



DEPRESSION: PSYCHOPATHOLOGY AS DEFINED BY UNDERREPRESENTED ADOLESCENTS

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Introduction

How do adolescents define depression and how does that compare to the standard definition used in Psychology? Because not all suffering is equal, it is better to understand the narratives underrepresented people have by listening to them. This project is insightful by nature because it dives into the perspective adolescents have regarding depression.

This project is a collaboration on an ongoing project in Oceanside which has collected qualitative data regarding mental health experiences of underrepresented adolescents. The setting where the interviews have taken place is a culturally diverse school in which students there are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Within the interviews, participants were asked to define depression, where they heard this name from, and if they had it or knew someone that did.

Methods

A total of 19 participants, 12 males and 7 females, from ages 10-13; were interviewed in a neutral setting. Each interview has been recorded and transcribed, the only people participating in these interviews are the participant and the interviewer. A total of six interviews were done per individual, on different days.

"It doesn't just mean that you're sad and just want to kill yourself all the time, like it's multiple symptoms. Sadness, anger, anxiety, basically all of our emotions and not knowing what to do; as in nervios (nervousness in Spanish)."

Results

- The majority of the participants related depression with sadness (15 out of the 19 participants; 79%).
- Four of the participants related depression with anger. Two of them have seen this symptom in a family member who suffers from depression.
- Three of the participants mentioned suicide as related with depression. One of them almost lost her mother due to depression.
- Two of the participants associated depression with the song SAD! By XXXTentacion. This song talks about feeling sad and low as result of a heartbreak. The artist expresses in the lyrics the consideration of suicide as a result of this.
- Two of the participants related depression with stress, one of them expressed it as being unable to cope with life and committing suicide as result; the other participant experienced depression as a result of bullying.
- Two of the participants had hopelessness as one of their definitions of depression.
- One of the participants expressed depression as a mixture of emotions

Conclusion

Definitions adolescents gave to depression aligned with that of the DSM-5. Feeling sad, hopeless, diminish in interest, decreased in appetite, insomnia, feelings of worthlessness, and recurrent thoughts of death are both expressed in the interviews and described as symptoms of depression by the DSM-5. Nonetheless, for most of the participants, it was difficult to define depression as a psychopathology; they related it with an emotion rather than a mental disorder. There were some instances where depression stood out as a form of perpetual sadness, differing the disorder from the ephemeral nature of an emotion. The definition of depression given by participants is heavily influenced by observation of loved ones that are being affected or have been affected by depression. In the same way, music artists play an important role in giving sense to this psychopathology as song lyrics resonate with them in some way.

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Word cloud of interview transcripts