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# The prevalence and socioeconomic correlates of depressive and anxiety symptoms in a group of 1,940 Serbian university students

Prevalencija i uticaj socioekonomskih faktora na nastanak depresivnosti i anksioznosti na uzorku od 1 940 studenata u Srbiji

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## Abstract

**Background/Aim.** Mental health of university students is under increasing concern worldwide, because they face challenges which predisposes them to depression and anxiety. The aim of this study was to identify demographic and socioeconomic variables associated with depressive and anxiety symptoms among university students. **Methods.** This cross-sectional study on 1,940 university students was performed using a questionnaire including demographic and socioeconomic variables, Beck Depression Inventory and Beck Anxiety Inventory. **Results.** The prevalence of depressive symptoms in students was 23.6%, while the prevalence of anxiety symptoms was 33.5%. The depressive symptoms were significantly related to the study year ( $p = 0.002$ ), type of faculty ( $p = 0.014$ ), satisfaction with college major choice ( $p < 0.001$ ), satisfaction with grade point average ( $p < 0.001$ ). Female students (odds ratio – OR = 1.791, 95% confidence interval – CI = 1.351–2.374), older students (OR = 1.110, 95% CI = 1.051–1.172), students who reported low family economic situation (OR = 2.091, 95%

CI = 1.383–3.162), not owning the room (OR = 1.512, 95% CI = 1.103–2.074), dissatisfaction with graduate education (OR = 1.537, 95% CI = 1.165–2.027) were more likely to show depressive symptoms. The anxiety symptoms were significantly related to study year ( $p = 0.034$ ), type of faculty ( $p < 0.001$ ), family economic situation ( $p = 0.011$ ), college residence ( $p = 0.001$ ) satisfaction with the college major choice ( $p = 0.001$ ), and satisfaction with graduate education ( $p < 0.001$ ). Female students (OR = 1.901, 95% CI = 1.490–2.425), and students who reported parents high expectations of academic success (OR = 1.290, 95% CI = 1.022–1.630) were more likely to show anxiety symptoms. **Conclusion.** This is one of the largest study examining mental disorders in a sample of university students in Serbia. These findings underscore the importance of early detections of mental problems and prevention interventions in university students.

**Key words:** depression; anxiety; students; signs and symptoms; prevalence; socioeconomic factors; serbia.

## Apstrakt

**Uvod/Cilj.** Mentalno zdravlje studenata sve više postaje sfera interesovanja na globalnom nivou, jer sučeljavanje sa brojnim životnim situacijama koje nosi ovaj period života ubrzava nastanak depresivnih i anksioznih poremećaja. **Metode.** Istraživanje je sprovedeno kao epidemiološka studija preseka na uzorku od 1 940 studenata, korišćenjem upitnika koji je pored demografskih i socioekonomskih karakteristika obuhvatao Bekovu skalu za procenu depresivnosti i Bekovu skalu za procenu anksioznosti. **Rezultati.** Na ispitivanom uzorku, prevalencija depresivnih simptoma iznosila je 23,6% a preva-

lencija anksioznih simptoma 33,5%. Utvrđeno je da postoji statistički značajna povezanost nastanka depresivnih simptoma sa godinom studija ( $p = 0,002$ ), vrstom fakulteta ( $p = 0,014$ ), zadovoljstvom izborom fakulteta ( $p < 0,001$ ) i zadovoljstvom prosečnom ocenom ( $p < 0,001$ ). Regresionom analizom dobijeno je da su ženski pol (OR = 1,791, 95% CI = 1,351–2,374), stariji uzrast (OR = 1,110, 95% CI = 1,051–1,172), loš imovni status porodice (OR = 2,091, 95% CI = 1,383–3,162), neposredovanje svoje sobe (OR = 1,512, 95% CI = 1,103–2,074), nezadovoljstvo uslovima studiranja (OR = 1,537, 95% CI = 1,165–2,027) pokazatelji nastanka depresivnih simptoma. U pogledu anksioznih simptoma, utvrđena















