

The causes of depression among university students and its effects on their academic life in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

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Abstract

Introduction: This article discusses the causes of depression among university students and how it affects their academic life. It also looks at how students understand and define the concept of depression since research evidence points to the fact that arriving at a consensual definition for depression can be difficult due to the varying experiences among individuals influencing its definition. Methods: Data was collected through in-depth interviews with undergraduate students in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) Faculty of Social Sciences and review of various literatures on depression. Findings: The study revealed that majority of the students viewed depression as a long period of sadness where one feels hopeless and worthless; few viewed depression as a long period of sadness and isolation. Students understood the concept based on their personal experiences. It also indicates that loss of a loved one, financial crisis and unmet expectations in their academic work were the causes of depression among university students. It also confirmed that depression affects students' academic life in a number of ways which includes inability to study and poor academic achievements. Conclusion: The study concludes by acknowledging that students are able to cope with their depression on their own, yet it recommends that the counseling unit of the university be made easily approachable and strengthened, students encouraged to seek guidance and counseling.

Key Words: Academic life, Causes, Depression, Effects, Students, University

Introduction

Depression just like other forms of mental illnesses is often overlooked or ignored in most societies around the world especially in African societies; though studies show that depression is one of the contributors to the global burden of disease which affects people in most societies across the world and according to Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams and Glazebrook (2012) it is ranked third after cardiac and respiratory diseases as a major cause of disability and premature death. The findings of a survey conducted by the World Mental Health for the WHO (2012) in 17 countries showed that an average of about 1 in 20 people reported having

an episode of depression in 2011. Depression affects people from all walks of life and young people in the university are no exception. For instance, Ibrahim et al. (2012) in their study observed that depression is a serious health problem among university students' population. Adewuya Ola, Olutayo, Mapayi and Oginni (2006) also pointed out that depression is a common disorder among university students. Researches done by some college counseling centers in some parts of the world revealed that depression was one of the most common problems among university students. Thus, studies by Erdur-Baker, Aberson, Borrow and Draper (2006) and Green, Lowry and Kopta (2003) highlighted that depression accounted for 39% of problems among students, a rate higher than anxiety, problems with romantic relationships, and the self-esteem of students. Further, according to Collingwood (2016), a combined anxiety disorder and depression affected about 16% of undergraduates in the University of Michigan in 2007, with thoughts of suicide among 2% of these students. Students are therefore particularly vulnerable to depression with rates at 14% in a study at Dublin, Ireland.

Moreover, Sarokhani et al. (2013) in another study on depression among university students revealed that depression is a widespread issue and continues to increase in the university student population. In addition, one study by Ustun and Kessler (2002) stated that the rate of depression was from 10% to 40% among university students in Turkey. A Nigerian study by Adewuya et al. (2006) about the wide spread of depression among university students, found that the rate of depression among Nigerian students was only 2.7%.

All of these studies cited above suggest that there is a great demand for decreasing the rate of depression globally. The National Institute of Mental Health in the US (2015) stated that depression is a mood disorder marked by sad or anxious feelings that causes worrying symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as learning, eating, or working. To be diagnosed with depression, symptoms must be present for most of the day, almost every day for at least 2 weeks. In their research, they found out that during the university years of many young people is when they experience their first symptoms of depression. The causes for their depression is usually varied; according to Garret and Heidi (2000) scientists do not know exactly what causes depression, and the cause might be different for each person.

However, some studies have observed that there are some common causes of depression among students like the socio-economic level of a student. For instance, a large cross-national (from 23 countries) study by Steptoe et al. (2007) on the relationship between the cause of depression and socio-economic background of university students showed that family and personal income level, and family wealth, contributed to depression in students. That is, the financial problems of students and their families have a negative impact on students. Similarly, a study conducted by Ibrahim et al. (2012) in Egypt on the relationship between socio-economic status and depression among undergraduate students found out that the socio-economic background of students associated negatively with the causes of depression. The study concluded that students from families with a low level of income have a tendency towards depression. Undergraduate students who participated in this study also mentioned socio-economic level as one of the causes of their depression.

As stated by the US National Institute of Mental Health (2015), depression affects how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as learning or working. It is very obvious that in the life of a university student

one has academic goals, obligations and expectations like performing well academically, study and do all academic assignments and most of all being named among honorary students; all of these constitutes in making up the academic life of a student. Depression has a very great impact on academic performance, academic satisfaction and academic achievement. A Turkish study by Bostanci et al. (2005) found that depressed students have a poorer academic performance compared to students who are not depressed. Another study by Wechsler, Lee, Kuo and Lee (2000) reported that students with symptoms of depression achieve lower grades and are less active in the classroom relative to students who do not have these symptoms.

The findings shown points to the fact that depression is a serious problem that requires psychological support for the majority of students; but most of the time, depression among students normally go untreated due to stigma attached to depression or going to see a counselor, unavailability of counseling centers or counselors that are properly equipped to handle the situation adequately and the lack of knowledge on depression among people. It is against this backdrop that the study on which this article is based sought to explore students understanding and definition of depression, the causes of depression among university students and how it affects their academic life

The theory anchoring this article is the person in environment theory. According to Kondrat (2002) the individual and his environment form an ecosystem, where all systems within the ecosystem and individual are in constant interaction. Within the system individuals are influenced and influence their environments through their actions. In spite of the fact that depression among students go untreated due to stigma, unavailability of counselors and counseling centers, students find a way to cope with their depression by being in constant interaction with their environment. It follows that most of the students in this study found a way to cope when they are depressed without necessarily seeking medical treatment as would be seen later in the data and the discussion presented below

Methods

Study Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population of this study comprised second year to final year students in the Faculty of Social Sciences in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi, Ghana. They were selected as the target population, because they have had certain experiences in the university life which was needed for this study. Besides, they are able to give more information based on their experience, and are also more knowledgeable comparatively than first year students. Study participants were selected using the convenience sampling which is a non – probabilistic sampling. Participants were sampled because they were those who were convenient for the source of data needed for the study. Participants were found in lecture halls, eateries on campus and also at places students regularly meet to study. The study population was very large and not all could partake in this study. The study relied on the concept of data saturation, where needed and relevant information had already been taken and participants kept repeating information. Due to data saturation, fourteen (14) participants took part in this study out of the total number of students in second year to final year. In order to ensure gender parity in the study and avoid gender biases, the

number for both males and females who participated in this study was quite balanced, by ensuring to select equal number of males as females.

Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected through a face to face in-depth interview. This in-depth interview enabled the researcher to explore the views and experiences of individual participants. Interviews were conducted with a semi – structured interview guide to ensure that the second author (who collected the data) stayed focused on study objectives. Although the interviews were conducted with the help of a semi structured interview guide in relation to the research objectives, but some questions were also asked outside the interview guide before the beginning of the interview. Thus, a sense of humor was portrayed to participants, with the aim of building rapport with participants and creating a favorable communication atmosphere for a successful interview to commence. The free-flowing format of the discussions provided an insight into participants' views and concerns about the concept. Further, in order to capture the exact words of the participants, all data collected were audio recorded with a mobile phone subjected to participants' approval. Data was collected within a one-month period which was from the 23rd of February to the 23rd of March, 2018.

Data Management and Analysis

The study used a thematic data analysis in relation to research objectives. The themes that emerged from the narrations of the participants were manually analyzed. The interviews were audio recorded and these were listened over and over before writing them down verbatim. The collected data was organized, transcribed with Word Document, edited and coded to ensure complete and accurate information. The transcribed data were read and re-read to ensure familiarity and accuracy in the analysis. After the transcriptions, the data was organized into sections based on the themes of the research questions posed, through discovery and coding. This was done to develop concepts as the research progresses.

Ethics

Issues of informed consent, anonymity of participants, respondents' confidentiality were catered for in this study. On informed consent, permission was sought from all participants before the study was conducted. To ensure anonymity, respondents were required not to submit their names or any identifiable information but just the ones that were needed for the research like the course they were pursuing and the year they were in. Therefore, all the names mentioned in this article are fictitious. Prior to the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants and assured them that anything said was confidential. Participation was voluntary and respondents could withdraw their participation in the course of the interview.

Results

Understanding of Depression: Most of the studies and literatures reviewed defined the concept of depression as a mood disorder marked by a long period of sadness, inactivity, difficulty in thinking and concentration, significant increase or decrease in appetite and time spent in sleeping, feelings of dejection and hopelessness, and sometimes suicidal tendencies. A report written by the World Mental Health and published by the WHO in 2012 for instance viewed depression as a common mental disorder that presents itself with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-

worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, and poor concentration. This study found out that a greater number of the students understood depression as a long period of sadness which lasts for days, weeks or months where they feel so hopeless and worthless they tend to isolate themselves from their peers

Long Period of Sadness: It was observed that majority of the students understood the concept as an instance where one feels so sad for a long period of time. This feeling of sadness include crying for no particular reason, feeling so down nothing cheers you up, feeling anxious and this state of being unhappy could last for days, weeks and even months. A level 400 Political Science student, Akua recounted on this saying;

“In my opinion depression is a long period of unhappiness where you despair and cry a lot and this feeling lasts for days and weeks”

Another level 400 Religious Studies student, Kofi also stated;

“Depression is a serious mental illness typically marked by sad or anxious feelings. You occasionally feel sad or anxious, but these emotions usually pass quickly; within a couple of days. But for depression these emotions last for a long time, it is much more than just being “a little down” or “feeling blue.”

Hopeless and Worthless Feeling: Other students also understood the concept of depression as hopelessness and worthlessness, thus defined depression as a feeling of hopelessness and a feeling of low self-worth, they argued that depression is when you easily despair and do not have any meaning for life and want to give up entirely on life. A level 300 Sociology student, Amma indicated this;

“Depression is a mental illness with feelings of guilt, low self-worth, and this feeling of hopelessness where you feel there is no light at the end of the tunnel”.

Isolation: A few students understood depression in the form of isolation. They argued that depression is the feeling of having less interest in the company of people or even friends; one easily isolates themselves from people. In other words, instances where an individual does not find joy in the company of others and has a lot of mood swings whilst being in the company of others, they isolate themselves from people so much that they sometimes scream at people who try to get close to them.

Students Experience with Depression: Per most literatures that were reviewed, individuals who experience depression show certain signs and symptoms. People’s experiences differ from one person to the next, according to the United States National Institute of Mental Health (2015) people who experience depression do not all have the same symptoms. The severity, frequency and duration of symptoms will vary depending on the individual. In this study, it was found that majority of the participants identified their experiences with Loneliness, Suicidal Tendencies, Loss of Appetite and Anger and Frustration.

Loneliness: Loneliness affects many people especially those who isolate themselves but depression can make one feel so lonely it does not really matter if there are people around them or not. Majority of the

respondents explained that they felt so lonely and left out when they were depressed. A level 400 French student, Kwadwo recounted his experience saying;

“My experience with depression, I felt so lonely like the world was against me, Nobody cared about me, I used to cry a lot in my pillow at night”

Another student also recounted his experience by focusing on his social relationships;

“My experience with depression, I felt so lonely that even when I was with friends I would isolate myself, it did not really matter the number of friends I was with I always felt alone and left out”

Suicidal Thoughts: Some of the participants expressed their experience by emphasizing on suicidal thoughts like stabbing oneself, poisoning themselves, cutting their wrists and even hanging themselves. It was revealed that, depression made them feel like giving up on life since they deemed it meaningless and so not worth it. Akosua, a female level 400 Political Science student actually confessed on how she almost took her own life;

“I was so depressed I did not know what I was doing till I heard a scream, I actually had a knife in my hand trying to stab myself. I was just crying. Nothing seemed to make sense, life was not worth living”.

This finding is in line with an observation made by the Irish Association of Suicidology (2016) that people suffering from depression often show distorted thinking. Everything looks bleak to them, and they hold extremely negative views about themselves, their situation, and the future. Trapped in their pessimism, they obsess over their problems and blow them out of proportion. Feeling hopeless and helpless, they may start to see suicide as their only way out.

Loss of Appetite: Few participants also added that through their experience with depression, they lost their appetite; they did not feel like eating. It was observed that their depression made them starve themselves sometimes and some actually lost a lot of weight due to this. Frank, a level 300 Social Work student said he was so depressed he started starving himself, he added that he could go the whole day without taking in anything just water. He became so skinny and has now developed stomach ulcer.

Anger and Frustration: Anger and frustration was how some of the participants also described their experience with depression. They got angry over little matters that under any circumstance would not be described as an issue, they were so confused and frustrated by what was going on in their lives that they sometimes took their frustrations out on others.

Causes of Depression among University Students: According to the US National Institute of Mental Health (2015), there is no known single cause of depression, some scientist believed that some people's genes may make them more likely to get depressed, while others believed stressful life events were the cause of depression. But Garret & Heidi (2000) stated that the most important fact to know is that the cause

of depression is different for each person. In this present study, most students stated, loss of a loved one, financial crisis, and unmet expectations in academic work.

Loss of a Loved One: It was observed that a greater number of the students revealed that the loss of a loved one through death was one of the major causes for their depression. The loss of that loved one, that special person, the people who meant so much to them, who was so close to them, their mother, father, brother, sister, a cousin, a friend left their world crumbling down. According to Nall (2017), losing a loved one can generate intense feeling of grief. For some people, this grief can lead to depression or make those who are already feeling depressed much worse. This was how a level 300 Sociology student, Felicity expressed what caused her depression;

“I lost a very good and close friend of mine. We went to a beach party organized by some friends she really did not want to go but I persuaded her and she agreed. She drowned that day, I was so devastated, I started to think; what if I had not persuaded her, what if I listened to her and we all stayed at home? I felt it was my fault, I was in so much grief that it led to depression.”

Financial Crisis: Most of the students also revealed that when they go through serious financial crisis while on campus it makes them depressed. They also held the view that when their parents go through serious financial crisis it really affects them and this leads them to getting depressed. It was also observed that, when their parents are going through this financial crisis and for weeks and months they have not sent them any money, just thinking about what to eat, the pressure to buy lecturers' handout leads them to be depressed. Moses a level 400 Geography student recounted on this saying;

I was so depressed when my family was going through serious financial crisis and we were not getting help from anywhere, I almost deferred in third year it was that bad. I do not even know how I pulled through.

Unmet Expectations in Academic Work: A few students revealed that failing in their exams be it mid-semester exams or the end of semester exams can make one depressed. They shared how sometimes getting certain grades for a paper you really studied hard for can be really disappointing and end up breaking you which may lead to them being very depressed. According to them, studying very hard for your academic work and having very high expectations that all your hard work would pay but you end getting certain grades or worse you fail so miserably can leave one so distraught and even give up entirely. Michael, a level 200 Social Work student remembered being so depressed because he had failed one of his mid-semester exam, he had studied so hard for the mid-semester exam that semester and when the results came in he just could not imagine the type of grades he was getting. It left him being so confused, just kept asking himself what he did wrong.

Effects of Depression in the Academic Life of a Student: Depression affects all aspects of a person's life be it social, economic, physiological; it has impacts on individuals' ability to perform life activities, including those required at the workplace. The academic life of a student can be viewed as a parallel to work life.

Inability to Study: Students revealed that when they are depressed they find it very hard to study; they are unable to concentrate when they are studying on their own and even in class. They keep thinking all the time so much that they lose focus on their studies and sometimes even fail to go for lectures or even group studies or meetings. It was also observed that, they sometimes fail to do assignments given to them since they are not really motivated to study and unable to think clearly in their depressed state. Kofi, a Religious Studies student recounted on this saying;

When I was depressed, I stopped studying altogether, it was not worth it to me anymore. I did not attend lectures for weeks, refused to do assignments and disassociated myself from a study group I was a part of.

Poor Academic Achievements and Performance: For most of the students, depression affected their academic performance; they were not able to achieve certain goals they had set out for their academic life. Most argued that their grades dropped significantly when they were depressed; they were unable to write certain papers during the exam. This is in line with the findings of Hysenbegasi et al. (2005) who stated that poor academic achievement and low level of exam performance as the effects of depression in a student's life. For instance, Elizabeth a level 300 Sociology student talked about how her grades dropped significantly when she was depressed, both her mid-semester exam and end of semester exam results were so bad. She had hoped to improve her average during that semester but because of her depression she was not able to attain that.

Coping with Depression as a Student: Individuals are able to cope with their depression differently; students are no different. They are able to find certain things in their immediate surroundings or engage in certain activities and develop certain innate skills to be able to cope with depression without necessarily needing medication treatment or even traditional psychotherapy. Since most students attested to the fact they do not like to visit the counseling centers and the clinical psychologist in the university they find ways to deal with their depression on their own. From the literature reviewed, most researchers and authors do not state a lot of things about how students are able to cope on their own.

Hanging out and Talking with Friends/ Close Relatives: A greater number of students revealed that when they are depressed they are able to cope on their own by hanging out with friends and share certain experiences with their friends who are able to guide them and even make them laugh. Hanging out with friends help them to be able to release certain tensions and conflicts they have within them that makes them depressed and sharing what they are going through with their friends helps to get things off them, even hearing the experiences of their friends' calms things down for them. Some also argued that it is not only their friends but when they talk with relatives and pastors they help them to cope with their depression. Amma, a Level 400 Political Science student had this to say;

"I was so depressed I did not want to talk with my friends. I felt they would not understand what I was going through, but I was able to cope with my depression when I spoke to my Catholic Parish Priest, he was the only one I trusted and felt really confident with. I talk to him anytime I feel so depressed and that is how I am able to cope with depression"

Engaging in Entertaining Activities: Students also revealed that they cope with their depression by engaging in certain activities they deem entertaining like listening to music, watching movies or funny videos, playing video games or even engaging in actual sports like football. They argued that when they engage in these activities they are able to take their minds off whatever is making them depressed. Kwadwo, a Level 300 English Language student said that whenever he is depressed he watches some comedy or action movies just to take his mind off things or more less forget about things. He sometimes listens to music; it could be gospel, hip-hop or any motivational song. He stated that it makes him forget about his feelings or how he feels about himself sometimes; he says some of the songs he listens to have strong and inspirational messages about life and self-worth.

Hanging out with oneself or Being Alone: A few students also expressed that when they feel depressed they really like to be with themselves, thus, they are able to cope by finding a quiet and serene environment just to be with themselves to think things through and express their emotions freely by crying or screaming, throwing things around and throw a few tantrums. They argued that, sometimes being with themselves helps them to resolve their inner conflicts and also think clearly and view things from a different perspective.

4. Discussion

In assessing what causes depression among students and how it affects their academic life, one needs to understand what depression is and how it is defined. The definitions and views of the students in this paper shows how definitions and understanding of depression differs from one individual to the other, one society to the other or even one group of people to the other. Students used their experience with depression to define and understand depression; one's experiences with depression differs from the other. This concept is actually in line with a report from the Harvard Medical School (2008) which stated that in understanding the concept of depression, depression is not a one-size-fits-all illness, like a rash or heart disease, depression can take many forms. There is a cluster of symptoms that are typically present when one is depressed, but one person's experience of depression often differs from another's. Individuals use their experience to define and understand what depression is. Thus, the definitions and concept of depression continue to evolve. Most students understood depression as a long period of sadness which lasts for days, weeks or months where they feel so hopeless and worthless they tend to isolate themselves from their peers. This definition is in line with the definition from the WHO (2012) and other medical and social researchers; according to them, depression is a common mental disorder that presents itself with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, and poor concentration.

According to the US National Institute of Mental Health, people who experience depression do not all have the same symptoms. The severity, frequency and duration of symptoms will vary depending on the individual. Students gave different experiences of how they felt when they were depressed, some felt lonely, they lost their appetite, they were angry and frustrated most of the time. One feeling most students spoke of was the strong tendencies to commit suicide during the time of their depression. The Irish Association of Suicidology (2016) asserted that females are more likely than males to experience

pronounced feelings of guilt, sleep excessively, over eat, and gain weight on the other hand males who experience depression are less likely than females to acknowledge feelings of self-loathing and hopelessness. Instead, they tend to complain about fatigue, irritability, sleep problems, and loss of interest in work and hobbies. However, both sexes of students in this study had strong tendencies for suicide; and went through the same experiences although how they connected and acknowledged their feelings with depression differed.

The main objective for this paper was to identify the causes of depression among university students. As stated by Garret and Heidi (2003), scientists do not know exactly what causes depression, and the cause might be different for each person. Students actually had different views over what causes their depression, most of them stated that when they face financial problems and they are unable to buy certain things for themselves they get really depressed. They also added that it is not just their socio-economic level on campus that affects them but also that of their parents; when they see their parents struggling to get them some sort of finances it really causes them to be depressed. This finding is similar to the cross national study report conducted by Steptoe et al. (2007) in 23 countries around the world where students showed that family and personal income level and family wealth, contributed to depression in students. The loss of a loved one also causes depression among students, students revealed that the main cause of their depression was a loss of a loved one, a relative, that special person in their life. The loss of that person took a toll on their lives. Most students who revealed that they were depressed due to losing their loved ones argued that they had strong tendencies to commit suicide, they wanted to join their loved ones and felt without them they could not go on with their life.

Unmet expectations in their academic work and poor academic performance caused students to be depressed. As stated by Ceyhan et al. (2009), students have many goals, obligations and expectations for their academic work, if some students fail to achieve their goals, meet expectations or responsibilities, they are at a higher risk of suffering from depression. According to Baker and Siryk (1986), this is the reason why it is assumed that poor academic performance and unmet expectations in academic work are one of the main causes of depression among students. Bayram and Bilgel (2008) also points out that students who are not satisfied with their course of study have greater rate of depression than students who are satisfied. In such cases, they felt no connection and had no choice in the selection of their courses because it was their parents who chose those courses for them or for some the school gave them those courses because of their grades. Other causes of depression among university students was broken relationships with their peers or their boyfriends/girlfriends, lack of social relations and support.

Depression can lead to many mental and physical ailments, which are serious threats for university students who make up one of the important parts of society. According to Arslan et al. (2009) it is believed the major problems in students' depression include poor self-assessment, lack of pleasure and interest in everyday life, problems in eating and sleeping, and suicidal thoughts. However, this study assess how depression affects the academic life of the university student. As stated by Chen et al. (2013) and Hysenbegasi et al. (2005), the effects of depression on the academic life is associated with personal, cognitive, and emotional problems, notably, lack of concentration, decision making and problems of time management; poor academic achievement and low level of exam performance. Students' depression is a

serious risk to academic impairment. Students revealed that they found it very hard to concentrate on their studies, and even concentrate in class; they were unable to study on so many occasions. They performed poorly in their academic work, they actually failed and their grades dropped significantly when they were depressed.

In coping with depression, most people visit the therapists, counselors and psychologists or they sometimes take in medications such as the anti-depressants to help cope with their depression. Students asserted to the fact that they do not visit the counseling centers and the clinical psychologist put in place at the university to help students facing conditions like depression, they had no idea how effective it is to see the counselors. Besides, students fail to see counselors due to stigma, trust issues, shyness and nervousness since some of these counselors were their lecturers. However, they are able to adapt and acquire certain knowledge to cope on their own when they are faced with depression such as hanging out and talking to friends and close relatives, engaging in entertaining activities and spending some time alone with themselves as ways they coped with their depression.

Further, students are able to use their innate ability to confront the inner conflicts they are having; they did not necessarily use medications or a trained therapist to help them cope with their depression. Some students also revealed that through some of these coping strategies, they dealt with the whole idea of their existence and discussed issues of the meaning of life and existence, acceptance, isolation and one way or the other learnt how to draw strength from their religion.

Even though some students vowed never to seek the services of the counseling unit they felt if there are changes that helps with the stigma, their trust issues and their shyness; it would make it easier for them to visit the counseling center because coping with depression on their own is sometimes difficult. The students gave their opinions on other measures they feel would help those who are depressed; they suggested the creation of awareness about depression, its effects and how to cope it, the effectiveness of counseling to those depressed. They also feel if there was a help-line they could call when they are faced with depression, to help address the issue.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this study supposes that university students in Ghana and West Africa in general also experience depression just like their counterparts in the Americas, Asia and Europe, though differently. Depression affects the health, social wellbeing and the academic life of students. Counseling centers on university campuses need to be very proactive, easily approachable to all students, get help-lines where students can get in contact with a counselor without necessarily approaching the counseling unit to help students who feel very shy and intimidated. Students who fail their exams or do not achieve their academic goal should be encouraged to seek for guidance. This issue of depression needs a lot of attention and resources, if this issue is not well tackled most universities may have an increase in suicide among students.

Competing interests

The authors have no competing interests

Author contribution

Hafa was the researcher and drafted the manuscript. JMD and Hafa reviewed and finalised the manuscript.

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