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Depression Among Greek Teenage Students: A Silent Crisis

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Abstract

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the increasing rates of depression among Greek teenage students, a phenomenon that poses serious implications for their academic, emotional, and social development. Drawing on recent studies, national statistics, and expert insights, the paper investigates the multifaceted causes behind adolescent depression in Greece, including socio-economic instability, educational pressure, and digital influences such as social media. It also explores the impact of the school environment, highlighting the lack of mental health resources in public education. Furthermore, the article identifies early warning signs, outlines the long-term consequences of untreated depression, and offers evidence-based strategies for prevention and intervention. A statistical table presents current prevalence rates, emphasizing the urgency of coordinated policy reforms. The ultimate aim of this article is to propose an integrated approach to improving mental health outcomes for Greek teenagers through collaborative efforts between families, schools, and policymakers.

Keywords: depression, Greek adolescents, mental health, education stress, school psychology, teen well-being, adolescent mental health policy

Introduction

Mental health issues among adolescents have escalated significantly in recent years, and Greece is no exception to this global trend. Depression, in particular, has emerged as one of the most pressing mental health challenges for Greek teenage students. This condition affects not only their academic performance but also their emotional development and overall quality of life. This article delves into the causes, manifestations, and consequences of depression among Greek adolescents and proposes a framework for

addressing this growing concern, integrating current data, expert opinions, and academic research.

Understanding Adolescent Depression

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by persistent sadness, lack of interest in activities, and a range of cognitive and physical symptoms that impair daily functioning. Among teenagers, this condition is especially concerning due to their ongoing

psychological and neurological development (Kleftaras & Katsogianni, 2020). Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to environmental stressors, social pressures, and academic challenges, all of which are prevalent in the Greek context.

Causes of Depression in Greek Teenagers

A range of socio-economic and cultural factors contribute to the rise of depression among Greek teenagers. The aftermath of Greece's financial crisis continues to impact families, creating a climate of economic uncertainty. According to Papadopoulos and Georgiou (2022), financial hardship within households correlates strongly with increased anxiety and depressive symptoms in adolescents.

Academic pressure also plays a significant role. The Greek educational system places immense emphasis on university entrance exams, leading to chronic stress and performance anxiety among students (Papadopoulos & Georgiou, 2022). Additionally, the widespread use of private tutoring (frontistiria) consumes much of students' free time, leaving little room for socialization and recreation.

Social media further exacerbates the issue. Teenagers often compare themselves to idealized images online, which can distort self-image and lower self-esteem. Exposure to cyberbullying is also a growing concern, particularly in urban areas (World Health Organization, 2021).

The Role of Family Dynamics

Family structure and communication styles can play a crucial role in either buffering or amplifying depression in adolescents. Dysfunctional family relationships, lack of emotional support, or high parental expectations often correlate with depressive symptoms (Kleftaras & Katsogianni, 2020). On the other hand,

emotionally supportive families are shown to promote psychological resilience in teenagers.

The School Environment

The Greek school environment tends to prioritize academic performance over emotional well-being. Most public schools lack dedicated mental health professionals. Teachers, often untrained in psychological support, are ill-equipped to identify or address students' emotional needs. As a result, many cases of depression go unnoticed or are misunderstood as disciplinary issues.

Digital Dependency and Screen Time

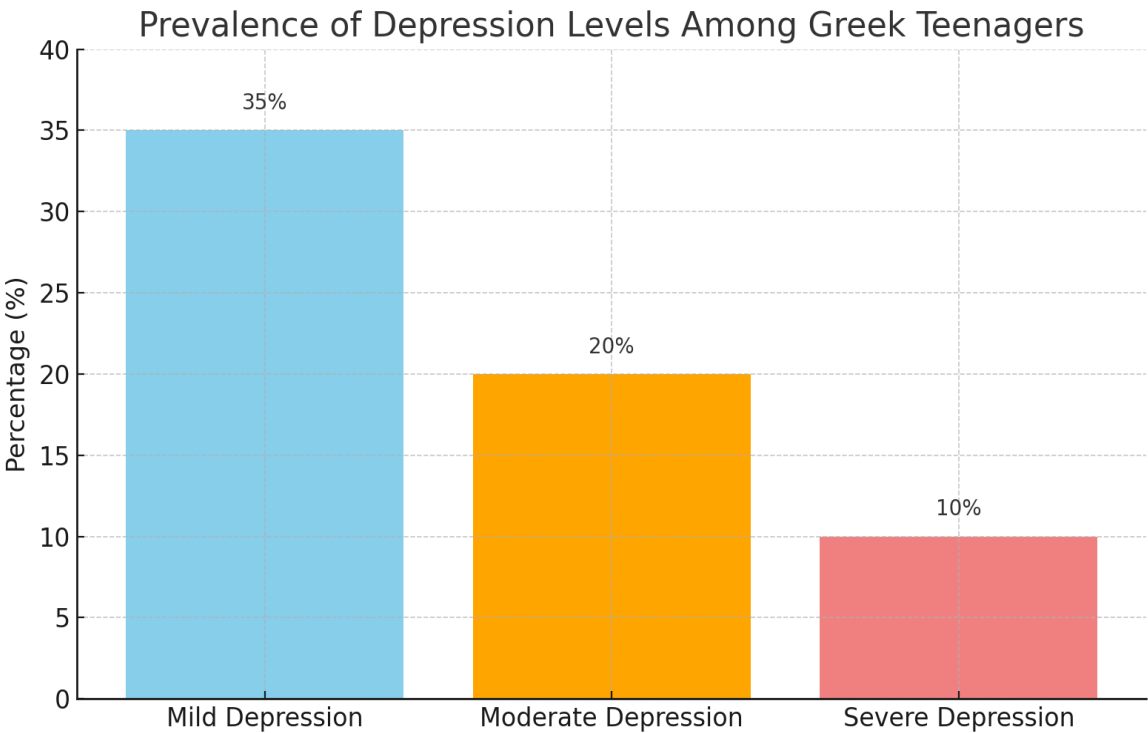
The rapid integration of technology into the lives of Greek teenagers has also introduced new challenges. Excessive screen time and dependency on digital devices can disrupt sleep patterns, reduce physical activity, and limit real-world social interaction—all of which are associated with heightened depressive symptoms (WHO, 2021).

Prevalence and Statistical Data

Recent studies indicate a worrying rise in the prevalence of depression among Greek adolescents. According to a national survey conducted in 2021, approximately 30% of Greek teenagers reported experiencing symptoms of depression, with 10% showing signs of severe depression (Papadopoulos & Georgiou, 2022).

Depression Level	Percentage (%)
Mild Depression	35%
Moderate Depression	20%
Severe Depression	10%

Table 1: Prevalence of Depression Levels Among Greek Teenagers



Bar Chart 1: Prevalence of Depression Levels Among Greek Teenagers

The table and bar chart show that a significant portion of students experience mild to moderate depression, while a smaller but crucial

percentage face severe symptoms requiring immediate intervention.

Symptoms and Early Warning Signs

Recognizing the signs of depression is critical for early intervention. Common symptoms include persistent sadness, irritability, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and withdrawal from social interactions (Kleftaras & Katsogianni, 2020). Academic decline is often one of the first observable indicators.

Long-Term Impact

Untreated depression can have serious long-term consequences. These include chronic mental health disorders, substance abuse, academic failure, and increased risk of suicide. Depression during adolescence is a strong predictor of mental health issues in adulthood (World Health Organization, 2021).

Cultural Attitudes and Mental Health Stigma

Despite growing awareness, mental illness in Greece is still stigmatized. Many adolescents hesitate to seek help due to fear of social judgment. Educational campaigns, community discussions, and open school dialogues are essential in changing societal perceptions and encouraging help-seeking behavior.

Strategies for Prevention and Support

To address this issue, a multi-level strategy is required:

- ✚ School-Based Mental Health Services: Schools should be staffed with psychologists and counselors trained to support adolescents.
- ✚ Curriculum Reform: Incorporating emotional education and stress management techniques into the curriculum can help students develop resilience.
- ✚ Parental Involvement: Parents need to be educated about mental health to support their children effectively.
- ✚ Public Awareness Campaigns: National campaigns can reduce stigma and encourage teens to seek help without fear of judgment.

Policy Recommendations

The Greek Ministry of Education must prioritize adolescent mental health. This involves funding mental health services, training educators, and creating policies that promote student well-being. Additionally, collaboration with mental health organizations can provide ongoing support and resources for schools and families.

Conclusion

Depression among Greek teenage students is an urgent issue that requires comprehensive intervention. Through collaborative efforts between schools, families, healthcare providers, and policymakers, Greece can create a supportive environment that promotes the mental health and well-being of its youth. Early intervention, education, and destigmatization are key to empowering teenagers to face their challenges with strength and resilience.

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