



## Adolescent Subthreshold-Depression and Anxiety: Psychopathology, Functional Impairment and Increased Suicide Risk

Balazs, J., Miklosi, M., Keresztesy, A., Hoven, C.W., Carli, V., et al. (2013). Adolescent subthreshold-depression and anxiety: Psychopathology, functional impairment and increased suicide risk. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54, 670-677. doi:10.1111/jcpp.120166.



12,935 European adolescents participated in a study investigating the relationships between adolescent depression and anxiety and functional impairment and suicidality. Both subthreshold and threshold depression and anxiety were related to functional impairment and suicidality.

### Key Findings:

- 11% of participating adolescents were classified as depressed, 29% as subthreshold depressed, 6% as anxious, and 32% as subthreshold anxious.
- Girls were more likely than boys to be depressed, anxious, subthreshold depressed, or subthreshold anxious.
- Adolescents who were depressed, subthreshold depressed, anxious, or subthreshold anxious were more likely to report functional impairment than non-depressed or non-anxious adolescents.
- Anxiety and depressive symptoms significantly increased the likelihood of adolescents experiencing suicidal ideation, with a stronger relationship existing for depression comparatively.

### Implications for Programs:

- Programs could offer classes for parents to help them recognize and manage mental health concerns in their children.
- Programs could collaborate with public schools with high numbers of military children to identify military youth who are experiencing emotional difficulties and to intervene appropriately.

### Implications for Policies:

- Policies could allocate funding to train family program workers in effective means of supporting families who are managing mental health concerns in their children.
- Policies could recommend that public schools with high numbers of military children be offered professional development on how to most effectively engage and assist these students and their families.

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could use a longitudinal design to examine how these relationships change over time.
- Additional studies could examine cross-cultural differences in these relationships.



## Background Information

### Methodology:

- Adolescents aged 14-16 years old in 11 European countries at randomly selected schools were recruited to participate; no information on consent rate was presented.
- Students completed self-report questionnaires of depression, anxiety, psychopathology, functional impairment, and suicidal ideation.
- Adolescents were divided into three groups based on their depression score: depressed, subthreshold depressed, and non-depressed. They were also categorized into three groups based on their anxiety score: anxious, subthreshold anxious, and non-anxious.
- Analyses of covariance assessed differences in psychopathology, suicidal ideation, and functional impairment among the groups.

### Participants:

- 12,935 adolescents participated
- 55% of the youth were female.
- Average age = 14.91 years (SD=0.90 years).
- No other demographic data were presented.

### Limitations:

- The participants were European; it is unknown how these findings generalize to American youth.
- All data are cross-sectional, and causal conclusions are not appropriate.
- All data were self-report, rather than the preferred clinical interview.

## Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample					Quality Rating:
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	★★★☆☆
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods					Quality Rating:
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	★★★☆☆
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations					Quality Rating:
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★★★)	★★★☆☆
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications					Quality Rating:
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★★)	Questionable (★★★)	★★★☆☆
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
Overall Quality Rating					★★★☆☆