



Anxiety Among Hostel and Non-Hostel Students

Solanki Vaishali Dharmendrakumar
M.A. Sem:2 Psychology
P.K. Kotawala Arts College, Patan
Email: rajusolanki00008@gmail.com

Abstract

Anxiety among university and college students is a pervasive and multifaceted concern, influenced by numerous environmental and psychosocial factors. One important dimension affecting student mental health is living arrangement—specifically, whether students reside in hostels (dormitories) away from home or commute daily as non-hostel (day-scholar) students. Hostel life can offer opportunities for independence, peer socialization, and proximity to academic facilities, but it can also introduce stressors such as homesickness, roommate conflict, and adjustment challenges. Conversely, non-hostel students may benefit from family support and familiar environments yet face pressures related to commuting, time management, and social integration within campus life. This article synthesizes research comparing anxiety levels among hostel and non-hostel students, explores contributing factors, discusses psychological and academic consequences, and highlights strategies for intervention and support in educational settings.

1. Introduction

The transition to higher education represents a major life change for many young adults. Students confront new academic demands, social environments, and lifestyle adjustments that can contribute to psychological stress and anxiety. Anxiety disorders among students have been documented worldwide, and their prevalence is growing in both developed and developing countries. Living conditions play a crucial role in students' emotional adjustment, as spatial, social, and environmental factors interact with personal coping capacities.

Living arrangements—whether a student resides in a hostel or remains with family—affect daily routines, social support systems, and perceived autonomy. Hostels may present unique stressors such as sharing living spaces, adapting to communal rules, and coping with distance from family. Non-hostel students, while in familiar environments, may experience commuter stress, fatigue, and less integrated social networks. Understanding how these living arrangements influence anxiety levels can inform targeted mental health support strategies in educational institutions.

2. Anxiety in Hostel Students

2.1 Prevalence of Anxiety and Related Stressors

Multiple studies indicate that students residing in hostels often report high levels of anxiety:

- Research among students in girls' hostels in Baneshwor, Kathmandu found that 84.6% of hostel residents exhibited symptoms of anxiety, alongside high levels of stress and depression. Roommate disturbances, homesickness, lack of support, and feelings of isolation were identified risk factors for heightened anxiety.



- A broader observational study of female hostel students in Western India revealed elevated mean anxiety scores, signifying a considerable prevalence of emotional disturbance linked to hostel living.

Such findings underscore that hostel environments—while offering independence—often challenge emotional equilibrium, especially in students who are away from their familial support networks for the first time.

2.2 Environmental and Social Triggers

Several aspects of hostel living contribute to stress and anxiety:

- **Adjustment Stress:** New residents must adapt to shared spaces, communal rules, and fluctuating peer dynamics, which can be stressful, particularly for introverted or socially anxious individuals.
- **Homesickness and Isolation:** Separation from family and familiar routines is a prominent source of psychological discomfort for many students. Feelings of nostalgia and loneliness can amplify anxiety, especially in the first months of hostel life.
- **Roommate Conflict and Environmental Stressors:** Noise, lack of privacy, differences in lifestyle, and roommate disputes have been linked to emotional strain. These stressors, while not unique to hostels, are intensified when students lack established coping frameworks or social support systems on campus.

3. Anxiety in Non-Hostel Students

While hostel students often face anxiety due to adaptation challenges, non-hostel (day-scholar) students are not immune to psychological distress. Their living arrangement presents different stressors:

3.1 Academic and Commuter Stress

Non-hostel students frequently commute from home to campus daily. This routine can contribute to:

- **Time Pressure:** Commuting time reduces opportunities for rest, study, and social engagement.
- **Fatigue:** Daily travel—especially in congested traffic contexts or long distances—can induce exhaustion, reduce academic productivity, and contribute to stress.
- **Balancing Responsibilities:** Day scholars often juggle family roles and academic duties, which may fragment attention and elevate anxiety.

3.2 Comparisons with Hostel Students

Some research comparing hostel and non-hostel students suggests interesting patterns:

- A multi-ethnic study of medical students found that anxiety levels were somewhat higher among non-hostel (day-scholar) students than their hostel counterparts in certain contexts.

These variations may reflect contextual factors such as family expectations, cultural norms regarding independence, and available support systems. Non-hostel students may gain emotional support from family but also face pressures related to constant familial proximity, which can affect autonomy and identity development.



4. Comparative Studies: Hostel vs Non-Hostel Anxiety

Comparative analysis of anxiety among hostel and non-hostel students reveals nuanced patterns:

4.1 Medical Student Study

In a cross-sectional research project involving undergraduate medical students:

- Both hostelites and non-hostelites experienced significant psychological distress, but non-hostelites showed slightly higher rates of anxiety in certain subgroups. While medical education itself is a major source of stress, the study suggests that living at home does not necessarily shield students from anxiety—possibly due to the combined pressures of study, family expectations, and time management.

4.2 Emotional Disturbances in Private College Students

Another study focusing on emotional disturbances including anxiety among hostelites and day scholars found that:

- Hostelites reported significantly higher anxiety scores than day scholars, indicating that living away from home may exacerbate emotional stress for some students. Together, these findings underscore that living arrangement affects student anxiety in complex ways: neither hostel nor non-hostel living universally protects against emotional distress.

5. Psychological Mechanisms Underlying Anxiety in Student Living Arrangements

To understand why living conditions influence anxiety, it is helpful to consider psychological frameworks:

5.1 Social Support and Belongingness

- **Hostel Students:** Hostel life can foster peer connections and a sense of community, which may buffer stress for some. However, for students who struggle to establish social ties, the absence of familial support and unfamiliar peer environments can heighten feelings of isolation and anxiety.
- **Non-Hostel Students:** Living with family often provides emotional support, yet day scholars may experience social disconnect from campus life, leading to stress due to perceived exclusion or lack of peer integration.

5.2 Autonomy and Coping

- **Independence:** Hostel life requires students to manage personal routines, finances, and study schedules, which can be empowering but also overwhelming, particularly for first-year students unaccustomed to independent living.
- **Routine Management:** Non-hostel students may benefit from familial routines but miss the opportunity to develop self-regulation skills critical for academic and personal success.

5.3 Environmental Stressors

Factors such as noise, overcrowding, and lack of personal space—commonly reported in hostel environments—can increase perceptual stress and emotional tension. Experiences of conflict or insufficient facilities can compound this effect, contributing to anxiety and sleep disturbances.



6. Academic and Health Consequences

Anxiety has significant implications for student well-being and performance:

6.1 Academic Outcomes

- Elevated anxiety has been linked to difficulties with concentration, memory, and exam performance.
- Students with sustained anxiety may avoid academic tasks, leading to procrastination and suboptimal performance.

6.2 Sleep and Physical Health

- Research shows that anxiety and poor sleep quality are correlated, affecting both hostel and non-hostel students and resulting in reduced cognitive functioning, mood disturbances, and physical fatigue.

6.3 Social Functioning and Loneliness

- Hostels may reduce loneliness through peer interaction, yet poor social integration or conflict can increase feelings of isolation.
- Non-hostel students may benefit from family interaction but struggle to develop strong campus friendships, which are critical support networks during stressful academic periods.

7. Gender and Cultural Considerations

Several studies highlight that female students often report higher anxiety levels than male students across living arrangements. Cultural expectations around gender roles, socialization patterns, and safety concerns contribute to these differences.

In hostel environments, gender-specific stressors such as safety concerns, harassment fears, or adjustment pressures may disproportionately affect female residents.

8. Strategies for Reducing Anxiety in Students

To mitigate anxiety among both hostel and non-hostel students, educational institutions can implement targeted interventions:

8.1 Mental Health Services

- On-campus counseling centers should be accessible to all students, with services tailored to student needs.
- Regular screening for anxiety and stress can help identify high-risk students early.

8.2 Orientation and Adjustment Programs

- Pre-entry orientation programs focusing on coping skills, time management, and social integration can ease transitions.
- Peer mentoring and buddy systems help new hostel residents build supportive relationships.

8.3 Environmental Improvements

- Hostels should provide quiet study spaces, comfortable living conditions, and opportunities for social engagement through recreational and cultural activities.



8.4 Academic Support

- Academic tutoring, study groups, and workshops on exam preparation reduce performance-related anxiety.

8.5 Family and Community Engagement

- For non-hostel students, programs that foster campus connectedness and reduce commuter fatigue—such as flexible scheduling or online support groups—can alleviate stress.

9. Conclusion

Anxiety among students is a multifactorial issue influenced by living arrangements, academic pressures, social support systems, and individual coping styles. Hostels provide independence and opportunities for close peer interaction but can also cause stress due to adjustment demands and environmental factors. Non-hostel students benefit from family support but face unique challenges related to commuting and campus integration.

Rather than assuming one environment is universally superior, research suggests that both hostel and non-hostel living have distinct anxiety-related risks. Institutions must understand these nuances and tailor psychosocial support systems to ensure student mental well-being across living arrangements.

References

1. Khatri V., Chovanec P., Singh Malik V., Soni G. Are Hostelites Better-Off than Non-Hostelites? A comparison of stress, anxiety, and depression among undergraduate medical students. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2025.
2. Bhatta H., Bhatt A. Factors associated with mental health status among students living in girls' hostel of Baneshwor, Kathmandu. *International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health*. 2023.
3. Observational assessment of mental health among hostel students in Western India. *International Journal of Advanced Community Medicine*.
4. Frequency of emotional disturbances among hostelites and day scholars medical students. *PubMed*.
5. Rashid K., et al. Sleep quality, academic performance and anxiety among hostelites and non-hostelites students. *Insights Journal of Health and Rehabilitation*. 2025.