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Titled

*The Contribution of Social Support to Reducing
Levels of Depression Among Individuals*

Researcher

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Supervisor signature

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Dedication

*I dedicate the fruit of this effort to the dearest hearts in my life—
my beloved family, my loyal friends, and all those who supported
me through their efforts or with a kind and encouraging word.*

Abstract

This study examines the role of social support in reducing levels of depression among individuals. This topic holds significant importance for mental health and the improvement of quality of life. Most people experience periods of sadness, distress, and mood fluctuations at various times in their lives, particularly during crises—whether medical, psychological, social, political, economic, or even natural. Such feelings are considered normal emotional responses.

Depression is one of the most prominent psychological factors that negatively affect an individual's physical health. Social support plays a crucial role in alleviating psychological stress. The researcher argues that one of the most powerful approaches to managing depression is support—whether individual or group-based, and whether it comes from relatives or even strangers. This is because individuals suffering from depression tend to withdraw from their surroundings and experience negative thoughts that do not reflect reality. Although social support may not completely solve the problem, it helps reduce the individual's suffering and provides assistance, whether material or emotional.

Therefore, the importance of this study lies in highlighting the role of social support in lowering levels of depression.

The study aims to identify the role of social support as a contributing factor in reducing depression levels among individuals. It also seeks to clarify the sources of positive social support and the different types of social support that contribute to reducing depression.

The study hypothesizes that there is a positive correlation between social support and the reduction of depression levels among individuals. It also assumes a negative correlation between social support and increased levels of depression.

The study was conducted using the descriptive correlational method, as it is appropriate for the nature of this research.

The results of the study revealed the following:

There is a statistically significant negative correlation between social support and levels of depression, indicating that increased social support contributes to reducing depressive symptoms.

Social support helps reduce depression through several psychological mechanisms, such as enhancing a sense of belonging, reducing psychological isolation, and supporting coping strategies.

There is general agreement among previous studies on the importance of social support, despite differences in study populations and cultural contexts.

Most studies suffer from methodological limitations, particularly reliance on the descriptive correlational approach, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships.

The study recommends the following:

- 1. Strengthening the role of the family in providing emotional and psychological support through awareness and guidance programs.*
- 2. Activating the role of educational and health institutions in providing psychological and social support services.*
- 3. Establishing psychological and social support groups for individuals at risk of depression, especially vulnerable groups.*
- 4. Training individuals in social communication skills, seeking support, and expressing emotions.*
- 5. Integrating social support programs into therapeutic and preventive mental health plans.*

Introduction.

Mental health is one of the fundamental pillars of human life, alongside physical health, upon which overall human well-being depends. It is also considered one of the most important indicators of quality of life. Throughout their lives, individuals face numerous challenges and difficulties that may develop into risk factors and disorders threatening various aspects of their lives.

Mental health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than merely the absence of disease or disability. It encompasses the prevention of mental disorders, the reduction of stress in a world characterized by conflicts, and the empowerment of individuals to perform their roles and functions at a level consistent with their physical and mental capacities (Hijazi, 2004, p. 26).

Depressive disorder, commonly referred to as depression, is among the most prevalent psychological disorders. It is characterized by persistent low mood, loss of pleasure, and diminished interest in activities over extended periods of time. Approximately 332 million people worldwide suffer from depression (World Health Organization, 2025).

Psychological studies and literature have demonstrated that social factors, particularly social support, play a significant role in preventing

depression and mitigating its severity. Accordingly, this study seeks to explore the role of social support in influencing depression levels among individuals, drawing on the theoretical perspectives of social psychology.

The study Problem.

Most people experience periods of sadness, distress, and mood fluctuations at certain times in their lives, particularly during times of crisis. These crises may be medical, psychological, social, economic, or even natural in nature. Therefore, feelings of sorrow and sadness are considered normal and natural emotional responses to difficult life circumstances.

Depression is regarded as one of the most significant psychological conditions that negatively affect an individual's physical health. In this context, social support plays a vital role in alleviating psychological stress and mitigating various negative factors that adversely influence personal well-being, such as depression, despair, and grief.

Individuals experiencing depressive episodes—whether mild, moderate, or severe—often suffer from a persistent low mood, reduced energy levels, and decreased activity. Their ability to enjoy and take interest in activities diminishes, concentration becomes impaired, and intense fatigue is commonly experienced even after minimal effort. Sleep disturbances and loss of appetite are also frequent symptoms. In addition, self-esteem and self-confidence tend to decline, the future may appear

bleak, suicidal thoughts may emerge, and noticeable physical symptoms often accompany the disorder (Okasha, 2005, p. 407).

A study conducted by Khamisa (2016, p. 95) indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived social support and depression levels. In other words, higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of depression. This finding highlights the importance of providing social support in its various forms, particularly for individuals suffering from illness.

In cases of mild and moderate depression, symptoms may not be readily apparent, leading society to overlook the individual's suffering and consequently provide insufficient support. Moreover, misunderstanding the individual's condition and a lack of awareness regarding the seriousness of depression may contribute to the progression of the disorder and the emergence of more severe symptoms. Accordingly, the present study seeks to investigate the role of social support in influencing depression levels among individuals.

The importance of studying:

The significance of this study lies in highlighting the role of social support in reducing levels of depression among individuals. It emphasizes that various forms of social support can positively influence and contribute to lowering depressive symptoms. Through this study, the researcher seeks to focus on the positive dimensions of social support and their effectiveness in decreasing depression levels and promoting psychological well-being among individuals.

Objectives of the study:

- *To identify the role of social support as a supportive factor in reducing levels of depression among individuals.*
- *To clarify the sources of positive social support that contribute to reducing levels of depression.*
- *To identify the various types of positive social support that help reduce levels of depression among individuals.*
- *To examine the level of societal awareness regarding the seriousness and potential consequences of depression.*

Study hypotheses and questions.

- *There is a positive correlation between social support and the reduction of depression levels among individuals.*
- *There is a negative correlation between social support and increased levels of depression among individuals.*

Study Approach.

*Since this study seeks to examine the contribution of social support to reducing levels of depression among individuals, it adopts the **descriptive correlational approach**, as it is the most appropriate methodology for investigating the relationship between social support and depression levels.*

Study Terms and Operational Definitions

- **Social Support:** *A network of social relationships and sources of psychological, emotional, and material assistance that an individual receives from family members, relatives, friends, and the broader community.*
- **Depression:** *A psychological condition characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, and decreased energy levels.*

Chapter Two : Theoretical Framework of Depression

Section One: The Nature of Depression

First: The Origin and Historical Development of Depression

*According to Sarhan et al. (2008), depression is considered one of the oldest psychological disorders. Conditions resembling what is currently diagnosed as depression have been described in numerous ancient religious and secular texts. Hippocrates (the "Father of Medicine"), Galen, and Avicenna regarded **melancholia** as one of the earliest and most significant mental illnesses. They described it as an imbalance in the body's fluids, leading to disturbances in mood. Furthermore, the English physician **Robert Burton** published his renowned work *The Anatomy of Melancholy* in 1621, in which he characterized the condition as a universal disease.*

*Melancholia is a disorder that causes disturbances in mood and may represent the earliest conceptualization of what is now known as depression. In modern psychology, depression is classified among **mood disorders**. Individuals suffering from depression experience profound and persistent sadness, loss of pleasure in activities, decreased energy,*

disturbances in sleep and appetite, negative thoughts, a pessimistic outlook on life, and a tendency toward social withdrawal.

*During the nineteenth century, depression became a central topic in the research and writings of prominent psychiatrists such as **Emil Kraepelin**, **Karl Jaspers**, **Sigmund Freud**, and **Kurt Schneider**. As a result, depression is now recognized as a major public health issue, prompting governments, organizations, and academic institutions worldwide to allocate significant resources and programs to address and combat this disorder.*

*The United Nations (2018) reported that depression is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. According to its estimates, more than **300 million people** were living with depression, representing an increase of over **18%** between 2005 and 2015. The lack of adequate support for individuals with mental disorders, coupled with the fear of social stigma, prevents many people from obtaining the treatment necessary to lead healthy and productive lives.*

Depression is considered a significant indicator of mental health. As a negative emotional state, it has serious consequences for both physical and psychological well-being. Individuals suffering from depression experience not only low mood, slowed thinking, and loss of appetite, but

may also engage in self-harming behaviors or attempt suicide (Yu et al., 2023).

Second. Definition of Depression

A. Linguistic Definition

In Arabic, the term ikti'ab (depression) refers to a state of sadness, grief, and emotional brokenness. The word ka'abah denotes a profound alteration in one's psychological state resulting from intense worry and sorrow, while ka'abah itself signifies deep sadness. It is also said that ashes are "depressed in color" when they become darkened, similar to the appearance of a sorrowful person's face. This linguistic definition extends beyond a simple description of sadness to encompass the psychological and behavioral changes that accompany it (Sarhan et al., 2008, p. 12).

Classical Arab linguists used the term ka'abah in a manner similar to its current usage. This meaning is also reflected in the Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ supplication for travel:

"O Allah, we seek refuge in You from the hardships of travel and the gloom of returning."

Here, the gloom of returning refers to the sadness and distress experienced when a traveler returns home and encounters unpleasant circumstances affecting family or property.

This linguistic definition provides a cultural and historical perspective on the understanding of depression, demonstrating that the modern psychological concept is not entirely new but has deep roots in Arab and Islamic thought.

B. Conceptual Definition (in Psychology)

Beck (1977) defines depression as a psychological disorder characterized by disturbances in thinking, in which depressive symptoms arise from dysfunctional negative cognitive patterns that influence how individuals interpret events and emotionally respond to them.

Similarly, Rehm (1978) conceptualizes depression as involving a negative self-evaluation accompanied by reduced self-reinforcement and increased self-punishment. According to Rehm, these factors contribute to the decreased behavioral activity commonly observed among depressed individuals (Kahla, n.d., p. 11).

Al-Zahran (2005, p. 517) defines depression as a state of severe and persistent sadness resulting from painful and distressing circumstances. It often reflects a sense of loss, even when the individual may not fully understand the true source of their sorrow.

Amisshah (2014) describes depression as a spectrum of mood disorders ranging from mild to severe and from temporary to chronic conditions.

Depression is also defined as a disorder characterized by a significant decline in mood, accompanied by a loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities. It involves substantial changes in weight and appetite, insomnia or excessive sleep, psychomotor agitation or retardation, fatigue or loss of energy, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, diminished ability to think and concentrate, indecisiveness, and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide (Amal & Guaidri, 2020).

These definitions demonstrate the connection between depression and contemporary psychological science, enabling researchers to move beyond a purely linguistic description toward a scientific understanding that can be assessed, measured, and applied in practice. As illustrated throughout this discussion, depression is not merely a temporary feeling of sadness; rather, it is a serious disorder that can profoundly affect all aspects of an individual's life.

Conclusion.

Social support is considered one of the most important psychosocial factors that positively influence both the psychological and biological aspects of human life. It represents a fundamental pillar in reducing levels of depression and promoting mental health among individuals. Its impact is not limited to emotional well-being; rather, it extends to enhancing psychological and social adjustment. The presence of various forms of social support contributes significantly to reducing the influence of psychological factors that negatively affect human health, particularly depression.

Through this study, the researcher found a significant negative correlation between the level of social support and the level of depression. This finding underscores the importance of providing social support in its various forms, especially for individuals suffering from depression.

In light of these findings, the researcher proposes the following recommendations and suggestions.

Results:

Based on the analysis of the literature and previous studies, the research arrived at several theoretical findings, the most important of which are as follows:

- 1. There is a statistically significant negative correlation between social support and levels of depression, indicating that higher levels of social support contribute to a reduction in the severity of depressive symptoms.*
- 2. Social support helps reduce depression through various psychological mechanisms, including enhancing individuals' sense of belonging, reducing psychological isolation, and strengthening coping strategies.*
- 3. Previous studies generally agree on the importance of social support in mitigating depression, despite differences in the populations studied and the cultural contexts in which the research was conducted.*
- 4. Most existing studies are subject to methodological limitations, particularly their reliance on the descriptive correlational approach, which restricts the ability to establish and interpret causal relationships.*

Recommendations:

- *The role of the family in providing psychological and emotional support should be strengthened through awareness-raising and counseling programs.*
- *Educational and healthcare institutions should play a more active role in delivering psychological and social support services.*
- *Psychological and social support groups should be established for individuals at risk of depression, particularly vulnerable populations.*
- *Individuals should be trained in social communication skills, help-seeking behaviors, and the effective expression of emotions.*
- *Social support programs should be integrated into mental health treatment and prevention plans to enhance overall psychological well-being and reduce the prevalence of depression.*

The reviewer:

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