

Religion, Spirituality and Depression in Adolescent Psychiatric Outpatients

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Background: In studies of adult populations, greater religiousness has been linked to lower levels of depression, and faster recovery from depressive episodes. In contrast, studies of religious variables and depression among adolescents have yielded mixed findings. This study examines in a preliminary manner the relationship between multiple facets of religion/spirituality and depression in treatment-seeking adolescents.

Methods: 117 psychiatric outpatients, aged 12-18, completed the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI), and a two-item substance abuse inventory developed for the study. Multivariable regression was then used to model BDI scores. Subscales of the religiousness/spirituality scale (BMMRS) were entered sequentially into the model. The Scheffe method was used to correct for multiple comparisons.

Results: Female gender and higher levels of substance abuse significantly predicted greater depression scores. Controlling for substance abuse and demographic variables, depression was related to feeling abandoned or punished by God ($p < 0.0001$), feeling unsupported by one's religious community ($p = 0.0158$), and lack of forgiveness ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusions: These preliminary results suggest that clinicians should assess religious beliefs and perceptions of support from the religious community as factors intertwined with the experience of depression, and consider the most appropriate ways of addressing these factors that are sensitive to adolescents' and families' religious values and beliefs.