



The Relationship Between Economic Status and Anxiety Levels Among Third-Year Undergraduate Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis.

Methods: A cross-sectional study design was used involving 38 third-year undergraduate nursing students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. Anxiety levels were measured using the DASS-42 instrument, and economic status was categorized as medium or high. The data were analyzed using the Chi-Square test with SPSS version 29.

Results: The majority of participants experienced mild anxiety (76.3%), while 23.7% experienced moderate anxiety. No participants experienced severe anxiety. Most students (78.1%) came from a high economic background, while the remaining 21.1% were from a medium economic status. The Chi-Square analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between economic status and anxiety levels, with a p-value of 0.049.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that economic status is significantly associated with anxiety levels among nursing students. Students from higher economic backgrounds tend to experience lower anxiety levels. These results underscore the importance of addressing economic factors when developing mental health support strategies for students in higher education settings.

Keywords: Economic Status, Anxiety, Nursing Students, Chi-Square Analysis, Mental Health

Introduction

Mental health is a cornerstone of holistic well-being and academic performance, especially for students undergoing rigorous professional training (Jana ., et al. ,2021) . Among various mental health concerns, anxiety stands out as a prevalent and potentially debilitating condition in university populations worldwide. Nursing students, in particular, face a unique set of academic, clinical, and personal stressors that can lead to heightened levels of anxiety (Aryuwat.,et al., 2024). These stressors include demanding coursework, clinical placements, emotional exposure to patient suffering, and the pressure to perform with competence and empathy. As these students navigate the transition from education to clinical practice, their psychological well-being becomes a critical determinant of both personal health and professional development (Peri .,et al., 2023).

In this context, the socioeconomic background of students plays a significant role in shaping their mental health experiences. Economic status has long been recognized as a social determinant of health, influencing not only physical health outcomes but also psychological resilience and vulnerability (Moa & Agyapong., et al., 2021). For students from lower-income families, financial instability can amplify feelings of uncertainty, self-doubt, and hopelessness, which may exacerbate anxiety symptoms. Conversely, students with higher economic security may enjoy greater access to resources such as healthy food, stable housing, academic support, and leisure activities, all of which contribute to psychological stability (Walker., et al., 2024). As such, understanding the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among nursing students is essential to inform institutional policies, academic support systems, and student welfare programs (Matthews., et al., 2022).

Numerous studies have established that students in health-related fields report higher levels of anxiety compared to their peers in other disciplines (Milic., et al., 2024). The reasons for this include the dual burden of theoretical and clinical education, long hours of study, the responsibility of patient care, and exposure to suffering and death. A study by Reeve et al. (2013) found that approximately 41% of nursing students in their final year of study reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety (Amadu., et al., 2024). In Indonesia, similar trends have been observed, with a growing number of nursing students seeking counseling services for stress and anxiety management. These findings suggest an urgent need to investigate the underlying causes of anxiety, particularly those linked to socio-demographic variables such as economic status (Ndetei., et al., 2022).

Economic status is not only a static measure of income or financial means, but also a dynamic construct that affects various aspects of student life. For many students, limited financial resources lead to part-time work, which reduces study time and sleep quality, thereby increasing stress and anxiety (Summer., et al., 2025). Additionally, economic hardship often limits access to psychological services, nutritious food, and safe living conditions—all of which are protective factors against mental distress (Oliveros., et al., 2022). In contrast, students from economically secure backgrounds are more likely to enjoy a supportive environment conducive to academic focus and mental well-being. Thus, economic status can be viewed both as a risk factor for anxiety and as a buffer against it, depending on the context and individual circumstances (Seto., et al., 2023).

In Indonesia, the economic disparities among students are often stark and multifaceted (Fadhila., et al., 2024). While some nursing students come from urban, middle- to upper-class families with strong educational support, others may originate from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds with limited access to financial and academic resources (McNamee., 2022). These disparities can affect students' sense of belonging, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms. Moreover, cultural factors such as family expectations, community perceptions, and religious beliefs may compound the stress

experienced by economically disadvantaged students (Pryce., 2024). In the specific context of STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis, a higher education institution that serves a diverse student body, the relationship between economic status and anxiety is especially pertinent and worthy of scholarly exploration.

The third year of nursing education marks a critical juncture in students' academic journey (Johnston., 2024). During this period, students are typically involved in more advanced coursework, intensive clinical rotations, and preparation for future employment or national licensure examinations (Tan., et al., 2023). These increased responsibilities often coincide with a peak in psychological stress. Therefore, studying third-year students provides valuable insights into the impact of external stressors—including financial strain—on mental health outcomes such as anxiety. Furthermore, understanding these dynamics can help academic institutions implement early interventions and support services tailored to students' economic realities (Osegbue., 2025).

Although the relationship between economic status and anxiety has been studied in various populations globally, there is a scarcity of context-specific research in Indonesian nursing education. This gap in the literature limits the capacity of academic institutions to respond effectively to the needs of their students (Arikawe., et al., 2024). Existing studies tend to generalize findings across disciplines or focus on broader psychological outcomes without accounting for the unique challenges faced by nursing students (Ayed., et al., 2025). Therefore, a focused investigation on the correlation between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis will contribute significantly to both academic knowledge and practical solutions (Kochuvilayil., et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the current study is anchored in the biopsychosocial model of health, which posits that mental well-being is influenced by an interplay of biological, psychological, and social factors (Su., 2021). Economic status, as a key social factor, interacts with individual psychological traits (such as resilience and self-efficacy) and external stressors (such as academic demands) to influence mental health outcomes. By applying this model, the research aims to unravel the complex pathways through which economic conditions affect anxiety levels in nursing students . (Zhu., et al., 2024). This holistic approach enables a deeper understanding of the issue and supports the development of comprehensive mental health strategies within nursing institutions (Mahadik & Reddy., 2025).

The findings of this research have the potential to inform several important initiatives. Firstly, they can guide the development of targeted psychological support services, such as counseling and financial aid programs, for economically disadvantaged students . (Van Agteren., et al., 2021). Secondly, the results may be used to advocate for curriculum reforms that integrate mental health education and resilience-building activities into nursing training .(Dordevic & Knezevix., 2021). Thirdly, institutional stakeholders can use the data to allocate resources more effectively and foster a supportive learning environment for all students, regardless of economic background .(Maqhubela ., 2025)

In conclusion, anxiety is a critical mental health issue among nursing students, one that is intricately linked with economic status. While academic and clinical demands contribute significantly to psychological stress, financial instability may further compromise students' mental health and academic performance .(Rajuroy & Emmanuel., 2024). In a developing country like Indonesia, where educational and economic inequities persist, it is imperative to investigate the intersection of these factors (Harsono., et al., 2024). This study aims to fill that gap by examining the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis. Through this research, we hope to contribute to the ongoing discourse on student mental health and provide

evidence-based recommendations for improving support systems in nursing education (Selim., et al., 2025).

Objektif

This study aims to determine the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis

Method

Design and Participants

This cross-sectional study was conducted at Institut Kesehatan Rajawali Bandung between March and April 2025, involving undergraduate students as study participants. A total of 35 students participated in this study. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that those included met specific research criteria. The inclusion criteria for this study were as follows: students who voluntarily agreed to participate, were currently enrolled as active students at the institution, and were aged between 18 and 25 years. The exclusion criteria included students who had been diagnosed with any form of mental illness, those who were currently undergoing psychological or psychiatric treatment, and those who were on academic leave or had not actively attended lectures for more than one semester. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the ethics committee of Institut Kesehatan Rajawali Bandung, and informed consent was acquired from all participants prior to data collection.

Instrument and measurement

The instruments used in this study were divided into two parts, corresponding to the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable, peer support, was measured using a structured questionnaire consisting of four main indicators: informational support, instrumental support, emotional support, and appraisal support. Informational support referred to the guidance, advice, and knowledge shared by peers; instrumental support involved tangible assistance such as help with tasks or materials; emotional support reflected empathy, care, and comfort received from peers; and appraisal support referred to recognition and encouragement. The validity test for the peer support questionnaire showed item-total correlation values ranging from 0.359 to 0.749, indicating acceptable to strong validity. Reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92, confirming excellent internal consistency.

The dependent variable, stress level, was measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-42), a widely recognized psychometric tool for assessing mental health conditions. In this study, only the stress subscale was used, consisting of 14 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale. This instrument has been proven to be reliable and valid in various populations and is suitable for assessing the psychological stress experienced by university students.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Prior to distribution, the researchers explained the purpose and objectives of the study to potential participants through class announcements and WhatsApp group messages. Students who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate voluntarily were provided with the link to the questionnaire. The online form included an informed consent section that participants had to agree to before proceeding to the main questions. The questionnaire consisted of items related to demographic information, economic status, and anxiety levels, which were measured using a standardized anxiety

scale. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, no identifying information was collected, and responses were used solely for research purposes.

Data analysis.

The data collected were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize demographic information, economic status, and anxiety levels of the participants. To examine the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels, the Chi-Square test was applied, as it is suitable for assessing associations between categorical variables. The results of the Chi-Square analysis revealed a p-value of 0.049, indicating a statistically significant relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis. This suggests that economic background may influence the level of anxiety experienced by students.

Results and discussion

Sociodemographic of respondent

Tabel 1. Sociodemographic of respondent

Variable	F/Mean	%/SD
Gender		
Male	14	36.8
Female	24	63.2
Total	38	100
Age		
<Mean	24	63.2
>Mean	14	36.8
Total	38	100
Economic Status		
Low	0	0
Medium	8	21.1
High	30	78.1
Total	38	100
Anxiety Level		
Mild	29	76.3
Moderate	9	23.7
Severe	0	0

Total	38	100
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Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of 38 third-year undergraduate nursing students. The majority of participants were female (63.2%), while males accounted for 36.8%. In terms of age, 63.2% were below the mean age, and 36.8% were above the mean. Regarding economic status, most students (78.1%) reported a high economic status, while 21.1% fell into the medium category, and none reported a low economic status. As for anxiety levels, the majority of students (76.3%) experienced mild anxiety, 23.7% experienced moderate anxiety, and none experienced severe anxiety.

Main findings

Tabel 2. Correlationship between variables

Status Ekonomi	Tingkat Kecemasan						P. Value
	Ringan		Sedang		Tinggi		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Rendah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0,049
Sedang	4	50,0	4	50,0	0	0	
Tinggi	25	83,3	5	16,7	0	0	
Total	29	76,3	9	23,7	0	0	

Table 2 presents the correlation between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis. The table shows that out of 29 students, the majority (76.3%) experienced mild anxiety, while 23.7% had moderate anxiety, and none experienced severe anxiety. Among students with a high economic status, 83.3% had mild anxiety and 16.7% had moderate anxiety. For those with a moderate economic status, 50% experienced mild anxiety and 50% experienced moderate anxiety. No students with a low economic status were recorded in the data. The analysis indicates a statistically significant relationship between economic status and anxiety levels, with a p-value of 0.049, suggesting that economic status may influence the level of anxiety experienced by students.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between students' economic status and their levels of anxiety, with a p-value of 0.049 (Oteir & Al-Otaibi, 2022). This indicates that economic background plays a role in influencing psychological well-being, particularly anxiety, during the academic journey of nursing students (Sun et al., 2022). The significance of this finding lies in highlighting that financial conditions may be an important social determinant of mental health, even among young adult populations pursuing higher education in health-related fields (Nasir et al., 2025). These findings emphasize the need for institutions to explore economic-based stressors among students and adopt preventive interventions accordingly.

Students from higher economic backgrounds were found to experience lower levels of anxiety compared to those from middle or lower economic groups (Gellisch et al., 2024). One possible explanation is that students with greater financial stability are less likely to worry about costs associated with education, daily living expenses, or future employment uncertainty (Jones et al., 2021). On the contrary, students from less privileged economic situations may carry the added burden of financial stress, which could exacerbate academic pressure and lead to higher anxiety levels (Ogbuagu et al., 2025). Financial insecurity can lead to concerns about tuition, housing, transportation, and basic needs, all of which may significantly contribute to chronic stress and anxiety symptoms. Additionally, the psychological toll of navigating financial uncertainty may impair concentration, reduce academic motivation, and lead to social withdrawal or feelings of inadequacy. These cumulative effects further highlight the complex interplay between economic hardship and mental health among students.

These findings are consistent with prior research conducted in various educational contexts. Studies have shown that financial stress is strongly associated with poor mental health outcomes among university students. For example, a study by Eisenberg et al. (2007) found that students with financial difficulties reported significantly higher rates of anxiety and depression. Similar results were observed in a study conducted by Beiter et al. (2015), which noted that economic hardship was a major predictor of psychological distress among college students. The present study reinforces these findings within the context of Indonesian nursing students and underscores the need for institutional awareness regarding the socioeconomic challenges students face (Priyandara et al., 2024). It also supports the growing body of international evidence suggesting that economic insecurity among students must be viewed not merely as a financial issue but as a substantial mental health concern. In this way, addressing economic disparities becomes essential for improving student outcomes, engagement, and well-being.

Moreover, the significance of this relationship must be understood within the broader scope of the academic and clinical demands faced by nursing students (Aryuwat et al., 2024). Third-year nursing students are typically immersed in both intensive theoretical coursework and practical clinical training, which can heighten their vulnerability to psychological strain. When combined with financial stress, these academic pressures may contribute to increased levels of anxiety (Mistry & Elenbaas, 2021). The dual responsibilities of academic study and patient care often require students to manage their time and emotional resources effectively. Financial hardship can further complicate this balance, reducing the time available for rest, social support, or even basic self-care. As such, universities and health education institutions should consider implementing support systems that address not only academic concerns but also financial and emotional well-being, such as counseling services, financial aid programs, and peer support networks (Russell et al., 2025). By creating a holistic support environment, institutions can mitigate the adverse effects of financial stress and promote student resilience.

Furthermore, this study's findings call attention to the importance of early intervention. Students experiencing high levels of anxiety may not always seek help due to stigma, lack of awareness, or limited access to mental health services. For students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, these barriers may be even more pronounced. Therefore, it is crucial for universities to develop screening tools and proactive outreach strategies that identify at-risk students early in their academic careers. Interventions such as financial literacy programs, stress management workshops, and confidential counseling could play a vital role in improving outcomes for these students. Equally important is fostering a campus culture where mental health is prioritized, and financial struggle is met with empathy and actionable support. By acknowledging the interrelated nature of socioeconomic and psychological challenges, educational institutions can create inclusive environments that better support student success.

In conclusion, the statistically significant relationship between economic status and anxiety levels found in this study indicates that financial conditions are an important factor influencing students' mental health (Negash et al., 2021). These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach to student support, one that integrates academic, emotional, and socioeconomic aspects (Lin & Zainudin, 2024). It is recommended that educational institutions take proactive steps to identify students at risk due to financial stress and provide targeted interventions to reduce anxiety and improve academic outcomes. This includes implementing financial assistance programs, promoting accessible mental health services, and fostering a supportive learning environment that acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of its student population. Future research should explore the specific aspects of economic hardship that most strongly influence anxiety, as well as examine the effectiveness of institutional support programs in mitigating this issue (Mathieu et al., 2022). By doing so, universities can better serve their student populations and ensure that financial disadvantage does not become a barrier to academic and personal well-being.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study found a statistically significant relationship between economic status and anxiety levels among third-year undergraduate nursing students at STIKes Muhammadiyah Ciamis, with a p-value of 0.049. These findings highlight that financial conditions are an important factor influencing students' mental health, particularly their level of anxiety. Students from lower economic backgrounds are more likely to experience heightened anxiety, likely due to financial stressors related to academic and daily life. Therefore, it is essential for educational institutions to recognize and address the impact of socioeconomic factors by providing appropriate support systems, such as financial assistance, mental health services, and stress management programs, to help students achieve both academic success and psychological well-being.

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