

Full text open access online (Since 2007)

©  Kamlaraj S-EM 2024

PRINT: ISSN 0973-5070 ONLINE: ISSN 2456-6772

Ethno Med, 18(2): 104-112 (2024)

DOI: 10.31901/24566772.2024/18.02.683

## **The Impact of Exercise on Depression and Anxiety in First-Year Students at a Rural University in South Africa**

**L.K. Tshikovhele<sup>1</sup>, S. Govender<sup>2</sup>, K. Nel<sup>3</sup> and Indiran Govender<sup>4</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>University of Limpopo- Psychology Department, South Africa  
Orcid: 0000 0003 3759 9240*

*<sup>2</sup>University of Limpopo- Psychology Department, South Africa  
Orcid: 0000 0002 6586 6185*

*<sup>3</sup>University of Limpopo- Research Administration and Development, South Africa  
Orcid: 0000-0001-8892-4176*

*<sup>4</sup>Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Department of Family Medicine and Primary Health Care, Ga Rankuwa, South Africa  
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0126-8087>*

**KEYWORDS** Exercise. Depression. Anxiety. Self-esteem. Mental Health

**ABSTRACT** Students who move into tertiary institutions can experience stressors, which may lead to low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. This may be alleviated by exercise. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of exercise on depression and anxiety on first-year students registered at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). A cross-sectional survey design was used. The study sample consisted of 320 randomly selected first-year students, 160 students who exercised regularly and 160 students who did not exercise. Data was collected using the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), and the Beck Depression Inventory-11 (BDI-11). Data was analysed using descriptive statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis. There were no statistically significant differences when comparing the different ages and gender with exercise, depression and anxiety. The study highlights the role that exercise plays as an intervention in mental health issues among first-year university students managing with a new environment adjustment and the academic demands.