

Research Paper

A Comparative Study of Stress and Emotional Maturity Among Hosteller and Day Scholar Students

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ABSTRACT

This investigation examines how residential arrangements influence psychological well-being in undergraduate education by analyzing the relationships between living situation, stress experience, and emotional development. The study compares on-campus residents (hostellers) with commuting students (day scholars) across measures of perceived stress and emotional maturity. Participants included 92 undergraduates equally distributed between residential categories (46 hostellers, 46 day scholars) with balanced gender representation, recruited through convenience sampling. Assessment utilized two validated instruments: the 52-item Measuring Stress Questionnaire to evaluate stress perception across multiple domains and the 48-item Emotional Maturity Scale measuring five dimensions of emotional functioning. Statistical analysis revealed hostellers experienced significantly elevated stress levels compared to their commuting counterparts, highlighting the unique challenges associated with campus living. However, emotional maturity measurements demonstrated no statistically significant variation between groups, suggesting that emotional development processes may operate independently of residential context. These findings indicate that while living arrangements substantially impact immediate stress experiences, they appear less influential in shaping broader emotional development trajectories among undergraduate students.

Keywords: *Emotional Maturity, Day scholar students, Hosteller, Stress*

The shift from secondary to tertiary education represents a pivotal transition characterized by substantial psychological and emotional adjustments (Engels et al., 2019). University students frequently encounter unfamiliar academic demands, social environments, and living arrangements that collectively influence their mental well-being (Deb et al., 2016). Among these variables, residential status whether a student lives on campus (hosteller) or commutes from home (day scholar) plays a crucial role in shaping their collegiate experience and psychological adaptation mechanisms (Anu Agarwal, 2014).

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Typically, hostellers experience greater independence, increased peer interaction, and deeper immersion in campus culture. While this environment fosters self-sufficiency and adaptability, it may simultaneously trigger homesickness and feelings of isolation (Gebel & Heyne, 2014). In contrast, day scholars maintain access to family support networks and familiar surroundings, potentially providing emotional stability while possibly limiting their integration into the campus community (Deil-Amen, 2011). These divergent living contexts potentially influence students' stress management capabilities and emotional development trajectories.

Stress, conceptualized as the physiological and psychological response to perceived challenges, remains prevalent across student populations and can significantly impact academic performance and psychological health (Frazier et al., 2018). Academic pressures, social dynamics, and personal expectations contribute to elevated stress levels which, if inadequately managed, may precipitate anxiety, depression, and burnout (Poon et al., 2012). Emotional maturity is the capacity to understand, regulate, and appropriately express emotions and functions as a critical component in stress management and overall psychological resilience (Masaud Ansari, 2015).

Previous investigations have explored connections between living arrangements and students' psychological functioning. Research by Kumar (2017) identified a significant negative correlation between emotional maturity and stress among undergraduate students, suggesting that higher emotional maturity associates with reduced stress levels. Similarly, Sinha et al. (2021) documented differences in emotional competence between day scholars and hostellers, indicating that living environments influence emotional development trajectories. Further research by Sowmyashree and Sreenivas (2014) highlighted that day scholars exhibited higher emotional maturity compared to hostellers, emphasizing family support's role in emotional development.

The relationship between residential status and stress levels has also been documented in the literature. Research by Mir and Ittoo (2018) observed that hostellers reported elevated stress levels compared to day scholars, attributing this difference to factors including homesickness and adjustment challenges. Conversely, some investigations suggest that day scholars experience greater academic stress due to commuting difficulties and balancing family responsibilities with academic demands (Ramachandran et al., 2015). These contradictory findings underscore the necessity for additional research to elucidate the nuanced relationship between living arrangements, stress, and emotional maturity.

Understanding these dynamics holds significant implications for educational institutions seeking to support students' mental health and academic achievement. By identifying the specific challenges encountered by hostellers and day scholars, targeted interventions can be developed to enhance students' coping strategies, emotional regulation, and overall well-being. As illustrated in Figure 1, this study examines residential status (hosteller or day scholar) as the independent variable, hypothesizing its influence on the dependent variables of stress levels and emotional maturity.

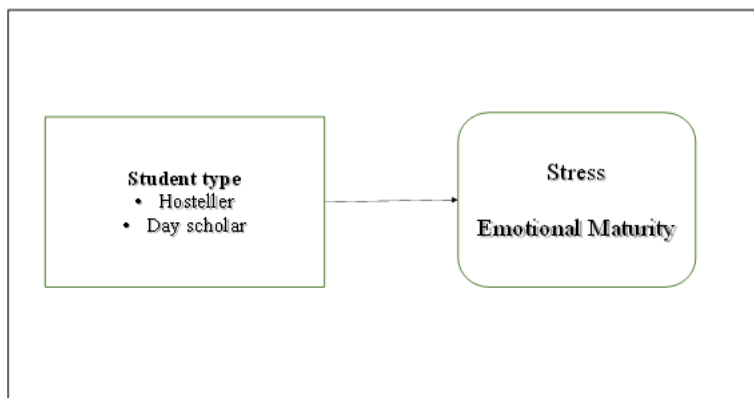
Need for the Study

While existing research provides insights into the individual effects of stress and emotional maturity among student populations, comprehensive studies comparing these variables between hostellers and day scholars remain limited. Given the contrasting environments and experiences associated with these living arrangements, investigating their influence on

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students' stress levels and emotional maturity becomes imperative. Such research can inform the development of customized support systems and interventions addressing each group's unique needs, ultimately fostering more conducive learning environments for all students.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of the study



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This investigation employed a comparative research design to examine differences in stress levels and emotional maturity between hosteller and day scholar students. The primary objective was to determine whether residential status influences psychological well-being, particularly regarding stress and emotional regulation. Two null hypotheses were tested:

- **H1:** No significant difference exists in stress levels between hosteller and day scholar students.
- **H2:** No significant difference exists in emotional maturity between hosteller and day scholar students.

Participants

The study included 92 undergraduate students, equally divided into two groups:

- Hostellers: 46 students (23 males, 23 females)
- Day Scholars: 46 students (23 males, 23 females)

Participants were selected through convenience sampling based on availability and willingness to participate. The sample's mean age was 21 years.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Students aged between 18 and 24 years
- Current full-time enrollment at accredited higher education institutions

Clear identification as either hostellers (campus residents) or day scholars (commuters)

Exclusion Criteria:

- Students exceeding 24 years of age
- Individuals with diagnosed psychiatric conditions or physical disabilities
- Students unable to comprehend assessment instruments
- Part-time or working students

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Measures

Two standardized instruments were utilized for data collection:

1. **Measuring Stress Questionnaire** (Latha, 1988): This 52-item instrument assesses stress levels across various domains including academic pressure, peer relationships, and family expectations. Items utilize a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating greater perceived stress.
2. **Emotional Maturity Scale (EMS)** (Singh & Bhargava, 1999): The EMS comprises 48 items assessing emotional maturity across five dimensions: emotional instability, emotional regression, social maladjustment, personality disintegration, and lack of independence. Responses reflect participants' capacity to understand, regulate, and express emotions appropriately.

Procedure

Prior to data collection, researchers obtained informed consent from all participants. Students received assurances regarding response confidentiality and anonymity. Questionnaires were administered in group settings during regular academic hours, with sufficient completion time provided. The researcher remained available to address participant questions throughout administration.

Statistical Analysis

Data analysis utilized IBM SPSS Statistics version 20. Independent samples t-tests compared mean scores between hostellers and day scholars on stress and emotional maturity variables. Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$.

RESULTS

Table 1 Shows the difference of mean and Standard Deviation for Stress among hostellers and Day scholars.

Stress	N	M	SD	“t”	“p”
Hosteller	46	0.49	0.17	-3.70	0.00
Day scholar	46	0.35	0.20		

* $P < 0.01$

Table 1 presents independent samples t-test results comparing stress levels between residential groups. Hostellers demonstrated a mean stress score of $M = 0.49$ ($SD = 0.17$), while day scholars exhibited $M = 0.35$ ($SD = 0.20$). The computed t-value (-3.70) with corresponding p-value (0.00) falls below the significance threshold ($p < 0.01$), indicating statistically significant differences in stress levels between groups. Consequently, the null hypothesis proposing no significant difference in stress between groups is rejected. These findings suggest hostellers experience significantly higher stress levels compared to day scholars.

Figure 2 shows the percentage of Stress among Hosteller and day Scholar.

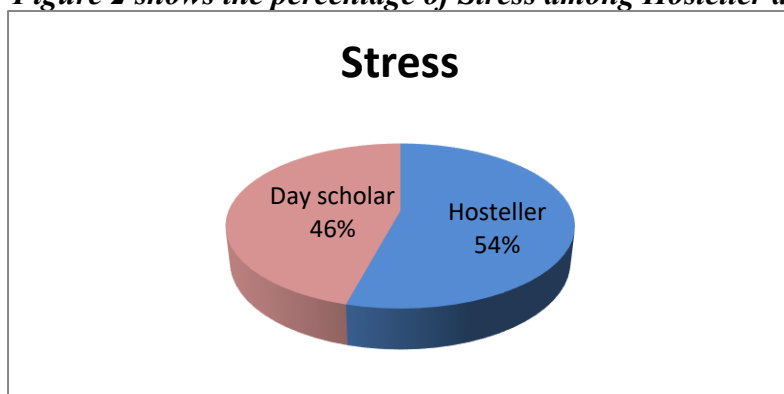


Figure 2 illustrates stress level distribution percentages across residential categories. Results indicate 54% of hostellers report high stress levels compared to 46% of day scholars. Hostellers typically encounter multiple challenges including homesickness, hostel environment adjustment difficulties, roommate relationship management, financial concerns, and institutional regulation adherence. Academic and institutional pressures further compound their stress burden. When lacking adequate coping mechanisms to address these stressors, hostellers demonstrate increased vulnerability to psychological strain.

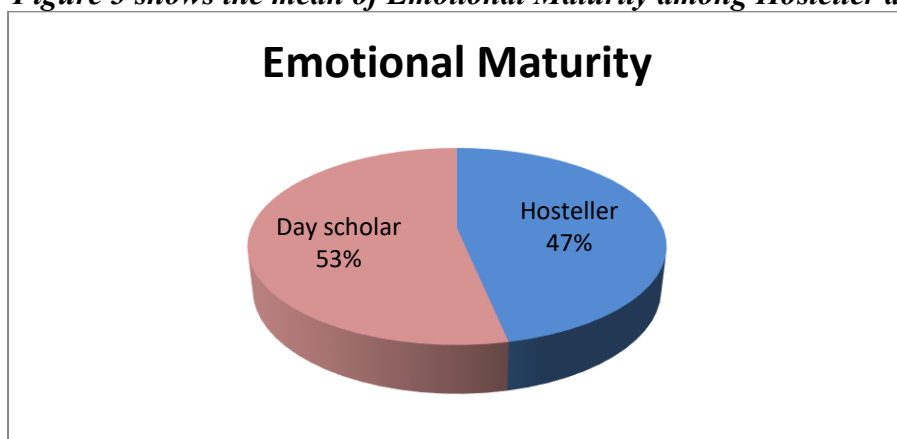
Table 2 Shows the difference of mean and Standard Deviation for Emotional Maturity among hostellers and Day scholars.

Emotional Maturity	N	Mean	SD	“t”	“p”
Hosteller	46	2.28	0.56	0.20	0.83
Day Scholar	46	2.30	0.60		

* $P < 0.01$

Table 2 summarizes independent samples t-test results for emotional maturity. Hostellers demonstrated mean emotional maturity scores of $M = 2.28$ ($SD = 0.60$), while day scholars scored $M = 2.30$ ($SD = 0.56$). The calculated t-value (0.20) with p-value (0.83) exceeds the significance threshold ($p < 0.01$), indicating no statistically significant emotional maturity differences between residential categories. Therefore, the null hypothesis proposing no significant difference in emotional maturity between groups is accepted.

Figure 3 shows the mean of Emotional Maturity among Hosteller and Day Scholar.



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Figure 3 displays emotional maturity level percentages across residential categories. Day scholars reported slightly higher emotional maturity levels (53%) compared to hostellers (47%). Emotional maturity encompasses self-regulation, self-awareness, and constructive emotion management capabilities. Students demonstrating higher emotional maturity typically manage interpersonal relationships and academic pressures more effectively. The minimal observed difference suggests residential status minimally impacts emotional maturity development.

Figure 4 shows the overall percentage of scores in the dimensions of Emotional Maturity (N-92)

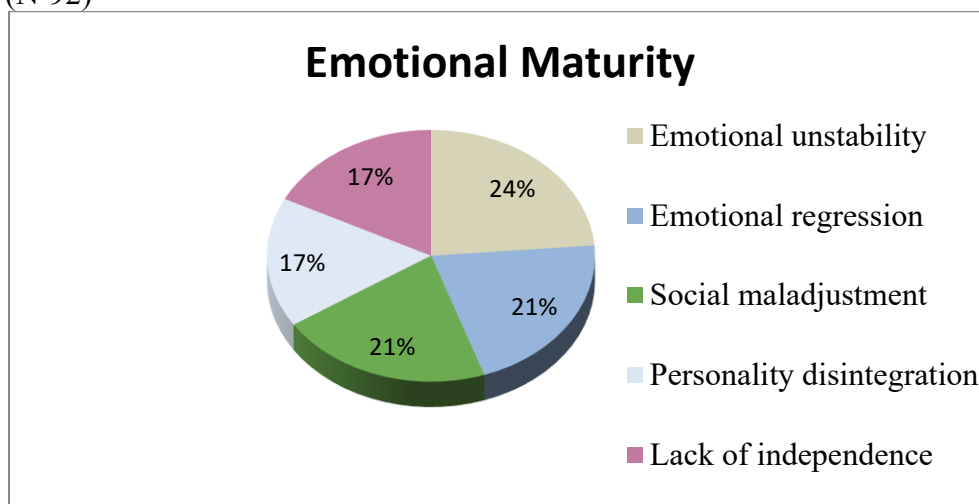


Figure 4 illustrates overall distribution across emotional maturity dimensions for both residential categories. Emotional instability demonstrated highest prevalence (24%), suggesting widespread difficulties with daily problem management, irritability, and emotional dependency. Emotional regression and social maladjustment each represented 21% of responses, indicating tendencies toward inferiority, aggression, social withdrawal, and hostility. Lower percentages appeared in personality disintegration and independence lack (17% each), representing traits including pessimism, irrational behaviour, and excessive reliance on others. These findings highlight emotional development complexity and the diverse factors influencing emotional maturity in young adults.

DISCUSSION

This investigation's findings highlight significant differences in stress levels between residential categories while revealing comparable emotional maturity across groups. Hostellers reported substantially higher stress levels, potentially attributable to adaptation requirements within residential environments, interpersonal relationship navigation with roommates and staff, independent academic responsibility management, and familial support system separation. These stressors potentially contribute to heightened psychological burden among residential students.

These observations align with previous research indicating residential students encounter unique challenges absent from commuter experiences (Sharma & Wavare, 2012). Separation from home environments necessitates adjustment to unfamiliar social and physical contexts, potentially straining psychological well-being when coping mechanisms remain underdeveloped. Additionally, hostellers frequently navigate independent financial

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management, time regulation, and communal living dynamics of factors potentially compounding stress without adequate institutional support resources.

Conversely, day scholars benefit from home environment support, including immediate family access, customized meals, and familiar social contexts. These factors potentially function as protective mechanisms against stress, enabling day scholars to maintain more balanced psychological states. However, commuters potentially encounter unique challenges including transportation fatigue, time constraints, and limited campus activity integration, potentially influencing their academic and emotional experiences to varying degrees.

Regarding emotional maturity, results indicate minimal differences between residential categories. This noteworthy finding suggests that despite daily stressor variations between groups, emotional maturity levels remain comparable. This outcome supports the perspective that emotional maturity development reflects broader developmental experiences, including upbringing, personality characteristics, and social learning, rather than exclusively educational settings or living arrangements (Ansari, 2015).

Furthermore, emotional maturity encompasses individuals' capacity to regulate emotions, maintain interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate resilience during adversity. Evidence suggests students develop emotional coping mechanisms during collegiate years regardless of residential status, potentially attributable to shared academic pressures and similar social and developmental challenge exposure.

Figure 4 findings highlighting emotional maturity dimensions identify specific areas requiring attention. The predominance of emotional instability indicates substantial emotional fluctuation among students, necessitating emotional response management support. Emotional regression and social maladjustment emerge as critical domains, suggesting the need for psychosocial interventions promoting emotional resilience, confidence, and social adaptability. This investigation reinforces institutional support system importance, including counselling services, peer mentoring programs, and stress management resources, particularly for residential students. Emotional development programs focusing on emotional intelligence enhancement, communication skill development, and adaptive coping strategy cultivation could benefit both residential categories. Future research employing mixed-methods approaches may provide deeper insights into residential categories' lived experiences and their contributions to stress and emotional regulation.

CONCLUSION

This investigation compared stress levels and emotional maturity between hosteller and day scholar students. Results revealed statistically significant differences in stress levels, with hostellers experiencing substantially higher stress than commuter counterparts. This difference potentially stems from factors including family separation, residential environment adjustment challenges, academic pressures, and interpersonal conflicts within shared living spaces. Conversely, no significant emotional maturity differences emerged between groups, suggesting residential status minimally influences students' emotional development and regulation capabilities.

These findings underscore targeted intervention and support system importance within educational institutions, particularly residential facilities, to facilitate effective student stress management. Emotional maturity, representing a crucial psychological resilience and social

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functioning determinant, remained consistent across both groups, suggesting broader developmental and personality-related factor influence rather than exclusively living arrangement impact. This investigation contributes to enhanced student well-being understanding and provides valuable insights for educational psychologists, counsellors, and institutional planners developing mental health strategies responsive to student living contexts.

Limitations

While providing valuable insights, this investigation contains several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size (N=92) selected through convenience sampling limits finding generalizability. The sample potentially inadequately represents diverse backgrounds, institutions, and geographic regions potentially influencing stress and emotional maturity. Second, exclusive reliance on self-report measures introduces social desirability bias vulnerability and potentially inadequately captures emotional experience and stressor depth. Additionally, cross-sectional design restricts causal inference capacity between student type and psychological outcomes. Furthermore, other potentially influential variables including personality traits, academic performance, family background, and peer relationships remained uncontrolled during analysis. Future research should consider longitudinal designs, larger and more diverse samples, and qualitative data inclusion to comprehensively explore stress and emotional maturity nuances among student populations.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

Informed written consent was obtained from the participants. All identifying information has been anonymized.

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Data Availability Statement

The de-identified data that support the findings of this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request and with appropriate ethical approvals.

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