



UNIVERSITI  
TEKNOLOGI  
MARA

Fakulti  
Pengurusan  
dan Perniagaan

# FBM INSIGHTS

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN KEDAH

Volume 1

2020

e-ISSN 2716-599X

UiTM *di hatiku*

eISSN 2716-599X



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## **DEPRESSION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UITM KEDAH BRANCH: DO OUR STUDENTS SUFFER?**

Nur Zainie Abd Hamid

nurzainieabdhamid@gmail.com

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Shamsinar Ibrahim

shamsinaribrahim05@gmail.com

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Hasyimah Razali

syima1904@gmail.com

Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Kedah

Depression become a topic of interest as it is an important cause of mental health problem throughout the world (World Health Organization, 2019). In Malaysia, the government has announced that depression is expected to be the second leading health illness in year 2020 after heart disease (Bernama, 2018). Today, depression has also become increasingly prevalent among university students. Depression could be derived from untreated emotional distress. Among all, undergraduate students are those who can easily experience emotional distress (Yusoff, Rahim & Yaacob, 2010). Undergraduate students are often struggling to adjust their lives with the new environment which includes new accommodations and new social relationships in the university (Rahul & Vikas, 2018). These can give a significant impact on the students as they need to start a new independent life. In addition, expectations of lecturers and family have also generated emotional distress among students. If these emotions are not properly managed and recognized, emotional distress can lead to a more serious psychological problem called depression. Given a lack of understanding of the disease especially in recognizing the early signs and symptoms of the mental problems in the society, this study was conducted to determine the prevalence and severity of depression among university students. This is a quantitative and cross-sectional study. This study was conducted in University Teknologi MARA, Kedah Branch, Malaysia. 24 male and 151 female undergraduate students from the Faculty of Business and Management were conveniently selected through a purposive sampling technique. A self-administered survey was created by adopting the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9). The results were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics version 21 through descriptive analysis. The study has found a considerable prevalence of depression among the students which is 23.42 percent (41 students). 7.32 per cent (3 students) are experiencing mild depression, 39.02 percent (16 students) are experiencing moderate depression, 39.02 percent (16 percent) are experiencing moderately severe depression and 14.63 per cent (6 students) are experiencing severe

depression. Regardless of the severity of depression, depression is more common among female students. This may be correlated with hormonal changes in females that trigger depression to occur (Sharma & Kirmani, 2015). Furthermore, students in the first year of study were found to suffer more depression than male students and those in the second and third year of studies. The self-transition to university can be emotionally challenging for the first year students because they are having troubles in confronting and dealing with the new stage of life. This emotional discomfort creates pressures and anxieties that can cause the students to feel overwhelmed as they are living on their own. As a result, this will trigger depression among the students. This study will be the starting point in finding the best initiative and effort in preventing students from facing university pressures. The university management should provide high considerations for students in their first year and those whom are identified with symptoms of depression. Preventive efforts should also be planned in order to ensure that all students are aware of their biological, physical or psychological changes.

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