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## BACKGROUND

- The psychosocial impact of living with skin disease is a growing concern with psoriasis carrying a substantial psychosocial burden affecting quality of life.
- Little is known about the impact of psoriasis on mental health in Afghanistan.
- The aim of this study was to examine the occurrence of anxiety and depression among people with psoriasis in Kabul, Afghanistan.**

## METHODS

- Observational cross-sectional study conducted at the Dermatology Department of Maiwand Teaching Hospital, Kabul University of Medical Sciences in Kabul, Afghanistan between November 2020 and December 2021.
- Study participants included dermatologist-confirmed psoriasis patients aged 18-80 years without comorbid skin disorders or a history of psychiatric disorders.
- A pre-structured questionnaire was used to collect information on socio-demographic and clinical profiles.
- The Psoriasis Area and Severity Index (PASI) was used by dermatologists to rate the severity of psoriasis.
- The Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) questionnaire was used to assess psychiatric disorders. Scores range from 0 to 21; 0-7 indicates normal levels, 8-10 mild levels, 11-14 moderate levels, and 15-21 as severe levels of anxiety or depression.
- Descriptives were summarized using mean ( $\pm$ SD) and proportions as appropriate. Pearson Chi-square test, Student's t-test and one-way ANOVA were used for comparison of percentages and means, respectively.  $p < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## RESULTS

- A total of 340 people with psoriasis were recruited, 194 (57.1%) women and 146 (42.9%) men, with a mean age of  $35.2 \pm 14.0$  years.
- Most patients had no history of smoking cigarettes or of cannabis use; 80.3% and 92.6%, respectively.
- Of the 340 psoriasis patients, 66 (19.4%) had mild psoriasis and 274 (80.6%) had moderate to severe psoriasis.
- The mean PASI was  $18.2 \pm 9.2$ ;  $5.6 \pm 2.3$  in patients with mild psoriasis and  $21.2 \pm 7.5$  in patients with moderate/severe psoriasis.
- Almost all patients had plaque psoriasis in multiple sites of the body (95.0%), with only 5.0% with scalp psoriasis alone.
- One third of patients had joint pain (31.2%) and 84.7% had more than one symptom such as itchy, painful lesions that can crack or bleed.
- All patients were receiving treatment, half (49.1%) had topical treatment alone while the rest had both topical and systemic treatment.
- The mean anxiety score (HADS-A) was  $8.6 \pm 3.1$ ; 27.1% of patients had normal levels (anxiety absent), 47.1% had mild anxiety (HADS-A 8-10) and 25.9% reported moderate to severe anxiety (HADS-A  $\geq 11$ ).
- The mean depression score (HADS-D) was  $8.7 \pm 3.1$ ; 29.7% of patients had normal levels (depression absent), 38.5% had mild depression (HADS-D 8-10) and 31.8% reported moderate to severe depression (HADS-D  $\geq 11$ ).
- It was revealed that 22.1% of patients diagnosed with psoriasis demonstrated concurrent moderate to severe anxiety and depression.
- Moreover, 28.2% of these individuals exhibited mild levels of anxiety and depression, while a notable 20.3% did not express symptoms of either anxiety or depression.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Clinical characteristics of patients with psoriasis by severity of psoriasis.

	Overall		Mild Psoriasis (PASI<10)		Moderate to Severe Psoriasis (PASI $\geq$ 10)		P-value
	N=340		N=66		N=274		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
<b>Location of psoriasis</b>							<0.001
Scalp, only site	17	5.0	17	25.8	0	0	
Multiple sites	323	95.0	49	74.2	274	100	
<b>Age at onset</b>	25.9 $\pm$ 12.5		25.1 $\pm$ 12.1		26.1 $\pm$ 12.6		0.281
<b>Duration of psoriasis</b>	9.2 $\pm$ 8.5		4.1 $\pm$ 4.2		10.4.9 $\pm$ 8.8		<0.001
<b>Joint pain</b>							<0.001
No	234	68.8	63	95.5	171	62.4	
Yes	106	31.2	3	4.5	103	37.6	
<b>Symptoms</b>							<0.001
Itch	52	15.3	26	39.4	26	9.5	
More than one	288	84.7	40	60.6	248	90.5	
<b>Type of treatments</b>							<0.001
Topical	167	49.1	55	83.3	112	40.9	
Systemic & Topical	173	50.9	11	16.7	162	59.1	

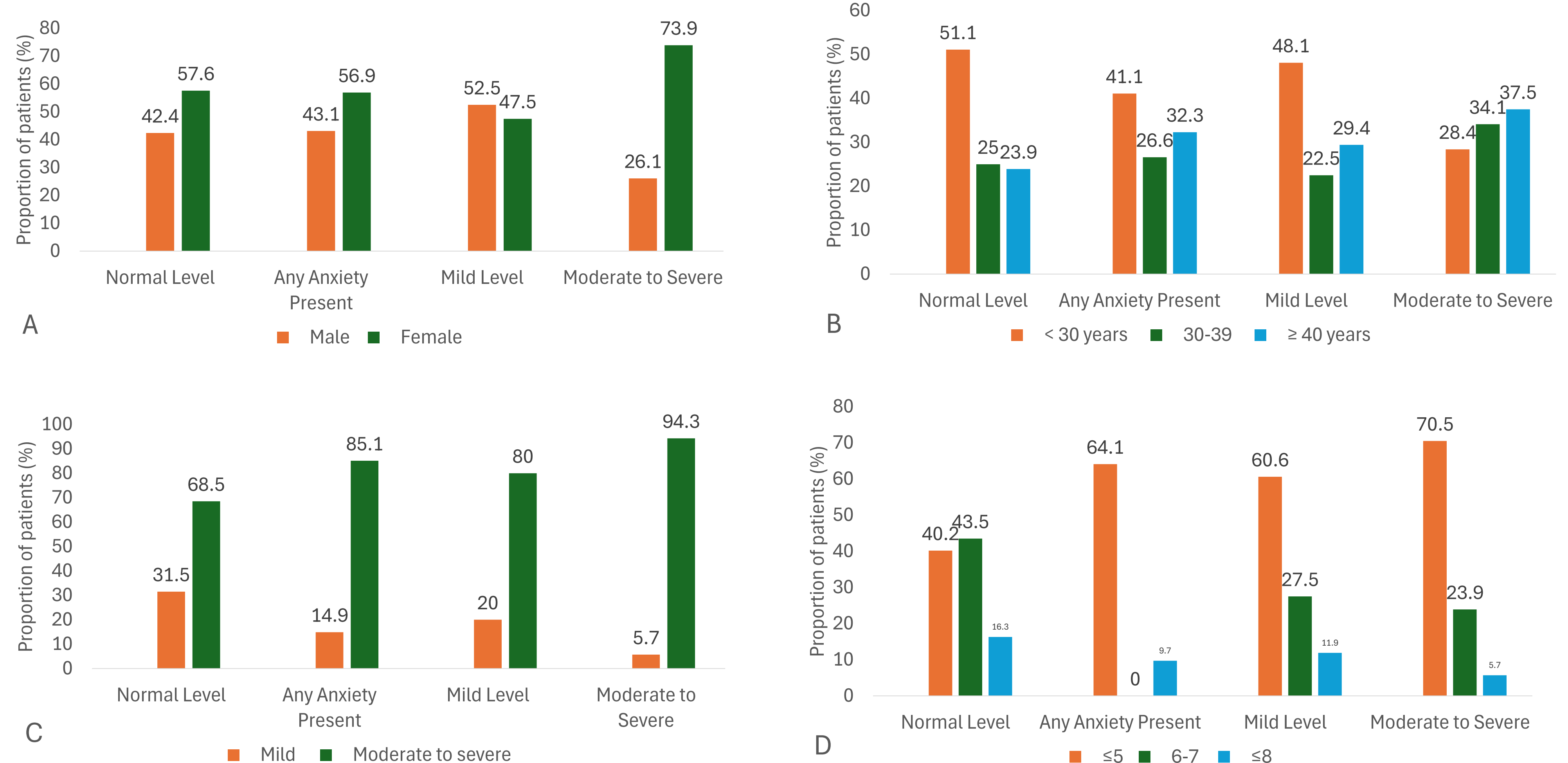


Fig 1. Anxiety levels of psoriasis patients by (A) gender, (B) age, (C) severity of psoriasis, (D) sleep duration

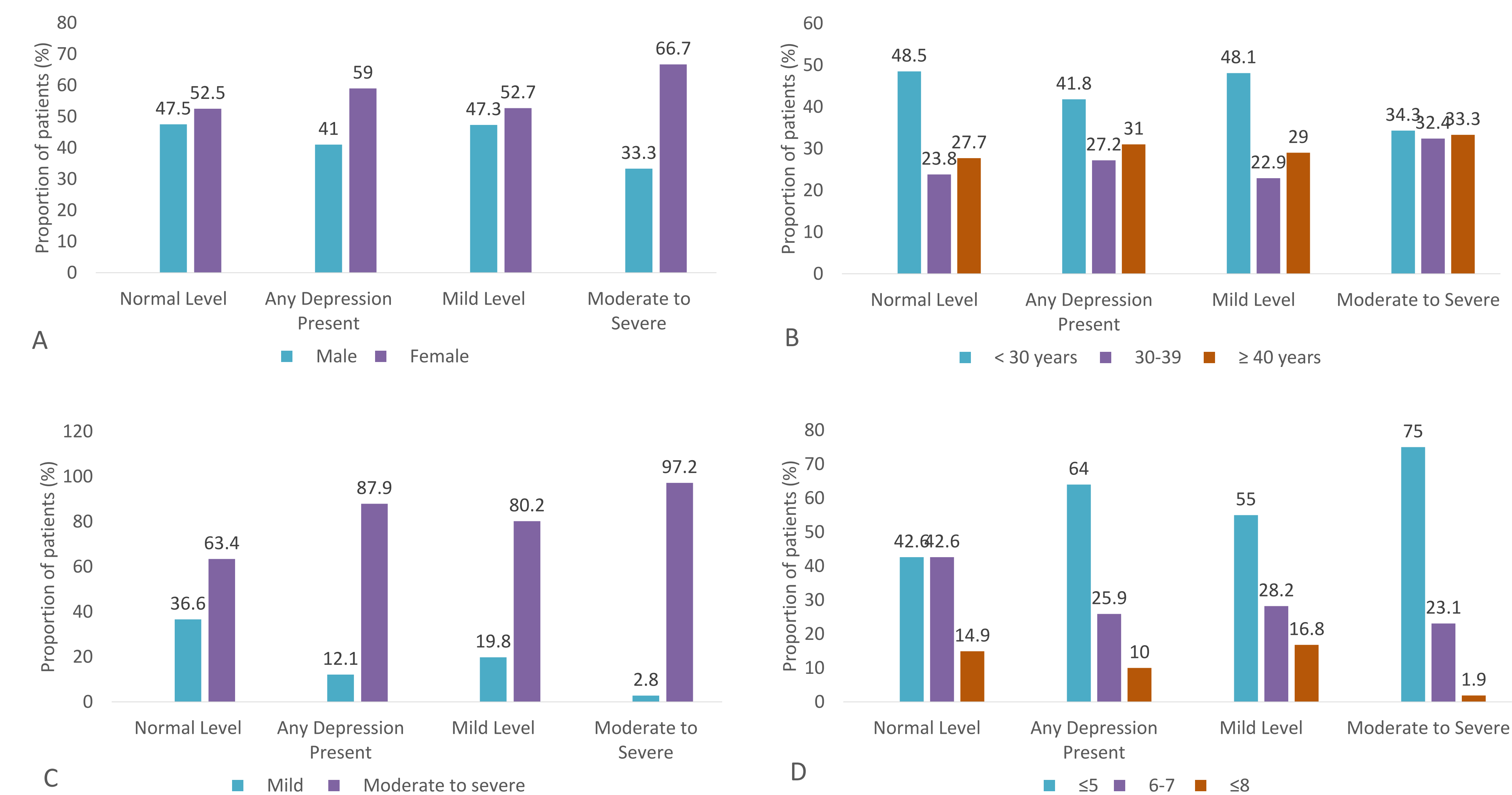


Fig 2. Depression levels of psoriasis patients by (A) gender, (B) age, (C) severity of psoriasis, (D) sleep duration

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

- This study provides information for the first time on the psychological impact of psoriasis in patients in Afghanistan.
- We demonstrated high levels of HADS-A and HADS-D among patients with psoriasis.
- Prevalence of anxiety and depression was higher among females, those with lower economic status and educational attainment, insufficient sleep, more severe psoriasis, accompanying joint pain, and coexisting health conditions.
- Screening for these symptoms among people with psoriasis should be considered along with an integrated approach for managing dermatological and psychological factors.

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