

MENTAL HEALTH STATUS OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN RELATION TO THEIR SOCIAL CLASS BELONGINGNESS - A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Globally Mental Health among undergraduate student's issues is becoming increasingly concerning. In India, this issue is compounded by students from schedule tribe, schedule castes, OBC, and minority communities suffer socioeconomic and cultural obstacle. This research paper aims to study the Status of Mental Health of undergraduate students from these groups, exploring the widespread occurrence of mental health issues, contributing factors, and potential interventions. Factors such as financial constraints, social discrimination, and cultural isolation exacerbate these challenges, leading to higher rates of anxiety, depression, and stress among these students compared to their peers from more privileged backgrounds (Singh & Singh, 2020; Kumar & Tiwari, 2019). Moreover, the academic pressure in higher education institutions often acts as a significant stressor, further impacting the mental well-being of these students (Sharma & Jha, 2021).

Our findings reveal significant disparities in mental health status among these groups, emphasizing the necessity for focused interventions and assistance systems to promote mental well-being and academic success. Effective interventions could include culturally sensitive counselling services, peer support programs, and financial aid initiatives to alleviate some of the socio-economic burdens (WHO, 2019). These targeted support systems are crucial to create an inclusive educational environment where all students can excel academically and personally."

Keywords: Mental Health, Undergraduate students, Social Class, Academic performance

Introduction

Mental health is an integral component of overall well-being, especially among students in higher education who are navigating academic pressures, social adjustments, and personal development. This study focuses on students from SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes, aiming to identify their specific mental health needs and propose actionable solutions to address them. In India, the higher education landscape is marked by diversity, with students from various socio-economic backgrounds, including SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes. These groups often face additional challenges such as discrimination, financial constraints, and cultural isolation, which can exacerbate mental health problems. Understanding the mental health status of these students is crucial for developing targeted support systems and policies. The Mental health of undergraduate

students is a significant concern, as this group faces unique stressors and challenges that can affect their well-being. In recent years, the mental health of undergraduate students has received significant attention due to the rising prevalence of mental health issues within this population. The transition to university life, academic stress, social changes, and other stressors lead to a complex mental health framework for undergraduate students. This review explores the current literature on the mental health status of undergraduate students, including the prevalence of mental health issues, contributing factors, impacts on academic performance, and interventions.

Key Stressors affecting Undergraduate Students' Mental Health

1. **Academic Stress:** The demands of coursework, exams, and the stress to achieve high grades can lead to significant stress and anxiety. Students often feel the need to perform well to secure future career opportunities.
2. **Financial Stress:** Many students face financial burdens, such as tuition fees, accommodation costs, and living expenses. Balancing part-time jobs with academic commitments can exacerbate stress levels.
3. **Social and Personal Adjustments:** Transitioning to university life involves adapting to a new environment, forming new social networks, and sometimes dealing with homesickness. These adjustments can be challenging and contribute to feelings of loneliness and isolation.
4. **Identity and Developmental Issues:** University years are a crucial period for personal and identity development. Students often grapple with questions about their future, career paths, and personal beliefs, which can lead to stress and anxiety.

Need and Significance of the Study

The need and significance of studying the mental health status of undergraduate students from minority groups, schedule tribe, schedule castes and OBC classes are crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. These groups often face unique socio-economic challenges, systemic discrimination, and cultural stigmatization, which can adversely affect their mental health. Understanding their mental health status helps in identifying specific stressors and mental health issues they encounter, enabling the formulation of targeted interventions and support systems. Moreover, promoting mental well-being in these communities contributes to their academic success, personal development, and overall quality of life, thereby advancing social equity and justice. By addressing mental health disparities, educational institutions can create a more equitable and nurturing environment that supports the holistic development of all students, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the Undergraduate Students participated in this research of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority Classes.
2. To study the Mental Health Status of Undergraduate Students of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority Classes.
3. To analyse the differences of mental health status among undergraduate students belongs to different social classes OBC, SC, ST, and Minority Classes.

Hypothesis of the Study

H1-1: There is no significant difference among undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC and Minority Classes on mental health.

Literature Review

Researches indicate that mental health issues are common among undergraduate students worldwide. Here are some reviews that make the study more credible-

Kumar and Choudhury, (2020) found that the prevalence of mental disorders among individuals aged 18-29 was 7.39%. Specifically, students from SC, ST, OBC, and Minority backgrounds exhibit higher rates of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds.

Kumar et al., (2019) Understanding the mental health needs of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority students in Indian higher education he found in his study that Social class, including caste and minority status, significantly affects an individual's life experiences and access to resources, which in turn influence mental health outcomes.

Diehl et al., (2018) investigated in his study that due to change in social interactions the mental health status of students get effected which is often due to the transformation to college. Loneliness and social isolation are prevalent among students, particularly those who are living away from home for the first time.

Bhatia, (2018) studied the discrimination based on caste and religion remains pervasive in Indian society, and educational institutions are not exempt. Experiences of bias and exclusion can lead to feelings of inferiority, loneliness, and distress.

Deb et al., (2016) found that the competitive higher education's nature paired with academic achievement, shows immense pressure on students', further aggravating mental health issues. This address the mental health to ensure students' academic success and overall well-being.

Eisenberg et al. (2013) found that college students most commonly deals with problem related to mental health such as under depressed condition, high anxiety, and state of high stress. These issues contribute to social isolation, academic pressure and stress regarding finance and transformation to adulthood. However, students from marginalized communities face additional challenges that exacerbate these issues.

Research Design

Descriptive statistics employed in this study to gather comprehensive data on mental state of undergraduate students from SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes. Participants were recruited through different colleges, universities and social media platforms. The survey was administered online or offline to ensure wide reach and convenience for participants. Data were anonymized to maintain confidentiality. The sample consists of 400 undergraduate students from various universities, selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation from each of the target groups. Purposive sampling used to collect the data. The survey used for data collection included self-made rating scale on mental health status rating scale (MHSRS) tools and a demographic questionnaire to gather information on social class belongingness.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The sample consisted of different numbers of students from each social class. Here minority is delimited into Muslim and Sikh. The quantitative data were calculated and analysed by ANOVA and post-hoc tests were conducted to compare the mental health status across different social classes.

Objective-1: To study the undergraduate students participated in this research of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority Classes.

Table-1

Social Class	Number	Percentage
OBC	138	34.5 %
SC	92	23 %
ST	61	15.25 %
Minority (M)	101	25.25 %
Minority (S)	08	2.25 %

Table-1, showing social class undergraduate student

The table present a breakdown of undergraduate students based on their social class. The largest group, constituting 34.5% of the total belongs to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) social class, with 138 undergraduate students. Following this, Scheduled Castes (SC) social class accounts for

23% with 92 undergraduate students, while Scheduled Tribe (ST) is below than the OBC, SC, and Muslim Minority. ST social class represent 15.25% with 61 undergraduate students. Additionally, 25.25% of the undergraduate students from Muslim Minority social class consists 101, another Subcategory of Sikh Minority consists 8 undergraduate students, making up 2.25% of the total. Sikh Minority social class mental health of undergraduate students is lowest than the all social classes (OBC, SC, ST, Muslim Minority). So, it is shows that the variations in the mental health status of undergraduate students in different social classes. The table provides a detailed distribution of the undergraduate students across different social classification.

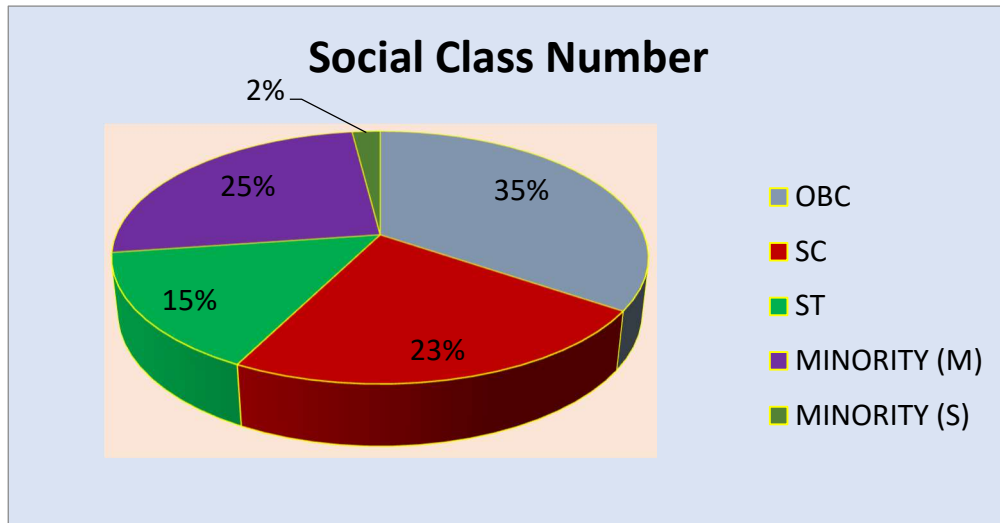


Figure 1 showing graphically social class undergraduate students

Objective-2: To study the mental health status of undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority Classes.

H0-1: There is no significant difference in the Mental Health Status among undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC, and MINORITY classes.

Table-2

Mental Health Status	Sum of Square	df	Mean	F	Significance
Between groups	2655.196	4	663.799	25.292	Significant at 0.05 level
Within groups	10367.101	395	26.246		
Total	13022.298	399			

Table 2: Showing f - ratio of mental health status among undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority (Muslim and Sikh) classes

The above table shows the p value (.000) less than 0.05 (alpha level), which means the result is statistically significant. Since the p-value is so low, we reject the null hypothesis (H0). This shows

variation in Mental Health Status among undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes. The high F-statistic (25.292) further supports the conclusion that the variance between the group means is greater than the variance within the groups. There is variation in mental health Status among undergraduate students of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes. This suggests that the mental health status varies significantly between these groups.

Objective- 3: To analyse the differences of mental health status of undergraduate students belongs to different social classes OBC, SC, ST, and Minority Classes.

Table-3

Social Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Significant Level at 0.05
OBC	138	88.20	5.109	7.532	Significant
SC	92	93.45	4.109		
OBC	138	88.20	5.109	6.908	Significant
ST	61	94.51	6.300		
OBC	138	88.20	5.109	1.800	Not Significant
MM	101	89.42	4.208		
OBC	138	88.20	5.109	2.378	Significant
MS	08	93.13	3.796		
SC	92	93.45	4.109	1.263	Not Significant
ST	61	94.51	6.300		
SC	92	93.45	4.109	6.720	Significant
MM	101	89.42	4.208		
SC	92	93.45	4.109	.213	Not Significant
MS	08	93.13	3.796		
ST	61	94.51	6.300	6.165	Significant
MM	101	89.42	4.208		
ST	61	94.51	6.300	.604	Not Significant
MS	08	93.13	3.796		
MM	101	89.42	4.208	2.415	Significant
MS	08	93.13	3.796		

Table 3: Showing t-ratio in mental health status of undergraduate students in different social classes.

Interpretation

After the post hoc test researcher found that (i) Calculated t-value is 7.532 which is higher than the table value (1.98) so, there is remarkable variation between OBC and SC. (ii) Obtained value is 6.908 which is also higher than the critical value (1.98), the remarkable variation between OBC and SC. (iii) Calculated value is 1.800 which is lower than the critical value so, there is insignificant differences between OBC and Muslim Minority. (iv) Obtained value is 2.378 which are higher than the critical value (1.97) so there is significant variation between OBC and Sikh Minority. (v) Calculated value t is 10263 which is lower than the table value so there is insignificant difference between SC and ST. (vi) Obtained value is 6.720 which is higher than the critical value (1.98) so there is significant variations between SC and Muslim Minority, (vii) Calculated value t is .213 is lower than the critical value (1.98) so there is insignificant difference between SC and Sikh Minority. (viii) Obtained value is 6.165 which are higher than critical value (1.97) so there is significant variation between ST and Muslim Minority, (ix) Obtained t value is .604 which is lower than the critical value (1.99) so there is insignificant difference between ST and Sikh Minority. (x) Obtained value is 2.415 which is higher than critical value (1.98) so there is significant variation between Muslim Minority and Sikh Minority.

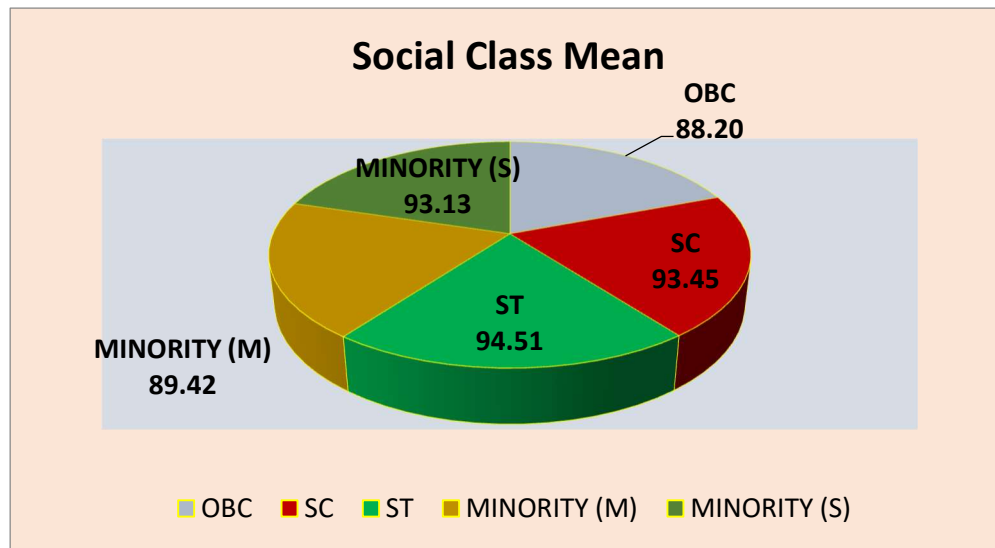


Figure2: Showing graphically Mean value of mental health status of undergraduate students in different social class.

Findings

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need to address mental health issues among undergraduate students from SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes. The high frequency of problem of mental health in these groups is alarming and calls for targeted interventions. On the other hand they suggest that social class belongingness is a critical determinant of mental health among undergraduate students. SC and ST students experience more severe mental health challenges, likely due to historical marginalization and socio-economic disadvantages. OBC students reported

comparatively better mental health, which may be attributed to relatively better socio-economic conditions. Minority students, while better off than SC and ST students, still face significant mental health issues, particularly anxiety, possibly due to cultural and societal pressures.

These disparities underscore the importance of developing targeted mental health interventions and support systems that address the unique challenges faced by these groups. Universities should consider implementing comprehensive mental health programs that are inclusive and sensitive to the needs of marginalized students.

Conclusion

The Status of Mental Health of undergraduate students from SC, ST, OBC, and Minority classes is a critical issue that requires immediate attention. By understanding the distinctive provocations faced by these students and carry through the targeted interventions, universities can foster more inclusive and supportive atmosphere that encourages mental well-being and educational achievement. Further study should proceed with intersection of socioeconomic, cultural and academic factors in shaping the mental health outcomes of these vulnerable groups. This study highlights significant differences in the state of the mental health of undergraduate students based on their social class belongingness. SC and ST students are particularly vulnerable to poor mental health outcomes, necessitating urgent attention and intervention. Upcoming Research should explore the underlying factors contributing to these disparities and evaluate the effectiveness of targeted mental health programs.

Educational Implications

- i. **Inclusive Mental Health Services:** Universities should develop inclusive mental health services that are sensitive to the cultural and socio-economic contexts of SC, ST, OBC, and Minority students. This includes hiring counsellors from diverse backgrounds and providing training on cultural competence.
- ii. **Financial Support:** Providing financial assistance, scholarships, and part-time job opportunities can alleviate the economic burdens that contribute to mental health issues.
- iii. **Anti-Discrimination Policies:** Implementing and enforcing strict anti-discrimination policies can help create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.
- iv. **Peer Support Programs:** Establishing peer support programs can help students from similar backgrounds connect, share experiences, and provide mutual support.

Suggestions

- Design mental health counselling and support services that consider the specific social and cultural backgrounds of students, ensuring that consider the specific social and cultural backgrounds of students, ensuring that students from OBC, SC, ST, and Minority communities feel understood and supported.

- Launch awareness campaigns focusing on destigmatizing mental health issues within different social groups, encouraging open discussions, and normalizing seeking help.
- Introduce mental health education into the curriculum that focuses on resilience, stress management and coping skills, with sensitivity to the diverse socio-economic background of students.
- Create mentorship programs where students from lower socio-economic backgrounds can be paired with faculty or senior students to guide them through academic pressures, reducing isolation and mental strain.
- Ensure that mental health resources are easily accessible and well-publicized, especially for students from marginalized communities who may face barriers in seeking help.

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