

Students Perception of Factors Contributing to Depression During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Muhammad Helmi Mohd Nor¹, Arihasnida Ariffin^{1*}

¹Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education,
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400, Parit Raja, Johor, MALAYSIA

*Corresponding Author Designation

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Abstract: The purpose of study is to identify the students' perception towards factor of family, environment, and social contributing to depression during Covid-19 pandemic to students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education in Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. This study involves 301 sample consisting of students from year 1 to year 4 in the Bachelor of Vocational Education (ISMPV) in program General Machining, Building Construction, Catering, Welding and Metal Fabrication, Electrical and Electronics, Multimedia and Creative, and Refrigeration and Air Conditioning. The simple random sampling method is used based on the study procedure from the selected population group and has homogeneous population characteristics that have the same characteristics in this study. Set of questionnaires has been distributed to collect data in the medium of google forms which contains four sections where Section A (demographics), Section B (perceptions of family factors), Section C (perceptions of environmental factors) and Section D (perceptions of social factors) as a research instrument. The data were collected, analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows Version 25 (SPSS) software descriptively such as mean scores and standard deviations. The findings of the study showed that the main factors causing depression during the Covid-19 pandemic among students were social factors (mean 3.48), followed by environment factors (mean 3.34) and family factors (mean 2.87). The findings of this study also show that students' perceptions of the three factors that cause depression are at a moderate level. This study can help the university to identify students that suffer from depression and can be overcome immediately.

Keywords: Depression, Family, Environment, Social

1. Introduction

Pandemic is defined as the spread of new infectious disease across a large region (WHO, 2020). Covid-19 has been announced as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) after the epidemic had outburst in more than 100 countries across the world. Although a lot of provision steps had been taken, it still became one of the deadliest infectious diseases in history and took millions of lives since its occurrence in 2020. The outburst of Covid-19 has affected numerous people from

different fields, educational field included. However, the consequence of this pandemic has greatly affected students from all ages including young children, teenagers and even adults. According to Abdul Rashid (2020), the scenario that is currently happening across the world is forcing all people to adapt and accommodate the new norms of living in a pandemic. This also applies to students. However, learning in a pandemic can be very challenging. There are some factors that contribute to a student's inability to learn such as unconducive learning space, family issues, internet availability, facilities and so on. These problems can bring negative emotions such as the feelings to give up and stress which eventually lead to depression among students in the new norms living style.

Depression is one of the common mental illnesses that frequently happens among society members and will give negative consequences if not treated carefully as it is one of the main causes that lead to death (Beaudry, 2019). This mental disturbance is also experienced by a lot of students. Some depressed students will take a long time to heal and overcome the after-effects of the depression since it affects their daily lives. As for the students of Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), the problems that lead to depression stem from numerous different causes. Some previous studies had proven that the educational field is also one of the contributors to stress among the students and educators (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). This mental illness would not be easily experienced by any people without contribution from one's surroundings (Mohamad & Ibrahim, 2018). Instead, it is caused by the situation around the students which negatively affects them and eventually leads to stress and depression. According to Norhayati (2013), the main factors that can cause depression among students are family, environment and social. The following three factors can influence a student in causing various depressive problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. This problem of depression among students needs to be avoided and eliminated so as not to be detrimental in a more severe direction.

1.1 Research background

Depression is a type of mental disease that needs to be taken seriously as it cannot be expressed physically albeit being emotionally exhausted. In regard to this issue, the university's counseling center had done a few psychological tests on the students according to each intake year in order to ascertain their mental health condition. Moreover, an unofficial interview session with the Senior Psychology Officer of UTHM was conducted through WhatsApp and the results showed that UTHM students are also greatly affected with the outburst of Covid-19 pandemic. This is mainly due to the changes of the teaching and learning methods in accord with the new norm after pandemic. According to the senior officer, there are some students that have difficulties in taking part during online classes as they face problems such as financial status, internet access and their surroundings. Although recently the practical sessions have been conducted face to face to fulfill the syllabus needs, the sudden changes of environment and learning methods have affected the students emotionally. Not only that, other changes made by the University have also drained them mentally and physically. This is because some of them are not ready to face the frequent changes in teaching and learning sessions which requires them to take immediate actions. In addition, some family members of the students are not understanding enough to give them the time and space they need to take part in the online lessons. Some parents always expect their children to carry out their responsibility at home although they have coursework and deadlines to complete. This becomes stressful to them as they need to multitask at home. According to Haslindar Nor (2020), students also face challenges in terms of the geographical surroundings as some places do not have internet access. Moreover, there are also students that do not have the device needed to take part in online classes. Social restrictions caused by the pandemic and the concern of being exposed to the danger of Covid-19 has caused stress among children, teenagers and even adults.

1.2 Problem statements

The problem of depression that plagued the students was very worrying and troubling during this Covid-19 pandemic. This study can answer the questions and factors to the problem of depression among students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn

Malaysia (UTHM) to help students in dealing with depression. With this study, researchers were able to detect students who experienced depressive factors throughout the Covid-19 pandemic struck in themselves. The study was triggered when researchers were able to detect that depression is increasingly becoming a new problem in society, especially university students who are easily exposed to this problem. Adolescent girls are more prone to this problem of depression due to erratic feelings and significant emotional changes according to the situation. Based on data obtained from the University Counseling Center shows that every year students experience psychological problems in terms of stress problems, mental problems, and depression. This data was obtained from students who came in person to see a psychologist and students who were referred by the University Counseling Center. In addition, statistics by faculty show that the faculty of Technical and Vocational Education recorded the highest number of students compared to other faculties in 2020 (15 students) and 2021 (11 students). This shows that students are suffering from mental health problems due to factors that contribute to the problem.

In addition, students face various challenges in conducting online teaching and learning generally such as purchasing internet data to continue classes virtually. If students from the B-40 group have a profound impact on family finances in daily expenses. The purchase of internet data has become routine for university students undergoing continuous virtual classes until the end of the semester. While the unconducive environment also gives the effect of emotional and health influences to students. For example, students who do not have study desks and chairs to conduct virtual learning. Such a thing can have an impact in terms of body position structure and time to undergo is very limited due to uncomfortable conditions. Students are also burdened with two responsibilities when in their homes, namely responsibilities as children and students. For example, a student is going through a class virtually but at the same time a parent is calling to ask for help. This distracts students to focus during class but at the same time the responsibility towards parents should take precedence. Students will experience stress in the following situations. During the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the world many students were less able to communicate with each other face-to-face. Students are quieter and many conduct meetings and classes online. Social relationships with the community became increasingly fading as usual due to the presence of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, students are prone to anxiety and confusion when communicating with each other and other communities for fear of being infected with the Covid-19 virus.

The factors that drive students to this problem can be seen in terms of family, environment and social. The purpose of this study was to identify the problem of depression to be reduced and even avoided by students by taking precautions and practicing a healthy lifestyle from both physical and mental aspects. In addition, the factors that lead to depression among students during the Covid-19 pandemic can be identified from the study conducted.

1.3 Objectives of study

- a) Identify the students' perception towards the factor of family contributing to depression during Covid-19 pandemic.
- b) Identify the students' perception towards the factor of environment contributing to depression during Covid-19 pandemic.
- c) Identify the students' perception towards factors of social contributing to depression during Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Methodology

Research methodologies are tools or techniques for conducting research or studies. It aims to provide an explanation of how the study was conducted, the data were obtained and analyzed to ensure that the objectives of the study were achieved.

2.1 Research Design

This study uses a survey study design by using a quantitative data approach to obtain data from respondents collected through a questionnaire. Surveys through questionnaires are used to collect information on variables and seek clarification in the study as well as analyzed in the form of statistics. This study used a survey through a questionnaire to obtain and collect data from a random sample in the study population. The purpose of the survey design was used to identify students' perceptions of the factors that cause depression from family, environmental and social factors among students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this research design is suitable to be used in this study based on the issues that occur among students during Covid-19 pandemic.

2.2 Sampling and Population

The scope of this study belongs to the students of the Faculty of Technical and Vocational Education (FPTV) at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) in the Bachelor of Vocational Education (ISMPV) program at this faculty. Among the programs in ISMPV are General Machining, Construction, Catering, Electrical and Electronics, Multimedia and Creative, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning as well as Welding. In addition, the limitation of the study is that the respondents of this study only consist of students of the Bachelor of Vocational Education (ISMPV) program who will be selected randomly only in the form of a google forms questionnaires. The study sample consisted of 277 ISMPV students of the Faculty of Technical & Vocational Education (FPTV) based on the model of Krejcie & Morgan (1970) consisting of male and female genders. These selected students will answer voluntarily without any coercion for the success of this study. On the other hand, in the actual study, the researcher managed to obtain a total of 301 respondents after Google forms were distributed among the study population.

The researcher chose simple random sampling for this study because it simplifies the process of data collection using questionnaires. In this simple random sampling, items are selected from a selected population group using a random selection tool. This method is suitable for use when there are homogeneous population characteristics that have similar characteristics in this study.

2.3 Research Instruments

The researcher developed the questionnaire by using the previous questionnaire as a guide and reference. There are 36 questions in the questionnaire which includes four sections where Section A (demographics), Section B (perceptions of family factors), Section C (perceptions of environmental factors) and Section D (perceptions of social factors) as the contents of the instrument or questionnaire developed. Part A includes 6 questions regarding the demographics of the respondents such as gender, age, year of study, program, race, and state. Sections B, C and D include perceptions of family, environmental and social factors. In addition, sections B, C and D have questions related to the second to fourth objectives of this study, which is related to students' perceptions of the factors that cause depression from the family, environment and social using the Likert scale. Each constructed question tests and identifies students' perceptions. This section consists of 30 questions and each perception of the depressive factor contains 10 questions based on the objectives and questions of the study.

The researcher used the Likert scale as a selection of answers, namely "Strongly Disagree (1)", "Disagree (2)", "Neutral (3)", "Agree (4)" and "Strongly Agree (5)". The questionnaire conducted was more focused on the factors that contributed to a student experiencing depression during the Covid-19 pandemic that hit the country. The data obtained were analyzed using Statistics Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0. Meanwhile, the method of data analysis used in this study is a descriptive statistics method that is obtained by calculating the mean and standard deviation of data.

The results of the analysis by section obtained Cronbach's Alpha values all exceeded 0.6, namely in section B (0.917), section C (0.917) and section D (0.896). The number of items for sections B, C and D are 10 items respectively. While the results of the analysis found that the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for this study for 30 items is 0.946. This shows that the overall Cronbach's Alpha value is found to exceed the value of 0.6, this is a very good and effective value with a high level of consistency (Bond & Fox, 2015).

The researcher used the interpretation of the mean score from Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994), which has four levels where the low level for the mean score (1.00 to 2.00), medium low level (2.01 to 3.00), medium high level (3.01 to 4.00) and high level (4.01 to 5.00) to explain students' perceptions of the factors that cause depression among ISMPV students.

2.4 Analysis

Data analysis is a method used in the collection of raw data to obtain useful information and give an impact to the study. Statistics Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 25.0 software is used to analyze the raw data for data processing. In addition, Statistics Packages for Social Science (SPSS) software is a computer software used by researchers to facilitate the process of analysis of research data in general for social studies. Descriptive statistical methods such as frequency, mean and standard deviation are a method of data analysis used in this study. Descriptive statistics such as mean scores are also used to describe the level of depression experienced by students.

3. Results and discussion

There was a total of 301 respondents who filled out the questionnaire. The researcher collected data quantitatively from a questionnaire online using the Google Form. The data obtained from the questionnaire was presented in Table 1 and Table 2 to identify students' perceptions of family, environment and social factors that cause depression during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.1 Demographics

The results of this study found that female respondents with a total of 174 people (57.8%) exceeded male respondents with a total of 127 people (42.2%). This shows that women are more committed in answering the questionnaire distributed among the selected sample. The distribution of respondents by gender is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The distribution of respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Male	127	42.2
Female	174	57.8

There are four age categories involved in this study that are under 21 years, 22 until 24 years, 25 until 27 years and 28 until 30 years. Based on these four categories it was found that the age category of 22 to 24 years exceeded by a total of 175 people (58.1%) compared to the other age categories with 75 (24.9%) and 51 (16.9%) respectively. On the other hand, for the age category of 28 to 30 years, no respondents were involved in this study. This shows that all respondents are below 27 years old up to 21 years only. Each of the following age categories had different perceptions and views in answering this study. The distribution of respondents by age is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency distribution and age percentage of respondents

Age	Frequency (<i>f</i>)	Percentage (%)
Below 21 Years	75	24.9
22 – 24 Years	175	58.1
25 – 27 Years	51	16.9
28 – 30 Years	-	-

This study uses all respondents from year 1 of study to year 4 of study as respondents. Based on the research data, 122 of year 3 students (40.5%) exceeded year 1, 2 and 4 students each with 63 (20.9%), 65 (21.6%) and 51 (16.9%) respectively. Respondents from year 1 and year 2 only had insignificant differences. The distribution of respondents according to year of study is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Frequency distribution and percentage based on respondents' year of study

Year of Study	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	63	20.9
2	65	21.6
3	122	40.5
4	51	16.9

The research analysis show that each program is 25 (8.3%), 64 (21.3%), 70 (23.3%), 18 (6.0%), 46 (15.3%), 58 (19.3%) and 20 (6.6%) respectively. The results shows that the Catering program (BBC) has more respondents than other programs with a total of 70 students (23.3%). In addition, the program that has second highest respondents is the Building Construction program (BBB) with a total of 64 respondents with a percentage of 21.3%. The frequency distribution and percentage of respondents according to their program is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequency distribution and percentage of respondent programs

Program	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
General Machinery (BBA)	25	8.3
Building Construction (BBB)	64	21.3
Catering (BBC)	70	23.3
Welding and Metal Fabrication (BBD)	18	6.0
Electrical and Electronics (BBE)	46	15.3
Multimedia and Creative (BBF)	58	19.3
Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (BBG)	20	6.6

3.2 Analysis of students' perceptions of family factors

In this section, the analysis of students' perceptions of family factors answers to question 1 of the study that is what are students' perceptions of family factors that cause depression during the Covid-19 pandemic? Table 5 shows the analysis of mean values, mean value levels and standard deviations for students' perceptions of family factors.

The results of the analysis to answer question 1 show that the overall mean value is 2.87 which is in the interpretation value of the mean score of the medium low level and the standard deviation value is 0.92. The results showed that the students who frequently witnessed fights between parents or siblings during this Covid-19 pandemic which was item 7 was in the lowest mean value compared to the other items. According to Rohayati Junaidi and Tengku Intan Marlina (2020), family members, especially parents, play a significant role in affecting children's emotions while facing Covid-19 pandemic. They not only have to be physically close with the children but also emotionally supportive. Therefore, parents must avoid all sorts of arguments in front of children so that they would not be negatively affected by the incident that occurs. The best way to solve marital issues is by having a calm discussion at a suitable place and time.

Aside from that, the item with the highest mean value is item 9 that is "I help my parents less at home because I am busy completing the assignments given by lecturers" with a mean value of 3.41 and a standard deviation of 1.29. This clearly depicts that most students occupy their free time by attending online classes and completing the tasks given by the lecturers every time the class takes place. Several students must complete the assignments given by the deadline that is set by the lecturers.

Table 5: Analysis of mean values, mean value levels and standard deviations for family factors

No.	Students' perceptions of family factors	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
1.	I experience emotional stress because I have too much to do at home and in my study.	3.30	1.20	Medium High
2.	I am often disturbed by my parents when I have online classes at home.	2.72	1.30	Medium Low
3.	I get less attention from my parents.	2.36	1.25	Medium Low
4.	I am often being told to do a lot of things by my parents at home.	3.18	1.32	Medium High
5.	I am considered a family burden when staying at home, especially when I must deal with online classes during covid-19 pandemic.	2.33	1.38	Medium Low
6.	I use more of my parents' financial resources when attending online classes.	3.04	1.46	Medium High
7.	I often see fights among my parents and also my siblings during Covid-19 pandemic.	2.08	1.38	Medium Low
8.	I feel burdened when I must shoulder two responsibilities as a child and a student when I am home.	3.16	1.43	Medium High
9.	I help my parents less at home because I am busy completing the assignments given by lecturers.	3.41	1.29	Medium High
10.	I communicate less with my parents because I am often in my room.	3.13	1.41	Medium High
	Overall	2.87	0.92	Medium Low

3.3 Analysis of students' perceptions of environmental factors

In this section, the analysis of students' perceptions of environmental factors answers the second question of the study that is what are students' perceptions of environmental factors that cause depression during the Covid-19 pandemic? Table 6 shows the analysis of mean values, mean value levels and standard deviations for students' perceptions of environmental factors.

The results of the mean analysis show that the overall mean value for the perception of environmental factors is 3.34 which is at a medium high level and with a standard deviation value of 1.07. The item with a medium low mean value is item 1 which is "I have no specified space to study" with a mean value and standard deviation of 2.89 and 1.50 respectively. This is because since the outburst of Covid-19 pandemic across the globe, most students have prepared a specified space to study to make online lessons easier. Students from families with higher income are more prepared than students from middle-income families (Jafar et al. 2020).

Meanwhile, the item with the highest mean value is item 6 that is "I feel very stressed when the internet network is often disconnected while online classes are in progress" with a mean value of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 1.28. This is because students must fully depend on the internet connection in order to attend online classes at home.

Table 6: Analysis of mean values, mean value levels and standard deviations for students' perceptions of environmental factors

No.	Students' perceptions on environmental factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	I have no specified space to study.	2.89	1.50	Medium Low
2.	I experience noise disturbance problems when attending online classes.	3.54	1.36	Medium High
3.	I am uncomfortable with the learning environment at home that is not conducive.	3.43	1.38	Medium High
4.	I had poor internet access causing difficulty in joining classes virtually.	3.18	1.42	Medium High
5.	I have financial problems buying internet plans.	2.90	1.47	Medium Low
6.	I feel very stressed when the internet network is often disconnected while online classes are in progress.	3.91	1.28	Medium High
7.	The surroundings at home caused difficulties for me to be punctual when attending online classes.	3.21	1.45	Medium High
8.	I am fatigued when learning because of the lack of a study table and chair.	3.26	1.47	Medium High
9.	The environment at home makes me feel lazy to study and join online classes.	3.50	1.43	Medium High
10.	The environment at home makes me lack focus when in class.	3.56	1.38	Medium High
	Overall	3.34	1.07	Medium High

3.4 Analysis of students' perceptions of social factors

In this section, the results of the analysis relate to the third research question on students' perceptions of social factors that cause depressive problems during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of mean analysis and mean value level shows that the overall mean value for social factors is 3.48 which is at a moderately high level with a standard deviation value of 0.89. Meanwhile, there are no mean value that is at a high or low level. Item with a medium low mean values are item 5 that is "My friends were less supportive of me through social media during the Covid-19 pandemic" and item 7 that is "I have difficulties understanding and adapting in using latest technologies to contact other people" with the same mean value of 2.91. Friends have a great influence towards their peers and are very close with each other as students. Social media is a medium for them to communicate with each other despite being miles away from their friends. Some examples are communicating through WhatsApp, Telegram, Instagram and more. Apart from that, the students are already well-versed about current technology while going through online classes due to the closing of campuses. This is because the young generation can easily adapt with technology to communicate with each other.

Meanwhile, the item with the highest mean value is item 3 which is "I stay in a lot because I am afraid of Covid-19 infection" with a mean value of 3.98 and the standard deviation of 1.16. All society members already have awareness regarding the danger of Covid-19 that can easily infect others simply by touch and through air. It is more worrying because it can lead to death once reached critical level. Therefore, most students prefer to stay at home during this pandemic to protect themselves from being infected.

Table 7: Analysis of mean values and standard deviations for social factors

No.	Students' perceptions of social factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
1.	I am depressed because I cannot communicate with my friends face to face.	3.79	1.23	Medium High
2.	I am depressed because I cannot see my friends face to face.	3.79	1.23	Medium High
3.	I stay in a lot because I am afraid of Covid-19 infection.	3.98	1.16	Medium High
4.	I have less two-way interaction throughout the online classes.	3.76	1.22	Medium High
5.	My friends were less supportive of me through social media during the Covid-19 pandemic.	2.91	1.34	Medium Low
6.	I have less communication with the PAK in discussing the problems encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic.	3.48	1.26	Medium High
7.	I have difficulties understanding and adapting in using the latest technologies to contact other people.	2.91	1.37	Medium Low
8.	I feel uncomfortable doing virtual presentations with my classmates during classes.	3.12	1.34	Medium High
9.	I am less aware of other people's situations.	3.19	1.33	Medium High
10.	I distanced myself from other people to avoid Covid-19 infection.	3.83	1.21	Medium High
	Overall	3.48	0.89	Medium High

4. Conclusion

To conclude, all these problems faced by students will change after our country enters the endemic phase in a new norm lifestyle. Depression problems among students can be decreased once they are able to go through their normal life again while pursuing their studies on campus. This is because campuses have enough facilities to ease their study. As for the family factor, some changes will happen once they go back to their campus to proceed with the teaching and learning session face to face. The burden that they have will be lessened when they are on campus compared to their own respective houses. Besides, internet connection issues that frequently disconnect while online lessons can be overcome once they go back to their university. This is because the campus has Wi-Fi access throughout the compound which can ease their learning session. As for social factors, the students are advised to take vaccine injection as announced by the Ministry of Health of Malaysia (KKM). This vaccination program is aimed to reduce serious symptoms if infected with the Covid-19 virus. However, further study is required to provide more detailed information about the cause of depression among students of UTHM.

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