



Cross-Sectional Study of the Prevalence of Anxiety Disorders in Urban Versus Rural Populations

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(Received: 04 August 2023

Revised: 12 September 2023

Accepted: 06 October 2023)

KEYWORDS

Anxiety Disorders, Cross-Sectional Study, DSM-5 criteria, Mental Health, Prevalence, Rural population, Urban population

ABSTRACT:

Background: Rural and urban populations have different anxiety disorder rates, making them a public health issue. Understanding these differences is necessary to build effective, geographic-specific therapies.

Methods: This cross-sectional retrospective study was conducted at MGMMC & LSK Hospital, involving 100 participants equally divided between urban and rural areas. Data were collected from medical records using DSM-5 criteria to diagnose anxiety disorders. The statistical study used descriptive statistics and Chi-square testing to compare varying prevalence rates.

Results: The number of people with anxiety disorders was much higher in rural places (64% vs. 36%) compared to cities. The groups had very different levels of socioeconomic class, as shown by demographic analysis. A statistical analysis showed that there is a big difference ($p < 0.05$) in the number of people with anxiety disorders living in cities compared to those living in rural areas.

Conclusion: This study shows that rural anxiety problems are rising and require tailored treatments. These studies should focus on mental health care access, awareness, and socioeconomic inequities. These approaches can help public health campaigns improve underprivileged communities' mental health and reduce anxiety disorders.

Introduction

Background on Anxiety Disorders

Some of the most common mental illnesses are anxiety disorders, which affect millions worldwide. Phobias, SAD, GAD, and PA lie under this umbrella [1]. Genetics, environment, and society contribute to anxiety disorder prevalence. Anxiety disorders can affect one's

relationships, work, and health as well as daily life. Even though anxiety disorders are frequent, misdiagnosis and undertreatment cause unnecessary suffering and damage

Understanding anxiety disorders and their prevalence in different demographics is important for several reasons. Environmental factors affecting anxiety disorders vary

between rural and urban areas. Urbanites' hectic lifestyles, pollution, and social isolation may increase their anxiety. Social stigma, economic pressures, and lack of mental health care may be more frequent in rural areas [3]. Research into these variances may assist target public health policies and financing. If politicians and healthcare providers recognise rural and urban needs, mental health policies can be more effective. In cities, interventions that reduce environmental stress and social isolation can be effective, while those in remote locations can improve mental health treatment and community networks. Such research fills mental health epidemiological gaps. Their findings may aid researchers in developing more complex hypotheses on anxiety disorder origins and persistence.



Making treatment and prevention methods culturally and contextually suitable improves them.

Objective

- To determine the prevalence of anxiety disorders in urban and rural populations.
- To compare the prevalence rates of anxiety disorders between urban and rural areas.
- To investigate differences in access to mental health services between urban and rural settings.

Literature Review

Many studies have found considerable regional and population-specific variances in anxiety disorder incidence. Anxiety disorders affect 7.3% of the world's population, according to [4] meta-analysis. They are one of the most frequent mental illnesses worldwide. Cities, which are famously dirty and socioeconomically disadvantaged, have substantially higher prevalence rates than developed nations [5]. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that 18% of US people have anxiety disorders (NIMH, 2023). Panic disorder and Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) afflict 5-7% of the UK and German population [6].

Urban vs. Rural Mental Health

Differences between rural and urban locations affect mental health outcomes like anxiety disorder rates. [7] found that metropolitan areas have higher stress and anxiety rates due to pollution, social isolation, and population density.

Metropolitan locations have higher mental health treatment need because city life's fast pace and competition can increase anxiety symptoms. Rural mental health is affected by distinct factors. In rural areas, cultural stigma, economic inequality, and a lack of mental health experts may prevent anxiety disorders from being recognised and treated [8]. Economic instability, unemployment, and isolation may increase stress in rural populations, making them more susceptible to anxiety disorders.

Factors Influencing Anxiety Disorders in Different Populations

Genetics, biochemistry, psychology, and environment all affect anxiety disorders. Genetics and family history strongly influence anxiety disorders [9]. Neurotransmitters like norepinephrine and serotonin affect anxiety disorders. Traumatic childhood, unpleasant life events, and persistent stress increase the risk of anxiety disorders. [10] found that cultural and societal norms affect how anxiety symptoms are perceived and expressed, which affects whether people seek help and how well treatment works. Socioeconomic position, education, and healthcare access also affect anxiety disorders. Social determinants of health must be addressed in mental health policy and practice [11].

Understanding these differences is crucial to tailoring anxiety disorder therapies and support networks to rural and urban populations. By understanding the intricate relationships between biological, environmental, and social factors, researchers and clinicians can enhance chronic disease prevention, detection, and treatment.

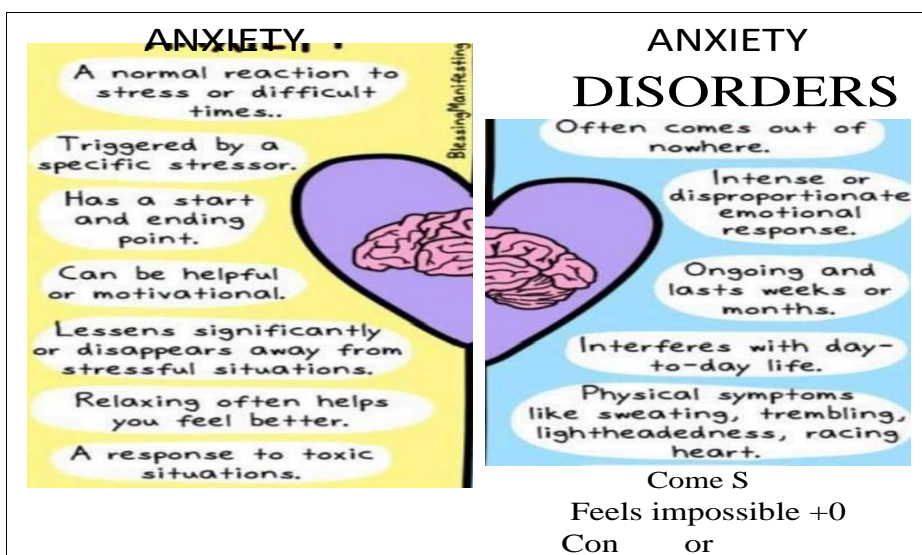


Figure 1 Anxiety disorder (Source: [12])



Methods

Study Design

This study was conducted as a cross-sectional analysis. The cross-sectional retrospective design allowed for the examination of the prevalence of anxiety disorders at a specific point in time, analyzing existing data from medical records over a one-year period. This approach provided a comprehensive overview of anxiety disorder prevalence in the selected populations.

Setting

The MGMMC and LSK hospitals hosted the study. Population, transportation, and economic considerations determined rural or urban status in the study. People prefer highly populated cities with greater public services. We sought rural areas with low population densities and robust agricultural economies.

Sample Size

The study included 100 persons, 50 rural and 50 urban. This balanced representation allowed confident comparison of the two populations.

Inclusion Criteria

- Individuals aged 18 years and above.
- Participants who had visited MGMMC & LSK Hospital within the study period and had complete medical records.
- Individuals diagnosed with any form of anxiety disorder according to the DSM-5 criteria.

Exclusion Criteria

- Participants with incomplete medical records.
 - Individuals with comorbid psychiatric disorders that could confound the diagnosis of anxiety disorders.
 - Patients from transitional or peri-urban areas that did not fit strictly into urban or rural classifications.
- Data Collection and Analysis

Medical records from MGMMC and LSK Hospital were retrospectively accessed. A thorough record review found anxiety disorders diagnosed during the research period. Gender, age, socioeconomic status, medical history (including anxiety disorder diagnoses), and critical data points from these records were extracted.

Anxiety disorders were identified using DSM-5 criteria. A thorough medical history checks confirmed compliance with these criteria.

Statistical Analysis

Statistical analysis was done using SPSS or R. The study focused on urban and rural anxiety disorder rates. Descriptive data included demographic factor and prevalence rate frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Rural and urban anxiety disorder prevalence rates were compared using chi-square testing. T-tests or ANOVA were used to compare demographics and other factors between groups. A p-value below 0.05 indicated statistical significance. Tables and figures showed prevalence rate differences and other key findings. The research also used confidence intervals to assess prevalence rates' reliability.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The study included 100 participants, with an equal representation of 50 individuals from urban areas and 50 from rural areas. The demographic characteristics of the study participants are summarized in Table I.

Table I demonstrates that an equitable age and gender distribution was found across urban and rural study participants. The mean age of rural participants was 36.7 years (SD=11.8), compared to 35.4 years (SD=12.3) for urban participants. With 48% men and 52% women, urban and rural groupings were similar. A clear distinction occurred in socioeconomic status (SES). The urban population was mostly middle class (60%), low class (24%), and high class (16%). Rural residents were 60% low-SES, whereas middle-class (36%) and upperclass (4% of participants) socioeconomic statuses were substantially smaller. Given the known links between socioeconomic variables and mental health outcomes, this discrepancy between urban and rural participants may affect anxiety disorder prevalence and expression.



Prevalence of Anxiety Disorders

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants

Demographic Variable	Urban (n=50)	Rural (n=50)	Total (n=100)
Age (years)			
Mean (SD)	35.4 (12.3)	36.7 (11.8)	36.0 (12.0)
Gender			
Male	24	26 (52%)	50 (50%)
Female	26 (52%)	24	50 (50%)
Socioeconomic Status			
Low	12 (24%)	30 (60%)	42 %
Middle	30 (60%)	18 (36%)	48 (48%)
High	8 (16%)		10 (10%)

Table 2 Prevalence of Anxiety Disorders in Urban and Rural Populations

Population Group	Number of Participants	Number with Anxiety Disorders	Prevalence Rate
Urban	50	18	36
Rural	50	32	64

Table 2 shows urban and rural anxiety disorder rates. Of the 50 urban group members, 18 (36%), reported anxiety disorders. In contrast, 64% of rural participants 32 out of 50—were diagnosed with anxiety. These facts suggest

Overall, rural communities have more anxiety disorders than urban ones. To reduce rural anxiety disorders, mental health treatments and resources should be tailored to rural communities due to this disproportionate impact.

Table 3 Comparative Analysis of Anxiety Disorder Prevalence

Comparison	Chi-square Value	p-value	Confidence Interval (95%)
Urban vs. Rural	8.645	0.003	1.25 - 2.88



Discussion

Rural areas had 64% higher anxiety problems than metropolitan areas (36%). Socioeconomic status, healthcare accessibility, and environmental stress may increase mental health issues in rural populations. The demographic analysis found that low-income people were more likely to live in rural areas. Rural anxiety disorder rates

may be linked to socioeconomic inequality. Financial hardship, lack of mental health care, and social isolation can worsen mental health issues in rural locations. According to study, farming, social isolation, and a lack of recreation may increase anxiety in rural settings. Rural individuals may be reluctant to seek treatment for anxiety problems due to mental health stigma.

Table 4 Comparison Table

Study	Study Type	Sample Size	Findings
Present Study	Cross-sectional, Retrospective	100 (50 urban, 50 rural)	Higher prevalence of anxiety disorders in rural population (64%) compared to urban population (36%)
Study 1 [13]	Cross-sectional	500 (250 urban, 250 rural)	Rural residents had higher anxiety rates (55%) than urban residents (40%); limited access to mental health services cited
Study 2 [14]	Cross-sectional, Prospective	300 (150 urban, 150 rural)	Rural population showed a higher prevalence of anxiety disorders (60%) compared to urban (35%); socioeconomic factors significant contributors
Study 3 [15]	Longitudinal	200 (100 urban, 100 rural)	Anxiety disorders more prevalent in rural areas (50%) vs. urban areas (30%); rural stressors and isolation highlighted

The comparison table compares the current study's findings to three rural-urban anxiety disorder investigations. The current cross-sectional retrospective study of 100 participants (50 urban and 50 rural) found that rural areas had more anxiety disorders (64% vs. 36%). This is consistent with [13], who reported that 55% of rural inhabitants have anxiety due to mental health service gaps. [14] observed that urban areas had 35% prevalence and rural areas 60%, highlighting the socioeconomic divide. [15] found a 50% prevalence in rural locations compared to 30% in metropolitan areas, citing social isolation and rural pressures. These studies show how far rural areas fall behind metropolitan areas in mental health and how severely they need specific interventions to close this gap.

Implications for Public Health

To improve public health, we need to deal with anxiety disorders in both cities and rural places. Because anxiety disorders are more common in rural areas, they need special mental health services. Interventions in public health may include. More rural mental health clinics and telehealth programmes can improve care. Mobile health units and community health programmes can reach rural populations.

Raising awareness of anxiety disorders and decreasing mental health stigma is crucial. Rural populations can learn about anxiety disorders and the significance of treatment through public health campaigns. Addressing socioeconomic conditions that cause anxiety disorders can help. Economic development, financial assistance, and job creation in rural areas can alleviate stress and promote mental health. Social support networks and community engagement can reduce isolation and give emotional support. Local community centres and organisations can help create a friendly environment.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The retrospective design relies on existing medical records, may not capture all cases of anxiety disorders or may include incomplete data. The sample size of 100 participants, while providing a balanced representation, is relatively small and may not fully represent the broader population. Additionally, potential biases in medical record documentation and diagnosis practices could affect the accuracy of the findings.



Future Research

Future research should examine anxiety disorder prevalence and aetiology by group. Larger, prospective trials would provide more data and reveal trends. To customise therapies, rural and urban stresses and protective variables must be studied. Qualitative study involving urban and rural people using focus groups and interviews may illuminate anxiety disorder challenges. Investigating cultural characteristics, social support, and healthcare accessibility in different situations might improve public health strategies. The study found that rural regions have more anxiety disorders and unique issues, therefore reducing mental health disparities is vital. If they identify and address these inequalities, public health initiatives can better promote mental health in diverse communities.

Conclusion

The data show that the number of people with anxiety disorders is much higher in rural areas than in cities. The results show how important it is to start working right away to make mental health care and support more fair for everyone, no matter where they live. We can lower the higher rates of anxiety disorders in rural places by making more people aware of the problem, making it easier for people to get treatment, and addressing the socioeconomic issues. Through targeted interventions, public health programmes can improve the mental health of people in both cities and rural areas by lowering the number of people who have anxiety disorders.

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