

MANIFESTATIONS OF DEPRESSION AMONG UNDERGRADUATES OF UNIVERSITIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite and poor concentration. This study was therefore carried out to investigate the manifestations of depression among undergraduates of universities in Kwara State. It also examined the influence of variables of religious affiliation and level of study on undergraduates' responses. Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study and multi-stage sampling procedure which comprises purposive, proportional, stratified and simple random sampling techniques were adopted to draw a total sample of 600 undergraduates from two universities in Kwara State. "Manifestations of Depression Questionnaire (MDQ)" was used to collect relevant data. The instrument was subjected to test re-test reliability coefficient which yielded the score of 0.78 and the hypotheses were analysed using t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) at 0.05 significance level. Frequency counts and percentages were used to present the demographic data. The findings of the study identified poor school academic performance, avoidance of responsibility and difficulty in day to day tasks, health problems and loss of self-confidence as major manifestations of depression among undergraduates of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The hypotheses tested revealed no significant difference in the manifestations of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation and level of study. In line with the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that members in peer groups should be encouraged to assist one another and encourage prompt report of depression.

Keywords: Depression, Manifestation, Undergraduates, Kwara State

Introduction

Depression is a persistent illness, but one that can be treated (Philip, 2004). The term depression was originally derived from a Latin verb "*deprimere*" meaning- to press down. To press down also means to subjugate or bring down in spirits. This term was used in 1665 by an English author, Richard Backer in his work entitled "chronicle" to refer to having a great distortion in spirit. It was also used by another English author Samuel Johnson in similar manner in 1753. The term comes into use in physiology, economics and geography where they mean different things. An early usage referred to depression as psychiatric disorder was by famous French psychiatrist, Louis Delasiauve, in 1856. He viewed it as a physiological and metaphorical lowering of emotional function of human beings (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 2002).

Depression is defined by Marcus, Yasamu, Ommeren, Chisholm and Sexana (2012) as a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite and poor concentration. Depression described a range of moods, from low spirits that we all experience to a severe problem that interferes with everyday life (World Mental Health Federation, 2012).

Nevertheless, depression is said to differ from a mere simple grief, bereavement or mourning mood which are appropriate emotional responses toward unwanted

circumstances. There is a clear ground for expression of unhappiness in human life. However, depression is present when the depressed mood expression is disproportionately long and severe vis-a-vis the precipitating event (The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 2002). "Certainly an acute episode of depression will last only a week, a month, or even a year would change everything. It would still be a ghastly ordeal, but the worst thing about it, is the incessant yearning for death, the compulsion toward suicide would drop away but not a limited depression because a depression with hope is a contradiction. The experience of convulsive pain, along with the conviction that it will never end except in death that is the definition of a severe depression" (Grohol, 2008). Depression in this study refers to psychological disorder suffered by students of tertiary institution which usually manifested through avoidance of responsibility, poor school performance, difficulty in day to day task among others.

Manifestations of Depression

Depression, if left untreated for a considerable period of time, can have serious and sometimes long lasting damaging effects that can affect almost all aspects of human's life. The following are some of the common manifestations of depression (Jed Foundation, 2014).

- (i) **Suicide:** Having thoughts of death are symptoms of depression. However, if depression is left untreated its resultant effect could be suicide.
- (ii) **Self Injury:** In coping with depression, some people inflict pain and injury upon themselves by cutting or burning parts of their body. While some people do not really intend to harm themselves but the reason behind it is depressed mood. With these behaviours, serious and life-threatening injuries and accidental death may occur.
- (iii) **Reckless Behaviour:** When people are feeling hopeless, angry or really bad about themselves, they are less likely to take care of themselves and think about the consequences of their actions. Depressed individuals may put themselves in risky situations with obvious devastating effects. For instance, driving drunk, unprotected sex and so on.
- (iv) **Poor School Performance:** An untreated depression can also lead to difficulty in going to class and complete assignments. This is because depression diminishes one's ability to concentrate, remember things and make wiser decisions.
- (v) **Relationship Problems:** Depression leaves people drained emotionally, mentally and physically, so it becomes hard to be outgoing with friends and family members.
- (vi) **Health Concerns:** Depression can become an unhealthy cycle. People with depression need to take good care of themselves to feel better but because of the symptoms, they do not want to sleep or either sleep too much, they do not want to eat and they do not have interest in exercise. As a result of these, their depression worsens and their health also suffers. This can leave depressed person vulnerable to other illnesses such as the flu which worsens his or her own health condition.

On a final note, depression can have a devastating impact on the sufferer's ability to learn and function within the learning environment. Those with depression may experience a significant drop in grades due to decreased work readiness and work performance, lack of participation and increased tiredness to and absences from school. Depression has significant impact on how the brain functions. It makes sufferers become unmotivated and even disorganized and may have increased difficulty with short term memory. Depression and school failure can be a self-perpetuating cycle while depression contributes to school failure, school failure can also exacerbate depression in students (Students First Project, 2013).

Problem

Depression accounted for loss in any known organization than any other form of mental disorder. In a research, Ndu, Arinze-Onyia, Aguwa and Obi (2011) asserted that depression is associated with increase in risky behaviours, non-compliance to treatment, higher risk of co-morbid disorders and shortened survival. Depression can also interfere with students' study, eating pattern, sleeping patterns and can cause mental dysfunction among others in the affected persons. Besides, human body has been described as an amazing study in awesomeness (Solaade, 2013). Human body is a living machine (Jafar, 2009). Research contends that human body "talks" by cracking, popping, growling, ringing and whistling, only that they are being ignored by human beings, but assuming these noises of the body are being listened to and addressed appropriately before the worse time comes (that is, final breakdown), this could have saved human beings the hassles of spending money in hospitals on many of psychological diseases like depression.

Worldwide, there are certain risk factors that make some people more likely to get depressed than others (World Mental Health Federation, 2012). Moreover, many studies have been carried out on depressive disorders among many perimeters, culture and influences across the globe. For instance, Adeoye and Yusuf (2011) appraised the prevalence and causes of depression among the civil servants in Osun State, Nigeria. They found that majority of civil servants interviewed were suffering from depression meaning that it is prevalent among the civil servants. Their study also revealed that women are at risk than their men counterparts and that job demands and poor remunerations are the major factors that lead to depression among civil servants.

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is a gap yet to be filled as none of the aforementioned studies covered the manifestations of depression among undergraduates of universities in Kwara State. This study filled this gap by investigating the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

- (i) What is the level of manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State?
- (ii) Is there any difference in the level of manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation?
- (iii) Is there any difference in the level of manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on level of study?

Research Hypotheses

- Ho₁:** There is no significant difference in the level of manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference in the level of manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on level of study.

Research Design

The researchers adopted descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey provides an opportunity for the researcher to present information about the characteristics within a particular field of study with the purpose of providing a picture of situations, as they naturally exist (Burns & Grove, 1995).

Population, Sample and Sampling Techniques

The population of this study comprised the entire undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State. The target population for the study consisted of all undergraduates of two Universities in Kwara State. These two universities are University of Ilorin and Kwara State University. However, the study's target population is 38, 828 as at the time of this study. Out of this figure, University of Ilorin has a lion share of 34,000 undergraduates population (The Sun News Paper report of March 18, 2014), and Kwara State University (KWASU) has 4,828 (Olayinka & Alaya, June 5, 2013). The technique that was used in selecting sample for this study is a multi-stage sampling technique. At stage 1, purposive sampling technique was used to select purposively two Universities among all Universities that are in Kwara State.

At stage 2, proportional sampling method was used to select five hundred and twenty-six (526) undergraduates from University of Ilorin and seventy-four (74) from Kwara State University, all together making a total of six hundred (600) participants for the study. The above figures were based on the following percentages and represent the proportional contribution of each of the two universities used by the researchers in this study using simple calculation thus; University of Ilorin (UNILORIN) = $(34,000/38,828 \times 100) = 87.6\%$ of the target population and Kwara State University (KWASU) = $(4,828/38,828 \times 100) = 12.4\%$ of the study's target population. It is on this calculation that the sample size of each of the two universities studied was proportionally worked out from the 600 respondents considered for study. Thus; UNILORIN; $(600 \times 87.6/100) = 526$ representatives and KWASU; $(600 \times 12.4/100) = 74$ representatives. However, the addition of representatives of the two Universities give thus; $(526 + 74) = 600$.

At stage 3, stratified sampling method was used to categorize the respondents into various groups of interest of the researchers such as religious affiliation and level of study. Stratified sampling is done to ensure that certain sub-groups (for instance African Traditional Religion, Christianity & Islam) in the population are represented adequately in the sample of study (Ibrahim, Landu, & Opadokun, 2004). Thus, the stratified sampling will be used to select the sample of the study in respect to the variables under study. At the stage 4, simple random technique was used to select sample at random from all the identified sub-groups of the study.

For the purpose of this study, questionnaire was used as a measuring device which is personally designed by the researchers after a well guided and thorough review of literature and the questionnaire was tagged "Manifestations of Depression Questionnaires (MDQ). The questionnaire therefore consists of 2 sections; A and B. Section A: focuses on the demographic data of the respondents which include information on religious affiliation and level of study of respondents. Section B consists of twenty (20) items seeking information from the respondents on the manifestations of depression. The respondents responded to the items using: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the draft of the questionnaire was given to seven experts in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin for vetting and advice. Sequel to their suggestions, necessary amendments were made.

The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the test re-test reliability method. The questionnaire was administered on 30 undergraduates from University of Ilorin, who did not form part of the study but possess the similar characteristics or attributes of the population. After a period of four weeks, the same instrument or questionnaire was re-administered on the same group of people. The two sets of scores obtained differently on the two occasions were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient (r) statistical

method. The value obtained was 0.78 at 0.05 alpha level of significance. Thus, the instrument is reliable for the study.

The data obtained were analysed using frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation as well as rank order for the descriptive data while t-test and Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) statistical analysis were used to test the null hypotheses generated.

Results

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents Based on Religious affiliation and Level of study

No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Religious Affiliation		
	Christianity	217	36.2
	Islam	302	50.3
	Others	81	13.5
	Total	600	100.0
2	Level of Study		
	100 Level	115	19.2
	200 Level	236	39.3
	300 Level	147	24.5
	400 Level	68	11.3
	500 Level	18	3.0
	600 Level	16	2.7
	Total	600	100.0

Table 1 presents the distribution of respondents based on religious affiliation and level of study. The total number of respondents who participated in this study is 600 out of which, 217 (36.2%) of the respondents were Christians, 302 (50.3%) were Muslims while 81 (13.0%) were from other religious sects. In regards to level of study, 115 (19.2%) were in 100 level, 236(39.3%) were from 200 level, 147 (24.5%) were in 300 level, 68 (11.3%) were in 400 level, 18 (3.0%) were in 500 level while 16 representing (2.7%) were in 600 level.

Research Question One: What are the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State?

Table 2: Mean and rank order on manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of universities in Kwara State, Nigeria

Item No.	I experienced the following on my depression:	Mean	Rank
4	Poor school performance	3.15	1st
1	Avoidance of responsibility	3.14	2nd
12	Difficulty in day to day task	3.12	3rd
6	Health problems	3.11	4th
20	Loss of self-confidence	3.10	5th
19	Difficulty in thinking	3.10	5th
7	Loss of friends	3.10	5th
9	Eating problem (over eating or under eating)	3.09	8th
15	Hatred for academic pursuits	3.08	9th
13	Sleep disorder or sleep difficulty (insomnia)	3.07	10th
5	Difficulty in relating with others	3.06	11th
10	Truancy	3.05	12th
16	Loss of weight	3.04	13th
11	Telling lies	3.03	14th

18	High cost of hospital visitation	3.03	14th
14	Avoidance of social activities	3.01	16th
8	Difficulty in making decision	3.01	16th
17	Self-injury	2.98	18th
3	Reckless behaviour (e.g. drug/alcohol abuse)	2.93	19th
2	Suicidal behaviour	2.87	20th

Table 2 presents the mean and rank order of the manifestation of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The table shows that item 4 (with score mean of 3.15) which stated that "I experienced poor school performance while feeling depressed" was ranked first. Item 1 (with mean score of 3.14) which stated that "I experienced avoidance of responsibility while feeling depressed" was ranked second while item 12 (with mean score of 3.12) which stated that "I experienced difficulty in day to day tasks" was ranked third respectively. On the other hand, items 17, 3 and 2 were ranked 18th (with mean score of 2.98), 19th (with mean score of 2.93) and 20th (with mean score of 2.87) respectively. The items indicated self-injury, reckless behaviour and suicidal behaviour as the least manifestation of depression. It can be concluded that the leading manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara States are poor school academic performance, avoidance of responsibility, difficulty in day to day tasks, health problems, loss of self-confidence etc.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant difference in the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation.

Table 3: ANOVA showing the manifestation of depression as perceived by undergraduates of universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation.

Gender	df	SS	Means Square	p-value
Between Group	2	221.602	110.801	0.39
Within Group	597	58322.898	97.693	
Total	599	58544.500		

Table 3 shows that the p-value of 0.39 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. This means that there is no significant difference in the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation. Thus, the hypothesis is not rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant difference in the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on level of study.

Table 4: ANOVA showing the manifestation of depression as perceived by undergraduates of universities in Kwara State based on level of study

Gender	df	SS	Means Square	p-value
Between Group	5	1011.411	202.282	0.22
Within Group	597	57533.089	96.857	
Total	599	58544.500		

Table 4 shows p-value of 0.22 which is greater than alpha level of 0.05. This means that there is no significant difference in the manifestations of depression as perceived by undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on level of study. Thus, the hypothesis is not rejected.

Discussion

The findings identified poor school academic performance, avoidance of responsibility, difficulty in day to day tasks, health problems and loss of self-confidence as major manifestations of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The finding is in line with the notion of Glied and Pine (2002) that depressed adolescents are at much higher risk of poor performance at school. This is because the victim of depression might have loss interest in any activities he/she engages and feels nothing worth striving for in life. According to Beck, Rush, Shaw and Emery (1979), the essential feature of the content of depressive disorders is the concept of the cognitive triad, or negative views of self, world, and future. The result of the study indicated that students in universities in Kwara state have perceived moderate level of depression. The respondents scored between 3.00 and 3.40 in 17 out of 20 items while 3 out of 20 items have low level of depression.

Hypothesis one revealed no significant difference in the level of manifestations of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliations. Religion does not differentiate respondent's manifestations of depression. This may be due to the fact that all forms of religion accord people opportunities for social support, which has been found to protect people against depressive symptoms (George, Larson, Koenig & McCullough, 2000). The finding is in consistence with the study of Koenig, George and Peterson (1998) whose finding indicated that certain aspects of religiousness (e.g., public religious involvement, intrinsic religious motivation) may be inversely related to depressive symptoms (with greater religious involvement associated with fewer symptoms of depression).

The result of hypothesis two revealed no significant difference in the manifestations of depression among undergraduates of universities in Kwara State based on level of study. The finding corroborates the study of Joel, Cassie and Cassandra (1997) who found a positive relationship between level of study and depression but without differentiation among levels.

Conclusion

The findings identified poor school performance, avoidance of responsibility, and difficulty in day to day tasks, health problems and loss of self-confidence as the major manifestations of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The results revealed moderate level of manifestations of depression in 17 out of 20 items. This shows the need for counselling to prevent high level of manifestation of depression among students of universities in Kwara state. The result of the hypotheses revealed no significant difference in the manifestations of depression among undergraduates of Universities in Kwara State based on religious affiliation and level of study.

Counselling Implications

Counsellor in the academic environment should be aware of students' behaviours, health status and their interpersonal relationship with others in order to identify depressed students and to provide adequate counselling intervention that could help such students overcome the impending problem. Counsellors and the Counselling Centres in various higher institutions of learning in Kwara state should intensify efforts in palliative measures to cushioning the effect of economic crack down on students such measure include: scholarship to indigent students' study work scheme etc. The centre should continue to sensitize students to the function of counselling centre so that they can patronise them for their concern and receive adequate counselling to avoid depression.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: Counsellors should be employed in all Nigerian schools (from primary to tertiary level) so that students can share their concerns with them. The counsellors would help them to be aware of their concerns and provide lasting solution to the identified problems such as replacing negative thoughts with positive ones, learning of appropriate coping skills and so on. Students in tertiary institutions need to attend valuable programmes organised and designed by the Counselling Centre to help them adjust to environment and taken necessary steps to prevent problem that could cause depression and other challenges. The peer groups in the school should assist one another in identifying depressed students and refer such to the school counselling unit for appropriate counselling intervention.

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