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A COMPARISON OF MENTAL HEALTH IN DORMITORY AND NON-DORMITORY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to compare mental health in two groups of the dormitory and non-dormitory students. To do this, descriptive correlation method was used. The sample of the study consisted of all male and female dormitory and non-dormitory students of Islamic Azad University of Dehaghan, Isfahan, Iran. 422 students were randomly selected and General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (GHQ) was used for analyzing variables in the students. The data were analyzed in SPSS 20. The findings of the study indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the female dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms and depression ($p>0.05$). There were statistically significant differences between the female dormitory and non-dormitory students in stress and social dysfunctions ($p<0.05$) in that female dormitory students had more stress and social dysfunctions than non-dormitory students. There was no statistically significant difference between the male dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms ($p>0.05$). There were statistically significant differences between the male dormitory and non-dormitory students in stress, social dysfunctions and depression ($p<0.05$) in that male dormitory students had more stress and social dysfunctions and depression than non-dormitory ones. Therefore, female and male dormitory students had greater mental health than non-dormitory students.

Keywords: *Stress, Depression, Dormitory Student, Mental Health*

INTRODUCTION

The main principal of human general health, in addition to having physical health, is to enjoy mental health (Shoja-Tehrani, 2002). Mental health as successful performance of mental function brings about constructive activities, the ability to communicate with other people, the ability to adapt to learning changes (Jahson, 2003), reform in personal and social environments, and properly resolve conflicts (WHO, 2004). Maninger states that mental health is the maximum adaption of a person to his surrounding world, which breeds happiness and a perfect, useful and efficient understanding (Milanifar, 2003). Kameo believes that a person with mental health does not suffer from stress or disability symptoms, and his/her emotional, social, mental and physical health is complemented when s/he can communicate with other people and can face with everyday problems. Thus, Kameo has divided mental health into some factors such as personal growth, lack of stress, lack of disability symptoms, the ability to communicate with other people, and the capacity to face difficulties in life (Nejat, 1999).

Canadian Mental Health Association defines mental health based on three parts:

- a) Attitudes toward yourself: including control over your emotions, awareness of your weaknesses, and satisfaction with simple pleasures.
- b) Attitudes toward others: including interest in long-term and intimate friendships, the feeling of belonging to a group, and responsibility towards human and material environment.
- c) Attitudes toward life: including acceptance of responsibilities, motivation for extending facilities and interests, ability to make personal decisions, and motivation for good performance (CMHA, 1996).

Vitality, and happiness are blessings that human being can enjoy in terms of physical and mental health. In addition to this, mental health is one of the important factors in improving and evolving human beings. This factor is essential, especially in students, because creating and maintaining health, the ability to face everyday problems, the ability to create healthy and intimate relationship with others, and having a purposeful and productive life is important for students (Hemchand, 1983; Tourani, 2008).

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The duration of university education is so stressful in terms of different factors; in other words, entrance to universities is a critical event in the lives of efficient and active human resources in every country, and it often brings about basic changes in personal life, especially in social relations. Being under such circumstances mainly engenders pressure, stress, and specific emotions that influence performance and efficiency of people, and finally it affects mental health.

It can be expected that in intensively stressful situations, the proportion of students who are vulnerable are at high risk of mental illness (Yousefi *et al.*, 2010). Besides, in some cases living in dorms exerts physical and mental pressures on students that they feel self-alienation and isolation (Iman *et al.*, 2008). Some studies have been conducted on mental health. Mohseni-Tabrizi and Razi (2007), for instance, investigated the relationship between social protection and mental health, finding that there was a statistically significant difference between the two variables (Mohsen-Tabrizi and Razi, 2007).

Farahbakhsh *et al.*, (2008) indicated in their study that there was no statistically significant difference between student's residence in dorms, private houses, and rental houses to their mental health (Farahbakhsh *et al.*, 2007). Ekhtiyari (2004) compared mental health in single and married students, finding that there were no statistically significant differences between single and married students in mental health (i.e., stress, depression, disorders in social functions and physical symptoms) (Amiri-Ekhtiyari, 2004).

As previous studies have shown, only a few researches compared mental health in dormitory and non-dormitory students. So, regarding the importance of mental health for all members of the society especially students, the present study was carried out to compare mental health in dormitory and non-dormitory students. In doing so, the following hypotheses were investigated:

H01: There is a statistically significant difference in physical symptoms between female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students.

H02: There is a statistically significant difference in stress between female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students.

H03: There is a statistically significant difference in social dysfunction between female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students in.

H04: There is statistically significant difference in depression between female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students.

H05: There is statistically significant difference in mental health between female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Methodology

Procedure

The purpose of this study is to compare dormitory and non-dormitory students in Islamic Azad University of Dehaghan, Isfahan, Iran. Descriptive correlation method was used. The sample of the study consisted of all female dormitory and non-dormitory students and male dormitory and non-dormitory students of Islamic Azad University of Dehaghan. 422 dormitory and non-dormitory students were selected randomly and General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (GHQ) was distributed among them to collect data. After describing purposes of the study and giving general instructions for completing the questionnaires, eight questionnaires were put away because of imperfect responses.

Instruments

General Health Questionnaire

In this study, General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (1972) consisting of 28 questions was used to investigate general health. The questionnaire includes four sub-tests of physical symptoms, stress and insomnia, social dysfunction and depression; each test has consists of 7 questions. The answers were graded based on a scale including four values: 0, 1, 2, 3. The overall score was obtained from the sum of the scores of four subtests. Scores 14-21 on each subtest show low-level of mental health in the participants. According to this method, cut-off score for males is 22 and for females is 21. Investigations

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indicate the high reliability of the questionnaire (GHQ-28). The reliability of the questionnaire according to Chun (1983) with a sample of 244 participants was found to be 0.87, and according to Yazdanpanah, the reliability of the questionnaire calculated based on Cronbach’s alpha was 0.92, with a sample of 541 participants. Yaghoubi (1996) stated that the reliability of this questionnaire was 0.88 and the reliability of sub-tests are 0.50-0.81. Also, Mirhakak (2002) stated that the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.86. The validity was reported through calculating correlation coefficient of this test and other tests that measure the same scale such as SCL90. In another study, Goldberg and Miller reported the correlation coefficient of scores of the four sub-tests of this questionnaire as 0.33-0.61.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the Study

Findings of Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: The mean and standard deviations of variables under the study for dormitory and non-dormitory students according to gender

Variable	Gender	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Physical Symptoms	F	Dormitory	6.48	3.84	178
		Non-dormitory	5.94	2.99	175
	M	Dormitory	6.14	3.83	44
		Non-dormitory	5.12	2.57	25
Stress	F	Dormitory	8.41	4.63	178
		Non-dormitory	7.04	3.82	175
	M	Dormitory	7.18	4.4	44
		Non-dormitory	4.72	2.92	25
Social Dysfunction	F	Dormitory	7.7	3.67	178
		Non-dormitory	6.64	3.05	175
	M	Dormitory	7.27	3.16	44
		Non-dormitory	5.52	2.29	25
Depression	F	Dormitory	5.71	5.63	178
		Non-dormitory	4.6	3.84	175
	M	Dormitory	5.68	5.17	44
		Non-dormitory	3.64	2.95	25
General Health	F	Dormitory	28.3	14.9	178
		Non-dormitory	24.16	10.29	175
	M	Dormitory	26.14	12.63	44
		Non-dormitory	19.10	6.35	25

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of the study. The means of female and male dormitory students in physical symptoms are 6.48 and 6.14, which are greater than the means of female and male non-dormitory (5.94 and 5.12). In addition, the means of female and male dormitory students in stress are 8.41 and 7.18, which are greater than the means of female and male non-dormitory students (7.04 and 4.72). The same results hold true for social dysfunction and depression variables. However, reverses results were found for general health variable: the higher the scores in general health, the less mental health in individuals. Therefore, mental health of dormitory students was greater than that of non-dormitory ones.

Findings of Hypothesis Testing

The first main hypothesis was formulated to discover statistically significant differences between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms, stress, social dysfunction, depression and

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general health. To analyze the hypotheses, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to confirm data normality and, according to the calculations, p-values of all variables were less than 0.05. As a result, data normality assumption was not confirmed, and Mann-Whitney test was used.

Table 2 shows results of Mann-Whitney test for female students. Because p-value is more than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$) in the first hypothesis, it can be concluded that there was no statistical difference between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms. So, the first hypothesis is rejected. In the second hypothesis, p-value is 0.006 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is a statistically significant difference between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in stress. Because of the greater mean of female dormitory students than that of non-dormitory ones, the amount of stress in female dormitory students was probably more than that in female non-dormitory students. So, the second hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 2: Results of Mann-Whitney test for analyzing variables of the study among female dormitory and non-dormitory students

Variable	Group	Mean	Mann-Whitney Test	t-test	Sig
Physical Symptoms	Dormitory	6.48	14860		-0.75
	Non-dormitory	5.94	0.43		
Stress	Dormitory	8.41	12933	-2.76*	0.006
	Non-dormitory	7.04			
Social Dysfunction	Dormitory	7.7	13.35.5		-2.66*
	Non-dormitory	6.64	0.008		
Depression	Dormitory	5.71	14996.5	-.61	.54
	Non-dormitory	4.6			
General Health	Dormitory	28.3	13478.5		-2.19*
	Non-dormitory	24.16	0.029		

(*) shows significance

In the third hypothesis, p-value is 0.008 ($p < 0.05$). The mean of dormitory students is greater than that of non-dormitory ones; therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in social dysfunction, and this hypothesis is confirmed. In the fourth hypothesis, p-value is more than 0.05. So, there is no statistically difference between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in depression, and this hypothesis is rejected. In the fifth hypothesis, p-value is 0.029, which is significant as it is less than 0.05. It can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in general health, and the hypothesis is confirmed.

The second main hypothesis was formulated to discover any statistically significant differences between male dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms, stress, social dysfunction, depression and general health. To analyze the hypothesis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to investigate data normality, and according to the test results, P-values of all variables were more than 0.05. Data normality assumption was, then, confirmed, and as a result, independent sample t-test was conducted.

Table 3 shows the results of independent sample t-test for male students. Before applying independent sample t-test, Levene test was used. It indicated the homogeneity of variance of stress and social dysfunction variables, but the homogeneity of variance assumptions of other variables were rejected. In the first hypothesis. P-value is more than 0.05; therefore, there is no statistically significant difference

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between male dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms, and the first hypothesis is rejected. In the second hypothesis, p-value is 0.015, which is significant ($p < 0.05$). The results show that there was a statistically significant difference in stress between male dormitory and non-dormitory students, and the degree of stress was more in male dormitory students than that in non-dormitory ones. So, the second hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 3: Results of independent sample t-test for analyzing variables of the study among male dormitory and non-dormitory students

Variable	Group	Mean	Levene Test	's Sig	t-test	Sig(two tailed)
Physical Symptoms	Dormitory	6.14	6.32 0.19		0.014	1.31
	Non-dormitory	5.12				
Stress	Dormitory	7.18	2.14 0.015		0.148	2.5*
	Non-dormitory	4.72				
Social Dysfunction	Dormitory	7.27	1.68 0.018		0.2	2.43*
	Non-dormitory	5.52				
Depression	Dormitory	5.68	7.6	0.007	2.09	0.04
	Non-dormitory	3.64				
General Health	Dormitory	26.14	10.79	0.002	3.12*	0.003
	Non-dormitory	19.10				

(*) shows significance

In the third hypothesis, p-value is 0.018, which is significant ($p < 0.05$). There is a statistically significant difference between male dormitory and non-dormitory students in social dysfunction. In addition, The mean of male dormitory students is greater than that of non-dormitory ones. Thus, the degree of social dysfunction was greater in male dormitory students than that in non-dormitory ones. So, the third hypothesis is confirmed.

In the fourth hypothesis, p-value is 0.04, which shows a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). There was a statistically significant difference between male dormitory and non-dormitory students in depression, and the mean of male dormitory students is greater than that in non-dormitory ones. Therefore, the degree of depression was more in male dormitory students than non-dormitory ones. So, the fourth hypothesis is confirmed.

In the fifth hypothesis, p-value is 0.003, which indicates significant relationship as it is less than 0.05. It can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between male dormitory and non-dormitory students in general health. The mean of male dormitory students is greater than that of non-dormitory ones. Yet, in this case, the greater mean shows a less degree of mental health. So, the degree of mental health in male dormitory students was less than non-dormitory ones, and the hypothesis is confirmed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study compared dormitory and non-dormitory students of Islamic Azad University of Dehaghan. The findings of the study were based on gender differences. Female dormitory students showed more stress and social dysfunction than non-dormitory ones, but there were no statistically significant differences between female dormitory and non-dormitory students in physical symptoms and depression. Male

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dormitory students showed more stress, social dysfunction and depression than non-dormitory ones. When students enter university, they face a new place which is different from their everyday life and social environment. The new atmosphere brings about problems for them.

Inappropriate condition of dormitories, homesickness, emotional problems, intense competition over years of academic studies, lack of entertainment, anxiety about finding jobs after graduation, problems of perusing education, and so on may expose students to a high risk of mental disorders such as stress and depression.

Based on the findings of the study, the degree of mental health in female and male dormitory students was greater than that in non-dormitory students. This findings is not in line with findings of Frahbakhsh *et al.*, (2008). They showed that there was no relationship between students' lives in dorms, private houses, and rental houses to their mental health. Low level of mental health between dormitory students than non-dormitory ones account for the fact that non-dormitory students engage in different social groups such as family, friends, and neighbors, receiving more support that result in achieving health. Individuals in social groups are less depressed and enjoy more mental health than those who are not in such groups. Being away from friends and family, or being away from these strong supportive sources may cause problems for dormitory students concerning mental health. Besides, the relative isolation of dormitory students from the society and different living conditions in dorms lead to some problems. A Dorm is an isolated place. Dormitory students who move from one city to another have specific culture backgrounds. They cannot be easily familiar with the culture of new place. Most of the time, transferability from one cultural system to another results in students' mental disorders. They lose their individual domain when they face their roommates and other dormitory students. Lack of individual domain causes mental fatigue. Policy-makers in every society try to provide conditions that guarantee the health of social members. Based on the findings of the study, the promotion of mental health is not possible without the assistance of university Policy-makers.

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