

Research Paper

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

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ABSTRACT

Youth is a critical developmental period characterised by rapid physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes. During this stage, young people encounter numerous challenges that may affect their well-being, academic achievement, and interpersonal relationships. The present study aimed to assess family, college, social, and personal problems among Government Undergraduate College students and to examine their association with gender and age. A cross-sectional descriptive design was adopted. The sample consisted of 101 Government Undergraduate College students from Mysuru city selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Youth Problem Inventory (YPI) developed by Verma (1988). Descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests were employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed significant gender differences across all four domains of youth problems. Female students reported higher levels of above-average family problems (56.0%) and social problems (46.0%), whereas male students reported higher levels of severe college problems (43.1%) and social problems (51.0%). Male students also reported a higher prevalence of above-average personal problems (60.8%) compared with female students (34.0%). Significant associations were observed between gender and family problems ($\chi^2 = 11.872$, $p = .003$), college problems ($\chi^2 = 18.731$, $p < .001$), social problems ($\chi^2 = 14.715$, $p = .002$), and personal problems ($\chi^2 = 9.386$, $p = .025$). Age did not show a significant association with any problem domain. The findings emphasise the need for gender-sensitive counselling services and psychosocial support programmes in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Youth problems, Undergraduate Students, Family Problems, College Problems, Social Problems, Personal Problems, Gender Differences

Youth represents one of the most important stages of Human Development. It is a period marked by identity formation, emotional growth, educational advancement, and increasing independence. While this developmental phase offers opportunities for personal growth, it is also accompanied by numerous psychosocial challenges that may influence academic performance, mental health, and social adjustment.

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Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

The transition from adolescence to adulthood often places considerable demands on young people. Academic expectations, family responsibilities, peer relationships, financial concerns, and career-related uncertainties frequently contribute to stress and psychological distress. If these challenges are not effectively managed, they may negatively affect emotional well-being and overall quality of life.

Family problems among youth commonly include conflicts with parents, communication difficulties, financial constraints, and inadequate emotional support. College-related problems may involve academic pressure, examination stress, lack of motivation, and adjustment difficulties. Social problems encompass peer pressure, interpersonal conflicts, social isolation, and difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships. Personal problems may include anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional instability, and poor coping skills.

Gender has consistently been identified as an important factor influencing the experience and expression of psychosocial difficulties. Research suggests that female students are more likely to report emotional and interpersonal concerns, whereas male students often experience academic and behavioural challenges. Understanding these differences is essential for developing effective intervention programmes.

Although youth-related issues have gained increasing attention, limited evidence exists regarding the spectrum of youth problems among Government Undergraduate College students in Mysuru city. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to assess family, college, social, and personal problems among undergraduate students and examine their association with gender and age.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in two major theory Arnett's Theory of Emerging Adulthood (2000, 2015) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979).

The youth stage of Human Development is a unique developmental stage characterised by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and feeling in between adolescence and adulthood. Individuals experience significant transitions related to career planning, education, relationships and personal identity. Youth encounter the multiple psychosocial challenges that may be evident as family, college, social and personal problems. Family problems may emerge due to increased autonomy, changing parent-child relationships and lower socio-economic status. College-related problems may arise from academic expectations and career uncertainty. Social problems may result from peer relationships; personal problems may arise with identity exploration and adjustment issues.

The substantial gender differences observed in the current study support the proposition that youth is experienced differently by males and females due to variations in societal expectations, developmental tasks and coping strategies.

The study is further supported by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), which emphasises that developmental stages in human development is influenced by interactions between individuals and several environmental systems. According to the theory, youth problems are shaped by experiences within different ecological contexts:

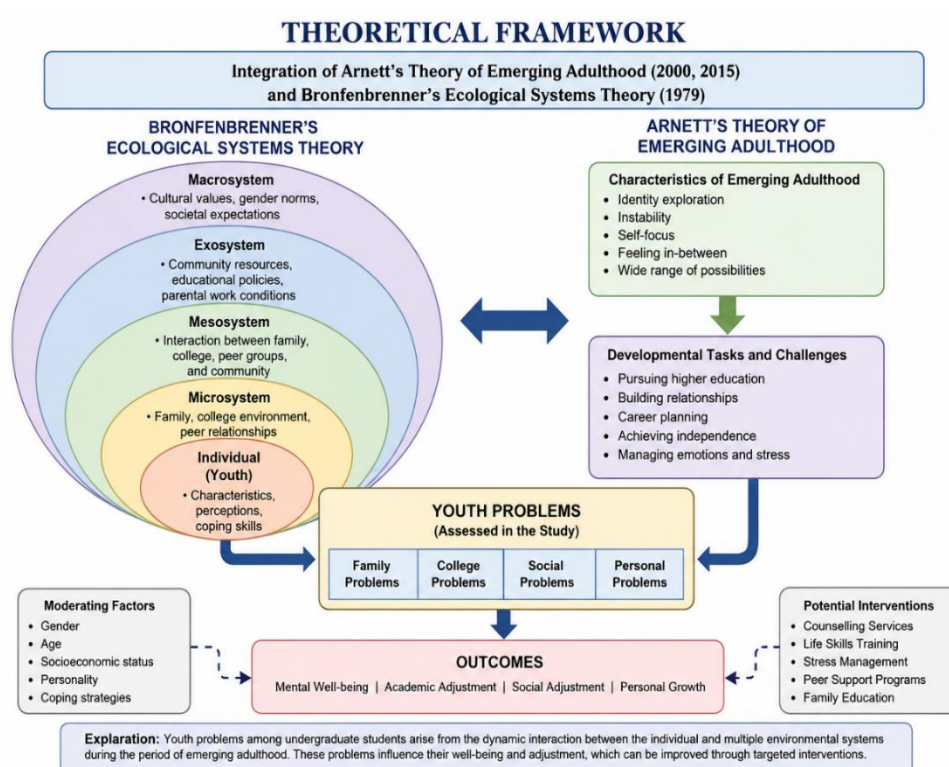
- Microsystem: Family relationships, peer interactions, and college environment.
- Mesosystem: Interactions between family, educational institutions, and peer groups.

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

- Exo-system: Community resources, educational policies, and parental occupational conditions.
- Macrosystem: Cultural values, gender norms, and societal expectations.
- Chronosystem: Developmental transitions occurring during the period of emerging adulthood.

The four domains assessed in the Youth Problem Inventory—family, college, social, and personal problems—represent different ecological influences affecting undergraduate students. The significant associations observed between gender and these problem domains highlight the role of sociocultural and environmental factors in shaping youth experiences.

Together, Arnett's Theory of Emerging Adulthood and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of youth problems among undergraduate students.



Objectives of the Study

1. To assess family, college-related, social and personal problems among Samples.
2. To examine the association between gender and youth problem domains.

Need for the Study

Youth constitute a significant segment of the population and play a crucial role in the social, economic, and developmental progress of a nation. The UG years represent a vital developmental period during which young individuals experience transitions related to education, career planning, interpersonal relationships, and personal identity. While these transitions offer opportunities for growth and self-exploration, they also expose students to

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

various psychosocial challenges that may adversely affect their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being.

In the current era, concerns regarding the psychological well-being of college students have increased significantly. Changing family structures, academic competition, peer pressure, social expectations, financial constraints, and uncertainty regarding future career have emerged as vital stressors affecting youths. These challenges may manifest as family, college, social, and personal problems, which, if left unaddressed, can contribute to mental health issues, emotional instability, lack of trust in relationships, etc.

Studies have demonstrated that youth problems are multidimensional and influenced by a complex interaction of individual, familial, social, and educational factors. However, the nature and severity of these problems often vary according to cultural context, gender, and educational environment. Although several studies have examined adolescent and youth well-being, limited empirical evidence is available regarding the spectrum of youth problems among undergraduate College students in Mysuru city. Students studying in government institutions may encounter unique challenges related to socioeconomic background, educational resources, career aspirations, and psychosocial support systems, making it important to understand their specific experiences.

Furthermore, identifying gender-based differences in youth problems is essential for developing targeted interventions and support services. Understanding whether male and female students experience different types of family, college, social, and personal difficulties can help educational institutions design effective counselling programmes and preventive mental health initiatives.

The present study was therefore undertaken to assess the prevalence and nature of family, college, social, and personal problems among Government Undergraduate College students and to examine their association with gender. The findings are expected to contribute to the existing frame of knowledge on youth development and provide valuable insights for academicians, counsellors, mental health professionals, and researchers in planning appropriate intervention strategies for promoting student well-being and successful adjustment during emerging adulthood.

METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional study design was adopted and conducted among 101 undergraduate students from a government college in Mysuru City, consisting of 50 male and 51 female students aged between 19 and 22 years. A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit participants.

Inclusion Criteria

- Students enrolled in Government Undergraduate Colleges.
- Students aged between 19 and 22 years.
- Students willing to participate in the study.

Tool Description

Youth Problem Inventory (YPI)

The Youth Problem Inventory, developed by Verma (1988) was used to assess youth problems. The inventory evaluates four major domains:

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

- Family Problems
- College Problems
- Social Problems
- Personal Problems

The inventory categorises respondents into different levels of problem severity based on raw score converted into percentile rank, final score and interpretation.

Data Collection Procedure

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and confidentiality was assured. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents before participation.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were tabulated and analysed using SPSS, descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests. Statistical significance was considered at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 101)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	50.5
	Female	50	49.5
Age (Years)	19–22 years	101	100.0
Educational Status	Government Undergraduate Students	101	100.0

Table 1 indicates demographic details of the study participants, nearly equal percentage (50.5) of males and (49.5) females were recruited as samples who were between the age group 19 and 22 years studying undergraduate at a government college.

Table 2: Distribution of samples according to Family, College, Social, and Personal Problems (N = 101)

Level of Problems	Family Problems n (%)	College Problems n (%)	Social Problems n (%)	Personal Problems n (%)
Above Average	45 (44.6)	43 (42.6)	29 (28.7)	48 (47.5)
Average	9 (8.9)	33 (32.7)	12 (11.9)	21 (20.8)
Below Average	—	—	19 (18.8)	21 (20.8)
High	47 (46.5)	25 (24.8)	41 (40.6)	11 (10.9)
Total	101 (100.0)	101 (100.0)	101 (100.0)	101 (100.0)

Table 2 presents the distribution of samples according to the levels of family, college, social, and personal problems. Nearly half of the students (46.5%) reported high family problems, while 44.6% reported above-average family problems. With regard to college problems, 42.6% of students reported above-average problems and 24.8% reported high problems. In the social domain, 40.6% of students experienced high social problems,

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

followed by 28.7% who reported above-average social problems. Personal problems were predominantly reported at the above-average level (47.5%), whereas only 10.9% of students reported high personal problems. Overall, family and social problems emerged as the most prominent concerns among the samples.

Table 3: Association between Gender and Family Problems

Family Problems	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	χ^2 df p
Above Average	28 (56.0)	17 (33.3)	11.872 (2) 0.003
Average	0 (0.0)	9 (17.6)	
High	22 (44.0)	25 (49.0)	

Table 3 indicates that female students reported a higher prevalence of above-average family problems, whereas male students reported a greater proportion of high family problems. A statistically significant association was observed between gender and family problems ($\chi^2 = 11.872$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.003$).

Table 4: Association between Gender and College Problems

College Problems	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	χ^2 df p
Above Average	27 (54.0)	16 (31.4)	18.731 (2) 0.001
Average	20 (40.0)	13 (25.5)	
High	3 (6.0)	22 (43.1)	

Table 4 reveals that, male students reported substantially Majority (54%) of female students have above average level, 40% of Average level and negligible 6% of high-level problems were faced by female students whereas majority of (43.1%) of high level, 25.5% of average level and above average level (31.4%) of male students had reported that college problems. A highly significant association was found between gender and college problems ($\chi^2 = 18.731$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5: Association between Gender and Social Problems

Social Problems	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	χ^2 df p
Above Average	23 (46.0)	6 (11.8)	14.715 (3) 0.002
Average	4 (8.0)	8 (15.7)	
Below Average	8 (16.0)	11 (21.6)	
High	15 (30.0)	26 (51.0)	

Table 5 indicates that female students reported higher levels of above-average social problems, while male students demonstrated a higher-level prevalence (51%) of social problems. Higher (21.6%) of male were had below average level social problems compared to female (16%). A significant association was observed between gender and social problems ($\chi^2 = 14.715$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.002$).

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

Table 6: Association between Gender and Personal Problems

Personal Problems	Female n (%)	Male n (%)	χ^2 df p
Above Average	17 (34.0)	31 (60.8)	9.386 (3) 0.025
Average	12 (24.0)	9 (17.6)	
Below Average	12 (24.0)	9 (17.6)	
High	9 (18.0)	2 (3.9)	

Table 6 reveals that male students reported a higher prevalence of above-average personal problems than 34% female students. Equal percentage of average (24%) and below average level of female are having personal problems compared to male average (17.6%) and below average level. A statistically significant association was observed between gender and personal problems ($\chi^2 = 9.386$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.025$).

DISCUSSION

The current study explored the spectrum of youth problems among Government Undergraduate College students in Mysuru city. The findings reveals that significant gender differences across family, college, social, and personal domains. Female students reported higher levels of family-related problems. This may be attributed to stronger emotional involvement in family relationships, greater sensitivity to family expectations, and traditional gender-role socialization. Research by Matud (2004) found that women experience greater interpersonal and family-related stress than men due to their stronger orientation toward relationship maintenance. Similarly, Misra and McKean (2000) reported that female college students perceived higher levels of stress arising from family and social relationships compared to their male counterparts.

College-related problems were significantly higher among male students. The findings suggest that male students may face greater difficulties in academic adjustment, examination stress, and career-related concerns. Supporting this observation, Brougham et al. (2009) reported that male students often experience greater stress related to academic performance and career expectations, although they are less likely to seek support.

Similarly, a research study found that male students demonstrated poorer academic adjustment and coping strategies during college transition. Significant gender differences were also observed in social problems. Female students reported higher levels of above-average social difficulties, whereas male students experienced more social problems. These differences may reflect gender variations in socialisation patterns, peer relationships, and coping mechanisms (Dyson and Renk, 2006). Research by Rose and Rudolph (2006) suggests that females are more sensitive to interpersonal concerns and social evaluation, whereas males tend to exhibit externalising behaviours when confronted with severe social stressors. Similar findings were reported by Leadbeater et al. (1999), who observed that adolescent girls experienced more relational difficulties while boys exhibited more severe behavioural and social adjustment problems.

Personal problems were more prevalent among male students. The findings may indicate challenges related to emotional regulation, self-concept, and help-seeking behaviours. Studies have consistently shown that men are less likely to seek psychological support and

Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

often rely on avoidant coping strategies. Addis and Mahalik (2003) reported that masculine gender norms frequently discourage help-seeking, increasing vulnerability to personal and emotional difficulties. Likewise, Eisenberg et al. (2007) found that male college students were significantly less likely to access mental health services despite experiencing psychological distress.

No significant age-related differences were observed in any domain of youth problems. This suggests that students within the undergraduate age range experience similar developmental challenges regardless of age. This finding is consistent with the developmental perspective proposed by Jeffrey Arnett (2000), who described the period between 18 and 25 years as "emerging adulthood," characterized by common developmental tasks, identity exploration, educational pressures, and psychosocial challenges. Similarly, Schulenberg et al. (2004) reported relatively homogeneous stress experiences among college students within this age range.

Recommendations

1. Further studies may include larger and more diverse samples.
2. Longitudinal studies can provide a better understanding of changes in youth problems over time.
3. Intervention studies should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of counselling programmes.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals significant gender differences in family, college, social, and personal problems among Government Undergraduate College students. Female students reported greater family and social concerns, whereas male students demonstrated higher levels of college and personal problems. Age did not significantly influence the occurrence of youth problems. The findings underscore the importance of wide-ranging counselling services and psychosocial support programmes within higher education institutions to enhance student well-being and academic success.

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Gender Disparities in Family, College, Social and Personal Problems among Undergraduate College Students in Mysuru City

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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