

**Comparison of Clinically Depressed, Subclinical, and Normal Control Adolescent group regarding familiar interpersonal and cognitive factors**

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**Introduction**

Although much is known about depression in youth, the subclinically depressed population is not yet well understood. The present study attempts to provide a clearer understanding of depressive symptomatology particularly subsyndromal levels of depression in adolescents.

The research was guided by one major research issue which explored whether depressed, subclinically depressed, and normal control adolescents differ in their depressogenic cognitive style as well as in their perceptions of the following five psychosocial variables: family cohesion, family conflict, family expressiveness, critical maternal messages, and peer social support.

**Methodology**

The sample consisted of 91 male and female adolescents, aged 13-17, from Stip, R. Macedonia. We examined potential group differences and similarities between adolescents with three diagnostically identified groups: the group of clinically depressed (Major Depressive Disorder-MDD or Dysthymic Disorder-DD), the group of subclinically depressed, and the group of normal control adolescents-exhibiting no depressive symptomatology.

Adolescents selected for the subclinically depressed group exhibited higher than average depressive symptomatology (CDI >12), but did not meet DSM-IV criteria for either MDD or DD. Normal control group adolescents consisted of students from primary and secondary schools in Stip. A variety of familial interpersonal variables, as perceived by the adolescents (cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, and critical maternal communication style) and cognitive variables (adolescent's perceptions of the self, world, and future) were examined.

The following instruments were used: M.I.N.I.; the Self-Report Measure of Family Functioning, Child Version; the Family Messages Measure –Mother; the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support; the Cognitive Triad Inventory for Children; and the Children's Depression Inventory.

## **Results**

It was expected that groups (clinically depressed, subclinically depressed, and normal control youth) would differ significantly in the composite of the adolescents' depressogenic cognitive style and perceptions of the following psychosocial variables: family cohesion, family conflict, family expressiveness, critical maternal messages, and peer social support. A MANOVA was conducted with adolescents diagnostic category as the independent variable. Depressogenic cognitive style and the five psychosocial measures were the dependent variables.

The results of the data analysis indicated that this hypothesis was supported. Using Wilk's Lambda, the MANOVA indicated that there were significant differences between diagnostic groups in the composite of the dependent variables,  $F(14, 56) = 3.47, p < .002$ .

Most importantly, the results of this study suggest that adolescents with subclinical levels of depression should no longer be left on the margins of academic and clinical interest. This has extremely important implications for clinic practice, research and public health policy, as well.

**Key words:** clinical; subclinical; depression; familiar interpersonal; cognitive factors.