



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL COURSES

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ABSTRACT Education is one of the significant instrumental factors to social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual development of a country, therefore people should be educated so that they can contribute their best in nation building. This can be possible only when they will be mentally sound and healthy. The present investigation has been undertaken with an intention to find out the difference between mental health status of students enrolled in the professional and non-professional courses. For this purpose total 120 students of higher education level were selected from different professional and non-professional colleges of Patna University, through simple random sampling method. Mental Health Inventory developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) was used for the data collection. The result revealed that mental health of professional students was found to be sound as compared to that of non-professional ones. However professional and non-professional male students didn't differ significantly in their mental health status while professional female students have comparatively better mental health than the non-professional female one. It is concluded that more professional courses should be included in the curriculum and students should be encouraged getting such type of education as they can contribute their best for the nation building. Important measures should also be taken in order to improve the mental health status of the students who are not enrolled in the professional courses.

KEYWORDS : Mental health, Professional, Non-professional, Higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The most important aim of education is to create skill, knowledge and awareness among the students related to our glorious national heritage and the important achievements of human civilization, develop scientific outlook and commitment to the ideals of democracy and nationalism along with the goals mentioned in the preamble of our Indian Constitution. The higher education prepares students for doing some productive work that have some considerable contribution in the nation building. The ever expanding population has created the problem of unemployment while on the other hand cut-throat competition in every field has raised the stress level of students which hamper the capability of students and adversely affect their mental health status. Most students did not disclose their mental health problems due to fear of discrimination during their studies and in professional employment. Many students make considerable efforts to hide their mental health condition and in order to doing so they have to struggle a lot to meet their university needs [1]. There is an urgent need of policy changes like- innovative programs, curricular changes and supported education programs are necessary in order to completely support students with psychiatric disabilities and mental health concerns [2]. There is a need for long-term prospective research covering a range of higher education institutions to obtain a full picture of mental disorder in students. In a study it was found that 65% of female and 54% of male undergraduate students attending a student health service scored positive on the General Health Questionnaire [3]. Mental health is an important component of the total health of a person that includes physical, emotional, moral, spiritual, and social health. Good mental health is very important as people who have poor mental health tend to be more laid back, less goal oriented, less driven by success and can't contribute their best for the nation building. WHO [4] define mental health as the concept "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her own community".

In this age of competition, the reasons of mental illness among university students are different. Some of the variables related to mental health like self-esteem, resiliency, familial economic standing, and years in school have significant impact on depression, anxiety, and stress of university students [5]. Early adult life is a very critical stage of life as the individual has to face transition from adolescence to independent adult. Underachievement or failure at this stage can have long-term effects on the latter stages of someone's life. Students have different needs and they vary in their experience of mental health difficulties, including how they think and perceive their situation, and whether they wish to disclose their difficulties. Mental health difficulties can beat students at any point in their academic career. The underlying causes certainly not all directly related to their higher education experiences but may be related to past experiences too and can cause stress for them. For all students participation in higher education offers opportunities along with challenges. Some of them are capable of overcoming these challenges while some are not. Those who are capable of overcoming these challenges are able to develop

self-confidence and self-esteem and also able to possess good mental health status while those who are not capable of doing so may not able to possess good mental health status. The task for institutions is to help students to possess positive mental status and get the benefits of higher education along with identifying and providing appropriate support to those students who are more vulnerable to mental health problems. It is not only good in the interest of the institution, but also in the interest of nation as a whole.

The ever increasing competition, adjustment with day to day life, family adaptation, the field chosen for education, their aim, self concept etc. also exert pressure upon them. These factors have direct or indirect impact on their mental status. As a result students have to face academic deterioration that can result in the repetition academic years or even they have to withdraw the university or college education. Ultimately, some of the students become successful in order to adjust with their environment on the other hand some are not capable to doing so. The result is that they go in depression and become prone to suicidal attempt. In this way they can't contribute anything for their nation and waste their talents as well as their lives too, so there is an urgent need for such kind of investigation. The findings of this research will be helpful in providing informations regarding mental health problems of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses at higher education level and also will provide some recommendations for their mental well being.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find the difference between levels of mental health status of students enrolled in professional (PF) and non-professional (NPF) courses.
2. To find the difference between levels of mental health status of male students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.
3. To find the difference between levels of mental health status of female students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.
4. To find the difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students enrolled in professional courses.
5. To find the difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students enrolled in non-professional courses.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference between levels of mental health status of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.
2. There is no significant difference between levels of mental health status of male students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.
3. There is no significant difference between levels of mental health status of female students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.
4. There is no significant difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students enrolled in professional

courses.

- There is no significant difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students enrolled in non-professional courses.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROOCCESS

As the investigation was descriptive hence survey method was followed for the present study. Participants were selected from 10 different professional and non-professional courses running in different Colleges of Patna University. For the purpose of study total 120 participants, 60 from professional courses (M. Ed. and B. Ed.) and 60 from non-professional courses (M. Sc. And M. A.), were selected through simple random sampling method. Each group consisted of 30 male and 30 female students.

RESEARCH TOOLAND PROCEDURE

Mental Health Inventory developed by Jagdish and Srivastava (1983) was used for data collection. This scale consist of 56 items based on 6 dimensions having four response categories viz. always, often, rarely and never. The value of split-half reliability coefficient was $r=0.73$ and construct validity was $r=0.54$ which confirm the standardization of the scale. The inventory was distributed among all the participants. They were given all the required instructions related to filling up the inventory. They were also assured that their responses will be kept confidential and only the researcher would have access to their data. Mean, standard deviation and Student's t-test were used for the analysis of the data.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 displays the data on difference between levels of mental health status of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses. The mean value of mental health status of students enrolled in professional courses was higher than that of those enrolled in non-professional courses. When these two groups were compared with each other statistically significant difference ($p<0.05$) was observed between the mental health status of students belonging to professional and non-professional courses. Students enrolled in professional courses were found mentally healthier than that of the non-professional one.

Table 1: Shows difference between level of mental health status of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses.

GROUP	N	Mean	SD	t-value
PF	60	63.46	17.55	1.80363*
NPF	60	77.6	19.15	

*Significant at $p<0.05$ level of significance

Table 2 displays data on difference between levels of mental health status of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses with respect to gender. The Student's t-test revealed that no significant difference exists between the mental health status of male students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses while statistically significant difference ($p<0.05$) exists between the level mental health status of female students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses and the female students enrolled in professional courses were found mentally healthier than that of the non-professional one

Table 2: Shows data on difference between levels of mental health status of students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses with respect to gender.

Group	Male (N=30)			Female (N=30)		
	Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
PF	85.96	16.60	1.27	80.96	18.39	1.86*
NPF	80.23	18.21		71.43	21.09	

*Significant at $p<0.05$ level of significance

Table 3 displays data on difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students with respect to courses. The mean value of level of mental health status was higher in male students of professional courses as compared to that of the female students. This difference was found to be statistically significant at $p<0.05$ level, This indicates that male students enrolled in professional courses have better mental health as compared to that of the female one. Similarly, mean value of level of mental health status was higher in male students of non-professional courses as compared to that of the female students,

however, the difference was not significant statistically.

Table 3: Shows data on difference between levels of mental health status of male and female students with respect to courses.

Group	PF (N=30)			NPF (N=30)		
	Mean	SD	t-value	Mean	SD	t-value
Male	80.23	18.21	1.72939*	85.96	16.60	1.10509
Female	71.43	21.09		80.96	18.39	

*Significant at $p<0.05$ level of significance

Fig. 1 displays percentage analysis of mental health status (Good, Average and Poor) of students. It is clear from the figure that among the students enrolled in professional courses 22% have good mental health status, 73% have average mental health status and 5% have poor mental health status, On the other hand among the students of non-professional courses 15% were of good mental health status, 78% were of average mental health status and 7% were of poor mental health status.

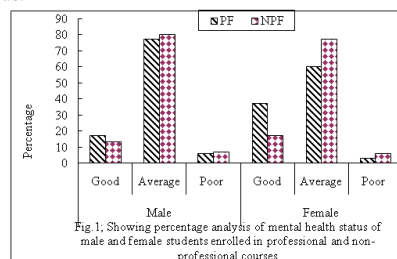


Fig. 1: Showing percentage analysis of mental health status of male and female students enrolled in professional and non-professional courses

DISCUSSION

Academic demands and heavy workload in the university courses require much more self-directed learning and the capacity to manage time and priorities of work which can easily disrupt the mental health status of students. In the present investigation majority of the students were identified with average level of mental health status. Students enrolled in non-professional courses were found mentally less healthy as compared to that of the professional ones. The students enrolled in professional courses are much assured about their professional career in future and so they have no anxiety related to this issue. On the other hand students enrolled in non-professional courses have less self-confidence related to their future probabilities and less abilities to realization of their potentialities as compared to their counterparts which increases the level of anxiety among them and might be one of the reasons of their poor mental health status. This finding has been supported by Raut and Mundada [6] Who have found that the non-professional students have more anxious than professional students. However, this finding is not in line with the findings of Singh and Singh [7] who found that the professional students have more stress and poor emotional adjustment as compared to that of the non-professional ones, Khanet al.[8] Who found that the non-professional students have better mental health as compared to the professional one and Sharma and Kirmani [9] found that professional students reported more symptoms of depression and anxiety than the non-professional students. The reason for contradiction might be difference in profession from where sample has drawn and the locality.

In the present study it was also found that professional female students have comparatively better mental health than the non-professional female one. The reason might be their self confidence, self dependence and more abilities to decision making as compared to their counterparts. This finding has been supported by Ahmad and Ahamad [10] who have found that non-professional students are more anxious in compression to professional graduate level students in both gender. However, Shirazi and Khan [11] have not found any significant difference at the mean scores of professional and non-professional students' mental health in terms of gender. Further, it was found that male students enrolled in professional courses have comparatively better mental health than the female students enrolled in professional courses. The reason might be presence of more autonomy in male students as compared to the female one that has contributed their better mental health status. This finding has drawn its' support from the work of Sreedhar and Reddy[12] Who have found that the male students studying both professional and non professional courses were obtained better mental health scores than female subjects. However, in the present study there was no significant difference noted between the mental health status of students enrolled in non-professional courses

with respect to gender.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Students at the higher education level are very important assets of the country as they have to contribute as per their capabilities in the welfare of the country. To facilitate integration of student mental well being across the higher education institution, it is recommended that guidance should be circulated widely. The higher educational institutions should consult and collaborate with students and discuss about their mental health difficulties before formulating and implementing student mental health-related policies and procedures and in identifying areas for improvement. It is also recommended that there should be special and healthy arrangements for students with a history of mental health difficulties. Further, it is recommended that all higher education institutions have a formal mental health policy that should cover areas such as health promotion, the provision of advice and counseling services, student support and mentoring, and special arrangements for examinations.

CONCLUSION

The presents study find out that students of non-professional courses have comparatively poor mental health than that of the professional students due to the lack of guidance, lack of confidence, unemployment problems, competitions of career etc. Another finding reveal that male students of professional and non-professional courses didn't vary significantly in their mental health status, however female students of professional and non-professional courses vary significantly in their mental health due to ever increasing competition, adjustment with day to day life, family adaptation, the field chosen for education, their aims etc. On the basis of findings of the present study it is concluded that professional students are more able to contribute towards nation building as they have sound mental health as compared to their counterparts. However, it doesn't mean that the students enrolled in the non-professional courses doesn't contribute in the national development but due to heavy competition and unemployment problems their mental health status become poor and as they are mentally less healthier than their counterparts so are less able to contribute their personal development as well national development. Thus, the Government and other stakeholder should be concerned in this regard.

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