Nursing is considered as an extremely stressful profession and has been identified as a “disease of the 20th Century” (Smith & Yang, 2017), manifesting in stress-related illnesses for health professionals (Bartlett, Taylor & Nelson, 2015). The educational journey to professional nursing can be fraught with stress, impacting global health and overall well-being. The effects of stress on nursing students’ academic performance depends on the sufficiency of coping behaviors (Findik, Ozbas, Cavdar, Topcu & Onler, 2015). As the student transitions from one level to the next level of learning, healthy behaviors and coping processes can play a key role in the student’s academic success (Deasy, Coughlan, Pironam, Jourdan & Mannix-McNamara, 2014). Spiritual health has been identified as an important coping strategy that regulates an individual’s stress (Abbasi, Farahani-Nia, Neda, Givari & Haghani, 2014). One aspect of spirituality, spiritual perspective, plays a significant role in how an individual views life events, awareness of inner self, and any connection to a higher being (Reed, 1986). Theoretically, spirituality has the potential to impact all aspects of life including health behaviors and global health outcomes. The inability to balance the academic demands of nursing school with the demands of home and work can affect the student’s perception of stress as well as the student’s academic performance and overall well-being (Bryer et al., 2013; Critz & Feagai, 2014; Smith & Yang, 2017).

This correlational research examined the relationship between spiritual perspective and perceived stress in a sample (N=91) of baccalaureate nursing students at a historically black college and university (HBCU) as they are preparing to embark upon their professional careers as nurses. Nurse educators can aid in the development of a risk profile to assist in the early identification of targeted diversified student populations who may benefit from interventions based on their placement in the nursing curriculum and capture those students that maybe at high risk for academic attrition. Further, these results can be used as a precursor to the development, implementation and evaluation of programs aimed at stress reduction and their potential success in enhancing academic performance and reduction in attrition rates among diversified nursing students in HBCU settings.

Because a student’s spiritual perspective is often overlooked as a resource and coping strategy, findings from this study can assist nurse educators in gaining a more expanded understanding of the spiritual perspective of students and its relationship to perceived stress, thus offering a more holistic perspective to the body of stress research. Identifying which significant predictors that pose as barriers experienced by nursing students at different points along the trajectory of the nursing school experience are critical to student success. According to the National League for Nursing (NLN), in
2014 there were 12.2% African Americans enrolled in nursing programs in the United States (www.nln.org).

It is significant for higher education and nursing schools to recognize the importance of incorporating stress management techniques and continuing to emphasize health promoting behaviors in the nursing curriculum. It is also vital for schools of nursing and nursing faculty recognize the important role that spirituality can play in the student’s overall health and well-being. Therefore, emphasis should be placed at incorporating stress management techniques into nursing curriculum globally as a resource to introduce nursing students to how to effectively handle stressful situations in the nursing profession as a means of coping. Furthermore, educators should globally enhance health awareness as a concept to challenge health care needs of future nurses to improve self-care. Rigorous academic and emotional demands that nursing students experience, impacts their perception of high levels of stress (Reeve, Shumaker, Yearwood, Crowell, & Riley, 2013).

The impact of stress not only effects nursing students’ lives during their educational journey but may also later impact their journey as professional nurses (Reeve et al., 2013). A major finding revealed there were no statistically significant differences in spiritual perspective between baccalaureate nursing students enrolled at a HBCU. Findings further revealed there was no statistical significance found in selected demographic characteristics as predictors of perceived stress in baccalaureate nursing students. However, a statistically significant, negative correlation was observed between spiritual growth and perceived stress. Study findings have important implications for stress management techniques to be incorporated throughout the nursing curriculum as the student matriculates throughout the nursing program, which has the potential to play an important role in maintaining or improving overall health and well-being of nurses globally, particularly new graduates.

Title:
Lifestyle Promoting Behaviors, Spiritual Perspective, and Perceived Stress Among Baccalaureate Nursing Students at a HBCU

Keywords:
Global Health Outcomes, Perceived Stress and Spirituality

References:

Abstract Summary:
Implications for stress management techniques incorporated throughout the nursing curriculum as students matriculate throughout nursing programs, yielding the potential to play an important role in maintaining or improving overall health and well-being of nurses globally, and impacting all aspects of life including health behaviors and health outcomes, particularly new graduates.

Content Outline:
I. Effects of stress on nursing students’ academic performance
   a. Spiritual Health as coping strategy
   b. Significant indicators of health behaviors and global health outcomes
II. Findings on relationship between spiritual perspective and perceived stress
   a. Demographics of study participants
   b. Findings of major overarching research question
III. Discuss implications for nursing education and diverse global health outcomes
   a. The role of holistic stress reduction and health promotion programs in curricula
b. Impact of maintaining or improving overall health and well-being globally in diverse populations

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**Author Summary:** Dr. Garner's research interest includes promoting effective coping strategies and healthier lifestyle choices in baccalaureate nursing students that will enhance their ability to manage stress as they embark upon their professional careers in nursing. Her involvement with baccalaureate nursing students has gained recognition on multiple levels. In addition to her recent recognition as an NLN Jonas Scholar and Celebrate Nursing Honoree, Dr. Garner fosters scholarship and lifelong learning. She holds memberships in numerous professional organizations.