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Determinants and effects of depression on the academic performance of undergraduate students of University of Benin, Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria

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Abstract

Today, there is widespread worry over university students' poor mental health. University students are disproportionately affected by depression, anxiety, and stress, which hurt their quality of life, performance in the classroom, and overall accomplishment. This research aimed to determine the factors contributing to depression among undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria and to ascertain the impact of depression on undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The study's population was all full-time undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin City, which was estimated to be 77,000. The study employed a hybrid method that included quantitative and qualitative techniques. The results of this study demonstrated that numerous factors, including academic pressure, discrimination based on gender, stress related to money and the economy, and academic workload, might contribute to depression. The study established that depression lowers students' general enthusiasm to participate in academic activities. According to this study, the administration of the University of Benin should give priority to developing and enhancing mental health support services on campus. This comprises furnished counseling facilities staffed by experts (social workers, psychologists, counselors, etc.) who are available to provide students with mental health concerns with private and discrete help.

Keywords: Academic achievement; Depression; Distress; Emotion; Mood

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is an essential component of optimal health. This means that mental health is more

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than just the absence of mental illnesses or disabilities; rather, it is a state of well-being in which people are aware of their abilities, can manage daily stressors, and can contribute to their community by working productively.[1]A recent study reveals that approximately 322 million people worldwide suffer from depression.[2]Ina similar vein, the World Health Organization (2020) estimates that more than 264 million people of all ages suffer from depression.[2] Comparably, research by Chodavadia, Teo, Poremski, Fung, and Finkelstein[3]indicates that 4.4% of people worldwide have significant depressive illnesses. This is because stresses during the pandemic era have caused a 25% rise in the prevalence of anxiety and depression. Like other mental diseases, depression is frequently neglected or underestimated in the majority of cultures worldwide, especially among teenagers in Africa. It is not the same as mood swings or fleeting emotional reactions to problems encountered in daily life. Particularly if it persists for a long time and is moderately to severely intense, depression may develop into a serious medical disease. It causes a person to suffer greatly and perform poorly in their day-to-day interactions or transactions at job, school, and in the family. In the worst-case scenario, it drives the patient to end their own life.[4]

University students are not an exception to the rule that depression affects people of all ages and stages of life.[5]According to Ibrahim et al.,[6] depression is a serious health problem that affects many students in higher education. According to research done at three colleges in Rajasthan by Rathore, Jagawat, and Lahiri Mallik,[7] depression is a common health problem among undergraduate students. Rathore, Jagawat, and Lahiri Mallik went on to say that depression is a typical health problem that many undergraduate students deal with regularly as it might be quite crippling if not addressed.
A survey conducted in Asia over four years with 1401 undergraduate students in China revealed that between 20% and 40% of undergraduates experienced

[1]World Health Organization. 2018. "Fact Sheet: Depression." Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization. Available at http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/en/.
[2]Ma, J., Zhou, H., Fu, Q., & Lu, G. "Facilitators and Barriers in the Development and Implementation of Depression Prevention and Treatment Policies in China: A Qualitative Study." *BMC Public Health* 23, no.1 (2023): 276. Published February 7, 2023. doi:10.1186/s12889-023-15201-0
[3]Chodavadia, P., Teo, I., Poremski, D., Fung, D., & Finkelstein, E. "Prevalence and Economic Burden of Depression and Anxiety Symptoms Among Singaporean Adults: Results from a 2022 Web Panel." *BMC Psychiatry* 23 (2023): 104. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-023-04581-7
[4]Bachmann, Sebastian. "Epidemiology of Suicide and the Psychiatric Perspective."*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 15, no. 7 (2018): 1425. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15071425
[5]Durga, Krishna M., Rajan, Binaya, Ridesh, Prakash, &Shreesti, Sujata."Depression among the University Students in Arghakhanchi District."*American Journal of Applied Psychology* 10, no. 4 (2021): 95-100. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajap.20211004.12
[6]Ibrahim, A. K., Kelly, S. J., Adams, C. E., &Glazebrook, C. A. "A Systematic Review of Studies of Depression Prevalence in University Students."*Journal of Psychiatric Research* 47, no. 3 (2013): 391–400.
[7]Rathore, N. S., Jagawat, &LahiriMallik, S. "Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety among College Students: A Study." *International Journal on Advanced Science Engineering and Information Technology* 11 (2023): 76-78.

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stress, anxiety, and depression to varying degrees, and about 35% of them had higher levels of depression than the general population.[8]According to an online survey conducted among 7915 first-year students at Hong Kong University in China, 21%, 41%, and 27% of respondents, respectively, reported having moderate to high levels of stress, anxiety, or depression far higher than the average for the general population.[9]In six ASEAN nations (Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam), there were 15859 college students. The median prevalence rate of depression among these students was 29.4%, and 7% to 8% of them committed suicide. According to Dabana and Gobir,[10] 58.2% of Ahmadu Bello University Zaria students in Nigeria met the criteria for moderate depression.

Over the last few decades, Nigeria's economy has grown, increasing the need for skilled labourers. This has raised the demand for higher education in the nation. The university education system in the nation is in a competitive climate due to intense rivalry for jobs. In addition, parents, the majority of whom come from middle-class and upper-class backgrounds, think of sending their children to private universities as an investment in their social security in the future. Parents, meantime, have high expectations that their offspring will assume family management responsibilities shortly after graduation. In addition to the demanding academic setting, some Nigerian university students (University of Benin, Benin City inclusive) experience poor mental health outcomes as a result of financial strain and familial expectations. Parents, teachers, school administrators, the government, curriculum designers, and the general public are all concerned about their children's academic performance. Meanwhile, between secondary school and university transfer, there is a lot of tension and adjustment.

According to Arnett,[11]this stage is characterized by introspection, instability, potential, self-focus, and a combination of these. Throughout this phase, individuals usually face challenges relating to shifting their identities and responsibilities, as well as greater complexity and variety from families and institutions. Numerous studies have been conducted on the subject matter of depression in some selected countries of the world but to the best of my knowledge, none of these have employed the hybrid methods of data analyses to examine the determinants of depression and its effects on the academic performance of undergraduate students of University of Benin, Benin City, Edo

[8] Liu, X., Ping, S., &Gao, W. "Changes in Undergraduate Students' Psychological Well-Being as They Experience University Life." *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, 2019.
[9] Wong, J. G., Cheung, E. P., Chan, K. K., Ma, K. K., & Tang, S. W. "Web-based Survey of Depression, Anxiety and Stress in First-Year Tertiary Education Students in Hong Kong." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 40 (2006): 777–782.
[10]Dabana, Aisha and Abdulrazaq Abdullahi Gobir. "Depression among students of a Nigerian University: Prevalence and academic correlates." *Archives of Medicine and Surgery* 3 (2018): 6 - 10.
[11] Arnett, J. J. "Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties." *American Journal of Psychology* 32 (2004): 378–379.

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State, Nigeria. Hence, this leaves a vacuum in the literature which this study intends to address.

Research Questions

The following research questions will help to guide this study.

1. What are the determinants associated with depression among undergraduate students of University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of depression among undergraduate students of University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria?

Determinants of Depression among Students

It is essential to acknowledge that depression is a complex illness, with individual experiences varying widely. Understanding how these elements interact may help students avoid depression, and it's essential to use this knowledge when creating preventative and therapeutic plans. A multitude of intricately intertwined causes can lead to student depression. Individual, academic, and environmental factors can be used to group these variables.

1. Individual Factors: Numerous individual characteristics can have an impact on student depression. These innate qualities of the person might interact with outside pressures and stresses, such as those related to school. These include but are not limited to:

a. **Genetic Predisposition**: An individual's vulnerability to depression is influenced by hereditary factors. Studies have revealed a genetic component to depression, since it may run in families. A family history of depression has been linked to an increased risk of developing depression in a person.[12]

b. **Biochemical Aspects**: Depression has been linked to neurochemical dysregulation, including changes in serotonin and dopamine levels.[13]These imbalances can affect an individual's mood and emotional regulation.

c. **Personality Traits**: Neuroticism is one attribute that might increase an individual's susceptibility to depression symptoms while under stress.[14]In other words, certain psychological characteristics, especially when exposed to stress, might increase a person's risk of developing depression. For instance, those who exhibit high degrees of neuroticism which is defined by emotional instability and a predisposition toward negative emotions are more likely to experience depressive symptoms in response to stresses.

[12]Sullivan, P. F., Neale, M. C., &Kendler, K. S. "Genetic Epidemiology of Major Depression: Review and Meta-analysis." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157, no. 10 (2000): 1552-1562.

[13]Nestler, E. J., Barrot, M., DiLeone, R. J., Eisch, A. J., Gold, S. J., &Monteggia, L. M. "Neurobiology of Depression."*Neuron* 34, no. 1 (2002): 13-25.

[14]Kotov, R., Gamez, W., Schmidt, F., & Watson, D. "Linking 'Big' Personality Traits to Anxiety, Depressive, and Substance Use Disorders: A Meta-analysis."*Psychological Bulletin* 136, no. 5 (2010): 768-821.

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d. **Difficult Life Events**: According to Kendler et al.,[15] depression can be brought on by personal tragedies like the death of a loved one or physical abuse.

e. **Cognitive Patterns:** Depression may be influenced by an individual's cognitive patterns. For instance, when faced with difficulties in their personal or academic lives, those who have a tendency to engage in negative self-talk, rumination, and tilted thought patterns are more prone to suffer depression symptoms.

2. **Academic Factors:** Students who experience depression often do so as a result of academic difficulties. The distinct difficulties and demands of educational settings can significantly affect mental healthin the following ways:

a. **Academic Pressure:** According to Hunt and Eisenberg,[16]there is a risk of chronic stress and depression as a result of high academic expectations, such as tests, homework, and competitive situations.

b. **Perceived Failure:** Feeling hopeless and experiencing depression symptoms might result from experiencing recurrent academic defeats or believing that one is academically unsuccessful.[17]

c. **High Stakes and Competition:** In environments where there is intense competition for grades or limited opportunities, the fear of not meeting expectations or losing out can create a pressure-cooker atmosphere. This high-stakes and competitive environment can contribute to stress and depression.

d. **Academic Burnout:** According to Schaufeli et al.,[18]academic burnout is a condition that precedes depression and is brought on by extended exposure to academic stress without appropriate coping mechanisms.

e. **Excessive Workload:** An excessive workload can overwhelm students, leaving them with little time for relaxation, self-care, and social activities. This can lead to stress and fatigue, which are precursors to depression. A heavy academic workload has been linked to higher levels of depressive symptoms.[19]

f. **Social Comparison:** Students frequently compare themselves to others, which might make them feel inadequate if they think their academic performance falls short of expectations.[20]

g. **Isolation:** Intense academic demands can lead to social isolation as students spend more time studying and less time socializing. Social

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[15]Kendler, K. S., Karkowski, L. M., & Prescott, C. A. "Causal Relationship between Stressful Life Events and the Onset of Major Depression. "*American Journal of Psychiatry* 156, no. 6 (1999): 837-841.

[16]Hunt, J., & Eisenberg, D. ''Mental Health Problems and Help-Seeking Behavior Among College Students.'' *Journal of Adolescent Health,* 46, no.1 (2010): 3-10.

[17]Lewinsohn, P. M., Rohde, P., & Seeley, J. R. "Major Depressive Disorder in Older Adolescents: Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Clinical Implications." *Clinical Psychology Review* 23, no. 6 (2003): 769-788.

[18]Schaufeli, W. B., Martinez, I. M., Pinto, A. M., Salanova, M., & Bakker, A. B. "Burnout and Engagement in University Students: A Cross-national Study." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 33, no. 5 (2002): 464-481.

[19]Dusselier, L., Dunn, B., Wang, Y., Shelley, M. C., & Whalen, D. F. "Personal, Health, Academic, and Environmental Predictors of Stress for Residence Hall Students."*Journal of American College Health* 54, no. 1 (2005): 15-24.

[20]Festinger, L. "A Theory of Social Comparison Processes." *Human Relations* 7, no. 2 (1954): 117-140.

support is crucial for mental well-being, and social isolation can contribute to depressive symptoms.

3. **Environmental Elements:** Students' development of depression can be strongly influenced by environmental circumstances. These variables include a range of external factors, such as social, economic, and cultural aspects, that interact with the intellectual and personal aspects of an individual. It is essential to comprehend how these environmental elements affect students' depression to avoid and treat it. These include but are not limited to:
    a. **Social Support:** According to Hammen,[21]depression may be significantly exacerbated by a lack of social support from friends, family, or peers. The presence of a strong social support network can act as a protective factor against depressive symptoms.
    b. **Economic Stress:** According to Daly et al.,[22] financial hardships or worries about the expense of schooling might cause depressive symptoms.
    c. **Campus Environment:** The physical and social environment of the campus can impact students' mental health. Factors such as safety, social connectedness, and the availability of recreational and relaxation spaces can influence the overall well-being of students.
    d. **Discrimination:** According to Williams et al.,[23] encounters with bias or discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender, or race might set off depressive episodes.
    e. **Access to Mental Health resources:** Students may be discouraged from seeking depression therapy due to a lack of mental health resources and the stigma associated with requesting assistance.[24]
    f. **Living Situations:** According to Dusselier et al.,[25]unfavourable living situations, such as cramped quarters or unsupportive roommates, might exacerbate depression symptoms.
    g. **Cultural Norms:** Cultural norms and attitudes toward mental health and emotional expression can influence how students perceive and cope with depressive symptoms. Some cultures may stigmatize seeking help for mental health issues, making it difficult for students to acknowledge and address their depression.
    h. **Academic and University Policies:** Academic and university policies related to grading, workload, accommodation for students with

[21]Hammen, C. "Stress and Depression." *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology* 1 (2005): 293-319.
[22]Daly, M., Delaney, L., & Egan, M. "Childhood Circumstances and Adult Health in the National Child Development Study." *International Journal of Epidemiology* 30, no. 3 (2001): 725-731.
[23]Williams, D. R., Neighbors, H. W., & Jackson, J. S. "Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Health: Findings from Community Studies." *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 2 (2003): 200-208.
[24]Eisenberg, D., Golberstein, E., & Hunt, J. 2009. "Mental Health and Academic Success in College."*The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy* 9 (2009): 40-40. https://doi.org/10.2202/1935-1682.2191.
[25]Dusselier, L., Dunn, B., Wang, Y., Shelley, M. C., & Whalen, D.F. "Personal, Health, Academic, and Environmental Predictors of Stress for Residence Hall Students."*Journal of American College Health* 54, no. 1 (2005): 15-24.

mental health issues, and the availability of counseling services can either alleviate or exacerbate the stress and pressure students experience.

Effects of Depression on Students' Academic Performance

Depression is categorized as a psychiatric ailment and is sometimes referred to as the "psychiatric cold," a prevalent mental illness in the twenty-first century. Depression has a detrimental impact on our actions, including decreased interest, productivity, and social interaction. Suicide is the eleventh most common cause of death in the United States. Suicide happens around every 16 minutes, and virtually all of those who commit suicide have a diagnosis of a psychiatric illness at the time of death.[26][27][28] A pleasant mood makes us feel good, which motivates us to take care of our requirements and has favourable effects.[29] When a baby is taken away from its primary attachment figure-as was the case in the Harlow research with rhesus monkeys-the immune system is also harmed, which contributes to depression.[30] The usual reaction is not hopelessness and passivity. People who have experienced rejections, separations, and unstable bonds in the past may be sad.[31] As we have previously said, however, the death of a cherished lifetime spouse can also lead those with a history of contented and stable relationships to experience protracted depression.[32] When prompted to reminisce about happier moments, both depressed and non-depressed individuals become more upbeat. Still, unhappy people experience an additional worsening of their feelings, as though the good recollection somehow confirms that they will never again be happy.[33] Individuals with depression tend to explain things more negatively than those without depression. Depression is associated with a gloomy, negative explanation and interpretation of failure.

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[26]American Association of Suicidology. USA. "*Recommendations for Reporting Suicide*."Retrieved September 14, 2023, from Sci.int.(Lahore), 27(2), 1619-1624, 2015.ISSN 1013-5316.http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=236&name=DLFE-336.pdf

[27]American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP).*Facilitating Suicide Bereavement Support Groups: A Self-Study Manual*. New York, NY: Author, 2007.

[28]Sudak, Harold S. "Suicide." In Benjamin J. Sadock and Virginia A. Sadock (Eds.) *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry,* Vol. 2, 8th ed., (2005): 2442-2443. Philadelphia.

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[30]Hennessy, Michael B., Schiml-Webb, Patricia A., &Deak, Terrence. "Separation, Sickness, and Depression: A New Perspective on an Old Animal Model." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18 (2009): 227–231.

[31]Nolan, Sarah A., Flynn, Cynthia, & Garber, Judy."Prospective Relations between Rejection and Depression in Young Adolescents."*Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85, no. 4 (2003): 745–755.

[32] Wakefield, J. C., Schmitz, M. F., First, M. B., &Horwitz, A. V. "Extending the Bereavement Exclusion for Major Depression to Other Losses: Evidence from the National Comorbidity Survey." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 64, no. 7 (2007): 433–440.

[33]Joormann, Jutta, Siemer, Matthias, &Gotlib, Ian H. "Mood Regulation in Depression: Differential Effects of Distraction and Recall of Happy Memories on Sad Mood." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 116, no. 3 (2007): 484–490.

Stress-related unpleasant emotions can impact health in several ways. Those who are prone to rage or depression should be especially aware of this. When we are joyful, we want to approach others and be helpful to them, and we also become friendlier and more open-minded.[34] We typically experience depression when we are fatigued. Depression symptoms have an impact on college students' academic performance.[35]Behaviour on the other hand is also impacted by depression. McCarthy et al.,[36] state that teenagers who experience depression are more likely to commit suicide. This may be true as they may not know the coping mechanisms to survive such depressive acts. Women experience depression at higher rates than men[37] and social and environmental factors may be the primary contributors to this. [38] In a community survey, more than 8,000 persons reported having major depressive symptoms. These symptoms included the same signs of mental illness, such as losing a significant relationship or financial investment, career failure, and social status decline. [39] Bipolar disease may be the cause of mood fluctuations that range from sadness to mania when a person has extreme energy, feels like they are on top of the world, and can accomplish everything they set their mind to.[40] Although bipolar illness is increasingly commonly diagnosed in young children and adolescents, the diagnosis is still debatable in these cases since symptoms in children might differ from those in adults. Even though major depressive illness is more prevalent than bipolar disorder, it is more debilitating and causes many missed workdays annually.[41]

Major depressive disorder is the psychiatric condition that is diagnosed the most often. Typical estimates indicate that up to 13% of women and 5% of men may suffer depression at some point in their lives, notwithstanding the large

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[34] De Dreu, Carsten K. W., Baas, Matthijs, &Nijstad, Bernard A. "Hedonic Tone and Activation Level in the Mood-Creativity Link: Toward a Dual Pathway to Creativity Model." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94, no. 5 (2008): 739-756.

[35]Lindsey, Beth J., Fabiano, Patricia, & Stark, Christopher. "The Prevalence and Correlates of Depression Among College Students." *College Student Journal* 43, no. 4 (2009): 999–1014.

[36] McCarthy, Jessica, Downes, Elizabeth J., & Sherman, Caroline A. "Looking Back at Adolescent Depression: A Qualitative Study." *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 30, no. 1 (2008): 49-68.

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[39]Winstead, Barbara A., and Jennifer Sanchez."Gender and Psychopathology." In James E. Maddux and Barbara A. Winstead (Eds.), *Psychopathology: Foundations for a Contemporary Understanding*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2005

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[41] Kessler, Ronald C., Akiskal, Hagop S., Ames, Merike, Birnbaum, Howard, Greenberg, Paul, Hirschfeld, Robert M. A., Jin, Robert, Merikangas, Kathleen R., Simon, Gregory E., & Wang, Philip S. "Prevalence and Effects of Mood Disorders on Work Performance in a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Workers." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 163, no. 9 (2006): 1561–1568.

variations in stated prevalence rates.[42] Depression affects women more often than it does males. It has been noted that there is a difference in depression rates between men and women that is unaffected by socioeconomic status, race, or nationality.[43] Female hormones may influence mood via a process that is currently unclear. Mood disorders, such as postpartum depression and mood swings associated with menopause, have been linked to hormonal changes in women.[44] The severity of depression can vary from mild to severe, depending on the degree of functional impairment and/or disability effect of symptoms. Numerous scholars have looked at the relationship between depression and academic success. Undergraduate students' academic performance can also be impacted by depression.[45] Depression and academic performance are inversely correlated as students with depression typically do their assignments less quickly and have poorer grade point averages.[46] Due to negative and good affect are interconnected, they lack discrete aspects.[47]

According to a 2011 American College Health Association across the nation study of students attending two- and four-year colleges, about 30% of college students reported having depression, even to the point that it was difficult for them to function.[48] According to a 2006 poll by the University Counselling Centres, 91.6% of participants reported having psychological issues, and this finding was followed up on.[49]Depression is a serious problem at American universities, thus many of them are constructing health and counselling centers for students to help them succeed in their college studies. College students with mild to moderate depression may have an elevated risk for academic harm.[50]

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[42]Hasin, Deborah S., Goodwin, Renee D., Stinson, Frederick S., & Grant, Bridget F. "Epidemiology of Major Depressive Disorder: Results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcoholism and Related Conditions." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 62 (2005): 1097–1106.

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[50]Heiligenstein, Eric, and Gregory Guenther."Depression and Academic Impairment in College Students."*Journal of American College Health* 45, no. 2 (2006): 59-64.

Theoretical Considerations

Addressing depression among undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State requires a multifaceted approach that targets biological, psychological, and social determinants. According to Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams & Glazebrook,[51] the interventions should include screening and early detection of depression, access to mental health services, and psycho-educational programs aimed at promoting resilience and coping skills. Collaborative efforts involving academic advisors, faculty members, and student support services can facilitate timely identification and intervention for students experiencing depression. Furthermore, creating a supportive campus environment that reduces stigma, fosters social connectedness, and promotes mental health awareness is essential for enhancing student well-being and academic success.[52]

Based on the above narratives, the theory that helped to illuminate this study was the biopsychosocial model of depression proposed by Engel.[53] This theory posits that depression is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors. Biological factors include genetic predispositions and neurochemical imbalances.[54] Psychological factors encompass cognitive distortions, negative thinking patterns, and maladaptive coping strategies.[55]Social factors involve environmental stressors, social support, and interpersonal relationships.[56] This model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of depression among undergraduate students.

First, biological vulnerabilities play a significant role in the development and manifestation of depression among undergraduate students. Genetic predispositions contribute to individual differences in susceptibility to depression, with heritability estimates ranging from 30% to 40%.[57]Neurobiological factors, including alterations in brain structure and function, neurotransmitter imbalances, and hormonal dysregulation, have been

[51]Ibrahim, A. K., Kelly, S. J., Adams, C. E., &Glazebrook, Christopher A. "A Systematic Review of Studies of Depression Prevalence in University Students."*Journal of Psychiatric Research* 47, no. 3 (2013): 391–400.
[52]Eisenberg, Daniel, Golberstein, Ezra, & Hunt, Justin."Mental Health and Academic Success in College."*The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy* 9: (2009) 40-40. https://doi.org/10.2202/1935-1682.2191.
[53]Engel, George L. "The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine." *Science* 196, no. 4286 (1977): 129-136. doi:10.1126/science.847460.
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[56] Kessler, Ronald C., Akiskal, Hagop S., Ames, Merike, Birnbaum, Howard, Greenberg, Paul, Hirschfeld, Robert M. A., Jin, Robert, Merikangas, Kathleen R., Simon, Gregory E., & Wang, Philip S. "Prevalence and Effects of Mood Disorders on Work Performance in a Nationally Representative Sample of U.S. Workers." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 163, no. 9 (2006): 1561–1568.
[57]Sullivan, Patrick F., Neale, Michael C., &Kendler, Kenneth S. 2000. "Genetic Epidemiology of Major Depression: Review and Meta-Analysis." *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157, no. 10 (2000): 1552-1562.

implicated in the pathophysiology of depression.[58][59] Among undergraduate students at the University of Benin, genetic and neurobiological vulnerabilities may interact with environmental stressors to increase the risk of depression, thereby impacting academic performance.

Second, psychological factors contribute significantly to the onset and course of depression among undergraduate students. Cognitive theories highlight the role of negative cognitive schemas, rumination, and cognitive biases in maintaining depressive symptoms.[60] Emotion regulation difficulties, such as deficits in emotion recognition and regulation, may exacerbate depressive symptoms among students facing academic stressors.[61] Additionally, learned helplessness and maladaptive coping strategies can perpetuate depressive episodes and impair academic functioning.[62] Understanding these psychological processes is essential for addressing the cognitive and emotional aspects of depression among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. More so, social factors, including interpersonal relationships, social support networks, and environmental stressors, significantly influence the prevalence and severity of depression among undergraduate students. Social support serves as a protective factor against depression, buffering the impact of academic stressors and promoting adaptive coping strategies.[63] Conversely, social isolation, peer pressure, and relational conflicts may contribute to increased vulnerability to depression among students.[64] Socioeconomic factors, such as financial strain and academic pressure, further exacerbate the risk of depression among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. Cultural norms and stigma surrounding mental illness may also impact help-seeking behaviours and treatment outcomes.[65] Considering these social contextual factors is crucial for addressing the broader environmental influences on depression and academic performance among students.

In line with the above stated theory, depression has significant implications on academic performance among undergraduate students at the University of Benin. Studies have consistently demonstrated a negative association between depression and academic achievement, including lower grades, increased

[58]Drevets, Wayne C., Price, Jennifer L., &Furey, Maura L. 2008. "Brain Structural and Functional Abnormalities in Mood Disorders: Implications for Neurocircuitry Models of Depression." *Brain Structure and Function* 213, no. 1–2 (2008): 93–118.
[59]Nestler, Eric J., Barrot, Michel, DiLeone, Ralph J., Eisch, Amelia J., Gold, Steven J., &Monteggia, Lisa M. "Neurobiology of Depression." *Neuron* 34, no. 1 (2002): 13-25.
[60] Beck, Aaron T. *Depression: Clinical, Experimental, and Theoretical Aspects*. University of Pennsylvania Press,1967
[61]Gross, James J., and Thompson, Ross. "Emotion Regulation: Conceptual Foundations." In *Handbook of Emotion Regulation*, (2007): 33-50.
[62]Lewinsohn, Peter M., Rohde, Paul, & Seeley, John R. "Major Depressive Disorder in Older Adolescents: Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Clinical Implications." *Clinical Psychology Review* 23, no. 6 (2003): 769-788.
[63]Cohen, Sheldon, & Wills, Thomas A. "Stress, Social Support, and the Buffering Hypothesis."*Psychological Bulletin* 98, no. 2 (1985): 310–357.
[64]Joiner, Thomas E., & Coyne, James C.*The Interactional Nature of Depression: Advances in Interpersonal Approaches.* American Psychological Association, 1999
[65]Kleinman, Arthur. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition.* Basic Books, 1988

absenteeism, and reduced productivity.[6667] Cognitive impairments associated with depression, such as poor concentration, memory difficulties, and executive dysfunction, can hinder students' ability to engage effectively in academic tasks.[68] Moreover, the motivational deficits and diminished interest characteristic of depression may lead to disengagement from coursework and extracurricular activities.[69] As a result, depression can undermine students' academic performance and hinder their overall educational attainment.

Methodology

In this research, a cross-sectional study design was employed. The cross-sectional study design is used for conducting research with a descriptive purpose, which is often done through a survey. The study was conducted at the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The University of Benin is a Federal government-owned tertiary institution, established on the 23rd of December, 1970, by the then Col. Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia, led administration of Mid-Western State with Professor (Mrs.) Lilian Imuetinyan Salami as it current Vice-Chancellor. The study was restricted to the entire Full-Time undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria which is put at 77, 000 (Registry, UNIBEN, 2023).

The sample size for the study was calculated using 1.12% of the total population. This was done in other to get a reasonable amount of respondents who would be able to represent the entire population in the study. Therefore, the sample size for this study was eight hundred and sixty (860). Multi-stage sampling technique was utilized in the study. This involves first, using the simple random sample technique, five faculties were chosen at random from among the fifteen faculties within the institution in the first phase. One department from each of the five faculties that were chosen was also chosen in the second phase using a purposive sampling method. The departments of computer science, guidance and counseling education, property law, nursing, sociology and anthropology were the five departments that were specifically chosen for the study.

In the third phase, the convenient sampling technique was used to select one hundred and seventy-two (172) students from each department which sum up to 860 students. In all, a total of eight hundred and sixty (860) students participated in the study. At the last phase of selecting the students from each

[66]Eisenberg, Daniel, Golberstein, Ezra, & Hunt, Justin."Mental Health and Academic Success in College."*The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy* 9 (2009):40-40. doi:10.2202/1935-1682.2191.
[67]Ibrahim, A. K., Kelly, S. J., Adams, C. E., &Glazebrook, C. "A Systematic Review of Studies of Depression Prevalence in University Students."*Journal of Psychiatric Research* 47, no. 3 (2013): 391–400.
[68]McDermott, Kyle B., &Zerr, Christopher L. "Individual Differences in Learning Efficiency."*Current Directions in Psychological Science* 28, no. 6 (2019): 607–613. doi:10.1177/0963721419869005.
[69]Vaez, Mehdi, &Laflamme, Lucie. "Experienced Stress, Psychological Symptoms, Self-Rated Health and Academic Achievement: A Longitudinal Study of Swedish University Students." *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal* 36, no. 2 (2008): 183–196. doi:10.2224/sbp.2008.36.2.183.

class ranging from 200L to 400 level, students were met in their lecture halls immediately after their classes and the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th…… students were selected to participate in the study. In a situation in which the students who were systematically selected were not willing to participate in the study, such students were skipped and the next "n" student was administered the questionnaire. In all only fifty-seven (57) students were conveniently selected from the 200 level and 300 levels while fifty-eight (58) students were selected from the 400 level and administered questionnaire from each of the selected Departments.

For this study, a self-created questionnaire was used. Of the 860 distributed questionnaires, 854 were completely filled and returned. The quantitative data collected were first coded and then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 23.0) while the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: What are the determinants associated with depression among undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria?

Table 1: The Determinants of Depression amongst Undergraduates of the University of Benin

QUESTION	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
Academic pressure is a significant contributor to depression among undergraduates.	Agree	726	84.9
	Disagree	128	15.1
	Total	**854**	**100**
Experiences of discrimination and prejudice based on factors like race, gender or sexual orientation contribute to depression in students.	Agree	787	92.2
	Disagree	67	7.8
	Total	**854**	**100**
Economic stress such as financial difficulties is a major risk factor for depression in students.	Agree	689	80.7
	Disagree	165	19.3
	Total	**854**	**100**
The academic workload at the University of Benin is a major source of stress which causes depression for students.	Agree	752	88.1
	Disagree	102	11.9
	Total	**854**	**100**

Source: Field work, 2023

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The result in Table 1 above shows that of the 854 participants, 726(84.9%) participants agreed that academic pressure is a significant contributor to depression among undergraduates while 128 (15.1%) participants disagreed with the term. The result also shows that 787 (92.2%) participants agreed that experiences of discrimination and prejudice based on factors like race, gender or sexual orientation contribute to depression in students while 67(7.8%) participants disagreed with the term. The result also shows that 689(80.7%) participants agreed that economic stress such as financial difficulties is a major risk factor for depression in students while 165(19.3%) participants disagreed with the term. Lastly, 752(88.1%) agreed that the academic workload at the University of Benin is a major source of stress which causes depression for students while 102(11.9%) disagreed with his term. Data gathered from the field stated that there is a strong relationship between discrimination and depressive disorder. The findings from the IDI corroborated those from the questionnaire survey conducted. The following captured the broad view of the IDI respondents:

> "Personally, whenever I think of how I am going to survive in this semester with money coming from home or any source at that, I feel really depressed and out of sort" (1D1, Male 400 level student, 2023)

Another student observed that:

> "Each time 1 don't have money, I get moody and very irritated" (1D1, Female 400 level student; 2023)

Based on the analysis of the results above, it is pertinent to state that numerous determinants of depression hinder undergraduate students' academic performance. This is so as the majority of the respondents stated that academic pressure, discrimination and prejudice based on skin colour, gender; financial stress as well as academic workloads all cause stress and anxiety among undergraduate students which in turn leads to depression.

Research Question Two: What are the effects of depression among undergraduate students of the University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Effect of Depression among Undergraduate Students of the University of Benin

QUESTION	RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENT (%)
Depression leads to a decrease in students' overall motivation to engage in academic activities.	Agree	695	81.4
	Disagree	159	18.6
	Total	**854**	**100**
Students experiencing depression are more likely to have difficulty concentrating in	Agree	648	75.9
	Disagree	206	24.1
	Total	**854**	**100**

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class.			
Depression negatively affects the academic performance of undergraduate students.	Agree	651	76.2
	Disagree	203	23.8
	Total	**854**	**100**
Students with depression tend to have lower self-esteem and lower self-confidence which affects their academic performance.	Agree	660	77.3
	Disagree	194	22.7
	Total	**854**	**100**
Depression may lead to physical health issues due to increased stress and disrupted sleep pattern which affects the students' wellbeing as well as their academic performance.	Agree	725	84.8
	Disagree	129	15.2
	Total	**854**	**100**

Source: Field work, 2023

The result in Table 2 also shows the effects of depression among undergraduate students at the University of Benin, Benin City. Five questions were asked to analyze this research question. The result of the study shows that 695(81.4%) participants agreed that depression leads to a decrease in students' overall motivation to engage in academic activities while 159(18.6%) participants disagreed with the term. The participants were also asked if students experiencing depression are more likely to have difficulty concentrating in class. Of the 854 participants 648(75.9%) agreed with the term while 206(24.1%) of the participants disagreed with the term. The participants were also asked if depression negatively affects the academic performance of undergraduate students.

Of the 854 participants, 651(76.2%) participants agreed that depression negatively affects the academic performance of undergraduate students while 203(23.8%) participants disagreed with the term. Participants were further asked if students with depression tend to have lower self-esteem and lower self-confidence which affects their academic performance. The result also shows that of the 854 participants, 660(77.3%) agreed with the term while 194(22.7%) participants disagreed with the term. Lastly, the participants were also asked if depression may lead to physical health issues due to increased stress and disrupted sleep patterns which affects the students' well-being as well as their academic performance. The result also shows that 725(84.8%) participants agreed with the term while 129(15.2%) disagreed with the term.

The quantitative result in Table 2 above, corroborates with the in-depth interview of some of the IDI participants who spoke expressly in support that stress and not having enough sleep were by-products of depression. This implies that people who have gone through adverse life events are more likely to develop depression which in turn leads to more stress and dysfunction and

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worsens the affected person's life situation. This was expressly stated by some IDI participants who stated thus:

> “One of my friends who is suffering from depression has an appetite change which has resulted to unintended weight loss. I pray this does not harm his heart" (1D1 Male, 400 level students, 2023)

Another interviewee simply stated that:

> "People with depression may experience insomnia or trouble sleeping. This can leave mom feeling exhausted and make it difficult to manage both their physical and mental health” (IDI, Female, 400 level student, 2023)

Many respondents disclosed that it feels really bad when a lecturer gives preferential treatment to students who appear better off than they are. This status and its predisposing factor to depression are well captured by a 400-level student in the Department of Computer Science when he stated:

> ‘l know that I am from a poor background and do not need anybody to rub this fact in. Unfortunately, some of my lecturers are very insensitive as they unconsciously push me aside and attend to students who are flashy and appear to be well off. Each time this happens I tend to withdraw and it affects my reading throughout that day and even beyond" (IDI, Female, 400 level student, 2023)

The views of another student further corroborate the above assertion when he noted that:

> “There are some places and functions on campus; I don’t get invited to because of my social status. This act of discrimination affects one's mental health" (IDI, Male, 200 level student, 2023)

Another recurring theme in this study was that academic workload was also a contributing factor to depressive disorder amongst undergraduates of the University of Benin. One of the interviewees angrily stated that.

> "In UNIBEN, it is like the lecturers were specially selected to kill students with work. The pressure is just too much. No wonder some students who cannot cope, just break down mentally!’’(IDI, Male, 400 level student, 2023)

Another student simply said that:

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> "The pressure of academic work here in UNIBEN is too much. To keep up, one has to keep taking stimulants to keep awake. Unfortunately, these stimulants have negative effects on the student's mental health" (IDI, Female, 200 level student, 2023)

Data gathered from the study shows that depressive disorder generally affects undergraduate students in diverse ways but more particularly, the students' self-esteem. The view of one of the respondents stated thus:

> "I have for some time now noticed that my roommate usually has very low self-esteem. Quite frankly, I did not know that she was going through depression due to the death of her parents on the same day. Poor girl, she is now a shadow of her old self (IDI, Female, 300 level student, 2023)

Another interviewee puts it aptly thus:

> "When I start thinking which has become very often, my self-esteem becomes low. The reason is because of lack of money and mockery from my classmates who make jest of my clothes (IDI, Male, 400 level student, 2023)

Discussion of Findings

Research question one of this study sought to find out the determinants associated with undergraduates at the University. The findings of this study established that there are several determinants of depression ranging from academic pressure and discrimination which could be based on gender and colour, economic/financial stress, and academic workload. In fact, the majority of the respondents believed that all the above-enumerated factors were responsible in one way or the other for depression among students. This finding validates the previous study of Hunt and Eisenberg,[70]Dusselier et al.,[71] Daly et al.,[72] and Williams et al.[73] where they contended that academic pressure, overload of academic assignments, and discrimination or bias based on gender, and financial hardship respectively are determinants of depression amongst students in universities.

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[70]Hunt, J., & Eisenberg, D. "Mental Health Problems and Help-Seeking Behavior Among College Students." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 46, no. 1 (2010): 3-10.
[71]Dusselier, L., Dunn, B., Wang, Y., Shelley, M. C., & Whalen, D. F. "Personal, Health, Academic, and Environmental Predictors of Stress for Residence Hall Students."*Journal of American College Health* 54, no. 1 (2005): 15-24.
[72]Daly, Michael, Delaney, Liam, & Egan, Mark."Childhood Circumstances and Adult Health in the National Child Development Study."*International Journal of* Epidemiology 30, no. 3 (2001): 725-731.
[73]Williams, David R., Neighbors, Harold W., & Jackson, James S. "Racial/Ethnic Discrimination and Health: Findings from Community Studies." *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 2 (2003): 200-208.

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The study also found that depression has very severe implications for students of the University of Benin. Many of the respondents were of the view that depression leads to a decrease in students' overall motivation to engage in academic activities, others hold that it leads to difficulties in concentrating in lectures and or classes. Other implications of depression found in the study include lower self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as leading to physical health issues due in most cases to increased stress and disrupted sleep patterns. The finding of this study further supports the works of Orth, Robins, Trzesniewski, Maes, & Schmitt[74] where they observed that depression could lead to decrease in motivation to engage in academic activities, as well as lower self-esteem and self-confidence.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, there are important ramifications for academic performance regarding the factors contributing to depression among University of Benin undergraduate students. Knowing these factors can help create focused treatments that promote students' academic performance and emotional wellness. Depression may be lessened in its detrimental impact on academic performance by addressing it via counseling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and proactive support networks. Furthermore, encouraging a welcoming campus community that lessens the stigma associated with mental health might motivate students to get treatment when they need it. The University of Benin must prioritize student well-being over academic success to create a conducive learning environment.

[74]Orth, Ulrich, Robins, Richard W., Trzesniewski, Kali H., Maes, Jan, & Schmitt, Manfred. "Low Self-Esteem is a Risk Factor for Depressive Symptoms from Young Adulthood to Old Age." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* no. 118 (2009): 472-478.

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