

RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND DEPRESSION IN ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRIC OUTPATIENTS

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Objectives

Religion and spirituality often relate inversely with depression in adults, while results in adolescents have been mixed. Little research has addressed these issues in adolescent psychiatric patients. The role of substance use in religion-depression relationships is understudied.

Subscale	# items	Chronbach's α	Sample item
Daily Spiritual Experiences	5	0.92	"I feel God's presence"
Private Religious Practices	5	0.86	"How often do you pray privately in places other than at a church, synagogue, or temple?"
Organizational Religiousness	2	0.82	"How often do you go to religious services?"
Religious and Spiritual Coping	4	0.87	"I look to God for strength, support, and guidance"
Negative Religious Coping	2	0.73	"I feel God is punishing me for my sins or lack of spirituality"
Religious Support	2	0.86	"If you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation, how much comfort would the people in your congregation be willing to give you?"
Negative Religious Support	2	0.77	"How often are the people in your congregation critical of you and the things you do?"
Commitment	1	N/A	"I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life"
Overall Self-Ranking	2	0.86	"To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?"
Religious History	3	0.30	"Have you ever had a significant gain in your faith?"
Forgiveness	3	0.72	"I have forgiven those who hurt me"
Meaning	2	0.71	"I have a sense of mission or calling in my own life"

Methods

117 psychiatric outpatients aged 12-18 completed the Beck Depression Inventory, and an inventory of alcohol and drug use developed for this study. Subjects also completed the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality, a 40-item inventory. Subscales analyzed included: Spiritual Experiences, Forgiveness, Private Religious Practice, Religious Coping, Religious Support, Commitment, Spiritual History, Organizational Religiousness, Self-Ranking, and Meaning. Data were analyzed via multiple regression predicting BDI score while controlling for demographics and substance use. Religious subscales were entered sequentially into the base model. Scheffe's method was used to correct for multiple comparisons.

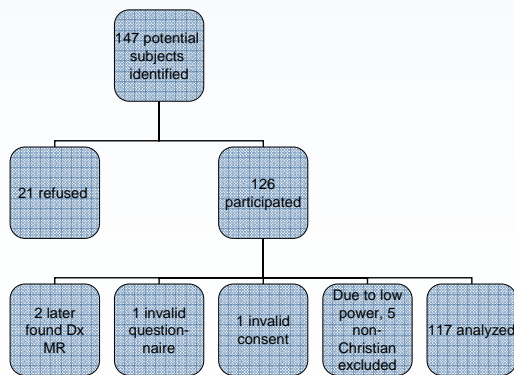


Figure 1. Enrollment flowchart.

Results

Significant bivariate correlates of increasing BDI score included increasing age, female gender, greater substance abuse, lower levels of Spiritual Experiences, lower levels of Forgiveness, more use of Negative Religious Coping, and greater levels of Negative Religious Support. Controlling for demographics and substance use, religious factors associated with depressive symptoms included Negative Religious Coping ($p < 0.0001$), Negative Religious Support ($p = 0.0158$), and Forgiveness ($p < 0.001$).

N	117
Mean Age	14.5 (SD 1.8)
Female	53 (45%)
Race: Caucasian	93 (79%)
African American	18 (15%)
Other	6 (6%)
Mean income	40-60K
Time in treatment	82 weeks (SD 113)
Hx of hospitalization	33 (28%)
Depression diagnosis charted	59 (50%)
Mean BDI	12.7 (range 0-54; possible 0-63)
Mean substance use score	0.6 (range 0-6; possible 0-8)
Denomination: Conservative Protestant	77 (66%)
Liberal Protestant	22 (19%)
Catholic	9 (8%)
None	7 (6%)

Table 2. Sample characteristics

Conclusion

Based on this exploratory study, lack of forgiveness, feeling abandoned or punished by God, and feeling unsupported by one's religious community may be risk factors for or symptoms of depression in adolescent psychiatric outpatients. Further research should seek to clarify longitudinal relationships, elucidate mechanisms, and consider clinical implications.

Independent Variable	β	p
Age	0.67	0.2156
Female Gender	15.28	0.0025
African American (vs. White)	-4.94	0.2319
Increasing income	0.31	0.5943
Substance Abuse	1.89	0.0124
Gender*Race	-9.06	0.0931
No Religion	0.54	0.8920
Conservative Protestant	2.91	0.2092
Liberal Protestant	-4.54	0.0880
Catholic	-6.96	0.0621
Daily Spiritual Experiences	-0.13	0.1268
Forgiveness	-1.08	0.0074
Private Religious Practices	-0.06	0.5594
Religious/Spiritual Coping	-0.10	0.7102
Negative Religious Coping	2.35	<0.0001
Religious Support	-0.11	0.8199
Negative Religious Support	1.22	0.0158
Commitment	-0.43	0.6967
Religious/Spiritual History	-0.55	0.5892
Organizational Religiousness	0.19	0.5373
Overall Self-Ranking	-0.32	0.5597
Meaning	-0.50	0.4217

Table 3. Multivariable correlations of demographic, substance abuse, and religious/spiritual variables to Beck Depression Inventory scores (n=108-113).

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