

Examine Islamic Perspective of Depression Causes among Libyan Muslims Adult

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Abstract. Numerous studies have found that depression is more prevalence among female and young people. Based on the Holy Quran, the researcher found that Qur'an did not indicate to age or gender is caused depression. So the goal of this study was examining the Islamic perspective of depression. The finding shows that depressed participants tended to be younger than older participants and the majority of participants showed moderate symptoms of depression 60.8% of females were more likely to be depressed. Also findings show that there was a significant effect of age on depression for males and females – particularly on the 17-29 age groups.

Keywords: Depression, Islamic perspective of depression, gender, age.

1. Introduction

There is a considerable variation in the estimate of the prevalence of depression. There are different ways in which it is defined and differing measurement procedures that are usually used. The prevalence of depression determined by considering certain factors such as the individuals' age, gender, culture, socio-economic status and, educational background.

The depressive disorder rate appears to differ with age; for example, depression may be expressed differently among children, adolescents and adults and that the rate of the depression increases dramatically among adolescents. According to DSM-IV-RT, the difference between genders often begins at mid-teenage years and continues to adulthood. Furthermore, the National Population Health Survey, conducted a study in Canada reported that the highest rate of depression varied from 1.4% to 9.1% for the first experience among young adults whose ages ranged from 12-24. Moreover, the lowest rate of depressive disorder estimated from 1.3% to 1.8% among the individuals whose ages ranged from 65 and above. Other studies have also showed similar findings. Depression has been found to be highly common among adolescents with prevalence rate approximated to range from 3% to 8%. It was also found that 15% to 20% of teenagers through the course of this sensitive stage experienced depressive disorder. 7.7% of depressed teenagers were associated with serious social difficulties such as poor academic attainment, peer problems, excessive use of drugs and alcoholic drinks, and suicide. Depression appeared to be frequent in females compared with males. Epidemiological studies showed that the prevalence of depression estimated from (2.6%) to (5.5%) among males and (6.0%) to (11.8 %) among females. In addition, DSM-IV-RT reported that there is a possibility during one's lifetime to experience depression which is estimated to range from (5%) to (12%) for men and (10%) to (25%) for women. At any given period of time, it was found that (2%) to (3%) of men and (5%) to (9 %) of women suffer from major depression. Quran pointed out that there are many causes as well as groups that could face and suffer from depression more than others like; Like, Human nature (*fetrah*), and depression is more prevalence among people how are not following Allah's guidance and teachings, and who suffering from hardship in the form of tests and loss of the beloved one(s) or thing(s).

2. Islamic Perspective of Depressive Mood Causes

2.1. The Major Causes of Depressive Mood

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Based on the Holy Quran, the researcher has found three major groups that could suffer of depressive mood. They are discussed below:

2.2. Not following Allah's guidance and teachings

Anyone who does not follow Allah's guidance and teachings may feel sorrow and this in turn may lead to depression. For example, in the following verses "But if anyone turns away from My reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one..." (Qur'an, 20: 124) and "... who believe and mend (their lives) upon them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'an, 6: 49). One can have severe consequences and hardship as a result of one's disobedience to Allah's guidance. The implicit meaning of this verse "Whatever misfortune happens to you is because of the things your hands have wrought..." (Qur'an, 42: 30) implies a cause of depression.

2.3. Minor Causes of Depressive Mood

In addition to the major causes of depression mentioned above, there are six minor causes that Allah alludes to in the Qur'an with regard to the depression. They result from:

2.3.1 Loss of the beloved one(s) or thing(s)

The sense of loss is expressed in the case of Prophet Moses' mother when she lost her son Moses "But there came to be a void in the heart of the mother of Moses Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, and that she might not grieve ..." (Qur'an, 28: 10 and 13). A similar scene is also reflected in the case of Prophet Jacob when he lost his son as in this verse "And he turned away from them, and he said: how great is my grief for Joseph..." (Qur'an, 12: 84).

2.3.2 Behavioural abuse from others

Abuse hurts the individual's feelings as in this verse "Let not their speech, then, grieve you..." (Qur'an, 36: 76) and "We do know how your heart is distressed at what they say" (Qur'an, 15: 97) Allah urges Prophet Mohammed not to grieve if he received bad words or behavior from his enemies "Perchance you may (feel the inclination to) give up a part of what is revealed unto you, and your heart feels straitened lest they say..." (Qur'an, 11: 12).

2.3.3 Low self-esteem, low self-confidence or incapability

Low self-esteem, low self-confidence or incapability may make individuals feel depressed. This is reflected in this verse "Faint not nor grieve: for you must gain mastery if you are true in faith" (Qur'an, 3: 139). This verse encourages grieving Muslims to move forward and face the challenges in life.

2.3.4 Fear of risk(s)

Individuals tend to be depressed when they feel there is a risk threatening their lives as shown in these two verses "And when Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account, and felt himself powerless (to protect) them: but they said: fear not, nor grieve: we are here to save you and your kinsfolk..." (Qur'an, 29: 33). "But Allah delivers the righteous to their place of salvation. No evil shall touch them, nor shall they grieve" (Qur'an, 39: 61).

2.3.5 Feeling guilty

Guilt is mentioned in this verse "(He turned in mercy also) to three who were left behind; they felt guilty to such a degree that earth seemed constrained for all its spaciousness, and their (very) souls seemed straitened..." (Qur'an, 9:118). The three people who disobeyed Allah by not going to holy war (jihad) felt guilty consequently great grief in them. As a result, they deserted their people and went up a hill in the outskirts to repent.

According to above Allah has not alludes to age or gender in the Qur'an with regard to the depression. But the Qur'an does not indicate that age or gender is an assistant factor of depression. Because of that and the researcher's belief that the Qur'an never makes mistakes, as well as to exam the effects of sex and age, she added the next hypothesis.

3. Objectives

This study aims to examine these hypotheses

There is a significant mean difference in depression between male and female.

There is a significant relationship between age and level of depression.

There is a significant effect of age in depression for males and females.

4. Method

Data of the current study obtained from Benighazi, the second largest city in Libya. Participants selected from three places: Gar Yunis University, the main General Electric Company, and local clinics. The sample size of the university students was 300, they selected through stratified sampling as follows: 3 departments are selected randomly from 3 colleges of the 8 colleges. The three colleges were Teachers Rehabilitation College, Arts College and Economics College. 150 participants were selected from the Electric Company. In the present study, 500 participants completed a self-report questionnaire, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II). Questionnaire results were calibrated by psychiatric interviews of a subsample of 75 patients.

5. Result

- **Hypothesis 1: There is a Significant Mean Difference in Depression between Male and Female Libyan Muslim.**

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the depression scores for males and females. There was a significant difference in means for males ($M = 11.01$, $SD = 8.836$) and females ($M = 17.86$, $SD = 10.662$); $t(447) = -5.63$, $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was very small (eta squared = -0.13). This indicates that more female respondents experienced depression than male respondents.

- **Hypothesis 2: There is a Significant Relationship between Age and Level of Depression Libyan Muslim.**

The relationship between depression scores (as measured by the BDI-II) and participants' age was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was a small negative correlation between the two variables, $r = .098$, $n = 407$, $p < .0005$, with high levels of depression associated with younger participants' age group; for more details see Figure 1.

- **Hypothesis 3: There is a Significant Effect of Age in Depression for Males and Females. Total of Depression**

A two-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of sex and age on levels of depression, as measured by the BDI-II. Subjects were divided into four groups according to their age (Group 1: 17-29 years; Group 2: 30-39 years; Group 3: 40-49 years; Group 4: 50-60). $F(3, 441) = 2.95$, $p = .033$. This indicates that there is a significant effect of age on depression for males and females. Although there was a statistically significant mean effect for age of $F(3, 441) = 2.90$, $p = .035$, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .02). Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean of the depression score for the 17-29 age group ($M = 17.67$, $SD = 10.74$) was significantly different from the 40-49 age group ($M = 11.20$, $SD = 9.22$) and the 30-39 age group ($M = 13.50$, $SD = 9.81$). The 50-60 age group ($M = 15.11$, $SD = 9.44$) did not differ significantly from either of the other groups. The main effect for sex, $F(1, 429) = 0.30$, $p = 0.59$, and the interaction effect, $F(2, 429) = 1.44$, $p = 0.24$, did not reach statistical significance.

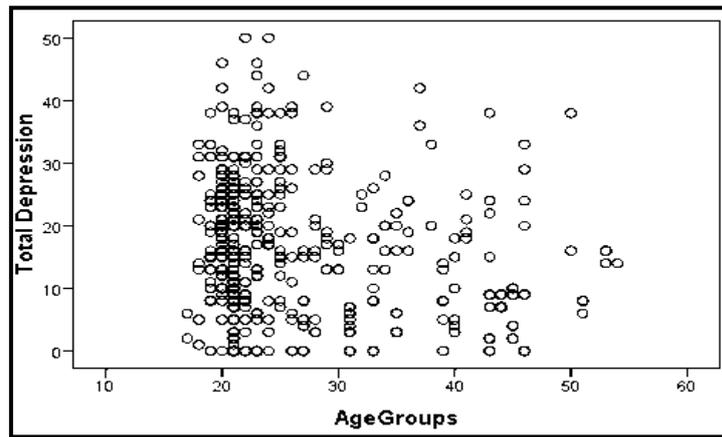


Fig.1. Correlations between the Age and Depression Level.

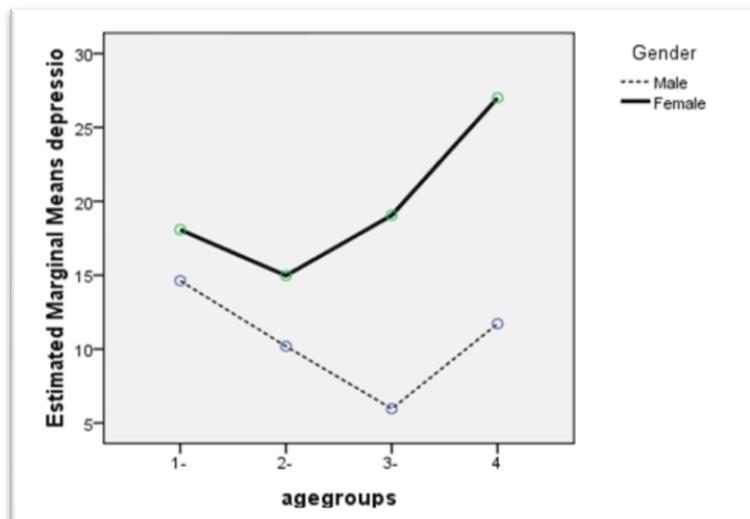


Fig.2. Effect of Age on Depression Scores for Males and Females Estimated Marginal Means.

6. Discussion

6.1. Hypotheses 1: Depression and Gender

The current findings indicate that more female respondents experienced depression than male respondents: 60.8% of females were more likely to be depressed, while 60.0% of males showed normal mood. These findings are consistent with the prevalence of depression among the Qatari population, which was assessed at 53.1% among women and 18.7% among males. The National Survey of Mental Health and Well-Being (NSMHWB) in Australia was conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998) and estimated that the prevalence of depression was 22.4% for men and 29.7% for women. Many studies reported that there is consistent evidence for a higher prevalence of depressive symptom rates for women. This high rate among women is possibly caused by the fact that women have several fundamental causes for susceptibility to be depressed, such as biological differences between sexes. In this regard, reported that “since gender differences in depression prevalence do not typically emerge until adolescence, studies have suggested that female’s greater susceptibility may be tied to increases in female reproductive hormones estrogen and progesterone at puberty; also differences in monoaminergic functioning and processing” (p. 232). Biological and social differences between the roles of the genders, and biological gender-role identity differences may also contribute to the gender differences. The underlying assumption is that gender shapes both the nature and experience of specific role activities, and thus the psychological consequences of involvement in various social roles (for example, as parent or paid employee) are different for women and men. These factors have been well documented in several studies. Moreover, freedom among Libyan females is very limited and there are many restrictions imposed on them as a result of Arab traditional life.

6.2. Hypotheses 2: Depression and Age

As evidenced by the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, there is a negative correlation between the depression and age, the highest levels of depression is associated with the youngest age group. This finding shows that depressed participants tended to be younger than older participants and the majority of participants showed moderate symptoms of depression. Moreover, the lowest rate of depression prevalence was among the older age participants; this result is in accordance with that of Glicken (2006) which showed that the lowest rate of depressive disorder was estimated at between 1.3% and 1.8% among individuals who were older. In Malaysia, the rate was 6.3%. Several studies find that depression is highly common among young participants.

The current result is consistent with the Islamic model of depression as clarified in the next paragraph. There may be other reasons that older people are less depressed on the BDI-II: for example, it is possible that older individuals are more religious, more accepting of difficulties and life events, so they have the patience and experience to deal with them, or because they have more difficulty with self-administered questionnaires for cognitive reasons.

By reference to the Islamic model of depression, this verse describes one possible cause of depression: "... whoever follows My Guidance shall neither go astray, nor fall into distress and misery. But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Quran nor acts on its orders, etc.) verily, for him is a life of hardship..." Q: 20: 123-124.

The verse above implies that whoever does not practice his religion well may experience depression ("a life narrowed down and dark"). However, the next verse implies that, when an individual reaches maturity in age and with the Mercy of Allah SWT, he/she usually increases his religious practice and becomes more pious, and this leads to a decrease in depression. The above and following verses indicate that there may be a relationship between increased age and a decrease in depression. "...when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam." Qur'an:46:15. Qur'an: 46: 15.

But the Qur'an did not indicate to gender as a contributing factor of depression. So the relationship between age and gender on depression was examined (see next section).

6.3. Hypotheses 3: The Effect of Age and Sex in Depression

There was a significant effect of age on depression— particularly for the 17-29 age group – but the main effect of sex and the interaction effect did not reach statistical significance. This finding is consistent with a study conducted on Muslims living in America from Arab and non-Arab countries.

This result could be explained by the suggestion that if depression is affected by gender, the high level should never be reduced in the later adult stage. However, because depression is affected by age, when young people become older adults their depression decreases. The researcher's experience as a therapist in Libya may explain the current findings. Young adults are more likely to form dysfunctional beliefs as a result of mixed and confusing expectations of the Libyan society. Young female adults in Libya are confused between their desires to follow and live modern lives as women do in Western or non-Muslim countries, and the Muslim and traditional Arab lifestyle. This is strongly consistent with Islam's model of depression as stated in the following verses "But if anyone turns away from my reminder, his life will be a dark and narrow one..." (Qur'an, 20: 124) and when he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, "O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou has bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as Thou mayest approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow (to Thee) in Islam." Qur'an:46:15. For more details see Chapter Three "minor causes of depressive mood". Furthermore, there are possibly several trigger causes of depression in Libyan society due to the increased cost of living and decreased outcome, delayed age of marriage, as well as an increase in the rate of spinsterhood. With young adults, these economic and social factors have become more influential today.

7. References

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