

# Adolescent Depression and its Impact on Academic Achievement

Vanessa L. Vasquez

California State University Fullerton, Department of Social Work



## Abstract

Adolescents experiencing depressive symptoms often manifest academic difficulties. This phenomenon is worrisome because it highlights the struggles that adolescents deal with continuously. The current study is a secondary data analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health). The sample that was used for this current study consists of 4,871 adolescents who are in 7th through 12th grade. Results indicated that depression is correlated with academic achievement. Depression is associated with a significant amount of unexcused absences, suspension, expulsion from school, and minority status. Students will significantly benefit from proactive services and interventions that will aim to reduce adverse consequences on adolescents' academic achievements. It would improve their academic experience, and it would also help students become more successful in their overall lives by aiding in the reduction of future negativity and harshness.

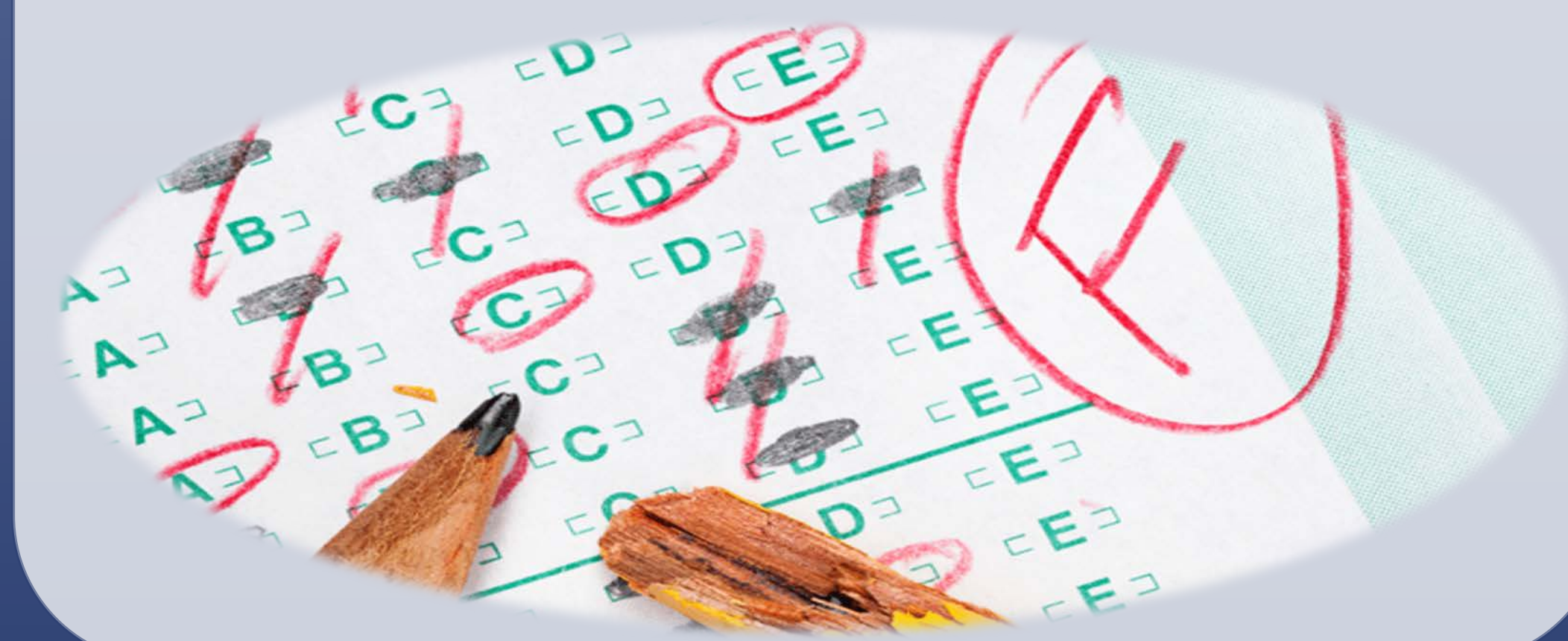
## Introduction

**Significance of Study:** According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2019), 3.2 million adolescents between the ages of 12 to 17 years have experienced at least one major depressive episode in the past year. The impact of depression leads to negative outcomes such as low performing academic achievement.

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to help understand the consequences and effects of depression on adolescents' academic achievement. This study will focus on identifying the implications of depression regarding how adolescents are impacted academically. It is essential to understand if depression is a significant contributor to poor academic achievement among adolescents, and if so, how depression is impacting school performance.

**Research Question:** What are the effects of depression on academic achievement among adolescents?

**Hypothesis:** The hypothesis for this study is that, students with higher levels of depression are at significant risk of failing, dropping out, or getting kicked out of school, when compared to other students.



## Literature Review

### The Impact of Depression on Self-Perception:

Adolescents are twice more likely to drop out of school due to depressive symptoms (Dupéré et al., 2018). Adolescents experiencing depressive symptoms doubt their capability to perform well in school, therefore they self-sabotage through unwanted thoughts and doubts.

### The Impact of Depression on Academic Achievement:

Depression affects academic domains and causes difficulty for adolescents in finding pleasure in school, paying attention in classes, and forming connections with others. Minkinen et al. (2017) stated that when comparing externalizing and internalizing behaviors, externalizing behaviors had a greater correlation with underachievement and at risk of failing in school.

### Depression and Academic Achievement Impact

**Adolescents:** Depression impacts female and males academics differently. Depression was identified when boys perceived the load of schoolwork as too much, while in girls, all subjective school performance was much more strongly associated with severe depression (Fröjd et al., 2008). Latino youth grades are affected and they are not meeting school expectations due to depression and accompanied stressors (Zychinski & Polo, 2012).

### Factors Impacting Depression and Academic

**Achievement:** Students suffer from various outside factors that impact depression and academics. Latino students are impacted by acculturative stress (Zychinski & Polo, 2012). Poor parent-child relationship and high expectations from family can create depression and suicidal ideation (Lee et al., 2006).

## Methods

**Research Design:** The study is a secondary data analysis of the Add Health study. The current study examined the relationship between depression and academic achievement among adolescents. This study only concentrated on Wave I. The study is cross-sectional, and its sole focus is on U.S. adolescents who are in 7th through 12th grade.

**Sample and Sampling Method:** The final sample size was 4,871 participants. The study included female and male participants. African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, Caucasians, and others were included in the study for the purpose of inclusion. To be eligible to participate, adolescents were in 7th through 12th grade and taking English, Science, Math, and History courses.

### Measure:

**Independent variable:** The independent variable for this study is academic achievement. Academic achievement is defined by academic performance and attendance in classes. Adolescent will report grades, grade point average (GPA) will be calculated, and will be asked if they have ever repeated a grade, ever received an out of school suspension or expulsion, and the number of unexcused absences.

**Dependent variable:** The dependent variable for this study is depression. Participants were administered a 19-item depression scale.



## Results

- The relationship between depression and GPA indicated a statistically significant and negative relationship between depression and GPA,  $r(4869) = -.245, p < .001$ . Higher levels of depression were associated with lower current GPA.
- The relationship between depression and unexcused absences indicated a statistically significant and negative relationship between depression and unexcused absences,  $r(4869) = .141, p < .001$ . Higher levels of depression were associated with a higher number of unexcused absences.
- A multiple linear regression was performed to predict a study participant's total depression based on their age, gender, minority status, and grade point average. Younger male non-minority study participants who have higher GPAs scored lower on depression than other study participants.

Academic Achievement and Depression

		Mean Depression (SD)	Mean Difference	t	p
Repeated Grade (ever)	Yes	12.96 (7.94)	-2.89	-11.12	< .001
	No	10.07 (7.16)			
Suspended (ever)	Yes	12.75 (8.19)	-2.84	-11.96	< .001
	No	9.91 (6.97)			
Expelled (ever)	Yes	13.87 (7.75)	-3.35	-6.39	< .001
	No	10.52 (7.37)			

Comparisons made using independent t test

## Conclusion

Students suffering from depression have displayed low GPA, which oftentimes result in failing grades. Moreover, students suffering from depression have demonstrated a higher amount of unexcused absences, suspensions, and, in worst-case scenarios, expulsions from school. Also, minorities are at a higher risk of depression than non-minority students.

### Implications for Future Research:

- Future researchers should consider equalizing ethnicity groups and further categorizing them on socioeconomic groups.
- It would also be vital to focus on the student's family dynamics to learn if there is a secure support system.
- Understanding culture and cultural beliefs would provide a clearer insight in the youths lives.



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