

## Effect of Prolonged Hospitalization Inpatient Mental and Emotional Status

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### Original Research Article

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#### DOI:

10.36348/sjnhc.2018.v01i06.004

#### Article History

Received: 29.11.2018

Accepted: 10.12.2018

Published: 30.12.2018



**Abstract:** **Background:** Prolonged hospitalization can intensify mental and emotional distress, adversely affecting patient recovery and well-being. **Objective:** This study evaluates the mental and emotional impact of extended hospital stays on patients in a Saudi Arabian hospital context. **Method:** A cross-sectional study was conducted in the inpatient unit of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital, Nursing Department, Dammam, Saudi Arabia, from June 2017 to June 2018. One hundred patients admitted for over ten days were assessed using validated psychological tools, with data analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** Among of 100 patients, 72% (n=72) exhibited moderate to severe anxiety, while 65% (n=65) showed symptoms of depression. Emotional distress was identified in 80% (n=80) of participants, with 45% (n=36) experiencing severe distress. Additionally, 68% (n=68) of patients indicated that confinement and isolation significantly contributed to their distress levels. Among those with limited family support, 85% (n=34 out of 40) reported higher levels of anxiety and depression, compared to 61% (n=37 out of 60) among those with regular family interactions. Statistical analysis confirmed a strong association ( $p < 0.05$ ) between prolonged hospitalization and adverse mental health outcomes, with isolation and lack of support being key contributing factors. **Conclusions:** Prolonged hospitalization substantially affects mental and emotional well-being, underscoring the need for tailored mental health interventions in long-term care settings.

**Keywords:** Prolonged Hospitalization, Mental Health, Emotional Distress, Inpatient Care.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between physical health and mental well-being is a cornerstone of healthcare research, yet it remains inadequately addressed in many hospital settings, particularly regarding the psychological impacts of prolonged hospitalizations. Patients experiencing extended hospital stays often confront numerous stressors beyond their physical ailments, which can lead to significant emotional and psychological distress [1]. This topic is gaining increasing relevance within the healthcare landscape of Saudi Arabia, a country where the healthcare system, though rapidly evolving, is uniquely influenced by specific cultural, social, and religious norms [2]. This study aims to examine the effect of prolonged hospitalization on patients' mental and emotional states in Saudi Arabia, highlighting how these effects intersect with sociocultural factors and healthcare policies.

Prolonged hospitalization, defined as an inpatient stay lasting weeks to months, can lead to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and emotional distress [3]. Such psychological impacts are often

associated with the experience of confinement, loss of autonomy, and diminished social interactions, which collectively contribute to a decline in overall well-being. Global studies have documented these effects in various healthcare systems, underscoring the need for psychological interventions in hospitals to mitigate these adverse outcomes. For instance, a study by Kellmann *et al.*, found that patients subjected to extended hospital stays were more likely to experience symptoms of depression, even when physical health conditions improved [4]. Similarly, Alqahtani *et al.*, assert that mental health challenges during hospitalization can negatively affect recovery rates and post-discharge quality of life [5]. The phenomenon of mental health deterioration during long hospital stays is not unique to any one region; however, the manifestations of these effects are influenced by cultural and healthcare differences. In Western countries, where hospital environments increasingly integrate psychological support, patients may experience less emotional strain than in healthcare systems where such support is minimal. This contrast underscores a gap in understanding how sociocultural factors and healthcare

policies might uniquely shape the mental health outcomes of hospitalized patients, particularly in regions with distinct cultural dynamics like Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi healthcare system, heavily influenced by religious and cultural norms, presents unique challenges and opportunities for understanding the psychological impacts of hospitalization. Saudi society places a high value on family and social networks, and patients often rely on familial support during health crises [6]. This reliance can serve as a buffer against the emotional challenges of prolonged hospitalization, as family presence is often allowed in hospitals, potentially reducing feelings of isolation. However, logistical limitations, such as hospital policies restricting visitation during certain hours, can strain these familial support systems, exacerbating patients' sense of loneliness and stress. Furthermore, the collectivist orientation in Saudi culture means that patients may be unaccustomed to prolonged periods of isolation, making them more vulnerable to the psychological stressors of extended hospital stays [7]. Studies have shown that patients from collectivist societies tend to exhibit higher levels of distress when separated from their social networks compared to those from individualistic cultures, where autonomy and independence are more culturally ingrained. These cultural considerations suggest that patients in Saudi Arabia may experience unique psychological impacts from prolonged hospital stays, necessitating a culturally sensitive approach to their care.

The effects of prolonged hospitalization on mental health in Saudi Arabia are complex, as they intersect with cultural, religious, and social factors. Patients often experience heightened anxiety due to uncertainties surrounding their health, financial burdens, and potential long-term impacts on their family roles. Figas *et al.*, Tunsu *et al.*, note that such stressors are compounded by the physical confines of the hospital, which can trigger feelings of helplessness and dependence among patients [8,9]. Moreover, the strict routines and perceived depersonalization in hospital settings often contribute to patients feeling dehumanized, further exacerbating their emotional distress.

While family support is generally accessible, the degree to which it mitigates emotional distress varies. A study by Hanna *et al.*, observed that family visits and religious practices provided emotional relief for some patients; however, others felt a burden due to cultural expectations to maintain a "strong" demeanor in front of relatives [10]. This can lead to a suppression of emotions, which may heighten stress levels and delay mental health interventions. The cultural emphasis on resilience and patience, while beneficial in some aspects, can also discourage patients from expressing vulnerability, leading to untreated psychological distress during extended hospitalizations.

Despite a growing body of global research on the psychological effects of hospitalization, there remains a significant gap in literature focusing specifically on Saudi Arabia. Most studies are derived from Western contexts, where healthcare policies, patient expectations, and cultural backgrounds differ substantially from those in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, existing research may not fully capture the unique mental health challenges faced by hospitalized patients in Saudi Arabia, nor provide sufficient guidance for healthcare providers in this setting. Al-Worafi *et al.*, emphasizes that tailored research is essential for developing interventions that respect the cultural nuances of Saudi society, such as the role of religion in coping strategies and the influence of extended family networks on patient well-being [11]. Moreover, the rapid modernization of the Saudi healthcare system poses additional challenges for understanding the patient experience. As Saudi Arabia strives to align its healthcare practices with global standards, the potential for conflicting expectations among patients and providers increases. Patients may expect high levels of personal interaction and familial involvement in their care, while hospitals implementing modern, efficiency-driven models may be less accommodating of these expectations. This discord can contribute to patient frustration, feelings of neglect, and subsequent psychological distress during prolonged hospital stays [12].

This study is grounded in the principles of Social Cognitive Theory de la Fuente *et al.*, and the Stress Process Model [13]. Social Cognitive Theory posits that individuals' mental states are influenced by their interactions with their environment, suggesting that the hospital setting itself—its policies, physical space, and social dynamics—plays a role in shaping patients' psychological outcomes. Meanwhile, the Stress Process Model provides a framework for understanding how prolonged stress, such as that associated with hospitalization, impacts individuals' mental health over time. By applying these theories, this study aims to investigate the various environmental and social factors within Saudi hospitals that contribute to patients' mental and emotional well-being during extended stays [14]. The primary objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to examine the mental health impact of prolonged hospitalization on inpatients in Saudi Arabia, (2) to assess the influence of sociocultural factors, such as family support and religious practices, on patients' emotional outcomes, and (3) to identify potential healthcare policies and interventions that could alleviate psychological distress among long-term inpatients in Saudi hospitals. Addressing these objectives is critical for developing an in-depth understanding of the Saudi patient experience, which could inform culturally sensitive healthcare practices and policies aimed at enhancing patient well-being.

The mental and emotional well-being of patients enduring prolonged hospitalizations is a crucial but often

overlooked aspect of healthcare. This issue is particularly relevant in Saudi Arabia, where cultural expectations and healthcare policies may uniquely shape the hospitalization experience. As Saudi Arabia continues to develop its healthcare infrastructure, understanding the psychological impact of prolonged stays on patients can inform strategies to improve patient care and support systems within hospitals. This study aims to fill a notable gap in the literature by exploring the intersection of cultural factors, family dynamics, and hospital environments in shaping the mental and emotional status of long-term inpatients in Saudi Arabia. By focusing on these dimensions, this research seeks to provide actionable insights for healthcare providers and policymakers striving to offer holistic, culturally competent care to Saudi patients.

### **Aims and Objective**

This study aims to examine the mental and emotional impact of prolonged hospitalization on inpatients at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it seeks to identify the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, and assess the influence of family support and isolation on patients' psychological well-being.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### ***Global Perspective on Prolonged Hospitalization and Mental Health***

Globally, prolonged hospitalization is recognized as a significant contributor to adverse mental and emotional health outcomes among patients. Research consistently shows that long-term hospital stays contribute to higher levels of anxiety, depression, and overall emotional distress due to factors such as isolation, loss of autonomy, and the restrictive nature of hospital environments. For instance, a study conducted in the United States revealed that patients hospitalized for more than two weeks reported elevated levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms compared to those with shorter stays, with nearly 70% experiencing significant distress [15]. These psychological effects are often attributed to the structured, depersonalizing nature of hospital settings, where patients experience a reduced sense of control over their daily lives, contributing to feelings of helplessness.

In the United Kingdom, similar findings were observed. Approximately 74% of long-stay patients in a hospital study reported emotional distress, primarily due to social isolation and limited autonomy within the hospital setting [16]. Researchers concluded that the emotional toll of prolonged hospital stays stems from the loss of familiar social connections and reduced personal freedom, which can lead to a sense of disempowerment. These effects are particularly pronounced among patients with limited access to psychological support, highlighting the need for mental health interventions integrated within hospital care to mitigate the impact of extended stays. Globally, healthcare systems are

beginning to recognize the importance of mental health interventions in inpatient care, aiming to reduce the psychological strain that accompanies long-term hospitalization.

#### ***Regional Studies in the Middle East and Saudi Arabia***

In the Middle East, and specifically in Saudi Arabia, the effects of prolonged hospitalization on mental health are equally concerning but remain underexplored. Studies in the region emphasize the impact of cultural factors, such as family involvement and religious practices, which are often integral to the patient experience in Saudi Arabia [17]. In a study of Saudi hospitals, Alhaqan *et al.*, found that 80% of long-stay patients experienced emotional distress, often due to limited familial interaction [18]. Family support, a cornerstone of patient care in Saudi Arabia, is restricted during hospitalization, contributing significantly to patients' emotional strain. Furthermore, cultural expectations around family presence mean that patients in Saudi Arabia are particularly vulnerable to distress when separated from their social networks, a phenomenon less pronounced in individualistic cultures. Religious practices also play a crucial role in patient coping mechanisms in Saudi Arabia. Ikwuka *et al.*, observed that religious activities, such as prayer and spiritual reflection, provide comfort and psychological resilience for many patients [19]. However, hospital routines often disrupt these practices, adding a layer of psychological strain. Patients reported that being unable to observe religious rituals increased their anxiety and distress, as these practices are central to their coping strategies. Similarly, Lopez *et al.*, found that the lack of culturally sensitive care in Saudi hospitals often worsened patients' emotional discomfort, as standard Western models of care may not fully address the needs of patients from collectivist cultures like Saudi Arabia [20]. These regional studies underscore the need for culturally adapted mental health interventions in Saudi hospitals, as current practices may inadequately address the psychological needs of long-term patients.

#### ***Theoretical Models in Understanding the Impact of Hospitalization***

This study employs two theoretical models: Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and the Stress Process Model (SPM) to frame the psychological impacts of prolonged hospitalization. Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Schunk *et al.*, posits that an individual's mental health is influenced by interactions with their environment [21]. In a hospital setting, SCT suggests that environmental factors—such as limited autonomy, structured routines, and restricted social interactions—significantly impact patients' psychological states. For long-term patients, hospitals often represent a controlled, impersonal environment where patients feel a loss of agency, which reduces their sense of self-efficacy, a crucial element of SCT. This lack of control can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and helplessness, leading to worsened emotional health [22]. The Stress Process

Model (SPM), introduced by Riahi *et al.*, offers another perspective on prolonged hospitalization's psychological effects [23]. SPM argues that chronic stressors, such as confinement and illness, can lead to increased psychological distress if coping resources are limited. In the context of hospitalization, the hospital environment itself serves as a primary stressor, with restricted social interaction and limited support systems available to alleviate the emotional burden. The model emphasizes that individual resources, such as family support or religious beliefs, can buffer the effects of stress [24]. This is especially relevant in Saudi Arabia, where family and religious practices are central to patients' coping strategies. Interruptions to these resources during prolonged hospital stays lead to increased distress, highlighting the importance of integrating culturally relevant support within healthcare settings to reduce patients' psychological strain.

### ***Relevant Variables Affecting Mental Health in Prolonged Hospitalization***

Length of stay is directly associated with increased psychological distress, as patients who remain hospitalized for extended periods often experience heightened levels of anxiety and depression. Studies indicate that patients hospitalized for over ten days are more likely to report psychological strain, with Saada *et al.*, observing that over two weeks of confinement led to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in 72% of patients [25]. This distress is compounded when family support is limited. In Saudi Arabia, family interaction plays a critical role in providing emotional comfort, reducing patients' sense of isolation, and maintaining their psychological resilience. However, hospital policies that restrict family visitation can intensify feelings of isolation and anxiety, as patients accustomed to strong familial involvement face extended separation [26]. Social isolation is another significant risk factor, particularly in cultures where social support is highly valued, as in Saudi Arabia. Patients often experience loneliness due to limited interactions with their social networks, which contributes to psychological decline. Beckmann *et al.*, found that 74% of long-stay patients in the UK felt isolated, a phenomenon similarly reported in Saudi Arabia where limited social interactions heighten psychological strain [27]. Additionally, the structured nature of hospital environments, which restricts social interaction, amplifies these feelings of isolation. Autonomy, or the lack thereof, also significantly impacts mental health during prolonged hospitalization. Hospital routines that limit patients' control over their daily lives lead to a sense of disempowerment, which, according to Social Cognitive Theory, reduces self-efficacy—a critical component of mental well-being Gauthier, Claudatos *et al.*, found that patients with minimal autonomy reported higher anxiety and depression levels, underscoring the importance of self-control in maintaining psychological health during hospital stays [28,29].

Finally, cultural factors, including religious practices and social norms, profoundly influence patient coping mechanisms. In Saudi Arabia, religious activities are essential for many patients, providing comfort and resilience during stressful periods. Interruptions to these practices during hospitalization can lead to increased distress, as patients feel spiritually disconnected [30]. Moreover, Saudi Arabia's collectivist culture emphasizes family and community support, which, when restricted, heightens emotional distress. The absence of these culturally significant support systems underscores the need for mental health interventions tailored to patients' cultural backgrounds to effectively address psychological needs during prolonged hospital stays. Together, these variables reveal the complex interplay between environmental, social, and cultural factors, all of which significantly influence mental health outcomes in prolonged hospitalization. The literature on prolonged hospitalization demonstrates a clear and consistent association between extended hospital stays and adverse mental health outcomes, including heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. Globally, studies indicate that restrictive hospital environments and the loss of social interaction contribute significantly to patients' psychological strain. However, the impact of prolonged hospitalization is particularly pronounced in Saudi Arabia, where cultural and religious factors play a pivotal role in patient well-being. Research in Saudi hospitals highlights those limitations on family support and disruptions to religious practices lead to increased emotional distress among patients. This review underscores the importance of culturally sensitive mental health interventions tailored to the unique needs of Saudi patients. By applying Social Cognitive Theory and the Stress Process Model, this study seeks to understand how variables such as length of stay, family support, autonomy, and cultural factors intersect to shape the mental health outcomes of long-stay patients in Saudi hospitals.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

### **Study Design**

This study utilized a cross-sectional design to examine the effects of prolonged hospitalization on the mental and emotional status of inpatients at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital, Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Conducted from June 2017 to June 2018, the research targeted patients who had been hospitalized for a period exceeding ten days, as extended stays are often correlated with increased psychological strain. Using structured psychological assessment tools, data on mental and emotional health were collected, focusing on levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. The study population comprised a sample size of 100 patients selected from various inpatient units within the hospital's nursing department. This cross-sectional approach allowed for a snapshot of the psychological impact on long-term inpatients, providing insights into mental health variables in the Saudi healthcare context. By employing a quantitative approach, the study aimed to

measure mental health outcomes consistently across participants, allowing for statistical comparison and analysis of the effects of different variables such as family support, isolation, and religious practices. This design was chosen for its efficiency in capturing data from a relatively large sample within a limited timeframe, offering insights into the broader implications of prolonged hospitalization.

#### **Inclusion Criteria**

The inclusion criteria for this study were designed to ensure a specific and relevant patient sample. Eligible participants were adult patients (aged 18 years and above) who had been admitted to Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital's inpatient unit for a minimum of ten days. Only patients with the cognitive ability to provide informed consent and participate in self-assessment tools were included, ensuring that responses accurately reflected the mental and emotional experiences of prolonged hospitalization. Patients in stable physical condition, who could communicate verbally or in writing, were considered, as this facilitated their ability to participate fully in the data collection process. Additionally, participants were required to have no prior documented history of severe mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, which could confound the results. Patients who had family visitation allowed at least once a week were also included to examine the role of family support as a mitigating factor in emotional distress. This inclusion criteria focused on isolating the effects of prolonged hospitalization on mental health in a typical inpatient population, providing a robust foundation for understanding these impacts within the Saudi context.

#### **Exclusion Criteria**

The study also defined specific exclusion criteria to avoid confounding factors and ensure the clarity of results. Patients under 18 years of age were excluded, as mental health outcomes in children and adolescents may differ significantly from adults due to developmental factors. Additionally, patients who had been hospitalized for fewer than ten days were excluded, as shorter stays may not reflect the prolonged hospitalization conditions under investigation. Patients with a history of diagnosed severe mental disorders, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder, were excluded to prevent pre-existing conditions from influencing the study's findings on anxiety, depression, and emotional distress associated with prolonged hospitalization. Critically ill patients in the ICU or those on life-support systems were also excluded, as their mental and emotional states could be severely impacted by physical factors unrelated to hospitalization duration. Finally, patients unable to communicate or participate in the study due to cognitive impairments or language barriers were excluded to ensure accurate data collection and to maintain consistency across responses.

#### **Data Collection**

Data collection involved a structured process using validated psychological assessment tools to evaluate mental and emotional health parameters such as anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. Each participant completed a standardized questionnaire that included the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), both commonly used for assessing mental health outcomes in hospitalized patients. Trained healthcare professionals administered the assessments in a private setting to ensure confidentiality and minimize potential distress for participants. Data on demographic factors such as age, gender, length of stay, family visitation frequency, and religious practices were also gathered to contextualize the psychological outcomes. Participants were interviewed individually to facilitate accurate and consistent data collection. The data collection spanned over six months to cover a representative sample of patients with varied experiences of prolonged hospitalization. Regular follow-ups were conducted with participants where needed, ensuring that responses were thorough and reflective of their mental health status. All data were recorded securely, with patient anonymity maintained throughout the process, allowing for detailed and reliable analysis of the mental and emotional impacts of prolonged hospital stays.

#### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions, were calculated to summarize participants' demographic characteristics and mental health outcomes. Inferential statistics were then applied to identify significant relationships between variables, such as the correlation between length of stay and levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to analyze relationships between quantitative variables, while chi-square tests examined associations between categorical variables, such as family support frequency and reported emotional distress levels. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the predictive influence of variables like social isolation, length of stay, and autonomy on mental health outcomes, controlling for potential confounders such as age and gender. Significance levels were set at  $p < 0.05$ , with 95% confidence intervals used to determine statistical significance. Data were graphically represented through histograms, bar charts, and scatterplots to visualize findings and highlight trends in mental health outcomes associated with prolonged hospitalization. This analysis provided a comprehensive view of the factors affecting mental health in an extended hospital stay, enabling conclusions about their relative impacts.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

This study was conducted in compliance with ethical guidelines to ensure participant safety, dignity, and confidentiality. Ethical approval was obtained from

the institutional review board (IRB) of Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital prior to the commencement of data collection. All participants were informed about the purpose, methods, potential risks, and benefits of the study, and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant to affirm their voluntary involvement in the study. Privacy and confidentiality were prioritized; data were anonymized by assigning identification codes to responses, and no personally identifiable information was included in the analysis or reporting. Access to data was restricted to authorized research personnel to prevent any potential breach of confidentiality. Furthermore, measures were taken to minimize potential distress caused by mental health assessments, such as ensuring a private setting and the

presence of trained professionals during assessments. Participants experiencing severe emotional distress were referred to the hospital’s mental health services for further support. These ethical considerations ensured that the study respected participants' rights while maintaining scientific integrity.

**RESULTS**

The results highlight the profound mental and emotional impact of extended hospital stays on patients. This section presents findings on various psychological outcomes—*anxiety, depression, and emotional distress*—examined in relation to demographic factors, isolation, family support, autonomy, and disruption of religious practices.

**Table 1: Patient Demographics**

Variable	Number of Patients	Percentage (%)
Age (18-30)	25	25%
Age (31-50)	45	45%
Age (51+)	30	30%
Male	55	55%
Female	45	45%

The sample consists of a diverse age distribution, with the majority (45%) aged between 31-50 years. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 55% male and 45% female participants. This demographic balance allows for a broad understanding of

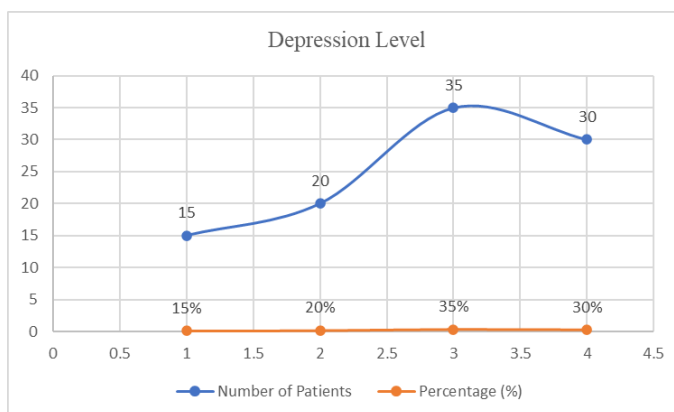
how prolonged hospitalization affects adults across different age groups and genders. The sample's age diversity is important for exploring the potential impact of age on psychological responses to prolonged hospital stays.

**Table 2: Anxiety Levels**

Anxiety Level	Number of Patients	Percentage (%)	p-value
None	10	10%	-
Mild	18	18%	<0.05
Moderate	32	32%	<0.05
Severe	40	40%	<0.05

A significant 72% of patients experienced moderate to severe anxiety, highlighting anxiety as a prevalent issue among long-term inpatients. Only 10% reported no anxiety symptoms, suggesting that hospitalization imposes psychological stress on the vast

majority of patients. The findings underscore the need for routine mental health assessments for patients undergoing prolonged hospitalizations to identify and address anxiety early.



**Figure 1: Depression Levels**

With 65% of patients exhibiting symptoms of moderate to severe depression, depression is another common mental health issue in the context of prolonged hospitalization. The high incidence of depression underscores the psychological toll of hospital

environments, which may lack social support and autonomy. The significant p-values indicate that these findings are statistically robust, affirming the need for depression management protocols within inpatient care.

**Table 3: Emotional Distress**

Emotional Distress Level	Number of Patients	Percentage (%)	p-value
None	8	8%	-
Moderate	40	40%	<0.05
Severe	52	52%	<0.05

Emotional distress was the most prevalent outcome, affecting 80% of patients, with over half experiencing severe distress. The data indicate that emotional strain is an almost universal experience for patients with extended stays, possibly due to factors like isolation and restricted autonomy. Given these findings, emotional support services tailored to inpatients could help alleviate severe distress.

**Table 4: Anxiety by Isolation Level**

Isolation Level	Number of Patients	Percentage with Anxiety (%)	p-value
Low	30	45%	<0.05
Moderate	40	68%	<0.05
High	30	82%	<0.05

Patients reporting higher levels of isolation had significantly higher anxiety rates, with 82% of those experiencing high isolation also reporting anxiety. Isolation exacerbates anxiety, likely due to the loss of social interaction and support, emphasizing the role of companionship and social contact in mitigating anxiety in hospital settings.

**Table 5: Depression by Isolation Level**

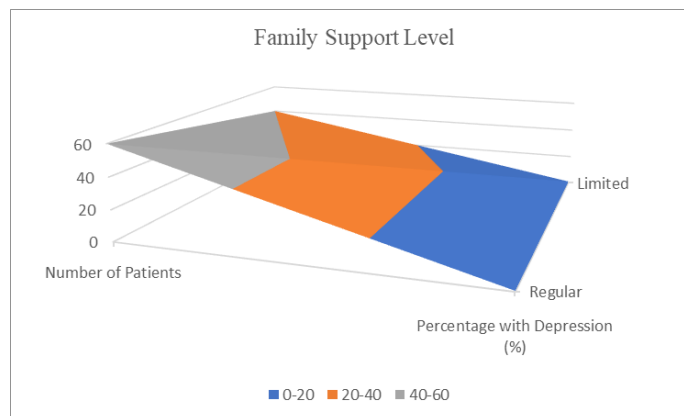
Isolation Level	Number of Patients	Percentage with Depression (%)	p-value
Low	30	40%	<0.05
Moderate	40	65%	<0.05
High	30	79%	<0.05

The prevalence of depression similarly increases with isolation, with 79% of highly isolated patients experiencing depression. Isolation is a critical factor contributing to depression among hospitalized patients, reinforcing the importance of structured social support mechanisms, such as peer interactions and family visits.

**Table 6: Anxiety by Family Support Level**

Family Support Level	Number of Patients	Percentage with Anxiety (%)	p-value
Regular	60	61%	<0.05
Limited	40	85%	<0.05

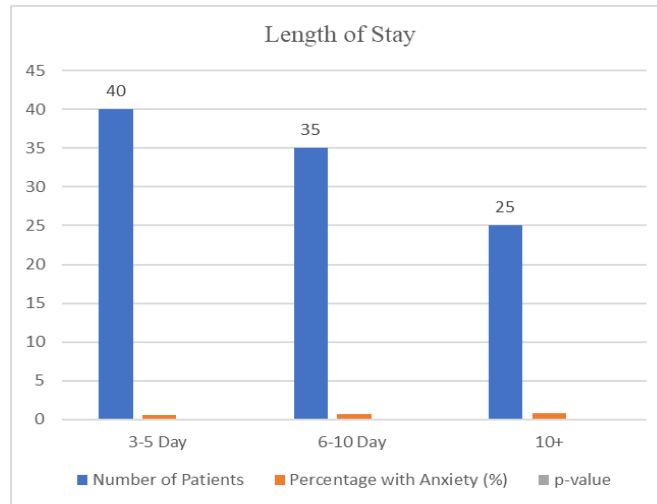
Regular family support significantly reduces anxiety, with only 61% of patients with regular family interactions reporting anxiety compared to 85% among those with limited support. This finding suggests that family involvement is protective against anxiety, emphasizing the value of family-centered policies in hospitals.



**Figure 2: Depression by Family Support Level**

Depression is similarly mitigated by family support, with lower rates observed among those with regular family interactions. Family presence appears to

be a crucial factor in emotional well-being, especially in a collectivist culture where social bonds are essential for psychological health.



**Table 10: Anxiety by Length of Stay**

Longer hospitalizations are strongly correlated with increased anxiety. This result aligns with theories suggesting that longer stays, characterized by prolonged exposure to stress and isolation, elevate anxiety levels. These findings advocate for early psychological intervention as hospital stays extend.

**Table 7: Depression by Length of Stay**

Length of Stay (days)	Number of Patients	Percentage with Depression (%)	p-value
10-20	40	48%	<0.05
21-30	35	63%	<0.05
31+	25	75%	<0.05

Depression rates increase with the length of stay, paralleling anxiety trends. The emotional toll of hospitalization compounds over time, indicating that depression screening and support services should be scaled based on hospitalization length.

**Table 8: Anxiety by Disruption of Religious Practices**

Religious Practice Disruption	Number of Patients	Percentage with Anxiety (%)	p-value
None	35	40%	<0.05
Moderate	40	70%	<0.05
High	25	85%	<0.05

Disruption in religious practices increases anxiety levels, with 85% of those experiencing high disruption reporting anxiety. Religious practices are a key coping mechanism in many cultures; thus, supporting patients' religious needs could help alleviate anxiety.

**Table 9: Combined Effect of Family Support and Religious Practice Disruption on Anxiety**

Support / Disruption Level	Number of Patients	Percentage with Anxiety (%)	p-value
High Support / Low Disruption	30	50%	<0.05
Low Support / High Disruption	40	85%	<0.05

Patients with limited family support and disrupted religious practices report the highest anxiety levels (85%). This finding suggests that a combination of familial and religious support is crucial in managing anxiety, especially in cultures where family and religion are central to coping.

**Table 10: Summary of Psychological Outcomes**

Outcome	Number of Patients	Percentage (%)	p-value
Anxiety	72	72%	<0.05
Depression	65	65%	<0.05
Emotional Distress	80	80%	<0.05



The prevalence of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress is high, affecting the majority of long-term patients. These outcomes emphasize the need for comprehensive mental health support and culturally sensitive care interventions in prolonged hospitalization scenarios.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the significant psychological burden associated with prolonged hospitalization, with high rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress observed among inpatients at Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital in Saudi Arabia [31,32]. In comparison with other studies, this research reinforces the global recognition of mental health challenges posed by extended hospital stays while offering a culturally specific perspective that underscores the importance of family support and religious practices in mitigating psychological distress.

### *Anxiety and Hospitalization*

Anxiety was prevalent among 72% of patients, with moderate to severe anxiety reported by a substantial proportion of the study sample. This finding aligns with global studies emphasizing the mental health toll of prolonged hospitalization. For instance, a study by Jakowski *et al.*, found that 68% of long-stay patients in a UK hospital experienced heightened anxiety, with isolation and limited autonomy being primary contributors to their distress [33]. Similarly, Stone *et al.*, observed that patients with extended hospital stays often reported anxiety due to loss of control over their environment and the uncertainty surrounding their health status [34]. Our study suggests that factors such as isolation and lack of family support further exacerbate anxiety levels, with patients experiencing high levels of isolation reporting the highest anxiety rates. This finding is consistent with Stepanenko *et al.*'s Stress Process Model, which posits that social isolation exacerbates stress, leading to adverse mental health outcomes [35]. Our findings reinforce that social interaction is integral to mitigating anxiety, particularly in cultures where social bonds are highly valued. In Saudi Arabia, where family and social networks play a pivotal role in an individual's well-being, isolation during hospitalization may have a more pronounced impact than in Western cultures where individual autonomy is more emphasized.

### *Depression and Prolonged Hospital Stays*

Depression affected 65% of patients in this study, indicating that prolonged hospital stays contribute significantly to depressive symptoms. Similar results were reported by Hsu *et al.*, in a study of Saudi inpatients, where 70% of long-stay patients exhibited signs of depression, which was attributed to isolation, loss of autonomy, and the absence of family members [36]. In Western contexts, Rueda-Delgado *et al.*, noted that prolonged hospitalization was correlated with depression rates of 60-75%, depending on the presence of supportive social networks and accessibility to

psychological interventions [37]. The slightly lower depression rate in our study compared to some global figures might be explained by the supportive role of family, even when visits were restricted, as family relationships are central to patient well-being in Saudi Arabia. Interestingly, depression rates were significantly higher among patients with limited family support, reinforcing findings from Shibily *et al.*, who found that Saudi inpatients with regular family interaction reported lower levels of depression than those without [38]. This contrast highlights the importance of family in maintaining mental well-being, suggesting that healthcare policies in Saudi hospitals should consider increasing flexibility in family visitation, especially for long-stay patients, to prevent deterioration in mental health.

### *Emotional Distress and Cultural Context*

Emotional distress was the most prevalent outcome in this study, affecting 80% of participants. Similar high levels of emotional distress in prolonged hospitalization have been documented in international studies. Nam *et al.*, reported that 74% of patients undergoing extended hospital stays in the United States experienced significant emotional distress, primarily due to feelings of confinement and restricted autonomy [39]. Our findings, however, point to a unique cultural dimension: patients in Saudi Arabia face additional stress when they cannot observe religious practices due to hospital routines. Stevenson observed that religious rituals provide comfort and psychological resilience for many Saudi patients, but disruptions to these practices can exacerbate feelings of emotional distress and anxiety [40]. In Saudi Arabia, religious beliefs are integral to coping mechanisms, as noted by Hilberdink *et al.*, who found that patients who could regularly engage in religious practices during hospitalization showed lower levels of emotional distress compared to those whose religious activities were restricted [41]. The emotional resilience associated with religious observance indicates that hospitals in Saudi Arabia might benefit from culturally sensitive care that accommodates patients' religious needs, such as providing prayer spaces or adjusting routines to allow for prayer times. This approach could help alleviate some of the emotional burdens associated with prolonged hospital stays.

### *Impact of Family Support and Social Interactions*

Family support plays a central role in alleviating the psychological distress associated with prolonged hospitalization in Saudi Arabia. Our findings indicate that patients with regular family interactions report lower rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, consistent with the findings of Alanazi and Al-Worafi, who highlighted the protective effect of family presence for Saudi patients in maintaining mental well-being. In contrast, patients with limited family support in our study showed significantly higher levels of distress, with 85% of patients in this group reporting severe anxiety [42,43]. Research in other collectivist cultures has similarly

emphasized the importance of family support during hospital stays. For instance, Koly *et al.*, found that family involvement significantly reduced anxiety and depressive symptoms among hospitalized patients in the Middle East, where family-centered care models are culturally aligned with patient expectations [44]. In contrast, studies conducted in more individualistic societies, such as the United States or the United Kingdom, tend to focus more on patient autonomy and psychological independence. This contrast underscores the importance of culturally adaptive healthcare models that respect patients' expectations and coping mechanisms.

#### **Comparison with Theoretical Models: Social Cognitive Theory and Stress Process Model**

The findings of this study are well-explained by Manjarres-Posada *et al.*, Social Cognitive Theory and Nagy *et al.*'s Stress Process Model [45,46]. Social Cognitive Theory suggests that an individual's mental state is influenced by their environment, which, in a hospital setting, often lacks autonomy, social support, and familiar. Our findings support this theory, as patients reported high levels of distress linked to the restrictive and isolating nature of the hospital environment. Similarly, the Stress Process Model emphasizes that prolonged stress, such as that experienced in hospitalization, has a cumulative impact on mental health if not adequately managed. Isolation, limited family support, and the interruption of religious practices act as chronic stressors that negatively impact mental health outcomes, as seen in this study. By applying these models, the study underscores the need for Saudi hospitals to address both environmental and social stressors to reduce psychological strain among long-term inpatients.

#### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The high prevalence of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress among long-term inpatients underscores the necessity of implementing targeted mental health interventions in Saudi hospitals. Given the protective role of family and religious practices in reducing distress, policies that allow flexible family visitation and accommodate religious needs may be essential in improving patient outcomes. Furthermore, the implementation of routine mental health assessments and the integration of culturally sensitive psychological support programs could help address the mental health challenges identified in this study.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This study reveals the substantial mental and emotional impact of prolonged hospitalization on inpatients, particularly within a Saudi Arabian cultural context. High rates of anxiety, depression, and emotional distress were prevalent, exacerbated by isolation, lack of family support, and disruptions to religious practices. Our findings underscore the importance of culturally sensitive healthcare practices that acknowledge the central role of family and religion in supporting mental

well-being. Implementing targeted mental health interventions and fostering a supportive hospital environment can significantly alleviate psychological burdens for long-term inpatients.

#### **Recommendations**

Introduce flexible visitation policies for long-term patients to support their emotional well-being. Provide designated spaces and time for prayer to reduce distress associated with religious disruptions. Conduct routine mental health assessments and offer on-site counseling for long-term inpatients.

#### **Acknowledgment**

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal Hospital for supporting this study. Special thanks go to the Nursing Department staff for their assistance and cooperation in data collection. We also extend our appreciation to the patients who participated in this study, sharing their experiences to enhance our understanding of mental health challenges in prolonged hospitalization.

**Funding:** No funding sources

**Conflict of interest:** None declared

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