

The Relationship between Depression and Academic Performance among Undergraduate Students of Benue State University Makurdi, Nigeria.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to find the relationship between depression and students' academic performance among undergraduate students of Benue State University Makurdi. The study employed Beck's Depression Inventory with students' CGPA. The study used a survey method. A sample of 150 participants was drawn, 93 students were males and 57 were females. The study tested three hypotheses. The first hypothesis states that, there will be a significant relationship between depression and academic performance. The result of the study using Pearson correlation shows that there is a significant negative relationship between depression and students' academic performance ($r(137) = -0.040$; $p < 0.05$). The second hypothesis states that, there will be a significant difference in gender response to depression. The result of the findings show that females were more likely to get depressed than males on independent t-test ($t(145) = 0.0646$; $p < .05$). The third hypothesis states that students from low income earners will be more depressed than those from high income earners. Using independent t-test, there is no significant difference between low and high income earners on depression ($t(129) = 0.383$; $p > 0.05$). Based on the findings, the study recommended that, Educators, Counsellors, Psychologists, and Researchers to develop strategies to reduce psychological problems like depression among students and to develop intervention programs to enhance students' psychological well-being which may help to increase their academic performance

Key words: Depression, academic performance, students and CGPA

Introduction

Education is a primary need in this era of globalization. Education not only gives insight, it also grooms the personality, inculcates moral values, add knowledge and gives skill (Musarat, Sundus, Faqiha, Fozia & Aysha, 2013). The world is making progress day by day because education is the only key to match the pace of its progress. People are giving preference to higher education. The quality of students' performance remains at the top priority for educators (Musarat, et al, 2013).

While entrance to a university or other tertiary education institutions is a joyous time, it can be a stressful life event for some students (Wong et al., 2006). First-year students are particularly at-risk as they face a number of new stressors during the transitional period of starting a new life in university or college (Voelker, 2003). Just as all young adults, undergraduate students need to cope not only with psychological and psychosocial changes that are connected to the development of an autonomous personal life but also with the academic and social demands that they encounter in university studies in their preparation for professional careers. Therefore, the period of undergraduate education is a sensitive period in an individual's life span, and this period is regarded by many as important for developing systems and intervention methods that may prevent or reduce mental problems (Gjerde, 1993).

Evidence that suggests that university students are vulnerable to mental health problems has generated increased public concern in many societies (Stanley and Manthorpe, 2001). Previous studies suggest high rates of psychological morbidity, especially depression and anxiety, among university students all over the world (Adewuya et al., 2006; Nerdrum et al., 2006; Ovuga et al., 2006; Voelker, 2003). Edwards and Holden (2001) found that among college students seeking counseling services, anxiety and depression were ranked first and third as presenting problems, respectively; academic and work-related concerns were ranked second as the presenting problem. Brackney and Karabenick (1995) noted that high levels of distress, concomitant with limited coping resources, render students less able to meet academic demands.

Depression may signify a mood, a symptom or a syndrome as a mood; it refers to temporary feelings of sadness, despair, and discouragement. As a symptom, it refers to these feelings, when they persist and are associated with such problems as decreased pleasure, hopelessness, guilt, and disrupted sleeping and eating patterns. The entire syndrome is also referred to collectively as a depression or depressive disorder (Gale encyclopedia of psychology, 2001). The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR) of Mental Disorders, produced by the American Psychiatric Association (2000) categorizes depression as an affective, or mood disorder.

Certain core characteristics are often seen among people with depression. These characteristics may be organized within the four psychological domains; the affective domain, the cognitive, and the physiological domain. Affective domain: sadness, unhappiness, apathy, anxiety, brooding, elation, grandiosity, and irritability. Cognitive domain: pessimism, guilt, inability to concentrate, negative thinking, loss of interest and motivation, suicidal thoughts, pressured thoughts, lack of focus and attention and poor judgment. Behavioural domain: low energy, neglect of personal appearance crying, psychomotor retardation, agitation, overactive, and talkative. Physiological domain: poor or increased appetite, constipation, sleep disturbance, disruption of the menstrual cycle in women, loss of sex drive and the like.

Depression is a condition in which one feels blue or sad. But these feelings are usually for a short period of time. Depression interferes with daily life activities of an individual. It is a common but serious illness (National Institute of Mental Health, 2011). It is a major cause of disability across the regions and it causes fatigue, suicide, decreased ability to do work and attend school (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2013). Depression disrupts a person's thinking processes, emotional reactions and day-by-day behaviors (Williams, 1984; Farby, 1980).

Literatures have shown that performance in school, college, or university was found to be affected by many symptoms of depression, such as difficulties in concentration, lack of interest and motivation, preoccupations, fatigability, and poor attendance (Fine & Carlson, 1992). Surtees, Wainright, and Pharoah (2002), in their survey, found these conditions reduced the likelihood of achieving a first-class degree among first-year students, although this relationship disappeared when adjustment was made for other factors such as homesickness. Many clinical descriptive reports suggested that depression may be a contributing factor to poor academic performance (Fine & Carlson, 1994). Because of this, several approaches have been conducted to investigate the relationship between depression and academic achievement. For example, Stark and Brookman (1994) obtained teachers' and parents' global ratings of students' academic performance and ratings of severity of students' depressive symptoms. The former was an instrument used to measure student's academic performance and study habit, while ratings of severity of students' depressive symptoms were used to measure the depression level of the students. The result of the studies showed that there was an inverse relationship between academic achievement and depression. This notion was then supported by Zaid, Chan, and Ho (2007). The study on emotional disorders among medical students in one of the Malaysian private colleges found that students who experienced depression had a lower academic performance. Another study by Sherina, Lekhraj, and Nadarajan (2003) yielded that 41.9% students in one of the Malaysian public institutions were found to have depression. Some reported that their academic performance was affected by depression. This shows that depression affects the performance of the students i.e. the higher the depression, the lower is the academic performance of the students. Based on the above findings, it can be said that depression does affect academic performance of the students. This means the higher the depression level of the students, the lower is their academic performance.

According to Hysenbegas, Hass, and Rowland, (2005) Diagnosed depression was associated with a 0.49 point, or half a letter grade, decrease in student GPA, while treatment was associated with a protective effect of approximately 0.44 points. The self-reported data regarding the impact of depression on the performance of academic tasks was consistent with these findings. Depressed students reported a pattern of increasing interference of depression symptoms with academic performance peaking in the month of diagnosis and decreasing thereafter with the lowest levels reported in months 4 through 6 post-diagnosis, each of which is significantly less than the month of diagnosis.

A depressed mood is the experience of unhappiness or distress. Depression may involve feelings of being sad, weak, disappointed, frustrated, despairing, helpless, and hopeless (Sarason & Sarason 2002). Many depressed individuals may be unable to perform well in academic life because they do not have courage in what they are doing (Sindhu, 2016). They may feel that they are not reaching the standard of performance set for them. As a result they continuously feel disappointed and despairing. They perceive things negatively and consider themselves as failures. This condition can definitely contribute too many serious problems in their academic life such as poor grades (Sindhu, 2016).

Morales, Aguilar, and Guzmán, (2013) held that significant difference in depressive symptoms between female and male students do exist and that students who had depressive symptoms failed a subject, which was a risk of disapproval of 2.4 times compared with those without such symptomatology. According to them "variables sex and depressive symptomatology were found to be factors related to poor academic performance". Govinda & Varghese, (1993) and Arora, (2014) opined that differences between the sexes could lead to differences in academic performance and, more specifically, to female students "underperforming" their male

counterparts. High depression, anxiety and financial problem in females tend to result poor academic performance than males. Rates of depression among women are 1.5 to 3 times that of men (Weissman et al., 1984; Regier et al., 1993; Kessler et al., 1994; Kessler, 1998; Kessler and Zhao, 1999) although the overall course of depression remains the same (Kessler et al., 1993).

Al-Qaisy, (2011) the females have more anxiety in comparison with the males, while males are more depressed than females. Wong et al. (2006) obtained the same results of the study. They, also, found a significant difference between the mean of depression scores of male and female students. Male students' means of depression scores were significantly higher compared to female students'. (Adewuya et al., 2006), using the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview, found depression to be two times more prevalent among male university students. Another study using the Higher Education Stress Inventory and Major Depression Inventory showed that male students gave higher ratings than females for depression and stress (Dahlin et al., 2005). Studies on samples of Turkish students using the General Health Questionnaire-12 and Beck Depression Inventory instruments found higher depression rates among male students (O' zdemir and Rezaki, 2007). Edwards and Holden (2001) obtained the same results that male students gave higher ratings than females for depression, but the female students gave higher ratings than males for anxiety. However, there are also studies that found no differences according to gender in terms of depression or depressive mood (Grant et al., 2002).

Research shows an inverse relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and depression, especially among women (Kohn, Dohrenwend, and Mirotznic, 1998; Dohrenwend et al., 1992). While evidence linking social class to depression is not as clear-cut as that linking gender to depression, mixed findings may be due to the variation in the criteria used to determine SES. It can be measured by years of education, income level, occupational prestige or a combination of these factors, such as the Nam criteria, which combines household income, education and occupation into a percentile score of social prestige (Nam and Power, 1965). In a review of the literature, Link, Lennon, and Dohrenwend (1993) found that rates of depression among members of low SES groups are approximately twice those of high SES groups. A [2011 report from the Centers for Disease Control](#) shows that income level correlates very strongly, in an inverse fashion, with depression. Kas (2013) Money may not buy happiness, but it sure as hell buys freedom from depression.

Students' academic performance is indeed a thing of concern by parents, teachers, school management, the government, curriculum designers and in fact the general public, to this effect a lot of researches have in the past years investigated factors that affect students' academic performance, ranging from social to psychological factors such as socio-economic status, inability to manage course load, anxiety, stress, personality, poor attitude of teachers and depression. However, little studies have been done to uncover the relationship between depression and academic performance in Nigeria and in Benue State University, therefore, this study focuses on depression and its relationship with students' academic performance. It also intends to discover gender difference in response to depression among undergraduates of Benue state university, Makurdi so as to add to the available literature on the study variables.

Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study:

- i.** To find out if there will be a significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance among undergraduates of Benue state university
- ii.** To determine if there will be a significant different in sex response to depression

- iii. To determine whether students from low income earners will be more depressed than those from high income earners.

Research questions

The following research questions were put forward to guide the study

- i. What is relationship between depression and students' academic performance among undergraduates student of Benue state university?
- ii. Is there gender difference in depressive response among Students in Benue State University?
- iii. Is there students from low income earners be more depressed than those from high income earners?

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were postulated for the study

- iv. There will be a significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance among undergraduates of Benue state university
- v. There will be a significant different in sex response to depression
- vi. Students from low income earners will be more depressed than those from high income earners.

Methodology

For the purpose of achieving the research objectives, the study adopted a survey design. The study population consisted of Undergraduates of Benue State University, Makurdi. 150 students were randomly selected across the institution. They were drawn from different cluster groups of male and female. The age range of the participants was 18-50 years; 93 (62.0%) were males while 57 (38.0%) were female. The descriptive analysis also shows that 130 (86.7%) were single, 18 (12.0%) were married while 1 (.7%) were divorced and 1 (.7%) did not respond. Among the sample size, 13 (8.7%) came from families of high socio-economic status 109 (72.7%) were from families with average financial status, 25 (16.7%) were from families with low financial status and 3 (2.0%) did not respond. The data further showed that 6 (4.0%) were on fair, 9 (6.0%) were on pass degree, 27 (18.0%) were on third class, 75 (50.0%) were on second class lower division, 20 (13.3%) were on second class upper division and 2 (1.3%) were on first class. The researchers distributed 200 copies of the questionnaire among the Undergraduates of Benue State University in Nigeria. They were distributed among male and female. Only 150 copies of the questionnaire were returned and were found usable.

Instruments

Data for this study was collected using the Becks Depression scale with twenty eight (28) items and two sections. The sections are tagged section A and B

Demographic characteristics was measured using seven (7) item subscale, sample items of this scale include: information such as sex, age, financial status, students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA).

Scoring of the instrument

Becks Depression Inventory (BDI)

Becks Depression Inventory (BDI) was in 1961. It tests the rate of depression. The Becks depression inventory has scores of 0,1,2,3. Choosing 0 means that one has no depression and choosing 3 means that one has severe depression.

The scale was shown to have a high one-week test-retest reliability (Pearson $r=0.93$), suggesting that it was not overly sensitive to daily variations in mood. The test also has high internal consistency ($\alpha=.91$).

Procedures for Data Collection

The researchers obtained informed consents of students who formed sample for the study. The researchers personally administered the questionnaires to the respondents at their various locations within the University, in keeping with ethical standard, the respondents were debriefed accordingly. The questionnaires were collected by the researchers after completion.

Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyze the data and make inferences for the study, the study used Pearson Product Correlation Movement, independent t-test and a description statistics. Pearson Product Correlation Movement and independent t-test were used to test the hypotheses to see the level of relationship and differences among the study variables. While the descriptive statistics were employed to analysis demographic data (the characteristics) of the respondents

Results

Hypothesis one: there will be a significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance among undergraduates of Benue State University.

Table 1: correlation coefficients showing the relationship between depression and students' academic performance (CGPA)

Variables	N	df	r	sig	Remark
CGPA	139				
		137	-0.040	0.05	$p<0.05$
Depression	136				

The result shows that at the alpha level of 0.05 there is a significant negative relationship between depression and students' academic performance ($r(137) = -0.040$; $p<0.05$). Therefore, the study accepts the alternative hypothesis and rejects the null hypothesis.

Hypotheses two: there will be a significant different in sex response on depression

Table 2: Independent t-test showing difference between in sex response to depression

Sex	N	mean	S.D	df	t	p	Remarks
Male	92	0.8043	0.9287				
				145	0.646	0.05	$p<0.05$
Female	55	0.9091	0.9864				

The results from table 2 shows that at the alpha level of 0.05 there is a significant difference in sex response to depression ($t(145) = 0.646$; $P<.05$). Based on this finding, the research hypothesis was confirmed.

Hypothesis three: students from low income earners will be more depressed than those from high income earners.

Table 3: Independent t-Test Showing Gender Difference on Learning

Fin. Status	N	mean	S.D	df	t	p	Remarks
Low	24	0.8750	0.899988				
				129	0.383	0.05	p>0.05
High	107	0.7944	0.93907				

The results above showed that low income earners did not differ significantly from high income earners on beck's depression inventory. ($t(129) = 0.383$; $P > .05$). Based on this finding, the research hypothesis was not. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis rejected.

Discussion

The first hypothesis of this study state that there will be a significant relationship between depression and students' academic performance. Results of this study indicate that there is a negative relationship between depression and academic performance of students at the university, this shows that the higher the depression among students, the lower their level of performance. Al-Qaisy, (2011) Simonds and Whiffen (2003) support this result. This finding also agrees with other studies like (Kendal et al, 1990) who have it that individuals who tend to loss interest in school activities, poor concentration, sad, hopeless, helplessness, suicidal thought and irrational thoughts pattern are likely to have low grade in their GPA. Since depression is a mental illness in which a person experiences deep, unshakable sadness and diminished interest in nearly all activities, there is likelihood that students who are suffering from depression will perform poor in academic. This result is parallel to the submission of Brackney and Karaberi, (1995), according to them there is no direct correlation between academic performance and depression.

Regarding the second hypothesis which states that there will be a significant different in sex response to depression. The study found significant differences between genders. Female students been more likely to get depress than males. This means that female tend to have double risk of depression than their men counterparts. This finding goes in line with previous findings, depression among women are 1.5 to 3 times that of men (Weissman et al., 1984; Regier et al., 1993; Kessler et al., 1994; Kessler, 1998; Kessler and Zhao, 1999). Other research studies have also shown that when trouble strikes, women tend to think, men tend to act. Women often have vivid recall for both wonderful and horrid experience but men more vaguely recall such experiences (Seidlitz & Diener, 1988). Some previous studies, hold different view from the present findings, Al-Qaisy, (2011) the females have more anxiety in comparison with the males, while males are more depressed than females. Wong et al. (2006) obtained the same results of the study. They, also, found a significant difference between the mean of depression scores of male and female students. Male students' means of depression scores were significantly higher compared to female students'. (Adewuya et al., 2006), using the Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview, found depression to be two times more prevalent among male university students. However, there's also a study that found no differences according to gender in terms of depression or depressive mood (Grant et al., 2002).

Finally, the study postulated that students from low income earners will likely get depress than those form high income earners. This finding has shown that socio-economic status has no relationship with depression. Even though other studies show that low socio-economic status (poverty) is related to depression, this present study proves contrary. The study has shown that

some students were from low socio-economic background yet never experience depression. From the result, depression may be caused by individual negative thoughts towards the event (poverty/ low income) rather than the event itself.

Conclusion

The study establishes that depression is an important risk factor for failing a subject or having a poor academic performance.

Gender differences on depression response exist, and female students are more prone to depression than male students

There is no significant difference between students from high and low income background.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the study recommended that:

- Educators, Counsellors, Psychologists, and Researchers to develop strategies to reduce psychological problems like depression among students and to intervention programs to enhance students' psychological well-being which may help to increase their academic performance.

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