The Relationship Between Religion and Adolescent Depression

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Research Questions
- Does religious attendance impact adolescent depression?
- Does importance of religion to the adolescent moderate the relationship between religious attendance and depression?

Hypotheses
- Religious attendance will be negatively associated with depression.
- Relationship will be strongest for those who say religion is important to them.
- Depressive conflict will arise in adolescents who attend frequently, but do not find religion important.

Background
- 3.2 million adolescents in the U.S. had at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in 2017 (McCance-Katz, 2017).
- Youth were at higher risks of an MDE when religion was not important to them or their friends (Topalian et al., 2019).

Data
- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
- Grades 7-12

Frequency of Attendance
- Weekly
- Monthly
- < Once a Month
- Never

Religious Service Attendance
- 1- Once A Week or More: 24%
- 2- Once A Month or More/Less Than Once a Week: 39%
- 3- Less Than Once a Month: 17%
- 4- Never: 20%

Religious Importance
- 1- Very Important: 17%
- 2- Fairly Important: 6%
- 3- Fairly Unimportant: 43%
- 4- Not Important at All: 34%

Depression Scale
- Level of Depression
- Mean Depression by Religious Attendance and Religious Importance

Results
- Depression decreases as religious attendance increases.
- Hypotheses were supported.
- Exception is those who frequently attended religious services but found no importance in religion – their depression was higher.

Summary of Findings
- Depression decreases as religious attendance increases.
- Hypotheses were supported.
- Exception is those who frequently attended religious services but found no importance in religion – their depression was higher.

Limitations and Future Research
Limitations:
- Research conducted in mid 1990s – results may differ in more contemporary sample.
- The definition of “important” is subjective.
Future research:
- Take into consideration gender, SES, parental influences.
- Look at differences across different religions.

References