

# The Comparison of Subjective Psychosomatic Responses of Turkish Medical Students With Time-Elapse\*

TÜRK TIP ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE ZAMAN İÇİNDEKİ ÖZNEL PSİKOSOMATİK TEPKİLERİN KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI

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## SUMMARY

The Akdeniz University, medical faculty student's subjective psychosomatic responses have been studied by General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (GHQ) in total 1657 subjects at the years of 1983 and 1988 prospectively. It has been found that the negative psychosomatic responses were strikingly higher in 1988 when compared to that of 1983 in male students.

The same test had also been applied to agricultural faculty students and the responses were compared with the medical faculty student's scores at the same period. The responses were also evaluated on the basis of psychosocial variables such as sex, education, accomodation facilities and income levels. The medical faculty students showed more negative responses increased wirth poor life slandarts. These findings were also compared with medical faculty students of Ankara University and the simila results were obtained.

**KeyWords:** General Health Questionnaire, Subjective psychosomatic responses, Psychosocial stresses

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In modern psychosomatic medicine the health is defined not only as a state of non-existence of a

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## ÖZET

Akdeniz Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi öğrencilerinde öznel psikosomatik tepkiler Goldberg'in Genel Sağlık Soru Çizelgesi aracıyla toplam 1657 denek üzerinde 1983 ve 1988 yıllarında prospektif olarak değerlendirildi. Bu değerlendirmede erkek öğrencilerin 1988 yılındaki negatif psikosomatik cevaplarında 1983 yılına göre belirgin bir artış olduğu saptandı.

Aynı yöntemle, eş zamanlı olarak Ziraat Fakültesi öğrencileri de değerlendirilip, tıp öğrencilerinin test skorları ile karşılaştırıldı. Bu değerlendirmede seks, eğitim, barınma olanakları ve gelir düzeyi gibi psikososyal değişkenler gözönüne alındığında kötü yaşam koşullarının negatif cevapları alındığı saptandı. Yine Tıp öğrencilerinin ziraat fakültesi öğrencilerinden daha olumsuz tepkiler gösterdikleri saptandı. Bu bulgular Ankara Üniversitesi Tıp Fakültesi öğrencileri ile de karşılaştırıldığında benzer sonuçlar elde edildi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Genel sağlık soru çizelgesi, Öznel psikosomatik yanıtlar, Psikososyal stresler

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disease, but also a completely integrated physical, psychological, social and environmental well-being (17). The psychosocial stresses, by activating a non-specific position of arousal, may threaten adjustment, health and survival (12).

The relationship between psychosocial stress and illness have recently been vigorously investigated. Many techniques and methods have been developed to detect and screen this interaction. We

agree with the other workers in the field that self-report quantitative instruments are very useful in establishing the immediate condition of the subjects and making comparisons (2,8,10,13,14,15).

The General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (GHQ) is a well-known instrument to obtain the subjective psychosomatic responses of the subjects (1,3,4,5,6,7,9,16). The reliability, validity and the specificity of the questionnaire has been done for the Turkish population (12).

The present study designed particularly to assess the effect of time-elapse and the relevant factors on the subjective psychosomatic responses of Turkish medical faculty students.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

This study had been carried out on Akdeniz University medical and agricultural faculty students with 140 items form of the General Health Questionnaire of Goldberg (GHQ). First application of GHQ on medical faculty students was in 1983 (n = 949) and second in 1988 (n = 708). The subjects were nearly from the same population in both trials. Student's-t-test had been used to compare the responses.

Besides the time-elapse, sex, income level and accommodation facilities were taken into consideration in statistical analyses. The educational factor has been evaluated between the Akdeniz University medical and agricultural faculty students.

A separate study were also performed in 1989 with the same method to investigate the effects of geographical positions of faculties, on Ankara University medical faculty students.

## RESULTS

It was found that the total scores of the male medical students in 1988 ( $p < 0.001$ ), whereas no difference was seen in the female's scores. Only the sub-group of "interpersonal relationships" of the questionnaire remained unchanged with the time-elapse in both sexes.

The male agricultural faculty students felt themselves much better than the medical ones in 1988 ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the females showed no difference again.

Ankara University medical faculty student's total scores were more negative than Antalya ones in 1989 ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Poor life standards affected the scores negatively on all subjects.

## DISCUSSION

It is a well-known fact that, poor life standards are a source of psychosocial stress in almost everywhere. The unquality of the life standards within the same group (university students) may produce more severe psychosocial stress and its consequences on their individuals.

In our study, apart from the "relations with others" in all the sub-groups\* of the questionnaire, the time-elapse has been found as a worsening factor. This finding, at first sight, may seem as a controversy. In general, traditional Turkish people is submissive to the stressful social stimuli arising from their society. Hence, under such circumstances, we do not meet major disturbances in their "relation with others"; instead, psychological and somatic afflictions. The Turkish society is aggressive when stress is external.

In female students, the subjective psychosomatic responses didn't change with the time-elapse. Although the modern Turkish women started to share all the economic and vocational responsibility of the family in recent decades, the majority is still dependent on the male. For the female, marriage, family life and motherhood are more important than the future vocational expectancies. Therefore the Turkish female university students are less vulnerable to such stresses than the males.

Major findings of this study is the negative effect of the time-elapse on the male medical students. In 1988 studies agricultural students felt themselves much better than the medical ones. This difference has led us to think whether the medical educational program in itself is a source of psychosocial stress or not, in Turkey. To investigate this hypothesis we asked to the last term students, how they evaluated "the medical profession" when they started to medical education and now. This enquiry unanimously revealed that the medicine, now is much more less valuable and desirable profession in society than they thought to be when they started. They felt that their theoretical and practical medical knowledge severely lacking, expectations of the future damaged, frustrated and very disappointed.

This condition is one of the worse source of psychosocial stress in one's life.

There had been a major change in Turkish medical educational program in 1982. Without almost any improvement in the infrastructures (academic staff, equipment and other educational facilities) of the medical faculties, the number of the students entering to school has suddenly ben increased over %100 and the percentage of increase was nearly %400 in Antalya medical faculty.

We think that the medical educational policy and related problems should be reconsidered in Turkey.

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