

## Family Support as a Protective Factor for Mental Health among Indian College Students Residing Away from Home

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### ABSTRACT

The present study examines the role of family support as a protective factor for mental health among Indian college students residing away from home. With increasing academic mobility, students face emotional, social, and psychological challenges. Family support may act as a buffer against such stressors. A quantitative cross-sectional design was used with a sample of 35 participants aged of 18-22 years. Data were collected using Family Environment Scale (FES) and Mental Health Battery (MHB). Correlational and Regression analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between family support and mental health. The findings suggest that family support contributes to better psychological well-being, although other contributing factors also exist.

**Keywords:** *Family Support, Mental Health, Students, Protective Factor, India*

In recent years, a large number of Indian students have migrated away from their homes for higher education. This transition often exposes them to new environments, academic stress, and emotional challenges. Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and adjustment problems are commonly observed among such students.

Family support plays a crucial role in providing emotional security, guidance, and coping strength. Even when students are physically distant, perceived family support can significantly influence their psychological well-being. On the other hand, lack of family support may increase vulnerability to psychological issues such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Thus, understanding family support as a protective factor becomes important in the Indian context.

For students residing away from home, family support often shifts from physical presence to emotional and virtual connections. Despite this distance, the perceived availability of support continues to act as a protective factor. The concept of a “protective factor” in mental health refers to any condition or attribute that reduces the negative effects of stress and promotes psychological well-being. Family support, in this sense, can buffer the adverse effects of academic stress, homesickness, and social isolation.

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## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although previous research has highlighted the importance of social and family support in mental health, there remains a need to examine this relationship specifically among Indian college students who are living away from their homes. This group faces unique cultural and emotional challenges that may not be fully captured in existing studies. Moreover, there is limited empirical research that investigates family support as a predictive or protective factor using statistical approaches such as regression analysis.

**Mugotitsa et al. (2025)** conduct a cross-sectional study on 1424 university students in Kenya found that family support significantly improves mental health among university students by reducing psychological distress.

**Arif Jameel et al. (2024)** This research showed that parental support and family relationships significantly enhance students' mental well-being, and strong parent-child relationships act as a protective factor against mental health issues.

**Shihong Dong et al. (2024).** The study revealed that perceived social support (especially family support) improves psychological well-being, and resilience acts as a mediator in reducing stress and emotional problems among students.

**Yan-Yan Wang et al. (2023)** The study found that family health positively influences student well-being, and psychological resilience acts as a mediator.

### *Research Gap*

1. Most studies focus on general student populations, not specifically those residing away from home.
2. Limited research in the Indian cultural context, where family bonds are stronger.
3. Few studies use standardized tools like FES and MHB together.
4. Lack of studies using regression analysis to establish predictive relationships.
5. Insufficient focus on family support as a protective factor rather than just a correlational variable.

Therefore, the present study aims to fill these gaps and explore the role of family support as a protective factor for mental health among Indian college students residing away from home. By examining this relationship, the study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how familial connections influence psychological well-being in a transitional and potentially stressful phase of life.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Hypotheses*

- **H<sub>0</sub>:** No significant relationship exists between family support and mental health.
- **H<sub>1</sub>:** A significant positive relationship exists between family support and mental health.

### *Objectives*

1. To examine the relationship between family support and mental health.
2. To assess whether family support predicts mental health.
3. To analyse the extent to which family support contributes to variations in mental health (explained Variance).

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4. To explore how distance from family influencing students psychological well-being.

### *Sample*

The sample consisted of 35 college students who were currently residing away from their homes for educational purposes. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling method, as it allowed easy accessibility and voluntary participation. The inclusion criteria required that participants must be enrolled in a college or university and living independently from their families, such as in hostels, rented accommodations, or paying guest facilities.

### *Research Design*

The present study adopted a Quantitative, cross-sectional research design. This design was considered appropriate as it allows the researcher to analyse relationships between variables at a single point in time and to determine the predictive nature of one variable over another using statistical techniques such as regression analysis.

### *Statistical Analysis*

The data collected from the participants were analysed using statistical statistics. **Pearson's Product Moment Correlation** was applied to examine the relationship between family support and mental health.

In addition to correlation analysis, a **Simple linear regression analysis** was conducted to assess the predictive role of family support on mental health.

### *Variable*

- **Independent Variable:** Family Support (FES)
- **Dependent Variable:** Mental Health (MHB)

### *Instruments*

1. **Family Environment Scale (FES)** used to assess the perceived level of family support and overall emotional atmosphere within the family. The scale consists of key dimensions such as Cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, independence, achievement orientation, and organization, which together reflect the quality of family functioning and environment.
2. **Mental Health Battery (MHB)** was used to assess the overall psychological well-being of the participants. It evaluates the socio-economic status of family and also evaluates different aspects of mental health, including emotional stability, over-all adjustment, autonomy security-insecurity, self-concept, and intelligence. Higher scores indicate better mental health and psychological adjustment.

### **Procedure**

The study was conducted in a systematic manner following the selection of participants who met the inclusion criteria. After obtaining their consent, participants were requested to complete the assessment tools in a structured sequence. Clear instructions were provided to ensure accurate and honest responses.

The responses were collected and carefully reviewed to ensure completeness before being compiled for analysis. The obtained data were then organized and prepared for statistical evaluation to examine the relationship between family support and mental health. (The

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questionnaire was sent to 60 participants out of which only 35 are selected for further scoring)

### *Data collection*

Mainly, university students who were residing away from their homes for educational purposes were recruited for the study. The participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to take part in the research. Data were collected using standardized questionnaires administered through an online survey method. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain confidential.

## RESULTS

*Table 1: Correlation Analysis*

| Variables                   | 1     | 2     |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|
| Family support (FES)        | 1     | 0.466 |
| Mental Health Battery (MHB) | 0.466 | 1     |

Correlation result ( $r=.0466$ ) indicates that there is a moderate positive correlation between FES and MHB. It shows that family environment plays an important role in influencing the psychological well-being of students.

*Table 2: Regression Analysis*

| Variable       | B     | SE    | t    | P    |
|----------------|-------|-------|------|------|
| Intercept      | 47.07 | 10.40 | 4.52 | .000 |
| Family Support | 0.569 | 0.188 | 3.02 | .004 |

The results indicate that family support significantly predicts mental health ( $p < .05$ ). The positive coefficient suggests that higher family support is associated with better mental health. The model explains 21.7% of the variance

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study provide clear evidence that family support functions as a significant protective factor in maintaining mental health among Indian college students residing away from home ( $N = 35$ ). The results of the regression analysis revealed that the model was statistically significant,  $F(1, 33) = 9.16$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that family support is a meaningful predictor of mental health. The positive regression coefficient ( $B = 0.569$ ,  $SE = 0.188$ ,  $t = 3.02$ ,  $p = .004$ ) further suggests that an increase in family support is associated with a corresponding increase in mental health scores.

In addition, the Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a moderate positive relationship between family support and mental health ( $r = 0.466$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This indicates that students who perceive higher levels of emotional and familial support tend to report better psychological well-being. Although the strength of the relationship is moderate, it is statistically significant and practically meaningful, particularly in the context of students living away from their homes.

The findings can be interpreted within the Indian socio-cultural framework, where family plays a central role in emotional development, identity formation, and psychological

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stability. For students residing away from home, the absence of direct physical support can lead to feelings of loneliness, homesickness, and adjustment difficulties. In such circumstances, perceived family support—through communication, emotional reassurance, and a sense of belonging—serves as a crucial buffer against stress and psychological distress.

Despite the significant findings, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.217$ ) indicates that family support accounts for 21.7% of the variance in mental health. This suggests that while family support is an important contributing factor, a substantial proportion (78.3%) of the variance remains unexplained by this variable alone. This highlights the multifactorial nature of mental health, which is influenced by a range of factors including peer relationships, academic demands, personality characteristics, coping strategies, and environmental conditions.

The present findings are consistent with the theoretical perspective of the buffering hypothesis, which posits that social support reduces the negative impact of stress on psychological well-being. Family support, in particular, enhances resilience and helps individuals manage emotional challenges more effectively. Even in the absence of physical proximity, the perceived availability of support continues to play a significant role in maintaining mental stability.

Furthermore, the consistency between correlation ( $r = 0.466$ ) and regression results strengthens the reliability of the findings. Both analyses indicate a positive and significant relationship, reinforcing the conclusion that family support contributes meaningfully to mental health outcomes.

### CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that family support is a significant predictor of mental health among Indian college students residing away from home. Higher levels of perceived family support are associated with better psychological well-being, highlighting its role as a protective factor against stress and adjustment difficulties.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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