

Investigating the Impact of Collective Self-Esteem and Perceived Discrimination on the Symptom Profile of Depression in South Asians

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Introduction: Despite South Asians accounting for 1/3 of the global mental health burden, culturally relevant research on how immigration and South Asian culture interact with depressive symptoms is lacking.⁷

Objectives: This study aimed to explore differences in depression symptoms between native and immigrant South Asians in the U.S. and India, using the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II) and the Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ-9). It examined the impact of collective self-esteem and perceived discrimination on depressive symptoms.

Methods: Participants aged 18-24, of South Asian descent who had experienced depression, were recruited via social media and word of mouth. Sample size was 150, although 18 were excluded due to incomplete demographic criteria. The questionnaire included demographic measures, the BDI-II, PHQ-9, Collective Self-Esteem Scale, and Perceived Discrimination Scale. Correlation analyses, survey logistics, and descriptive statistics were conducted using SAS software.

Results: The study found that the collective self-esteem scale, particularly the importance to identity and membership subscales, was highly correlated with depressive symptoms. These subscales measure the significance of a group to one's self-concept and worthiness as part of a group. These findings suggest identity and membership as predictors of depressive symptoms in this population, reflecting the collectivist nature of South Asian culture.^{1,4} Additionally, perceived discrimination, both lifetime and daily, was correlated with depressive symptoms.⁹

Conclusion: As South Asians aged 18-24 are impacted both by their cultural identity and status as a minority group, resources should be focused on combating discrimination and promoting mental wellness within a collectivist framework in the community. This study should be generalized only to South Asian immigrants from highly educated and high-income households, and should be repeated with a larger sample size in order to generalize.

Keywords: Depression, Culture, Asian, Self-esteem, Discrimination

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