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A Study of Relationship Between Social Alienation and Psychiatric Disorders among the University Students

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Abstract: Alienation is a state of mind in which an individual feels lonely and has a low level of attachment with her society, fails to get control over the environment and gradually becomes isolated and helpless. Psychiatric disorders refer to what a person feels, thinks and act that lead her towards the mental disturbance or spoil his areas of functioning. The present study investigated the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders among university students. 600 students were selected as a sample from different departments of a university. A scale for alienation developed by [Guerrero and Castillo \(1966\)](#), and a scale for psychiatric disorders developed by [Lovibond and Lovibond \(1995\)](#) were used to collect the data. The collected data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation. Results showed that certain level of social alienation and psychiatric disorders exist among students, and there was a positive association between social alienation and psychiatric disorders.

Key Words: Psychiatric Disorders, Social Alienation, University Students

Introduction

Alienation is a state of mind ([Nelson & O'Donohue, 2006](#)). It refers to the feelings of detachment. This detachment can be physical, mental, spiritual, psychological as well as social ([MEHTA & SHARMA, 2013](#)). Hence the literal meaning of the word 'Alienation' is separation ([Safipour et al., 2011](#)). Alienation takes place when people lack identification of themselves and others ([Yildiz & Şaylıkay, 2014](#)). There are two types of alienation first is individual alienation, in which an individual becomes alienated from his own self; the second type is social alienation, in which the individual isolates from others and avoids developing meaningful relationships ([Kacire, 2015](#)). Alienation from a different point of views is defined as a lack of meaningful relationships and disconnection from others and society. Unfortunately, the problem of alienation extensively affects the field of education, particularly at secondary and higher education

levels ([Cetin et al., 2009](#)). Alienation in education may be defined as detachment of students from learning, educational process, any activity relevant to the learning and gradually learning process become unpleasant for students ([Cetin et al., 2009](#)). Alienation is a mental state in which students become lonely from a group or an activity to which they belong. Student alienation is related to the low achievement of students. Social alienation is not only related to students' lower grades but may also anticipate the student's failure and dropouts ([Atnafu, 2013](#)).

The learning process and education become unpleasant for alienated students. Lack of self-concept, less involvement in the learning process, and lack of discipline are some symptoms of student academic alienation ([Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010](#)). Four dimensions, Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness and Isolation, are associated with alienation in

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academic life. Powerlessness: lack of personal control in learning, Normlessness: deficiencies of rule-governed behaviour (i.e. educational dishonesty), Meaninglessness: students' perception that curriculum is not relevant to their present and future requirements, Isolation: low level of attachment with peers, teachers and learning environment (Erbas, 2014). Some causes of students' alienation are; transition from college to university, internet addiction, absenteeism and dropouts (Safipour et al., 2011), poor relationships with peers, poor self-concept and low academic achievements (Hascher & Hagenauer, 2010) and irrelevant curriculum (Atnafu, 2013).

Psychiatric disorders refer to what an individual thinks, feels and acts that create personal distress, cause impairment or disable the individual to perform normal functioning. When behaviour is distressful, unusual and dysfunctional, psychologists mark it as a disorder (D. K. Singh, 2011). Mental disorders can be the outcome of family background, genetics or any other biological, social and behavioural factors (either these factors take place alone or in combine form) (Smith, 2013). Mental disorders not only present the psychological, social and economic load of society but also enhance the risk of physical ailment (Hosman et al., 2004). Mental illness is related to some definite determinants, i.e. rapidly changing social life, the traumatic situation in work, prejudices, social elimination, detrimental way of life, gender discrimination and physical illness. A large number of university students has problems of mental health, i.e. (depression, anxiety, addictions and chronic psychiatric disorders) when compared it with general population. In educational organizations, some factors extensively affect mental health of university students such as failure in examination, economic problems, searching part time job to accomplish the expenses of course books and other equipment (Aldiabat et al., 2014).

In higher education institutions, students become a victim of different disorders, but the most commonly spread disorders among university students are stress, anxiety and depression. The situation or circumstance that negative thinking or feeling in an individual is labelled as stress (Kumaraswamy, 2013). Symptoms of stress include mood disturbance, lack of concentration, fast heartbeat or nervous habits such as nail-biting (Sharma, 2011). Students

suffer stress due to certain reasons like changes in their life, academic pressure, increasing work demands and social relationships with others (Khan et al., 2013). Anxiety is the reaction to perceive a risk that could be actual or fantasy and generated by individual perception, ideas or feelings (Ishtiaq et al., 2013). Its symptoms can be physical or psychological. Physical symptoms of anxiety among students are nervousness, panic attack and difficulty in breathing, while psychological symptoms include tension about the test, uneasiness in making assignments and no interest in tough subjects. Anxiety disorder has a negative impact on student's educational performance. Severe anxiety destructs the students' working memory, thinking and problem-solving abilities (Vitasari et al., 2010). Depression is disabling disorder that disturbs the person social, vocational and psychological performance (Peluso et al., 2011). Depression is the most common disorder in adolescents across the world (Saleem et al., 2014). Symptoms of depression may influence the quantity of time in learning activities. These symptoms are sleeping disturbances (less or more sleep than normal), the inability of concentration and decision making (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

The Current Study

Social alienation has a great impact on students' academic performance and their social adjustment. While on the other hand, psychiatric disorders have pessimistic effects on students' physical and mental health. As this study investigates the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders, the researchers first of all assess the prevalence of social alienation among the students. Secondly, they identify the existing level of psychiatric disorders (Depression, Stress and Anxiety) and then find out the relationship between these variables. The present study focused on finding out the answers to the following research questions:

- What is the level of social alienation among students?
- To what extent do psychiatric disorders prevail in the students?
- What is the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders?

Methods and Materials

The major purpose of conducting this study was to find out the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders. To achieve this purpose, researchers utilized a quantitative research approach. This study was descriptive in nature, and a survey method was adopted to collect views from the respondents. Two scales were used in the study. A scale developed by [\(Guerrero & Castillo 1966\)](#) and modified by Dwight Dean was used to check the existence of social alienation among the students. This scale has three subscales, Powerlessness, Normlessness and Social isolation and has overall 18 statements in it. The first subscale, Powerlessness, has six statements, the second subscale Normlessness has five statements, and the third subscale, social isolation, has seven statements. The second scale of psychiatric disorders developed by [\(Lovibond & Lovibond 1995\)](#) was used to measure the level of psychiatric disorders among the students. The scale has three subscales, Depression, Stress and Anxiety and has overall 21 statements in it. Each subscale of psychiatric disorders has seven statements in it. The questionnaire was developed by using a five-point Likert scale. Demographic information was also included in it regarding the age, gender, background and educational level. To check the validity of subscales, questionnaire was presented to the experts who have research experience. For pilot testing, two departments from Government College University Faisalabad were surveyed by the researchers. Instrument was finalized keeping in view the feedback of experts and pilot testing. Reliability of research tool was also measured by the researchers through using

Cronbach's alpha and found .831 reliability of the scale of social alienation and .837 reliability of the scale of psychiatric disorders. Six hundred students (males & females) of master's level enrolled in Government College University Faisalabad were selected as a sample of the study. These students were selected from 21 different departments of four faculties of the university. A multiphase random sampling technique was used to select the sample. In the first phase of sampling, four faculties were selected through using convenient sampling. In the second phase, 21 departments were selected using a simple random sampling technique, and in the final phase, students were selected randomly from each department. The process of data collection was completed in three weeks. Collected data were analyzed by using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) 21 version. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient were applied in order to find out the relationship between the two variables.

Results

The mean score of each subscale was calculated. Mean scores for the subscales of social alienation (i.e. Powerlessness (M=20.43), Normlessness (18.58) and Social isolation (23.26) show that symptoms of social alienation exist among the students. The overall mean score of social alienation (M=62.25) shows existence level of alienation among the students, whereas the mean scores for the subscales of psychiatric disorders (i.e. Depression (M=18.53), Stress (M=22.61) and Anxiety (M=20.42) show the existence level of psychiatric disorders among the students.

Table 1. Mean Score Showing the Presence of Different Indicator of Social Alienation

S. No	Indicator	Mean	SD
1	Powerlessness	20.43	3.76
2	Normlessness	18.58	3.23
3	Social Isolation	23.26	3.80
	Social Alienation	62.27	10.79

Table 1 shows the mean score and standard deviation of the subscales of social alienation. The mean score of 20.43 indicates that the prevalence of Powerlessness among students is on average. The mean score of 18.58 shows that the existence of Normlessness among students is above average.

The mean score of 23.26 reveals that the prevalence of social isolation among the students is on average. The mean score of social alienation reveals that the existing level of social alienation among the students is 62.25.

Table 2. Mean Score Showing the Prevalence of Different Indicators of Psychiatric Disorders

S. No	Indicator	Mean	SD
1	Depression	18.53	5.28
2	Stress	22.61	4.92
3	Anxiety	20.41	5.36
	Psychiatric Disorders	61.55	15.56

Table 2 shows the mean scores and standard deviation of the subscales of psychiatric disorders. The mean score of 18.53 shows that the existing level of depression among students is below average. The mean score of 22.61 indicates that the prevalence of stress among students is on average. The mean score of 20.42 shows that the prevalence of anxiety among students is on average. This

discussion shows that a certain level of psychiatric disorders exists among the students included in the sample.

The major purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders. For this, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied to assess the relationship between these two variables.

Table 3. Values of Pearson Correlation Coefficient representing Relationship among Different Indicators of Social Alienation and Psychiatric Disorders

	Depression	Stress	Anxiety
Powerlessness	.333**	.445**	.418**
Normlessness	.175**	.355**	.234**
Social Isolation	.249**	.321**	.324**
Social Alienation	.346**	.505**	.445**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 shows the Correlation between social alienation and psychiatric disorders. Different indicators of social alienation correlated with the indicators of psychiatric disorders that show the relationship with each other. It means that a significant and positive correlation exists between social alienation and psychiatric disorders.

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to find out the association between Social Alienation and Psychiatric Disorders. This study found that social alienation and psychiatric disorders prevail among the students. A study conducted on Alienation, Normlessness, Isolation and Estrangement by (Schmidt 2012) found that alienation and its prominent factors encouraged understanding the concept of self. It concludes that the prevalence of social alienation increases when people perceive distance from the social group. The study suggests that self-concept is necessary for the understanding of social alienation. A study conducted by (Singh & Kiran 2013) highlighted that alienated adults suffer from more depressive signs because they seem less contented, pleased and more pessimistic. Another study conducted

by (Kaur & Singh 2015) on Alienation among urban adolescents in relation to emotional intelligence investigates the Correlation between alienation and emotional intelligence. The results of this study demonstrate that there is a significant and negative Correlation between alienation and emotional intelligence. Thus, the study reveals that more emotional intelligent adolescents have low level of alienation. Similarly, another study conducted on the same area of alienation and emotional intelligence of adolescents with internalizing symptoms (include social withdrawal, unhappiness, nervousness and anxiety) by (Shrivastava & Mukhopadhyay, 2009) indicates that adolescents reported a high level of alienation and its areas of Powerlessness, Normlessness, Meaninglessness and Isolation. The results of this study indicate that areas of alienation and emotional intelligence were factors that contribute to the development of internalizing symptoms. So the study draws the conclusion that adolescents who are having internalizing symptoms demonstrate a high prevalence of alienation. These studies do not support the present study because the present study investigates the alienation among the

students in relation to psychiatric disorders. A study by (Kim 2014) conducted on “Does money is all attitude” causes alienation in the people of Sweden, the US and Korea. Results show that the materialistic thinking of an individual enhances the level of alienation, but money does not contribute to people’s well-being and happiness. The findings of this research indicate that active participation of the individual in social activities can reduce the prevalence of alienation. Similarly, a study conducted on Feelings of Alienation, a comparison of immigrant and non-immigrant Swedish youth, found a significant relationship between alienation and immigrant background. This study found that due to the cultural differences and transition from one place to other, immigrants feel more social alienation as compared to the natives. This study does not correlate with the present study as it was conducted to see the comparison of immigrant and non-immigrant youth of Sweden. The present study proves that psychiatric disorders such as depression, stress and anxiety exist among the students, and the students show a moderate level of stress. According to the study on academic stress among undergraduate students conducted by (Bataneh 2013) shows that majority of the students experienced moderate level of stress in their academic life due to the workload of the semester, exams, low motivation and high expectations of family. It was also found that fear of failure in exams is a major source of stress in students. According to the researchers of this study, it is normal for students to experience moderate stress so that they are motivated to do their work and duties at university. Similarly, another study which was conducted on assessing stress among university students found that university students experienced moderate level of stress (Thawabieh & Qaisy, 2012). Thus these results support the findings of the present study. A study on the effects of depression on students’ academic performance by (Khurshid et al., 2015) conducted in Pakistan indicates that students experienced depression that has pessimistic effects on learners’ academic performance. It means depression exists among the students. So the result of this study also relates to the result of this study. A study by (Nadeem et al., 2012) on the impact of anxiety on the academic achievement of students having different mental abilities at the university level in Bahawalpur (Pakistan) indicates that anxiety affects students’ academic

achievement. Result also shows that anxiety has negative effects on students’ academic performance. Results also reveal if anxiety increases among male and female students, their academic achievement decreases. So it is proved by this study that anxiety prevails among the students, and it has negative effects on student’s academic performance.

Conclusions

The present research study was to investigate the association between Social Alienation and Psychiatric Disorders at the university level. To draw conclusions, various statistical techniques were applied to the data and data were carefully analyzed by the researchers. Some research questions were formulated by the researchers to draw a conclusion of the current study. What is the level of social alienation among the students? To what extent, psychiatric disorders prevail in the students? What is the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders? Conclusions are drawn from this study enumerated below:

The first research question of the present study was to check out the level of social alienation among the students studying at Government College University Faisalabad. The first indicator of social alienation was Powerlessness. The results show that the prevalence of Powerlessness among the students is on average, which means students have a moderate level of Powerlessness. The second indicator of social alienation was Normlessness. The students’ response shows that the prevalence of Normlessness among them is above average, which shows that students have a high level of Normlessness. The third indicator of social alienation was Social isolation. The results show that the prevalence of Social isolation among students is on average, which indicates that students have a moderate level of isolation. This discussion shows that all dimensions of social alienation exist among the students. Thus the answer to the question can be that a certain level of social alienation exists among the students of Government College University Faisalabad.

The second question made by the researchers was concerning the prevalence of psychiatric disorders among the students of Government College University Faisalabad. The first indicator of psychiatric disorders was depression. Students’ responses show that the prevalence of depression

among students is below average that means students have a mild level of depression. The second indicator of psychiatric disorders was stress. The results indicate that the prevalence of stress among students is on average, which means students have a moderate level of stress. The third indicator of psychiatric disorders was anxiety. The results reveal that students have a moderate level of anxiety. All these points indicate that student's response about psychiatric disorders is positive. It shows that certain level of psychiatric disorders prevails among the students of the university.

The third question was to find out the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders at the university level; for this, Pearson product correlation was employed to find out the relationship between social alienation and psychiatric disorders. Almost all the indicators of social alienation were positively correlated with the indicators of psychiatric disorders. Thus the answer to the question is that social alienation has a significant relationship with psychiatric disorders.

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