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Effect of Depression on Adolescent Alcohol Use

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**Effect of Depression on Adolescent Alcohol Use**

**Thomas Bibber and Tawnya Mayo**

**Brigham Young University**

**Introduction:** Adolescents who drink tend to continue to drink as adults. Research has pointed to depression as a factor in alcohol and substance abuse by adolescents (Deykin, Levy, and Wells, 1987). Yet, research is lacking in describing the specific effects of depression on adolescent alcohol use. Additionally, religiosity has not been taken into account in past research. Other studies have specified gender as a moderating factor on the relationship between depression and substance abuse (Rohde, Lewinsohn, and Seeley, 1996).

**Methods:** Data was drawn from the second wave of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. The severity of alcohol abuse was measured by a composite of frequency of alcohol consumption, frequency of drinking five drinks or more, and frequency of getting drunk or high on alcohol. The depression indicator was a composite of nineteen variables measuring the respondent’s level of depression. This indicator is based on the Children’s Depression Inventory as developed by Kovacs in 1985. Religiosity was measured by a composite of church attendance, participation in youth groups, and prayer. The regression was run using the log of each of the previous indicators and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.982</td>
<td>2.016</td>
<td>2.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression Scale</td>
<td>.075**</td>
<td>.097**</td>
<td>.094**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>- .163*</td>
<td>-.150*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression/Gender Interaction</td>
<td>-.00002051</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.001**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at p<.05  
**Significant at p<.01

**Results:** Depression does have a significant relationship with alcohol use in adolescents. Those adolescents who scored higher on the Children’s Depression Inventory are more likely to abuse alcohol. Female respondents reported less alcohol usage than males. Contrary to past research we found gender does not moderate the effect of depression on alcohol consumption. Religiosity has a significant negative effect on adolescent alcohol consumption. These results are significant but the model only predicts seven percent of the variation in adolescent alcohol consumption.

**Conclusions:** Individuals working with depressed youth or youth with an alcohol abuse problem should take into account this relationship. Religiously involved adolescents use less alcohol than those who are not religiously involved. This lends support to Durkheimian social cohesion theory. Further research needs to be done to establish causality. Further research might also be conducted on whether specific religions have greater or lesser effect on alcohol consumption.