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Depression and quality of life in university students: The role of sources of social support

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Statement of the Problem: A lack of social support is a determinant of mental health problems including depressive symptoms among university students and has negative impact on quality of life. More university students worldwide are currently being diagnosed with mental health problems, and many researchers attribute this to academic, financial and social stressors. Identifying the differential impact of sources of social support would be beneficial for the development of preventative programmes for the wellbeing of students.

Methodology: University students (aged 18 and over) completed an online survey measuring depressive symptoms (Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)), social support (multidimensional scale of perceived social support (MSPSS)), and quality of life (WHOQOL-BREF using the psychological and social relationships domains). Socio-demographic variables included age, gender, and year of study.

Findings: The sample was 461 students (82% female) with a mean age of 20.62 years (range 18–53 years). Using the PHQ-9 cut-off score of 10, the prevalence of depressive symptoms was 33%. Social support from family, and friends was a significant predictor of depressive symptoms at $p=0.000^*$. Quality of life (psychological) was significantly predicted by social support from family and friends, while quality of life (social relationships) was predicted by social support from significant others and friends. Female students reported significantly higher levels of social support from significant others compared to male students.

Conclusion & Significance: Sources of social support showed a significant impact on depression and quality of life domains for university students and represent a valuable resource for universities in protecting the mental health of students. These findings provide knowledge for the development of effective strategies for both students and universities.

Biography

Alsubaie M M is a PhD Researcher in Mental Health at the Durham University and is working as a Lecturer at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. His research interests encompass youth mental health and well-being, and more specifically, the role of risks and protective factors on the mental health of young people.

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