PREVALENCE OF DEPRESSION IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS BELONGING TO DIFFERENT SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Syeda Razia Bukhari¹, Sarwat Jahan Khanam²

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

INTRODUCTION

Depression in university students is immensely prevalent and pervasive problem across the country.¹⁻³ Struggle for maintaining adequate grades, future planning and being away from home causes anxiousness for many students.⁴ 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 students.⁵⁻⁸

Since over two-thirds of young individuals did not talk about or get help for psychological health issues,³ university students have higher prevalence of depression. In developing countries 10%-14% individuals are suffering with anxiety and depression.¹⁰⁻¹¹ Among these countries Pakistan has higher prevalence of depression because of social hardships.¹²

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 occupation.¹³

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 successes.¹⁴

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 status.¹⁵⁻¹⁸ In cross-sectional research studies, low socio-economic status has been constantly linked with higher prevalence of depression.¹⁹ Lorant et al found association between depression and worst days socio-economic status.²⁰ Butterworth et al established linking of socio-economic status with depression and experiencing financial hardship. Furthermore, Niaz and Hassan 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%).
Prevalence of Depression in Univ. Students Belonging to Different Socioeconomic Status

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>50.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>087</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

P-value .042
Table 3: Prevalence of Depression in university students belonging to various Socioeconomic Statuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No Depression (%)</th>
<th>Mild Depression (%)</th>
<th>Moderate Depression (%)</th>
<th>Severe Depression (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socioeconomic Status</td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>11(10.1)</td>
<td>20(18.3)</td>
<td>43(39.4)</td>
<td>35(32.1)</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>21(15.6)</td>
<td>31(23.0)</td>
<td>46(34.1)</td>
<td>37(27.4)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>18(10.0)</td>
<td>24(27.6)</td>
<td>22(25.3)</td>
<td>23(26.4)</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50(15.1)</td>
<td>75(22.7)</td>
<td>111(33.5)</td>
<td>95(28.7)</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

P-value 0.171

**DISCUSSION**

Our findings are consistent with previous research conducted by Steptoe et al. who found higher prevalence of depression in Asian countries. Likewise Bayram and Bilgel found 27.1% depression among Turkish university students. Bostanci et al. 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 depression. Fulfillment of financial responsibility during university academic life causes lot of stress among Socio-economic companions.

**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.

**REFERENCES**

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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.