

5th World Congress on **NEONATOLOGY AND PEDIATRICS**
&
World Congress on **NURSING RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE**

February 25-26, 2019 | London, UK

A cross-sectional study of stress and its sources among health professional students at Makerere University, Uganda

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Background & Objectives: Health professionals training is regarded as very demanding and stressful to students, most of the stressors are academic while others are non-academic. These affect the academic performance, physical and psychological well-being of the students. However, what stresses health professionals' students at Makerere University College of Health Sciences has not been documented. This study was conducted to assess prevalence of stress and its sources among undergraduate health professional students at Makerere University.

Methods: This was a descriptive cross-sectional study using quantitative methods of data collection. It was conducted among 258 undergraduate health professional students (Medical, Dental and, Nursing students) at Makerere University. From each programmed, students were recruited proportionately, while being selected conveniently from each year of study. Stress was measured using the General Health Questionnaire 12 and stressors assessed using a questionnaire developed from literature. After obtaining ethics approval, data were collected from consenting students. Data collected were analyzed using SPSS statistical program.

Results: The prevalence of stress was found to be 57.4% and stressors of academic and psychosocial origin were most frequently reported. The top stressors included; academic curriculum (38%), dissatisfaction with class lectures (30.9%), long distance walk (29.5%), lack of time for recreation (28.9%), performance in examination (28.3%), lack of special guidance from faculty (26.7%) and high parental expectations (26.7%).

Conclusion: The prevalence of stress was high among health professionals' students and major stressors were related to academic and psychosocial domains. University management should avail counseling services to students. Further studies should be done to guide appropriate curriculum review

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