

How to Cite:

Abdulhussien, A. J., & Muttashar Zan, H. (2022). Assessment of psychological distress among undergraduate Al Qadisiyah University Students. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S5), 3457–3466. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS5.9396>

Assessment of psychological distress among undergraduate Al Qadisiyah University Students

Asmaa Jabbar Abdulhussien

Master student, psychiatric Nursing Faculty of Nursing, Kufa University.
Email: asmaajabaar82@gmail.com

Assist Prof. Dr. Hussam Muttashar Zan

PhD in psychiatric Health Nursing Department, Faculty of Nursing, Kufa University, Najaf, Iraq

Abstract--Background: Psychological distress is the period that originate significant stress in students' lives and has been found to growth their distress, often It often occurs during the transition to college in which stressors are linked to life transitions and the resulting distress appears to impede academic life and reduce self-confidence as a result Psychological distress is prevalent throughout the world, and characteristics of psychological distress include despair about the future, lack of enthusiasm, and symptoms of anxiety. A Descriptive correlational design conduct to assess the psychological distress among undergraduate students in AL-Qadisiyh University for the period from 20th October, 2021 to 10th May, 2022. The sample selected was 380 undergraduate students from different colleges from University of AL qadisiyah for the study. A probability sampling technique (cluster sample) used through dividing AL qadisiyah University to three cluster based on homogeneous properties (Health faculties, Scientific faculties & Humanistic faculties). Results A total of 380 participants completed the GHQ-28 questionnaire and the our study It shows that the about (76.58%) of the students have moderate assessment regarding the total score of GHQ-28 scale; It also shows that there is significant relationship between psychological distress and some of demographic characteristics (Age, gender, monthly income, specialty, college). the study concluded that the current study showed College students are high risk to increased psychological distress where psychological distress Contributes effectively to the problems of academic adaptation of university students. Our study recommended that conducting weekly or bi-monthly courses and workshops with students, as this allows them to share their concerns about an psychological distress and focus on conducting research and studies that focus on identifying negative feelings associated with coping with stress and. In addition to Focus on risk factors associated

with psychological distress such as social, and environmental risk factors such as economic status, family income, family problem.

Keywords---Anxiety, stress, depression, university students.

Introduction

Although mental health difficulties affect society as a whole, college students are found to have a higher occurrence of mental disorders compared to the general population, this is due to the fact that college students have to face multiple pressures such as, pressure to succeed, requirements Academic financial burden teacher and parent pressures ⁽¹⁾. Psychological distress is the period that originate significant stress in students' lives and has been found to growth their distress, often It often occurs during the transition to college in which stressors are linked to life transitions and the resulting distress appears to impede academic life and reduce self-confidence as a result ⁽²⁾. Psychological distress is prevalent throughout the world, and characteristics of psychological distress include despair about the future, lack of enthusiasm, and symptoms of anxiety ⁽³⁾. Psychological distress is the period that originate significant stress in students' lives and has been found to growth their distress, often It often occurs during the transition to college in which stressors are linked to life transitions and the resulting distress appears to impede academic life and reduce self-confidence as a result ⁽⁴⁾. Family intervention is an essential tool to provide to patients with ED and their family members who have high levels of burden, psychological distress, and the need to receive information about their sick relative. There is a need to provide family members and patients with a family-educational psychological intervention in order to meet their own care needs ⁽⁵⁾. The psychological distress of college students appears to be greatly influenced by peer behavior that students are exposed to on a daily basis ⁽⁶⁾. Psychological distress among undergraduate students is linked to a variety of factors across domains as diverse as social contact, economics, the rapid development of higher education, academic stress during the coronavirus, and the complete shutdown of all state institutions which has negatively impacted the student's life ⁽⁷⁾.

Subjects and Methods

Research design

A Descriptive correlational design conduct to assess psychological distress among undergraduate student in AL-Qadisiyh University for the period from November 1st, 2021 May 10th 2022.

Setting

This study was conducted in Al-Diwaniya province for undergraduate student in AL-Qadisiyah University.

Study sampling

The sample selected was 380 undergraduate students from different colleges from University of AL qadisiyah for the study. A probability sampling technique (cluster sample) used through dividing AL qadisiyah University to three cluster based on

homogeneous properties (Health faculties, Scientific faculties & Humanistic faculties).

Instrument Construction

To assess the psychological distress among undergraduate in AL qadisiyah university. A questionnaire was used that includes General health questionnaire scale. The General health questionnaire scale (GHQ-28 item) was used, which includes four aspects, which are as follows (anxiety domain , depression domain ,social domain, and the somatic domain), which is a four-sided Likret Scale by (⁸) Arabic version adopted by (⁹) All items of level psychological distress questions has four responses, items No. (1, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) are as follows (more than usual, . The scoring were 4 points, Rather more than usual 3score ,No more than usual 2 score , Not at all 1 score). While the Remainder items are written in the opposite direction, then mean of score for any item was calculated which is equal to the mean score of all responders for the items. The evaluation of level GHQ-28 Item.

Data collection

The data was collected through the utilization of the developed questionnaire and by means of self-administrated questionnaire with the subjects' who were included in the present study, before data collection the investigator met the students at the classrooms to clarify the study subjects' and get their verbal agreement to participate in the study with right refuse or withdrawal in participation and confidential the information , then a copy of the questionnaire was distributed for each sample to completely. A total of 380 questionnaires for statistical analysis were collected from undergraduate university students, this process was applied at each college that was included in the present study, the data collection process has been performed from ²⁹ December 2021 until ¹⁵ Feb 2022.

Statistical Analysis

It has been confirmed that there is no missing data and then converts the data into calculated data (conversion into numbers) and inserts them into the Microsoft office Excel 2010 program in order to arrange them and transfer them to the "Statistical Package of Social Sciences program (SPSS)" version 25 for statistical analysis and then to Microsoft Office Word 2010 to move the tables to the final results and presented for study.

Result

The studied samples included 380 student from al qadesiyah university. The statistical distribution of study sample by their socio-demographic data, it explains that the highest percentage of the students' subgroup are: students with ages between (18-22) years old (72.6 %), female students (55.3 %) ; those living in urban areas (75 %), and those who are single (81.1 %), those with roughly sufficient monthly income (41.6 %), those living with (2-8) family member (73.9),

those who are studying in pure science specialty was (48.2 %) , those who are studying in science college (18.2).

Regarding stage of study, the students are approximately equally distributed (25%, 25%, 24.7%, 25.3% for first, second, third and fourth respectively) those with normal BMI (54.5%). This (table 1). Regarding the overall assessment the study participants of psychological distress among undergraduate student the descriptive statistics of student's subgroups according to their **GHQ-28** scale assessment. This table reveals that the majority of students have (76.58 %) had moderate assessment. (This table 2).

In our study about ANOVA table for the differences in **GHQ-28** total score of students and their demographic data. It shows that there is a significant relationship between students' **GHQ-28** total score and the following demographic data: Age, gender, monthly income, specialty, college.

Regarding age, the category (18-22) years recorded the highest **GHQ-28** score (MS= 2.33); female student had psychological distress higher than male (2.37 and 2.21 respectively); students with insufficient monthly income showed higher psychological distress (MS=2.40); the humanitarian colleges exhibited the highest psychological distress score (MS=2.36) comparing the other specialties; College of Education for girls recorded the highest psychological distress score (MS=2.52) in comparison to the other colleges included in the study.

Table (1) study Sample Demographic Data and clinical data

Items	Sub-groups	Study group (Total = 380)	
		Frequency	Percentage
Age / Years	18-22	276	72.6
	23-30	99	26.1
	≥ 31	5	1.3
Gender	Male	170	44.7
	Female	210	55.3
Residence	Urban	285	75.0
	Rural	95	25.0
Marital Status	Single	308	81.1
	Married	72	18.9
Monthly Income	Sufficient	154	40.5
	Roughly Sufficient	158	41.6
	Insufficient	68	17.9
Family Member	2-8	281	73.9
	9-15	96	25.3
	16-22	3	0.8
Specialty	Medical	61	16.1
	Pure Science	183	48.2
	Humanitarian	136	35.8
College	Dentistry	40	10.5
	Nursing	21	5.5

		Art	32	8.4
		Law	68	17.9
		Computer Science	49	12.9
		Science	69	18.2
		Education for girls	36	9.5
		Engineering	65	17.1
Stage		First	95	25.0
		Second	95	25.0
		Third	94	24.7
		Fourth	96	25.3
BMI		Underweight	43	11.3
		Normal	207	54.5
		Overweight	120	31.6
		Obese	10	2.6

Table (2): Descriptive statistics of student's subgroups according to their GHQ-28 scale assessment

Descriptive Statistics		GHQ -28 assessment		
		Poor	Moderate	Good
GHQ-28	Frequency	77	291	12
	Percentage	20.26	76.58	3.16

Table (3) ANOVA table for the differences in GHQ-28 total score of students and their demographic data

Items	Sub-groups	Mean	SD	F Test	P value Sig.
Age / Years	18-22	2.33	0.36	3.49	0.031
	23-30	2.23	0.32		
	≥ 31	1.82	0.00		
Gender	Male	2.21	0.29	21.08	0.000
	Female	2.37	0.38		
Residence	Urban	2.30	0.35	1.01	0.364
	Rural	2.32	0.38		
Marital Status	Single	2.28	0.35	3.36	0.067
	Married	2.37	0.38		
Monthly Income	Sufficient	2.25	0.37	4.22	0.015
	Roughly Sufficient	2.31	0.33		
	Insufficient	2.40	0.36		
Family Member	2-8	2.26	0.36	0.77	0.464
	9-15	2.31	0.36		
	16-22	2.30	0.16		
Specialty	Medical	2.34	0.40	4.79	0.009
	Pure Science	2.24	0.32		
	Humanitarian	2.36	0.36		

College	Dentistry	2.42	0.40	4.48	0.000
	Nursing	2.20	0.34		
	Art	2.34	0.32		
	Law	2.28	0.37		
	Computer Science	2.31	0.41		
	Science	2.26	0.30		
	Education for girls	2.52	0.36		
	Engineering	2.18	0.26		
Stage	First	2.23	0.35	1.76	0.154
	Second	2.31	0.36		
	Third	2.32	0.35		
	Fourth	2.34	0.36		
BMI	Underweight	2.25	0.37	1.32	0.27
	Normal	2.33	0.37		
	Overweight	2.26	0.33		
	Obese	2.29	0.28		

Discussion

According to (Table 1) the results show statistical distribution of study sample by their socio-demographic data, it explains that the highest percentage of the students' subgroup are (Age ,Gender, Residence , Marital status , Monthly income, Family number ,Specialty, college , stage of college ,BMI). Throughout the course of the data analysis of the current research, the results appear the highest percentage of the age students' subgroup are : students with ages between (18-22) years old with (72.6 %) the reason is that most college students often ranged (18-22) and this difference was due to the study community. this result agree with previous study that performed by ⁽¹⁰⁾ where the ages of the students ranged between 18-22 years and the percentage for them was (79.3%).

Regarding to the gender the results revealed that female students percentage was (55.3%) while male was (44.7%) because most of the sample were women and always has view and share to know more details about the disorder, which is more in women, this study similar to the previous study that performance by the ⁽¹¹⁾ where percentage female was (54.8%) and male percentage was (45.2%). With regard to residence, the current study found that the percentage of students who live in urban areas was about (75%). the reason for this may be that the majority of students are from urban areas, which Represent the vast majority of Iraqi society. this result is consistent with the previous study conducted ⁽¹²⁾ with percentage was (86.0%).

Regarding to students who are single was the result (81.1 %), This due to the fact that the sample size is mostly unmarried and can explained too that most students who are busy studying or because of the high costs of marriage in Arab societies, including Iraq. this result agree with ⁽¹³⁾ where the percentage was (78.7%). In this study, show the students with roughly sufficient monthly income (41.6 %); %) this may be explained by the nature of living for the family, which may depend on specific source of livelihood, our results were interpreted too by reflecting the nature of the study sample, which provides evidence that it is from

the middle class in addition to the economic situation in Iraq. this result is similar to the previous study that supported by ⁽¹⁴⁾ where the result was (49.3%). Those living with (2-8) family member was (73.9 %), Because of the economic situation that requires living inside the house for several people the study agree with ⁽¹⁵⁾ and ⁽¹⁶⁾ Regarding specialization, pure sciences were more than the other disciplines with percentage (48.2%) it is possible to explain these results that pure sciences contain the largest number of students compared to other colleges in the study community. that similar to the study conducted by ⁽¹⁷⁾ where the result was (44.8%).

With regard to the college, science was the most among the colleges included in the study where percentage was (18.2 %), because it includes many scientific departments and the number of its students is the largest, according to the statistics of the University of Al-Qadisiyah. this outcome agree with study⁽¹⁸⁾. Regarding stage of study, the students are approximately equally distributed (25%, 25%, 24.7%, 25.3%) for first, second, third and fourth , respectively). this can be explained in two ways, the first is that the method of sample collection has affected these results, or it may be due to the college's work strategy in accepting students equally as a statistic approaching annually ,this result correspond with the previous study by ⁽¹⁹⁾ .

In this current study the student with normal BMI were (54/6%) May explain that on Considering that this category is more to work and participate in sports clubs than others, Trying to reach the ideal weight and body to maintain an ideal weight and a healthy body. The result similar to study conducted by ⁽²⁰⁾ where the result was (62.0%). (Table 2) : shows descriptive statistics of students' subgroups according to their total score of (GHQ-28) assessment ,It shows that the about (76.58 %) had moderate assessment ,the results are indicating that not all people are equal in the level of psychological distress , and this reason is due to the difference in their characteristics and the factors affecting them ,or maybe could be explained by the student experiences due to academic performance at the university or by the lack of social support that has been known to have a negative impact on the student's studies, which means that people who see higher social (family) support report less distress. This result similar to the previous study that performed by⁽²¹⁾ the percentage was (82.5%) ⁽²²⁾ as moderate tension .

(Table 3) : the differences in General Health Questionnaire (GHQ -28) a total mean of score of students and their demographic data

The study results show that a significant association between student's stress level and (Age, Gender, Specialty, college, Monthly Income) while the remaining factors had a non-significant association.

In regarding **age**, psychological distress level is a significantly higher among group (18-22) year comparing to others groups, this outcome can interrupted that this category does not have enough knowledge about how to manage crises and overcome the difficult situations that the student goes through during the study period the study similar with ⁽²³⁾ .

Relation to **Gender** female had psychological distress level is significantly higher than male our results may be explained by the difficulty of coordinating the time

between household commitments and academic stress, the nature of women's constitution that goes through psychological conditions and hormonal change. this agree with the study ⁽²⁴⁾ Relation to **monthly income**, psychological distress level is higher among monthly income insufficient students compared to others, this result may be interpreted by the anxiety level of students who are not enough income level was high compared to others. It may be due to thinking about providing study requirements, this result agrees with ⁽²⁵⁾

Regarding to **specialty** the humanitarian college was significant higher psychological distress from other specialties this results can be interpreted because it is the type that includes the most number of students for ease of acceptance, meaning it does not need high grades, this result similar to study conducted by ⁽²⁶⁾ Regarding college, psychological distress level is significantly higher among students whose study in Education for girls college compared to other colleges, the current result can be explained by thinking about finding a job in the future, or being exposed to the pressure of work at home and at university, this study agrees with ⁽²⁷⁾ and ⁽²⁸⁾ .

Conclusions

According to the present study findings, the researcher can mention the following conclusions:

The results showed that the College students are risk psychological distress, it found that moderate stress about **(76.58 %)** of the student and It shows that there is a significant relationship between 28-GHQ overall assessment of student and the following demographic data: age, gender, specialty, college, monthly income.

Recommendation

Establishing a student guidance center in colleges with the help of mental health professionals such as psychiatrists help students talk about psychological problems .It can be very useful to have weekly or bi-monthly courses and workshops with students, as this allows them to share their concerns about an eating disorder.

References

1. Kumar, H., Shaheen, A., & Rasool, I. (2016). shafi M (2016) Psychological Distress and Life Satisfaction among University Students. *J Psychol Clin Psychiatry*, 5(3)
2. Padrón, I., Fraga, I., Vieitez, L., Montes, C., & Romero, E. (2021). A study on the psychological wound of COVID-19 in university students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 9.
3. Li, T., Zhang, X., Chen, M., Wang, R., He, L., Xue, B., & Zhao, D. (2020). Psychological distress and its associated risk factors among university students. *Revista da Associação Médica Brasileira*, 66, 414-418.
4. Padrón, I., Fraga, I., Vieitez, L., Montes, C., & Romero, E. (2021). A study on the psychological wound of COVID-19 in university students. *Frontiers in psychology*, 12, 9.

5. Sampogna, G., Caldararo, O., Del Vecchio, V., Luciano, M., Volpe, U., Fiorillo, A., & Monteleone, P. (2017). Psychoeducational family intervention for people with eating disorders: Rationale and development. *European Psychiatry*, 41(S1), S382-S382.
6. Nania, T., Dellafiore, F., Caruso, R., & Barello, S. (2021). Risk and protective factors for psychological distress among Italian university students during the COVID-19 pandemic: The beneficial role of health engagement. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 67(1), 102-103.
7. Zheng, W., Huang, W., Zhang, L., Tian, Z., Yan, Q., Wang, T., ... & Li, G. (2019). Early pregnancy metabolic factors associated with gestational diabetes mellitus in normal-weight women with polycystic ovary syndrome: a two-phase cohort study. *Diabetology & metabolic syndrome*, 11(1), 1-9.
8. Goldberg, D. P., & Hillier, V. F. (1979). A scaled version of the General Health Questionnaire. *Psychological medicine*, 9(1), 139-145.
9. Fatima, W., Al-Amarei¹, H. M., & Khudair, Z. W. A survey of determination the mental distress level among internally displaced person at Al-Najaf city. *American Journal of BioMedicine* 2016;4(10):421-426
10. Reasonover, M. (2021). Psychological Well-Being, Eating Disorder Risk, & Weight-Related Concerns in First Semester College Students.
11. Choi, J. (2020). Impact of stress levels on eating behaviors among college students. *Nutrients*, 12(5), 1241.
12. Salma, K. J., Wafaa, A. A., & Zainab, A. (2016). A study of eating habits among female nursing students in the university of Babylon/Iraq. *Journal of Contemporary Medical Sciences*, 2(8), 141-147.
13. Ergüney Okumuş, F. E., Sertel Berk, H. Ö., & Yücel, B. (2019). Body image, depression and eating behaviour: a comparative study in eating disordered women and healthy controls. *Psychiatry and Clinical Psychopharmacology*, 29(4), 774-780.
14. Schmits, E., Dekeyser, S., Klein, O., Luminet, O., Yzerbyt, V., & Glowacz, F. (2021). Psychological Distress among Students in Higher Education: One Year after the Beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(14), 7445
15. Hasan, H., Shihab, K. H. A., Mohammad, Z., Jahan, H., Coussa, A., & Faris, M. E. (2022). Associations of Smartphone Addiction, Chronotype, Sleep Quality, and Risk Of Eating Disorders Among University Students: A Cross-Sectional Study.
16. Dokhani, A., Dehghan, M., Rayani, M., Maazallahi, M., & Frouzi, M. A. (2022). Factors associated with disordered feeding among high school students in Kerman City, Iran. *Journal of Eating Disorders*, 10(1), 1-7.
17. Damiri, B., Safarini, O. A., Nazzal, Z., Abuhassan, A., Farhoud, A., Ghanim, N., ... & Zahran, J. (2021). Eating disorders and the use of cognitive enhancers and psychostimulants among university students: a cross-sectional study. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 17, 1633.
18. Iyer, S., & Shriram, V. (2021). Prevalence of eating disorders and its associated risk factors in students of a medical college hospital in South India. *Cureus*, 13(1).
19. Hasan, H., Shihab, K. H. A., Mohammad, Z., Jahan, H., Coussa, A., & Faris, M. E. (2022). Associations of Smartphone Addiction, Chronotype, Sleep Quality, and Risk Of Eating Disorders Among University Students: A Cross-

Sectional Study.

20. Abdalla, M. I., Alsaïdi, N. A., Azman, A. H. B., Thivakaran, A. Q., Hong, S. V., Kirthana, K., ... & Yeong, K. H. (2020). The association between abnormal eating behaviors, body mass index, and waist-to-height ratio among university students in Malaysia. *US Endocrinol*, 16, 69-73.
21. Malik, M., & Javed, S. (2021). Perceived stress among university students in Oman during COVID-19-induced e-learning. *Middle East Current Psychiatry*, 28(1), 1-8.
22. Laurene, K. R., Kodukula, G., Lechner, W. V., Grega, C., Lumpkin, E., & Kenne, D. R. (2022). Assessment of psychological distress as a function of positive psychological variables during the COVID-19 pandemic: A university longitudinal study. *Journal of American College Health*, 1-7.
23. Braden, A., Musher-Eizenman, D., Watford, T., & Emley, E. (2018). Eating when depressed, anxious, bored, or happy: are emotional eating types associated with unique psychological and physical health correlates?. *Appetite*, 125, 410-417.
24. Suryasa, I. W., Rodríguez-Gámez, M., & Koldoris, T. (2022). Post-pandemic health and its sustainability: Educational situation. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(1), i-v. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6n1.5949>
25. Auttama, N., Seangpraw, K., Ong-Artborirak, P., & Tonchoy, P. (2021). Factors Associated with Self-Esteem, Resilience, Mental Health, and Psychological Self-Care Among University Students in Northern Thailand. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare*, 14, 1213.
26. Bekova, S., Dementeva, J., & Smirnov, I. (2021). Factors associated with depression among university students: the role of students satisfaction.
27. Fradelos, E. C., Kapsiocha, E., Tzavella, F., Kastanidou, S., Tsaras, K., Papagiannis, D., & Papathanasiou, I. V. (2019). Factors associated with psychological distress in university students and the relation to emotional intelligent and spirituality: A cross-sectional study. *Materia socio-medica*, 31(4), 262.
28. Damiri, B., Safarini, O. A., Nazzal, Z., Abuhassan, A., Farhoud, A., Ghanim, N., ... & Zahran, J. (2021). Eating disorders and the use of cognitive enhancers and psychostimulants among university students: a cross-sectional study. *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment*, 17, 1633.
29. Djuraev, A. M., Alpisbaev, K. S., & Tapilov, E. A. (2021). The choice of surgical tactics for the treatment of children with destructive pathological dislocation of the hip after hematogenous osteomyelitis. *International Journal of Health & Medical Sciences*, 5(1), 15-20. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijhms.v5n1.1813>
30. Odriozola-González, P., Planchuelo-Gómez, Á., Irurtia, M. J., & de Luis-García, R. (2022). Psychological symptoms of the outbreak of the COVID-19 confinement in Spain. *Journal of health psychology*, 27(4), 825-835.