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The prevalence of depressive symptoms in early adolescence in Cyprus

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Background: Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for mental health, as the brain undergoes rapid growth and development during these stages. During this time, children and adolescents acquire essential cognitive and socioemotional skills that are fundamental for assuming adult roles in society and shaping their future mental well-being. One of the most significant concerns during this stage is depression, a complex mental health condition that affects a considerable number of children worldwide.

Aim: The aim of the present study was a) to examine the prevalence of depressive symptoms among early adolescents in Cyprus and b) to explore potential associations between the individual and family characteristics of participants and depressive symptoms. Design: A cross-sectional descriptive correlational study with random sampling

Methods: Depressive symptoms were assessed using the Children's Depression Inventory-2 (CDI-2), with descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and multivariate logistic regression models employed to analyze sociodemographic associations and odds ratios, adjusting for confounders.

Results: Of the 552 participants included in the study, 14.3% exhibited depressive symptoms. Girls were nearly twice as likely to develop depressive symptoms compared to boys (OR = 1.93), while children with neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD) had a fivefold increased risk (OR = 5.56), and children with foreign fathers had more than four times (OR = 4.52) more likely to develop depressive symptoms.

Conclusions: The study highlights the impact of sociodemographic factors and sex differences on depression in early adolescents in Cyprus, emphasizing the need for targeted mental health interventions.

Key messages:

- Early adolescent girls and children with ADHD or foreign fathers in Cyprus face significantly higher depression risks highlighting urgent needs for targeted support.
- Our study reveals key sociodemographic predictors of youth depression, calling for tailored interventions in schools and communities across Cyprus.