Perceived barriers to seeking mental health support among international nursing students

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Abstract

Over the years, the world has become a global village. People are moving to foreign countries to study nursing. As they settle and integrate into the community, they are faced with numerous challenges such as separation from family and friends, language barrier, culture shock and huge academic workload. These challenges are likely to have an adverse effect on the international nursing students' mental well-being. However, international nursing students seek mental health support as there are barriers that hinder them from seeking mental health support. The study was aimed at increasing awareness on the barriers that hindered international nursing students from accessing mental health support. The findings could be used to influence future research on international nursing students' mental health and enhance their access to mental health support. Eight articles that answered the research question and matched the inclusion criteria were selected from PubMed, CINAHL Ultimate, and Elsevier. Literature review approach was employed to analyse the selected articles. Three main themes were identified from the literature review; Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking behaviour, Barriers to Healthcare Access and Academic factors. In conclusion, it was found that culture, stigma, and language barrier are essential aspects in considerations to mental health provision to the international student nurses. The schools and mental health institutions could provide a supportive environment for all the students and address the prevalence of mental illness through education and resources with a comprehensive approach encompassing mental health and general well-being. Collaborative efforts in nursing degree programs and cultural integration education can provide caring spaces for international nursing students and promoting success in their education journey.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

International nursing students, mental health support, barriers

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1 Introduction

Over the years, the trend of looking for advanced education abroad has continued to rise. Seeking nursing studies abroad has acquired massive prominence among global students. Finland has become a noticeable destination for international nursing students (Mikkonen et al. (2017). This is highly attributed to its excellent education standard, high-level medical care infrastructure, a patient-centered approach to nursing practice and engaging living environment. Additionally, the nation flaunts beautiful sceneries for nature lovers and high living standards making it an attractive destination for international students aspiring to pursue studies.

However, alongside the apparent benefits, international nursing students frequently defy the scope of challenges as they move and settle into the new environment. In his study, Forest (2007) writes that these students travel alone from their home country facing separation from their families, friends, and cherished personal items, food, and their way of doing things, which can lead to feelings of loneliness in their new surroundings or environment. There are challenges faces by those that travel with their families that could pose the difficulty of balancing academic responsibilities with family care, the adjustment to a new culture and different environment . Furthermore, Kristiana et al.(2022) add on many international students are compelled to juggle their studies with work commitments in order to support themselves financially, meet basic living expenses and some sufficient funds for tuition fees. These pressures can significantly influence their mental well-being (Kristiana et al.,2022).

Nevertheless, while Finland draws in international nursing studies with its educational greatness and medical services system as the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Association in Finland, SAMHA, (2022) acknowledges that Finland is no exception, as most Nordic countries are known for their academic excellence and unique culture also home to some of the best universities in Europe today and once again named the happiest country in the world for the sixth year in a row, it's not only a top-notch study abroad destination for those looking for a unique Nordic experience. Mikkonen et al. (2017), notes that nursing students in Finland often face critical obstacles to seeking mental health support while recognizing and addressing these difficulties is fundamental to guaranteeing their well-being and academic achievement in their clinical practice areas. In this study the authors aimed to raise awareness of the barriers to accessing mental health care for student

nurses and can be used to influence future studies of nursing students' mental health and improve their access to mental health support.

2 Background

2.1 What is mental health

Mental health revolves around a person's social, emotional, and psychological well-being. In reference to World Health Organization, WHO (2022) a person's mental health affects their day-to-day life as it primarily determines how people see and explore their general surroundings, impacting their considerations, feelings, behavior, and cooperation. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, SAMHSA (2023) denotes that mental health addresses the harmony between an individual's capacity to oversee pressure, structure significant associations, and settle on informed choices. Not only does the core of mental health lie in the ability to deal with pressure but also includes the capacity to oversee day-to-day pressures as well as to answer adaptively to unexpected difficulties. An individual with sound mental health has survival strategies that permit them to return quickly from difficulties and keep up with emotional stability. Mental health is not an outright state; it exists on a range. Toward one side lies a positive mental health state described by profound equilibrium, strength, and viable working. At the opposite end are emotional wellness issues, which can go from everyday state-of-mind problems like gloom and nervousness to additional severe circumstances like schizophrenia (WHO,2022;SAMSHA,2023).

The concept of mental well-being has an extensive reach as it resonates across different life spaces. The WHO (2023) identifies several aspects that can be used to determine a person's mental state. One aspect is an individual's emotional wellness, which is the ability to identify, understand, manage, and express emotions in healthy ways. Another important aspect of mental health is psychological well-being, which revolves around a person's cognitive abilities. These include problem-solving and decision-making skills. People with good mental health can make choices that are consistent with their goals and values improving their overall life fulfilment and satisfaction (WHO, 2022).

In addition, Kristiana et al. (2022) note that one's social skills also form a critical component of their mental wellness and social well-being can be determined by the ability to form with maintenance of healthy relationships. They continue to say that solid mental prosperity empowers the development of certifiable and satisfying connections. Positive mental health adds to viable working in day-to-day existence. It empowers people to connect gainfully in work, studies, and exercises (SAMSHA,2023). This practical limit is supported by emotional flexibility, which permits people to oversee mishaps without being overpowered by negative feelings. Solid mental prosperity additionally upholds the improvement of sound connections and the capacity to interface with others on a profound level encourages trust, closeness, and powerful correspondence. These characteristics support significant connections and add to a singular's general satisfaction and satisfaction (Kristiana et al.,2022;SAMSHA,2023).

Moreover, Kristiana et al. (2022) agree that it is also possible to examine one's mental health by looking at their ability to take care of themselves. This includes things like maintaining personal hygiene, having healthy diets, and exercising. Lastly, a mentally healthy person can recognize when they are mentally disturbed, and they know when to seek help either from friends, family, or professionals (SAMSHA,2023).

2.2 Why mental health?

The significant effect of mental health on an individual's life highlights its most extreme importance. As physical health is viewed as a foundation of overall well-being WHO, (2022) observes that mental health is similarly fundamental, significantly impacting thoughts, feelings, ways of behaving, and overall personal satisfaction. Research done by Mohebbi et al. (2019) namely the State of Mental Health and Associated Factors in Nursing Students from Southeastern Iran found that a lot of nursing students have mental health issues that arise from both personal and academic factors, the case participants of the research were 130 where 68.5% had mental health problems. Perceiving and tending to mental health worries at their origin can avert their progression into more severe conditions such as addition disorder, depression, anxiety disorder, eating disorder and schizophrenia (WHO, 2022).

In addition, addressing emerging concerns instantly can forestall the acceleration of mental illness SAMSHA(2023),into additional severe circumstances, relieving affliction and weakness just as

physical ailments benefit from early diagnosis and treatment. This initiative-taking methodology aligns with the standards of preventive medical care, focusing on prosperity and lessening the weight of mental health problems on people and society enabling one to lead a more fulfilled life (SAMHSA,2023). In Finland, the Finnish Student Health Survey 2016 for Finnish student under thirty-five years found that thirty percent of a 10,000 students' sample from both the university of applied sciences and the academic universities reported mental health problems with common stressors of performing in public and struggling with academic studies. The Helsinki University Professor Salmela-Aro (2020) study cited that sixty percent of the students at the same university found to be suffering from burn out due to the imbalance between demands such as daily schedule and technical challenge. The study also found that burn out was commonly found among the first-year students and lead to understand that basic psychological needs are crucial to prevent burn out. Nursing students experienced academic burn out through their studies (Kim &Lee ,2022).

The rise in the number of mental illnesses has been of great concern globally (WHO,2023). This further amplifies the need to address mental illnesses by ensuring that those affected seek support in good time. In 2019 WHO report stated that about nine hundred and seventy million people suffer from mental illnesses, meaning one in eight people live with a mental disorder. The population living with mental disorders cut across all age groups. However, a study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and prevention, CDC, (2021) showed that four in every ten undergraduate students showed some behavioral or emotional symptoms that could be attributed to mental illness. In addition, one in five students considered suicide while one in 10 students attempted it (CDC,2021).

In the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ,OECD, (2020) reported that people in the European Union, EU, succumb to mental illness-related events or commit suicide and about one person dies from these causes every 6 minutes in the EU. Among people aged 15-24, around nine lives are lost to suicide every day in EU countries and in Finland has the highest estimated incidence of mental disorders in the EU. Almost one in five people is affected. These amplifies the need to identify the barriers that may hinder students from seeking mental health support.

2.3 Causes and types of mental health illnesses

There are various causes of mental illness (CDC,2023). In reference to the organisation firstly the cause can be biological factors, a brain chemistry where the brain chemicals like serotonin and dopamine being liked to mental health problems. Secondly, a person's experiences can contribute to their mental illness. People who have experienced traumatic situations or gone through abuse are traumatic experiences such as childhood abuse, neglect, or significant trauma in adulthood can lead more likely to have mental health illness. Thirdly, (WHO,2022) confirms that environmental factors can lead to mental illness, not limited to social isolation, poverty, poor housing and experiencing discrimination or stigmatisation can contribute to developing mental illness.

In addition, WHO (2022) continues to say that physical health conditions and lifestyle choices, including diet and substance abuse, can have an impact on mental health. Lastly, mental health problems can be hereditary. There are different mental disorders which include antisocial personality disorder, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, borderline personality disorder, eating disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, schizophrenia, suicide, and suicidal behaviors (WHO,2022). A psychological framework for understanding the onset and course of major mental disorders, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, is the Stress Vulnerability Model (SVM). The model as Demke (2022) says it suggests that mental illness is the result of a complex interaction between biological vulnerability and environmental stress. It emphasizes the importance of understanding both the intrinsic make-up of the individual and the external pressures to which they are exposed in their lives (Demke,2022).

2.4 Signs and symptoms of mental health illness

People with mental health illnesses exhibit a combination of signs and symptoms and different people may have different signs and symptoms for different conditions. Understanding the common signs and symptoms can help one notice when their loved ones or the people around them might be having some mental problems thus plan for early intervention (WHO,2022). Lattie et.al (2019) also mention that it could also be that students are not recognising the need for treatment, but rather accepting that mental health issues such as depression and anxiety symptoms are typical manifestations of stress.

However, SAMHSA (2023) notes these some of the signs and symptoms could include as eating too much or too little, sleep deprivation or sleeping too much, withdrawing from people, and having low energy. In addition, some people experience unexplained pains, feels hopeless, start using drugs more than usual, get easily confused, scared and experience mood swings. Lastly, some people hallucinate, thoughts of self-harm or harming others and are unable to perform daily tasks such as maintaining personal hygiene. However, apart from the signs and symptoms proper diagnosis is needed to conclude that one has a mental disorder (SAMHSA,2023;WHO,2022).

2.5 Cultural Influences on mental health support and stigma

Culture can be seen to affect a person in the way they think and perceive the world ,Hofstede (2001) states , also their values and behaviours, their language and communication style, social relationships, and their lifestyle choices (Hofstede,2001). He defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another", (Hofstede ,2001). This concept implies that culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs and norms that influence the behaviour and perceptions of individuals within a society. Culture is transmitted in many ways, including direct parent-child transmission, indirect absorption of societal norms, observational learning from peers, and imitation of others' behaviour (Whiten et al.,2011). Examples of cultural activities include traditional dances, storytelling sessions, pottery making, calligraphy, theatre performances and folk music concerts.

Stigma refers to negative perceptions and beliefs held by individuals or groups towards people with certain characteristics, such as mental illness (WHO,2001). Stigma can contribute to feelings of shame, low self-esteem, and social isolation (Link & Phelan, 2014; Batterham et al.2013) and can have a significant impact on an individual's mental health and well-being. Link & Phelan (2014) report also international nursing students, their experience of mental health support and access to care may be further complicated by the additional layers of stigma they may face due to their migrant status and cultural differences. The Helsinki Times study (2023) reported that young people with migrant backgrounds often face challenges in navigating and developing their cultural identities, they may struggle with finding a balance between their cultural heritage and Finland's culture.

World health organization (2022) defines mental support as any assistance given to a person that seeks to protect or promote psycho-social well-being or prevent or treat mental illnesses. Mental health support plan is highly individual. Individuals are different; thus, people will respond to different interventions differently. However, the organisation continues to say, due to different beliefs, values and norms, the provision of mental health support varies across cultures. For example, in some cultures it may be stigmatised to seek professional help for mental health problems, so people may rely instead on informal support networks or traditional methods of healing in the article by Jüriloo in the United Nations Children Fund (2021) mentions that the Kenyan society holds mental health as a taboo so is seeking mental health support thus leads to self-stigmatisation (Aromaa et al., 2011).

The treatment of mental health disorder requires a holistic approach where in most cases, a combination of different inventions approach is used (SAMHSA, 2023). Individuals' preferences for certain treatments may be influenced by cultural factors such as those from collectivist cultures may prioritize involving the family in making treatment decisions, whereas those from individualist cultures may value autonomy and prefer more individualised approaches (SAMHSA, 2023). The first approach that can be used is psychotherapy or talking therapies. This is done by talking to a professional. It helps identify the root cause of the illness, produce everyday activities that are helpful with the treatment and reduce the risk of self-harm or harming others. Prescribed medication such as antidepressants and psychotics can be incorporated in the mental health support and a person suffering from a mental health condition may need to change their lifestyle for example by reducing alcohol intake and identifying healthy ways of dealing with stress. This can be also made possible through the support of friends and families (SAMHSA,2023).

3 Aim, Purpose, and Research question

This study aims to understand the challenges faced by international nursing students in mental health care and to identify the barriers that prevent them from seeking support for their mental health. The purpose is to increase awareness on the existing barriers that hinder international nursing students from accessing mental health support and how they can be eradicated.

Research question: What are the perceived barriers that hinder international nursing students from seeking mental health support?

4 Methodology

The research was a literature review-based study, which included analysing and reviewing existing literature. It was intended to findings of literature on the perceived barriers that hinder undergraduate international nursing students from seeking mental health support. The data was retrieved from academic articles, reports, and studies on the topic. Literature review research provides a theoretical basis for the proposed research, justifies the existence of the research question, reasons why the research contributes something new to the body of knowledge, and examines the methods and approaches of the proposed research (Paré & Kitsiou, 2017.)

Literature reviews are important for Identifying what has been written on a topic or issue. In addition to determining the extent to which a particular area of research reveals interpretable trends or patterns literature review type of studies synthesise empirical evidence in relation to narrow research question to support evidence-based practice generating new frameworks and theories (Paré & Kitsiou, 2017). Finally, they identify issues or questions that need further investigation. There are six general steps involved in writing a review article, as Paré and Kitsiou state:

I.Formulate the research questions and aim(s).

II.Searching the existing literature.

III.Screening for inclusion.

IV.Assessing the quality of primary studies.

V.Data extraction.

VI. Analysing the data.

The authors began their study by defining the problem and formulating the central research question. They then embarked on a comprehensive review of the existing literature to identify potential barriers to accessing mental health support for undergraduate nursing students, particularly

those of international origin. This exhaustive review facilitated the synthesis of findings from numerous recent publications spanning from 2013. The rationale for the selection of literature reviews was based on their ability to provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted barriers to mental health support for international nursing students. In addition, they provided a platform for researchers to analyse students' experiences through different social lenses, incorporating cultural and academic dimensions (Paré & Kitsiou ,2017.)

The integration of diverse types of research such as qualitative, quantitative has facilitates comprehensive understanding of different dynamics and measure (Paré & Kitsiou ,2017). This study compiled researches from both the qualitative and quantitative research types, to the factors influencing students reluctance to seek assistance for their mental health. This approach has also enabled the identification of significant gaps within the existing literature, thereby highlighting promising research opportunities and potential avenues for intervention and service enhancement. The literature review comprises of developments and evolving dynamics of the arrears mental health support for international nursing students from 2013 to 2023.The time frame ensures that the analysis is firmly rooted in current research and practices crucial in the consideration of ever evolving nature of higher education and the increasing consideration and recognition of mental health issues. obtain a broader understanding on what affects students from seeking assistance for their mental health (Paré & Kitsiou ,2017).

PICOs was used as a guide during the search to ensure that the all the articles selected were relevant, answered the research question ``what are the perceived barriers that prevents international nursing students from seeking mental health support´´ covered the targeted population which is international nursing students, and they were published in English as shown in the table 1 below.

Table 1PICOS illustration

P- Population (Participants)	International Undergraduate nursing students.
I- Phenomena of interest	What are the perceived barriers that prevents international nursing students from seeking mental health support.
C- Context	International nursing students with mental health issues globally.
S- Types of studies	In English, Peer reviewed, published from 2013 to date.

4.1 Data extraction

The data bases intended for this thesis were PubMed, CINAHL Ultimate, and Elsevier. To obtain articles that are relevant to the topic and are answering the research question, what are the perceived barriers that hinder international nursing students from seeking mental health support, the following keywords were used during the search, Nursing students OR nurse's student OR student nurse OR international students AND mental health OR mental health interventions OR mental health support OR mental healthcare AND barriers OR obstacles OR challenges OR difficulties OR issues OR problems OR limitations.

4.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Strict inclusion criteria were rigorously set with the goal of completing a thorough and complete literature review on the perceived barriers to obtaining mental health support among nursing students, particularly international students. These standards were crucial in illuminating the unique difficulties faced by this student population and maintaining the research's credibility. First, the papers chosen must be full texts, available for jamk students . This evaluation focused on international nursing students because of the unique challenges they face in the classroom and clinical practices.

Secondly, the articles selected should provide concrete solutions to the stigmas that people face when they consider getting help for their mental health. With this criterion in place, the authors were sure that the material used was directly relevant to the study, which improves the overall comprehension of the topic at hand. In addition, for the sake of uniformity and ease of access for the research team and potential readers, only publications published in English were considered for inclusion. (Paré & Kitsiou, 2017.)

Finally, the publications chosen had to be empirical research, defined using rigorous data gathering and analysis techniques like surveys, interviews, experiments, or observations. To answer the research issue, empirical studies are crucial since they provide hard data. This literature review adhered to these demanding inclusion criteria because the authors wanted to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of the difficulties nursing students, especially international students, face when looking for mental health support. The review's adherence to these criteria assured that the findings are reliable, valid, and relevant and helps to further our understanding of this major area (Lau,2017.)

Exclusion Criteria: Exclusion criteria is just as important as inclusion criteria when doing a literature review. To narrow down the selection process and review only the most relevant and applicable items, exclusion criteria were employed. The focus and integrity of the study can be preserved if the researchers are transparent about what will not be included, to maintain coherence in the use of English, items originally published in other languages was disregarded (Lau,2017.)

Finally, works that were empirical, such as opinion pieces or simply theoretical articles, were not considered because they need to provide insights based on evidence (Hawker et al., 2002). The quality, relevance, and precision of the review was maintained with these exclusion criteria, and they allowed for a more efficient synthesis of relevant findings in the analysis that follows. A summary of the inclusion and exclusion is as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2 Inclusion and exclusion table

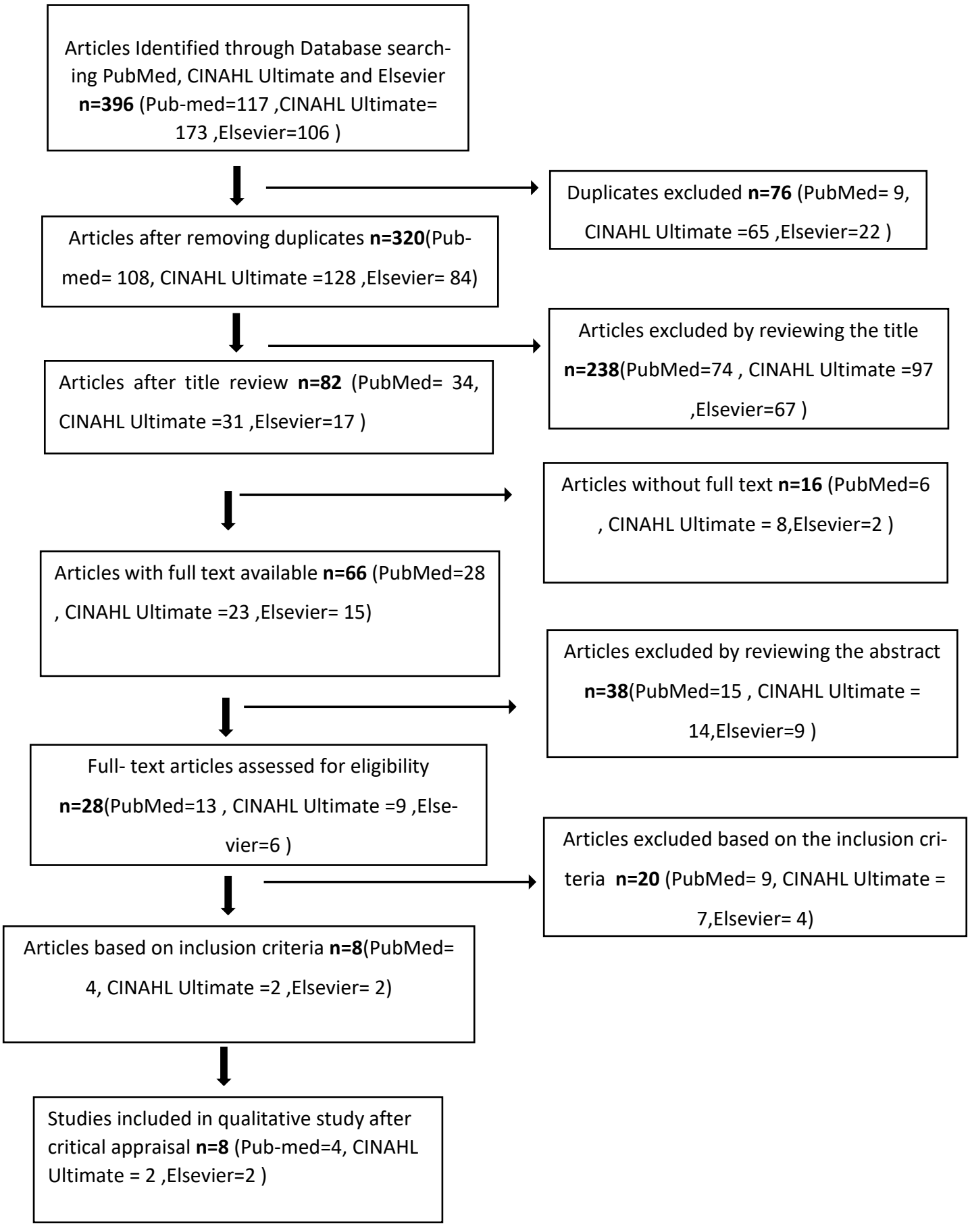
Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1. Focus on Nursing Students, with an Emphasis on International Students. 2. Address the Perceived Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Support. 3. Articles published in English. 4. Articles with an abstract 5. Articles dated from the year 2013 onwards. 6. Nursing articles available to JAMK students.	1. Irrelevant Populations: Articles focusing on populations other than nursing students or not emphasizing international students. 2. Unrelated Topics: Articles not addressing the perceived barriers to seeking mental health support. 3. Non-English Publications: Articles published in languages other than English. 4. Non peer reviewed articles. 5. Repeated articles in other databases.

4.3 Data collection and selection process

The research process involved conducting comprehensive searches across multiple databases. 396 articles relevant to the subject under investigation were identified from Pub-med, CINAHL Ultimate, and Elsevier. Following a meticulous process of removing duplicate entries from the combined dataset, a final count of 320 unique articles remained, serving as the foundation for subsequent analysis and assessment. An additional 238 articles were excluded after screening the titles. The remaining 82 were scanned for full text availability. This led to the exclusion of a further 16

articles. Afterwards, the abstracts of the remaining documents were screened which led to the exclusion of 38 articles. The remaining 28 articles were subjected to a rigorous screening process, adhering to predetermined criteria, to determine their pertinence to the research investigation. Out of the total, a total of 20 records were removed from the study due to their failure to match the specified inclusion criteria or their lack of relevance to investigating perceived barriers to seeking mental health support among foreign undergraduate nursing students. In the end, 8 studies that met all the predetermined criteria were chosen for the qualitative analysis. A summary of the study selection is as shown in figure 1. The summary of the articles is shown in the appendix 1.

Figure 1 Data selection flow diagram



4.4 Critical Appraisal

Integrity and credibility of the literature review depend on the critical appraisal of selected publications. The authors used the well-recognized Hawker et al.,(2002) framework for reviews to accomplish their goal. This methodology was developed with the express purpose of objectively evaluating each study's quality and applicability. Study design, data collection methods, sample size and representatives, rigor of analysis, and bias and confounding factors played important roles in the critical appraisal process (Hawker et al.,2002).

Each chosen publication was critically appraised by two researchers to verify accuracy and consistency. The researchers appraised and weighed the eight articles independently by evaluating their content as showed in the appendix 2 and appendix 3. Out of the highest possible score of 36, an article had to score a minimum of 22 points in each of the two independent evaluations to qualify for inclusion in the study. After the critical appraisal, all the eight selected articles were included in the study. This method ensured that the critical evaluation was as objective as possible. This literature review is committed to upholding the finest norms of scholarly inquiry by subjecting the chosen articles to rigorous critical evaluation according to the framework developed by Hawker and others. In addition to guiding the articles chosen for inclusion, the appraisal process shed light on the study's merits and flaws, paving the way for a more in-depth synthesis of the results later in the review.

4.5 Studies Included in the Review

This study consisted of a total of eight articles. These articles were carefully chosen because they represent the foundation upon which the study of the perceived barriers to seeking mental health support among international nursing students. Eight articles were chosen to ensure a thorough exploration of the topic while keeping the quality and relevancy of the sources, striking a balance between depth and breadth (Paré & Kitsiou ,2017). The articles ,3 was from United Kingdom, one from Australia, and one from both the United Kingdom and Australia ,one from Korea lastly one from both Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

In Korea, Kim et al., (2020) study aimed to examine aimed to examine aimed to examine aimed to examine aimed to examine aimed to examine aimed to examine the mediational effects of social

support on the relationship between grit and academic burnout in nursing students. In Australia Benny et al., (2022) provides valuable guidance for educators and institutions to improve nursing student supervision and training, particularly in complex mental health nursing. In Australia, Asturias et al., (2021) study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence the psychological well-being of future health care professionals. Cameron et al., (2022) research entailed a qualitative study conducted in the UK and Scotland highlighting the challenges and experiences of nursing students in various countries and found that learning in small groups made them feel better. Galvin et al., (2015) In the United Kingdom identified stressors and issues and helps improve training and support for nursing students. Kotera et al., (2021) found that self-compassion is a protective factor that may reduce mental health problems and shame in nursing students.

Mitchell (2018) United Kingdom qualitative study aimed to identify perceived barriers and facilitators to seeking psychological support and inform strategies to improve mental health support for nursing students. Lastly, Selim et al., (2023) in Egypt and Saudi Arabia focused on validating an academic counselling assessment tool for nursing students. The study aimed to assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of the instrument in specific cultural and educational settings, contributing to improved academic support for nursing students.

4.6 Data Analysis

A synthesis of the results from the chosen publications was performed to analyse the data using content analysis. The aggregated data was thematically arranged to reveal recurrent issues and emerging tendencies in providing mental health services to international nursing students a method referred to as content analysis (Colorado State University ,n.d) .As is in literature review process, onset of the research the two authors started together only to find It was difficult for to choose which articles to include in evaluation because there were so many accessible (Page et al.2021).In this regard they decided to do each on their own putting a framework of highlighting and bookmarking the links of the documents that allowed for comparison and contrast of the various studies that correspond with the research question. Firstly, by reading through the abstract then deciding on the document based on their methodology, research design, and conclusions.

The two authors read the selected articles separately several times to internalize the content. They then held a meeting after locating the papers that were the most applicable to the study issue and deciding which ones would be most beneficial where they together wrote down the key concepts that answered the research question “what are the perceived barriers that hinder international nursing students from seeking mental health support?” Concepts that had some similarities were grouped together and given one title as the main category as shown in appendix 4. The results were presented systematically and debated in the following parts of this study. A summary of the process of data analysis is show in the table 3 below.

Table 3 Data analysis

Data Analysis Process	**Description**
1. Data Synthesis	Aggregating data from selected publications for analysis.
2. Thematic Arrangement	Thematically organizing data to identify recurrent issues and emerging trends related to mental health services for international nursing students.
4. Systematic Presentation	Presenting the results systematically in the study paper.
5. In-Depth Discussion	Analysing and discussing the findings in subsequent sections of the research paper to provide insights into the factors affecting international nursing students' help-seeking behaviour for mental health issues.

The authors came up with three main categories as illustrated in table 4 below that were combining findings from different studies. To ensure authenticity of the results, the authors included an original simplified version of the key concepts.

Table 4 Data analysis process

Original simplified version	Subcategory	Main Category
Some international nursing students came from communities where mental illness is considered a taboo thus not discussed. Some students felt unwelcome while seeking mental health support. This led to increased self-shame.	◆ Cultural differences ◆ Self-shame	Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour
Some receptors found assessment tools and systems too complicated to comprehend. In most cases, students did not have knowledge on where or how to seek mental health support. There is need to improve the professional providers knowledge and skills as it greatly influences clients' satisfaction. In some instances, the international nursing students were not familiar with the language used in the systems or by some professionals while seeking mental health support.	◆ Lack of awareness on the functioning of Health systems (insurance coverage, referral procedures and scheduling appointments) ◆ Locating services ◆ Inadequately trained staff. ◆ Language barrier.	Barriers to healthcare access
Nursing students had a lot of academic workloads. They prioritized their academics at the expense of their mental well-being. Some students feared that disclosure would have negative effects on their schoolwork.	◆ Academic pressures. ◆ Fear of negative Academic Consequences.	Academic factors

5 Results

Three main categories were identified from the study of the eight articles. These main categories and their subcategories are shown in the table 5 below.

Table 5 Categories and subcategories

Main Category	Subcategory
Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour	◆ Cultural differences ◆ Self-shame
Barriers to healthcare access	◆ Lack of awareness on the functioning of Health systems (insurance coverage, referral procedures and scheduling appointments) ◆ Locating services ◆ Inadequately trained staff. ◆ Language barrier
Academic factors	◆ Academic pressures ◆ Fear of negative Academic Consequences

5.1 Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour

Cultural differences: International nursing students are not immune to the persistent and powerful barrier that is the stigma associated with mental health concerns. The study showed that due to the prevailing social stigma, individuals experiencing mental health issues frequently encounter instances of discrimination, unfavourable stereotypes, and societal disapprobation (Galvin et al., 2015; Cameron et al., 2022). The examination of cultural disparities in the perception and discourse surrounding mental health was crucial to understanding this issue (Selim et al., 2023). The findings revealed that many students from other countries may come from backgrounds where discussing mental health is taboo or frowned upon. Problems with one's mental health are stigmatized as indicators of moral deficiency in various societies (Selim et al., 2023). Given the growing number of minority and international students present on campuses, the ability to communicate

effectively across cultures was essential. Counselors needed to be able to appreciate and accommodate clients of varying ethnicity, religions, and socioeconomic statuses. This ensured that students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds received treatment that was tailored to their individual needs. Consequently, students hailing from those socioeconomic situations exhibited reticence in expressing their mental health concerns due to apprehensions surrounding potential stigmatization and negative evaluations. Counselors needed to be able to appreciate and accommodate clients of varying ethnicity, religions, and socioeconomic statuses (Cameron et al., 2022). This ensured that students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds received treatment that was tailored to their individual needs.

Self-shame: Nursing students with high self- shame were reluctant to seek mental health support leading to poor health outcomes (Kotera et al., 2021). The study revealed reluctance among international students to seek assistance from mental health professionals who may lack cultural sensitivity towards their diverse origins. They feared being judged or worried that they would experience cultural insensitivity. This increased self- shame making them hesitant to seek mental health support (Selim et al., 2023). In some cases, nursing students felt unwelcomed by the health workers while seeking mental health support. This lowered their self-esteem and increased self -shame (Galvin et al., 2015). In the long run, the affected students discontinued their treatment plans and failed to go back for subsequent appointments.

5.2 Barriers to healthcare access

Lack of awareness on the functioning of healthcare systems: Some international nursing students lacked knowledge regarding the kind of mental health options available and exhibited lack of awareness regarding the appropriate methods for seeking insufficient promotion and communication of mental health services inside educational institutions gave rise to this significant obstacle. It was revealed that some assessment tools and procedures in the medical systems were complicated, and the nursing students found it difficult to use them (Benny et al.,2022). The findings showed numerous facets to the mental health system's complexity. It involved comprehending insurance coverage, interpreting referral procedures, and scheduling appointments with mental health professionals (Galvin et al., 2015). The difficulty in comprehending the functioning of the health systems discouraged the nursing students from seeking mental health support.

Locating services: The study showed that the complex nature of the mental health systems frequently left undergraduate nursing students, especially international students, feeling powerless and confused. This intricate web of services, providers, and administrative procedures proved to be daunting and overwhelming to navigate. Students found it difficult to schedule for appointments and did not know where they could get mental health support (Galvin et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2020). Consequently, students seeking mental health support experienced a profound sense of hopelessness and futility. These difficulties were worsened for international students by unfamiliarity with the healthcare system of their host country. This feeling of helplessness was worsened when students perceive a lack of control over their mental health care decisions (Galvin et al., 2015). They believed that decisions regarding their treatment were made for them, leaving them feeling disconnected from the process and disinterested in their mental health journey.

Inadequately trained staff: When it came to effectively supporting undergraduate nursing students, the knowledge and experience of counselling and mental health staff were crucial. To meet the varied and ever-changing requirements of their student bodies, schools could invest heavily in the professional development of their counsellors and mental health workers (Asturias et., 2021). This was supported by Selim et al., (2023) who concluded that the level of health care provider's knowledge greatly affected customer satisfaction. In addition, counsellors can keep abreast of developments in the field of mental health assistance through continual professional development and training. Another study by Benny et al.,(2022) revealed that medical personnel with little or no experience in cultural awareness, offered less effective and efficient support compared to their counterparts who had more experience. Clients who were satisfied with the services they received adhered to their treatment plan and referred they fellow students.

Language barrier: Language difficulties significantly challenged international students accessing mental health services. Communicating intricate mental health issues in a language, not one's native tongue evoked apprehension and exasperation. The apprehension surrounding potential miscommunication or misunderstanding served as a deterrent for international students when seeking assistance. In some cases, the professionals spoke language that could not be understood by the students. In addition, some assessment tools and hospital systems were in languages that were not familiar to the students (Benny et al., 2022). The language barrier created communication breakdown. This highly discouraged nursing students from seeking mental health support.

5.3 Academic factors

Academic pressures: The stringent requirements of nursing programs resulted in increased levels of stress and anxiety experienced by students. When confronted with a rigorous academic workload, especially the written assignments. Students prioritized their academic pursuits over their mental well-being due to concerns that obtaining assistance may impede their academic advancement. Nursing students felt that they did not have enough time to seek mental health support (Kim et al., 2020; Mitchell 2018). The act of prioritizing other aspects over mental health resulted in a recurring pattern of disregarding mental health needs, which intensified stress levels and adversely affected academic achievement and overall welfare (Asturias et al., 2021).

Fear of negative Academic Consequences: The findings indicated that students who consider seeking assistance for mental health issues typically experienced a sense of unease due to the potential negative educational consequences that could arise. There was a concern among individuals that revealing their personal challenges could potentially result to negative academic repercussions, discriminatory treatment, or an adverse influence on their academic performance. This concern discouraged individuals from seeking assistance, reinforcing the belief that prioritizing academic success should precede one's mental health (Asturias et al., 2021).

6 Discussion

The review of the eight selected articles shed more light on the complexity of international nursing students' mental health challenges. The study answered the research question “what are the perceived barriers that hinder international nursing students from seeking mental health support?”

The study revealed that cultural differences is one of the major barriers that hinder international nursing students from seeking mental health support (Galvin et al., 2015; Cameron et al., 2022; Selim et al., 2023). This theory is in line with the study introduction and theoretical background where Kristiana et al. (2022) and Sadiwo et al. (2020) noted that international nursing students have different culture, religion, and beliefs from those of the community they settle in. In most cases the international nursing students experience culture shock as they settle in their new destinations. In recent years, an increasing number of international students have been pursuing their higher education abroad, attracted by the promise of academic excellence and a diverse range of

cultural experiences (Forest ,2007). Among them, Finland's renowned educational standards, advanced healthcare infrastructure and attractive living environment have increasingly attracted nursing students to the country (Mikkonen et al.,2017).

Kotera et al. (2021) & Galvin et al. (2015) discuss how international students are faced with challenges related to cultural adjustment a such as adapting to norms and expectations of the host country that are inversely different to their home practices. In addition, the article by Jüriloo demonstrates is a cultural stigma that would discourage students from seeking mental health support in their home country in this sense it is possible for Kenyan students as international students to have a strong sense of self-reliance and seeking mental health support is seen as a sign of weakness or inability to cope independently (Jüriloo, 2021). She continues to say such a mindset will crawl up into internalised stigma and shame to an individual unable to advocate for their needs. Understanding the role of self-shame in different cultural contexts mental health services can provide targeted support that mitigates these feelings and encourages individuals to seek help.

The results also revealed students' academics hindered the international nursing students from seeking mental health support and the students claimed that they did not have enough time to seek help due to the huge school workload ,(Kim et al., 2020; Mitchell 2018). In addition, they feared that revealing their mental health status would have a negative effect on their academics (Kim et al., 2020; Mitchell 2018; Asturias et al., 2021).These findings support the sentiments by Kristiana et al. (2022) in the introduction who concluded that the international students experienced challenges in balancing their academics with their other obligations. Offering flexible deadlines ,mental health leave and supportive academic tutoring can reduce the fear of negative academic repercussions. In some cases, the hospital systems and assessment tools were in languages that the students were not familiar with (Selim et al., 2023). Hofstede (2001) mentions that one`s culture is inclusive of their language. Incorporating interpreters and training the personnel both in schools ,clinical practice areas and mental health institutions about cultural sensitivity could benefit in the international students at large.

Galvin et al.(2015) and Benny et al. (2022) discuss the functionality of health systems, and this could be where access to mental health services can be hindered by issues such as structural barriers like insurance coverage limitations, complex referral processes and difficulties in scheduling

appointments, rural settings where it is not easy to access mental health support. Improving the efficiency through better signage ,online information and dedicated support staff to assist locating services could help reduce these barriers as well improving the accessibility of mental health services. In addition, simplifying administrative processes increasing awareness about how health systems operate including insurance coverage ,referral procedures and appointment scheduling to help international nursing students unfamiliar with the local health care system.

7 Ethical consideration, validity and reliability, strength, and limitations

Ethics in research are employed as guidelines for what ought to be done or what should not be done. This helps maintain the integrity of the researchers and increase the reliability of the results (Roig, 2015). Plagiarism is one of the major components of ethical considerations in research. Clarke et al., (2023) defines plagiarism as the use of someone's work without acknowledging them. To avoid plagiarism in this study, the authors acknowledged all the information sources by correctly citing them throughout the process. In addition, the search and selection of literature review articles used in this study was unbiased. The articles were sort from three data bases, PubMed, CINAHL Ultimate, and Elsevier. This research will shed light on the numerous difficulties in international nursing students, have when accessing mental health services. These pieces could include a wide variety of points of view, research methods, and conclusions to add depth to the forthcoming literature review.

This literature review aims to provide an in-depth and evidence-based examination of undergraduate nursing students' challenges while looking for mental health support by incorporating a wide range of research that fits these stringent criteria. These findings are crucial for two reasons: (1) comprehending the difficulties encountered by this student population and (2) guiding the development of interventions and support structures designed to improve the student's well-being and academic performance. By methodically selecting and including these eight publications, significant progress has been made toward the study's overarching goals and objectives (Paré & Kitsiou,2017.)

The studies were conducted in English language in five different countries ranging from the year 2015 to 2023. Furthermore, the authors of these articles stated that they had sort permission from

relevant bodies, declared their source of funds and stated that there was no conflict of interests. However, the major limitation in this study was that the researchers relied on the informed consent from the eight selected articles. In addition, the articles reviewed were limited to only those published in English. This might have excluded very informative article published in other languages. This study can benefit different countries and systems where they can tailor make mental health interventions to be culturally sensitive. Including counselling and support groups to address self-shame. Also, educational programs can be developed to increase awareness about how health systems work in their country with enhancing the visibility and accessibility of mental health services. Training programs for mental health and schools´ personnel on cultural sensitivity and awareness to meet the needs of the diverse population. Provision of mental health services in multiples languages and interpreters can help bridge the language gap in the health care institutions. In the schools the institution can create policies to protect students who seek mental health help from academic penalties.

8 Conclusion

The findings from the reviewed studies and publications highlight the difficulties have far-reaching effects on students' academic performance, health, and overall quality of life at home and abroad. Findings about international students' propensity to seek mental health support highlight the significance of doing so and Grevtceva & Khevavasam (2022) in Finland highlight that students' ability to communicate their mental health needs and access appropriate services may be affected by low levels of proficiency in the local language. Multilingual support services and peer-led initiatives in Finland, such of culturally sensitive interventions, can play a significant role in bridging these gaps (Khoong et al., 2020). The introduction of multilingual support services could greatly assist to address the language barrier. Stigma disproportionately affects ethnic minorities, who may face cultural barriers and feel discriminated against (Clement et al.,2015). The young people are often exposed to stigma because of societal expectations and peer pressure so are traditional gender norms may discourage men from expressing their vulnerability and from seeking help (Henderson et al.,2013).

To assist the overseas students to be aware of and feel safe using existing support networks, educational institutions could foster settings that promote open talks about mental health. The out-

comes of this study highlight the exacerbated by academic pressures, transitional stresses, and being alone. Supportive campus culture, readily available resources, and education about mental health are just a few of the measures that schools could take. In addition to lowering academic pressures, encouraging a healthy work-life balance is crucial in easing students' minds (Medicine et al., 2021).Colleges and universities could do more to combat these pervasive problems if they adopt a more holistic approach to student health and wellness, encourage open dialogue about mental health, and prioritize these issues in their programming ((Medicine et al., 2021). Tackling these barriers is imperative and is crucial to fostering a healthy learning environment that promotes academic success and personal growth. It is important to consider time management and self-organisation skills, which are fundamental to productivity, effective self-realisation, competitiveness, and personal achievement (Halat et al., 2023). These skills help to reduce stress and anxiety as well as promoting mental wellbeing. The results provide basis for developing more effective strategies to support their wellbeing and academic success in international nursing students globally.

Further studies can be done to find out how social and healthcare institutions in Finland implement their international nursing students' integration into the Finnish culture in support of their academic studies and clinical practice in. In the clinical practice it could be further studied categorically to the academic year in the student study.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Summary of reviewed articles

Author and Title	Aim and Purpose	Participants	Methodology, Data Collection, and Analysis	Key Findings and Results	Country of Study
Kim, E. J., Yu, J. H., & Kim, E. Y. (2020). Pathways linking mental health literacy to professional help-seeking intentions in Korean college students.	To examine the relationships linking mental health literacy and help-seeking intentions in a sample of Korean college students.	200 Korean students.	cross-sectional study and analysed using a structural equation modelling approach.	Stigma fully accounted for the direct effect of mental health literacy on help-seeking attitudes.	Korea
Asturias, N., Andrew, S., Boardman, G., & Kerr, D. (2021). The influence of socio-demographic factors on stress and	To explore the influence of socio-demographic factors on	Undergraduate nursing students	Descriptive correlational cross-sectional study design.	The study identified how socio-demographic factors can affect stress and coping	Australia

coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students.	stress levels and coping strategies among undergraduate nursing students.			mechanisms in nursing students.	
Benny, J., Porter, J. E., & Thomas, B. (2022). A systematic review of preceptor's experience in supervising undergraduate nursing students: Lessons learned for mental health nursing.	To conduct a systematic review of preceptors' experiences in supervising undergraduate nursing students with a focus on mental health nursing.	Preceptors and undergraduate nursing students.	A systematic review of existing literature on preceptors' experiences in supervising nursing students, with a specific emphasis on mental health nursing.	The study provided insights into preceptors' experiences and their implications for mental health nursing education.	Australia
Cameron, D. M., Muratore, F., Tower, M., Eades, C. E., & Evans, J. M. M. (2022). Exploration of health and health behaviours of undergraduate nursing students: study comprised a self-report	To explore the health and health behaviours of undergraduate nursing students through a multi-methods study conducted in two countries.	Nine Scottish students and 11 Australian students were interviewed.	A multi-methods study conducted across two countries to investigate the health and health-related behaviours of nursing students.	The study provided insights into the health and behaviours of undergraduate nursing students in a cross-cultural context.	United Kingdom and Australia

questionnaire and in-depth qualitative interviews					
Kotera, Y., Cockerill, V., Chircop, J. G. E., & Forman, D. (2021). Mental health shame, self-compassion, and sleep in UK nursing students: Complete mediation of self-compassion in sleep and mental health.	To examine the relationships between mental health problems, mental health shame, self-compassion, and average sleeping time among UK nursing students.	182 nursing students at a university in the East Midlands	Cross-section design study	The results showed that mental health problems were positively associated with feelings of shame and negatively associated with self-compassion and sleep quality.	United Kingdom
Galvin, J., Suominen, E., Morgan, C., O'Connell, E.-J., & Smith, A. P. (2015). Mental health nursing students' experiences of stress during training: a thematic analysis of qualitative interviews.	To conduct a thematic analysis of qualitative interviews to explore the experiences of stress among mental health nursing students during their training.	Mental nursing students.	Qualitative research involving thematic analysis of interviews to understand the stress experiences of mental health nursing students.	The study provided thematic insights into the stress experiences of mental health nursing students during their training.	United Kingdom

Mitchell, A. E. P. (2018). Psychological distress in student nurses undertaking an educational programme with professional registration as a nurse: Their perceived barriers and facilitators in seeking psychological support.	To explore psychological distress in student nurses undertaking programs with professional registration and identify perceived barriers and facilitators in seeking psychological support.	Student nurses.	Qualitative research examining psychological distress, barriers, and facilitators in seeking psychological support among student nurses.	The study revealed perceived barriers and facilitators in seeking psychological support among student nurses.	United Kingdom
Selim, A., Omar, A., Awad, S., Miligi, E., & Ayoub, N. (2023). Validation of student academic advising and counseling evaluation tool among undergraduate nursing students.	To validate a student academic advising and counseling evaluation tool among undergraduate nursing students.	Nursing students	Research focused on the validation of an academic advising and counseling evaluation tool designed for nursing students.	The study provided insights into the validation of the evaluation tool for academic advising and counseling among nursing students.	Egypt and Saudi Arabia

Appendix 2. Critical appraisal of articles (1st author)

Author	Abstract/title	Introduction and aims	Methods and data	Sampling	Data analysis	Ethics and bias	results	transferability or generalizability	implications and usefulness	Total	Comments
Kim, E. J., Yu, J. H., & Kim, E. Y.	3	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	31	Good abstract and result presentation
Asturias, N., Andrew, S., Boardman, G., & Kerr, D.	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	33	good data collection methods
Benny, J., Porter, J. E., & Thomas, B. (2022)	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	32	The article was well introduced and easy to follow
Cameron, D. M., Muratore, F., Tower, M., Eades, C. E., & Evans, J. M. M.	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	33	The results were well presented and analysed
Kotera, Y., Cockerill, V., Chircop, J. G.	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	33	Good presentation. it was easy to follow

E., & Forman, D. (2021).											
Galvin, J., Suominen, E., Morgan, C., O'Connell, E.-J., & Smith, A. P.	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	33	The article had good flow and easy to follow
Mitchell, A. E. P.	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	33	Good presentation of results
Selim, A., Omar, A., Awad, S., Miligi, E., & Ayoub, N.	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	33	Excellent data selection criteria

Appendix 3. Critical appraisal of articles (2nd author)

Author	Abstract/title	Introduction and aims	Methods and data	Sampling	Data analysis	Ethics and bias	results	transferability or generalizability	implications and usefulness	Total	Comments
Kim, E. J., Yu, J. H., & Kim, E. Y.	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	33	Good introduction and easy to follow.
Asturias, N., Andrew, S., Boardman, G., & Kerr, D.	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	33	good data collection methods
Benny, J., Porter, J. E., & Thomas, B. (2022)	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	33	Nice flow and easy to follow
Cameron, D. M., Muratore, F., Tower,	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	33	Good presentation of results

M., Eades, C. E., & Evans, J. M. M.											
Kotera, Y., Cockerill, V., Chircop, J. G. E., & Forman, D. (2021).	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	33	Excellent data selection criteria
Galvin, J., Suominen, E., Morgan, C., O'Connell, E.-J., & Smith, A. P.	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	33	Good abstract and result presentation
Mitchell, A. E. P.	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	32	Good presentation. it was easy to follow.
Selim, A., Omar, A., Awad, S., Miligi, E., & Ayoub, N.	3	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	3	31	Good presentation of results

Appendix 4.Data analysis process

Themes identified from the articles	Subcategory	Main Category
Support seeking behaviour is affected by social -economic differences.	Cultural differences	Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour
Feeling unwelcome increased self-shame among students seeking mental support. Students with high self-shame were not likely to seek mental health support.	Self-shame	Stigma and Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviour
Some assessment tools were too difficult for students to understand	Lack of awareness on the functioning of Health systems (insurance coverage, referral procedures and scheduling appointments)	Lack of Empowerment
Some students lacked knowledge on where to get help.	Locating services	Lack of Empowerment
Some students were unfamiliar with the language used in the hospital systems.	Language barrier	Lack of Empowerment

Some assessment tools were written in languages that students did not understand. Some professionals spoke a language that could not be understood by students seeking services.		
Professional's skills should be continually improved as it affects the client's satisfaction. Many nurses had little or no exposure to help them support nursing students seeking help.	Inadequately trained staff	Lack of Empowerment
Students had many written assignments.	Academic pressures	Academic factors
Some students feared being discriminated by other students and teachers. Some students feared that disclosure of their status would disqualify them from continuing with their studies.	Fear of negative Academic Consequences	Academic factors