

## A STUDY ON MENTAL HEALTH STATUS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF KANNUR UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study was to compare the mental health status of undergraduate students of Kannur University. The study was conducted among undergraduate college students of Kannur University during the academic session 2016-17. One thousand two hundred undergraduate students (436 male and 764 female students) from different colleges were participants for the study. The mental health was assessed by using self made questionnaire as part of assessing health status of college students. Statistical techniques used were percentage analysis and chi square test. The study results emphasize the need for academic institutions to create a positive and facilitative campus culture, better teacher student relationship and student support systems for improving the mental health of students.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Mental Health and Under Graduate Students.*

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### INTRODUCTION:

“Looking after one’s mind is as important as looking after one’s body”. As part of one’s overall health, mental and emotional health or well being is a necessary condition to enable one to manage one’s life successfully. Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience that allows one to enjoy life and to survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of well being and an underlying belief in one’s own and others’ dignity and worth.

The mental health difficulties among students are an issue of concern (Castillo and Schwartz, 2013; Milojevich & Lukowski, 2016)). Studies also reveal that when compared to individuals of the same age and, in general, to any other population, students suffer more psychological problems (Roberts et al., 1999; Adlaf et al., 2005; Boujut et al., 2009). The prevalence of psychological distress in university students is significantly higher than in the general population (Stallman, 2010). Mental wellbeing plays a significant role in the overall health and wellness of young adults as poor mental health is strongly correlated with developmental

difficulties (Patel et al., 2007). Post-secondary students' mental health literacy levels vary due to a number of influences. Gender, which is learned through the process of socialization, is a key factor influencing an individual's knowledge and attitudes towards mental health (Holzinger, Floris, Schomerus, Carta, & Angermeyer, 2012).

Studies show that female students and residents had higher level of anxiety and depression compared to their male counterparts (Lloyd & Gartrell 1981). The mission of university and college counselling centres is to "assist students to define and accomplish personal, academic, and career goals by providing developmental, preventive, and remedial counselling (CAS, 1999).

Academic institutions should make available mental health resources and should consider the implementation of faculty development programs to teach educators about how to optimize the learning environment. A major concern that arises in offering quality mental health counselling services in India is the lack of indigenous counselling and psychotherapy models. Counselling needs to integrate and incorporate the Indian view, cultural background and unique mindset of the people for a better outcome. Hence, some exclusive counselling models (with specific settings and stages) that could affect the therapy process and outcome, well suited for Indian students, need to be identified to offer an effective intervention in colleges as professional counsellors (Brook & Willoughby 2014).

Because the transition from being a high school student to being a university student is a stressful or very challenging; university students worldwide are at risk for mental health disorders. Appropriate mental health training of staff counsellors must be made a priority by administrators within universities; research demonstrates that counsellors often struggle with the ability to deal effectively when students presenting with mental health concerns.

#### **METHODOLOGY:**

One thousand two hundred college students; (436 male and 764 female students) from different colleges of Kannur University were selected as participants for the survey study. The mental health status was assessed by using a self made questionnaire containing questions related to

social, emotional thoughts and behaviors. The statistical analyses were done by using percentage analysis and chi square test.

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS;

The response to the questions relating to mental health of college students have been presented in table 1.

Table 1. Mental health status of male and female undergraduate students

	Characteristics	Male	Female
Easily upset if things don't turn as expected	Very Much	22.9%	38.7%
	To some extent	70.4%	58%
	Not so much	6.7%	3.3%
Sometimes feel sad without reason	Very Much	10.6%	16.9%
	To some extent	40.8%	57.6%
	Not so much	48.6%	25.5%
Get easily upset when criticized	Very Much	19.5%	36.6%
	To some extent	60.8%	54.7%
	Not so much	19.7%	8.6%
Get disturbed by feeling of anxiety and tension.	Very Much	13.3%	21.9%
	To some extent	60.3%	63.1%
	Not so much	26.4%	15%
Wish to have more friends than actually having.	Very Much	53.9%	33%
	To some extent	32.8%	37.6%
	Not so much	13.3%	29.5%
Feel tired too easily.	Most of the time	8.1%	16.4%
	Sometimes	53.7%	66.7%
	Hardly ever	38.2%	16.9%
Worry of not having close relationship with	Most of the time	9.9%	7.2%

other people.	Sometimes	43.2%	43.5%
	Hardly ever	46.9%	49.3%
Capable of making appropriate decisions.	Always	19.8%	12.4%
	Most of the time	62.5%	49.3%
	Rarely	17.2%	36.5%
	Never	0.5%	1.8%
Able to enjoy day to day activities.	Always	23.2%	20.3%
	Most of the time	55.6%	56.6%
	Rarely	21.2%	23.1%
Have at least one teacher in the college to talk to, when faced with some problem.	Yes	38.9%	51.2%
	No	61.1%	48.8%
Moral policing in the campus hampers proper interaction among boys and girls	Always	27%	14.9%
	Most of the time	41.5%	52.2%
	Rarely	31.5%	32.9%
College provides counselling service to students.	Yes	34.3%	54%
	No	65.7%	46%

Table 1 of responses to questions relating to mental health status of undergraduate students of Kannur University indicates that 30.8% of students (22.9% males and 38.7% of female students) reported that they easily get upset if things don't turn as expected. Sixty three percent (62.95%) of total students mentioned that to some extent they feel sad without any reason. For the question, "Do you get easily upset when criticized; 28.05% of total students said that they very much get upset when criticized, whereas 57.75% (60.8% males and 54.7% females) reported that to some extent they get upset when criticized. 79.3% of total students reported that they very much or to some extent get disturbed by feeling of anxiety and tension. 53.9% males and 33% females reported that they wish to have more friends than they actually have. Response to whether they feel tired very easily, 12.25% of total students (8.1% male and 16.4% female)

mentioned that they feel tired very easily most of the time; whereas 60.2% of total students (53.7% male and 66.7% female) mentioned that sometimes they feel tired very easily. Good percentage of total students 51.9% sometimes or most of the time worry of not having close relationship with other people.

In case of response for the capability of making appropriate decisions, 19.8% males and 12.4% females mentioned that they were capable of taking appropriate decision always; whereas 62.5% of males and 49.3% of females reported that they were capable of taking decision most of the time. 28% of total students reported that they were rarely or never capable of making appropriate decisions.

77.85% of total students reported that they were able to enjoy day to day activities always or most of the time. 22.15% of total students reported that they were never able to enjoy day to day activities. 38.9% of male and 51.2% of female students reported that they have at least one teacher in the college to talk to when faced with some problem; whereas 61.1% of male and 48.8% of female did not have even one teacher in the college to whom they could talk when faced with some problem.

67.8% of total students mentioned that moral policing in the campus hampers proper interaction among boys and girls always or most of the time; whereas 32.2% of total students mentioned that it rarely hampered the interaction. 34.3% of males and 54% of female students mentioned that colleges provide counselling service to students; whereas, 65.7% of male and 46% female students mentioned that colleges does not provide counselling services.

Results of chi square analyse for association of gender with mental health status responses of undergraduate students of Kannur University is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Association of Gender with Respect to Mental health status of male and female undergraduate students

Questions/statements	Chi Square Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Easily upset if things don't turn as expected	34.924 <sup>a</sup>	2	0.000
Sometimes feel sad without reason	66.568 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Get easily upset when criticized	55.583 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Get disturbed by feeling of anxiety and tension.	30.168 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Wish to have more friends than actually having.	62.371 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Feel tired too easily.	73.018 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
Worry of not having close relationship with other people.	2.833 <sup>a</sup>	2	.243
Capable of making appropriate decisions.	57.711 <sup>a</sup>	3	.000
Able to enjoy day to day activities.	1.596 <sup>a</sup>	2	.450
Have at least one teacher in the college to talk to, when faced with some problem.	16.727 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000
Moral policing in the campus hampers proper interaction among boys and girls	27.426 <sup>a</sup>	2	.000
College provides counselling service to students.	42.890 <sup>a</sup>	1	.000

a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5

Table 2 of chi square analysis of gender with mental health status indicates significant chi square value for getting easily upset when things are not turned up as expected ( $\chi^2 = 34.924$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly significant chi square values were obtained for feeling sad without reason ( $\chi^2 = 66.568$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); get easily upset when criticized ( $\chi^2 = 55.583$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); Get disturbed by feeling of anxiety and tension ( $\chi^2 = 30.168$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); wish to have more friends that actually having ( $\chi^2 = 62.371$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); and get tired too easily ( $\chi^2 = 73.018$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). However in case

of worry about close relationship ( $\chi^2 = 2.833$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ); and able to enjoy day to day activities ( $\chi^2 = 1.596$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ) chi square values were not significant.

In case of capability of making appropriate decisions ( $\chi^2 = 57.711$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ); having at least one teacher in the college to talk to when faced with some problem ( $\chi^2 = 16.727$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ); feeling that moral policing in the campus hampers proper interaction among boys and girls ( $\chi^2 = 27.426$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); and college provides counselling service to students ( $\chi^2 = 42.890$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), the chi square values were significant showing association of gender with respect to the above statements

### DISCUSSION:

The results indicate association for gender with mental health status of undergraduate students of Kannur University. Female students (38.7%) than male students (22.9%) would get very much upset when things don't turn as expected. Female students were more prone to sadness without reason; get easily get upset when they are criticize, and felt more anxiety and tension as compared to male students.

There was no difference among male and female students in terms of their worry of not having close relationship with other people; and both male and female students were able to enjoy day to day activities most of the time.

Male students were better in terms of their capability of making appropriate decisions (always 19.8%; and most of the time 62.5%) as compared to female students (always 12.4%; and most of the time 49.3%). Female students reported better relationship with teachers and 51.2% of female students mentioned that they had at least one teacher to talk to, when faced with some problem as compared to 38.9% of male students. More male students (27%) than female students (14.9%) reported that moral policing hampered proper interaction between boys and girls. 65.7% of male students mentioned non-availability of counselling services in colleges for students as compared to 46% of female students.



## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

The survey emphasizes that a considerable number of students of Kannur University, both male and female have mental health issues. The study results are a wakeup call to academic institutions and teachers to create a positive campus culture in colleges and to facilitate better teacher student relationship and effective counselling and mentoring systems with an attempt to improve mental health of college students.

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