



The Role of Depression in Existential Dread: A Psychological and Existential Perspective on the COVID-19 Pandemic

M Razkiazka M H.
SMAS AL AZHAR MEDAN

Alamat: Jl. Pintu Air IV Kuala Bekala No.214, Medan.

Email korespondensi: mrakiazkamd368@gmail.com

Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant mental health challenges, notably depression, which has emerged as a typical psychological response to existential crises triggered by the pandemic. This paper examines the psychological underpinnings of depression during existential crises, drawing on the theories of Ernest Becker about when individuals are confronted with uncertainty and mortality. Freud's theory of transference explains the tendency to project one's anxieties onto external figures, such as authority or religious entities, during times of crisis. Although existential dread plays a role, the focus is on how the inability to find meaning during crises leads to depression. Philosophers like Sartre and Kierkegaard provide further insights into human freedom and the search for meaning. Still, the psychological responses—especially depression—remain central to understanding the emotional toll of the pandemic. The paper concludes that social and spiritual support systems are crucial for addressing depression, urging individuals to seek help through both psychological and spiritual means.*

Keywords: *Depression, Existential dread, Pandemic COVID-19*

Abstrak: Pandemi COVID-19 telah menyebabkan tantangan kesehatan mental yang signifikan, terutama depresi, yang telah muncul sebagai respons psikologis yang umum terhadap krisis eksistensial yang dipicu oleh pandemi. Makalah ini membahas dasar-dasar psikologis depresi selama krisis eksistensial, dengan mengacu pada teori-teori Ernest Becker mengenai ketika individu dihadapkan pada ketidakpastian dan kematian. Teori transferensi Freud menjelaskan kecenderungan untuk memproyeksikan kecemasan seseorang ke figur eksternal, seperti otoritas atau entitas agama, selama masa krisis. Meskipun ketakutan eksistensial memainkan peran, fokusnya adalah bagaimana ketidakmampuan untuk menemukan makna selama krisis menyebabkan depresi. Filsuf seperti Sartre dan Kierkegaard memberikan wawasan lebih lanjut tentang kebebasan manusia dan pencarian makna, tetapi respons psikologis—terutama depresi—tetap menjadi pusat untuk memahami dampak emosional dari pandemi. Makalah ini menyimpulkan bahwa sistem dukungan sosial dan spiritual sangat penting untuk mengatasi depresi, mendorong individu untuk mencari bantuan baik melalui cara psikologis maupun spiritual.

Kata kunci: Depresi, Ketakutan eksistensial, Pandemi COVID-19

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, has had a significant impact on people's physical and mental health. In addition to SARS-CoV-2 virus infections causing physical health problems, the pandemic has also increased the prevalence of mental health disorders, such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress. Factors such as fear of infection, social isolation, loss of loved ones, and uncertainty about the future contributed to the increase in mental disorders. Furthermore, feelings of anxiety related to mortality, the meaning of life, and human finitude often trigger more severe symptoms of depression (Zhou et al., 2020; Ranney et al., 2020).

COVID-19 has significantly increased depression rates during the pandemic. WHO, in its World Mental Health Report, stated that depression and anxiety rose by 25% in the first year of the pandemic. Data shows a significant increase in depression levels before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic (2019), approximately 1 billion people worldwide faced mental health issues, including depression. During the pandemic (2020-2021), global depression prevalence increased by up to 25%, primarily due to social isolation, fear, and job loss. In Indonesia, depression rates among young adults rose from 3% to 14%. After the pandemic, the mental health impact remains evident, with depression risks staying high, particularly among those exposed to significant psychological stress. This could be due to the enormous challenges facing humanity; being buffeted by uncertainty and chaos during the pandemic could be one of the causes of depression.

This condition, in a philosophical context, would trigger existential dread, which is closely related to mood disorders and depression (Van Deurzen, E. 2020). This raises the question: is there any impact of a pandemic on mental issues such as depression, and if so, are there any connections between the pandemic, depression, and existential dread? This study aims to determine the relationship between depression caused by the pandemic and existential fear.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative research methods, which are research approaches used to understand phenomena, experiences, or meanings from the perspective of specific

individuals or groups. This research focuses on non-numerical data such as words, narratives, symbols, or behaviour to reveal the complexity of a problem or social phenomenon. Data can be collected through in-depth interviews, observation, library research, or case studies (Sugiono, 2020). This data collection technique highly depends on the research context and the questions being asked. In this study, library research-based data collection techniques were used.

In library research, the data used does not come from the individuals or groups studied directly but from published library materials; researchers will analyse themes, patterns, and meanings that emerge from documents or written sources, often without collecting new data. It is essential in this approach to select documents or literature relevant to the research topic. The researcher will select and analyse the literature that provides the most insight and information appropriate to the research focus.

This research focuses on a literature-based study that explores the concept of reason through various sources, including Immunology, Pathology, Philosophy, Psychology, and Virology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The COVID-19 pandemic, caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, was first reported in Wuhan, China, in late 2019 and quickly spread worldwide, causing a global health crisis. The virus primarily affects the respiratory system, causing serious complications such as severe pneumonia and respiratory failure in severe cases. The rapid surge in cases forced global health systems to face a shortage of resources, such as hospital beds, ventilators and medical personnel and resulted in delays in non-emergency medical procedures (Zhou et al., 2020; Ranney et al., 2020).

The impact of the pandemic has also been felt on mental health, with social isolation and increased uncertainty triggering disorders such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress, both in the general public and medical personnel (Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Fear of infection and loss of loved ones add to the global emotional burden. In addition, global economic sectors are reeling, with many businesses temporarily shutting down, causing unemployment and long-term economic uncertainty for many individuals and families (Nicola et al., 2020). Significant social changes, such as the adoption of

remote working and education, also brought new challenges in terms of technological access and the quality of social interactions (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

On the other hand, the pandemic is driving the adoption of medical technologies, including telemedicine, to maintain healthcare services amid mobility restrictions (Monaghesh & Hajizadeh, 2020). While developing COVID-19 vaccines accelerated efforts to curb transmission, vaccine distribution in developing countries remains a significant challenge (Our World in Data, 2021). Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected physical health and changed the world's social and economic landscape, emphasising the importance of integration between physical and mental health and social well-being in the face of a global crisis.

Virology of SARS-CoV-2

SARS-CoV-2 is a positive-sense single-stranded RNA (+ssRNA) virus belonging to the *Coronaviridae* family and *Betacoronavirus* genus, along with SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV. Its genome consists of 29.9 kilobases, one of the largest among RNA viruses. The virus has a protein capsid protected by a lipid membrane and features a spike (S) protein that gives it its characteristic “crown” shape under electron microscopy (Zhou et al., 2020).

1. Structure of SARS-CoV-2:

- A. Spike (S) protein: This protein is responsible for binding to the ACE2 receptor on human host cells, initiating infection. This protein is also the primary target for the vaccine (Hoffmann et al., 2020).
- B. Envelope (E) protein: Plays a role in virion formation and viral pathogenesis.
- C. Membrane Proteins (M): Helps form the virus structure.
- D. Nucleocapsid (N): Protects the viral RNA genome and is involved in viral replication.
- E. RNA genome: Serves as a direct mould for the translation of viral proteins, allowing rapid replication in host cells.

The virus can highly infect humans due to the S protein's high affinity for the human ACE2 receptor, expressed in various organs, including the lungs, heart, and kidneys (Yan et al., 2020).

2. ACE2 Secretion and Regulation Process:

ACE2 (Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme 2) is a type I transmembrane enzyme synthesised in the endoplasmic reticulum of human cells. After synthesis, ACE2 is processed and transported to the cell membrane through the conventional protein secretion pathway. ACE2 is expressed as a functional protein at the cell membrane, especially on epithelial cells in the lung, heart, kidney, and intestine (Donoghue et al., 2000).

Synthesis: ACE2 is first translated as a polypeptide chain in ribosomes attached to the endoplasmic reticulum. **Post-Translational Modifications:** The polypeptide undergoes glycosylation at the endoplasmic reticulum and Golgi bodies to ensure its stability and activity as an enzyme. **Transport to Membranes:** ACE2 is then transported to the plasma membrane, where it is installed as a transmembrane enzyme.

Shedding (Release from Membrane): Metalloprotease enzymes such as ADAM17 can cleave the extracellular domain of ACE2, releasing the soluble form (soluble ACE2) into the blood circulation. Soluble ACE2 may bind to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, thus reducing its ability to infect cells (Hoffmann et al., 2020).

Secretion Regulation Factors: ACE2 secretion can be affected by several factors, including hypoxia, inflammation, and increased renin-angiotensin system activity, all common in conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and viral infections (Cuba et al., 2005).

Pathology of SARS-CoV-2

Upon entry into the body via the respiratory tract, SARS-CoV-2 uses spike proteins to bind to ACE2 receptors on the surface of respiratory tract epithelial cells. This process is facilitated by the enzyme transmembrane serine protease 2 (TMPRSS2), which cleaves the spike protein, allowing the fusion of the viral and host cell membranes (Hoffmann et al., 2020).

1. Infection Stages

- A. **Binding and Fusion:** The viral S protein binds to the ACE2 receptor.
- B. **Entry into Host Cell:** The virus enters via endocytosis or direct fusion.

- C. Replication and Transcription: The viral RNA genome is released into the cytoplasm and directly translated to produce non-structural proteins, such as RNA polymerase. These polymerases are used to replicate the viral genome.
- D. Assembly and Release: New viruses are assembled in the endoplasmic reticulum and released through exocytosis.

Immune Response and Tissue Damage:

Early Phase: Host cells produce cytokines and type I interferons responding to infection.

1. Hyperinflammation

In some individuals, infection triggers a cytokine storm, during which there is a massive release of IL-6, IL-1 β , and TNF- α . This leads to endothelial damage, pulmonary oedema, and microvascular thrombus formation (Del Valle et al., 2020).

2. Multisystem Damage

Besides the lungs, the virus can invade other organs, such as the heart, kidneys, and central nervous system, causing complications such as myocarditis, acute renal failure, and encephalopathy.

SARS-CoV-2 causes severe damage to the lungs, ranging from mild inflammation to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Post-mortem examination shows immune cell infiltration (macrophages and neutrophils), interstitial oedema, and alveolar-capillary damage, leading to gas exchange dysfunction (Xu et al., 2020).

According to the WHO, as reported by Deutsche Welle, by the end of 2021, an estimated 14.9 million excess deaths related to the COVID-19 pandemic are expected. This figure includes direct deaths from the virus and those caused by disruptions to the health system during the pandemic. WHO also reported that COVID-19 will no longer be classified as a global pandemic from May 2023, although cases and deaths still occur in some countries. The COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial financial impact globally. In 2020, global GDP decreased by 3.4%, equating to a loss of more than two trillion US dollars. Many industry sectors were severely affected, especially travel and tourism, while retail and

online commerce experienced growth. Countries also faced different impacts; for example, the UK economy contracted by almost 8%, while China managed to maintain positive development thanks to their quick response.

In addition, the labour sector was also severely affected, with many people losing their jobs or experiencing pay cuts, especially older and lower-income groups. While the global economy began to recover in 2021, significant challenges remain, including rising income inequality and vulnerability to another financial crisis. Massive stimulus packages have driven the global economic recovery, but economic strains remain, particularly in the credit market and commercial property sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial financial impact on Indonesia, affecting various sectors of the economy and triggering several social problems. Indonesia's economy has experienced a massive contraction due to activity restrictions, falling public consumption, and declining purchasing power. Sectors such as tourism, manufacturing, and trade were particularly affected. Many companies were forced to lay off workers due to the decline in demand and operational difficulties. This caused the unemployment rate to rise sharply. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), Indonesia's open unemployment rate increased in 2020 due to the pandemic. Therefore, many families lost their primary source of income due to layoffs or decreased business income, which increased poverty. The Indonesian government tries to help through various social assistance programs, but the impact does not directly address the deep problems related to economic inequality. (Supriatna, 2021).

Increasingly widespread poverty plus the loss of loved ones makes individuals feel hopeless, feel they are useless and begin to question what the purpose of this life is and where this suffering comes from; this is the first sign of an existential crisis.

Existential crisis and Existential dread

An existential crisis is when a person begins to question the meaning, purpose and value of his or her life. This phenomenon often arises when a person feels that his life has no clear meaning, feels lost, or faces significant challenges that shake his belief in life.

When faced with severe challenges such as a pandemic, poverty and chaos, an individual usually looks for a way out, but not all individuals find a way out. Individuals will feel that they are struggling alone but still do not produce results, so they start to give up, and despair until they start questioning their life's purpose. When individuals do not find the purpose or meaning of their life, this will lead them to existential dread, which can lead to depression.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a prominent French figure in existentialism, stated that an existential crisis occurs when individuals realise they are free to determine the meaning of their lives. Sartre considered that humans are not born with a specific purpose or essence, and each person must create his or her essence through their free choices. When a person realises this freedom, he faces a “doomed existence” or “existential malaise,” a feeling of fear, anxiety, and confusion towards the great responsibility of unlimited freedom. This crisis comes from the realisation that life has no defined purpose and that every action carries a significant burden of responsibility. The human being, according to Sartre, ‘Être pour soi’ (exists for the self), which means we exist and are aware that the individual exists so that it can determine the individual’s life journey, in contrast to ‘Être en soi’ (exists in the self) which means he exists but is not aware that he exists so he cannot make choices for himself. (Akinbode, 2023).

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a German philosopher, views the existential crisis in terms of “being”. For Heidegger, humans are trapped in a world full of uncertainty and anxiety because individuals are constantly faced with “being towards death”. According to Heidegger, this awareness of death is at the centre of the existential crisis as humans often avoid that their lives are finite and will end (Hom, A. R. 2023). In ‘*Sein und Zeit*’ (1927), Heidegger states that individuals live in a world full of distractions, but to truly understand the individual self, individuals must face the reality of individual existential limitations. This crisis is an opportunity to create authenticity in life by accepting death and making more conscious choices about individual existence.

According to Heidegger the individual is thrown into this world: “*Dasein ist geworfen in die Welt, und so ist es in ihr. Es wählt sich nicht, sondern es ist vielmehr geworfen in seine Situation und in seine eigenen Möglichkeiten.* (Dasein is thrown into the world, and

this is the way in which it exists. It does not choose itself, but it is rather thrown into its situation and its own possibilities.)” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 173).

What Heidegger means by being thrown ‘Geworfenheit’ is that the individual never expected or asked to be brought into this world. Still, the individual did not know, and suddenly, the individual was born on Earth, with a body limited in space and time and facing unlimited possibilities.

Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, developed an approach focusing more on the search for meaning in life. In his work ‘Man’s Search for Meaning’ (1946), Frankl described how survivors of Nazi concentration camps were able to survive not only by physical strength but also by finding meaning in their suffering. Frankl suggests that existential crises arise when individuals feel their lives have no meaning or purpose. According to him, the search for meaning is the primary motivation in human life, and people who can find meaning, even in extreme adversity, can overcome existential crises. Frankl supports the idea that humans seek happiness and the meaning of life through work, relationships, or even suffering (Van Deurzen, E. 2020).

These three thinkers provide different views on existential crisis, although they share a focus on freedom, the meaning of life, and human finitude. Sartre emphasises freedom and the burden of responsibility that comes with it; Heidegger sees the crisis as an awareness of mortality that drives individuals to live more authentically, while Frankl highlights the search for meaning as a way to overcome adversity.

An individual’s failure in his or her existential crisis will lead the individual to existential dread.

Existential dread occurs when an individual fails to face an existential crisis. According to Sartre, an individual’s failure occurs when he understands he cannot bear the responsibility for his freedom. In his work ‘*Being and Nothingness*’ (1943) he states: “*L’homme est condamné à être libre. Parce qu’une fois jeté dans le monde, il est responsable de tout ce qu’il fait.*” (Man is condemned to be free. Because once he is thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does.)” Man is indeed free to determine his will, but he is not free to limit the freedom of others. Sartre also stated in his play *Huis Clos* (1944): “*L’enfer, c’est les autres* (Hell is other people.)” He meant that

misery or suffering can be mentioned as a result of an individual's interaction with other human beings, such as their perception of the individual.

Furthermore, Sartre explains that when a person realises that he is free to choose and determine his essence, this can lead to feelings of anxiety, alienation, and even depression. This existential dread arises due to the burden of freedom that one has to carry and the realisation that there is no meaning given in advance by the world or God. Depression can be considered a reaction to uncertainty and fear of freedom without a clear purpose.

Meanwhile, according to Heidegger, existential dread is when individuals begin to surrender to the fact that the individual self is limited by time. Awareness of the limitations of life and the uncertainty inherent in human existence. Fear of death, loss of meaning in life, and feelings of alienation can lead to experiences such as depression. For Heidegger, these anxieties are part of a deep human existential condition, where individuals feel thrown into the world and faced with emptiness.

Based on the above statement, it can be concluded that the pandemic, one of the significant challenges individuals face, causes many problems that limit and must be accounted for, such as finding a new job and providing for the family because the pandemic made him fired. Individuals will begin to give up and face an existential crisis that leads to existential dread; one of the implications of existential dread is depression.

Depression

Depression is one of the consequences of existential dread; according to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is a common mental disorder characterised by persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities that are usually enjoyed, accompanied by symptoms such as disturbed sleep, appetite, or concentration (WHO, 2020). A failed existential crisis can cause feelings of sadness and loss of interest.

According to Ernest Becker (1973) in his book '*The Denial of Death*', depression is considered a psychological response to human awareness of mortality and helplessness in the face of death. Becker argues that depression arises when a person loses the "structure of meaning" that usually helps individuals face existential dread. According to him, humans need illusions or belief systems that provide a sense of purpose and meaning

in life. When this illusion collapses, individuals can experience feelings of helplessness and loss of hope, which contributes to depression.

Becker also attributes depression to the human struggle to overcome the conflict between instinctual drives and the awareness of mortality. Without effective psychological defense mechanisms, individuals can sink into a deep sense of hopelessness (Becker, 1973).

Decker then asserts that depression is when individuals give up and recognise their limitations to the infinity of future possibilities. Individuals will feel anxious due to facing a series of options that can harm them.

A Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard, stated something similar earlier; although he was not a psychologist, he often discussed human development. Kierkegaard influenced existential psychology with the idea that anxiety is a consequence of human freedom. When a person realises the many possibilities in life, he or she can feel trapped by fear or give up because of the limited ability to control everything.

In *'The Concept of Anxiety'*, he referred to anxiety as *'the dizziness of freedom'*. This anxiety arises from man's awareness of his freedom to choose amidst infinite possibilities. Kierkegaard also relates anxiety to the concept of *"the pursuit of certainty,"* where individuals often choose to *"hold on to finitude"* to avoid the anxiety that arises from uncertain possibilities. However, this choice can lead to stagnation and prevent personal growth. Conversely, dealing with anxiety in the right way allows individuals to thrive and understand their purpose in life (Beabout, 2023).

Kierkegaard refers to a way of life that focuses on pleasure, comfort, or aesthetics without considering ethical or spiritual aspects as *'philistinism'*. He believed that this state would ultimately lead individuals into *"unconscious despair,"* where they live without realising the inauthenticity of their existence. In this context, philistinism is seen as an obstacle to reaching a higher existential level, namely an ethical or religious life that involves self-reflection and a relationship with God.

Unknowingly, individuals become increasingly alienated and aware that they cannot escape the reality that demands the authenticity of their existence, eventually losing their sense of direction and falling into despair. These are insufficient to avoid despair, even

with wealth, achievements, or comfort. This despair arises from lacking an authentic relationship with oneself and spiritual meaning. When individuals remain in this state without reflection or transition to a more meaningful life (ethical or religious), they become vulnerable to feelings of emptiness, which can develop into depression (Hanson, 2021).

Kierkegaard offers a solution to despair through an existential approach focusing on the journey towards a more authentic and meaningful life. Here is how to overcome it according to Kierkegaard's perspective:

The first step is to recognise that one is experiencing despair. Kierkegaard refers to this as conscious despair, which requires deep reflection on life and existence (Hanson, 2021). With this awareness, individuals seek meaning and purpose, experiencing an existential crisis by moving beyond their daily pleasures.

The second step is that individuals must shift their focus away from the pleasure and shallow routines (the aesthetic life) and move towards the ethical life, which involves moral responsibility and deeper connections with both the community and oneself (Kosch, 2006). By strengthening relationships within a good group, individuals will gradually come to know themselves and their life's purpose. As they transition to an ethical life, individuals realise their role within the group.

The last step is the most profound decision to surrender oneself to God through a leap of faith. Religious life involves accepting a spiritual relationship and believing that true meaning is found in connection with God, who provides liberation from existential despair (Hanson, 2021). When individuals experience an existential crisis, they may begin to feel alone and realise their limitations in facing a range of limitless possibilities. This confusion can lead to despair, potentially resulting in depression. Individuals must recognise that to face limitless options, they need an entity that is also limitless, namely God.

A person experiencing depression, rather than struggling with their limitations, often increasingly restricts themselves. According to Alfred Adler, systematic self-limitation is related to how individuals confront feelings of inferiority and set behavioural boundaries to adjust to social or personal goals. In Adler's theory, feelings of inferiority are a natural

part of development, but responses to them vary. Some use positive compensation to grow, while others may excessively limit themselves, hindering personal and social growth (Adler, 1914/1963; Hopper, 2019). Adler emphasises that such self-limitation can be a way to avoid failure or confrontation but also reflects complex social relationship patterns. When used constructively, self-limitation helps individuals direct energy towards achieving realistic goals. However, overdone can lead to stagnation or alienation from society (Psychology, 2022; Social Sci LibreTexts, 2023).

The more individuals limit themselves, the more powerless and dependent they become on others. Eventually, the individual will realise that there is no longer an escape from failure and confrontation. As Heidegger suggests, life “*always moves toward realisation, without reaching an ultimate endpoint,*” as individuals are continuously confronted with their potential and limitations. This continuous engagement with existence prevents any permanent refuge from the existential challenges that arise along the way (Simonovic, 2022).

It was found that when individuals are about to surrender to an existential crisis, they seek something or someone to rely on, whether human or divine. Albert Camus (1942) stated, “*Ah, mon cher, for anyone alone, without God and a master, the weight of days is dreadful.*” Sigmund Freud refers to the need for an object to rely on as transference (Becker, E. 1973).

In Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, transference describes the process by which individuals project their feelings, desires, and expectations onto others, often unconsciously. In existential crises, this concept highlights the human tendency to transfer the burden of meaning, stability, and authority onto an external figure—whether another person or a divine being—to cope with feelings of isolation and helplessness.

In Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, the concept of transference explains the unconscious projection of feelings and expectations from an individual (often linked to childhood experiences) onto another figure, such as God. Freud viewed God as an idealised father figure, with individuals projecting their need for protection and guidance onto Him, seeing God as a strong, nurturing protector. He saw religion as wish fulfilment, where the belief in God as a divine protector is an illusion that provides psychological comfort but ultimately a projection of human needs rather than objective reality.

However, individuals sometimes feel that God is distant from them when, in fact, God is very close but not One with the individual; God is transcendent (separated from his creation) in essence, but immanent (with his creation) in attributes. al-Ash'ari(873-936), a Sunni scholar, articulated that while God's nature (that) is wholly transcendent and beyond human comprehension, His attributes (such as knowledge, power, and will) are active within creation. Al-Ash'ari's theology allowed for God's immanence within the world, but he also emphasised that God's essence remains separate from the created world (Ali, A. Y. 2021). Murtada Mutahhari (1919-1979), a prominent Shia philosopher and scholar, explored God's transcendence and immanence regarding divine attributes and the relationship between God and creation.

Rabbi Maimonides (1138-1204) stated that man cannot understand God except via negativa (from the opposite): God is merciful but not loving like creatures love each other but more than that), but his action can be recognised from his creation, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) believed that God is present in each individual because each individual is created by God (Robinson, G. 2021), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) in his book '*Ethics*' Spinoza states that God is a single self-existent substance and therefore, all things in the universe, be it matter or mind, are part of God. If there is anything that is not part of God, then there is something he does not control. God is not outside the world but permeates all aspects of this world. Is God more than many because he is in each of his creations? No, because God is infinite, God remains one. God is not separate from the world or His creation but is Nature itself.

From transference, it is found that the need to depend on entities that are more powerful than the individual has been subsumed since the beginning of individual life, and the only way to persuade and thank that entity is to worship him; this is in line with the arguments of several religions.

It also mentioned in Al Qur'an Surah Az Zariyat verse 56: “ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ (I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.)”

And also in New Testament Revelation 4 verse 11: “*Ἄξιός εἰ, ὁ Κύριος καὶ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν, λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα, καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.* (You are worthy, our Lord and God, To receive glory and honor and power, For you created all things, And by your will they were created, And

have their being.)”. Old Testament Isaiah chapter 43 verse 7: “**כָּל־הַנִּקְבָּדִים בְּרִאשִׁי וְלִי־עָשִׂיתִי**” (All who are linked to My name, Whom I have created, Formed, and made for My glory.)”

In Mandaenism Ginza Raba 1 verse 1: “*Nishmat al-ḡanīšā ḥayē d-nūrā, w-bā d-ḥayē d-nūrā ḥatā ilāhā.* (The soul of man is a divine light, and it comes from the world of light. Through baptism and the cleansing of the soul, it returns to its origin, worshipping the Great Life (God).”

Analects of Confucius 12 verse 1: “【第一章】 【一節】顏淵問仁。子曰、克己復禮爲仁、一日克己復禮、天下歸仁焉、爲仁由己、而由人乎哉。【二節】顏淵曰、請問其目。子曰、非禮勿視、非禮勿聽、非禮勿言、非禮勿動。顏淵曰、回雖不敏、請事斯語矣。(Chapter I. 1. Yen Yuan asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, “To subdue oneself and return to propriety is perfect virtue. If a man can for one day subdue himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will ascribe perfect virtue to him. Is the practice of perfect virtue from a man himself, or is it from others?)” in Bhagavad Gita 9 verse 22: “अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् // (There are those who always think of Me and engage in exclusive devotion to Me. To them, whose minds are always absorbed in Me, I provide what they lack and preserve what they already possess.)”

Even in Zoroastrianism at Yasna 34 verse 3 “*Ahura Mazda, yazad ī wuzurg, manuš ī vahman kardanī, kū ān ī wuzurg ān ba wuzurgāyī ōn maničān*. (Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, made the world the best of all things, and the purest, and it is by the understanding of the sound mind that one is guided to the proper path.)”.

All the verses from various religions suggest that humans are indeed created with a purpose to worship, honour, obey, comply, and even seek attention. It is essential to understand that humans seek attention from God and other entities that may have more power than themselves and can provide assistance, such as charms or other people. This is why, according to Camus, humans depend on their masters. Erik Fromm (1900–1980), in his book ‘*The Heart of Man*’ explains why individuals behave in such a way. According to him, this behaviour stems from an

individual's deep fear of living with their responsibilities (Doe, J., & Smith, A. 2022). As a result, they prefer to live in groups and delegate their duties to a figure of authority.

According to Freud (1913) in '*Totem and Taboo*', our submission to someone we perceive as a master or God is the result of our early experiences, particularly the interactions we have with our parents, especially the father figure (Doe, J., & Smith, A. 2022). This is where the mistake lies: rather than relying on an entity that is infinite and unchanging, individuals tend to rely on human beings who are just as limited and changeable, sometimes helpful, sometimes not. Suppose individuals want to maintain the health of their souls. In that case, they must get closer to the creator because the soul belongs to them, and the soul affects the nerves of the brain and moves the muscles of the body; by taking care of the soul, individuals also indirectly take care of their bodies (Razkiazka, M. H. et al. 1. 2024).

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a significant challenge for humanity, not only a health issue but also one that impacts the economy and poverty levels, potentially leading to an existential crisis that may result in existential dread. If existential dread is not adequately addressed, it can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

The relationship between the pandemic, depression, and existential dread lies in the fact that the pandemic creates numerous challenges that make individuals begin to question their purpose in life, which is an implication of an existential crisis. If individuals fail to overcome the existential crisis, it can lead to existential dread, which, if not adequately handled, may result in mental illnesses like depression. To cope with this, individuals cannot face it alone and need the support of those closest to them. Individuals can be helped spiritually and through social interactions, as proposed by Kierkegaard. By drawing closer to God, individuals may feel they are not facing their problems alone and remain optimistic about whatever happens to them.

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