

Qur'anic Antidotes to Prevalence of Depression Among University Students: The Case of University of Ilorin

***¹Mutmainnah Temitope Shittu & ²Abdulwahab Danladi Shittu**

¹Department of Health Promotion and Environmental Health Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria **Email:** mutmainnahtope@gmail.com

²School Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria **Email:** Shittu.ad@unilorin.edu.ng

Abstract

Depression among students in the university has become a pressing mental health challenge majorly caused by academic stress, social pressures and existential concerns. This work studied Qur'anic coping mechanisms for mental well-being in institutions of higher learning with focus on depression among students at the University of Ilorin. The research identified the prevalence of depression among students in institutions of higher learning and emphasizes verses of the Qur'an and its understanding as alternative remedy to depression in the society. Deploying a descriptive and content analysis research methods with the use of in-depth interview and focus group discussion for data collection, the work reveals a high rate of cases of depression in the university, and that students who actively involved in adopting Qur'an guidance are likely to be less vulnerable to depression. Qur'an verses guarantee greater resilience, inner peace and optimism in confronting life challenges. The study concludes that imbining teaching of the Qur'an in our life will go a long way in alleviating mental health challenges in the society and will thereby foster holistic well-being among students

Keywords: Depression, mental health, academic stress, social pressure, Islamic coping mechanism

Introduction

Depression, among other mental health challenges is a common mental illness that terrorizes the emotional, social, physical, and mental health status of a man. While depression can affect anyone, research has shown that certain populations such as women, individuals with a family history of depression, and those who have experienced traumatic events may be at a higher risk. Understanding the factors that contribute to the development of depression and identifying effective treatments is essential in promoting mental health and improving outcomes for individuals living with this condition.

Depression is more pronounced among students in institutions of higher learning because such students are on the line of endurance as a result of transition from adolescence to adulthood which is one of the most stressful stages in human life. Trying to fit-in among their peers, trying to meet up with the society expectations, maintaining good grades, balancing social life and planning for future can be draining and hence, cause anxiety for a lot of students

The University of Ilorin is one of the Nigerian leading universities in the North Central Zone of Nigeria, accommodating a large number of students with an average age of 20. This implies that the university students are young and also at the level of transitional and as a result, there is hardly no year that the university will not record cases of students being depressed either as a result of academic stresses or failure in meeting up with academic targets. This crisis continues to reoccur despite efforts made by the university counseling unit to contain the situation. Coincidentally, Students in the University are predominantly Muslims who will be interested in having the teaching of Islam as solution to their problems.

Islam offers a comprehensive solution to various psychological distresses. Allah is the creator of mankind; He knows the chemistry of his creator and the best solution to any emanating. It is on this basis that authors of this work examine the relevance of Islamic coping mechanism for depression in institutions of higher learning using the University of Ilorin as case study.

Depression is a mood disorder characterised by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyed. Other symptoms may include changes in appetite and sleep patterns. Numerous literature evidences suggest that medical students experience

mental health problems due to constant exposure to stressful conditions, such as academic burden to study a vast field, pressure from parents, fear of failure, labour market challenges, and vulnerability to diverse emotional outbreaks (Tabalipa, 2015).

The academic pressure experienced by students can lead to a sense of hopelessness and helplessness, which are common symptoms of depression. Social isolation is another factor that can contribute to depression among university students. Financial stress is another cause of anxiety for many university students, particularly those who are supporting themselves or have limited financial resources. Studies have shown that financial difficulties can lead to depression and anxiety, as well as physical health problems such as headaches and stomachaches. Students who experience financial difficulties may be more likely to drop out of university, which can have long-term consequences for their mental health and wellbeing. A study by Matthews et al. (2020) found that people who experienced financial strain were more likely to experience symptoms of depression, such as loss of interest, feelings of worthlessness, and changes in appetite or sleep patterns. Wajahat et al. (2023) observes that Main causes of depression are Negligence in material or spiritual aspect of life, trials & tribulations, and disobedience to Allah Almighty.

It is observed that people with substance use disorders were more likely to be depressed. The study was based on a review of 75 studies involving more than 270,000 participants. In another study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* (2020). Studies reveal that psychological distress is prevalent among UNILORIN students. University students are people in their adolescent age that are on the line of endurance as a result of transition from adolescent to adulthood and this is one of the most stressful stages in human life. Trying to fit in among their peers, meet up with the societal expectations, maintain good grades, balance social life, being away from home for a long time and planning of future can be draining and hence, causes anxiety for a lot of students. Despite the availability of a counseling center, many students do not seek professional help due to stigma and preference for religious coping (Olatunji *et-al.*, 2024). The University of Ilorin's Islamic orientation offers unique protective factors for mental health. The campus environment promotes modesty, structured prayer routines, and availability of mosques and Islamic student associations. These elements create a spiritually supportive environment where students feel a sense of belonging (Yusuf & Sanni, 2023).

Research suggests that such faith-oriented environments contribute positively to resilience, social connectedness, and emotional balance (Ali & Abdullahi, 2022).

The Counseling and Human Development Centre at UNILORIN provides services in academic guidance, emotional counseling, and career advice. However, utilization remains low due to cultural stigma associated with mental health care (Olatunji et al., 2024). To address this, the university has collaborated with student unions, religious organizations, particularly Muslim Student Society of Nigeria (MSSN) and NGOs to organize mental health awareness campaigns. Scholars recommend integrating faith-based approaches into counseling services to ensure cultural sensitivity and higher uptake (Rassool, 2021).

Methodology

The research design for this study is descriptive with content analysis adopted for the study of the Qur'anic antidotes to the curtailment of depression. The target population comprised all undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin with total number of forty-nine thousand one hundred and fifty-three across sixteen (16) faculties. Simple random sampling of fish bowl balloting technique was used to select five (5) out of the fifteen (15) faculties in the University of Ilorin. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select six percent (6%) of the population of undergraduates of each of the five faculties selected which will be used as sample for the study. In the process of gathering information for this research, researcher designed structured questionnaire with the title: Prevalence, Causes and Health Implications of Depression Among Undergraduate Students of the University of Ilorin. This Questionnaire consists of two sections which are Section A and B. Section A contained demographic data of the respondents while section B focused on structured questions based on the postulated hypotheses. The reliability of this instrument was determined using split half technique. The reliability of the study was carried out by administering 20 questionnaires to the respondents in college of education, Ilorin, Kwara State, which was outside the area of study but share the same characteristics. The co-efficient of "0.78" was obtained using Cronbach Alpha for analysis. The researcher adopted the use of frequency and percentage to analyze and display the demographic information of the respondents and the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The data was collected on the prevalence, causes and health implications of depression among undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. The data gathered were analysed using frequency and percentage to present the demography of the respondents. Research hypothesis 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were tested using chi-square at 0.05 level of significance using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) version. The results are presented as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents Involved in the Study Based on Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
15-30 Years	437	97.1%
31-45 Years	8	1.8%
46-60 Years	5	1.1%
Total	450	100.0

Results in the Table 1 reveals that out of 450 respondents sampled for this study, 437(97.1%) of the sampled respondents are within age bracket of 15-30 years of age, only 8(1.7%) of the respondents sampled are within the age bracket of 31-45 years of age while 5(1.2%) of the sampled respondents are within age bracket of 46-60 years of age. This implied that 15-30 age bracket were the majority of the respondents sampled for this study.

Table 2: Demographic Data of the Respondents Involved in the Study Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	207	46.0%
Female	243	54.6%
Total	450	100.0

Results in the Table 2 reveals that out of 450 respondents sampled for this study, 207(46.0%) of the sampled respondents are male while 243(54.6%) of the sampled respondents are undergraduate female students of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. This implied that undergraduate female students 243(54.6%) of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria are majority sampled for this study

Table 3: Demographic Data of the Respondents involved in the Study Based on Years of Study

Years of Study	Frequency	Percentage
First Year	157	34.0%
Second Year	82	18.2%
Third Year	100	22.2%
Fourth Year	25	5.6%
Other Year	86	19.1%

Total	450	100.0
-------	-----	-------

Results in the Table 3 reveals that out of 450 respondents sampled for this study, 157(34.0%) of the respondents sampled are within the first year of their study and 82(18.2%) of the respondents sampled for this study are within the second year of their study. The table 3 further revealed that 100(22.2%) of the respondents sampled for this study are within their third year of study and only 25(5.6%) of them are within the fourth-year stages of their study. While, 86(19.1%) of the respondents sampled for this study are in other year of their study in the University of Ilorin, Ilorin. It implied that majority of the respondents sampled 157(34.0%) for this study are within the first year of their study.

Table 4: Demographic Data of the Respondents involved in the Study Based on Living Arrangement

Living Arrangement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
On Campus	363	80.7%
Off Campus	87	19.3%
Total	450	100.0

Results in the Table 4 reveals that out of 450 respondents sampled for this study, 363(80.7%) of the sampled respondents are living within the University campus while 87(19.3%) of undergraduate students of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin sampled for this study are living outside the University campus. This implied that majority of undergraduate students of University of Ilorin sampled for this study are living within the University campus.

Research Hypotheses Testing

Haven examined the demographic data of the respondents involved in the study and research questions. The researcher proceeded to test the null hypotheses generated using Chi-squares at 0.05 level of significance

Research Hypothesis One: Depression is not significantly prevalent among the students of University of Ilorin

Research Hypothesis One on a Chi-square Analysis of Prevalent Depression among the Students of University of Ilorin, the data reveal a chi-square analysis showing significant prevalence depression among the students of University of Ilorin, Ilorin. The table shows a calculated chi value of 1360.3 with 2 degrees of freedom computed at 0.05. Since the sig value (.000) is

lesser than 0.05, hypothesis 1 is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, it is affirmed that there is significant prevalent depression among the students of University of Ilorin. Based on this findings, it was established that there is high level of prevalent depression among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Two: Academic workload will not significantly be a cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin

Research Hypothesis Two on Academic workload not significantly being a cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin, Result reveals a chi-square analysis showing significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin by academic workload. The table shows a calculated chi value of 4536.213 with 1 degrees of freedom computed at 0.05. Since the sig value (.000) is lesser than 0.05, hypothesis 2 is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, academic workload is significantly cause depression among the students of University of Ilorin. It implied that academic workload is one of the main causes of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Three: Financial problem is not significantly a cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Threeron Financial problem not significantly being a cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin. The result reveals a chi-square analysis showing financial factor as significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin. The table shows a calculated chi value of 12718.571 with 1 degrees of freedom computed at 0.05. Since the sig value (.000) is lesser than 0.05, hypothesis 3 is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin by financial factor. As a result of this, it was implied that financial factor is a major cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Four: Stress will not significantly lead to depression among the students of University of Ilorin

Research Hypothesis four on stress as a cause of depression among students in the university of Ilorin reveals a chi-square analysis showing significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin by the stress.

The table shows a calculated chi value of 6593.245 with 1 degrees of freedom computed at 0.05. Since the sig value (.000) is lesser than 0.05, hypothesis 4 is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is significant depression among the students of University of Ilorin as a result of stress. As a result of this, it was implied that stress is a significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Five: Depression will not significantly lead to suicide among the students of University of Ilorin.

Research Hypothesis Five on Depression not significantly leading to suicide among the students of University of Ilorin. Results of the analysis reveal a chi-square analysis showing depression as a significant factor that led to the suicide among the students of University of Ilorin. The table shows a calculated chi value of 105290.479 with 2 degrees of freedom computed at 0.05. Since the sig value (.000) is lesser than 0.05, hypothesis 5 is rejected while alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, depression is a significant factor that led to suicide among the students of University of Ilorin. Based on the findings of this study, it was implied that depression is a significant factor that led to suicide among the students of University of Ilorin.

Islamic perspective on mental health: Islam provides a comprehensive framework for addressing psychological distress. Islamic teachings emphasise the balance between physical, emotional, and spiritual health, offering guidance on how to cope with mental challenges, including depression. Islam recognises that human beings experience emotional highs and lows, and the Quran and Hadith acknowledge feelings such as sadness, anxiety, and distress. Allah says; And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patients(Quran 2:155).As-Sharawi (1997) posited that the highest of the trial is the loss of life of individuals. It is when one still survives this highest trial that he will be confronted with others among which are fear and hunger. The Qur'an and Hadith offer guidance on managing psychological distress. Notably, the Qur'an reassures believers that difficulties are temporary:(Qur'an 94:5–6 and Qur'an 13:28). The Hadith complements these Quranic teachings by encouraging both spiritual and medical treatment. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated: "Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it" (Bukhari, Hadith No. 5678). This further shows that depression should not be dismissed as a purely

spiritual issue but managed holistically through faith and professional support. Contemporary Islamic psychology emphasizes *dhikr*, *dua*, and reflection as therapeutic tools, alongside counseling and medical interventions. Rassool (2021) opines that integration of Islamic principles into modern psychotherapy enhances cultural sensitivity and reduces barriers to treatment, especially among Muslim populations.

When one remains steadfast, the Quran reminds him that the Hereafter is free from all negative experiences and feelings (43:68, 46:13). Throughout the Quran, these emotions are acknowledged, and, by extension, depression is acknowledged. As a part of this article, we examine the Quran's treatment of strong emotions, including grief and sorrow, and we draw lessons from these

Allah says regarding having faith and persevering "So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers." (3:139). The early Muslims of Medina were consoled in this verse following a defeat caused by their decisions and the turmoil they experienced in the battle of Uhud. The rumors that the Prophet (PBUH) had been martyred even caused some distress. As a result, they were unable to function effectively. This was a time of discontentment and sorrow for the early Muslims. (Al Baghaw, 1997) As Sharawy (1418) observed the condition of faith that ends the verse was provided as a solution to their discontentment and sorrow hence, faith is a remedy to depression

The Qur'an emphasizes that the presence of Allah provides solace. Allah says:

"And let not their speech grieve you. Indeed, honor [due to power] belongs to Allah entirely. He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (10:65).

Interpreting this verse, Qurtubi (1964) explains that the power to overcome all stresses lies with Allah. This verse is a profound consolation and reminder revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the face of ridicule, rejection and verbal abuse from his enemies. The verse carries timeless lessons for believers who encounter hostility, mockery or discouragement in their journey in life. This verse alleviates the worries of the prophet and strengthens his confidence thereby, relieving him of any depression.

Allah emphasizes that man should consistently seek help through patience and prayer. The Qur'an reads: "O you who have believed, seek help through

patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.”(2:153). Our relationship with Allah is one of the most effective ways of feeling calm internally and externally. This verse emphasizes two central tools of spiritual strength: patience and prayer. When a Muslim is patience and he prays, he feels relief from stress and the hardships of life and his mind and heart feel relaxed.

A Muslim is enjoined to be optimistic of a positive outcome in the end of every endeavor 35:34. This verse explains that it is a fact of life that no one is immune to concerns, anxieties, or sorrows and so, Allah will remove all anxieties and sorrows from the people of heaven. By implication, those on earth shall have their sorrows removed for them only by Allah and sorrows in this verse, refers to all forms of distress and concern(At-Tabari,2000)

Equally relevant as Qur’anic antidote to depression is the verse that established the fact that whatever man is faced with are within his ability of overcoming. Allah say: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا meaning “Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear (2:286)’ In the course of life, we are often faced with hardships. There will be a testing of patience, devotion, and faith on the part of Allah (SWT). This verse explains that nobody is burdened with any difficulties in which they are physically or mentally incapable of bearing. This implies that whatever challenge one faces, it is a trial which Allah is confidence that man shall overcome and so, man should not allow such trial or challenge to overwhelm him.

Anybody that puts his trust in Allah will always find Allah sufficient for him. The Qur’an is equivocal on this when Allah says:... وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ... meaning “Whoever puts his trust in Allah; He will be enough for Him”. (65:3) The beauty of Islam as contained in this verse lies in its ability to allow one to trust Allah (SWT). You must believe that Allah’s plan for you is the best one possible. Al Tha’labi (2002) interprets this verse to mean that a Muslim should put his trust in Allah in whatever difficult situation he finds himself believing well that Allah is the architect of his life. This trust will elevate distress and worries from him. After every hardship and difficulty, mankind is promised ease and relief (94:6). This verse is a profound reassurance from Allah that difficulties in life are never permanent.

In Allah’s guidance and trust lies fulfilling wisdom. Allah says: No misfortune ever befalls except by permission of Allah. And whoever has faith in Allah –

He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things (64:11) This verse highlights the central Islamic teaching that everything in existence, either good or bad, occurs by the will and wisdom of Allah. Allah (SWT) has the ultimate. Every action of His has a purpose, whether to strengthen or bring us closer to Him. Believing that your destiny is in your best interest is the key to trusting Him.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Islamic perspectives on mental health emphasise patience, resilience, and reliance on Allah, offering a holistic approach that addresses both psychological and spiritual needs. The case of the University of Ilorin demonstrates how an Islamic environment can promote student well-being through communal support, structured worship, and religious associations. Nonetheless, challenges such as underutilization of counseling services and persistent stigma remain. Bridging the gap between Islamic coping mechanisms and professional counseling through integrative models could strengthen mental health outcomes for students.

Findings obtained from this study are summarised in the following;

1. It was established that there is high level of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.
2. It was also implied that academic workload is one of the main causes of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.
3. It was established that financial factor is also a major cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.
4. The research further revealed that stress is a significant cause of depression among the students of University of Ilorin.
5. Lastly, depression is observed as a significant factor leading to suicide among the students of University of Ilorin.

On a final note, these this paper recommends adherence to Islamic teachings in patience, resilience, and reliance. The Qur'an has recommended solution to our mental health problem in constant remembrance of Allah in Qur'an 13:28

Reference

- At Tabari. (2000) Muhammad Jarir, *Jāmi' u l-Bayānfi Ta'wīlil Qur'an*, Beirut: Mu'assasatur Risālah.
- At-Tha^labi A.M. (2002). *Al Kashfu Wal Bayan an Tafsiril Qur'an* (Beirūt: Dāru l-hya' itturāthil Arabi.
- Al Baghawi, H. M. (1997) *Ma'ālimut Tanzīlfi Tafsīrīl Qur'an* Beirut: Dārut Taybah,
- Al-Qurtubi, M. A. (1964). *Al-Jami'u Li Ahkami 'l-Qur'an* (Vol. 6). Beirut: Daru lhyau Turath.
- As-Sha'arawi, M. M. (1997). *AL-Khawawtir*. Cairo: Maktabatu Wahabbah
- Abdel-Khalek, A. M. (2019). Islamic religion and mental health: A review. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 22(7), 672–685.
- Agesin, E. B., and Olabimitan, B. A. (2023). Test Anxiety and Academic Stress as Predictors of Depression among Undergraduate Students of University of Ilorin. *Psychology and Mental Health Care*, 9(3).
- Ali, R., and Abdullahi, M. (2022). Islamic Campus Environment and Student Well- Being: A Case Study of Nigerian Universities. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 16(2), 44–59.
- Haque, A. (2018). Psychology from an Islamic Perspective: Contributions of Early Scholars. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 57(1), 307–321.
- Haque, A., and Keshavarzi, H. (2021). Integrating Islamic Principles in Modern Psychotherapy. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 15(2), 22–35.
- Isara, A. R., Nwokoye, O. I., and Odaman, A. O. (2022). Prevalence and Risk Factors of Depression Among Undergraduate Medical Students in a Nigerian University. *Ghana Medical Journal*, 56(4), 303–310.
- Koenig, H. G. (2020). Religion and Mental Health: Research and Clinical Applications. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 59(6), 2623–2639.

- Matthews, T., Danese, A., Wertz, J., Odgers, C. L., Ambler, A., Moffitt, T. E., and Arseneault, L. (2020). Social Isolation, loneliness and Depression in Young Adulthood: A Behavioural Genetic Analysis. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 55(6), 667-676.
- Olatunji, M., Salawu, B., and Kareem, A. (2024). University-Based Mental Health Programs in Nigeria: The Tertiary Institution Mental Health (TIM) Programme Model. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 18(1), 1–12.
- Rassool, G. H. (2021). *Islamic Psychology and Psychotherapy: Concepts and Applications*. London: Routledge.
- Tabalipa F, Souza M, Pfütenreuter G, Lima V, Traebert E, Traebert J. Prevalence of Anxiety and Depression among Medical Students. *Revista Brasileira de Educação Médica*. 2015;39(3):388–394.
- Suleiman, A., & Yusuf, M. (2023). Faith-Based Coping Strategies and Resilience among Nigerian Undergraduates. *African Journal of Psychology*, 11(1), 55– 70.
- Yusuf, A., and Sanni, T. (2023). The Impact of Islamic Student Associations on Mental Health and Resilience. *Nigerian Journal of Islamic Studies*, 19(2), 88– 105.
- World Health Organization. (2021). Suicide data. https://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevention/en
- Wajahat K., & Muhammad, T. (2023). Role of Islamic Worships in Preventing and Controlling Depression (UMAN) 6(4)