

# Psychosocial Problems among Students of Central University of Karnataka: A Comparative Study

E Rajkumar<sup>1</sup>, K V Sooraj<sup>2</sup>, B H Sandeep<sup>3</sup>, C Harish<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>DST-JRF, Department of Psychology, Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga, Karnataka, India, <sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga, Karnataka, India, <sup>3</sup>Program Co-coordinator, Bhandavya Foundation, Mandya, Karnataka, India, <sup>4</sup>School Counselor, Telangana Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

## Abstract

**Background:** Psychosocial problems have been identified as the vital among university students at particular times when they enter the university, examination stress, personal and family life events. Psychosocial problems occur in a wide variety of settings they often negatively impact on students' mental health. There were very few studies have been conducted on psychosocial problems among university students. The aim of the study is to find out the psychosocial problems of university boys and girls students.

**Methods:** The study is a cross-sectional study with a between group research design. The sample consists of 25 boys and 25 girls. The convenient sampling method is used to select the participants. Moreover, the tool used is general health questionnaire.

**Results:** Results of the study indicated that there were no significant difference in the psychosomatic, anxiety/insomnia, and social dysfunction domains. But, in the dimension of Depression University boys found to have more depression than university girls.

**Conclusion:** From the results, it was found university boys and girls significantly differed in the dimension of depression. It is very important to emphasize on the contributing factors of these problem to formulate the intervention strategies.

**Key words:** Anxiety, Depression, Insomnia, Psychosocial problems, Social dysfunction

## INTRODUCTION

For students, the transition from secondary schools to higher education centers is a life challenge. It offers new opportunities for their psychosocial development,<sup>1</sup> even though entering into a new space may be a source of strain and acute stress.<sup>1</sup> College is a new space and time period for the students-most of them in their late adolescent age, physically getting mature, and psychologically unstable. During this period, students are undergoing confusion and ambivalence.<sup>2</sup> There will be a lot of opportunities and challenges available in the colleges. This may lead to some competitions or conflict among the students and within the student. The unhealthy levels of stresses

can have the capacity to hinder the students' abilities to socialize and achieve their academic goals. Finding out such stresses and its sources to prevent it to become a threat to the students is very important.<sup>3</sup> Most of the University students are facing academic stress to study, to complete their assignments, to participate in various programs in the college, and the stress is because of the imbalance between environment and demand.<sup>4</sup> According to Porter,<sup>5</sup> most of university students did not finish their course and left the university especially within first 2 years because of their inability to cope up with the situation. Steinberg and Darling<sup>6</sup> mentioned that most of university students who visited for the mental health service reported the problems of anxiety, depression, problems related to the academics. A study conducted by Anson *et al.*,<sup>7</sup> found that anxiety was inversely related with grades obtained by the students.

Academic demands as well as family and work commitments, create tension and anxiety, and it may lead to mental health problems.<sup>8</sup> when people experience stress, it affects their physical and psychological health. Studies reported that

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**Corresponding Author:** E Rajkumar, Department of Psychology, Central University of Karnataka, Gulbarga -585 311, Karnataka, India. Phone: +91-7259209285. E-mail: rajueslavath@gmail.com

stress affects the psychological and physical health of students.<sup>9</sup> Anxiety, depression, and anxiousness to perform better are correlated to the academic performance.<sup>10</sup> It is also found that students who are from poor socio-economic backgrounds will have financial problems which lead to depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>11</sup> It is also reported that students, who are from rural areas, are more prone to experience stress, depression, and anxiety as compared to the students from urban areas.<sup>12</sup> University students who are doing jobs due to financial problems are more prone to experience of mental health problems.<sup>13</sup>

The term psychosocial problems described as the maladaptive, unhealthy, intrapersonal, emotional and behavioral states. If people experience psychosocial problems, it may lead to maladaptive, unhealthy interpersonal networks, human relationships, social connections, and social malfunctioning.<sup>14</sup> If social support is not available for this issue, it negatively hampers the mental health.<sup>15</sup> Study conducted on psychosocial problems of adolescence were found to be associated with development of mental health disorders especially depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and psychosis also.<sup>16</sup>

In this study, the researchers intended to find out the psychosocial problems among college students. Pathak *et al.*,<sup>17</sup> reported that when comparing with boys, girls are facing more psychosocial problems. Hence, here, the researcher tries to study is there any differences between girls and boys regarding the psychosocial problems.

### Rationale of the Study

College life is the most enjoyable time as well as time for psychosocial development in every person. Because of tight schedules, the new atmosphere in colleges, exams, inter personal relation with teachers and fellow students and late adolescent age most of the students are facing some psychosocial problems such as anxiety, depression, and lack interest in studies. So, it is very important to assess and analyze to what extent these psychosocial problems are affecting the students and how they are varying by their gender differences. Hence, in this study, the researchers are attempting to trace out these informations.

## METHODS

The study is a cross-sectional study with between group research design. The sample consists of 50 under-graduate and post-graduate students (25 girls and 25 boys) from Central University of Karnataka. The convenient sampling method is used for selecting the participants. Moreover, the tool used for data collection was general health questionnaire (GHQ). The self-administered questionnaire

is an ideal screening device for identifying non-psychotic and minor psychiatric disorders to help inform further intervention.

GHQ is a 28 item scaled questionnaire developed by Goldberg in 1978.<sup>18</sup> GHQ-28 has been divided into four subscales. These are somatic symptoms (items 1-7), anxiety/insomnia (items 8-14), social dysfunction (items 15-21), and severe depression (items 22-28).

Reliability and validity: Various studies have investigated reliability and validity of the GHQ-28 in various clinical populations. Test-retest reliability of the tool is (0.78-0.09)<sup>19</sup> and inter-rater and inter-rater reliability have both been shown to be excellent (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.9-0.95).<sup>20</sup> High internal consistency has also been reported.<sup>20</sup>

Before proceeding to the data collection, the consent of subjects was taken, the rapport was established to make them comfortable. The researcher introduced himself and explained the purpose of his research to students. Then researcher circulated the copies of questionnaires to students. Subjects were instructed to go through the instructions written in the questionnaires before answering the questions. After data collection, scoring of the responses was done according to the scoring procedure given for each scale.

### Statistical Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows version 20.0 will be used for analyzing the data. Descriptive statistics and independent sample *t*-test were used for analyzing the data.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows demographic details of the students, from the table we can see that students between the age group of 20 and 30 are 98%, and more students are from undergraduate 64%, and most of the students are from the rural background 54%.

Table 2 shows the psychosocial problems of university students. Results of the study indicated that there were no significant difference in the psychosomatic, anxiety/insomnia, and social dysfunction domains. Moreover, it was found university boys and girls significantly differed in the dimension of depression. Boys are more depressed (boys, mean = 1.80, standard deviation (SD) = 1.52; girls, mean = 0.91, SD = 1.01). The domains psychosomatic (boys, mean = 1.84, SD = 1.68; girls, mean = 1.29, SD = 1.30), social dysfunction (boys, mean = 1.34, SD = 1.26; girls, mean = 1.21, SD = 1.31), and anxiety/

insomnia (boys, mean = 1.46, SD = 1.36; girls, mean = 1.08, SD = 1.21) domains are not showing much difference.

Graph 1 shows mean scores of boys and girls on Y-axis and psychosocial dimensions (psychosomatic, depression, social dysfunction, anxiety/insomnia) on X-axis.

## DISCUSSION

Results of the study indicated that there were no significant difference in the psychosomatic, anxiety/insomnia, and social dysfunction domains. Moreover, in the dimension of depression, boys are more depressed. The present study result contradicts the study of Pathak *et al.*,<sup>17</sup> They reported that when comparing with boys, girls are facing

more psychosocial problems. Studies conducted on nursing students revealed that most of them were facing psychosomatic issues<sup>12</sup> and which is substantiates the dimension of psychosomatic problems in the present study. Numerous studies (1, 2, 16, 21) have been shown the results that students are facing psychosocial problems from educational institutions. The present study also supports those studies. The studies in the field of educational sector regarding the psychosocial problems of students, most of them are focusing there is a great need to emphasize on the issues.

## CONCLUSION

Student life especially college life is a very important time period for the students- most of them in their late adolescent age, physically getting mature, and psychologically unstable. They are undergoing different kinds of stress to study, to complete their assignments, to participate in various programs in the college, and the stress is because of the imbalance between environment and demand. From the result of this study, it was found that the students are undergoing psychosocial problems such as depression. In this regard, there have not any significant difference between boys and girls, even though the problem is still there. So, it is very important to address these issues. The future research should focus on interventions that help to overcoming these problems.

### Limitations of Study

The present study consists 50 sample size which is small sample size for generalizing the results. So, future research could be on a larger sample. In the present study, we used convenient sampling method which will limit the generalization.

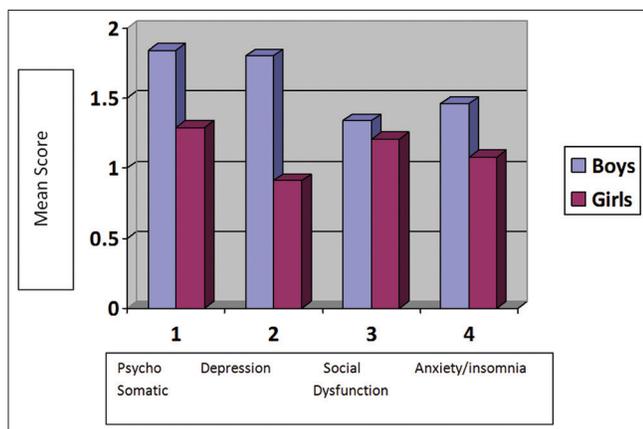
**Table 1: Demographic details**

Characters	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-30	49	98
30-40	1	2
Educational qualification		
Under-graduate	32	64
Post-graduate	18	36
Residence		
Rural	27	54
Urban	23	46

**Table 2: Psychosocial problems among university students**

Dimension	Gender				t-test
	Boys		Girls		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Psychosomatic	1.84	1.68	1.29	1.30	0.20
Depression	1.80	1.52	0.91	1.01	0.02
Social dysfunction	1.34	1.26	1.21	1.31	0.71
Anxiety/insomnia	1.46	1.36	1.08	1.21	0.31

SD: Standard deviation



**Graph 1: Difference in psychosocial domains among boys and girls**

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