

PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To study the prevalence of depression in University Students who belong to Middle, Upper Middle and Upper Socioeconomic status.

Methodology: The present research involved 331 university students (165 males and 166 females). Participants were selected with help of purposive sampling technique from different universities of Karachi, with age range of 19-30 years (Mean = 21.70 ± 2.7). Center for Epidemiological Studies Scale for Depression was used to screen out the level of depression and demographic form was used for Gender and Socioeconomic status.

Results: Among 331 participants 50 (15.1%) were not depressed, 75(22.7%) mildly depressed, 111 (33.5%) moderate and 95(28.7%) severely depressed. Males were more depressed than females and there was higher level of depression in upper middle socioeconomic status than other socioeconomic statuses.

Conclusion: It is concluded that depression is common in male and female university students belonging to different socioeconomic status in Karachi, Pakistan. There is higher prevalence of depression in Upper Middle socioeconomic status than Middle and Upper socioeconomic statuses. Over all male university students have higher level of depression than female.

Keywords: Prevalence, Depression, Gender, Socioeconomic Status, University Students

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INTRODUCTION

Depression in university students is immensely prevalent and pervasive problem across the country¹⁻³. Struggle for maintaining adequate grades, future planning and being away from home causes anxiousness for many students⁴. The reaction of these stress causes depression in some students. They remain isolated, cry and skip classes, shows avoidance without knowing that they are depressed. Several researches reported higher prevalence of depression in university students⁵⁻⁸.

Since over two-thirds of young individuals did not talk about or get help for psychological health issues,⁹ university students have higher prevalence of depression. In developing countries 10%-14% individuals are suffering with anxiety and depression¹⁰⁻¹¹. Among these countries Pakistan has higher prevalence of depression because of social hardships¹².

Socio-economic status is typically broken in to three classes, upper, middle and lower socio-economic. These classes of socio-economic status can assess through income, education and occupation¹³.

Usually middle, upper middle and upper socio-economic status individuals get admission in universities for higher education. Eamon found that low socio-economic status prevents access to resources and leads to extra stress and conflicts at home which influence their academic successes¹⁴.

In addition, socio-economic status is one of the most important environmental risk factors of psychological health. Individual with good income, job status and educational standard tend to be happiest and have less probability to suffer from depression and other mental disorders than the individuals with lower socio-economic status¹⁵⁻¹⁸. In cross-sectional research studies, low socio-economic status has been constantly linked with higher prevalence of depression¹⁹. Lorant et al found association between depression and worst days socio-economic status²⁰. Butterworth et al²¹ established linking of socio-economic status with depression and experiencing financial hardship. Furthermore, Niaz and Hassan²² examined the frequency of depression in upper and upper middle class urban women visited to private clinic in Karachi. Significant gender difference were found (Female, N=560; 67% Vs Male, N=275; 33%), ep-

idemiological researches suggested higher prevalence of depression in female than male²²⁻²⁵.

Depression is a devastating problem among university students. The few available studies were carried out in Europe and America. The present study was carried out to examine the prevalence of depression in university student's belonging to various socio-economic status.

METHODOLOGY

Sample was collected through purposive sampling technique from different universities of Karachi, Pakistan.

It was comprised of basic information like age, gender, birth order, education, family structure, address Socio-economic status etc. Participant's socio-economic status were determined according to their income level Middle Socio-economic Status: Families having per month income 14000 to 30000 (rupees). Upper Middle Socio-economic Status were families having per month income 30000 to 50000 (rupees). Upper Socio-economic Status were families having per month income 50000 (rupees) and more. (Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, 2001).

Initially, participant's written consent was taken, then they were asked to fill research instruments. The consenting participants were guaranteed of confidentiality and informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time when they wanted. Participants were informed about the nature of the research. After that demographic form to fill in the information related to participant's name, age, socio-economic status education, followed by Centre of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale. Afterward responses of the participants on the research instruments were scored according to

the standard procedure of scoring and the results were statistically analyzed.

In present research depression was assessed with 20-Items scale Centre of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale²⁶. The CES-D scale contains four main dimensions that are negative emotions, positive emotions, physical complaints and interpersonal relationships. Participants responded according to their experience of symptoms during the last month: rarely = (0), some of the time = (1), occasionally = (2) and most of the time = (3). According to standardized scoring on CES-D scale, 16 or more scores is considered as depression. The Centre of Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale have high validity and reliability, with excellent internal consistency, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is ranged from .84 to .85.

Descriptive statistics were computed to find out the Mean age and Standard Deviation. Further frequencies, percentages and Chi-Square Tests were computed for the prevalence of depression in male and female university students belonging to various socio-economic status. SPSS, version 18 was utilized for Statistical analysis of the data.

RESULTS

The present research contained 331 university students (male = 165 and female = 166) with age limit of 19 years to 30 years (mean age = 21.70 and Standard Deviation = 2.700). Their qualification ranged from BS to PhD.

Result depicts significant difference in the prevalence of depression in male and female university students ($p < .05$), however there is no significant difference in the prevalence of depression in various socio-economic status ($p > .05$).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of sample (n=331)

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	166	50.2
	Female	165	49.8
Socioeconomic Status	Middle	109	32.9
	Upper Middle	135	40.8
	Upper	087	26.3

Table 2: Chi-square tests Prevalence of Depression in male and female university students

Gender	No Depression (%)	Mild Depression (%)	Moderate Depression (%)	Severe Depression (%)	Total
Male	17(10.2)	37(22.3)	56(33.7)	56(33.7)	166
Female	33(20.0)	38(23.0)	55(33.3)	39(23.6)	165
Total	50(15.1)	75(22.7)	111(33.5)	95(28.7)	331

P-value .042

Table 3: Prevalence of Depression in university students belonging to various Socioeconomic Statuses

Variables	Category	No Depres- sion (%)	Mild Depres- sion (%)	Moderate De- pression (%)	Severe De- pression (%)	Total
Socioeconomic Status	Middle	11(10.1)	20(18.3)	43(39.4)	35(32.1)	109
	Upper Middle	21(15.6)	31(23.0)	46(34.1)	37(27.4)	135
	Upper	18(10.0)	24(27.6)	22(25.3)	23(26.4)	87
Total		50(15.1)	75(22.7)	111(33.5)	95(28.7)	331

P-value 0.171

DISCUSSION

Our findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Steptoe et al²⁷ who found higher prevalence of depression in Asian countries. Likewise Bayram and Bilgel²⁸ found 27.1% depression among Turkish university students, Bostanci et al²⁹ reported that among all university students in Denizli, there was 26.2% depression. The existence of depression in university students can be due to various reasons. University is an imperative transient stage of life, with particular reference to academic education, financial and interpersonal strains. Experiencing these transitions can lead higher risk of depression. University educational life is a crucial period where students have to manage each and everything by themselves without traditional support and supervision. Such as living with students, work in collaboration, maintaining peer relationships etc. Furthermore, there is clear cut difference in the methods of teaching and learning which they have at schools and colleges.

Moreover, we found male university students experiencing higher level of depression than female university students. Although previous researches depict female have higher prevalence of depression than male and some researches depicts no gender difference in prevalence of depression²⁸⁻³¹. Fulfillment of financial responsibility during university academic life causes lot of stress among Socio-economic compansion.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that depression is common in male and female university students belonging to different socioeconomic status in Karachi, Pakistan. There is higher prevalence of depression in Upper Middle socioeconomic status than Middle and Upper socioeconomic statuses. Over all male university students have higher level of depression than female. Further research is needed for development of appropriate techniques, interventional tools to overcome the occurrence of depression among university students.

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CONTRIBUTORS

SRB conceived the idea, did data collection and wrote the manuscript. SJK helped in data collection and analysis. Both authors contributed significantly to the final manuscript.