

INFLUENCE OF DEPRESSION ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated the Influence of depression on Academic performance among undergraduate students in University of Nigeria Nsukka in Enugu state. One question and hypothesis guided the study. Ex-post-facto design with a sample size of 250 undergraduate students in counselling and human development studies were randomly drawn from Faculty of education university of Nigeria Nsukka. The Instruments for the study which was made up of Beck's depression inventory (BDI) and influence of depression on academic performance questionnaire (IDAPQ) that was developed by researchers was used to obtain responses from the students. The instrument was face validated by three experts from the department of Counselling and Human Development Studies, Educational Foundations (psychology), and department of Science Education (measurement and Evaluation) of Faculty of Education University of Nigeria Nsukka respectively. Internal consistency was determined with Cronbach alpha statistics and a co-efficient of 0.89 obtained. Data collected was analyzed using Pearson product moment correlation tested at 0.05 level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that a significant relationship exist between depression and academic performance among undergraduate students in the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that professional counsellors should render psychological Interventions using cognitive behavioral techniques on students who are depressed in order to improve their academic performance. Coping strategies should also be taught in university of Nigeria, Nsukka in order to help lecturers and students recognize both onset and Morbidity of depression

Keywords: Depression, undergraduate university students, Academic performance.

Introduction

Depression is more than feeling unhappy or fed up for few days. Sometimes it is being misunderstood as trivial or something imagined and fake. However, this is a wrong assertion because depression is real with real symptoms. It is neither a sign of weakness as people wrongly assume nor something one can easily snap out of on their own by putting themselves together. The good news is that it is treatable with adequate cure and coping mechanism once the individual is engaged in the right cognitive behavioral mechanism, treatment and support. Depression is when a sad or bad mood of a student's last for weeks, months, or even longer and when it affects a student's ability to do well in school and with peers. Depression is not uncommon among students, but it can go unrecognized or undiagnosed. The onset of depression is the leading cause of morbidity in adolescents taking a massive toll on the quality of life in young adult's populations especially those of schooling age Bianca

Palmissano (2018). It occurs frequently among the age group of 12-20 giving rise to the onset of chronic and more persistent depression in adulthood. Yet depression is significantly under diagnosed in young people partially because the symptoms of adult depression which may be present differently in young students Neavin et al; (2018). Moreover, a student experiencing persistent boredom or disinterested in daily activities because of depression can become agitated and difficult to manage behaviorally. Unfortunately, because these adolescents do not always seem sad; they are more likely to be labelled as troublesome by lecturers and parents and rarely get treatment for the underlying cause of their behaviors. Furthermore, the effect of social stress on the depression student often correlate with bullying and suicide with the latter becoming the third leading cause of death in the world WHO, (2020). Depression is a common mental illness worldwide with more than 264 million people of all ages affected. It is the leading cause of disability worldwide and a major contributor to the overall global burden of mental disorder WHO (2020). It is different from usual mood fluctuations and short - lived emotional responses to everyday life challenges but has a long lasting with moderate or severe intensity to disrupt normal life, thereby affecting an individual's ability to function at work, school, and society. Depression is also known as the leading cause of suicide with close to 800,000 people dying yearly GBD (2018). Depression is also known as a disease characterized by decayed mood as its main symptomology. Others symptoms include, painful experience, bad humor, anguish, panic attacks, performance delay of various psychic and cognitive functions, tendency to isolation, demonization, apathy, hopelessness, negative thoughts, delusions, state of dejection and unhappiness. As estimated by world health organization, depression is the second largest illness in terms of morbidity with 2% of school children and 5% of adolescents suffering the disorder WHO, (2013).

Depression is classified as a mood disorder. It is described as feelings of sadness, loss or anger that interferes with person's everyday activities APA(2013). It is an ongoing problem which consists of episodes during which the symptoms lasts for at least two weeks, APA (2013). The word Depression comes from a latin word "depressioie" which means sinking. Operationally depression is a mood disorder that varies from normal transient low mood in daily life to clinical syndrome with severe and significant duration with associated signs and symptoms marked differently from normalcy. According to American Psychiatric Association (2013), depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how an individual feel, think and act. It leads to a variety of emotional and physical problems there by decreasing individual's interest in activities once enjoyed. The death of a loved one, failure in a subject or ending of a relationship are different experiences to endure with a normal feeling of sadness or grief in response, however it is not the same as having depression. This is because in grief, painful feelings comes in waves often mixed with positive memories of the situation while in depress, mood and interest are decreases for up to two weeks with a feeling of worthlessness and self-loathing APA, (2013).

Depression can affect anyone regardless of social status, age, ethnic group, socioeconomic status, parental up bringing among others; everyone at some point has experienced a sad mood. This short period of sadness is not uncommon as humans struggle with the pressure of everyday life such as financial pressure, marital pressure, raising laid, occupational difficulties amongst others. However, when this sadness goes beyond two weeks, it becomes of great concern because of its significant health consequences. The Diagnostic and Statistical manual of Mental Disorder Volume five DSM-V.TR, (2013) requires that five out of nine symptoms must be present for at least two weeks for a diagnosis of depression to becomes accurate. The nine symptoms includes, a sad depressed mood, loss of interest and pleasure in regular activities, loss of increase in weight and appetite, loss of energy, negative self-concept and feelings, worthlessness and guilt, difficult in concentrating

and recurrent thoughts of death Davidson and Neale (2021). In universities, the symptoms are more of somatic like social withdrawal and irritability manifesting in behaviours like fearlessness, physical complaint and clinging behaviours (Winkler, et al., 2018).

Depression and other affective disorders are areas primarily ignored in education especially by the public universities. A large number of undergraduate students are affected by depression which invariably affects their academic performances. This is seen in the way they skip school and academic activities, feel hopeless, difficulty in concentration, attention deficient, despondency, decrease in class activity, pessimism and sadness which severely disrupt and adversely affect their sometimes to such extent that suicide is attempted Lyer & Khan (2012). As an emotional problem with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, depression is a prevalent problem among undergraduate student across the world with a devastating effect on students, though it is treatable.

Untreated depression also interferes in day today activities of students with students ignoring their own successes and traits while exaggerating their faults and failures. Research has shown that students who believe that others are better than them are more likely to develop depression. Thus if lecturers and peers view and treat a student as someone not academically and socially capable and competent, there may be a greater risk of depression. For example, approximately 50% of undergraduate student in university of Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka with depression also have problems with anxiety, attention deficient, hyper activity disorder, conduct disorder, oppositional deficient disorder and substance abuse (Lyer & Khan, 2012).

Depression as a mood disorder affects a person's ability to perform life activities including academic performance, Hysenbegasi et al., (2015). It is common for people who suffer from depression to engage in self-blame, experience confusion and a feeling of hopelessness. It has been found that alot of interest aspect of depression is associated with lower grade point, anxiety and poor academic performance (Elsenberg 2019). Thus time and efforts are needed to help students achieve better feat in the academics. According to Narad and Abdullah (2016), academic performance is the knowledge acquired that is assessed by a teacher via grades or educational objectives set by students and instructors to be fulfilled over a defined period. Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or University has attained their short or long-term educational goals (Hysenbegasi et al). Operationally, academic performance is the term that indicates a student's achievement after completing a course or subject from an institution which measures students learning across various academic subjects, which is assessed by formative and summative assessments. This is because the desire of success is dependent on an individual's concept of himself and the different interpretation given to situations thus a student who sees himself as a top ranking scholar may set as his goal the attainment of the highest grade in the class while those who see themselves as hopeless and helpless with low self-esteem may see themselves as failures thus performing poorly in school Suleiman (2017).

Education at tertiary institution level is the bedrock and foundation for higher knowledge. It is an investment as well as instruments for achieving technological, scientific, cultural, social and political developments. This is why the federal ministry of education (2014) stipulated national policies for university education as an agent of national development that fosters individual development for further societal worth and development with equal opportunities for all. However, no nation can function academically when her student are depressed hence there is need for depression to be taken seriously as it has the capacity to destroy academic performance of the country's Younger generation and future work force. Furthermore, academic performance among undergraduate students has always

been a matter of great concern to educators, students and government. Though a lot of measures have been taken over the years in order to improve on the situation nevertheless, a large number of undergraduate students still perform poorly. Narad and Abdullah (2016) further emphasized that undergraduate students in recent times performed below expectations in internal examinations giving rise to a lot unanswered questions as a result of this abnormally. This has led to serious investigation by researchers on the reasons for the poor academic performance including attributions to depression among others.

Academic performance is the extent to which a student has attained a short or long term educational goals Mohammed, (2010). Academic performance is important because it is strongly linked to the positive outcomes we value students who are academically successful with high level of socio-emotional intelligence are more likely to be employed have stable employment than those with less education Janelle (2011). Academically, successful students have high self-esteem, lower level of depression and anxiety, less likely to abuse alcohol and engage in substance abuse. Academic performance is also very important for the successful physical, social, psychological, mental and medical development of students and better integration into the society. In Nigeria, academic excellence, qualifications and high performance attainment have been regarded as the parameters for recurrent, placement and advancement in both public and private sector. With reference to this study, depression has the ability to influence the prevalence of academic failure in a student. For example, anxiety and hostility is heightened whenever the same student is reacting to a negative stimuli with little or no self-control over his reaction making him more prone to depression thereby disrupting his normal routine functioning including academic.

Observation and interaction of the researchers about the undergraduate students revealed that most undergraduates students who are already adolescents have the ability to process better than children and some of them are in a better position to identify accurately what they are feeling, however being adolescents also makes them prone to immature articulation of situations which they see and react to from their immature minds (Animba 2020). Though depression has debilitating effects on adults, however it is often worse on adolescents who lacks the social and emotional experience of handling such situations, for example, rape is prevalent in the society how and why has it not always reported by students? The reason being due to the culture of silence practiced especially in undeveloped countries, blame on the victims, social and cultural bullying for speaking out among others. The experiences are quite traumatic to the individual with no way of escape thereby leading to chronic depression. Sadly, the only way of detecting the level of depression among them is through behavioural manifestation and daily disruption of daily functioning of student including academic performance. This is evident in the lack of concentration in the class, being absent minded, lack of enthusiasm and motivation for learning, distrust of the school and society at large, violent outburst, erratic and negative behaviour, numbness among others, Neroni et al (2019). This also made leaning low and unproductive among students which undergraduate students in the university of Nigeria, Nsukka are inclusive.

Undergraduate students are youths who are still at the prime of their lives with the intention of taking over from the ageing adults, Animba, (2020). However, when these students suffer acute and chronic stress which invariably trigger depression due to lack of identification of depressive stressors, adequate therapy and coping mechanism, they graduate from universities into the society as maladjusted and dysfunctional individuals who cannot contribute to the social, economic, emotional and physical functioning of the society. These undergraduates may also resort to suicide in order to escape their confused emotional state; not because they enjoy doing it but due to the overwhelming chronic state there by posing a

serious obstacle to their academic progress. Furthermore, there is need for proper investigation of depression in order to facilitate teaching and learning for the good of the students, school and society. It is worthy to note here that poor performance of undergraduate students is not linked to lecturers, Lectures variable alone; however, teaching and learning process has other contributory variable apart from lecturers to contend with.

Statement of problem

Despite the strategic position and role of university education in the educational system and the educational career of the undergraduate, its acquisition is being hindered in Nigeria. Poor academic performance is a major educational social and emotional problem that poses complex subject for policy makers, educators, parents, counsellors, students and others. Depression may has the ability to influence the prevalence of poor academic performance in a student's due to stress. The stress experienced by most undergraduate student's dose not only makes them uncomfortable but causes toxic stress response, if adequate support system is lacking in their lives to help them navigate the process, depression may set in, Animba (2020). Neglect, abuse and household crisis are all types of depression triggers that can cause overdrive of bodily stress management. Therefore it is very important for educators to be aware of this risk because students suffering from depression are not only at health risk but are prone to lower grade point that lends to poor academic performance, decreased reading and learning and increased school dropout.

As lecturers or educators, knowing the signs and having strategies to keep students to be successful can make a difference. Certain behaviours in a classroom setting may signify that a student is suffering from depression. For example, students being overly aggressive with other students, student being withdrawn, sad or distracted in class student engaging in self destructive behaviours among others Koplewicz (2022) if depression among undergraduate students continues to increase on the high rate and remained unchecked it will lead to university of Nigeria, Nsukka community to be overcrowded with youths who will become miscreant, vagabond, suicide, dropout and social deviant to the communities and to the society at large. It is on this backdrop that the researchers focused to investigate and determine the extent depression influences academic performances among undergraduate students in university of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of depression on academic performance of undergraduate students in universality of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Research Questions: One research question guided the study:

What is the influence of depression on academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria Nsukka?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the influence of depression on academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Methods

The study adopted Ex-post-Facto design. The population of the study comprised of 1000 undergraduate students in the faculty of education university of Nigeria Nsukka (source: Faculty of Education result Record, 2023). The researcher observed that the result performances of these students are very low compared to other student. The sample consists

of 200 depressed and 50 undergraduate's students that are not depressed in counselling and human development studies, Science Education, Educational Foundations which were drawn using multi-stage sample technique. There was researchers-designed instrument titled influence of depression on academic performance questionnaire (IDAPQ). Containing 25 items and Becks Depression Inventory (BDI) consisting of 21 symptoms items described in simple sentences which were modified to 20 symptom items. Each item has 4 different questions (0-3) to which the respondent ticks the one that best described his feeling. The highest possible total for the whole test would be sixty-three. Since the lowest possible score for each question is zero. Depression level is considered as 1-10 (normal) 11-16 (mild mood) 17-20 (borderline depression), 21-30 (moderate depression), 31-40 (severe depression) and over 40 (extreme depression). The instrument was subjected to face validity by three experts, two from department of counselling and human development studies and psychology and one from measurement and evaluation all in faculty of education university of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability co-efficiency of the instrument was determined using cronbach alpha and a reliability co-efficient of 0.89 was obtained. A total of 250 questionnaires were administered to the respondent with the help of two research assistants. These assistants were trained by the researchers to assist in administering the instruments to the respondents. A total of 250 copies properly filled and returned were used for analysis. Mean and standard were used to answer the research questions while t-test statistics was used to test the null hypothesis at 0.05 significance level. The decision was made using mean scores of 2.50 and above on the four-point rating was chosen as accepted while those below 2.50 was regarded as negative and was rejected.

Results

Research question: What is the influence of depression on academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu state?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of analysis on the influence of depression on academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu state.

N=250				
S/N	Variables	X	SD	Decision
1	Depression	19.36	2.25	Has influence
2	Students' academic performance	8.24	1.35	

The result of the study as presented in Table 1 showed the mean and standard deviations of respondents on the influence of depression on the academic performance of undergraduate student in university of Nigeria, Nsukka. Result showed that students' mean rating on depression was 19.36 with a standard deviation of 2.25, while students' academic performance mean score was 8.24 with a standard deviation of 1.35. Since the mean rating of students on depression is above 2.50 criterion level, this implies that depression may have influence on their academic performance.

Hypothesis one: The academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu state is not significantly influence by students' depression.

Table 2: Pearson T. test on the relationship between student depression and its influence on academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu state.

Variable	X	SD	N	T	DF	Sig
Depression	19.36	2.25	250	0.346	248	0.001
Academic performance	8.24	1.35				

a= 0.05, x = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, t = paired sample t-test value, df = degree of freedom, sig = significance

Paired sample t-test analysis was used to test hypothesis 1 (H O1). The result in Table 2 showed the t-value of 0.346 with a degree of freedom of 248 and an associated exact probability value of 0.001. This probability value of 0.001 was compared with 0.05 set as level of significance and it was found to be significant because 0.001 is less than 0.05. the null hypothesis which states that; the academic performance of undergraduate students in university of Nigeria, Nsukka Enugu State is not significantly influenced by the level of students' depression was therefore rejected. Inference drawn was that the academic performance of undergraduate student in university of Nigeria, Nsukka is significantly by the level of students' depression.

Discussion of findings

The finding of the study in table 1 showed that there is a significant relationship between academic performance and depression among undergraduate students in university of Nigeria Nsukka Enugu state. The relationship between the two variables was inversely proportional implying that the higher the academic performance, the lower the depression level and vice versa. The findings were consistent with the study carried out by Hysenbegasi, Hass and Rowland (2015) which found out that depression had significant impact on the academic productivity of undergraduate students. Similarly, Elsenberg (2019), examined the association between self-reported depressive symptomology and college academic performance and also found inversely significant relationship between depression and academic performance which is consistent with the findings of this hypothesis that significant relationship exists between depression and academic performance among undergraduate students in university of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu state.

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating the influence of depression on academic performance among undergraduate students. Stakeholders in education has tried a lot to find out why students fail even when lecturers do their best in impacting knowledge under stimulating environment. It has shown that one of these factors, depression plays an important role in teaching and learning. Symptoms resulting from depression can directly impact a students do not have the necessary coping skills to manage the impact of stress, anxiety and depression. Some might be distracted by intrusive thought about events that prevent them from paying attention in class during studying or doing well on a test. Exposure to violence and other traumatic event can disrupt a student's ability to relate with others and successfully manage their emotions. In the classroom setting, according to the finding depression can lead to lower grade point that will lead to poor academic performance because students with depression also have problem remembering difficulty in concentrating and easily distracted. The relationship between the two variables was inversely proportional implying that the higher the academic performance, the lower the depression level and vice versa.

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

- 1) Professional school psychologist, and counsellors should render psychological intervention using cognitive behavioural techniques to counsel undergraduate students who are depressed so as to improve their academic performance.
- 2) Teaching and learning should be made fun with less on test and examination as the true test of knowledge in order to minimize the effect of anxiety and depression on students.
- 3) Professional counsellors and psychologists should give more attention to students with difficult home background so as to recognize the signs of depression early before it interferes with the students daily functioning.

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