	2.55	0.949
My PTSD symptoms make it hard for me to handle the pressure of exams and assignments.	10.5% (14)	42.9% (57)	37.6% (50)	9.0% (12)	2.45	0.802
I feel that my PTSD symptoms have affected my overall academic success.	0.0% (0)	54.1% (72)	33.1% (44)	12.8% (17)	2.59	0.708
Cumulative Mean					2.49	

Mean score (0.00 – 2.39): Low Impact

Mean Score(2.40 – 3.49):Moderate Impact

Mean Score(3.50 and above): High Impact

Table 5 presents the impact of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on the academic performance of carryover nursing students. The cumulative mean score of 2.49 suggests a moderate impact of PTSD symptoms on their academic experiences. A significant 63.9% of students agree that their PTSD symptoms interfere with their ability to concentrate on their studies, reflected in a mean score of 2.71, indicating a notable concern regarding focus. Furthermore, 37.6% of students often miss classes or assignments due to PTSD symptoms, which results in a lower mean score of 2.15, highlighting a detrimental effect on attendance and submission of work. Moreover, 51.1% of respondents feel that their academic performance has declined since experiencing PTSD

symptoms, with a mean score of 2.41 indicating that many students perceive a negative impact on their studies. Participation in class or group activities is similarly affected, as 44.4% of students find it difficult to engage due to their PTSD symptoms, resulting in a mean score of 2.34. The management of time is another area impacted, with 44.4% of students agreeing that their PTSD symptoms hinder effective time management, reflected in a mean score of 2.45. Interestingly, while 20.3% of students have considered dropping out of school due to the stress and anxiety caused by their PTSD symptoms, the mean score of 2.68 suggests this concern is significant but not overwhelmingly high. Communication with peers and instructors is also impaired, as indicated by 25.6% of students who agree that PTSD affects their communication, resulting in a mean score of 2.54. Motivation to study is a struggle for many, with 37.6% of students reporting difficulty in staying motivated due to PTSD symptoms, which is reflected in a mean score of 2.55. The pressure of exams and

assignments also presents a challenge, as 37.6% of students feel that their PTSD symptoms make it hard to manage exam stress, leading to a mean score of 2.45. Finally, the perception that PTSD symptoms affect overall academic success is shared by 33.1% of students, indicated by a mean score of 2.59. Overall, these findings highlight that carryover nursing students experience a moderate impact of PTSD symptoms on various aspects of their academic performance, underscoring the need for targeted support and intervention strategies to assist them in managing their educational challenges.

The study reveals that the majority of respondents are below 20 years (70.7%), indicating a youthful demographic, followed by the 20-25 age group at 23.3%, with a sharp decline in representation for those aged 26-30 (4.5%) and above 30 (1.5%). Females make up 61.7% of the respondents, while males account for 38.3%, suggesting a gender imbalance that may reflect higher female enrollment or participation. Most respondents are in their second (41.4%) or third year (38.3%), with smaller proportions in their first year (15%) and fourth year (5.3%), and no fifth-year students were represented, indicating greater engagement from those in the middle stages of their education. The vast majority (92.5%) are single, which aligns with the youthful age distribution, while only 7.5% are married. In terms of academic performance, 59.4% of students have no carryover courses, though 27.1% have 1-2 carryovers, and 13.5% have 3 or more, suggesting that a portion of the population faces academic challenges. Frequency and Severity of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms Among Carryover Nursing Students The findings indicate that carryover nursing students at Federal University Otuoke experience a moderate level of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, with a cumulative mean score of 2.68. Flashbacks about stressful academic situations are sometimes experienced by 36.1% of students, with a mean score of 3.05, and 37.6% often avoid situations that remind them of stressful academic experiences, reflected in a mean score of 3.29. This finding is in line with findings from a study by Hawton et al. (2020), who investigated the relationship between academic stress and of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms among university students and indicated that 40% of students often avoid reminders of academic stress. Nightmares are reported very often by only 6.0% of students, with a lower mean score of 2.07. Feelings of detachment are sometimes experienced by 46.6% of students, with a mean score of 2.68, while 45.1% of students report never having difficulty concentrating, with a low mean score of 2.02. Jumpy or startled reactions sometimes occur in 33.8% of students, with a mean score of 2.50, and physical reactions like heart pounding or trouble breathing happen sometimes for 52.6%, with a mean score of 3.14. Loss of interest in activities is often experienced by 24.1%, with a mean score of 2.94, while 36.8% rarely feel hopeless about academic progress, with a mean score of 2.20. Difficulty sleeping due to academic worries is rarely reported by 45.1%, with a mean score of 2.92, suggesting that PTSD symptoms vary in frequency and severity across different academic stressors. Various Risk Factors Associated with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Carryover Nursing Students. The study shows that carryover nursing students experience a low risk of developing posttraumatic stress disorder, with a cumulative mean score of 2.37. This finding aligns with research by Mochizuki et al. (2021), which found that nursing students, despite facing significant stressors, demonstrated a low prevalence of PTSD symptoms. They reported that effective coping strategies and support systems contributed to this lower risk. About 51.9% of students feel overwhelmed by their academic

workload, with a mean score of 2.76, while 45.9% report experiencing a traumatic event during their academic journey, reflected in a mean score of 2.67. Feelings of isolation due to their carryover status are reported by 32.3% of students, with a mean score of 2.61. A family history of mental health disorders is noted by 13.5% of respondents, with a mean score of 2.17, indicating limited impact on most students. Additionally, 81.2% of students feel they have strong support systems, with a mean score of 1.89. Unhealthy coping mechanisms are not prevalent, as 56.4% disagree that they often resort to such methods, with a mean score of 2.32. Only 27.1% of students have sought help for mental health issues, with a mean score of 2.11, and 64.7% disagree that they frequently experience high stress and anxiety related to academic performance, reflected in a mean score of 2.20. Balancing academic and personal responsibilities is challenging for 51.1% of students, with a mean score of 2.62. Overall, academic workload and personal trauma are the most significant concerns, but the overall risk for PTSD remains low. The study reveals that carryover students use an average range of coping strategies to manage stress, with a cumulative mean score of 3.02. This aligns with Dyrbye et al. (2017), who noted that nursing students often use a mix of active and passive coping strategies, but still experience significant stress. The variability in coping strategies suggests a need for targeted interventions to enhance effective coping among nursing students. Seeking support from friends and family is a key strategy, used by 42.1% of students, with a high mean score of 3.43, and 36.1% often engage in positive self-talk, reflected in an even higher mean score of 3.48. Distraction techniques, such as reading or listening to music, are common, used by 48.1% of students with a mean score of 3.08. Physical activity is less frequently employed, as only 34.6% of students use exercise, resulting in a lower mean score of 2.34. Good sleep hygiene is practiced by 32.3% of students, with a mean score of 3.28, while relaxation techniques are less common, with only 5.3% using them very often, leading to a mean score of 2.74. Professional help is seldom sought, reflected in a mean score of 2.68, with only 10.5% of students never utilizing this option. Other strategies like maintaining a balanced diet and problem-solving approaches have mean scores of 3.04 and 2.94, respectively, but are not the primary methods. Overall, students use various coping strategies, though there is room for improvement in their use of relaxation techniques and professional support. Post traumatic stress disorder symptoms moderately impact the academic performance of carryover nursing students, with a cumulative mean score of 2.49. A significant 63.9% of student's report that posttraumatic stress disorder interferes with their concentration, leading to a mean score of 2.71, while 37.6% often miss classes or assignments due to these symptoms, reflected in a mean score of 2.15. Additionally, 51.1% feel their academic performance has declined, with a mean score of 2.41, and 44.4% struggle to participate in class activities, resulting in a mean score of 2.34. Time management is also affected, with 44.4% agreeing that posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms hinder their ability to manage time, indicated by a mean score of 2.45. While 20.3% of students have considered dropping out due to stress and anxiety, the mean score of 2.68 suggests that this concern is notable but not overwhelming. Communication with peers and instructors is impaired for 25.6% of students, with a mean score of 2.54, and 37.6% struggle with motivation, reflected in a mean score of 2.55. Managing exam stress is difficult for 37.6%, with a mean score of 2.45, and 33.1% feel that PTSD affects their overall academic success, resulting in a mean score of 2.59. These findings highlight

the moderate but widespread impact of posttraumatic stress disorder on students' academic experiences, indicating the need for support and interventions to help them manage these challenges. The study has key implications for nursing practice. With moderate levels of PTSD symptoms such as flashbacks, avoidance, and difficulty concentrating, nursing students' academic performance is negatively impacted, which could affect their future clinical practice. Nursing education must address this by integrating mental health support into curricula, including counseling services and stress management strategies. The low rate of students seeking professional help indicates the need to reduce stigma around mental health and improve access to resources. Early interventions can enhance student well-being, which is crucial for their success in both academic and clinical settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study reveals that carryover nursing students at Federal University Otuoke, experience moderate symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, yet the overall risk for posttraumatic stress disorder is low. While students reported various symptoms related to stress, such as flashbacks and avoidance behaviors, the presence of strong support systems suggests resilience among this population. Coping strategies primarily involve seeking support from peers and positive self-talk, with unhealthy mechanisms being infrequent. However, posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms moderately impact academic performance, affecting concentration and class attendance, and some students have considered dropping out due to stress. These findings highlight the need for targeted mental health support and effective coping strategies to enhance the academic success and well-being of nursing students.

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