

**FAMILY BACKGROUND FACTORS PREDISPOSING
DEPRESSION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
IN AN ERA OF ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY IN BENIN CITY**

Bardi Ifeyinwa Gloria

gloria.bardi@uniben.edu : +2348037425969

Department of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)
Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State

&

Igbineweka, Susan. O.

Susan.igbineweka@uniben.com: +2347035789619 :

Department of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE)
Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State.

Abstract

This study has examined Family Background Factors Predisposing Depression Among Undergraduate Students in an Era of Economic Uncertainty in Benin City, Edo State. The study was guided by four objectives and three hypotheses. The study employed cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study consisted of all undergraduate students studying in Benin City, Edo State. The sample size for the study consisted of six hundred (600) undergraduate students and sampling technique were multistage stratified and purposive sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is title Family Background Predisposing Depression Among Undergraduates (FGPDAU). Content validity was employed to establish the instrument's validity. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha method yielding a coefficient of 0.87. The data was analyzed using frequency and percentage, mean and Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The benchmark for identifying the level of depression was set at 2.5. It was found that the level of depression among undergraduate students is low. Also, it was found that parental economic and educational backgrounds are significant factors predisposing depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. However, parental relationships were not found to be a significant factor in predisposing undergraduate students to depression. Tertiary institutions in Benin City, Edo State should establish psychosocial counselling units and services to support students experiencing symptoms of depression.

Keywords: Depression, Economic uncertainty, Educational, Era, Family, Undergraduates.

Introduction

Depression is a psychosocial disease that affects individual behaviour, feeling and thinking. It is characterized by persistent sadness and a loss of interest in activities that one "usually enjoys" and these could be accompanied by the inability to carry out other daily activities. University students are faced with many problems such as accommodation, interpersonal relationships, family issues, societal challenges, competition and difficulties in academic studies, economic stress, and struggles in making important decisions etc. (Sobocki, Lekander, Borgstrom, Strom, & Runeson, 2017), and these problems could culminate into varying degrees of stress, anxiety and depression (SAD). It affects people from all walks of life and young people in universities are not exempt from its effects. Globally, the estimated incidence of depression rose by 49.86%, from 172 million cases in 1990 to 258 million cases in 2017, with a notable rise of 124.42% in Western sub-Saharan Africa (Liu , He, Yang , Feng , Zhao , & Lyu. 2020). Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams and Glazebrook (2013) observed that the

prevalence rates for depression among undergraduate students in Nigeria varied from 10% to 85%, with a weighted mean prevalence of 30.6%.. Some students feel alone and overburdened due to being away from home, having a lot of work to do, and experiencing homesickness. Additionally, some students might experience economic and academic challenges for the first time ever. These changes have been identified as risk factors for the onset of depression, which is linked to a number of serious issues in undergraduate students, (Dabana, & Gobir, 2018).

Depression is a disorder of the brain. There are a variety of causes, including genetic (biological), environmental, psychological, and biochemical factors (Remes Mendes,& Templeton, 2021). Family dysfunction at home, parental drug and alcohol use and the reduced presence of adults in the home may all contribute to psychological problems particularly depression among university students. As the structure of society changes, families' values show constant changes according to their economic strength and development goals. The influence of parents' education may change during childhood and adolescence. Past research has focused on the benefits of mothers' education or theoretical studies on the mental health of children throughout adolescence. Mothers with a high school education is associated with a lower risk of childhood depression in children (Yan-na & Qian 2023), which is consistent with children often adopt neglectful attitudes when their mothers are less educated (Briggs, Carey, & O'Halloran 2018), whereas the more educated a mother is, the more likely she is to spend time directly with her child. Yu, Yang, Yang, Chen, Qiu, Qiao, Zhou, Pan, Ban, Zhu, He, Ding, & Bai (2015) studied the role of family environment in depressive symptoms among university students: a large sample survey in China and found that hard family environmental factors such as parent relationship, family economic status, level of parental literacy and non-intact family structure were associated with depressive symptoms.

Alex, Cynthia, & Kanagalakshmi, (2023) studied prevalence and risk factors of depression among adolescent girls studying in government and private schools and found that the prevalence of depression among the study population was 23.8%. An adolescent girl studying in a private school has a 4.67 times higher chance of being depressed as compared to her counterpart in a government school. Stress due to higher academic expectations, peer pressure, disagreement with friends, excess smartphone usage, and family discord are associated factors in private school students, and family discord and chronic illness among family members were associated risk factors for depression in government school students. Also, Bakesia, Olayo, Mengich, and Opiyo (2023) studied risk factors for depression among adolescents in secondary schools in Kakamega county, Kenya. The study specifically identified the risk factors for depression among adolescents. The risk factors were grouped as psychosocial, biomedical, and school-related. Findings showed that the significant risk factor for depression among adolescents were age, level of study, school category, being orphaned, parental marital status, and socio-economic status of parents.

Statement of Problem

University students in Nigeria face economic crisis because most of them belong to lower-middle-class families. Most of the public university students do not get enough financial support to bear their livelihood and tuition expenses. Because of this they are not able to manage their life well, and gradually their frustration increases a lot. The family is the initial place of individual socialization, and parents play a primary caregiver role in the development of their children (Alan & Irina,2018). A child coming from an intact and presence of emotional support and encouragement of autonomy and not being in conflict with parents will be relatively invulnerable to depression. Also, increased parental education is usually associated with improved health status of children and adolescents, especially in

mothers. However, some studies have also demonstrated that there is no statistically significant association between mothers' education level and children's depressive symptoms (Sharma & Wotipka, 2019). There are plethora of literature examining the associations between various risk factors and depression or anxiety disorder among undergraduates, however, there seems to be paucity of literature on the family background correlates that predisposes depression among undergraduates in universities in Nigeria, hence the need to investigate family background correlates predisposing depression among undergraduate in Nigeria with special reference in Benin city, Edo State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to determine the family background factors predisposing depression among undergraduate students in the era of uncertainty in Benin City, Edo State. Specifically, the objectives are:

- i. To determine the level of depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State
- ii. To ascertain if there is a relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State
- iii. To ascertain if there is a relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State
- iv. To ascertain if there is a relationship between parents' relationship and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significance level.

- i. there is no significant relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State
- ii. there is no significant relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in in Benin City, Edo State
- iii. there is no significant relationship between parents' relationship and depression among undergraduate students in in Benin City, Edo State.

Methodology

This study employed the quantitative research design via a cross-sectional survey design. The population of the study consisted of all undergraduate students studying in universities in Benin City, Edo state. The sample size for the study consisted of six hundred (600) undergraduate students from universities in Benin city namely University of Benin, Igbinedion University Okada, and Benson Idahosa University, all in Benin City, Edo state., which was derived through multistage stratified purposive sampling technique. First, Benin city is divided into three based on the universities. Secondly, from each university, two hundred (200) undergraduates' students were recruited purposively, making a total of six hundred (600) undergraduate students selected for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire designed by the researcher. The questionnaire is title *Family Background Predisposing Depression Among Undergraduates* (FGPDAU) with four likert scale format of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly agree (SD), To establish the validity of the instrument, content validity was used. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha statistical method which had a coefficient of 0.87(87%). This showed that the instrument was reliable. The data was analyzed using frequency and percentage and descriptive statistics (mean) while the hypotheses were analyzed and tested using Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The criteria for level of depression is 2.5.

Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using frequency and percentage for gender while the hypotheses were analyzed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient (PCC). All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: The distribution respondents based on gender

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender: Male	168	29.2
Female	408	70.8
Total	576	100

Source: Researcher's computation 2024

The result of table 1 revealed that out of the five hundred and seventy-six (576) undergraduate students surveyed, one hundred and sixty-eight (168) representing 29.2% were male, while four hundred and eight (408) representing 70.8% were female. This meant that there were more female undergraduate students in the survey than male undergraduate students.

Research Objective One: Level of depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, , Edo State.

Table 2: Mean of level of Depression

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
bave	576	1.00	3.69	2.3015	.57414
Valid N (listwise)	576				

Source: Researcher's computation 2024 (Bench mark 2.5)

With a mean value 2.3015 the result revealed that the depression level among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State is low. This is because the mean value is less than the mean bench mark of 2.5.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis One: there is no significant relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State

Table 3: Correlation between Depression among Students and Parental Education Background

		Depression among students	Parental education background
Depression among students	Pearson Correlation	1	.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	576	576

Source: Researcher's computation 2024

With a correlation value of 0.733 and p-value of 0.001, the result revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. Also, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between parents' educational background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. This is because the p-value is less than 0.05. This means that parental education background predisposes depression among undergraduates' students in Benin City, Edo State.

Hypothesis Two: there is no significant relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State.

Table 4: Correlation between Depression among Students and Parental Economic Background

		Depression among students	Parental economic background
Depression among students	Pearson Correlation	1	.760**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	576	576

Source: Researcher's computation 2024

With a correlation value of 0.760 and p-value of 0.000, the result revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. Also, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State and accepts the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between parents' economic background and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. This is because the p-value is less than 0.05. This means that parental economic background predisposes depression among undergraduates' students in Benin City, Edo State.

Hypothesis Three: there is no significant relationship between parents' relationship and depression among undergraduate students in in Benin City, Edo State

Table 5: Correlation between Depression Among Students and Parental Relationship

		Depression among students	Parental relationship
Depression among students	Pearson Correlation	1	.150
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.234
	N	576	576

Source: Researcher's computation 2024

With a correlation value of 0.350 and p-value of 0.234, the result revealed that there is a positive and non-significant relationship between parental relationship and depression

among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. Also, the researcher rejects the alternative hypothesis there is significant relationship between parental relationship and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State and accepts the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between parental relationship and depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, Edo State. This is because the p-value is greater than 0.05. This means that parental relationship does not predispose depression among undergraduates' students in Benin City, Edo State.

Discussion of Findings

This study has examined family background factors predisposing depression among undergraduate students in the era of economic uncertainty in Benin City, Edo State. From the study, it was found that the level of depression among undergraduate students in Benin City is low. Also, it was found that parental economic background is significant factor predisposing depression among undergraduate students in Benin City. Furthermore, it was found that parental educational background is significant factor predisposing depression among undergraduate students in Benin City. Additionally, it was found that parental relationship is not a significant factor predisposing depression among undergraduate students in Benin City.

This study finding is in consonance with Al-Azzam, et al (2021) who studied predictors of depression and anxiety among senior high school students during Covid-19 pandemic: the context of home quarantine and online education and found that parents level of education, perceived difficulties in online education, gender, and age were significant predictors of depression. Also, the study is in line with Islam et al (2018) who revealed that about 63.4% of students from poor economic background experienced depression. The study also showed that students from poor, not well-off family background are more likely to be at risk of depression because they have no money to pay for course fee, examination fee etc. However, this is in contrast to Alex, et al (2023) studied prevalence and risk factors of depression among adolescent girls studying in government and private schools and found that stress due to higher academic expectations, peer pressure, disagreement with friends, excess smartphone usage, and family discord are associated factors in private school students, and family discord and chronic illness among family members were associated risk factors for depression in government school students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Depression is a major public health issue around the world with youths mostly affected. Most of the youths affected are university undergraduates hence, this study examined depression among undergraduate and family background predisposing factors. The result revealed low level of depression among the undergraduates, however, the fact still remains that depression is high among youth and it is a public health issue. Also, the study found that there is a relationship between parental economic and educational backgrounds as a significant predisposing factor, however, parental relationship is not. So efforts should be made to reduce factors that lead to depression among undergraduate students especially, socioeconomic and psychological factors

Based on the study, researcher recommends the following

- i. Tertiary institutions in Benin City, Edo State should set up Psychosocial counselling units and services where students experiencing depression could visit.
- ii. Management of tertiary institutions should periodically examine the mental health status of students attending their schools.

- iii. Lastly, though, the level of depression among undergraduate students in Benin City, is low, however, the government should ensure good jobs opportunities upon completion of student's studies. This will help reduce depression among graduate students.

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