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Research Paper

Impact of Gender, Living of Area, and Academic Streams on Mental Health of College-Going Students

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ABSTRACT

Mental health has emerged as a critical concern among college-going students in the present academic and social context. The study aimed to examine the influence of gender, living area, and academic streams on the mental health of students. A total sample of 180 students (90 male and 90 female), equally distributed across urban and rural areas and Arts, Commerce, and Science streams, was selected using a quota sampling method. Mental Health Battery (Singh & Gupta, 2005) was administered to assess psychological well-being. Data were analyzed using Mean, SD, and ANOVA. The findings revealed significant differences: female students reported higher mental health compared to male students, rural students scored higher than urban students, and Arts students demonstrated better mental health than Commerce and Science students.

Keywords: *Mental Health, Gender, Urban-Rural Differences, Academic Streams, College Students*

Mental health is a crucial determinant of overall well-being and directly influences how individuals think, feel, and act in their daily lives. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which individuals realize their abilities, cope with normal stresses, work productively, and contribute to their community. In higher education, the mental health of students has gained growing attention, as this developmental stage involves multiple transitions including academic challenges, identity formation, and preparation for careers. The presence of mental health concerns such as stress, depression, and anxiety during this period not only undermines academic success but also hinders social adjustment, interpersonal relationships, and long-term professional outcomes (Auerbach et al., 2018).

Globally, mental health issues among students are on the rise. The WHO World Mental Health Surveys–International College Student (WMH-ICS) project revealed alarming prevalence rates of anxiety and depression among college populations, emphasizing the need for systematic interventions (Auerbach et al., 2018). In India, the challenge is particularly acute due to a combination of rising academic competition, cultural and familial expectations, and the broader socio-economic environment. The competitive nature of higher education in India, with its high stakes for career advancement and social mobility,

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creates intense academic stress for students. Gupta and Kumar (2020) observed that a substantial proportion of Indian college students reported moderate to severe psychological distress, often manifesting in poor academic performance, burnout, and decreased quality of life.

While the general prevalence of mental health issues among college students is well established, research highlights that these concerns are not uniform across populations. Sociodemographic variables such as gender, place of residence (urban or rural), and academic stream significantly shape the mental health outcomes of students (Chokshi et al., 2021; Nath et al., 2025). Understanding these variations is important to design context-specific and culturally relevant interventions.

Gender and Mental Health

Gender differences are among the most widely studied determinants of student mental health. Several studies have consistently reported that female students experience higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms compared to their male counterparts (Bhasin et al., 2010). This difference can be attributed to multiple factors including societal gender norms, academic pressures, safety concerns, and familial expectations that disproportionately affect women. Additionally, female students may be more open to acknowledging and reporting mental health concerns, thereby resulting in higher prevalence rates in surveys (Malviya, 2024). Conversely, male students often exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression or substance use, or underreport internalized distress due to stigma associated with expressing vulnerability. These findings underscore the need for gender-sensitive mental health programs in colleges.

Living Area and Mental Health

The place of residence is another critical determinant of student well-being. Rural and urban students often face distinct stressors that affect their mental health differently. Rural students commonly encounter limited educational resources, financial constraints, and difficulties adjusting to urban-based institutions when pursuing higher education. Such challenges can lead to heightened stress, low self-esteem, and social isolation. On the other hand, urban students, while having greater access to facilities and opportunities, often experience competitive stress, lifestyle-related pressures, and higher incidences of loneliness or lack of community support (Singh & Kaur, 2019). Both contexts present unique vulnerabilities, highlighting the importance of considering the living area when examining student mental health outcomes.

Academic Streams and Mental Health

Academic streams also play a significant role in shaping the psychological well-being of students. In India, the choice of stream science, commerce, or arts is closely linked to societal prestige, career opportunities, and family expectations. Science students, in particular, face intense academic workloads, frequent examinations, and a competitive environment geared toward professional courses such as engineering and medicine. Unsurprisingly, research indicates that students in the science stream report significantly higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to their counterparts in commerce or arts (Chokshi et al., 2021).

Commerce students, while experiencing relatively moderate academic pressures, often face uncertainties regarding career pathways and financial prospects, which may generate stress

and worry. Arts students, in contrast, have been found to report comparatively better mental health outcomes. Nath et al. (2025) argue that the flexible curriculum, creativity-oriented learning, and comparatively lower academic demands in the arts stream provide students with better opportunities for personal growth and psychological stability. These differences suggest that academic stream not only reflects educational choices but also functions as a contextual factor influencing students' coping strategies and mental health trajectories.

While gender, living area, and academic stream are often studied independently, it is important to recognize their interconnected impact on mental health. For instance, female students from rural backgrounds enrolled in science programs may face compounded stressors including academic burden, limited resources, and cultural restrictions, thereby increasing their vulnerability to psychological distress. Similarly, urban male students in commerce streams might experience different patterns of stress related to competition and career uncertainty. A holistic analysis of these variables is therefore essential to fully understand the multifaceted nature of mental health among college students**.**

Rationale of the Study

The mental health of college students is a growing public health concern in India, with implications for academic success, employability, and national development. Despite increasing awareness, limited studies have systematically examined the combined effects of gender, living area, and academic stream on mental health outcomes. By exploring these factors together, the present study seeks to fill this research gap and provide nuanced insights that can inform targeted mental health policies and campus-based support systems. Understanding these variations is crucial for the design of preventive programs, counseling services, and academic policies that cater to the diverse needs of students across the country. mental health is shaped by a complex interplay of demographic and contextual variables. Evidence suggests that gender, living area, and academic stream significantly influence the psychological well-being of college students. Female students tend to report higher levels of emotional distress, rural students face unique resource-related challenges, and science students experience the greatest academic burden. Investigating these factors together provides an opportunity to understand patterns of vulnerability and resilience among students. Such knowledge is vital for educational institutions, policymakers, and mental health professionals to create inclusive, equitable, and supportive learning environments.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gender on Mental Health

Almas (2018) compared mental health status and stress levels between male and female college students in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh. Using the MMHSI and Stress Scale among 200 students (100 male, 100 female), the study found significant gender differences in overall mental health and stress highlighting that male and female students experience distinct profiles of psychological well-being. **Auerbach et al. (2018)** conducted the WHO World Mental Health–International College Student (WMH-ICS) initiative across multiple countries and reported high and broadly distributed rates of common mental disorders in first-year college students. The study found substantial unmet need for treatment on campus and identified female students as having higher prevalence of many common mental-health symptoms compared with male students, underscoring gendered patterns in disorder prevalence and service use. **Batra et al. (2021)**, in a multi-country study including Indian students, reported that female students were more likely to experience moderate-to-severe anxiety and depression than male students. **Dutta et al. (2023)** found that Science students

reported significantly higher levels of academic stress, anxiety, and depression, largely due to competitive examinations and career-related pressures. **Gandhi Umayal (2025)** this study found that There is no significant difference between male and female hospital employees in Positive Self-Evaluation, Perception of Reality, Integration of Personality, Autonomy, Group-Oriented Attitudes, Mental Health and Male hospital employees scored significantly higher in Environmental Mastery compared to female hospital employees. **Gruebner et al. (2017)** emphasized that urban settings may increase risk for common mental disorders due to social isolation, crowding, and environmental stressors, suggesting locality plays a key role in mental health outcomes. **Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, and Glazebrook (2013**) reported that nearly 30% of university students experience depression, with female students showing a significantly higher prevalence. These findings highlight the role of gendered stressors in shaping psychological well-being. **Kale (2024)** studied junior college students (boys vs. girls) in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra. Using the Mental Health Inventory, he measured factors like emotional stability, overall adjustment, autonomy, self-concept, and intelligence among 100 students (50 male, 50 female). Males scored significantly higher across most dimensions pointing to potential gender gaps favoring male students in certain areas of mental health and stability. **Kalpana Chawla et al. (2023)** performed a systematic review and meta-analysis of depression, anxiety, stress, and suicidal ideation prevalence among undergraduate medical students in India. Based on 43 studies (N = 15,557), they reported pooled prevalence estimates: depression 48%, anxiety 54%, stress 50%, and suicidal ideation 21%. Their subgroup analysis noted that these psychological burdens were higher among female students compared to males, emphasizing gendered vulnerability in Indian medical colleges. **Lahoria (2025)** revealed that fathers of children with disabilities scored significantly higher than mothers on all dimensions of mental health. This indicates that fathers demonstrate greater emotional stability, better adjustment, stronger self-concept, higher autonomy, better security, and superior intelligence in the context of parenting a child with a disability. **Nikam (2019)** this study found that female college students reported higher levels of mental health compared to male college students. **Panda & Azeem (2022)** explored gender differences among arts college students in Odisha. In a sample of 130 participants from Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, they found that while positive self-evaluation and perception of reality did not differ by gender, male students scored significantly higher in dimensions like integration of personality, autonomy, group-oriented attitude, and environmental mastery suggesting nuanced patterns of well-being. **Prakash et al. (2024, *this study*** revealed that prevalence rates of depression and anxiety differed significantly between **urban and rural adolescents**, suggesting that service accessibility and academic expectations influence mental well-being. **Rahna et al. (2024)** reviewed gender differences in Indian college students' mental health and found that female students consistently reported higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress compared to their male counterparts. **Ramu, S., Dhanasekar, G., Babu, G., Mohan Kumar, K., & Shanmugam, J.** (2023) this study found that Overall depression prevalence was 27.0% (mild 10.2%, moderate 8.5%, severe 2.4%, extreme 0.5%). Predictors included parental status (single/divorced), academic phase II, poor academic performance, health complaints, family conflicts, recent failures. **Shivane Dilip (2025)** this study found that Female students demonstrated significantly higher self-concept and better mental health compared to their male counterparts. **Waghmare (2018)** conducted a similar investigation, examining gender differences in mental health using the Mental Health Inventory (developed by Jagdish & Srivastava, 1983). Among 100 students (50 male and 50 females, equally from urban and rural backgrounds), the study aimed to dissect sub-factors of mental health across genders.

Living of Area on Mental Health

Bhakat and colleagues (2023) reviewed Indian studies on college student mental health and highlighted that both urban and rural students face significant challenges, though rural students often encounter barriers in accessing mental health services, while urban students are more affected by academic and social stressors. **Chaudhary et al. (2021)** examined the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indian college students and reported that urban students experienced higher stress and anxiety compared to their rural counterparts, largely due to academic pressures and social isolation in densely populated areas. **Khairunnisa et al. (2024)** compared mental health outcomes between rural and urban youth populations and found higher levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms among rural youth due to limited access to healthcare and stigma around help-seeking. **Prakash et al. (2024)** examined adolescents in rural and urban areas and observed higher prevalence of depression in rural populations, while urban students displayed higher rates of anxiety and stress. **Rajkumar (2022)** highlighted that rural youth face higher unmet mental health needs compared to urban counterparts. **Xu et al. (2023)** conducted a global meta-analysis and reported that urban students tend to show higher prevalence of depression than rural students, particularly in developed countries, suggesting that urbanicity itself may act as a risk factor. **Yu et al. (2022)** investigated the impact of urban rural household registration on Chinese college students and found that rural-registered students exhibited poorer mental health outcomes, including higher stress and depressive symptoms, due to socioeconomic disadvantages and social discrimination.

Academic Streams on Mental Health

Chokshi, Rangwala, Dumra, Thakrar, Singh, and Lakdawala (2021) conducted a comparative study and found that science stream students reported significantly higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress than their non-science counterparts. **Deb, S., Strodl, E., & Sun, J.** (2015) this study found that Prevalence of moderate to extremely severe depression was high (37.7% moderate, 13.1% severe, 2.4% extremely severe). Humanities/social sciences students had higher levels of depression than those in science and management. Positive perception of university environment and living arrangements, personal resilience (sharing problems, exercise) were linked to lower depression. **Miles (2024)** examined mental health literacy among students from different academic fields and observed significant variation, noting that certain majors demonstrated lower levels of literacy and help-seeking behavior. **Nath et al. (2025)** reported notable differences in academic stress and mental health across academic streams, with science students experiencing greater stress compared to arts and commerce students. **Rotenstein et al. (2016)** carried out a systematic review and meta-analysis of depression prevalence in medical students and found an overall prevalence of depressive symptoms around 27.2%, with suicidal ideation also reported at notable rates. Although this review focused on medical students (a subgroup of college populations), it illustrates the elevated burden of depression in tertiary students and points to the need to examine gender differences within high-stress academic tracks. **Sharma and Singh (2021)** further noted that Commerce and Arts students face unique psychological challenges, such as career uncertainty and social comparison, which directly affect their well-being. **Zenodo repository study (2023)** titled A study of mental health among arts, commerce and science college-going students highlighted differences across streams, with science students generally exhibiting higher stress and anxiety levels compared to arts and commerce students.

Statement of the Problem

Mental health has become an essential aspect of student well-being in today's competitive and demanding environment. College-going students face multiple challenges such as academic workload, examination stress, peer pressure, family expectations, career uncertainty, and adjustment to new environments. These challenges often result in mental health problems like stress, anxiety, depression, and social dysfunction, which negatively affect academic performance and overall quality of life. Gender differences play a significant role in shaping the mental health of students. Research suggests that male and female students experience and cope with psychological distress differently. Likewise, the living area of students (urban or rural) creates variations in access to educational resources, exposure to opportunities, and adaptation to the college environment. Students from rural areas may struggle with adjustment and limited facilities, whereas urban students may face intense academic competition and lifestyle stress. Furthermore, academic streams such as Arts, Commerce, and Science differ in nature, expectations, and future opportunities, which may also influence students' mental health outcomes. Despite increasing attention on student mental health, little research has examined the combined effect of gender, living area, and academic streams.

Objective of the Study

1. To study the impact of gender (male and female) on the mental health of college-going students.
2. To examine the differences in mental health between students from urban and rural areas.
3. To assess the effect of academic streams (Arts, Commerce, and Science) on the mental health of college-going students.

Hypothesis of the Study

- There is no significant difference in the mental health of male and female college-going students.
- There is no significant difference in the mental health of urban and rural college-going students.
- There is no significant difference in the mental health of college-going students across Arts, Commerce, and Science streams.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The total sample of the present study consisted of 180 college students from Patna district in Bihar Out of these, 90 were male students and 90 were female students. Each gender group included 45 urban students (Arts – 15, Commerce – 15, Science – 15) and 45 rural students (Arts – 15, Commerce – 15, Science – 15). Thus, the sample was equally distributed across gender, area of residence (urban and rural), and academic streams (Arts, Commerce, and Science). The participants were selected using the quota sampling method and belonged to the age group of 18 to 21 years (Mean age = 19.33, SD = 2.91), maintaining a 1:1 gender ratio.

Table N0.01- Sample Design

		Gender				total
		Male		Female		
Living of Area		Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	
Academic Streams	Arts	15	15	15	15	60
	Commerce	15	15	15	15	60
	Science	15	15	15	15	60
total		45	45	45	45	180

Research Design

The present study a balanced 2x2x3 factorial design was used.

Table N0.02 Research Design

		A			
		A1		A2	
B		B1	B2	B1	B2
C	C1	A1XB1XC1	A1XB2XC1	A2XB1XC1	A2XB2XC1
	C2	A1XB1XC2	A1XB2XC2	A2XB1XC2	A2XB2XC2
	C3	A1XB1XC3	A1XB2XC3	A2XB1XC3	A2XB2XC3

A. Gender A1- Male A2- Female
B. Living of Area B1- Urban B2- Rural
C. Academic Streams C1- Arts C2- Commerce C3- Science

Variables Used for Study

- Independent Variables- **Gender** - 1) Male Students 2) Female Students
- Independent Variables- **Living of Area** - 1) Urban Students 2) Rural Students
- Independent Variables- **Academic Streams** - 1) Arts Students 2) Commerce Students 3) Sciences Students
- Dependent Variables- Mental Health

Operational Definitions

1. **Gender:** In the present study, gender refers to the biological distinction between male students and female students as recorded in the college enrollment records. Participants are categorized into these two groups for the purpose of comparison.
2. **Male Students**: Male students are defined as individuals enrolled in college who identify as male and are officially registered as such in institutional records.
3. **Female Students:** Female students are defined as individuals enrolled in college who identify as female and are officially registered as such in institutional records.
4. **Living of Area:** Living of area refers to the geographical location where the students reside. For this study, students are classified into two groups: urban students and rural students, based on their permanent residence as provided in their admission records.
5. **Urban Students:** Urban students are those whose permanent residence is located in towns or cities with developed infrastructure, access to modern educational facilities, and urban lifestyle characteristics.

6. **Rural Students:** Rural students are those whose permanent residence is in villages or rural areas, characterized by smaller populations, limited infrastructure, and a primarily agrarian or semi-urban lifestyle.
7. **Academic Streams:** Academic stream refers to the specific field of study that students are pursuing at the college level. For this research, students are divided into three academic streams: Arts, Commerce, and Science.
8. **Arts Students:** Arts students are those who are pursuing higher education in subjects such as History, Political Science, Sociology, Literature, Psychology, and related disciplines under the Arts/Humanities faculty.
9. **Commerce Students:** Commerce students are those who are pursuing higher education in subjects such as Accountancy, Business Studies, Economics, Banking, and related areas under the Commerce faculty.
10. **Science Students:** Science students are those who are pursuing higher education in subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, and related disciplines under the Science faculty.
11. **Mental Health:** Mental health refers to a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being, encompassing the capacity to think, feel, and behave in ways that support functioning in daily life.

Research Tools

Table N0.03- Mental Health Battery (MHB)

Aspect	Name of the Test	Author	
Mental Health	Mental Health Battery	Singh and Gupta (2005)	**Item-** 130 items
			Scoring "Yes" or "No" response.
			Reliability - 0.67 to 0.88
			Validity - high

Procedures of Data Collection

The primary data were collected by first obtaining personal information from each student. The participants were invited in small groups of 10 to 15 students at a time. Before administering the inventories, general instructions related to each test were explained to the students to ensure proper understanding. The inventories were then distributed, and the students were asked to respond sincerely. Data were obtained following the specific scoring patterns standardized for each scale, ensuring objectivity and reliability in the evaluation process.

Statistical Treatment

At the initial stage, the data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as the Mean and Standard Deviation to summarize the distribution of scores. Further, to examine the significance of differences among the groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender on Mental Health

Hypothesis -01

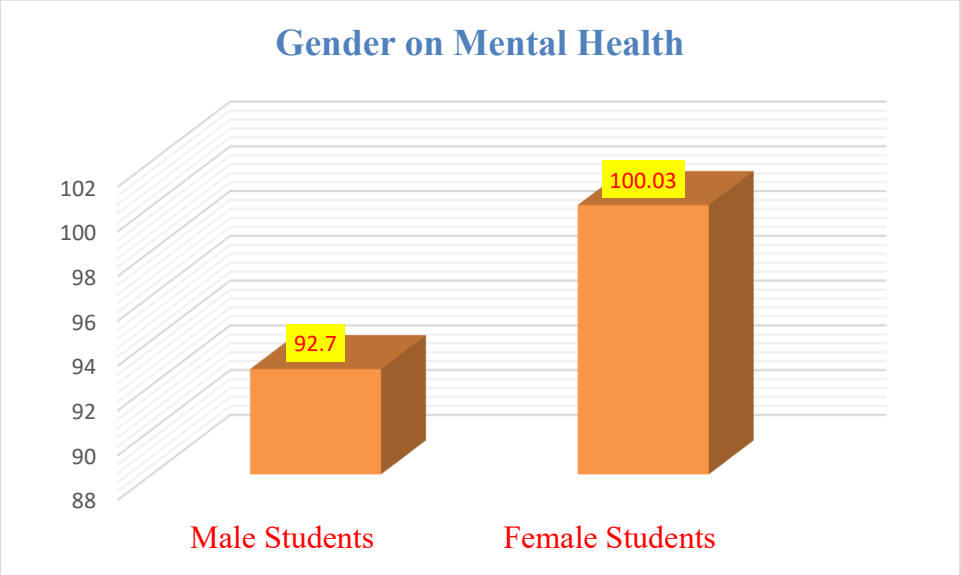
- There is no significant difference in the mental health of male and female college-going students.

Table No.04 Show the Mean, SD and F Value of Gender on Mental Health

Gender	Mean	SD	N	DF	F Value	Sign.
Male Students	92.70	6.40	90	178	23.90	$p < 0.01$
Female Students	100.03	7.00	90			

(Critical Value of f with df, 178 at 0.05 = 3.94 and at 0.01 = 6.96, NS= Not Significance)

Figure No.01. Mean of Gender on Mental Health



Observation of Table No. 04 and Figure No. 01 reveals that the mean Mental Health scores differ significantly between male and female students. The mean ± SD for Male Students was 92.70 ± 6.40, while for Female Students it was 100.03 ± 7.00. The obtained F-value was 23.90, which is statistically significant, $F(1,178) = 23.90$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the calculated F-value exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. These findings suggest that Female Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Male Students.

This finding suggests that gender plays an important role in determining mental health status during the college years. The results are consistent with previous research that has reported gender-based variations in mental health outcomes among young adults (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012; Matud, 2004). Several factors may explain why female students in this study demonstrated higher mental health scores. Women are generally more emotionally expressive and more likely to engage in social support networks, which act as protective factors for psychological well-being (Taylor et al., 2000). They also tend to use more adaptive coping strategies, such as seeking emotional and instrumental support, whereas men are often socialized to suppress emotions and rely on avoidance-based strategies (Ptacek, Smith, & Dodge, 1994). Such differences in coping styles may contribute to the

relatively better mental health observed among female students. At the same time, these findings contrast with research suggesting that females are more vulnerable to psychological distress, particularly anxiety and depression (WHO, 2020; Kessler et al., 2005). A possible explanation for this discrepancy may lie in cultural and contextual factors. In the Indian setting, female students often receive strong familial and social support during the college years, which can positively influence their mental health (Verma & Sharma, 2018). In contrast, male students may face greater academic and social pressures linked to financial responsibilities and career expectations, which can negatively impact their well-being (Mahanta & Aggarwal, 2013).

The present findings highlight the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach to mental health interventions in higher education. Colleges and universities should design programs that address the unique psychological needs of both genders. For female students, strengthening peer and family support systems may further enhance well-being, while for male students, targeted interventions that encourage emotional expression and the adoption of adaptive coping mechanisms could be particularly beneficial. The observation that female students reported better mental health than male students is noteworthy. Traditionally, studies have shown that women experience higher levels of psychological distress due to factors such as emotional sensitivity, hormonal influences, and higher prevalence of internalizing problems like anxiety and depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2012). However, the present study suggests that female students may demonstrate greater resilience during the college years, likely due to stronger social support networks, greater willingness to express emotions, and more effective coping strategies (Matud, 2004; Taylor et al., 2000). In contrast, male students may be more vulnerable due to heightened academic and social pressures, greater involvement in risk-taking behavior, and reluctance to seek help (Courtenay, 2000). These differences point to the need for tailored interventions that account for gender-specific challenges in maintaining mental health among college students.

Living of Area on Mental Health

Hypothesis-02

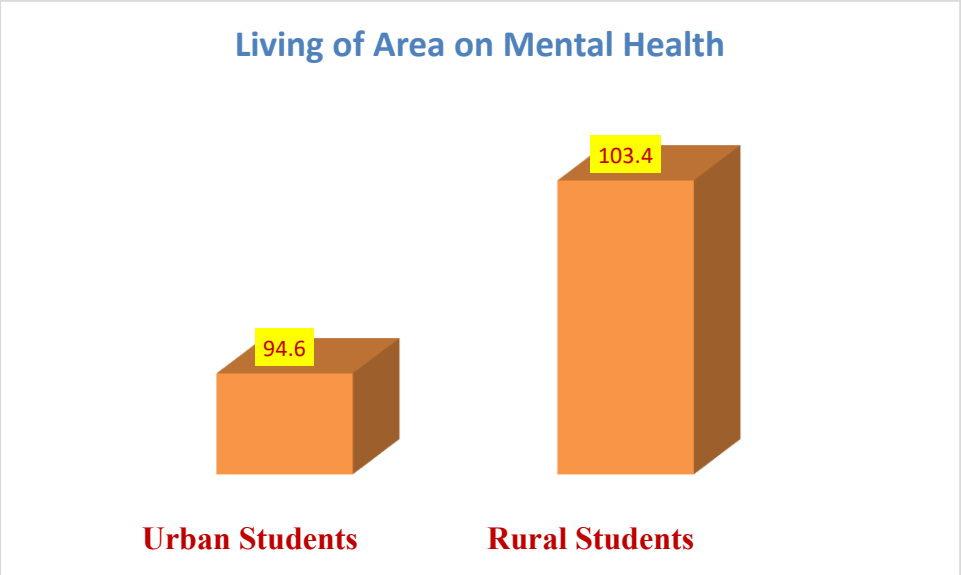
- There is no significant difference in the mental health of urban and rural college-going students.

Table No.05 Show the Mean, SD and F Value of Living of Area on Mental Health

Living of Area	Mean	SD	N	DF	F Value	Sign.
Urban Students	94.60	6.50	90	178	4.90	$p < 0.05$
Rural Students	103.40	7.10	90			

(Critical Value of f with df, 178 at 0.05 = 3.94 and at 0.01 = 6.96, NS= Not Significance)

Figure No.02. Mean of Living of Area on Mental Health



Observation of Table No. 05 and Figure No. 02 shows that the mean Mental Health scores differ between urban and rural students. The mean ± SD for Urban Students was 94.60 ± 6.50, while for Rural Students it was 103.40 ± 7.10. The obtained F-value was 4.90, which was found to be statistically significant, $F(1,178) = 4.90$, $p < 0.05$. This indicates that the calculated F-value exceeds the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. These results suggest that Rural Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Urban Students.

The present study revealed that rural students scored significantly higher on mental health compared to their urban counterparts, suggesting that place of residence plays a crucial role in shaping psychological well-being among college students. These findings are consistent with earlier research indicating that rural populations often demonstrate greater resilience and adaptive coping, largely due to stronger community ties and social support systems (Singh & Joshi, 2008; Desai & Shah, 2017). One explanation for the higher mental health of rural students lies in the presence of cohesive family structures and close-knit social networks, which provide both emotional security and a sense of belonging (Verma & Gupta, 2015). In addition, rural students may be relatively less exposed to lifestyle stressors such as overcrowding, pollution, and intense academic rivalry that are more common in urban environments (Patel et al., 2018). Urban students, despite having greater access to resources, are often vulnerable to psychological distress due to increased modernization, academic and career pressures, and a greater likelihood of social isolation (Kumar & Nehra, 2016). At the same time, the results diverge from studies that highlight the disadvantages of rural living, such as limited access to mental health services and greater stigma toward seeking psychological help (WHO, 2020; Loganathan & Murthy, 2011). This discrepancy may be attributed to cultural and contextual factors. In the present study region, rural students may have benefited from strong collectivistic cultural practices and familial support, which promote resilience despite limited professional resources. By contrast, urban students, although surrounded by healthcare facilities, may be at greater risk of stress due to fast-paced lifestyles, financial strain, and weaker social connectedness.

the finding that rural students exhibited better mental health than urban students underscores the influence of socio-environmental and lifestyle factors. Rural life, characterized by closer community bonds, fewer distractions, and a simpler pace, may help buffer against stress (Srivastava & Bhat, 2013). In contrast, urban life with its intense academic competition, financial burden, overcrowding, and social media exposure can heighten risks of anxiety and stress (Lederbogen et al., 2011). These insights point to the need for targeted interventions that strengthen social support and coping mechanisms, particularly among urban students, to safeguard mental health in higher education contexts.

Academic Streams on Mental Health

Hypothesis-03

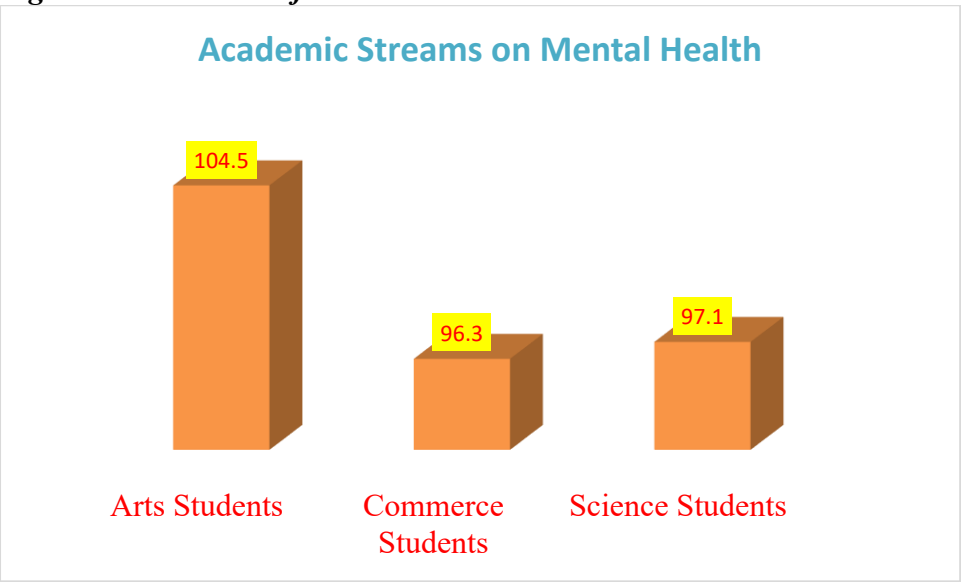
- There is no significant difference in the mental health of college-going students across Arts, Commerce, and Science streams.

Table No.06 Show the Mean, SD and F Value of Academic Streams on Mental Health

Academic Streams	Mean	SD	N	DF	F Value	Sign.
Arts Students	104.50	7.20	60	177	8.72	$p < 0.01$
Commerce Students	96.30	6.40	60			
Science Students	97.10	6.60	60			

(Critical Value of f with df, 177 at 0.05 = 3.94 and at 0.01 = 6.96, NS= Not Significance)

Figure No.03. Mean of Academic Streams on Mental Health



Observation of Table No. 06 and Figure No. 03 indicates that the mean Mental Health scores differ across academic streams. The mean ± SD for Arts Students was 104.50 ± 7.20, for Commerce Students it was 96.30 ± 6.40, and for Science Students it was 97.10 ± 6.60. The obtained F-value was 8.72, which was found to be statistically significant, $F(2,177) = 8.72$, $p < 0.01$. This indicates that the calculated F-value exceeds the critical value at the 0.01 level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. These findings suggest that Arts Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Commerce and Science Students.

The present study found significant differences in mental health across academic streams, with Arts students scoring higher than their Commerce and Science counterparts. This suggests that the choice of academic stream plays an important role in shaping the psychological well-being of college students. Prior research has also highlighted such differences, showing that variations in academic stress, coping strategies, and social support contribute to stream-wise disparities in mental health (Gupta & Khan, 1987; Deb et al., 2015). A key explanation for the higher scores among Arts students is the relatively lower academic workload and performance-related stress compared to Science and Commerce students. Science students, in particular, often face demanding study schedules, competitive examinations, and heightened career expectations in fields such as medicine and engineering, all of which can lead to anxiety and emotional strain (Misra & McKean, 2000). Commerce students, similarly, may experience stress due to competitiveness, financial pressures, and uncertainties regarding professional opportunities in business and finance (Jain & Singhai, 2018). By contrast, Arts students generally report greater academic flexibility, opportunities for creativity, and autonomy in learning, which may foster better psychological well-being (Kaur & Rani, 2019). Personality and coping styles associated with stream selection may also play a role. Arts students often exhibit higher levels of openness, creativity, and self-expression, which are linked to positive adjustment and resilience. Conversely, Science and Commerce students tend to adopt more achievement-oriented coping strategies, leaving them vulnerable to stress when expectations are not met (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Kumari & Rani, 2016). Nonetheless, some studies report contrasting findings, suggesting that Arts students may sometimes show poorer mental health outcomes due to limited career opportunities and lower social prestige compared to Science and Commerce peers (Deb et al., 2015). Such contradictions indicate that contextual factors including parental expectations, socioeconomic status, and institutional support can shape mental health outcomes differently across streams.

the present finding that Arts students demonstrated higher mental health than Commerce and Science students underscores the significant role of academic demands, career-related stress, and coping mechanisms. Arts students' relative academic freedom and opportunities for self-expression may act as protective factors, while students in Science and Commerce streams may require greater institutional and psychological support to cope with heavy workloads, performance pressure, and career uncertainties (Verma & Gupta, 1990; Deb, Strodl, & Sun, 2015).

CONCLUSION

1. Female Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Male Students.
2. Rural Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Urban Students.
3. Arts Students demonstrate significantly higher levels of Mental Health compared to Commerce and Science Students.

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Conflict of Interest

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