

# The Relationship Between the Extent of Depression and Social Connection

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the relationship between social connections and the extent of depression. The review has referenced the previous research among multiple countries between the groups of teenagers, elders, and other ages groups. In this work, it has shown that there would be a negative relationship between these two variables, which means the less likely for people to have depression while they have stronger social connection. Depression has been proposed to be an expression of self-helplessness or self-powerlessness. The obsession with helplessness during infancy might contribute to depression [1]. Bullying during adolescence may contribute to depression.

**Keywords:** depression, social connection, school bullying, ages

**1.INTRODUCTION**

Depending on the number and severity of symptoms and the influences on individuals' functioning, depression can be organised around three labels, mild, moderate or severe [2]. During a depressive period, individuals experience depressive emotions, such as sadness, emptiness, irritability, or a loss of interest in events most times of the day, and it must last at least two weeks. The

other symptoms might include poor concentration, excessive guilt, worthless, or hopelessness of the future, thoughts about death, disturbed sleeping, change about appetite or weight, and fatigue and depression [2]. In some cultures, individuals express their emotional distress via physical symptoms. Additionally, people who have depression might experience great difficulties in functioning in the family, personal, educational, social, and professional areas [2].

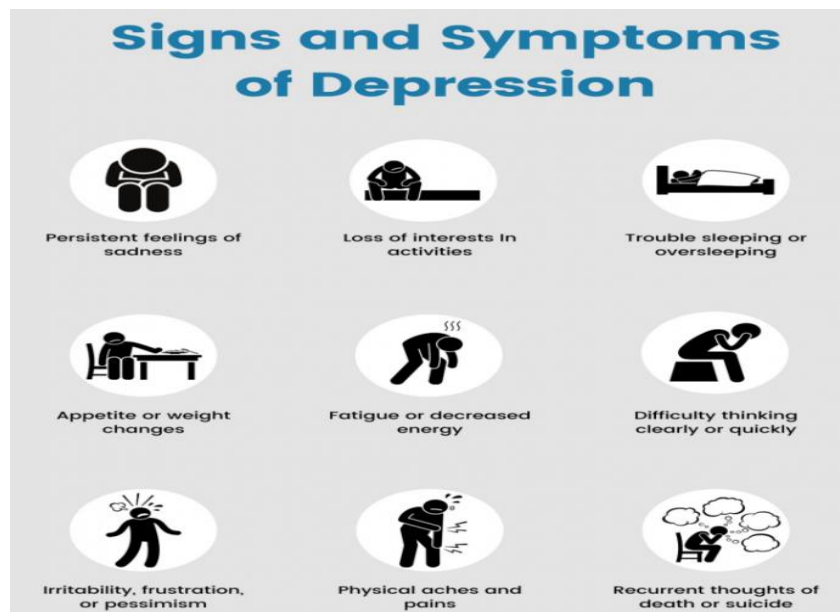


Figure 1 Depression Central: Tell Me All I Need to Know About Depression [4]

Human beings are social animals, individuals who have friends could help each other, and people who are disliked by others could feel depressed and anxiety because it is a fear of being abandoned. There are different ways to define the concept of social connection [3]. The term social connection relates to the social relations which people actively experience [3] as a significant aspect in their lives [3]. Social connections involve networks, relationships, and connections between people and others or communities, such as neighbourhoods, family members, friends, and sport teams [3].

The proposed attachment is the concept describing the first social connection between a baby and her/his mother and proposed that this relationship influences the child's future connections with her/his mother or others [3]. The concept of social connection is usually used in clinical literature as social support, which includes not only practical assistance or information support, but also creates self-esteem via a sense of belonging [3]. The other term that includes social connection is belongingness, which defines a basic need of human beings of feeling accepted or being part of something greater, that tends to involve intimate relationships [3]. Finally, social connections might include everything from relationships with family or friends to relationships appearing at the workplace via different events. The skill of developing social connections is a kind of depending on the context of the cases or the personal experiences of social connections with other people [3].

Social connections have been found to be associated with great physical and psychological health [3]. Social activities can reduce stress, improve self-esteem and skills of cognition, thereby positively affect people's health or well-being [3]. In other words, social isolation has been argued to lead to disturbed well-being and may have negative impacts on health [3].

## **2.RESULT**

### ***2.1 Social isolation, school bullying, and depression among teenagers***

School bullying has been regarded as one type of social isolation. Depression or serious suicidal ideation is raised in both bullies and being bullied students. The students who bully others, and who are being bullied, are equally likely to suffer from depression [5].

In 1997, there was a study which included a large cohort of teenagers, who come from two secondary schools in different areas of Finland [5]. A survey involved the questions of health, healthy behaviors, and behaviors about bullying, Baker Depression Scale, or suicidal ideation [5]. The result showed that students who suffer from bullying are more likely to be depressed. Depressed adolescents might also elicit negative

attention from their classmates [5]. Compared with others, students who are bullied tend to lack confidence, over-commit to their families, and are introverted [5]. Therefore, depression may be both the cause and outcome of being bullied [5].

According to Badri et al., (2021) [6], in a large cohort study between 15 to 19 years old, there were some participants considered they were "frequently/always depressed". The survey involved 14 fields associated with well-being, and the 5-Likert scale was used in the survey. Loneliness is one of the significant factors of depression among adolescents because it has the greatest direct effect on self-perception depression [6].

The result showed that plenty of adolescents understand the meaning of loneliness and report they are isolated. This study further showed that there are several other reasons that relate to the isolation or loneliness of school teenagers, which are general trusting, participating in informal events with friends, or the quality of spending time with their families. It seems obvious that some of these factors show outside of school or home, but the school factors are also important [6]. In addition, the outcome of the study also showed that relationships with relatives or friends have the same influences on teenagers' well-being, which might make them less depressed [6].

### ***2.2 Social connections, isolation, and depression among elders***

Bai et al., (2020) [7], suggest that older people with higher social capital are less likely to suffer from depression. This study used a multi-stage stratified cluster random sampling method in order to conduct the cross-sectional study of older participants from three cities in Anhui Province, China. The questionnaires were used in order to collect data of demographic characteristics, depression, and social capital. The generalized linear model and classification regression tree model were aimed to evaluate the relationship between social capital and depression [7].

A large cohort group of elderly  $\geq 60$  years old were involved in the final analysis. The outcome showed that multiple social capital dimensions are positively related to depression mood in general, such as social support, social participation, social connection, reciprocity, cohesion, and trust [7]. Previous research has shown that social isolation and loneliness might raise the likelihood of mental issues, however, individuals know a little about the different contributions of aspects of isolation [8].

According to a study in the United States, which was aimed to distinguish between the approaches about social disconnection (e.g., infrequent social connections and small social networks) and social isolation (e.g., little social support and loneliness) cause serious anxiety or depression symptoms in the elders between 57 and 85

years old. The researchers made a longitudinal mediation analysis through data from the National Social Life, Health and Aging Project (NSHAP) [8]. The participants were the United States people born from 1920-1947. The

measures about social disconnection, perceived isolation, and symptoms of depression or anxiety were used in the study. A structural equation model was used in order to create the longitudinal path model completely [8].

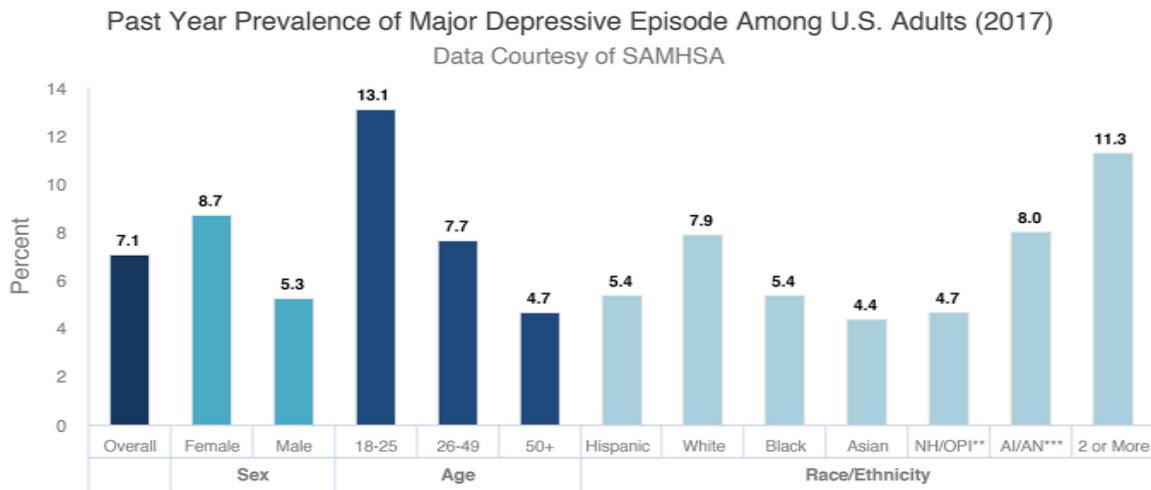


Figure 2 Depression Central: Tell Me All I Need to Know About Depression [4]

### 2.3 Research among individuals across all age's groups

The Australian National Mental Health and Happiness Survey (2017) also showed that social connection factors, such as the frequency or quality of social support, social isolation, and low levels of social connections are related to depression [9].

A national survey was signed up by a large group of participants aged 16-85. A logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between social connectivity factors and the 12-month average of serious depression in the whole sample [9].

The result showed that higher-quality social connections relate to the lower possibility of depression. Friendship plays an important role throughout the whole

life, and the family support is also significant in middle adulthood because participants who without family support showed more than tripled the possibility of depression in the previous year [9].

### 3.DISCUSSION

By 2050 one-fifth of the world population will be over 65 years old [10], together with social loneliness among young people there is a prediction of a severe public health issue in this generation because it is associated to cardiovascular issues, neurocognitive and mental health issues, or autoimmune [10]. This literature review has supported the prediction of a negative correlation between the extent of depression and the social connection, whether among young people or elders [10].

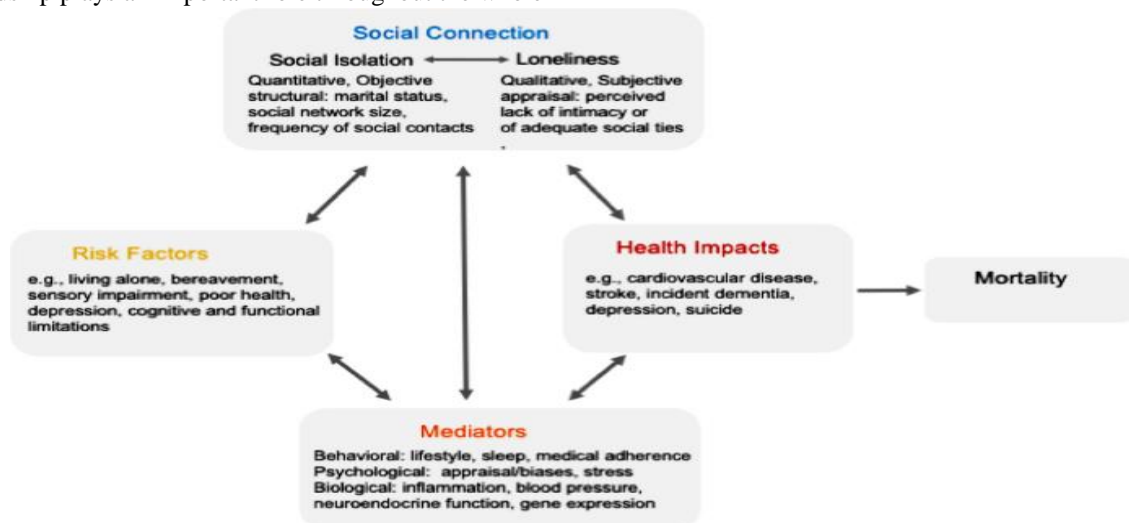


Figure 3 Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults: Review and Commentary of a National Academies Report.[11]

However, these outcomes could provide information for public health institutes and social policies. For instance, prevention interventions could be built more for elders and implemented in numerous health care, cultural or religious institutes, or the community centers [10]. Because these might help elders to build meaningful relationships with other people. The cognitive skills could help elders critically assess the level of the ways social support networks meet their needs of friendship or belonging. Additionally, the action-based approaches, such as creating connections with important individuals frequently, and supporting social connections could be significant for the greatest quality care [10].

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This review has collected data from multiple countries, such as Finland, Abu Dhabi, Australia, and China. The cross-cultural study could help improve the generalizability. According to the results, there is a negative relationship between social connection and depression. However, there are also some limitations. First, due to the COVID-19, it makes it difficult to find the participants, and the literature review seems harder to find something new if compared with the psychological experiment. Secondly, some of the literature seems a little old in this study. For example, the experiment in Finland was in 1997, which might not be able to accurately reflect the cases in 2021. It would be better to focus on the newest article in the future study or finding some real participants if it is possible.

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