



## Depression – A Worldwide Public Health Subject

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### Abstract

The problem of depression is common amongst all human beings at some point in their lives. Some individuals may experience major depression which might be severe and some may experience minor form of depression that may last for a short duration. The main purpose of this research paper is to highlight the fact that depression is a worldwide public health subject; the meaning of depression, causes of depression, signs and symptoms of depression, controlling depression, types of depression, and treatments for depression are the main aspects that have been crucial part of this research paper. It is concentrated within the individual himself to identify the causes of depression and the symptoms that are associated with it; if the depression is becoming a severe problem then it is vital to undergo treatment in order to restrain it.

**Keywords:** Depression; Causes, Signs; Symptoms; Control; Treatment

### Introduction

The meaning of the term depression holds many synonyms such as sadness, gloominess, melancholy, misery, despair, hopelessness and dejection. In today's world, not only amongst Indians but amongst other nationalities too, depression has become a common problem; the problem of depression has become prevalent amongst individuals of all age groups. For example, a child aged five years may be longing for a plaything, if he does not get it, he may feel depressed, a teenager may feel depressed if he does not score high grades in school, he feels that he has worked really hard and his grades have not been in accordance with his hard work, haven't been on a vacation for a long time may make a person feel depressed. Therefore, it can be stated that there have been many causes of depression. Every individual experiences feelings of depression in his lifetime due to one or more factors such as finances, health problems, career, education, family, property and so forth.

In the case of depression, what is vital for a person to understand is that this problem should not become an impediment in an individual's pathways. The feelings of depression should not

become so severe that they may occupy the mindset and overall system of an individual. Severe depression requires a person to undergo medical treatment, counseling sessions and even take medicines; an individual should learn how to cope up with depression.

### What is depression?

Depression is a common mental disorder that shows the symptoms of a depressed mood, loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyed, decreased energy, feelings of guilt or low self worth, isolation, lack of communication with the people around as well as those who are at a distance, disturbed sleep or appetite and poor concentration and performance in all the activities undertaken. These problems can become chronic and take a major form if they are not treated on time, these problems can cause detriments in individuals abilities and responsibilities. Almost one million lives are lost yearly due to suicide, which means that there has been occurrence of 3000 suicide deaths every day; suicide also occurs due to depression [1]; for example, students who are not able to score higher grades in school end up commit suicide due to depression,

in India, domestic violence within the house compels a woman to take up her own life out of depression; these are the examples of cases of depression that take an extreme form. There has been availability of effectual and lucrative treatments to improve the health conditions and life styles of millions of people around the world who are suffering from depression. An individual should educate himself about depression and on personal, societal as well as national level support those people who are suffering from this mental disorder [1].

### Causes of depression

Depression can take place due to two main factors; firstly because of the events and secondly they are attributable to the person's lifestyle. Events that might take place within an individual's surroundings leads to emergence of depression and these have been classified as follows: [2].

- Death or loss of a close relative or a friend
- Divorce or separation from the partner
- Breaking up from someone whom you care for
- Experiencing traumatic or life threatening happenings
- Too much stress or pressure of work in the office or at the school or university
- When somebody experiences insult or humiliation, then he may feel depressed
- Women may feel depressed, if not treated fairly by their in-laws or if they experience domestic violence
- Unemployment or losing a job
- Low grades or undermined performance
- Any kind of injury or illness or health problems
- Financial problems may incur feelings of depression amongst human beings
- Experiencing any disaster or natural calamity

Lifestyle factors that lead to depression are as follows: [2].

- Alcoholism or being a drug addict
- Social isolation, not interacting with people and lack of communication
- Insomnia or sleep disorders
- Being overweight, following a poor diet plan and lack of exercise

### Signs and symptoms of depression

The following are the most common symptoms of depression; if a person experiences four of the symptoms listed below for most of the day or every day for two weeks then it is understandable that he is suffering from depression and should take preventative measures [3].

- Tiredness, fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of melancholy and misery
- Loss of self-confidence and self-worth
- Difficulty in concentrating and implementation of tasks
- Not being able to take interest in any of the things that were once enjoyed such as music or movies
- Feeling apprehensive and restless most of the time
- Not willing to communicate and socialize with the people around, even parents, relatives and close friends
- Experiencing feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Experiencing sleep disorders, having problems in going to sleep on time and waking up much late than usual
- Possessing strong feelings of remorse and shame
- Unable to perform ones functions effectively in school, college or at job
- Loss of appetite or bingeing on unhealthy food items
- Physical bodily aches and pains
- Thinking about ending ones life, in other words committing suicide
- Imposing self-harm.

### Taking control of your depression

Depression makes a person vulnerable and dependent; controlling of depression and timely identification of its causes have a positive effect upon an individual. It is recommended that a person suffering from depression should get engaged into enjoyable activities such as going to the gymnasium, doing creative activities and so forth. There are many things and activities that a person can get engaged in if he wants to control depression and manage the symptoms [3].

1. **How you see yourself:** Depression leads to emergence of feelings of guilt and loss of self-esteem; a person should always have positive feelings about himself, the way the person thinks of himself largely frames his mindset. Recognition of negative thoughts is a must about oneself and these should be converted into positive thoughts.

2. **Social Networks:** It is important to stay connected with friends and family members in order to curb the feelings of depression; the reason being that feeling alone, in other words, loneliness leads to depression so it is extremely vital to have friends around whom a person can share his joys and sorrows.
3. **Worries regarding work, finances or legal situation:** A person should not get overwhelmed by work duties and take out some time for recreation as well. It is extremely crucial to spend sometime with family, friends and trying doing things that you enjoy during the day rather than just focusing upon the work duties. One should learn to manage his finances appropriately and look for means to keep up his job or source of income in order to get rid of depression.
4. **Close Relationships:** Having problems with family members can lead to depression; therefore, an individual should possess an adjustable nature and effective listening and communication skills. If a person is experiencing marital problems then it is advised to seek a marriage counselor for assistance.
5. **Physical Activity:** Any kind of physical activity such as sports or exercise stimulates the mindset of an individual by releasing endorphins in the brain and makes him feel energized; endorphins are the chemicals that make you feel happier. It is recommended that a person should aim at 50 minutes of exercise at least thrice a week; it is good for health and curbing depression.
6. **Diet:** Research has suggested that there is a link between diet and depression; foods that are rich in some essential fatty acids found in oily fish, like salmon helps in relieving some depressive symptoms. Healthy eating will make a person feel better and lively, especially when a person is even engaged in some kind of physical activity.
7. **Avoiding Alcohol and Drugs:** Alcohol acts as a depressant on the brain; if a person drinks too much or too often he is more likely to become depressed. Alcohol is publicly accepted, therefore, it is recommended that a person should consume it in moderation and recreational drugs should be avoided in order to control depression.
8. **Managing Anxiety:** Individuals who suffer from depression will also experience anxiety, taking steps to managing anxiety also provides room to the person to control depression; discussing things that are making one feel anxious, physical activity, yoga and meditation techniques, healthy diet are some of the ways of managing anxiety and also to deal effectively with the symptoms of depression.

## Types of depression

There are several types of depressive disorders: [4].

- **Major Depressive Disorder or Major Depression:** This kind of depression is immobilizing and prevents a person from functioning in a normal way; some people may experience this kind of depression just once in their lifetime but in most cases, the experience is more than once. The symptoms of this kind of depression interfere with the person's ability to sleep, eat, work, study and performing recreational activities.
- **Dysthymic Disorder or Dysthymia:** This kind of depression is characterized by long term symptoms which may be of two years or even longer; the symptoms may not be severe to immobilize a person but can inhibit normal functioning or feeling well. People with dysthymia may also experience major depression once or more than once during their lifetime.
- **Minor Depression:** This kind of depression is not the same as major depression, the symptoms of minor depression may be for two weeks or longer. Individuals who experience minor depression are at the risk of developing a major depressive disorder if they do not undergo proper treatment.
- **Bipolar Disorder:** This is also called manic depressive illness and is not familiar as the major depressive disorder or dysthymia. This kind of disorder is characterized by cycling mood changes from extreme heights that is mania to extreme lows that is depression.
- **Psychotic Depression:** This kind of depression occurs when a person is suffering from severe depression and also some form of psychosis, such as having false beliefs that are upsetting, delusions or hallucinations.
- **Postpartum Depression:** This kind of depression is experienced by many women after giving birth, they get overwhelmed by the new responsibilities and the hormonal and physical changes that they have experienced, such as some women gain too much weight. Around 10-15 percent of the women undergo postpartum depression after giving birth; they feel depressed because they have to learn to cope with new tasks and errands.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** This kind of disorder occurs with the commencement of depression during the winter season, when there is less natural sunlight. De-

pression begins to take place during spring and summer; effective treatment of seasonal affective disorder is characterized with light therapy, but it has been found out that light therapy alone is not effective for the treatment of SAD for more than half of individuals. SAD symptoms can be reduced by antidepressant medication and psychotherapy, either alone or in combination with light therapy.

### Treatments for depression

1. **Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT):** Individuals suffering from depression form negative viewpoints about themselves and the world around them. CBT depicts how the thoughts and ideas of an individual affect their mood and this therapy teaches them to correct the negative thinking that they have formed. CBT has proved to be advantageous for some individuals whereas for others it has not proved to be beneficial.
2. **Mindfulness Meditation:** Mindfulness is about becoming aware of what is happening in the present on a moment by moment basis; judgments are not to be made about whether a person likes or does not like what he sees around him. Mindfulness meditation is used to assist people in curbing some of the symptoms of depression such as worry, anxiety, concern and so forth [5].
3. **Interpersonal Therapy (IPT):** In most cases, the causes of depression or vulnerabilities to the development of depression is due to social functioning of an individual; under social functioning the areas that are, his work, employment, studies, career, education, family, relationships, social roles, performance, activities and personality. The main objective of IPT is to help individuals in understanding how their vulnerabilities can lead to existing depression or the jeopardy of developing depression in future [5].
4. **Psychotherapy:** Psychotherapy usually extends to several months or years, during this time period a relationship is built up between a therapist and his patient; this relationship is used to investigate what kind of events, occurrences and experiences a person went through during his past that have led to the problem of depression.
5. **Counseling:** Counseling is related to many diverse areas and is a set of approaches and goals that are essentially aimed at helping an individual to seek solutions to his problems. There are many kinds of counseling such as career, crisis, relationship, marital, depression, trauma, anger management and so forth.

6. **Self-Help and Alternative Therapies:** There are wide range of self help and alternative therapies which can be useful for some types of depression; either they can be used alone or in combination with physical treatments, antidepressants or psychological treatments. Melancholic or psychotic depressions are very unlikely to respond to self help and alternative therapies alone. Self-help and alternative therapies that may be useful for depression are yoga, meditation, relaxation techniques, good nutrition, alcohol and drug avoidance, physical exercise, Bibliotherapy, Omega-3, St. John's Wort, light therapy and acupuncture [5].

### Conclusion

Depression refers to mental disorder which depicts symptoms such as depressed mood, isolation, guilt, loss of interest in activities, studies and even job duties. Depression is caused due to some or the other occasion or an event that has been experienced by an individual such as losses incurred in business, loss of a close relative or a loved one, low grades in school, family issues, finances and so forth. Depression can take two forms, major as well as minor, major form of depression can even compel an individual to inflict injury or harm upon himself or take up his own life; whereas minor forms of depression can lead to loss of self-confidence or self-worth, feelings of restlessness and hopelessness.

There have been main types of depression such as major depressive disorders, dysthymia, minor depression, bipolar disorder, psychotic depression, postpartum depression and seasonal affective disorder. Nobody wants to be depressed; everybody would like to be contented, pleased and satisfied with what they possess, therefore, it is necessary to control depression, there have been ways of controlling depression, these are forming positive thinking of one self, forming social networks, close relationships, appropriately managing finances, property and ones employment and studies, getting engaged in physical activity, managing anxiety, avoiding too much alcohol and drugs and consuming a healthy and nutritious diet. When the problem of depression is assuming a major form then it is essential to undergo some kind of treatment; there have been treatments for depression such as cognitive behavior therapy, mindfulness meditation, interpersonal therapy, psychotherapy, counseling, and self-help and alternative therapies. Finally, it can be stated that undergoing depression is sometimes unable to avoid,

especially when the circumstances have been intense, but when an individual feels depressed, it is vital for him to recognize the signs and symptoms and experience the appropriate treatments in order to control it.

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