

CAUSES OF DEPRESSION AND ITS REMEDY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

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Abstract

Purpose of study: The objective of this study is to demonstrate that, when compared to science, religion offers more potent and successful treatments for depression. While healing procedures provided by science are not accessible to everyone, Divine connections' solutions are more affordable and accessible.

Methodology: Comparative analysis has been utilized as a methodological framework focusing on individualizing, universalizing, discovering variation, and embracing. As a conceptual framework, Abrahamic religions have been kept in view. The often-employed and highly regarded experimental and observational strategy for comparing studies has been implemented.

Findings: Abrahamic religions claim God Almighty is the sole creator of the universe. Since God made human beings and only He knows how humans can live a happy life during their stay on the earth, the ways given to humankind by Him as compared to artificial solutions are the best in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Application of the study: If the search for peace and contentment leads man to hunt for ways how to tune in his internal divine spark with the spark of nature outside to find the best solutions for freeing himself from mental stress and depression, then this study can serve as a foundation stone. Moreover, this article provides some primary material for those who make up their mind to study monotheistic religions ([Corrigan et al., 1998](#)) for peace of mind.

Keywords: *Depression, Causes, Symptoms, Mental Disease, Remedy, Judaism, Christianity, Islam.*

INTRODUCTION

First, there will be a concise overview of the topic of our study, and a comprehensive discussion has highlighted the relationship between the Abrahamic Religions ([Cohan & Oxford University Press, 2020](#)) and Depression.

Abrahamic Religions

Religions related to the Prophet Abraham ([Sakura, 2016, pp. 10-30](#)) are considered Abrahamic religions. In these religions, Allah is regarded as the Supreme Being and power. All these religions consider Abraham the most important figure, and all of them believe Abraham as God's chosen Prophet and messenger. Internally, all these religions call themselves monotheists (i.e. believers in one God). These religions include Islam, Christianity and Judaism, but Baha'ism ([Hinnells, 1991, pp. 218-240](#)) and other minor religions are also included. Here in this article, we will find a remedy for the problem of depression in the major Abrahamic religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Depression

Depression is one of the most common mental health conditions and often develops alongside anxiety. ([May, R. 1950](#)) Most people living in the rapidly growing world suffer from depression and anxiety. It is considered a mood condition that causes a persistent feeling of grief and loss of attention. Also called a major depressive disorder or clinical depression ([Chaturvedi, 2021 pp. 13-19](#)), it affects how you feel, think, and behave and can lead to various emotional and physical problems. Some people are affected by depression once, but some experience it multiple times. Depression is a painful and inextricable illness; for those who do not, depression is inextricable. People all over the world not only use different types of medicine but also seek the services of psychologists to get rid of it. Although depression (or melancholia) ([M. Middeke & Wald, 2011, pp. 4-5](#)) has been recognized as a clinical syndrome for over 2,000 years, there is no completely satisfactory explanation for its puzzling and paradoxical features. There are still major unresolved issues regarding its nature, classification, and aetiology. It can be mild and short-lived or severe and prolonged-lasting. Some people have been affected by depression only once, while others may experience it several times. Depression is preventable when appropriate support is provided. In the first step, we present the experts' opinions about depression;

- Lynne Walsh defines depression in these words:

"Depression is a form of mental ill health. It is an emotional state that causes its sufferers to experience negative feelings about their self-image." ([Walsh, 2009, p. 3](#))

- Dr Kwame Mckenzie defines depression as follows:

"Depression is an illness of mind and body. Most people have both physical and psychological symptoms, but their exact nature will vary from one person to another." ([Laster & McKenzie, 2006, p. 5](#))

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some writers define it as an occasional feeling a person suffers at some time in life. Some works that have been carried out relating to this topic before this study are as follows:

1. Pakistan Armed Forces Medical Journal presented research by [Ehsan, N., Johar, N., & Zafar, F. \(2017\)](#) on '*The Moderating Role of Religiosity among People Suffering from Depression*'. This study revealed a strong negative relationship between depression and mental well-being. However, religiosity significantly moderated the relationship between depression and mental well-being.
2. [Arjan W. Braam \(2019\)](#) presented a systematic review on religion, spirituality and depression in which R/S predicted a significant but modest decrease in depression over time. Further inquiry into bi-directional associations between religious struggle and (clinical) depression over time seems warranted.
3. [Micheline R. et al. \(2021\)](#) found that R/S is associated with a 14-fold increase in risk for depression at midlife in the same sample of adults to have derived a 75% protective benefit against depression during early and middle adulthood.
4. In another article, [Harold G. Koenig and others \(2020\)](#) presented recent developments in religion and psychiatry.
5. In another research, [Raphael Bonelli and others \(2012\)](#), in an article '*Religious and Spiritual Factors in Depression: Review and Integration of the Research*', found that there are undoubtedly many factors that influence the risk of depression besides R/S, including genetic, developmental, and environmental factors. However, in most studies, everything else being equal, R/S involvement is related to less depression, particularly in life stress. The systematic review discussed above indicates many more studies show possible benefits from R/S compared to those that show potential harm (61% versus 6% of studies).

Research Gap

There is no discussion regarding the causes and the remedy of depression from the perspective of Abrahamic religions before this. So, this paper presents the concerning research.

Symptoms

Depression signs can vary from slight to severe and can include:

- Feeling down or having a miserable mood.
- Loss of attention or desire in actions once liked.
- Variations in taste — weight loss or gain distinct from dieting.
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much.
- The beating of energy or improved tiredness.
- The rise in irrational physical activity (e.g., inability to sit still, pacing, handwringing) or slowed movements or speech (these actions must be severe enough to be observable by others).
- Feeling worthless or guilty.
- Trouble in thinking focused or making decisions.
- Thoughts of suicide ([Walsh, 2009, p. 4](#)).

Causes of Depression ([Walsh, 2009, p. 3](#))

Many things can increase the chances of depression. Some of them are as follows:

Abuse: Any abuse, physical, sexual or emotional, can make a person more vulnerable to depression later in life.

Age: Older adults are at a higher risk of depression. Isolation will be fatal for an older person.

Social Conflict: Personal conflicts or disputes with family members or friends would be fatal and increase depression.

Death or a Loss: Sadness or grief after the death or loss of a loved one, though natural, can increase the risk of depression.

Genes: A family history of depression may increase the risk. It has been thought that depression is a complex trait, meaning there are probably many different genes that each exert minor effects, rather than a single gene that contributes to disease risk.



Different Events: Even good events like starting a new job, graduating, or getting married can lead to depression in some cases. The same is the same as losing a job, destroying a business, or getting divorced.

Serious illness: Sometimes, depression happens with severe disease or another medical disorder.

Greed: Greed is another cause of depression. No matter how much wealth a person has, he will never have peace of mind. Constantly worrying about increasing wealth and the fear of loss will keep him restless.

Disappointment: Disappointment also causes depression in a person. Failures push a person towards despair, which is the leading cause of depression.

Feelings of Guilt/Regret: Feelings of guilt or regret also lead to depression. Sometimes a person unknowingly commits such mistakes that lead to shame, and that regret leads to depression.

It is the desire of every individual to lead a healthy life free from all types of depression. Whatever religion a person belongs to, that religion provides teachings to protect him from depression. Especially revealed religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) have given unique teachings so everyone can live a perfect life free from all types of depression according to their religious instructions.

Solution of Depression in the Bible

In this second part, we will discuss the solution to depression according to Jewish, Christian, and Islamic teachings.

Various Bible verses contain teachings for Jewish and Christian individuals regarding depression. Some of these verses are as follows:

Bible says that God will be with you at every level of stress, depression and anxiety.

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Deuteronomy, 31:8](#))

According to the verse mentioned above in the Holy Bible, while depression makes a person isolated, God is still there with him. Moreover, He is not leaving you alone in any case.

Whenever a person has difficult times and the darkness of depression prevails around him, God will uplift him.

"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Philippians, 4:8](#))

Though there may be inappropriate times, taking time to be thankful and reproduce well things can boost a person's spirits.

According to the Bible, Christ gives a person full strength:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Philippians, 4:13](#))

Despair can crush your vigour and make it nearly unbearable to achieve even modest tasks. However, this verse retells you that God is always there for you. You can find the will to get through even the shadiest times through him.

You have difficult times in your life, but they will be over with the help of God:

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, John, 16:33](#))

These comforting words can be a cause of forte as you imitate His love for all of us. Through trust, you can overwhelm the difficulties in the life of a Jew or Christian.

God always have a better plan for you in difficult times:

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Jeremiah, 29:11](#))

There is a way forward. God has a strategy for you, even if your current situation is proving worst.

Most people think of depression as a significant burden:

"Come unto me, all that labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Matthew, 28:11](#))

This verse helps as a cue that God is there to boost your problems and provide release.

God provides the way out for you from depression when you trust Him:



"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Proverbs, 3:5-6](#))

The verse mentioned above gives way forward by believing and trusting in God. Depression will isolate you on different occasions, but God will always be with you:

"Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, 1 Peter, 5:7](#))

Despair and unease can be isolating practices. However, God is there, and He will mend your ways. You should trust Him wholeheartedly.

Whenever a person has a difficult time, God is there to help him in any circumstances:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Psalm, 23:4](#))

This verse shows God's love. Even in difficult times, God stands with you. When a man feels he does not have a way out, there is a way with the help of God:

"The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Psalm, 9:9](#))

Despair situations make a person feel you are down. However, this verse reminds a person that God is there for your support in every case and will help him through thick and thin.

Your focus and trust in God help you to overcome all obstacles:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Matthew, 6:33](#))

This verse shows that when a person is intact and believes in God, God will never leave him in any situation. God is always with a person in any situation:

"Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God [is] with thee whithersoever thou goest." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Joshua, 1:9](#))

Throughout your life, God is always with you. Even if a person is struggling with depression and other mental health concerns, God will be there side by side to help her. God always love His creatures, especially a person:

"The LORD [is] nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Psalms, 34:18](#))

Whenever a person is in low spirits, God is still in love with him. There is no limit to God's love for humankind:

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Romans, 8:38-39](#))

This verse shows that God has a lot of love for humankind, and it will never change in any situation. God will be there in any struggle:

"The steps of a [good] man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth [him with] his hand." ([King James Bible, 1769/1990, Psalms, 37:23-24](#))

Struggle and effort are a part of life, but as long as God is, there is no need to worry.

The Bible's verses prove that the complete solution or remedy to depression is in the teachings of Judaism and Christianity.

Solution of Depression in Islam

Now let us look at depression in the teachings of Islam. The first thing is that a Muslim is never depressed, hopeless, or disappointed with the mercy of Allah. Because despair of Allah's mercy is a sign of weak faith. As Holy Prophet (PBUH) said (mentioned by Imam Muslim) ([Salahuddin Ali Abdul Mawjood, 2007](#))

"How wonderful is the case of the believer, for all his affairs are good. If something good happens to him, he is thankful for it, which is good for him; if something bad happens to him, he bears it with patience, which is good for him. This does not apply to anyone but the believer." ([Muslim, 2007](#))

When past and future sorrows surround us, life seems wrapped in woes, and there is no escape; when a person thanks Allah Almighty for rewards and blessings, Allah gives him the courage to give more. We have used the Holy Qura'n translation of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall (P. Nash, 2017) of every verse mentioned in the article.

¹“(The Holy Qur’an, 14:7) “وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ”

"And 'remember' when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more. But if you are ungrateful, surely my punishment is severe.'" (Pickthall, 1977)

According to a hadith, every child is born with the nature of Islam. When we go away from nature, we face problems. When we try to deviate from the rules laid down by Islam, the problem arises when there is a disturbance. Allah says:

²“(The Holy Qur’an, 42:30) “وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ”

"Whatever affliction befalls you is because of what your own hands have committed. And He pardons much." (Pickthall, 1977)

It is only through the teachings of Islam that we can attain happiness and contentment of the

Heart. If one wishes that the life of a human being is free from pain and sorrow, then such a wish is unnatural. Allah has also taught us how to deal with these problems; we must practice them. How should we react to the death of a loved one? The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) gave the best example of this:

"We went with Allah's Messenger to the blacksmith Abu Saif, and he was the

Husband of the nurse of Ibrahim (the son of the Prophet). Allah's messenger took Ibrahim and kissed him and smelled him. Later we entered Abu Saifs' house, and at that time, Ibrahim was in his last breaths, and the eyes of Allah's Messenger started shedding tears. 'Abdur Rahman bin 'Auf said, "Oh Allah's Messenger, even you are weeping!" He said, "Oh, Ibn 'Auf, this is mercy." Then he wept more and said, "The eyes are shedding tears, and the heart is grieved, and we will not say except what pleases our Lord (Allah), Oh Ibrahim! Indeed we are grieved by your separation." (Bukhari, 1997)

If there is any problem, we should be silent instead of complaining about it. Moreover, no one should even allow negative thoughts to explode near him, for example, if I am the only one to face all this. Or I was capable of that, etc. Rather, one should proceed by accepting the decision of fate. Satan's job is to fill the human mind with whispers and to make us despair of Allah's mercy. While Allah says, do not despair of Allah's mercy.

“قُلْ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَادَنِيَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ هَلْ هُنَّ كَاشِفَاتُ ضُرِّيهِ أَوْ أَرَادَنِي بِرَحْمَةٍ هَلْ هُنَّ مُمْسِكَتُ رَحْمَتِي ۗ قُلْ حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ ۗ عَلَيْهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ” (The Holy Qur’an, 39:34)

“Ask 'them', “Consider then whatever 'idols' you invoke besides Allah: if it was Allah's will to harm me, could they undo that harm? Or if He willed 'some' mercy for me, could they withhold His mercy?” Say, “Allah is sufficient for me. In Him 'alone' the faithful put their trust.” (Pickthall, 1977)

When it seems that there is nothing for us in this world, we have no one who cares about us, who loves us, and then know that there is a great being Who never forgets us, as Allah says:

“وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا” (The Holy Qur’an, 19:64)

"And your Lord is never forgetful.

There is also a process to accustom oneself to certain restrictions so that self-improvement can be possible. Allah says:

“قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا” (The Holy Qur’an, 91:9)

"Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul." (Pickthall, 1977)

This is the first step towards eliminating evil deeds and purity of the soul to avoid depression.

A person should take care of his mind in such a way that he completely separates himself from evil and disturbing thoughts, which lead him towards depression, and turns towards Allah. Imam Ghazali (d. 1111 A.D) (Frank, 2006) writes:

"The real meditation is this; the servant should know with certainty that the Allah Almighty is aware of his actions and thoughts, and the creatures only see his appearance. God Almighty sees both his outward appearance and his inwardness. Whoever understands this and the knowledge prevails in his heart, his appearance and interior will be purified." (Ghazali, 1999)

¹Ibrahim, 14:7

²Ash- Shuraa, 42:30

Because of meditation, a person can be protected from all types of depression.

In order to protect oneself from depression, there is a dire need for a Muslim to hold himself accountable for everything. Allah Almighty says:

"(The Holy Qur'an, 59:18) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَانْتَظِرُوا نَفْسَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لِغَدٍ "

"O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what 'deeds' it has sent forth for tomorrow." "Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul." (Pickthall, 1977)

A Muslim's primary duty is to examine himself at the end of every action and deed to save himself from depression by holding himself accountable in case of mistakes.

A Muslim should know that only Allah Almighty is worthy of trust and confidence. He is the one from whom help can be sought and received. A Muslim knows that the stronger his relationship with his Lord, the more peaceful he will be and the safer he will be from depression. Allah Almighty says:

"وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ ۖ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ إِذَا دَعَانِ ۖ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ" (The Holy Qur'an, 2:186)

"When My servants ask you, Oh Prophet, about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one's prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond with obedience to Me and believe in Me; perhaps they will be guided to the Right Way." "Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul." (Pickthall, 1977)

When a Muslim calls upon his Lord, He answers his call and is helped, and thus, he not only saves himself from depression but also comes out from all kinds of stress.

Similarly, a Muslim needs to remember Allah Almighty because remembrance is the best means of heart connection with Allah Almighty. As Allah says:

"(The Holy Qur'an, 13:28) إِنَّ اللَّهَ ۖ أَلاَ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ "

"Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort." (Pickthall, 1977)

A person will be saved from depression by the remembrance of Allah.

By studying, the Islamic teachings mentioned above, we understand that to save a person from Depression, Islam thoroughly guides its believers and informs them about the methods to lead a flourishing human life.

CONCLUSION

The dangers a man faces disturb him and destroy his peace of mind and tranquillity. There is a solution to depression and stress in the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Disappointment, guilt or regret, illness or sadness, greed, loss and death of a loved one are the leading causes of depression. If a person's heart is in a state of contentment, he is also satisfied and will protect himself from depression. Depression as a term comes somewhere in our early academic repertoire. The Jewish, Christian, and Islamic solution to depression is straightforward. At the same time, the solutions described by modern science and psychologists are complex and extremely difficult.

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