Depression: Analyzing the Influence of Comorbidity Between Negative Body Image and Alcohol Use in School-Age Children

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Depression, a common mental health issue, is prevalent in children due to their susceptibility to negative influences. Risk factors such as poor body images and alcohol use (as a coping mechanism) can prompt depressive symptoms to occur and contribute to its onset. The aim of the current study is to examine the relationship between body image and alcohol use to determine its effect on depression in school-age children. This study is a secondary analysis of data gathered from the Health Behavior in School-Aged Children (HBSC) 2009-2010 survey. The initial sample consisted of 12,642 students ranging from fifth to tenth grade in 314 schools around the United States. Participants completed a student survey inquiring about their health behaviors and attitudes such as nutrition, diet, health problems, physical activity, violence, bullying, and relationships with family and friends. This current study utilized a correlation analysis, multiple Kruskal-Wallis H tests, and a chi-square to determine the relationships and associations between body image, alcohol use, ethnicity, and depression. Moreover, various regression analyses were conducted to assess whether body image, alcohol use, and ethnicity were predictors of depression. Results indicated that poor body images positively predicted depression levels while drinking less alcohol negatively predicted it. These findings indicate that individuals with harmful body images or engagement with excessive alcohol are at a higher risk for adverse mental health outcomes. Thus, implementing early interventions to reduce the influences of unhealthy body images and alcohol abuse is crucial to prevent the onset of depression in children.