



Psychological Stress and Well Being Among Undergraduate Female Medical Students: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Medical education is often regarded as one of the most challenging academic paths, with literature indicating that female medical students are particularly vulnerable to higher levels of psychological stress compared to their male counterparts. The transition from high school to the rigorous environment of medical school, often seen as a dream fulfilled by aspiring doctors, can be compromised by substantial psychological stress throughout their training. This scoping review aims to examine the prevalence of psychological stress and overall well-being among female undergraduate medical students by synthesizing existing literature from various countries. We specifically explore factors contributing to stress and the coping mechanisms employed by these students, seeking to gain deeper insight into the unique challenges they face.

Methods: A literature search was conducted on PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science, using the terms ("psychological stress" OR "emotional stress") AND ("well-being" OR "mental health") AND ("female medical students") AND ("medical education") for articles published from 1978 to 2024. The first author adopted an inductive approach to summarize extracted data according to the research questions, following the PRISMA-ScR guidelines. Data extraction focused on prevalence, contributing factors, and coping mechanisms.

Results: Out of 55 records identified, 24 were screened, and 20 studies met the inclusion criteria. All 20 studies indicated a significant correlation between psychological stress and well-being among undergraduate female medical students, with data collected from 13 countries. Notably, mostly of studies were from Europe (4 studies) and the Middle East (7 studies), revealing various contributing factors and coping strategies reported by participants.

Conclusion: This review underscores the significant prevalence of psychological stress among female medical students, predominantly documented in Europe and the Middle East. Further research is essential to analyze the factors contributing to stress and effective coping mechanisms, enhancing our understanding and potential interventions to support these students.

Keywords: Medical Student; Mental Health; Well-being; Stress; Female Empowerment



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Biodata:

Dr Nabilla is a trainee lecturer in the Department of Medical Education in UiTM. She is passionate about student development and is actively involved in student society as the advisor of Harmoni Student Society. Her work mainly involves innovative teaching-learning activities that promote student engagement like PBL and Simulation Scenarios.