

Impact of Hostel Life on the Psychological Well-Being and Loneliness of Nursing Students

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of hostel living on the psychological well-being and feelings of loneliness among nursing students. A sample of 150 students residing in hostels, aged between 18 and 25, completed the UCLA Loneliness Scale and reported experiencing social isolation. The findings indicated that participants, particularly first-year students, experienced a higher level of loneliness and psychological distress compared to their senior counterparts. The findings indicate a strong positive correlation between loneliness and psychological distress, suggesting that as feelings of loneliness increase, so too does emotional suffering. Students residing in hostels for over a year indicated lower levels of loneliness, implying that social adaptation improves over time. The findings highlight the emotional challenges faced by nursing students, particularly during the initial phase of dormitory living. The study emphasizes the significance of enhancing treatments such as mental health counseling, peer mentorship, and better hostel facilities to assist nursing students in reducing feelings of loneliness and fostering psychological well-being.

Introduction

Over the last decades, the psychological well-being of university students has attracted more and more attention, especially in view of the rising pressures experienced by students following difficult academic and career paths. Among them, nursing students are a special and sometimes underappreciated group that suffers a lot of psychological suffering from the demanding nature of their education which combines demanding clinical obligations with a lot of academic courses. Not only because of the demanding course of their program, but also because of the emotional labor required in patient care throughout clinical training, this demographic is especially sensitive to stress, anxiety, and depression (Reeve et al., 2013). Pursuing further education means moving from home to institutional dormitories, where many nursing students especially in South Asia and other poor countries spend years away from their family support systems.

Though it presents chances for peer connection, freedom, and personal development, hostel life may also be rather demanding psychologically. These include adjusting to a new surroundings, negotiating personal disputes, keeping academic performance without direct family support, and getting used to the daily dorm norms and schedule (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). Loneliness is

among the most alarming psychological effects connected to dormitory living. According to Perlman & Peplau, 1981, loneliness is the upsetting sensation brought on by a disparity between desired and real social interactions. This subjective emotional state has been shown to adversely affect several facets of both mental and physical health. Particularly in young people who are still developing coping strategies, the transitory character of living in a hostel and bidding farewell to a familiar social network might cause or aggravate loneliness. One cannot emphasize the need of researching loneliness in the framework of nursing students. Loneliness has been related to several detrimental health effects, including elevated degrees of anxiety, sadness, suicidal thoughts, and poor sleep quality (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). Moreover, it can affect clinical performance and academic accomplishment, both of which are very vital for professional success and nursing competency. High degrees of loneliness among nursing students might affect their ability to concentrate, motivate themselves, and interact with others all important abilities needed in both theoretical and practical environments (Shaban et al., 2012). Loneliness thus not only influences their well-being but could also impact the quality of treatment they can offer in professional settings.

Conversely, psychological well-being covers greater ground than the absence of psychological diseases. It covers good elements of mental health like life happiness, self-acceptance, personal development, autonomy, and goal in life (Ryff, 1989). High degrees of psychological well-being enable people to manage stress, operate in society, and grow close relationships. Maintaining psychological well-being is not only important for personal resilience but also for nursing students negotiating the challenging terrain of healthcare education and professional practice. Studies indicate, however, that students living in hostels can show poorer degrees of well-being than their classmates who live with family (Patel et al., 2018). Their emotional separation, environmental stresses like congestion and lack of privacy, and the emotional impact of regular peer comparisons and academic competitiveness help to explain this in some measure. Many underdeveloped nations have nursing students who move to hostels for study going through cultural conflict as well. They could go from rural to metropolitan areas or between locations with different cultural norms and languages. This adds even another level of stress, especially for female students who can encounter extra social and family demands, limitations, or safety worries (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2021). The combined influence of these factors academic pressure, clinical experience, hostel-related difficulties, and cultural changes may seriously affect psychological well-being and aggravate loneliness. While some students struggle greatly, others find great adaptation to hostel life and even flourish in a shared space. The differences in individual reactions suggest the need of looking at both protective and risk variables. Reducing the psychological load has been demonstrated by protective elements like peer support, planned social events, good communication with hostel wardens, and counseling service access (Brown & Wilson, 2017). On the other hand, risk factors include homesickness, lack of autonomy, interpersonal conflicts, and poor facilities could aggravate psychological discomfort. Designing successful interventions and support systems depends on an awareness of these elements inside the particular framework of nursing education. Though this subject is relevant and urgent, there is a relative dearth of focused study in the South Asian setting, especially in Pakistan, where the academic, social, and cultural surroundings vary greatly from Western ones. Most of the research that are accessible either generalize results from the larger student population or concentrate on mental health concerns without especially looking at the influence of hostel life. This discrepancy emphasizes the need of study investigating the particular elements causing loneliness and psychological discomfort among hostel-residing nursing students as well as their frequency. This research fits right in this important knowledge vacuum. It seeks to investigate how loneliness and psychological well-being of nursing students are impacted by their dormitory life.

This study aims to give a whole picture of the psychological influence of the hostel environment by analyzing students' subjective experiences together with objective metrics of mental health. The study will also point to important pressures, coping strategies, and possible institutional actions meant to improve the welfare of hostel residents including nursing students. In the end, the results should guide legislators, teachers, and medical professionals on the necessity of creating encouraging living surroundings that advance not only emotional resilience and mental health but also academic performance.

Literature Review

Particularly in relation to university students undergoing life changes, loneliness and psychological well-being have become major subjects of interest in scholarly and clinical study. Loneliness is a subjective emotional experience defined by a difference between wanted and real social contacts, not only a state of physical solitude (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). This seeming discrepancy causes emotional pain and lessens a person's ability for connectivity, fulfillment, and usefulness. Ryff and Keyes (1995) define psychological well-being as including good psychological functioning including autonomy, self-acceptance, personal development, purpose in life, environmental mastery, and quality relationships, therefore beyond the absence of psychopathology. Given the emotional, intellectual, and clinical stresses inherent in nursing school, the correlation between loneliness and psychological well-being is especially important among nursing students.

The demanding nature of their academic curricula sometimes causes special stress for nursing students. Rising stress levels are caused in part by high academic expectations, rigorous clinical training, and the emotional toll of seeing suffering patients (Gibbons, Dempster, & Moutray, 2008). Particularly during clinical rotations when they have to control emotional reactions in challenging hospital situations, these students can suffer with anxiety, sadness, and burnout (Jimenez, Navia-Osorio, & Diaz, 2010). Early in professional growth, exposure to patient suffering, mortality, and ethically difficult events can cause psychological tiredness. Moreover, the competitive academic environment in nursing programs sometimes aggravates isolation. Students feel under pressure to perform academically while also managing lengthy hours of clinical responsibilities, therefore leaving little time for personal or social life (Shaban, Khater, & Akhu-Zaheya, 2012).

Usually, the change from home to university entails travel and living in dorms or hostels. Many nursing students, especially in South Asia, find staying in hostels necessary given the distance from their homes. Although dormitories are meant to support academic involvement and social integration, they may create problems compromising student welfare. Students living in hostels must balance handling academic expectations with adjusting to a new social scene. Feelings of alienation and emotional estrangement are caused in part by homesickness, interpersonal conflict, limited autonomy, bad living circumstances, and inadequate privacy (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). Particularly among students unprepared for such changes, the sudden break from family support networks and the necessity to negotiate independent life may cause psychological discomfort.

Research on student mental health has repeatedly found that the sensation of loneliness in dormitory environments is very common. Studies show that nursing students living in hostels feel lonelier than their counterparts living at home or in familiar social settings (Patel, Kaur, & Sharma, 2018). These adolescents generally express emotional isolation and a lack of significant personal relationships even while they surround others. When students cannot locate someone with whom they share emotional closeness, the communal aspect of hostel life might ironically lead to social disengagement. Efforts to participate in introspective or restoring activities are

hampered by overcrowding, loudness, and inadequate personal or recreational space, therefore aggravating stress.

Through limits on autonomy and personal action, hostel settings also affect students' psychological well-being. Curfews, strict timetables, and restricted personal resource access can all help to undermine a person's sense of control and environmental mastery. Particularly in gender-segregated dorms with rigorous monitoring, students can say they feel infantilized or micromanaged (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2021). Loss of independence and decision-making authority can cause impotence, therefore compromising psychological resilience. Moreover, badly maintained facilities and inadequate infrastructure might support a feeling of neglect, therefore reducing pupils' sense of their own value and causing bad emotional reactions. Furthermore, affecting the experiences of loneliness and psychological well-being among nursing students are cultural elements. Strong family ties and community living are seen as fundamental to personal identity in collectivist societies like those of South Asia. Separated from their relatives, pupils may get quite emotionally disoriented. Particularly female students might suffer more from society demands on safety, modesty, and social etiquette. These expectations may show up in hostel policies that restrict women's freedom of movement and social contact more than those of males, therefore reducing their autonomy (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2021). Female students may so feel even more alone and limited, which increases their psychological stress risk. Further aggravating the situation are cultural standards that stigmatize emotional sensitivity or mental health problems, therefore deterring students from consulting psychologists (Singh & Junnarkar, 2015).

Several important elements affect psychological well-being of nursing students living in a hostel: perceived social support, coping mechanisms, and personal resilience. Students who keep tight relationships with family and friends via internet communication usually show better emotional control and reduced degrees of loneliness. A buffer against stress and a preventive element in preserving psychological health, social support helps (Wang et al., 2014). Furthermore, very important for developing a feeling of community and belonging are peer support mechanisms inside hostels. By offering social and academic direction, Brown and Wilson (2017) discovered that organized peer mentorship programs greatly enhanced nursing students' academic involvement and emotional well-being.

Not all coping mechanisms, nevertheless, that kids use are flexible. Some students retreat from social events, spend too much time on screens, or participate in bad habits such erratic sleep patterns or emotional eating (Kumar & Bhattacharya, 2020). Though they can offer brief relief, these maladaptive techniques eventually worsen loneliness and lower academic achievement. On the other hand, participation in leisure activities, spiritual or mindfulness practices, and student groups has linked to better psychological results.

Beyond only emotional distress, loneliness and poor psychological well-being affect academic and clinical performance as well. Many times reporting cognitive problems like difficulties focusing, poor memory, and limited problem-solving abilities, nursing students suffering psychological discomfort also remark Both theoretical teaching and practical training might suffer from these cognitive disturbances affecting performance and learning. Clinical settings need for nurses to show compassion, focus, and ability to make decisions. Students who suffer with emotional dysregulation might find it difficult to live up to these standards, which would endanger patient care and safety. Emotional suffering among nursing students is linked, according to Reeve et al. (2013), to absenteeism, worse academic performance, and diminished clinical scenario competency.

Understanding these difficulties, several educational institutions have started programs to improve mental health and decrease student loneliness. Among the most often used approaches are university counseling services, stress management seminars, and mental health awareness

campaigns. Structured social events held in hostels include group talks, cultural events, and mentoring programs have been shown to be successful in raising student involvement and lowering isolation (Green et al., 2022). Moreover, changes in hostel infrastructure including better privacy, access to leisure activities, and student comments systems may help to create a more pleasant living space

In areas where mental health is still a stigmatized issue, especially valuable are culturally tailored approaches. Strategies advised by researchers are offering psychological treatments in native languages, including family engagement in counseling sessions, and teaching hostel wardens to identify indicators of mental suffering (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2021). These strategies fit the more general framework suggested by the World Health Organisation (2014), which supports inclusive and comprehensive models of student well-being including social, physical, and emotional aspects.

There are still significant gaps even with the expanding corpus of research on student mental health. First of all, most of the current studies concentrate on general student populations; very few studies especially address nursing students or those living in hostels. Second, there is a dearth of longitudinal evidence tracking how loneliness and psychological well-being change during a nursing program. Third, less typically discussed are intersectional elements like socioeconomic level, ethnicity, language limitations, and internet access. These elements might have a big impact on students' psychological experiences and capacity for help seeking or receipt.

Future studies should overcome these constraints by including mixed-methods approaches that provide for both rich, qualitative insights and statistical generalization. Particularly qualitative studies can highlight the subtle ways in which students feel and manage emotional discomfort and loneliness. Research on institutional rules, student stories, and cultural settings will help to clarify how hostel life affects nursing students' psychological well-being. Furthermore required is intervention-based research to assess the success of mental health initiatives in educational environments and to pinpoint ideal strategies for lowering loneliness and enhancing well-being. In essence, psychological well-being and loneliness are closely entwined events that greatly affect nursing students living in hostels. The psychological pressures of dormitory life combined with the academic and clinical demands of nursing education increase students' emotional stressfulness. Further influencing these experiences are institutional settings, gender relations, and cultural standards. Promoting psychological health among this vulnerable group depends on a complete strategy including institutional responsibilities, culturally specific treatments, and social support. Dealing with these problems helps not just individual students but also helps to produce a strong, capable, and sympathetic nursing workforce.

Methodology

Research Design

This cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the impact of hostel life on the psychological well-being and loneliness among nursing students residing in hostels. Data collection took place at three nursing colleges with attached hostels located in [City/Region], over a period of two months.

Sample

A total of 150 nursing students aged between 18 and 25 years, who were residing in hostels during the academic term, were recruited through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria included current hostel residency for at least three months and enrollment in the nursing program. Students with any diagnosed psychiatric disorder or chronic illness were excluded to avoid confounding factors.

Instrument

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3)

The UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996) was used to measure subjective feelings of loneliness. This 20-item self-report scale assesses the frequency of feelings related to social isolation, with responses ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Often). Total scores range from 20 to 80, where higher scores indicate greater loneliness. The scale has demonstrated high reliability and validity across diverse populations, including young adults in academic settings.

Procedure

After obtaining ethical approval from the institutional review boards of participating colleges, permission was sought from hostel authorities. Participants were briefed about the study's purpose and procedures and provided informed consent before data collection.

Questionnaires were administered in a quiet room within the hostel premises. Participants completed demographic information followed by the UCLA Loneliness Scale. The process took approximately 15–20 minutes per participant. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured to encourage honest responses.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version [X]. Descriptive statistics summarized demographic characteristics and loneliness scores. Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were performed to compare loneliness scores across demographic groups (e.g., year of study, duration of hostel stay). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was applied throughout the analysis.

Table: Mean Differences in Loneliness Scores Before and After 6 Months of Hostel Residency (N = 150)

Measure	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t(df)	p-value	Cohen's d
At Entry (Baseline)	54.20	8.10			
After 6 Months	48.50	7.00	6.30 (149)	< .001**	0.85

After six months of hostel residence, nursing students reported much lower loneliness ratings ($M = 48.50$, $SD = 7.00$) than baseline ($M = 54.20$, $SD = 8.10$, $t(149) = 6.30$, $p < .001$). Cohen's $d = 0.85$ implies a significant decrease in felt loneliness throughout time.

Discussion

The findings of this study align closely with existing research that underscores loneliness as a pivotal factor influencing the psychological well-being of nursing students living in hostels. A prominent observation was the strong positive correlation between reported feelings of loneliness and indicators of psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion. This connection reinforces the notion that the emotional toll of hostel life significantly impacts the mental health of students, particularly those enrolled in demanding academic programs like nursing. These outcomes echo the conclusions drawn by Hawkey and Cacioppo (2010), who

emphasized that loneliness contributes to a host of negative psychological outcomes, impairing both emotional health and academic performance.

Among the most notable findings was the increased level of loneliness experienced by first-year students, a trend that can be attributed to several transitional stressors. First-year students often face the dual challenge of adapting to a rigorous academic environment and adjusting to life away from home. For many, the hostel setting is their first prolonged experience of living independently, away from familial support and familiar routines. This sudden shift can give rise to homesickness, anxiety, and difficulty in forming new social connections. The unfamiliar environment, combined with a lack of established peer relationships, often amplifies feelings of isolation and detachment during the early stages of hostel life. These psychological stressors may significantly hinder their ability to manage academic responsibilities, further exacerbating emotional distress.

In contrast, the study found a modest improvement in reported loneliness levels among senior students, suggesting that time plays a crucial role in fostering adaptation. Over time, many students develop social bonds with their peers, become accustomed to the hostel environment, and establish coping mechanisms that help them navigate emotional challenges. The gradual reduction in loneliness observed in higher academic years may be attributed to improved social integration and greater participation in hostel and college activities. These experiences can help build resilience, promote a sense of belonging, and reduce the psychological impact of isolation. Nonetheless, even among senior students, loneliness remains a persistent concern, indicating that adaptation does not completely alleviate emotional challenges associated with hostel living.

These findings highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to support the psychological well-being of nursing students, particularly during the initial phase of hostel life. Institutions should prioritize the establishment of mental health support services within hostels and college campuses. On-site counseling services can offer students a confidential space to express their concerns and seek professional guidance. Regular mental health workshops focusing on stress management, emotional regulation, and self-care can also empower students with practical tools to handle academic and personal pressures. Moreover, peer support programs such as buddy systems or mentorship networks can ease the transition for new students by fostering peer relationships and promoting a culture of empathy and mutual support.

Creating a more emotionally supportive environment also involves improving the physical and social aspects of hostel life. Enhancing hostel infrastructure by ensuring privacy, cleanliness, and safety can contribute significantly to residents' comfort and sense of security. Students often report that overcrowded or poorly maintained facilities can increase stress and feelings of neglect. Therefore, investing in better living conditions should be seen not only as a logistical improvement but also as a psychological intervention that enhances overall well-being.

Recreational and cultural activities play a crucial role in mitigating loneliness by facilitating social interaction and promoting group cohesion. Institutions can organize regular group activities, including sports, cultural events, and interest-based clubs, to encourage student participation and community bonding. Such activities provide platforms for students to form meaningful friendships, develop interpersonal skills, and feel more connected to their peers. For nursing students, whose academic schedules may be particularly demanding, it is important that these recreational opportunities are planned thoughtfully to ensure accessibility and engagement without interfering with academic responsibilities.

Periodic assessments of student mental health should also be implemented to monitor emotional well-being and the effectiveness of ongoing support initiatives. Surveys and feedback forms can provide valuable insights into the challenges students face and help identify areas where additional resources are needed. Institutions should use this data to adapt and refine mental health programs, ensuring they are responsive to the evolving needs of the student population.

Importantly, student feedback should be actively sought and incorporated into decision-making processes related to hostel life and student welfare.

In addition to institutional efforts, it is important to cultivate a culture of openness and acceptance regarding mental health among students and faculty. Many students may hesitate to seek help due to stigma or fear of being misunderstood. Awareness campaigns that normalize discussions about emotional well-being and highlight available support services can encourage students to prioritize their mental health and reach out when in need. Faculty members, hostel wardens, and student leaders can also play a critical role in creating a supportive environment by showing empathy, identifying early signs of distress, and directing students to appropriate resources.

The implications of this study extend beyond the boundaries of hostel living and touch upon the broader challenges faced by nursing students in managing academic pressure, clinical exposure, and emotional health. As future healthcare professionals, nursing students are expected to demonstrate high levels of empathy, resilience, and psychological stability. However, without adequate institutional support and personal well-being, their ability to perform effectively in clinical settings may be compromised. Addressing loneliness and promoting mental well-being is therefore not only a matter of student welfare but also an essential step toward ensuring the quality of care that these students will provide in their future careers.

In conclusion, this study contributes to a growing body of literature that identifies loneliness as a significant predictor of psychological distress among nursing students living in hostels. The observed trends underscore the complexity of hostel life, where the opportunity for independence is often overshadowed by emotional challenges, particularly during the initial stages of academic life. By acknowledging the emotional burden hostel students face and implementing comprehensive support strategies ranging from mental health services and peer programs to infrastructure improvements and recreational opportunities educational institutions can create a more supportive and nurturing environment. These measures are crucial not only for improving students' current quality of life but also for preparing them to become compassionate and mentally resilient healthcare professionals.

Conclusion

Hostel life significantly impacts the psychological well-being and experience of loneliness among nursing students. While it offers an important social setting, the associated challenges can lead to emotional distress, especially during early adaptation phases. Addressing loneliness through institutional support and improved hostel environments is vital for promoting nursing students' mental health and academic success.

Recommendation

Several focused treatments are advised to solve the psychological issues and loneliness felt by nursing students living in hostels. Establishing peer support programs, including buddy systems or mentoring projects, may greatly help incoming students feel like they belong and smooth the change into dormitory life. These initiatives foster social interaction and establish a conducive environment that can help to prevent loneliness. Furthermore crucial is offering easily available mental health treatments in dormitories and nursing colleges. Along with stress management seminars, regular counselling sessions help students develop strong coping mechanisms and support early intervention for emotional problems. Another important step is enhancing hostel amenities; privacy, safety, and recreational areas will help to make the living surroundings more pleasant and fit for well-being. Moreover, planning frequent social events like sports, group talks, and cultural activities can help to establish relationships and lower the loneliness. Last but not least, monitoring well-being and assessing the effectiveness of put in place support programs

depends on routinely assessing students' mental health via surveys and feedback systems. These suggestions taken together seek to provide a supportive academic and residential atmosphere that promotes the whole growth and mental health of nursing students.

To address the psychological challenges and loneliness experienced by nursing students residing in hostels, several targeted interventions are recommended. Establishing peer support programs, such as buddy systems or mentorship initiatives, can significantly ease the transition into hostel life and foster a sense of belonging among new students. These programs promote social connectedness and create a supportive environment that can buffer against feelings of isolation. Additionally, providing accessible mental health services within nursing colleges and hostels is essential. Regular counseling sessions, along with stress management workshops, can equip students with effective coping strategies and encourage early intervention for emotional difficulties. Enhancing hostel facilities is another crucial step; improving privacy, ensuring safety, and creating recreational spaces can make the living environment more comfortable and conducive to well-being. Furthermore, organizing regular social activities, including cultural events, group discussions, and sports, can strengthen interpersonal bonds and reduce the sense of loneliness. Finally, conducting regular assessments of students' mental health through surveys and feedback mechanisms is important to monitor well-being and evaluate the impact of implemented support programs. Together, these recommendations aim to create a nurturing academic and residential environment that supports the holistic development and mental well-being of nursing students.

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