

A Comparative Study on Mental Health of Hosteller and Day Scholars Students

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Abstract

Mental health is a crucial determinant of student success and overall well-being. This study investigates and compares the mental health status of college students living in hostels (hostellers) with those commuting from home (day scholars). Using a structured questionnaire, data were collected from 30 students at Baba Farid College of Education, focusing on stress levels, sleep quality, social interaction, and coping mechanisms. The analysis revealed that hostellers tend to experience higher emotional distress due to homesickness, loneliness, and lack of familial support, whereas day scholars benefit from stronger social connections and more stable routines. The findings emphasize the need for enhanced mental health services and tailored interventions to support students in both living situations.

Keywords

Mental Health, Hostellers, Day Scholars, College Students, Stress, Sleep Patterns, Social Interaction, Coping Mechanisms

Introduction

Mental health concerns among students have gained increasing attention due to rising levels of anxiety, depression, and stress in academic settings. Living arrangements play a pivotal role in shaping students' psychological and emotional experiences. Hostellers often face the challenge of adapting to new environments without direct family support, while day scholars benefit from home-based stability but may encounter time-related stress. This study aims to understand how these two living conditions impact the mental health and well-being of students, contributing to the broader discourse on student support in higher education.

Review of Literature

Previous studies have highlighted the stressors faced by college students, including academic pressure, lack of time, peer pressure, and financial strain. According to Kumar (2020), hostellers are more likely to experience emotional distress due to the absence of family support systems. Sharma and Verma (2019) found that day scholars often report better mental health outcomes because of parental involvement and comfort. However, both groups are equally prone to academic stress and performance anxiety, suggesting a shared need for institutional mental health support.

Objectives of the Study

- To compare the mental health status of hostellers and day scholars.
- To identify the primary sources of stress for both groups.
- To examine the coping mechanisms adopted by students.
- To evaluate the impact of social interaction and lifestyle factors.
- To provide suggestions for improving mental health support in colleges.

Sample of the Study

The sample for this study consisted of 30 students from Baba Farid College of Education, Bathinda, selected through purposive sampling. The participants included an equal number of hostellers (15) and day scholars (15),

representing various academic programs such as BBA, LLB, B.Sc., and B.Ed. The sample was carefully chosen to ensure diversity in academic background while maintaining a balance between the two living arrangements under comparison. All participants were undergraduate students in the age range of 18 to 24 years and voluntarily participated in the survey conducted for this research.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive and comparative study based on primary data collected through a self-structured questionnaire. The study focused on analyzing stress, emotional well-being, sleep habits, lifestyle, and awareness of mental health among students.

Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by comparing mental health indicators across two student groups—hostellers and day scholars. The comparison focuses on major aspects such as stress levels, sleep quality, coping mechanisms, social interaction, lifestyle, and mental health awareness. The following table presents a clear comparative summary:

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Mental Health Indicators

Mental Health Indicator	Hostellers	Day Scholars
Stress Levels	Higher stress due to homesickness, loneliness, and lack of emotional support.	Moderate stress mainly due to academic pressure and time management.
Sleep Patterns	Poor sleep quality; irregular sleep cycles due to stress and emotional factors.	Better sleep quality; more regular schedules due to home environment.
Coping Mechanisms	Emotional support from hostel peers; fewer physical outlets for stress relief.	Talk to family, better time management, and more physical activity.
Social Interaction	Limited to hostel peers; frequent feelings of loneliness and isolation.	Frequent interaction with family and community; less loneliness.
Lifestyle Factors	Inconsistent meals, minimal physical activity, and limited recreational space.	Healthier eating habits, more access to fitness and outdoor activities.
Mental Health Awareness	Aware of mental health needs but report lack of access to counselling or support systems.	Similar awareness; slightly more likely to seek help due to family encouragement.

Findings

- Hostellers reported higher levels of emotional and psychological stress, largely due to homesickness, lack of personal space, and absence of immediate family support. Day scholars experienced stress primarily from academic workload and time management but had emotional support at home.

- Hostellers experienced disrupted and poor-quality sleep more frequently than day scholars, often due to anxiety, noise in hostels, and loneliness. Day scholars generally had better and more regular sleep cycles.
- Both groups used social support (family and friends) as a primary coping method. However, day scholars were more likely to use structured time management and physical activity, while hostellers tended to rely more on emotional sharing with peers.
- Hostellers reported higher levels of loneliness and isolation, whereas day scholars enjoyed regular interaction with family and community, reducing feelings of loneliness.
- Day scholars exhibited healthier lifestyles, including better eating habits and more physical activity. Hostellers cited poor food options and lack of access to recreational facilities.
- Both groups acknowledged the importance of mental health support but noted the inadequacy of institutional services such as counseling and awareness programs.

Conclusion

The study concludes that living arrangements significantly affect the mental health of students. Hostellers are more susceptible to emotional challenges, including homesickness, loneliness, and stress, which negatively impact their overall well-being. Day scholars, supported by family and stable routines, report better mental and emotional health outcomes. However, both groups experience academic stress, highlighting the universal need for effective coping strategies and institutional mental health support. The findings emphasize the importance of customized mental health interventions that address the distinct needs of both hostellers and day scholars to foster a healthier and more supportive academic environment.

Further Suggestions

- Regular access to trained counselors and mental health professionals should be made available for both hostellers and day scholars.
- Colleges should organize seminars, workshops, and awareness campaigns to reduce stigma and educate students about mental health.
- Forming student-led mental health clubs or peer counseling networks can provide emotional support, especially for hostellers.
- Ensuring cleaner environments, privacy, and recreation options in hostels can reduce stress levels among resident students.

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