



## **PREVALENCE OF ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: EFFECTS OF GENDER AND CHANGE OF RESIDENCE**

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### *Abstract*

*The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of adjustment problems in university students and the effect of gender and change of residence on adjustment problems. A sample of 346 university students completed Students' problems scale and a list of demographic questions. Up to 16.50 percent of students reported being highly burdened personal and emotional, as well as social and family problems, while 12.4 percent of students reported being highly burdened by risk factors (thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide, occasional aggressive or destructive behavior, engaging in criminal behavior, using illegal drugs, unwanted sexual relations, sexual assault or rape, problems related to sex life, thoughts of dropping out of university, problems concerning engaging in sexual relations, using laxatives, purging or extreme dieting, family violence and being unaccepted in one's social circle). Results of two-way analysis of variance have not shown significant effects of gender and change of residence on personal and emotional, nor social and family problems. However, they have shown significant differences in risk factors. Male students exhibit more thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide, engaging in criminal behavior, using illegal drugs, unwanted sexual relations, and family violence. Students, who stayed at home while attending university, reported more family violence, using laxatives, purging or extreme dieting, than the ones who left home to attend university. Interaction effects of gender and change of residence have shown that male students, who did not change their residence reported more occasional aggressive or destructive behavior and sexual assault or rape, than the ones who changed their residence, while female students did not differ significantly depending whether they left home or not.*

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## **Introduction**

Transition from adolescence to adulthood has long since been shown to present young people with certain challenges that put them at risk for adjustment problems, and that has shown to be especially the case in university students. University students show elevated levels of stress, depression, anxiety, addiction as well as suicide ideation, as compared to young people from general population (Blanco et al., 2008; Davoren, Demant, Shiely, & Perry, 2016; Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007; Friedlander, Reid, Shupak, & Cribbie, 2007; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). In recent years, a rise in problematic internet use (Al-Gamal, Alzayyat, & Ahmad, 2016; Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013), personality disorders (Truzoli, Osborne, Romano, & Reed, 2016; Wu, Ko, & Lane, 2016) and psychotic episodes (Shi et al., 2016) has also been documented. While an argument could be made that greater availability of attending university, better support systems at universities and a more inclusive policies when it comes to students with disabilities, could be responsible for this trend, in a way that they make it more possible for vulnerable students to attend university, it is unlikely that that can explain the constant unbalance when it comes to psychological problems.

Greater demands, the need for self-sufficiency, lack of structure, continuous examinations, pressure for excellence, and overall chaos of academic life seem to present additional pressure on students that their non-university attending peers simply do not face.

However, given the fact that the demands and circumstances regarding university life is unlikely to change a great deal, it is important to examine the prevalence of adjustment problems and risk factors in university students as well as factors that may put them at an increased risk.

As far as risk factor for student's psychological problems are concerned, studies show that students who perceive less social support, have poor interpersonal relationships (or have more relationship stressors) (Blanco et al., 2008; Friedlander et al., 2007; Kisch, Leino, & Silverman, 2005; Stallman & Hurst, 2016), or have been victim of sexual violence (Hanson Breitenbecher, 2000) are at an increased risk for psychological problems and disorders.

Adjustment to academic life can be particularly difficult for students who had to move away from home to go to university. Separation from parents (often for the first time) and social network leaves them without an immediate source of support and companionship. They are faced with having to form new friendships, while still trying to preserve former relationships, and often feel more lonely than students who did not move away from home (Girgin, 2009). They are also faced with having to deal with a variety of issues of everyday life by themselves, share living arrangement with other people, often have financial concerns, all of which can put extra strain on young person's resources and increase stress.

Research on gender differences in adjustment to university usually did not report significant differences (Enochs & Roland, 2006). However, when different aspects of adjustment or psychological problems are studied, some studies have shown that male students are better emotionally adjusted, while female students have better academic and social adjustment (Baker & Siryk, 1986). Furthermore, female student are more prone to anxiety and depression (Chen et al., 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2013), while male students are more susceptible to addiction (Cranford, Eisenberg, & Serras, 2009; Davoren et al., 2016) and are at a higher risk for suicide (Silverman, Meyer, Sloane, Raffel, & Pratt, 1997).

Universities have a unique opportunity to address mental health issues in their students through preventive programs, skills training, counseling centers and educating faculties about how they can recognize and help student with difficulties adjusting.

## **Objectives**

The aim of this study was twofold. First to examine the prevalence of adjustment problems in students attending university in Osijek, Croatia, and second to examine the effects of gender and change of residence on the frequency of students' problems. The study was conducted as a part of an effort of Students' counselling center to identify the most common and pronounced problems in university students as well to recognize more vulnerable students in order to be able to better address those issues and tailor interventions to specific problems.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 346 first (N=94), second (N=80), third (N=85) and fourth (N=87) year students. There were 192 female, and 154 male students, ages 18 through 35, with mean age 21.11 and standard deviation of 1.83. A total of 219 students changed their residence with enrolment in university, while 127 did not.

### *Instruments*

Demographic data that were gathered were: age, gender, year of study, and change of residence when enrolling in the university.

Students' problems were assessed using the Students' problems scale by Bezinović et al. (1996), which was developed at University counseling center in Rijeka, Croatia. The Scale consists of items from Zalaquett and McManus's University counseling center problem checklist (1996) and additional items measuring problems and symptoms identified to be indicative of adjustment problems in samples of students in Croatia (Bezinović, Pokrajac Bulian, Smojver Ažić, & Živčić Bećirević, 1998; Bezinović et al., 1996). It consists of 60 items measuring a wide variety of problem ranging from anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of confidence in oneself, social and family problem to sexual assault, family violence or criminal activity. The participants are required to assess the frequency of each problem on a scale from 0 - Not ever to 4 - Very often.

Since the problems included in the scale have such a wide range, from ones that are relatively common to ones that are expected to occur rarely, identification of items that could indicate psychopathology, or extremely risky behavior or experiences was necessary. A relatively low mean value of .05 (on a scale ranging from 0 to 4) was chosen as a criteria for selecting these items, because we wanted to depict problems or experiences that would put a person at a higher risk even if they happened very rarely. Items that met the criteria were following: Thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide (M=.24), Occasional aggressive or destructive behavior (M=.49), Engaging in criminal behavior (M=.15), Using illegal drugs (M=.19), Unwanted sexual relations (Mean=.11), Sexual assault or rape (M=.08), Problems related to sex life (M=.42), Thoughts of dropping out of university (M=.48), Problems concerning engaging in sexual relations (M=.31), Using laxatives, purging or extreme

dieting ( $M=.12$ ), Family violence ( $M=.08$ ), and Being unaccepted in one's social circle ( $M=.40$ ).

Although these items represent a relatively wide range of different problems, they can be considered a unique constellation that can indicate a serious existential problem, that is depict individuals who are in need of attention or treatment. Reliability analysis confirmed that these 12 items have good internal consistency with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  being .80, so they were computed as Risk factor scale. The theoretic range of results was 0 to 48.

The remaining 48 items were subjected to factor analysis, which resulted in a two factor structure, which explained 31.42% of total variance. Seven items did not have sufficient loadings (minimum of .30) at any factor so they were excluded from further analysis. The first factor was labeled Personal and emotional problems. It describes problems dealing with anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, lack of confidence in oneself, dissatisfaction with oneself, loneliness, lack of motivation, problems related to studies etc. It consisted of 30 items, and the theoretical range was 0 to 120. The second factor was labeled Social and family problems. It described family problems, problems with friends, intimate partners, and socializing. It consisted of 11 items, and the theoretical range was 0 to 44. Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ) were .91 for Personal and emotional problems and .77 for Social and family problems.

### *Procedure*

The survey was a part of an investigation of problems and adjustment of students at university in Osijek, which was conducted at the Psychological counseling center for students. Measures were administered during regular classes. The participants were given a general instruction about the survey, while each measure had its own instruction. They were also informed of the purpose of study, anonymity and confidentiality of the results, and made aware of the fact that their participation is strictly voluntary and that the results would be analyzed on a group level, not individually. Written consent was obtained.

### **Results**

Descriptive data (Mean, Standard deviation, Minimum, Maximum and Theoretical range) for Risk factors scale, Personal and emotional problems scale and Social and family problems are presents in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive data

	M	SD	Min.	Max.	Theoretical range
Risk factors	3.12	4.65	.00	29.00	0 – 48
Personal and emotional problems	38.49	22.88	2.00	117.00	0 - 120
Social and family problems	8.91	6.76	.00	32.00	0 - 44

As can be seen in Table 1, mean values are in a lower third of the theoretical range, which is not surprising since the survey was conducted on a non-clinical sample. However, maximum values indicate that there are individuals who experience problems with severe frequency or intensity. In order to examine how many students are burdened by few or no problems, moderately burdened or highly burdened, the results on Risk factors scale, Personal and emotional problems scale and Social and family problems scale were recoded into 3 categories; Little or no burden [minimum value through (mean – 1 standard deviation)], Moderately burdened [(mean – 1 standard deviation) through (mean + 1 standard deviation)], and highly burdened [(mean + 1 standard deviation) through maximum value].

However, in case of Risk factors scale, the category Little or no burden was actually only students who's score was 0, because even an occasional experience of some of the risk factors suggests at least a moderate burden. The percentage of students in each category is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of students with little or no burden by problems, moderately burdened and highly burdened students

	Gender		Change of residence		ANOVA		
	M	F	NO	YES	Gender F1,343	Residence F1,343	Gender x residence F1,343
Risk factors	5.18	2.72	3.70	2.78	10.85**	6.01*	5.64*
Personal and emotional problems	37.24	38.72	39.71	37.78	.43	2.99	2.81
Social and family problems	8.87	8.92	8.78	8.99	.01	.98	3.43

As shown in Table 2, there were similar number of students who did not report any risk factors and those who reported being moderately burdened, while most students reported being moderately burdened by personal and emotional,

and social and family problems. However, it should be noted that a significant number of students reported being highly burdened by all three groups of problems.

In order to examine whether gender, change of residence and their interaction had effects on students problems two-way analysis of variance were performed for each of the subscales. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of two-way analysis of variance for Risk factors, Personal and emotional problems, and Social and family problems

	Little or no burden	Moderately burdened	Highly burdened
Risk factors	39.6	47.1	12.4
Personal and emotional problems	16.8	66.2	16.5
Social and family problems	19.1	64.7	15.6

As can be seen in Table 3, gender, and change of residence, nor their interaction did not show significant effects on either Personal and emotional problems or Social and family problems. However, gender and change of residence both had significant main effects on Risk factors. Male students reported more risk factors than female students, while students, who did not change their residence with enrolment in university, also showed more risk factors than the ones who did. The effect of the interaction of gender and change of residence was also significant. In order to better understand the interaction effect, it was graphed in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure, female students do not differ in their risk factors based on change of residence, while male students, who did not change residence when they enrolled in university show significantly more risk factors than the ones who did change residence.

Since the main effect and interaction of gender and change of residence reached statistical significance only in case of Risk factors scale, the same effects were examined in each of the 12 items. The results of two-way analyses of variance are presented in Table 4.

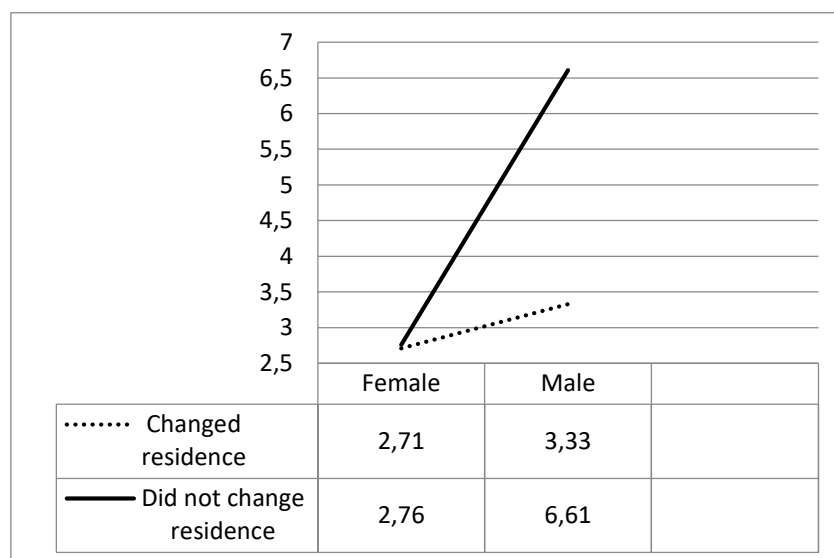


Figure 1. Differences according to gender and change of residence in Risk factors

Table 4. Results of two-way analysis of variance for individual risk factors

	Gender		Change of residence		ANOVA		
	M	F	NO	YES	Gender F1,343	Residence F1,343	Gender x residence F1,343
Thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide	.45	.20	.29	.21	6.11*	1.35	1.20
Occasional aggressive or destructive behavior	.65	.46	.56	.45	1.16	4.38*	5.69*
Engaging in criminal behavior	.40	.11	.19	.13	18.01***	1.59	2.67
Using illegal drugs	.41	.14	.25	.15	9.50**	3.68	3.17
Unwanted sexual relations	.33	.07	.11	.11	17.54***	.00	.99
Sexual assault or rape	.22	.05	.11	.06	10.34**	5.43*	7.61**
Problems related to sex life	.50	.41	.46	.41	.18	.89	1.13
Thoughts of dropping out of University	.67	.44	.58	.42	1.92	.64	.04
Problems concerning engaging in sexual relations	.49	.28	.35	.29	2.48	.98	1.58
Using laxatives, purging or extreme dieting	.22	.11	.19	.09	1.29	5.97*	3.69
Family violence	.22	.05	.13	.05	6.48*	5.56*	3.88
Being unaccepted in one's social circle	.62	.35	.48	.35	2.90	2.90	2.31



As can be seen in Table 4, gender had significant main effects on Thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide, Engaging in criminal behavior, Using illegal drugs, Unwanted sexual relations, Sexual assault or rape, and Family violence, each being more frequent in male students.

Change of residence had significant main effects on Occasional aggressive or destructive behavior, Sexual assault or rape, Family violence, Using laxatives, purging or extreme dieting, each being more frequent in students who did not change their residence when they started attending university.

Interaction of gender and change of residence showed significant effects on Occasional aggressive or destructive behavior and Sexual assault or rape.

In order to better understand these interaction effects, they were graphed in Figures 2 and 3

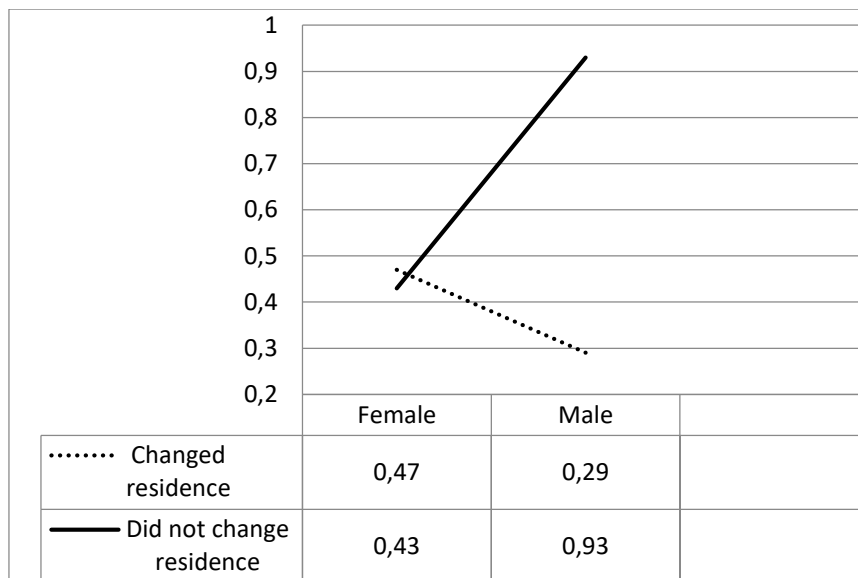


Figure 2. Differences according to gender and change of residence in occasional aggressive or destructive behavior

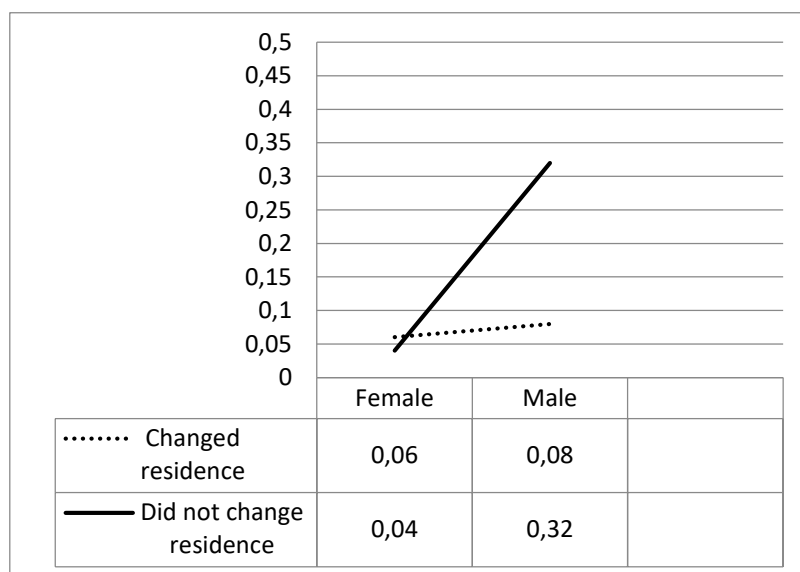


Figure 3. Differences according to gender and change of residence in sexual assault or rape

As can be seen in Figures 2 and 3, in both Occasional aggressive or destructive behavior and Sexual assault or rape, male students, who did not change their residence, showed more frequent problems than ones who did change residence, while female students did not differ according to change of residence.

### Conclusions

The aim of this study was to examine the prevalence of students' problems and determine whether gender and change of residence affected university students' problems.

The results have shown that most students experience none or few risk factors which is expected for nonclinical samples. However, even moderate levels of risk factors imply a significant risk for adjustment problems. Namely, if a person even rarely experiences suicidal thoughts, sexual assaults or engages in criminal activity, for example, it is justifiable to assume that this can pose a serious threat to their mental health.

Most students experience moderate levels of emotional and social problems, which is understandable since both subscales consist of relatively wide range of problems. Although not as serious as risk factors, moderate levels of adjustment problems suggest that students could benefit from interventions aimed at coping skills training, encouraging self-esteem and confidence, learning skills training etc.

Furthermore, it should be noted that up to 16.50 percent of students reported being highly burdened by adjustment problems, mostly personal and emotional, and social and family problems, which is in accordance with Eisenberg et al. (2007), who found a prevalence of anxiety and depression disorders of 15.6 percent. Taken together with the finding that 12.4 percent of students reported being highly burdened by Risk factors suggest that there is a significant number of students who are at serious risk of mental health problems.

With regard to differences according to gender and change of residence, the results have shown that male students report significantly more risk factors than female students, and that students who did not change residence after stating university also experience more risk factors than ones who did. These results are somewhat in contradiction with findings which suggest that adolescent girls and young women report more problems and experiences that might put them at a greater risk for psychological problems, than adolescent boys and young man (Cyranowsky, Franc, Young, & Shear, 2000; Ge, Lorenz, Conger, Elder, & Simons, 1994; Rodgers & Tennison, 2009). However, research has also shown that female students have better academic and social adjustment during their time at university (Miller, Finley, & McKinley, 1990; Živčić-Bećirević, Smojver-Ažić, Kukić, & Jasprica, 2007), which may account for differences found in this study.

The finding that students who left home to go to university show less risk factor than students who stayed at home, is in accordance with results of earlier studies who show a beneficial effect of leaving home on adjustment of students (Anderson & Fleming, 1986). Students, who had to leave home to go to university, may have a greater sense of responsibility towards studying and staying out of trouble due to their greater motivation and financial dependency on their parents. Furthermore, this finding suggest that students who stay at home, are at a higher risk of experiencing adjustment problems or engaging in risky behavior.

Upon examination of the effect of interaction of gender and change of residence, it was established that the difference according to change of residence was significant only in male students, while female students did not experience more risk factors if they stayed at home. The results suggest that male students who stay at home while they attend university are at an increased risk of developing psychological or behavioral problems. Developmentally, late adolescence and young adulthood are periods in which individuals are expected to attain greater autonomy, independence, life skills, and close interpersonal bonds. It is possible that male students have a greater need for autonomy, and independence than female students, and that staying at home interferes with their developmental goals, and thus affects adjustment. Also, it is possible that male students receive less support in their staying at home and being dependent on their parents (instead of getting a job), as their gender role would dictate. In our society it is still considered more appropriate for (young) women to be financially dependent than it is for young males. This could result in increased tension and conflict in the family.

However, the Risk factors scale consists of different problems, only some of which are expected to be more frequent in males, like aggressive or destructive behavior, using illegal drugs or engaging in criminal behavior. Other problems, especially ones related to sexual assaults or unwanted sexual relations, extreme dieting and using laxatives are expected to be more frequent in female students. In order to better understand differences in risk factors, the analysis were repeated for each problem.

The result revealed some unexpected findings. Male students reported that they had thoughts of doing harm to oneself or committing suicide, have engaged in criminal behavior, used illegal drugs, have had unwanted sexual relations, have been sexually assaulted and have been subject to family violence more frequently than female students.

More frequent use of illegal drugs and engaging in criminal behavior in male students is in accordance with studies that show that males are more prone to delinquent behavior and at greater risk for addiction (Dornfeld & Kruttschnitt, 1992; Jackson, Sher, & Wood, 2000). Although a large body of research shows that adolescent girls and young women report more depression than adolescent boys and young men (Chen et al., 2013; Ibrahim et al., 2013), result of this study show that thoughts of harming oneself or committing suicide were more frequent in male students. However, although most studies show that rates of suicide

ideation are not very different in women and men they also show that rates of completed suicide are higher in males (Kochanek, Murphy, Anderson, & Scott, 2004; Silverman et al., 1997). Taking that into account our results suggest a significant risk of suicide in some students, especially in light of the fact that most risk factors were also more present in males.

Male students reported having experienced more family violence than female students, which is partly in accordance with studies that show that males report more physical violence in general, while females report more emotional violence (Saewyc et al., 2009). However, since different aspects of family violence were not examined, it is not clear which type of violence they were exposed to. With respect to physical violence, some studies do suggest that males are at an increased risk of being victims of parental aggression, partly due to higher prevalence of externalizing behavioral problems in boys (Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler, & Sandin, 1997). It is also possible that male students, who witness a family member being abused or mistreated, are more likely to intervene, thus increasing the chances of them being affected too, while females react in a way that does not put them at risk (for example withdrawing from the situation).

The most surprising result pertains to males reporting having unwanted sexual relations and being sexually assaulted or raped more than female students, which is in contradiction with most studies reporting that women are more likely to be victims of sexual assaults. Furthermore, male students who did not change their residence reported more sexual assault or rape than ones who did change residence, while female students did not differ with respect to change of residence. Sexual assault of men is an area of research that has been neglected for a long time, mostly due to myths and common beliefs that men cannot be sexually assaulted or raped, or if they are, they usually enjoy it. Partly, this is due to a relatively narrow definition of sexual assault or rape, where it usually implies use of physical force or even penetration. However, authors agree that sexual assault should be defined as any unwanted sex whether it was obtained by the perpetrator through verbal pressure, intoxicating the victim, or force. Some authors agree, especially when studying male sexual victimization, that acts, which cannot be defined as coercive (such as because of peer pressure or because the other person is very sexually aggressive in propositioning), should also be included. Indeed, when sexual assault is defined in those terms, there are studies

that show that men are very often pressured to have unwanted sexual encounters (Muehlenhard, Powch, Phelps, & Giusti, 1992; Muehlenhard & Cook, 1988).

Although, in this study, sexual victimization was assessed with only a few questions, result do suggest that male students experience pressures and problems with regard to unwanted sexual experiences. A factor that may play a role in explaining this difference are gender roles. Efforts in preventing sexual assaults are usually aimed at educating adolescent girls and young women to resist pressure to engage in unwanted sexual relations. Young men, and especially adolescents, on the other hand, may be more reluctant to resist sexual advances because it does not conform to their gender role, which implies that they should seek and accept sexual opportunities. In other words, a woman may receive social approval upon resisting sexual pressure, but young men may fear that they will be ridiculed or disparaged because of that.

Gender differences, found in this study, suggest that male students should not be ignored with regard to being sexually victimized, especially because of a growing body of evidence suggest that the consequences of sexual assault in men are as harmful and as serious as they are in women (Peterson, Voller, Polusny, & Murdoch, 2011).

With regard to differences according to change of residence, students who did not change their residence when they started attending university, apart from aforementioned sexual assault or rape, also reported more occasional aggressive or destructive behavior, family violence, and using laxatives, purging or extreme dieting.

The differences in exposure family violence are understandable, given the fact they did not move away from home. If these students come from families prone to conflict and aggression, there is no reason to assume that aggressive behaviors would stop once they started university.

The result have shown that student who stayed home reported more occasional aggressive or destructive behavior. However, upon examination of the effect of the interaction of gender and change of residence, the difference turned out to be significant only in male student, while female students did not differ with respect to change of residence. It is possible that the aggressive or destructive behavior is a new development as a reaction to stress or other problems, or it could be a part of an ongoing problem which simply continued from earlier. It reasonable to assume that students, who continually show behavioral problems, would not receive support, financial or otherwise, in

leaving home to go to university. Another possible explanation could lie in socioeconomic status, especially in light of ongoing socio-economic crisis. Indeed, low SES was shown to be a risk factor for behavioral problems (Chen et al., 2013; van der Maas, 2016), and it could be related to both occasional aggressive or destructive behavior and not leaving home to go to university.

Students who did not change their residence after starting university reported more frequent use of laxatives, purging or extreme dieting than student who changed their residence. As with occasional aggressive or destructive behavior, this could be a reaction to stress and strain of academic or personal life, but it is also possible that it is a factor contributing to their not leaving home to go to university.

Finally, differences in personal and emotional problems nor social and family problems did not reach statistical significance. This could be due to the fact that both factors include a rather wide range of problems. For example, Personal and emotional problems include self-esteem and self-confidence issues, emotional issues, but also problems related to academic life and satisfaction with one's physical attributes. However, it could also mean that there are other factors that have effects on students' psychosocial adjustment that were not examined in this study. Further research is needed to better assess possible effects of gender and relocation on problems and adjustment in students, especially in first year students.

In conclusion, the results are in line with research and theoretical conceptions of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Reifman, Colwell, & Arnett, 2007). It is a period of numerous changes and new experiences, as well as important life events. By the end of this period, young people would have made their decision and finished education in a way that would have determined their occupations for the remainder of their lives. Also, by late twenties most young people have their personal lives organized around stable relationships and new households away from their primary family. The period where a lot is at stake and it is up to the person to achieve, while nothing is certain and guaranteed may be exciting and scary at the same time. Young people are aware of the consequences of their decisions but may not yet be prepared for the pressures associated with them, which can increase the risk of different adjustment problems. Furthermore, attending university may prolong the period of uncertainty and postpone some of the developmental tasks such as gaining financial independence from one's parents, especially in the context of recent

economic crisis, which might account for the greater prevalence of adjustment problems in university students as opposed to their same-aged peers who do not attend university (Blanco et al., 2008; Davoren et al., 2016; Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). With regard to the results of this study suggesting a greater risk in students, especially male ones, who stay at home while they attend university, this could mean that staying home interferes with developmental task of moving toward greater independence. Even though students who leave home to go to university still financially depend on their parents, for the most part, they are more independent and self-sufficient in other aspects of everyday life which may serve as bridge toward adulthood that is more adaptive in terms of developmental tasks (Erikson, 1968; Arnett, 2000).

The results of the study have important implications for universities. First, except for risk factors, over 80 percent of students report adjustment issues, suggesting that there is a need for continuous support in dealing with challenges of academic life, whether through individual counselling or through group interventions. Indeed, studies have shown that interventions aimed at cognitive and behavioral coping factors, as well as training in relaxations techniques are associated with decreases in depression and anxiety. Further, results suggest that, apart from giving support to students in adjusting to academic way of life and new surroundings, attention should be focused on students who did not leave home to go to university. It seems that there could be factors related to their staying at home that might put them at a greater risk for adjustment problems, especially for male students. Results pertaining to risk factors suggest that there is a need for interventions aimed at helping students under specific risks, especially if there are multiple risk factors present. For instance, the result suggest that attention should be focused on preventing suicide, as well as helping students protect themselves from sexual harassment as well as improving universities mechanisms for preventing and sanctioning sexual harassment.

In conclusion, result are in line with research and conceptions of emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period with unique characteristics, at least in cultures which allow young people prolonged explorations of their independence during their late teens and early twenties.

Some limitations should be mentioned. First, measures were self-report which increases the possibility of over- or underestimation of frequency of problems that students' experience, or it could be under the influence of other factor not included in the study. The study did include students from different



faculties, but not all areas of study. Further research would benefit from using a larger, more heterogenic sample in order to be able to examine whether factors associated with area of study affects adjustment, as well as investigation of other factors that could affect students' adjustment.

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