UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Resilience among 1st Year University Students with Depression and Anxiety

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

Background

- Increasing number of suicides and suicidal ideation in universities including Wits

- Raised need to assess the burden of common mental disorders (CMDs) among students

- Wits Mental health project – Fit Minds Study

Fit Minds Study is a students' mental health study which is conducted annually at Wits University by the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit (AIRU) since 2019.

- **Increased number** of adolescents and young adults with **poor mental health** globally.
- University students are at an increased risk.
- 1st year students at an increased and an extended risk of stress

01

Introduction

First year student

- Transitioning
- New chapter
- Adjustments
- Independent young adulthood
- New environment of learning
- Interpersonal relationships

This can be a daunting and stressful experience

These experiences lead to:

Unusually intense, chronic, uncontrollable and overwhelming stress

Burn-out

Depression

Anxiety

Resilience

- It is the best predictors of mental health status of an individual
- a defence mechanism which people with endangered well-being thrive when facing adversity
- Poor stress resilience = increased risk of poor mental health

Objective

To assess the levels and predictors of resilience of first year university students with Common Mental Disorders (CMDs) – depression and anxiety

02

Methodology

- Wits Fit Minds Study data collected Aug/Sept 2020
- Research design: Cross-sectional study employing quantitative methods
- Self-administered online survey using RedCap
- Tools used;
  - Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) – Depression
  - Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) - Anxiety
  - Brief Resilience Scale (BRS-5) – the ability to bounce back (resilience)
- Sample: 5 494 first time, first year students registered in 2020
- Response rate: 1 966 (36%)
- Descriptive Analysis

Results 03

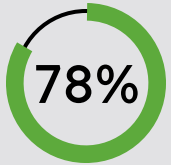
Demographic

Gender

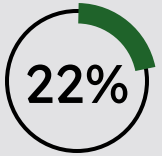
35%

65%

Age groups

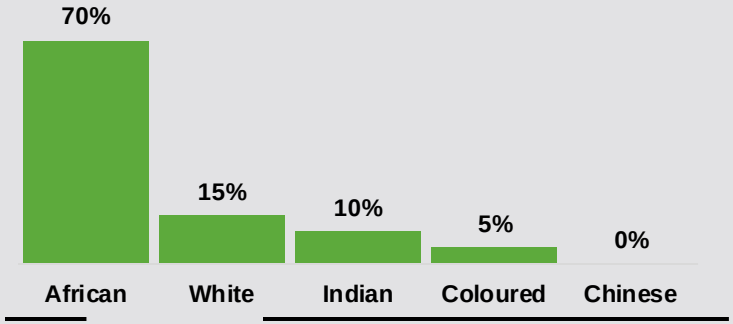


17 -18 years



19+ years

Race



Place of res

36%

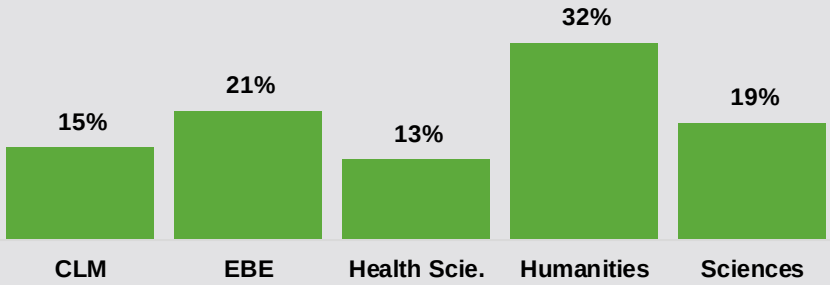
Wits Res

64%

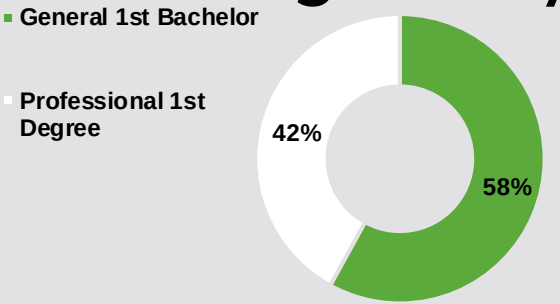
Home/Pvt. Accomodation

University

Faculty

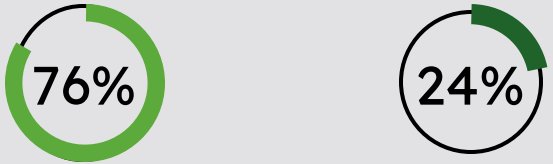


Program type



undergraduate occasional at 0.31%

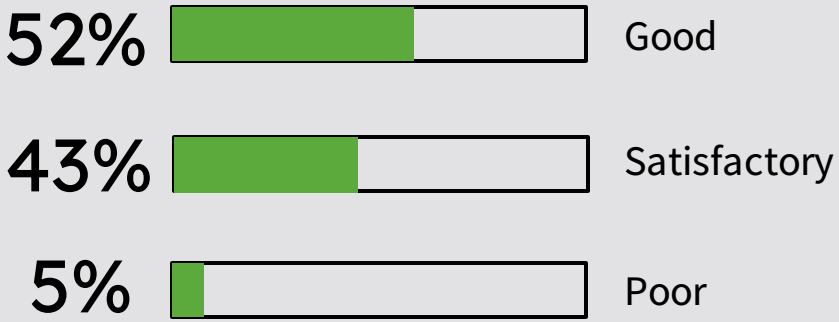
Progress



Progressed

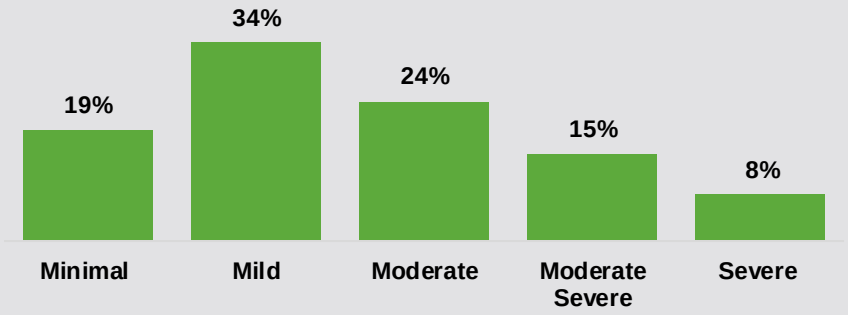
Did not progress

Wits experience

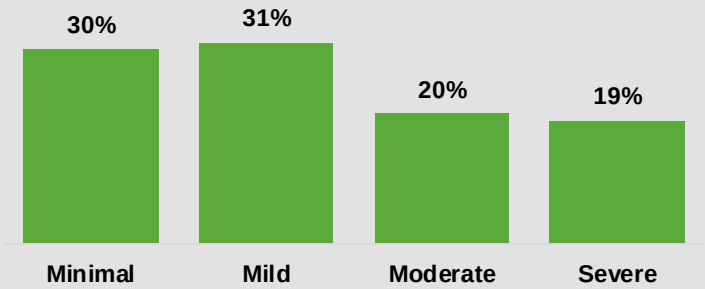


Mental Health

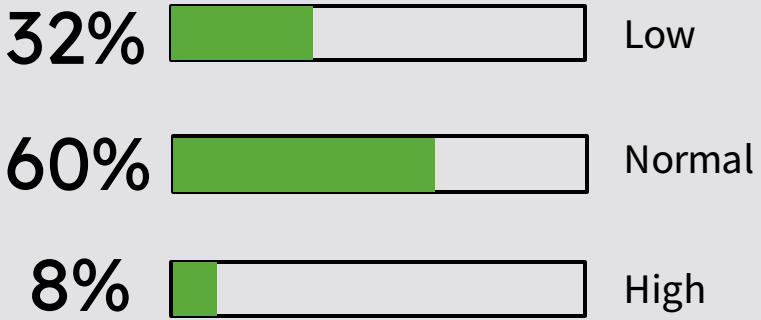
PHQ-9



GAD-7



BRS-5

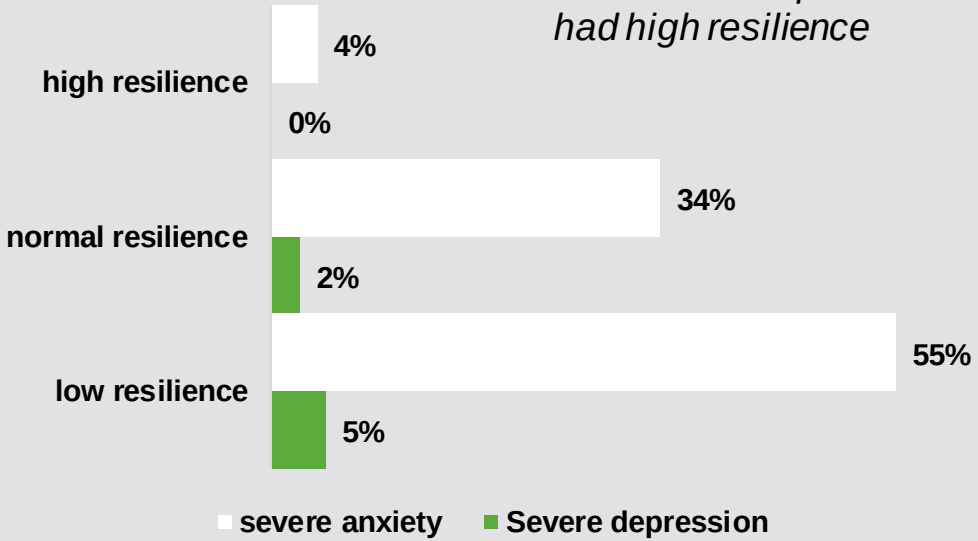


Demographic factors	Severe Depression (153)	Severe Anxiety (373)	Low resilience (621)
Gender			
Male	25%	25%	27%
Gender neutral	0%	0%	0%
Female	75%	75%	73%
Race			
African	78%	74%	72%
White	9%	13%	12%
Indian	11%	9%	10%
Coloured	3%	5%	4%
Chinese	0%	0%	0%
Age groups			
17-18 Years	79%	78%	77%
19 Years +	21%	22%	23%
Place of residence			
University residence	39%	41%	39%
Home/Pvt. Accomodation	61%	59%	61%

University factors	Severe Depression (153)	Severe Anxiety (373)	Low resilience (621)
Faculty			
CLM	10%	12%	10%
EBE	22%	21%	20%
HS	12%	13%	14%
HUM	35%	32%	36%
SC	21%	22%	19%
Program type			
General academic 1st bachelors degree	51%	56%	54%
Professional academic 1st bachelors degree	48%	43%	46%
Progress outcome			
Not permitted to proceed	29%	24%	27%
Permitted to proceed	71%	76%	73%
Wits Experience			
Good	19%	36%	41%
Satisfactory	18%	9%	51%
Poor	63%	55%	8%

CMDs and Resilience

None of the students with severe depression had high resilience



04

Conclusions

- 8% of the first year students had symptoms of severe depression
- 19% of the first year students had symptoms of severe anxiety
- 68% had normal to high resilience - they have the ability to bounce from stressful situations
- Most females had severe anxiety and severe depression but low resilience (at risk)
- African students had high % of severe depression and anxiety and most had low resilience

All these results show that, when the resilience is low, then depression and anxiety is severe.
Therefore, this study recommends that initiation of programs that can strengthen students resilience in order to eliminate their chance of severe anxiety and depression - this will ultimately promote the students success

Our team

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BMC Public Health

RESEARCH Open Access

The relationship between depression symptoms and academic performance among first-year undergraduate students at a South African university: a cross-sectional study

F Wagner[1*], RG Wagner[2], U Kolanisi[3], LP Makuapane[1], M Masango[4] and FX Gómez-Olivé[2]

Thank you