

# Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Causes and Effects of Depression Among Fourth Year Degree Nursing Students at A University, Windhoek, Namibia

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## Abstract

**Background:** Depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think and how you act. Depression is one of the most common yet serious mental health conditions that individuals have struggled with from the past to the present. Depression affects the functionality of a human being regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or even religion. Depression is a state of restlessness which can be explained as the extremist and the most profound state of sadness, while restlessness is like a burning flame, and sadness is like the embers that remain after this flame calms down. Moreover, Depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors. Student nurses are care givers to the clients and patient, therefore it is of utmost importance that they must know the causes and effects of depression. Therefore, this study focuses on the knowledge, attitude and practice of 4th year degree nursing students at the main campus in Windhoek, regarding the causes and effects of depression.

**Methodology:** In this study Quantitative, descriptive approaches were employed to determine the knowledge, and attitude of 4rd year degree nursing students of UNAM main campus in Windhoek, regarding the causes and effects of depression. The target population for this study was 91 4th year degree nursing students at the University of Namibia, main campus, Windhoek. Data was collected from 28th August 2022 until 7th of October 2022 and self-structured questionnaires were used to collect the data. For this study, probability, random sampling was used.

**Results:** A response rate of 100% was achieved. Out of 79 participants, 86% were female and they were dominating while 14% were male. All participants were Christians. The majority of the participants had grade12 certificate as their highest qualifications 87% and the least had other (certificate, diploma, degree) 13%. The study revealed that there was good display of knowledge, attitude regarding the causes and effects of depression.

**Keywords:** Effects, Depression.

## Introduction

According to the American Psychiatric Association, depression is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel the way you think and how you act [1]. This illness worldwide has an estimated 3.8% of the population affected, including 5.0% among adults and 5.7% among adults older than 60 years [2]. suggest that approximately 280 million people in the world have depression. Furthermore, Depression can cause the person to suffer greatly and function poorly at work, at school and in the family, worst depression can lead to suicide [2,3]. WHO further indicates that, depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life, especially when recurrent and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition. Indian union health ministry estimates, significant percentage of people who commit suicide in India is, 37.8%

and are below 30 years of age [4].

Botswana indicated that depression was associated with locus of control, suicidal ideation and previous suicide attempts, childhood drug abuse and sexual abuse, parental substance use and physical assault [5]. reported that in Africa, the prevalence of depression in the general population was reported to be at between 9% and 11.6%, of which 95% of the cases were in sub-Saharan Africa [2].

Studies done in Namibia stated that colonial political system has an impact on mental wellbeing of the Namibian nation [6]. Many years of the liberation struggle, which was accompanied by major psychological stressors, drug induced mental disorders, and high rates of unemployment currently at 35% increase the risk of mental disorders in the community [2].

## Background

Depression is a common illness worldwide, with an estimated 3.8% of the population affected, including 5.0% among adults and 5.7% among adults older than 60 years [2]. Approximately 280 million people in the world have depression. [3]. WHO indicates that, Depression is different from usual mood fluctuations and short-lived emotional responses to challenges in everyday life, especially when recurrent and with moderate or severe intensity, depression may become a serious health condition. [2]. Furthermore, Depression can cause the person to suffer greatly and function poorly at work, at school and in the family, worst depression can lead to suicide [2].

Indian union health ministry estimates, significant percentage of people who commit suicide in India is, 37.8% and are below 30 years of age [4]. is of the option that stressful events are more likely to precipitate depression when they occur in the same domain as those that rendered the individual vulnerable to depression earlier in their lives [7]. This means that youngsters who suffered interpersonal losses in early childhood are more likely to have a depressive episode later in their development stage. To reduce the effects of depression, internet-based cognitive-behavioral therapy has been established as an effective and cost-effective alternative in countries such as Australia, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, before they slowly spread to the rest of the developing countries [8]. In addition, the, internet-based cognitive-behavioral therapy has proven their feasibility and effectiveness in the prevention and treatment of depression [8].

In Ghana bivariate analyses has been conducted which had indicated that higher age, living without a partner, never having been to school, living in an urban setting, migration unemployment, alcohol abuse is associated with depression among women in Ghana [9]. The psychiatric hospitals and Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) provide the majority of psychiatric services in the country however, the level of knowledge and standard of care offered to people with mental disorders by general practitioners and primary care services is generally poor [10].

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According to in Africa, the prevalence of depression in the general population was reported to be at between 9% and 11.6%, of which 95% of the cases were in sub-Saharan Africa [11].

Study done in Namibia stated that colonial political system, the apartheid system of racial domination, political oppression has impact on mental wellbeing of the Namibian nation [6]. The study further indicated that many years of the liberation struggle, which was accompanied by major psychological stressors, drug induced mental disorders, and high rates of unemployment currently at 35% increase the risk of mental disorders in the community [6]. Although, research has been done regarding the causes and effects of depression done in Namibia, there is a need for the researcher to assess the knowledge, attitude and practice of the 4th year degree nursing students at a University, Windhoek regarding the causes and effects of depression.

## Aim

The aim of this study was to assess the knowledge and attitude of the 4th year degree nursing students regarding the causes and effects of depression at a University, Windhoek.

## Method

In this study quantitative, descriptive approaches were employed to determine the knowledge, and attitude of 4th year degree nursing students of University, Windhoek, regarding the causes and effects of depression. The research design therefore, spells out the approaches the researcher plan to adopt to develop information that is accurate and interpretable in order to provide evidence that address the research question accurately.

## Survey

Self- structured questionnaires were used to collect the data. The questions were close ended. The questionnaires consisted of 4 sections namely, section A, B, C, and D. Section A consisted of Demographic data such as sex and age, section B consisted of questions assessing the knowledge of 4th year degree nursing students regarding the causes of depression consisting agree and disagree, Section C consisted of questions assessing the knowledge of 4th year degree nursing students regarding the effects of depression consisting of true and false, Section D consisted of questions describing the attitudes and practice of 4th year degree nursing students towards depression consisting of agree and disagree.

## Interview schedule

Data was collected by the researcher. Firstly, the researcher approached the 4th year students and explained the process as well as the purpose for the study to them. Before giving them the questionnaires, the researcher gave them the consent forms and allowed them to sign. After they have agreed to participate in the study and given their written consent, they were then given the questionnaires, which they completed. Data was collected during the first week of September. The researcher also consulted the University of Namibia's online library and also used pre-reviewed studies, which was obtained from the internet.

## Ethical approval

Ethical clearance was obtained through the structures of the University of Namibia. Therefore, the following ethical considerations were written, informed consent was obtained from each participant after the procedure was explained and risks were pointed out after adequate information were conveyed, possible risks were pointed out. Voluntary participation without penalty for withdrawal was pointed out.

## Data analysis Results

### Participants age groups

Table 1: Age group

Age groups	Amount %
18-23	72%
24-29	16%
30-35	9%
36-44	3%

The table 1 above shows that most of participants were between the ages of 18-23 with (72%) followed by 24-29(16%), those who were between the ages of 30-35 were (16%) and lastly only 3% were between the ages of 36-35.

### Participants gender

**Table 2: Gender**

Gender	Amount %
Male	14%
Female	86%

The table 2 above shows that most of the participants were females with 86% and males were 14%.

### Participants working experience at a mental health hospital

**Table 3: Working experience at a mental health hospital**

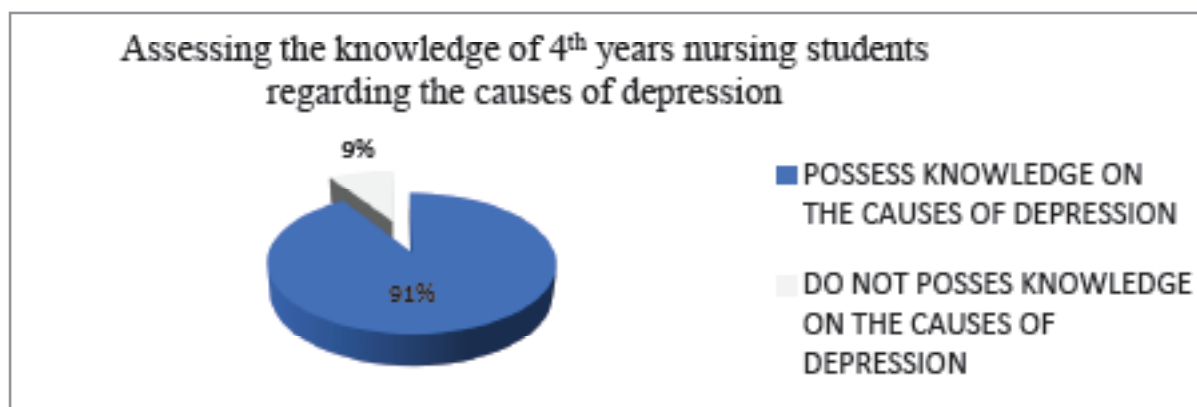
Working experience at a mental health hospital	Amount %
Yes	82%
No	18%

The table 3, above indicates that most of the participants had work experience in a mental health clinic/hospital (82%) and 18% had no experience.

### Participants educational level

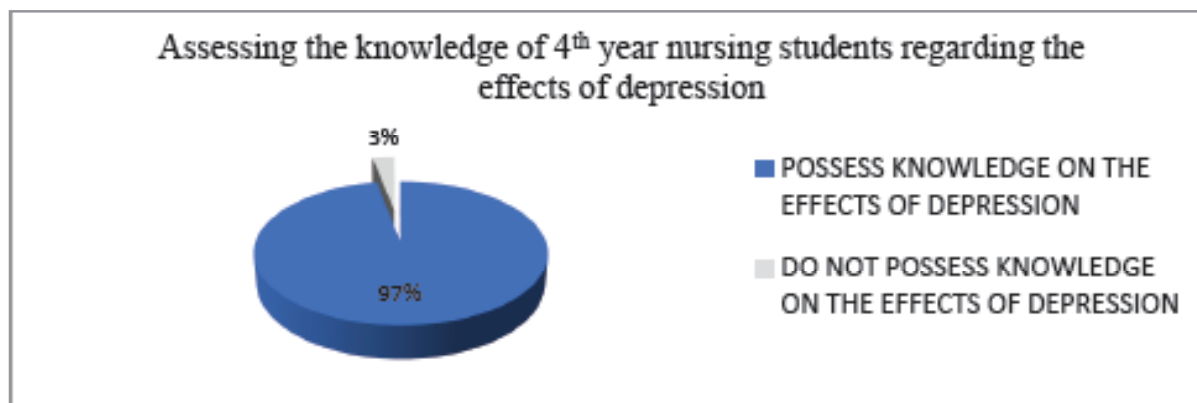
**Table 4: Educational level**

Educational level	Amount %
Grade 10	0%
Grade 12	87%
Other (certificate, diploma, degree)	13%



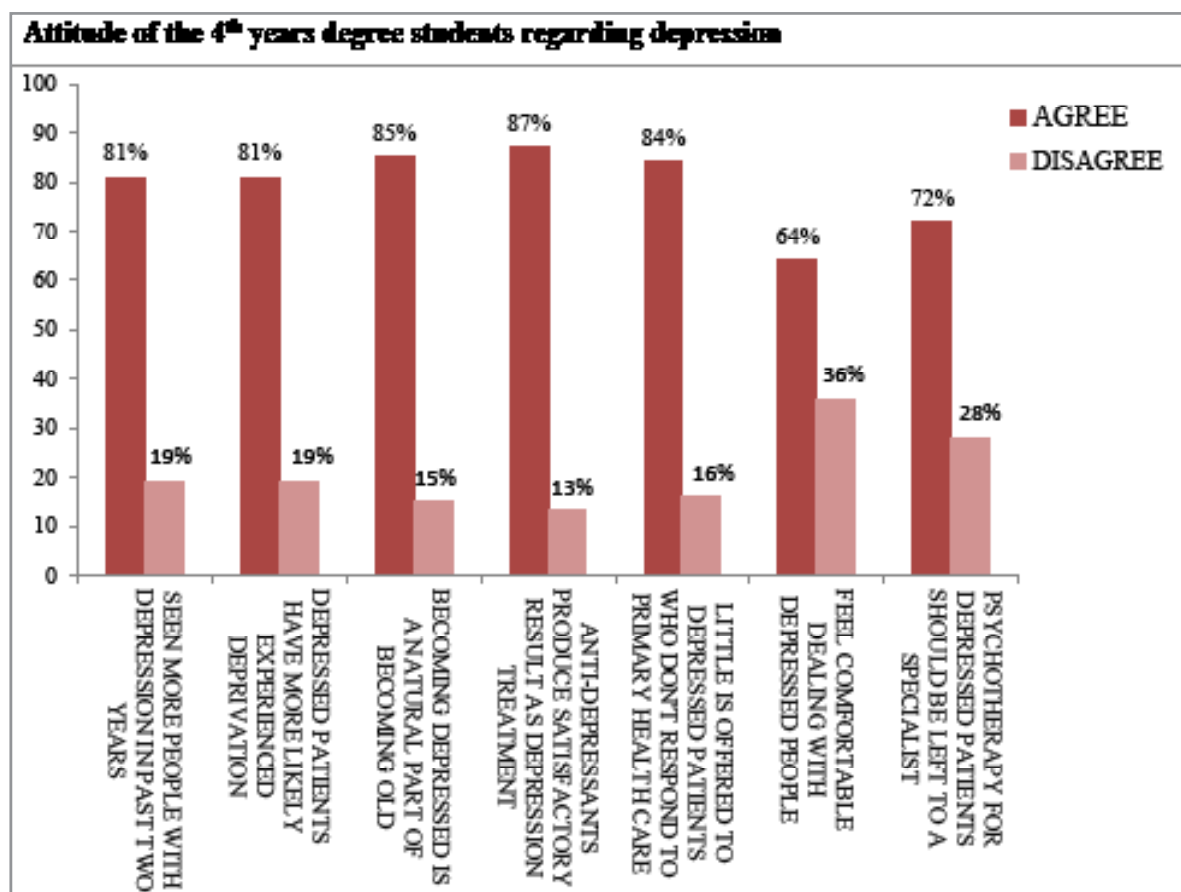
**Figure 1:** Knowledge of 4th years nursing students regarding the causes of depression

Figure 1 above show that most of the participants had knowledge on the causes of depression (91%) and only 9% were not knowledgeable on the causes of depression.



**Figure 2:** Knowledge of 4th year degree nursing students regarding the effects of depression

Figure 2 above show that most of the participants had knowledge on the effects of depression (97%) and only 3% were not knowledgeable on the causes of depression.



**Figure 3:** Attitude of the 4th years degree students regarding depression

Figure 3 above indicates that most participants agreed that anti-depressants produce satisfactory results as depression treatment (87%) while 13% disagreed, and also 84% agreed that little is being offered to depressed patients who do not respond to primary health care while 16% disagreed. Moreover, 85% also agreed that becoming depressed is a natural part of becoming old while 15% disagreed. In the same vein most of the participants were of the opinion that depressed patients are more likely to experience deprivation (81%) while 19% disagreed and also 81% also agreed that they had seen more people with depression in the past 2 years while 19% disagreed. Lastly, a significant number of the participants also agreed that Psychotherapy for depressed patients should be left to a specialist (72%) while 28% disagreed. To add on, 64% agree that they feel comfortable dealing with depressed people while 36% disagreed.

## Discussion

### Demographic data

Seventy-nine (79) participants took part in the study; the majority (72%) of the participants were in the age category of 18-23 years of age. Most of them (16%) were between the ages of 24-29 years of age and the least (9%) were between the ages of 30-35 years, only few (3%) who were between 36-40 years of age. Most of the respondents were female (86%) and only (14%) were male and this shows that nursing profession is more perceived by female students than male students. stated that Florence nightingale's perception and feminization of the nursing profession into a female only profession has resulted in male nurses to make up about 10% in the modern society [12].

### Knowledge of 4th years nursing students regarding the causes of depression

Based on the findings it shows that 91% of the respondents possess knowledge on the causes of depression. Depression is a global condition that seriously impairs both individuals and society as a whole [11]. The researcher wanted to see if participants agreed that depression is a serious illness based on the literature. According to the findings, the majority of individuals rated their depression as being very severe or extremely severe. According to the Health Belief Model, participants' perceptions of the severity of their condition play a role in whether or not they seek medical attention. According to the Health Belief Model, individuals are more likely to seek treatment for this problem because they believe that depression is a serious illness than they would be if they did not have this belief. It should be mentioned that the HBM highlighted several factors that a person may consider when determining whether to seek medical attention for a sickness. One of these factors is the severity of the ailment.

Help-seeking behaviour is not just influenced by a condition's severity. A person's decision-making process is also influenced by other factors, such as how likely they believe they are to get the condition or how effective they believe the available treatments will be in resolving their problem [13]. The problem is not what depression or mental illness is, but rather how a person interprets their circumstances. Additionally, the problem is not whether there is actually a problem, but rather how a person in-

interprets that difficulty. In order to make the problem less bothersome, this researcher asks: What relationship do they have with this problem and how may their relationship with the problem be changed? [13]. The design of the questionnaire allowed participants to interact with the researcher while sharing their ideas, perceptions, and personal experiences with depression. The researcher was able to determine what these university students believed to be the main causes of depression by learning about the social constructs they and their local societies connected to depression. Their accounts revealed that depression is, in fact, a complex phenomenon because it is frequently an enigmatic mental condition that imprisons individuals and leaves them penniless and lonely. Cognitive theorist discovered that individuals with depression had a pessimistic perspective on occurrences [14]. He puts forth a cognitive triangle that includes negative views about oneself, the outside environment, and one's future in which there are three different types of negativity. The person lives in a world where there are numerous occurrences that constantly endanger their psychological health, which is why the self-talks to Maslow's hierarchy of needs from 1943. The environment also makes it difficult for the depressed person to realize that better times are ahead, and the future consequently does not appear promising since a variety of challenges and demands seem overwhelming and the person feels as though these cannot possibly be met.

The first step in deciding to seek treatment is realizing that one is depressed [15]. However, one must first be aware of the signs of depression in order to determine if they are experiencing them. It's interesting to note that the majority of participants in this study claimed to be aware of the causes and signs of depression. The researcher, however, thinks that the questionnaire's design is more likely to be to blame for the fact that so many students said that they were aware of the signs of sadness.

Attitude of 4th years degree nursing students towards depression  
Most participants agreed that antidepressants produce satisfactory results as depression treatment (87%) while 13% disagreed, and also 84% agreed that little is being offered to depressed patients who do not respond to primary health care while 16% disagreed. Moreover, 85% also agreed that becoming depressed is a natural part of becoming old while 15% disagreed. In the same vein most of the participants were of the opinion that depressed patients are more likely to experience deprivation (81%) while 19% disagreed and also 81% also agreed that they had seen more people with depression in the past 2 years while 19% disagreed. Lastly, a significant number of the participants also agreed that Psychotherapy for depressed patients should be left to a specialist (72%) while 28% disagreed. To add on, 64% agree that they feel comfortable dealing with depressed people while 36% disagreed.

As it was already mentioned, the Health Belief Model also found that students' opinions of their susceptibility to the illness have a role in whether or not they seek treatment for their depression. Even though depression is the most prevalent psychiatric ailment in the world, it was fascinating to find that most participants thought they weren't particularly prone to the condition [11]. These findings may be explained by the fact that many people are unaware of their vulnerability to depression. Most individuals are not sure whether the sadness they are feeling

should be considered a normal fluctuation of emotions or whether the sadness is an indication of depression. Most frequently, people will look to an expert to make that choice for them [13]. The issue with this is that if individuals are uninformed of their propensity for depression, they are less likely to seek assistance, where they would have the chance to talk with a professional about their worries. In turn, this would imply that people experience depression for a longer period of time and only seek treatment when their symptoms get worse [16].

According to research, college years are a crucial transitional time for students, and as such, they present a special opportunity to support them during this challenging time [16]. Despite this, research indicates that few students actually seek out mental health care [16]. There are a variety of reasons why students might not seek treatment for mental illnesses, including a lack of knowledge of one's own mental illness, ignorance of the resources available to them for psychological support, and an unwillingness to use psychological services [17]. Literature has demonstrated that, particularly towards the start of their university careers, students may face feelings of humiliation and shame while discussing specifics of their mental health conditions [18]. However, research also shows that these sentiments of embarrassment and shame are lessened in the student population when colleges are more receptive to discussing mental illnesses with their students [18]. Participants also mentioned that not knowing where to look for treatment would be a barrier to getting help. As was previously noted, students are less likely to use the services that are accessible to them if they are not aware of them [13].

The institution can work to make the material simple to acquire since participants indicated a lack of time as the main obstacle impeding help-seeking behaviour. Students will spend less time looking for information as a result, and the institution as a whole will be more aware of the Student Support services.

## Limitations

The study was conducted on 4th year degree nursing students at University of Namibia, main campus. This slightly led to a selected bias that affected the possibility to generalize the results to all 4th year nursing students from all campuses in the country. Moreover, limitation of the study was affected by occurrences that depression is a very sensitive topic and not everyone was comfortable talking about it, therefore some students were not willing to open up and concealed the reality to a fellow student which is the researcher about their personal battles.

## Conclusion

The findings reveal that the younger age groups were more open to taking part in the questionnaire as opposed to older students. Additionally, more female students were keen on taking part in the survey than (gap difference of about 70%). Sadly, less than half of the participants have experience working in mental health clinics. This is a concern because that is where a huge number of people suffering with depression might end up who don't get the necessary help. When working with people who suffer from mental health, one gains experience in the field which is vital when it comes to assisting people experiencing depression. This is because all in all depression is a form mental health problem too.

According to the findings of the study, a good number of 91% of the fourth year nursing students have knowledge on the causes of depression. Only 9% do not acquire knowledge on the basic causes of depression. Additionally, a solid 97% of the fourth year nursing students have knowledge on the effects of depression; only 3% of the students do not acquire knowledge on the effects of depression.

Furthermore, the findings of the study show that 81% of the student participants have seen more people suffer with depression over the past two years and have experienced deprivation. Only 15% of the student participants do not agree that becoming depressed is a natural part of becoming old. Another 13% disagree that anti-depressants produce satisfactory result as depression treatment. 84% of the student participants agree that little is offered to depressed patients who do not respond well to primary health care. Over half, 64%, of the participants exactly is comfortable dealing with depressed people. Sadly, 72% of the participants believe that psychotherapy for depressed patients should be left to specialists

## Declarations

### Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

Ethical approval was obtained from the School of Nursing Health Research Ethical Committee at the University of Namibia, all methods were carried out in accordance with relevant guidelines and regulations, Prior to data collection written informed consent was obtained from all the participants.

### Consent to Publish

None

### Availability of Data Materials

Data base is available on reasonable request from the corresponding author Joseph Galukeni Kadhila.

### Competing Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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### Authors Contribution

Penehafo Dilu, original draft preparation, data collection, analysis and writing, Joseph Galukeni Kadhila\* was responsible for supervision and editing manuscript.

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