

## PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WITH REFERENCE TO DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Syeda Razia Bukhari\*, Haroon-Ur-Rashid\*\* & Syeda Ishrat Fatima\*

\*National Institute of Psychology, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad

\*\*Armed Forces Institute of Mental Health (AFIMH) Rawalpindi

### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Psychological issues are common among university students nowadays, which need immediate concern for their better education and future employment. The trained counselors are thus a necessary investment in academic organization for better outcomes.

**Aims:** To find out the prevalence ratio of psychological problems more specifically depression among university students in Rawalpindi and Islamabad with reference to demographic factors of students including gender, family structure and socioeconomic status.

**Methodology:** Cross sectional survey design was used to gather data, from 200 university students( $m=100$ ;  $f=100$ ). They were selected through convenient sampling from various universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, their age range was 19 to 25 years with mean age of 21.79 ( $\pm 2.970$ ). Severity Measures for Depression-Adult (DMS-5, 2013) was used to measure the level of depression.

**Results & Conclusion:** Results reflect higher Depression reported by Male students as compared to Female Students; however, no significant differences were found between students who belong to nuclear and joint family structure. Also for Socioeconomic status overall results reflect no significant difference across the three classes but post hoc analysis reflects that Upper class students appeared to have lower level of depression than middle and lower classes.

**Implications:** It is implicated that university students especially male students need counseling services as they are having high rate of psychological problems.

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**Keywords:** Depression, gender, Family structure, Socioeconomic status

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### INTRODUCTION

Symptoms of depression are widespread all over the globe which is typically characterized by sadness, nervousness, hopelessness and anxious

feelings (Kessler, 2003). According to World Health Organization (Chen et al., 2013) depression is most prevalent health issues faced by people around the world, particularly in students (Sarokhani et al., 2013). Previous researches reported high level of depression in university students around the globe (Ibrahim et al., 2012, & Mahmoud et al., 2012) and is increasing day by day (Reavley & Jorm, 2010).

University students are youngsters who are lasting a significant transitory time in which they are entering from adolescence to adulthood. It is the most critical time for students' life. They try to sustain good academic grades to get best jobs for their future and to maintain economic stability for their family and remains away most of the time from their homes which causes anxiety (Buchanan, 2012). It produces lot of stress and ultimately leads towards depression in many students. These students may develop crying spells, miss classes or keep themselves aloof and reserve without realizing that they are depressed. The standard age of beginning is also on the decline, making depression a silent troublesome area for the university students (Reavley & Jorm 2012). According to research one-third of young students do not seek help for their mental wellbeing (Castaldelli-Maia, 2012).

In general there are a variety of factors found associated with the prevalence of depression in society. Among them few are the growing age (Saluja, Iachan, Scheidt, et al., 2004), low socioeconomic status and Education (Freeman et al., 2016), and Gender (Husain, Chaudhry, Afridi, Tomenson & Creed, 2007). It was concluded that depression has associations with females (Hussain et al., 2007). Youth using substance also reported to be more depressed Saluja et al. (2004). In a meta regression model conducted by Sarokhani et al. (2013), depression found very common among students, however no differences were found for prevalence of depression across Gender, however marital status appeared as related to depression with single being more depressed. Another study analyzed that families following more of a nuclear system rather than an extended joint family system had a greater prevalence of depression (Syed & Khan, 2008).

Research concluded that university students with low socioeconomic status have higher rate of depression as compared to good economic status (Mojs et al., 2012). Low socioeconomic status (SES) is generally associated with high psychiatric morbidity, disability, and poor access to health care (Patel, Shahid, Riaz, et al., 2008). Across the world, less educated groups typically show a

higher prevalence of psychiatric morbidity (Gadit, 2004) as they do in Pakistan (Imam, Hashmi, Islam, et al., 2007). The outcomes of higher mental morbidity are found unequally distributed with lower SES groups facing more disabilities and a poor prognosis (Gadit, 2004). In low-income countries, lower SES groups tend to face obstacles in accessing health care (Cohen, 2006).

Considering the above literature it was desirable to study how various demographic factors are associated with prevalence of depression in the very crucial stage of life that is during the University years. Thus the present study aimed to investigate the prevalence of depression among university students with reference to demographic factors (Gender, SES and family structure).

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

In the present study 200 students (age range 19-25years) participated, 100 male and 100 females from different universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, with convenient sampling technique.

### *Measures*

#### **Demographic data sheet**

Demographic data sheet includes name, age, education, gender, family structure and socioeconomic status.

#### **Severity Measures for Depression-Adult**

Severity Measures for Depression-Adult is 4-point Likert scale with 9 items. It is modified from the patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9 DSM-5, 2013). Reliability estimate of .89 indicates that scale is internally consistent and highly reliable.

### *Procedure*

Permission from the respective institute was sought. Confidentiality of the data was ensured through obtaining informed consent from the participants before administering the questionnaires. Participants were free to leave the study

at any stage if they find any inconvenience. They were informed that the data (their names and responses) will be kept confidential. After giving such information, the demographic form and Severity Measures for Depression-Adult were completed. Statistical analysis was done on SPSS 20.

## RESULTS

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	100	50%
	Female	100	50%
Family status	Joint	073	36.5
	Nuclear	127	63.5
Socioeconomic Status	Upper	034	17%
	Middle	158	79%
	Lower	008	04%
Age	Mean	21.79	
	Std. Deviation	2.970	

**Table 2**  
*Summary of prevalence of depression among university students with respect to gender, SES and family structure*

Depression	Gender		SES			Family Structure	
	Male	Female	Upper	Middle	Low	Nuclear	Joint
	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)	f (%)
No Depression	8 (8)	16 (16)	2(22.2)	21(13.4)	1(2.9)	17(13.4)	7(9.6)
Mild	8 (8)	20 (20)	2 (22.2)	19 (12.1)	7 20.6	19 (15)	9 (12.3)
Moderate	24 (24)	24 (24)	2 (22.2)	38 (24.2)	8 (23.5)	31 (24.4)	17(23.3)
Moderately Severe	15 (15)	11 (11)	2 (22.2)	19 (12.1)	5 (14.7)	14 (11)	12 (16.4)
Severe	45 (45)	29 (29)	1 (11.1)	60 (38.2)	13(38.2)	46 (36.2)	28 (38.4)

Note: According to Severity Measure for Depression—Adult scale 0-4 = no depression, 5-9 = mild depression, 10-14 = moderate depression, 15-19 = moderately severe depression and 20-27 = severe depression

**Table 3**

*Summary of comparison in the level of Depression between male and female university students*

Variable	Groups	N	M	SD	T	Df	Sig
<b>Depression</b>	Male	100	16.83	7.344	2.755	198	.006**
	Female	100	13.72	8.574			

**Table 4**

*Summary of comparison in the level of Depression in university students with reference to Family Structure*

Variable	Groups	N	M	SD	T	Df	Sig
<b>Depression</b>	Joint	73	15.67	7.544	.527	198	.599
	Nuclear	126	15.04	8.478			

**Table 5**

*Summary of comparison in the level of Depression in university students with reference to SES*

Variable	Groups	N	M	SD	F	Df	Sig
<b>Depression</b>	Upper	009	11.78	6.741	.954	1,199	.387
	Middle	157	15.33	8.378			
	Lower	34	15.94	7.096			

**Table 6**

*Summary of Multiple comparisons in the level of Depression in university students with reference to SES using Tukey HSD and LSD*

	(I)	(J)	SES	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
Tukey HSD	Lower	Middle		-3.553	.410		-10.12	3.02
		Upper		-4.163	.359		-11.35	3.02
	Middle	Lower		3.553	.410		-3.02	10.12
		Upper		-.610	.917		-4.24	3.02
	Upper	Lower		4.163	.359		-3.02	11.35
		Middle		.610	.917		-3.02	4.24

## DISCUSSION

Findings of present study reflects that 45% among Males and 29 % among females reported severe depression indicating an alarming situation in terms of stress and low mood among the youth pursuing higher education. Across three socioeconomic status greater number of students belonging to Middle and Upper socioeconomic status reported severe depression. While for lower socioeconomic class the prevalence rate is quite low as compared to other classes it might be due to very low number of sample included in the study. For Family Structure figures reflect nearly equal number of students reporting severe level of depression both in nuclear and joint family system.

The present research result showed that there is a significant difference in the level of depression among male and female students (mean of male students is 16.83 and the mean of female students 13.72) but no difference was found in term of family structure (mean of joint family system is 15.67 and nuclear family system is 15.04) and socioeconomic status (Mean of upper class is 11.78; middle class is 15.33 and lower class is 15.94).

The present research showed significant difference in the level of depression among male and female university students. Finding supported the previous research analysis by Hakami (2018). Male students have higher level of depression as compare the female students. In our society male have to earn money to support his whole family and additionally poor economic conditions of Pakistan had limited job opportunities for youngster so it may be a leading factor for male students' depression. However, female students are not facing such type of pressure so they score low on depression scale.

Further, present research finding showed that there is no significant mean difference in the level of depression among students living in joint and nuclear family setup. Students who lived in joint family or in a nuclear family, in both cases the statistics shows alarming prevalence of depression in the sample. For students university years are academically and psychologically more challenging as compared to other stages of education. However, no meaning full association of family structure was observed with level of depression in students.

Moreover, various studies showed that the students belonging to lower and middle socio economic status have more depression than the students belonging to upper class. The reason behind these phenomena is that students

with low socio-economic status face more negative and stressful life events than the students from High SES (Gad & Johnson, 1980), thus students who lived in poverty are at high risk of mental health problems, including depression and conduct disorder. Low family income also plays an important role in the development of low self-esteem of children, which is often associated with depressive symptoms (Nelson, 1993). Further researches also showed that students from families with a low economic status have a higher rate of depression than those from families with a middle and upper economic status (Ibrahim, Kelly & Glazebrook, 2012).

Depression is more common in university students (Yu & Williams, 1999 & Roberts et al., 1999), but unfortunately very few organizations have insight about it. Socio-economic status explains clearly about why people in our society experience so much depression. People with limited basic facilities suffer from depression which is also common worldwide. Studies also highlighted that even patients from low-income backgrounds are less likely to respond to antidepressant treatment indicating that SES plays a role in responsiveness to antidepressants (Fregni, 2010).

### ***Conclusion***

It is concluded that there is high prevalence of depression among university students with reference to demographic factors (Gender, SES & family structure). These findings underline the importance of demographic factors as risk factors for depression among university students in Pakistan. It also suggests that educational psychologist and career counselor may be employed at university and college level for the early intervention of students' emotional and psychological problems which further will improve their mental health and confidence on educational system.

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