

Level of Depression/Anxiety and Social Support among Boarders and Day Scholars

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to investigate the level of depression and anxiety and the role of social support in boarders and day scholars. The sample consisted of 80 students (40 boarders and 40 day scholars). The sample was selected from University by using convenience sampling techniques. Aga Khan University Anxiety Depression Scale AKUADS and Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support MPPS were administered to both the groups. 't' test was applied to find out the statistical significance of the results. Results reveal that the level of depression and anxiety is high in boarders as compared to day scholars and level of social support is low in boarders as compared to day scholars. Boarders were found to be more depressed and anxious as compared to day scholars.

Keywords: Depression, Anxiety, Social Support, Boarders, Day Scholars

INTRODUCTION

Social support is important for our general well-being and mental health so the purpose of the study was that the people who face mental health problems such as anxiety and depression if receive proper social support will be better in getting relief from mental health problems.

Physical and psychological comfort provided by friends and family are important in an individual's life. Among humans, people who interact closely with others are generally better able to avoid illness than those who remain isolated from interpersonal contact. (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1994)

When illness does occur, people who receive social support recover more quickly than those who do not. Individuals whose attachment pattern is secure are more likely to cope affectively with stress through support seeking than are those with ambivalent or avoidant attachment patterns (Cole et al., 1997).

One of the reasons of the positive effects of interpersonal support is that talking to someone else reduces stress and the incidence of both major and minor health problems (L.F. Clark, 1993; Costanza, Derlega & Winstead, 1988; Pennebaker, Hughes & Heron, 1987).

The more an individual is secretive and conceals from others any personal information that is negative or distressing the greater the feelings of anxiety and depression and the more likely the development of physical symptoms (Larson & Chastain, 1990).

Positive self-concept and good social support have a combined effect in preventing a state of depression and of anxiety during an acute crisis (Hebfall & Walfisch, 1984).

Social support is negatively related to the incidence of psychiatric symptoms and absence of social support is a better predictor of disorders than is incidence of stressful events (Lin et al., 1979; Silberfeld, 1978).

Those people who have a high quality of family relationships tend to report fewer general psychiatric symptoms (Dean et al., 1981) and also fewer neurotic symptoms, such as depression and anxiety (Barrera, 1981).

Stacey Dangler, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (1990), found that there were significant interactions of support, state anxiety, and stress for loneliness when considering friend, significant others and total social support.

The present study highlights an important variable i.e. social support in the mental wellbeing of the individual. It is evident from the researches that sharing one's feelings and emotions with others lead to comfort and mental wellbeing. Since boarders are away from their families a good social support system is extremely essential for maintaining a positive outlook on life.

In the light of theoretical and literature review the following hypotheses were postulated:

1. Boarders will be more depressed and anxious as compared to the day scholars.
2. Individuals scoring high on AKUADS will perceive less social support than the individuals scoring in the normal range.

METHODS

Sample

The sample consists of 80 females students (40 boarders & 40 day scholars) enrolled in Honors and Masters Programs in various departments of Arts faculties.

Procedure

After taking informed consent from the participants, demographic information was obtained through a form which focused on the subject's age, department, qualification, siblings, birth order and residence the Aga Khan University Anxiety Depression Scale (AKUADS) and Multidimensional scale for Perceived Social Support (MPSS) was administered on the sample.

Operational Definitions

Depression

A mood state characterized by a sense of inadequacy, a feeling of despondency, a decrease in activity or reactivity, pessimism, sadness and related symptoms.

Anxiety

A feeling of apprehension and fear characterized by physical symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, and feelings of stress.

Social Support

Social support is defined as "physical and psychological comfort provided by friends and family." (Sarason, Sarason & Pierce, 1994)

Measures

The Aga Khan University Anxiety Depression Scale (AKUADS)

The Aga Khan University Anxiety Depression Scale AKUADS (Ali, B. S. 1996) is 14 items scale of anxiety and depression. The subjects are required to report their emotional state over a period of two weeks, on a 4 point likert scale ranging from never (0) to always (3). AKUADS is an indigenously developed screening instrument for anxiety and depression. The

scale does not differentiate between symptoms of anxiety and depression. AKUADS has demonstrated high internal consistency and good criterion and construct validity.

Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support (MPSS)

Multidimensional Scale for Perceived Social Support MPSS (Zimet, et al., 1988) is a 20 item questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of social support adequacy from 3 specific sources, the sources being family, friends and significant others. The subjects are required to rate their perception, of support, on 7 point scale ranging from very strongly agree (7) to very strongly disagree (1). MPSS has good internal validity (.88) and test-retest (.85) reliability. Kazarain, & McCabe (1999) also reported the scale to demonstrate excellent internal consistency and showed little relationship to social desirability. Also MPSS correlated negatively with two separate measures of depression and positively with self-concept measure.

Statistical Analysis

In order to interpret the results in statistical terminology descriptive statistics and t-test were applied using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 12 version) to find out the significant differences in the levels of depression and social support of both the groups.

RESULTS

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of both the groups

<i>Variable Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error Mean</i>
AKUADS Boarders	40	28.88	16.59	2.62
AKUADS Day Scholars	40	21.90	10.31	1.63
MPSS Boarders	40	23.10	12.75	2.02
MPSS Day Scholars	40	58.03	14.00	2.21

Boarders Result of AKUADS and MPSS

(AKUADS) N = 40, M = 28.88, SD = 16.59

(MPSS) M = 23.10, SD = 12. 75

Day Scholars Result of AKUADS and MPSS

(AKUADS) N = 40, M =21.90, SD = 10.31

(MPSS) M = 58.03, SD = 14.00

Table 2. Mean differences on the variables of depression and anxiety and social support of both the groups

<i>Variable</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.(2-tailed)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error Difference</i>
AKUADS Equal Variance Assumed	2.258	78	P<.027	6.98	3.09
MPSS Equal Variance Assumed	-11.666	78	P<.000	-34.92	2.99

AKUADS t =2.258, df = 78, sig. (2-tailed) = .027, M Diff = 6.98

MPSS t = -11.666, df = 78, sig. (2-tailed) = .000, M Diff = -34.92

DISCUSSION

On 1st hypothesis which pertains to the anxiety and depression level of borders and day scholars stands proved. Participants who belong to hostel high score in AKUADS which indicates that participants who belong to hostel are more depressed and anxious as compared to participants who do not belong to hostel. So there are significant differences in the level of depression and anxiety of both the groups. In contrast, participants who do not belong to hostel their score are high on MPSS as compared to participant who belong to the hostel. So there is significant difference in their social support.

Participants of hostel are more depressed and anxious because they lack social support, they are away from home. They do not get their primary support like support of parents and siblings so they feel isolated and thus they also do not perceive support of friends and significant others. Participants who do not belongs to hostel having strong social support since they remain in their family system, they share their sadness and happiness with them so in this way they are less depressed or anxious.

For most individuals with a healthy social support network, major stressors in life can be more easily handled. A proper support network consists of a reinforcing family and friends who can help the affected individual to work through any problems, such as the death of a family member, loss of a job, major injury, or any of a number of other stressors that can contribute to psychological illnesses, such as depression. For individuals with an undeveloped social network, or those with a negatively reinforcing social network, these major life events can cause greater harm to the individual because of a lack of support that most individuals have. An underdeveloped social network cannot handle the pressure of an individual looking for support, and a negatively framed social network can actually reinforce thoughts of hopelessness, failure, and being worthless. Without this support, it is more likely for that individual to develop symptoms of depression (Wade & Kendler, 2000).

The reason of being depressed or anxious is that hostel students are more sensitive and the reason of this is also that they have very low social support network that increased the vulnerability of psychological symptoms or disorders.

The role of this study and those of other recent studies indicates that social support plays a major role in developing psychological and physical illnesses. In other words we can say that people having low social support are more prone to depression or anxiety. Important areas for future research include the other variables that play a major role in developing depression and anxiety e.g. personality traits of people and environmental factors.

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