

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING – PERSPECTIVE OF UNDERGRADUATE URBAN COLLEGE GOERS

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**Abstract** - Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being. The paper aims to analyze the insights into college life considering factors such as lifestyle, physical fitness, academics, career goals, and peer pressure. The study also seeks to determine these factors impacting students' mental health. The study duration was from October 2022 to February 2023. The data was collected through a primary survey online mode. The target population was undergraduate students of Bachelor of Business Administration in Hospital Management, NSHM Knowledge Campus, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. 75% of the respondents were between 18–19 years, 22% between 20–21 years, and 3% between 22–23 years. Regarding the screen time, 74 students had been engrossed in active screen watching for 2–4 hours, 60 students were captivated between 4 to 6 hours, 14 spent 6 to 8 hours, and five students for more than 8 hours. Most had proper sleep schedules, and 25% responded as they tried to maintain their sleep schedule. 48% of respondents could communicate freely with their parents. Another 36% did without hesitation, and 16% could not share their feelings. Mental health is a topic of concern. A culture of imbibing well-being can help students to overcome difficulties and have a healthier population.

**Key Words:** anxiety, college, lifestyle, peer pressure, students' mental health.

### 1. Introduction

Mental health is one of the most critical aspects of overall well-being, and college students are not exempt from experiencing mental health issues (Wang et al., 2020). As the students navigate to new academic and social environments, manage increased responsibilities, and cope with the pressures of academic performance, the college years seem to be a challenging time. Some common mental

health issues experienced by college students include stress, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, and suicidal ideation (Lattie et al., 2019). These issues can affect their academic performance, relations, and other aspects of life.

Academic pressure also creates a significant impact on the mental health of students. Also, the pressure to maintain an excellent academic performance leads to anxiety, stress, depression, and other mental health issues (Yikealo et al., 2018). Some common factors contributing to academic pressure include high expectations from parents or teachers, the need to maintain good grades to secure future opportunities, competition among peers, and a heavy workload. Because of academic pressure, educators, parents, and students need to be conscious of the signs and symptoms associated with mental health issues. These can include changes in mood, sleep disturbances, social withdrawal, loss of interest in activities, and difficulty concentrating.

Mental health issues among college students have become a growing concern in recent years. The transition to college life, academic pressures, social challenges, and increased independence can all contribute to the development or exacerbation of mental health problems. Understanding the unique mental health needs of college students is crucial for developing effective support systems and interventions to promote their well-being and academic success. According to a study by Auerbach et al. (2018), approximately 35% of college students experience symptoms of a mental health disorder. Depression, anxiety, and stress-related issues are among the most commonly reported concerns. These mental health challenges can have a significant impact on students' daily functioning, academic performance, and overall quality of life.

In college, students are often exposed to new social environments. They may feel pressure to fit in with their peers, which can further cause a sense of anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness, as well as a feeling of disconnection from their true selves (Ahorsu et al., 2021). They may feel pressured to engage in unhealthy habits such as smoking, drinking, or the consumption of drugs to fit in with their peers. It can lead to negative consequences, both physically and mentally. Addressing the mental health needs of college students requires a multifaceted approach. Universities and colleges are increasingly recognizing the importance of promoting mental well-being among their students and are implementing various initiatives, including counseling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and peer support programs. However, there is a need for further research to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions and identify additional strategies that can effectively address the mental health challenges faced by college students.

College students must be aware of peer pressure's influence and prioritize their well-being by making healthy choices and seeking support when needed. Choosing the right friend circle and studying environment plays a considerable role here (Liu, 2022). College students must prioritize self-care practices like exercise, healthy eating, and sleep to support their wellness and good health. Prioritizing mental health is essential for college students to succeed academically and personally. Additionally, seeking social support from friends and family and practicing stress-management techniques like meditation or deep breathing can be helpful.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Problems related to mental health are widespread among college students. Mental health can significantly affect the student's physical activity levels and sleep quality. In the study done by Ghrouz, 2019; it was shown that the prevalence of depression was relatively less as compared to that of anxiety. Also, over half of the participants had low physical activity levels and poor sleep quality. Further, it was found that the physical activity levels and the scores for anxiety were inversely related, and the poor sleep quality resembled its positive association with anxiety. Approximately 14% of the global burden of disease is associated with neuropsychiatric disorders, primarily due to the chronic and disabling nature of conditions like depression, common mental disorders, alcohol and substance use disorders, and psychoses. These estimations have emphasized the significance of mental disorders in public health. However, by emphasizing the separate impact of mental and physical disorders on disability and mortality, these estimations may have further isolated mental health from broader efforts to enhance health and alleviate poverty. The burden of mental disorders is likely underestimated due to a lack of recognition regarding the interconnectedness between mental illness and other health conditions. Given

the complex and varied interactions, mental health is inseparable from overall health (Liang, MD et al., 2021). Mental disorders increase the risk of both communicable and non-communicable diseases and contribute to unintentional and intentional injuries.

Conversely, many health conditions elevate the risk of mental disorders, and the coexistence of multiple conditions complicates help-seeking, diagnosis, treatment, and prognosis. Equitable provision of health services for individuals with mental disorders remains a challenge, and the quality of care for mental and physical health conditions could be improved. It is necessary to develop and assess psychosocial interventions that can be integrated into the management of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. Strengthening healthcare systems to enhance mental health services should involve leveraging existing programs and activities, such as those addressing HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, gender-based violence, antenatal care, integrated childhood illness management, child nutrition, and innovative chronic disease management. Allocating a specific budget for mental health within these activities may be essential. Mental health significantly impacts progress towards achieving various Millennium Development Goals, including gender equality, reduction of child mortality, maternal health improvement, and combating HIV/AIDS (Liang, MD et al., 2021). Mental health awareness should be integrated into all aspects of health and social policy, healthcare system planning, and the delivery of primary and secondary general healthcare.

The study conducted by Lin, 2022; aimed to study the relationship between subjective well-being and physical exercise in undergraduate students. The results indicated that physical activity was positively associated with undergraduate students' well-being; this relation could be significantly mediated through sleep quality, sequential meditation, and psychological needs satisfaction. Along with revealing the mediating mechanism by underlining the relationship between subjective well-being shared with physical exercise by integrating physical and psychological factors, these findings also provided a basis for formulating prevention and intervention programs to promote college students' health and overall subjective well-being.

Mental health problems and physical inactivity have become significant public health issues worldwide, even though various studies have demonstrated the health benefits of regular physical exercise. Few epidemiological studies have investigated the same and highlighted its connection with suicidality (Garlow, 2008). As per the demonstrated association between poor mental health and physical inactivity, along with the cases of suicidal attempts and self-harm, there was a need to facilitate college students to become more physically active. It was a shared responsibility that resides both on a political level and in post-secondary institutions. The nature of this study was cross-sectional, which meant that one should be careful to draw a firm conclusion about the direction of causality

(Grasdalsmoen, 2020). The most substantial effect sizes were observed for the frequency of physical exercise and self-reported depression, compared to women exercising almost daily.

To improve depression, anxiety, and psychological well-being among college students the study suggested that digital mental health interventions can be effective. The study examined that college students are suffered from various mental health problems, like anxiety, depression, stress and also, and they frequently encounter barriers to seeking traditional mental health treatments. Treatment via the web and apps which was digital mental health interventions, offer the potential to improve mental health treatment. The study was conducted in a systematic review and comprised a total of 89 studies that met inclusion criteria. The study focused on digital mental health interventions such as depression, anxiety, and enhancement of psychological well-being sample of college students to identify the effectiveness, uptake, acceptability, usability, and adoption of such programs. The study showed that the most common intervention was internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy and the majority of interventions were delivered via a website. In producing beneficial changes in the main psychological outcome variable, the majority of programs were either effective or partially effective. In many of the studies, the quality assessments revealed a moderate-to-severe risk of bias. This type of program appears vital for the sustainable implementation of digital mental health interventions on college campuses. (Lattie, et al. 2019)

Mood and disruptive behavior disorders were related to cumulative health problem incidence and aggregate measures of health problems and severe health problems (Gregory, 2008). In addition, mood disorder diagnosis was associated with higher rates of infectious diseases, respiratory problems, and weight problems. Disruptive disorder diagnosis was related to higher rates of risk behavior-related health problems. The work extended the research on the relationship between mental and physical health problems to adolescents in the public sector, who were especially at high risk for behavioral and emotional issues. Potential mechanisms by which mental health problems might impact health problems were discussed. The study explored the factors related to insomnia from the perspective of lifestyle. It was hypothesized that a healthy lifestyle would be beneficial for overcoming insomnia among college students who were isolated at home. Most existing studies used a cross-sectional design, which limited their capacity to explore the temporal role of lifestyle in the prognosis of insomnia. Therefore, the study was designed to examine the relationship between lifestyle and insomnia from the perspective of the dynamic evolution of sleep problems. Insomnia exerts non-negligible adverse effects on an individual's daily life (Zhang, 2022). It was reported that insomnia impairs physical and mental functions,

reduces work productivity, and could also cause mental problems, such as anxiety and depression, and even suicide.

A total of 195 participants were recruited; however, only 148 participants completed the study for the analysis related to cardiovascular risk factors, including smoking status, BP, overweight or obesity, glucose and hemoglobin A1c, lipid panels, alcohol consumption, physical activity, and dietary habits were collected for analysis (TRAN, 2022). Information on alcohol consumption, physical activity, and nutritional habits were compiled based on self-report, and the remaining cardiovascular risk factors were measured. In China, the normalization stage and prevention and control of COVID-19 was composed of healthy lifestyle behavior and personal protection, which was reflected in various health protection activities that people take to enhance their physical fitness, maintain and promote physical and mental health, and avoid diseases (Bao, 2022). Examples of these activities were open windows for ventilation, healthy eating, exercise, washing hands frequently, and wearing goggles and masks when going out. Evidence suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic had a very negative impact in terms of mental health among the public. However, its implications for college students had not been well documented in the United States. The proportion of respondents showing depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts was alarming. Respondents reported academic, health, and lifestyle-related concerns caused by the pandemic (Wang, 2020). Given the unexpected length and severity of the outbreak, these concerns need to be further understood and addressed.

The paper by Verma, 2022, described the physical activity levels among the university students of north India. This study also emphasized students' perceptions regarding physically active lifestyle and their routine curricular activities. India's adult population's physical activity level pattern was way worse than the sample reported. The results also identified the inadequate representation of health-related topics in many of the higher education streams at the university. Recent research has shown the increased levels of stress and depression among the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. This review was explicitly focused on the mental health status of college students. The proportion of respondents showing depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts is alarming. The reported concerns by the respondents caused by the pandemic were related to academics, health, and lifestyle (Wang et al., 2020). As to the unexpected length and severity of the outbreak were given, these concerns need to be further understood and addressed.

Mental health issues among college students are increasing daily, and digital mental health interventions, for example, as delivered via the Web and apps, offer the potential to improve access to mental health treatment. The paper stated that issues like anxiety, depression, and other psychological well-being among college students could be effectively enhanced through digital mental health

interventions. However, further studies are needed to ensure the effective elements of these interventions (Lattie et al., 2019). The research focused on enhancing mental well-being among college students to identify the effectiveness, usability, acceptability, uptake, and adoption of these kinds of programs. The research showed that stress was pervasive among college students. This study was expected to contribute a lot in assessing the stress level and pointing out the most stressful academic and environmental factors students face in their college life. This study statistically revealed that the levels of environmental and educational stress had no significant relationship with characteristics like gender and CGPA. However, a significant association could be seen between the level of environmental stress and CGPA (Yikealo et al., 2018). Also, some of the standard coping techniques practiced by college students were proper utilization of time, involvement in leisure-related activities, and spending time with family and friends. Various other coping methods that proved to be beneficial were finding help, exercise, leisure, and a sense of security.

The study aimed to identify how optimistic bias among college students influenced the likelihood of COVID-19-related risky behavior not reported elsewhere (Shukla et al., 2021). In a developing country like India, where COVID-19 is at large, understanding the response of young college-going students to this situation would be a crucial tool for taking preventive measures. The article explored the main manifestations, influences, and deep-seated causes of peer pressure in college students (Liu, 2022). It puts forward suggestions for college students to improve their self-confidence, establish independent thinking, turn stress into motivation, improve themselves, and reasonably vent destructive emotions to cope with the pressure of their peers. The study appeared to depression during the peak of 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of COVID-19 in India. The presence of preferable interior colors, indoor plants, and artworks with a window that provides quality views of greenery and sky reduces the risk of anxiety and depression.

The review revealed a strong association between poor or non-availability of built environment aspects, often termed 'biophilic,' and the severity of anxiety levels and depressive symptoms among the student population, with particular oversight to the built environments which had no indoor plants and possess poor-quality window view with lack of greenery and sky visibility (Asim et al., 2021). Additionally, adverse effects on isolation-related productivity increased the risk of depressive symptoms. The study assessed the eating behavior and level of self-esteem, their relationship with body image perception, and also identified factors associated with them among undergraduate female college students (Kapoor et al., 2022). It revealed higher levels of body shape associated with a higher degree of body image dissatisfaction and a higher proportion of high-risk eating behavior and low self-esteem among female students. The study proposed practical and insightful implications of Instagram usage in a

culturally diverse India (Sharma et al., 2022). It explored persuasive issues such as social comparison, colorism, and mental health and their relationship with Instagram use, focusing on young adults living in India. This study also drew good information regarding mental health issues, which were often pushed into the backburner in India. This review assessed the impact of a peer-led intervention in promoting mental health along with workshops based on mental health awareness and establishing help-seeking and supportive behavior among university students in Hong Kong.

The intervention led by peers could provide a positive impact by increasing knowledge of coping strategies for self-help and helping others and mental health awareness among university students (Ahorsu et al., 2021). The most concerned factors were academic performance, pressure to succeed, and post-graduation plans to decrease the possible correlates of depression, stress, and anxiety of college-going students. Anxiety, depression, and stress affected their academic performance (Beiter et al., 2015). Demographically, the depressed, stressed students were transfer, upperclassmen, and those living off campus. Generally, it showed that collage going students were a higher prevalence of mental health issues other than the general population. This study aimed to analyze the effect caused by the pandemic on the mental health of medical and engineering students (Jain et al., 2021). The result of the study showed that two-thirds of medical and engineering students were affected by the pandemic (Aarons, 2008). And it was found that the most worrying factor was the timing of the exams or academic delay.

The smartphone-related compulsive behavior, functional impairment, and tolerance rate were substantial. Addiction to smartphones affects physical health and mental health also (Matar et al., 2017). The use of smartphones decreased sleep quality by 38.1%. At younger ages, use smartphones, especially excessive use during the weekday, and depression or anxiety. The cause of academic stress was that students' quality of life deteriorated. This study showed that sports and psychology programs had a lower stress risk than medicine (Neveu et al. 2015). To prevent the potentially harmful consequences of stress through developing efficient coping strategies in students and improving the academic environment. Mental health literacy is vital at the college level (Miles et al., 2020). This study identified high and low performers for whom increasing knowledge and awareness of mental health is essential to overall psychological well-being.

The study aimed to assess how university students would improve their resilience to stress through mindfulness courses (Galante et al., 2018). The provision of mindfulness training could be an essential component of students' mental health strategy. No one had adverse reactions to suicide, self-harm, or harm to others. The trauma-exposed students reported their mental health condition is poor. Among this population, service utilization was high. But the campus-

based mental health services remained underutilized (Artime et al., 2019). Compared to any other group, the interpersonal violence survivors reported the most negative impact caused on mental health and intervention with academic performance. The research showed the concerning rate of depression anxiety among university students. Decrease symptoms of stress associated with cognitive, behavioral, and mindfulness interventions (Regehr et al., 2013). And secondary outcome included lower levels of depression and cortisol. The work-life balance leads to college students' anxiety and symptoms of depression. Work-life balance affects students' mental health and is related to anxiety, stress, and depressive symptoms (Justin et al., 2021). Assisting students with work-life balance in educational institutions should be more critical to improving their college experience.

The rise in the field of behavioral finance has led to the emergence of new research in this area. Behavioral finance has introduced fresh assumptions that sharply contrast with traditional finance. Both macro and micro-behavioral finance explore the inefficiencies of financial markets and the limited rationality of investors. This particular study has highlighted several common behavioral biases and the factors that influence the investment behavior of individual investors. The research paper identified eight behavioral biases, namely herding, home bias, anchoring, representative bias, overconfidence, gambler's fallacy, hindsight bias, and confirmation bias. A sample of 400 respondents, consisting of College and University teachers, was selected from two cities in Punjab, namely Jalandhar and Amritsar (Sahni, 2023). Factor Analysis was employed to examine the factors that impact the investment behavior of the respondents when making investment decisions.

The study was a cross-sectional study comprising a sample size of 14,804 undergraduate students. The study was conducted among the 4 years college student in the United States to examine cross-sectional associations between vigorous physical activity, mental health, perceived stress, and socializing. The student was less likely to report poor mental health than those who met vigorous physical activity recommendations. In addition, the relationship between vigorous physical activity, mental health, and perceived stress, the socializing partially mediated. Interventions aiming to improve the mental well-being of college students should also consider promoting physical activity (VanKim, 2013). At least some of the positive benefits of physical activity may arise from social interactions. The study measures self-report physical activity, mental health, perceived stress, and socializing. In the study, school was estimated to examine the association between vigorous physical activity, mental health, perceived stress, and socializing through logistic regression models. Insecure attachment, a personality factor that transcends diagnostic boundaries, may pose a risk for mental health problems. Loneliness is thought to be one of the mechanisms underlying this relationship. Loneliness, a

prevalent experience during young adulthood, also pertains to social relationships and is associated with adverse mental health outcomes. The insecure attachment styles are linked to an increased likelihood of mental health issues, specifically depressive symptoms and problematic alcohol use, and whether loneliness serves as a mediating factor (Nottage et al., 2022). The participants were students between the ages of 17 and 43 attending a Dutch university who completed an online survey that assessed attachment, loneliness, social connectedness, depression, and alcohol use. The results indicated that individuals with mixed attachment styles, characterized by high scores on both anxious and avoidant dimensions, exhibited a positive association between attachment style and depressive symptoms mediated by loneliness. In an exploratory analysis using moderated mediation, social connectedness was found to moderate the relationship between attachment and depression, such that loneliness mediated the attachment-depression link among socially connected young adults with anxious attachment tendencies (Nottage et al., 2022). Similar patterns were observed for alcohol use; however, the direction differed, with lonelier students consuming less alcohol. The implications of these findings are discussed in terms of future research and the potential of interventions that target loneliness from an attachment perspective.

There is still much to learn and understand about mental health issues specifically related to students. While there has been progress in recognizing the prevalence and impact of mental health problems among students, there are gaps in knowledge regarding specific risk factors, protective factors, effective interventions, and the long-term consequences of untreated or unsupported mental health issues (Sahni, 2023). There is a growing concern about the mental health of students. Rates of anxiety, depression, stress, and other mental health disorders have been increasing among student populations. It is crucial to research to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying causes, contributing factors, and effective strategies to promote mental well-being among students. Students face a unique set of challenges and stressors, such as academic pressures, social transitions, financial concerns, and the impact of technology and social media. Research specific to student mental health can help identify these challenges and tailor interventions and support systems to meet their unique needs.

### 3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The paper aimed to analyze the insights into college life considering factors such as lifestyle, physical fitness, academics, career goals, and peer pressure. The study also sought to determine these factors' impact on student's mental health.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

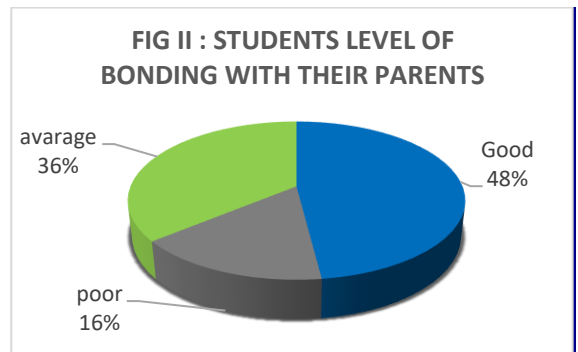
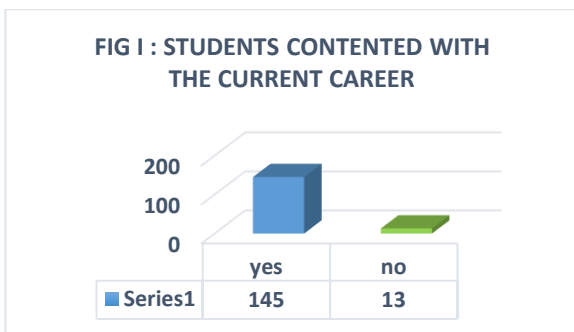
The study duration was from October 2022 to March 2023. The data collection was done through a primary survey - online mode. The target population was undergraduate students of Bachelor of Business Administration in Hospital Management, NSHM Knowledge Campus, Durgapur, West Bengal, India. The statistical analysis was done on MS Excel.

#### 5. FINDINGS

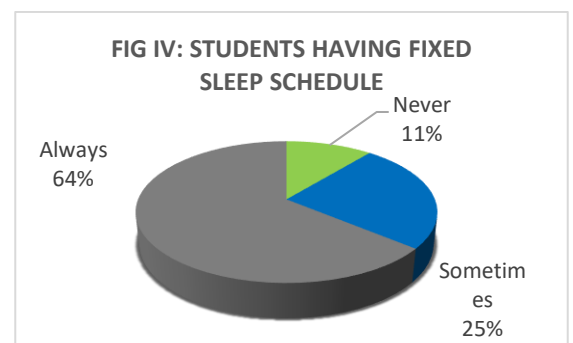
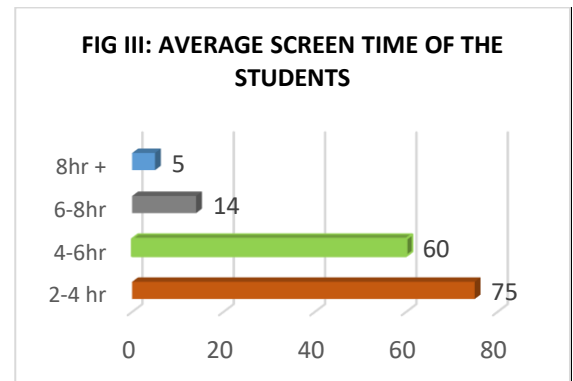
The findings stated that 75% of the students were from 18 to 19 years old, 22% from 20- 21, and 3% from 22-23. Ninety-three students were female, and 64 were male (Table 1).

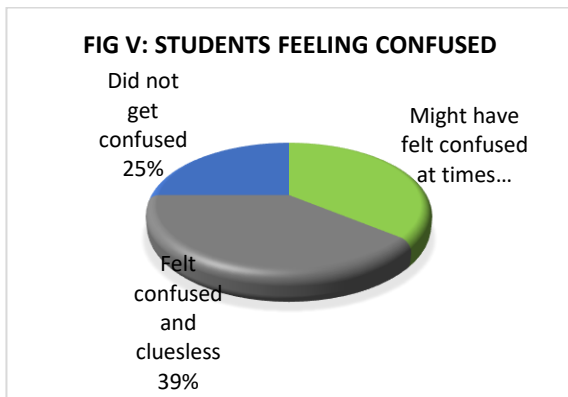
	Age groups	Number of students	Percentage
Age	18-20 yrs	118	75%
	20-21 yrs	34	22%
	21-22 yrs	6	3%
Gender	Female	94	59.5%
	Male	64	40.5%

Most students voted as they were satisfied with their current field of study (Fig 1). The data implied that 16% of students failed to communicate appropriately with their parents. Although 48% said they could communicate well, 36% had average bonding (Fig II).

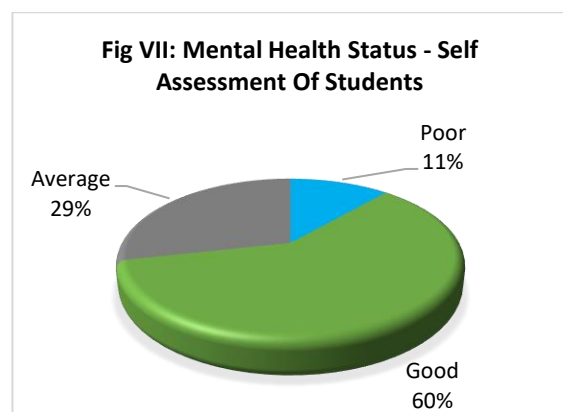
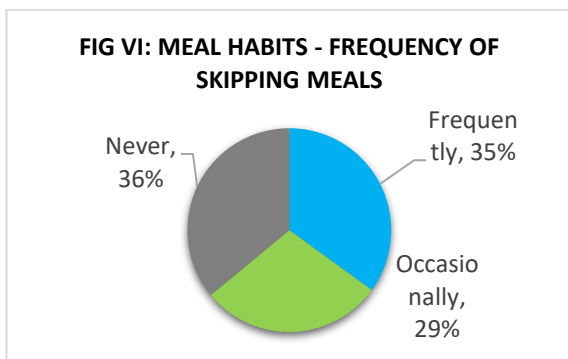


Significantly five students were highly addicted to their screen, their screen timing was above 8 hours, 14 students used 6-8 hours, 60 students were on their phones for 4-6 hours, and 74 students had spent time 2-4 hours (Fig III). 11% of young students did not have any particular time for sleep, 25% were sometimes able to maintain a sleep time, and the majority of them had a proper sleep schedule (Fig IV), 39% of students confirmed that they felt clueless or hopeless sometimes. 36% of students did not even know if they ever felt depressed. They were confused about their emotions, and 25% of students said they never felt clueless or hopeless (Fig V).





35% of students often skipped meals, some also regularly, 29% of students occasionally skipped meals, and 36% never did this (Fig VI). A handful of students rated their mental health as poor, while 29% had an average mental health status. 60% commented on having good mental health (Fig VII). The stress relieved for the students was watching social media content, reading books, riding, traveling, cooking, and spending time with near and dear ones.



## 6. DISCUSSION

Along with the high performers, the findings also conveyed equal importance to the low performers, who required increased knowledge and awareness regarding mental health for their overall psychological wellness. Educational interventions could be designed through the implications of these results to improve mental health

literacy at the college level. Some considerable factors that could be associated with psychological distress in students of college included gender, age, sleep quality, living condition, and arrangements, self-esteem, along with the pattern of behavior linked to drinking, smoking, taking drugs, and the usage of internet (Miles, Rabin, & Kloskowski, 2020). Through the outcome gained from this study, various strategies could be designed and implemented to identify mental health disorders in the initial stages of it. Also, various other programs could be organized for mental health promotion and well-being in the population of college students. Several complications emerged, neither influenced nor controlled by other people or events due to smartphone addiction (Matar Boumosleh J, Jaalouk D, 2017). The research pointed out that students spend lots of time on their phones for entertainment but not for knowledge gain. The academic and environmental factors contributed to more stress among college students (Yikealo, Yemane, & Karvinen, 2018).

The attendance and assignments pressure was too high on them. Unhealthy eating was significantly associated with the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress. Excessive intake of sweets, processed foods, and low-dairy products was associated with a higher prevalence of psychological and sleep disturbances (Arbués et al., 2019). The students did not have proper meals, and many often skipped them. One-third of both genders identified peer pressure as one of the hardest things they faced as a teenager. In general, peer pressure appeared stronger for females than males, and the genders disagreed about the areas where pressure was most substantial. The pressure sometimes leads to addiction to drugs and alcohol and portrays suicidal tendencies because of rising peer pressure.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Mental health is a topic of concern when we talk about students. Even though this has been enlightening a bit nowadays, many students still don't feel free to speak with their parents, teachers, or friends because of the fear of judgment and other reasons. Recognizing the impact of academic pressure, peer pressure, career stress, physical health, and improper lifestyle on college student's mental health and taking necessary steps to deal with it is significant. With this, colleges and universities can create a culture of well-being and ensure that students have the required support and resources to address the problem to create a healthier and more supportive learning environment for students.

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