

**THE IMPACT OF DEPRESSION ON ADOLESCENT AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL
SOCIAL WORKERS, A STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
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DECLARATION

I, **SHAIBU GLORY** with Matriculation Number: **SSC2106140** hereby declare that this work titled: **THE IMPACT OF DEPRESSION ON ADOLESCENT AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS** is a result of my research effort carried out in the **Department of SOCIAL WORK** under the supervision of **MR. NGBEKEN ANTHONY** and I declare that to the best of my knowledge and believe, its solely the result of my work except where acknowledged as derived from the text and a list of references provided. No part of this work has been previously presented for another degree or diploma at any university.

Signature _____

Date _____

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research project titled: **THE IMPACT OF DEPRESSION ON ADOLESCENT AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS** was written by, **SHAIBU GLORY** with the Matriculation Number **SSC2106140** under my supervision.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace, loving kindness, mercy sovereignty, provisions and divine enablement from commencement of this research through its successful completion. I also dedicate it to my parents whose prayers and words of encouragement kept me going throughout the most challenging point of my life.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of depression on adolescents and explores the role of school social workers in addressing this mental health issue in secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, Nigeria. Depression among adolescents has become a growing concern due to its adverse effects on academic performance, behavior, and social relationships. The objectives of the study were to determine the prevalence of depression among adolescents, identify its major causes, and examine the availability and effectiveness of school social workers in managing students' mental health challenges. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire which included the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) to assess depression levels. A total of 370 students from selected secondary schools in Egor LGA participated in the study. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and the Chi-square statistical tool to test for significant differences. Findings revealed that 63.5% of respondents experienced symptoms of depression ranging from mild to severe. The leading causes of depression included academic pressure, family conflicts, social isolation, and financial difficulties. Female students were found to exhibit higher levels of depressive symptoms compared to male students. Furthermore, the study found that the presence of school social workers was limited, and their role in managing adolescent depression was underutilized due to staffing shortages and lack of awareness. The study concludes that depression significantly affects adolescents in secondary schools, and that there is a pressing need to strengthen mental health support systems, particularly by increasing the presence and functionality of school social workers.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage characterized by profound biological, psychological, and social changes. During this phase, young people experience a heightened risk of emotional and mental health challenges, among which depression stands out as one of the most prevalent and debilitating conditions. Depression among adolescents has become a growing public health concern globally, affecting their academic performance, social relationships, self-esteem, and overall well-being (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Depression is more than just occasional sadness; it is a persistent mood disorder marked by feelings of hopelessness, low energy, irritability, and a lack of interest or pleasure in daily activities. For adolescents, these symptoms can severely disrupt school performance, interpersonal relationships, and even increase the risk of self-harm or suicide. According to the WHO (2023), depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents aged 10 to 19. It is estimated that approximately 10–20% of adolescents globally experience mental health conditions, yet many remain undiagnosed and untreated.

Recent research highlights a significant rise in adolescent depression, exacerbated by modern societal pressures, including academic stress, family issues, bullying, and, more recently, the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A study by Lee et al. (2022) found that depressive symptoms among adolescents increased by 29% during the pandemic, with school closures and social isolation contributing significantly. Furthermore, digital exposure and cyberbullying on social media platforms have become new contributors to adolescent depression (Twenge & Campbell, 2020).

In the educational context, depression among adolescents is associated with a range of negative outcomes. These include declining grades, poor school attendance, behavioral problems, and dropping out of school (Biehl et al., 2021). Left unaddressed, adolescent depression can extend into adulthood, resulting in chronic mental health issues, substance abuse, and unemployment. Consequently, schools are increasingly recognized not only as centers for academic learning but also as critical environments for mental health intervention and support.

The role of school social workers has become central in identifying, addressing, and mitigating the impact of depression on adolescents. School social workers act as mental health advocates within the school system, working collaboratively with students, teachers, parents, and community agencies to provide emotional support and mental health services. Their responsibilities include early identification of students showing symptoms of depression, crisis intervention, counseling services, case management, and referral to external mental health resources (Kelly et al., 2020).

School social workers are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between mental health services and educational systems. Unlike teachers, who may lack training in mental health, social workers are trained to recognize the signs of emotional distress, conduct psychosocial assessments, and implement individualized intervention plans (Franklin et al., 2021). Research by Dupper (2020) emphasizes that school social workers play a vital role in promoting mental health literacy, reducing stigma, and creating a supportive environment that fosters resilience among adolescents.

Despite their importance, the integration of school social workers into school settings remains inconsistent, particularly in developing countries where mental health is often underfunded or stigmatized. In Nigeria, for instance, school-based mental health services are still underdeveloped, with limited availability of trained social workers or psychologists in secondary schools (Adewale & Olatunji, 2022). Many adolescents suffer in silence, with their symptoms misunderstood as laziness, rebellion, or lack of discipline. This further exacerbates the condition, making early intervention and support even more critical.

Moreover, the stigma associated with mental health continues to deter adolescents from seeking help. A study by Uzoezie and Okafor (2023) revealed that adolescents in Nigerian secondary schools often fear being labeled as "mad" or "weak" if they express emotional distress. This cultural perception underscores the need for awareness programs and trained

professionals in schools to normalize mental health discussions and provide safe spaces for adolescents to express their emotions.

In light of these challenges, there is a growing advocacy for policies that support the inclusion of mental health professionals in schools and the provision of comprehensive mental health education. Countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia have made significant strides in this regard, incorporating social workers, counselors, and psychologists into school systems and establishing mental health frameworks tailored for adolescents (NASW, 2022). These policies have demonstrated success in reducing school absenteeism, improving academic performance, and lowering suicide rates among students.

To effectively address adolescent depression, a multidisciplinary approach is needed—one that combines educational, psychological, social, and policy-level interventions. The school environment offers a strategic setting for such interventions, and the school social worker is a critical component of this model. Through individual counseling, group sessions, classroom-based psychoeducation, and family engagement, school social workers can help adolescents navigate their emotional challenges, build resilience, and develop coping strategies.

The impact of depression on adolescents is profound, affecting all aspects of their development and future prospects. As the prevalence of mental health issues among young people continues to rise, the school system must evolve to include mental health as a core component of student support. School social workers play a pivotal role in this evolution,

offering professional, culturally sensitive, and accessible care to adolescents in distress. Their involvement not only improves individual student outcomes but also contributes to a healthier, more inclusive school environment. As such, there is an urgent need for governments, educational institutions, and stakeholders to prioritize the recruitment, training, and deployment of school social workers to combat the growing challenge of adolescent depression.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Depression among adolescents has become an escalating concern worldwide, affecting not only their mental and emotional well-being but also their academic performance, social interactions, and overall quality of life. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the prevalence of depression among school-aged adolescents, fueled by various factors such as academic pressure, family instability, bullying (both physical and cyber), substance abuse, and socioeconomic challenges. Despite this growing mental health crisis, many schools, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, lack the necessary structures, trained personnel, and intervention frameworks to address adolescent depression effectively.

The traditional focus of schools on academic achievement often overlooks the emotional and psychological struggles that students silently endure. Adolescents experiencing depression are often misunderstood by teachers, stigmatized by peers, and neglected by parents who may lack mental health awareness. As a result, many students suffer in silence, leading to poor

academic outcomes, truancy, self-harm, or even suicide in extreme cases. Studies have shown that early detection and support are critical in managing adolescent depression, yet the absence of mental health professionals within school settings remains a significant barrier to timely intervention (Lee et al., 2022; Uzoezie & Okafor, 2023).

School social workers, where available, have proven to be effective in identifying students at risk, providing counseling services, and connecting families with external mental health resources. However, in many Nigerian schools, the role of the school social worker is either undefined, undervalued, or entirely absent. This gap has left many adolescents without adequate support systems during their most vulnerable years. There is a pressing need to evaluate the impact of depression on adolescent students and to explore the extent to which school social workers, where present, contribute to early detection, support, and recovery.

Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the increasing impact of depression on adolescent students and the inadequate presence and utilization of school social workers to manage this mental health issue within school environments. Without adequate intervention and support, the educational goals and future well-being of many adolescents remain at risk.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of depression on adolescents and the role of school social workers

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Investigate the prevalence and causes of depression among adolescents in secondary schools.
2. Assess the effects of depression on the academic performance, behavior, and social relationships of adolescents.
3. Examine the availability and roles of school social workers in identifying and managing depression among students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To guide the investigation, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?
2. What are the major causes of depression among adolescent students?
3. How does depression affect the academic performance and social behavior of adolescents, and what strategies do school social workers use to support affected students?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it seeks to shed light on the growing problem of depression among adolescents and the vital but often overlooked role of school social workers in addressing this

issue. The findings will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on adolescent mental health, with a particular focus on how schools can become proactive environments for early identification, intervention, and support for students struggling with depression. The study will help create awareness among adolescents about the signs and symptoms of depression and the importance of seeking help. It will also advocate for the establishment of safe, supportive school environments where students can receive the emotional support they need.

The findings will provide insight into the adverse effects of depression on students' academic performance, behavior, and social interactions. This understanding can motivate school leaders to integrate mental health services into their schools and support the employment of qualified school social workers.

The study will highlight the critical role school social workers play in managing adolescent depression. It will also identify the challenges they face and offer suggestions on how their roles can be strengthened and better supported.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on investigating the impact of depression on adolescents and examining the role of school social workers in addressing this mental health challenge within selected secondary schools. The research will cover key areas such as the causes and symptoms of

adolescent depression, its effects on academic performance and social behavior, and the presence, functions, and effectiveness of school social workers in managing depression.

The geographical scope of the study is limited to selected public and private secondary schools in Egor LGA. The study population includes adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19, school social workers (where available), teachers, and school administrators.

1.6 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Despite its relevance, the study may face several limitations, including:

Limited Availability of School Social Workers: In many schools, especially in developing regions, school social workers are either unavailable or their roles are poorly defined. This may limit the depth of analysis regarding their effectiveness in addressing adolescent depression.

Time Constraints: The duration allocated for conducting the research may limit the ability to conduct a more comprehensive, longitudinal analysis of depression among adolescents.

Definition of Terms

For clarity and better understanding, the following key terms used in the study are defined:

Depression: A common mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and changes in sleep or appetite. In adolescents, it may also manifest as irritability, academic decline, and withdrawal from social interaction (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

Adolescents: Individuals in the transitional stage of development between childhood and adulthood, typically ranging from ages 12 to 19. This stage is marked by significant physical, emotional, and psychological changes that can influence behavior and well-being.

School Social Worker: A trained professional employed in educational settings to address social, emotional, and psychological issues that affect students' learning and behavior. They provide counseling, crisis intervention, and referrals, and act as a link between school, family, and community services.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

DEPRESSION

Depression, also known as major depressive disorder (MDD), is one of the most common and debilitating mental health conditions affecting individuals across all age groups. It is characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in most activities, significant changes in appetite or weight, sleep disturbances, fatigue, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt, and difficulty concentrating or making decisions (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2022). In severe cases, it can also lead to thoughts of death or suicide.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), depression is a leading cause of disability worldwide and contributes significantly to the global burden of disease. It affects over 280 million people globally, including children, adolescents, and adults. While occasional feelings of sadness are a normal part of life, depression involves more intense and prolonged emotional disturbances that impair an individual's ability to function in daily life.

Depression manifests in various forms, including major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia), bipolar disorder (which involves depressive episodes), and seasonal affective disorder (SAD) (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2023). The DSM-5-TR (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, Text Revision) sets specific criteria for diagnosing depressive disorders, which include at least five symptoms persisting for two weeks or more, with at least one being either depressed mood or loss of interest/pleasure (APA, 2022).

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2023) indicate that from 2021 to 2023, approximately 13.1% of individuals aged 12 and older reported experiencing symptoms of depression within a two-week period. Notably, the highest prevalence was among adolescents aged 12–19, at 19.2%, highlighting the urgent need for targeted mental health interventions in this age group.

The causes of depression are multifactorial, involving a combination of genetic, biological, psychological, and environmental influences. Genetically, individuals with a family history of depression are more likely to develop the condition (Fried & Nesse, 2022). Biologically, depression has been linked to chemical imbalances in neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine (Krishnan & Nestler, 2021). Additionally, chronic stress, trauma, childhood neglect, substance abuse, and certain medical conditions can increase the risk of developing depression (NIMH, 2023).

Environmental stressors such as poverty, family conflict, academic pressure, bullying, and social isolation are particularly significant in adolescent populations. The teenage years are marked by emotional volatility and social challenges, making adolescents more vulnerable to mental health disorders when these stressors are unaddressed (Patel et al., 2022).

Advances in neuroimaging have shown that depression is associated with structural and functional changes in the brain, particularly in regions such as the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hippocampus (Zhou et al., 2024).

These brain areas are involved in emotion regulation, decision-making, and memory, all of which are commonly disrupted in individuals with depression.

If left untreated, depression can lead to severe consequences, including poor academic or work performance, strained relationships, substance abuse, and suicide. The WHO (2023) reports that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds globally, and most suicides are associated with untreated or poorly managed depression.

Depression is treatable, and early intervention significantly improves outcomes. Common treatments include psychotherapy (especially cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy), pharmacological approaches (such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors or SSRIs), and lifestyle modifications like regular exercise, healthy sleep habits, and nutrition (NIMH, 2023). In more resistant cases, treatment options like electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) may be employed.

Multidisciplinary support, particularly in school settings, is crucial for adolescent populations. School-based mental health services, including the presence of trained school social workers, play a vital role in early identification, counseling, and referral of at-risk students (Green et al., 2022).

Depression is a complex, yet common and treatable mental health disorder that affects individuals across all demographics, with adolescents being particularly at risk due to their developmental stage and social pressures. Understanding its multifaceted nature—from causes to consequences—is vital for reducing stigma and promoting mental well-being. Effective management requires a holistic approach that includes clinical treatment, family support, and school-based interventions. The increasing prevalence of depression, particularly among adolescents, underscores the importance of incorporating school social workers and other mental health professionals into educational systems to support early detection and intervention. Depression is a common but serious mental health disorder characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, feelings of hopelessness, low energy, and impaired daily functioning. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents worldwide. It goes beyond ordinary mood fluctuations and can significantly interfere with social, academic, and emotional development.

ADOLESCENT

Adolescence is a distinct developmental phase that bridges childhood and adulthood, typically marked by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) defines adolescence as the period between ages 10 and 19 years, a stage characterized by profound growth and development across multiple dimensions. Recent research, however, suggests that the adolescent period may extend into the early to mid-20s due to prolonged educational, social, and economic transitions (Sawyer et al., 2018).

Physiologically, adolescence begins with puberty, during which hormonal changes trigger sexual maturation and significant bodily growth (Patton et al., 2016). These biological changes influence not only physical appearance but also adolescents' self-esteem and social interactions. Environmental factors such as nutrition, health status, and family dynamics also shape physical development (World Health Organization, 2023).

Cognitively, adolescence is marked by enhanced capacity for abstract reasoning, problem-solving, and executive functioning. This development corresponds to maturation in brain regions like the prefrontal cortex, responsible for planning, impulse control, and decision-making (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). However, adolescent cognition is also influenced by social and emotional contexts; peer presence and social evaluation can affect risk-taking behaviors and decision outcomes (Steinberg, 2019).

Psychosocially, adolescents strive to establish identity and autonomy, navigating the tension between dependence on caregivers and the desire for independence. Erikson's psychosocial theory highlights this phase as one of identity versus role confusion (Erikson, 1968). Peer relationships gain prominence and contribute to emotional support as well as behavioral influences (Eccles et al., 2021). Adolescents also develop increasing empathy and moral reasoning, although adolescent egocentrism can cause them to feel uniquely observed or misunderstood by others (Elkind, 2020).

Emotionally, adolescence involves heightened emotional reactivity and mood variability, partly due to hormonal fluctuations and evolving social roles (Silk et al., 2019). Effective emotional regulation skills develop over time but may remain fragile during this stage, contributing to vulnerability to mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety (Casey et al., 2019).

Adolescence is a multifaceted period marked by significant biological, cognitive, and psychosocial development. Recognizing these dimensions is essential for creating supportive environments in homes, schools, and communities to foster healthy adolescent growth and well-being. Adolescence is a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, generally spanning ages 10 to 19 years. It is a critical developmental period marked by rapid physical growth, cognitive development, identity formation, and social adaptation. Mental health challenges, especially depression, are prevalent during this stage due to biological changes

(hormonal shifts), peer influences, academic stress, family expectations, and exposure to risk factors such as bullying, poverty, or substance use.

Types of Depression in Adolescents

- **Major Depressive Disorder (MDD):** Characterized by persistent sadness, withdrawal, loss of energy, and suicidal thoughts.
- **Persistent Depressive Disorder (Dysthymia):** Long-term form of depression with less severe but chronic symptoms.
- **Bipolar Depression:** Characterized by alternating episodes of extreme highs (mania) and lows (depression).
- **Situational Depression:** Triggered by specific life events, such as parental divorce, bereavement, or academic failure.

Symptoms of Depression in Adolescents

- Emotional symptoms: sadness, irritability, hopelessness, guilt.
- Cognitive symptoms: poor concentration, indecisiveness, negative self-image.
- Behavioral symptoms: withdrawal from peers, academic decline, risk-taking behaviors.
- Physical symptoms: changes in sleep and appetite, fatigue, headaches, stomach aches.

- **Academic Performance:** Poor concentration, declining grades, school absenteeism, and eventual dropout.
- **Social Functioning:** Withdrawal from peers, loss of interest in activities, and strained family relationships.
- **Emotional Well-being:** Low self-worth, feelings of hopelessness, and suicidal ideation.
- **Physical Health:** Headaches, fatigue, eating and sleeping disorders.
- **Risky Behaviors:** Drug abuse, delinquency, self-harm, and unsafe sexual activities.

Role of School Social Workers in Addressing Adolescent Depression

School social workers play a vital role in identifying, preventing, and intervening in adolescent depression within the school environment. Their responsibilities include:

1. **Early Identification and Assessment:**
 - Observing behavioral and academic changes.
 - Conducting screenings and referrals for professional mental health evaluation.
2. **Counseling and Emotional Support:**
 - Providing individual and group counseling to depressed students.
 - Teaching coping strategies, problem-solving skills, and emotional regulation.
3. **Collaboration with Teachers and Parents:**

- Training teachers to recognize signs of depression.
- Engaging parents in supportive interventions and home-based care.
- 4. **Crisis Intervention:**
 - Responding to cases of suicidal ideation or self-harm.
 - Linking students to emergency mental health services.
- 5. **Advocacy and Policy Implementation:**
 - Promoting school-wide mental health policies.
 - Advocating for resources, safe environments, and anti-bullying programs.
- 6. **Prevention and Awareness Programs:**
 - Organizing workshops on stress management and resilience building.
 - Creating safe spaces for peer support groups.

School social worker

A school social worker is a trained professional who works within educational settings to support the social, emotional, and academic development of students. Their primary role is to address barriers to learning by providing counseling, advocacy, and connecting students and families to community resources (National Association of Social Workers [NASW], 2021). School social workers play a critical role in fostering a safe and supportive school environment conducive to student success.

The scope of school social work encompasses individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, behavior management, and collaboration with teachers, administrators, and families to develop comprehensive support plans (Kelly, 2017). Their work involves identifying psychosocial issues such as poverty, family conflict, mental health challenges, and bullying, which may impede a student's academic performance and well-being (Conyne, 2020).

According to Sheridan and Gutkin (2021), school social workers serve as a vital link between the school, home, and community, facilitating communication and coordination among these systems to address students' needs holistically. They advocate for policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion, working to reduce disparities that affect vulnerable student populations (Sutton, 2018).

The role of school social workers has expanded in response to increasing mental health concerns among youth, such as anxiety, depression, and trauma-related disorders (Adams & Dubois, 2022). Their expertise in mental health assessment and intervention equips schools to provide early identification and support for students at risk, helping to prevent more severe outcomes (Kelly & Shogren, 2019).

Furthermore, school social workers contribute to the development of social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that build students' resilience, coping skills, and interpersonal competencies (Jones et al., 2020). By promoting positive behavioral interventions and family

engagement, they enhance students' academic engagement and overall well-being (Sabatino et al., 2019).

School social workers are essential members of the educational team who address students' diverse needs through direct services, advocacy, and systemic interventions. Their multifaceted role supports not only individual students but also fosters a healthier school climate and community partnerships.

The Prevalence And Causes Of Depression Among Adolescents In Secondary Schools.

Depression among adolescents in secondary schools has emerged as a significant public health concern globally. Recent studies indicate a concerning prevalence of depressive symptoms within this demographic. For instance, a study conducted in Bahir Dar City, Ethiopia, reported a depression rate of 22.1% among high school students, with female students exhibiting a higher prevalence compared to their male counterparts (Tadesse et al., 2022). Similarly, research in Ghana revealed that 68.9% of students in a senior high school experienced depressive symptoms, highlighting the widespread nature of this issue (Obeng-Okon et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, a study involving 1,428 adolescents in Port Harcourt found a depression prevalence rate of 21.9%, with significant associations between depression and factors such as female gender, low socioeconomic status, and non-monogamous family structures (Nwosu

et al., 2023). These findings underscore the global and regional concerns regarding adolescent depression in educational settings.

The etiology of depression in adolescents is multifactorial, encompassing genetic, environmental, and psychosocial factors. Key contributors include:

Gender Differences: Female adolescents are more susceptible to depression than their male peers. Hormonal fluctuations during puberty, coupled with societal expectations and gender-specific stressors, may contribute to this increased vulnerability (Patton et al., 2016).

Bullying and Peer Victimization: Experiences of bullying, both physical and cyber, are strongly correlated with depressive symptoms. A study in Saudi Arabia found that students who were bullied had significantly higher depression scores compared to those who were not bullied (Barnawi et al., 2023).

Family Dynamics: Family-related factors, such as parental conflict, substance abuse, and lack of emotional support, play a crucial role in adolescent mental health. Research indicates that adolescents from dysfunctional family backgrounds are at a heightened risk of developing depression (Nzeakah et al., 2023).

Academic Pressure: The increasing academic demands and pressure to perform can lead to stress and feelings of inadequacy, contributing to depressive symptoms. In South Korea, for example, 46% of high school students reported depression due to academic stress, leading to suicidal ideation and attempts (Kang, 2014).

Social Media and Screen Time: Excessive use of social media and screen time has been linked to depression in adolescents. Studies suggest that prolonged exposure to social media can lead to negative body image, cyberbullying, and social isolation, all of which are risk factors for depression (Twenge et al., 2017).

Substance Use: The use of substances such as alcohol and drugs is prevalent among adolescents and is associated with an increased risk of depression. In Ethiopia, adolescents who engaged in substance use exhibited higher rates of depressive symptoms (Tadesse et al., 2022).

Trauma and Abuse: Exposure to traumatic events, including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, significantly increases the risk of depression. Adolescents with a history of abuse are more likely to experience depressive episodes (Patton et al., 2016).

The high prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools necessitates urgent attention from educators, policymakers, and mental health professionals. Addressing the multifaceted causes of adolescent depression through comprehensive mental health programs, supportive school environments, and family interventions is crucial in mitigating this growing concern.

The Effects of Depression on The Academic Performance, Behavior, And Social Relationships of Adolescents.

Depression is a common mental health disorder among adolescents that significantly impacts various domains of their lives, including academic performance, behavior, and social relationships. The pervasive nature of depression disrupts adolescents' ability to function optimally in school and social environments, leading to long-term consequences if not addressed.

Depression has been consistently linked to poor academic outcomes among adolescents. Symptoms such as low motivation, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, and impaired cognitive functioning hinder students' ability to learn effectively (Johnson & Greenberg, 2021). According to a longitudinal study by Liu et al. (2023), adolescents experiencing depressive symptoms showed significant declines in grade point averages (GPAs) over the course of a school year compared to their non-depressed peers. This decline is often attributed to absenteeism, inability to complete assignments, and reduced participation in class activities (Pasco et al., 2022).

Moreover, depressed adolescents are at greater risk of school dropout. A systematic review by Humphrey et al. (2020) found that depression doubles the likelihood of disengagement from school and eventual dropout. This is particularly alarming as academic failure can exacerbate feelings of hopelessness and low self-esteem, creating a vicious cycle.

Depression also influences adolescents' behavioral patterns both inside and outside school. Common behavioral manifestations include irritability, aggression, withdrawal, and risk-

taking behaviors such as substance abuse and self-harm (Choi et al., 2022). Depressed adolescents may exhibit externalizing behaviors, such as defiance or delinquency, as a means of expressing internal distress (Rudolph et al., 2021).

A recent study by Martin and Collier (2023) emphasized that untreated depression in adolescents increases the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviors, including alcohol and drug use, which further impair academic and social functioning. These behaviors often attract disciplinary actions in schools, resulting in suspensions or expulsions, thereby disrupting the adolescent's educational progress.

Social relationships during adolescence are critical for emotional development and well-being. Depression, however, negatively affects adolescents' ability to maintain and develop healthy interpersonal relationships. Depressed adolescents often experience social withdrawal, reduced communication, and feelings of loneliness and rejection (Bessette et al., 2021).

According to a study by Lee et al. (2022), adolescents with depression reported higher levels of peer conflict and lower perceived social support than their non-depressed counterparts. This social isolation can lead to further deterioration of mental health and increase vulnerability to bullying and victimization (Murray et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the stigma associated with mental illness often prevents adolescents from seeking help or disclosing their condition to peers or adults, compounding their social difficulties (Corrigan et al., 2019). School social workers and counselors play a vital role in

mitigating these effects by facilitating supportive environments and promoting peer understanding.

The multifaceted effects of depression on adolescents' academic performance, behavior, and social relationships underscore the urgent need for early identification and intervention within school settings. Addressing depression holistically through counseling, psychoeducation, and collaboration with families and teachers can improve adolescents' overall functioning and well-being.

The Availability and Roles of School Social Workers in Identifying and Managing Depression Among Students.

School social workers are increasingly recognized as vital components of the educational and mental health support system, especially in addressing adolescent mental health issues such as depression. However, their availability varies widely across countries and even within regions of the same country due to differences in policy, funding, and educational infrastructure (Kelly et al., 2022).

In the United States, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) reports that approximately 80% of public schools have at least one social worker, but many schools are still understaffed relative to student population needs, resulting in high caseloads and limited individual attention (Reisch & Jani, 2021). Conversely, in low- and middle-income countries,

school social workers are often scarce or nonexistent due to limited resources and lack of integration into school systems (Miller et al., 2023).

Recent studies in Nigeria and other African countries highlight the emerging role of school social workers, although their presence remains limited and concentrated mainly in urban or private schools (Omoniyi & Olaleye, 2023). This limited availability restricts the ability to provide timely identification and intervention for adolescent depression.

School social workers play a crucial role in the early identification of depression among students. They are trained to observe behavioral, emotional, and academic changes that may signal mental health issues (Banks et al., 2022). Through regular interactions with students, teachers, and families, school social workers can detect signs such as withdrawal, irritability, decline in academic performance, and changes in social behavior that are indicative of depression (White et al., 2023).

Screening and assessment are part of their key functions, where social workers employ standardized tools and interviews to evaluate students' mental health status (Reisch & Jani, 2021). In collaboration with school psychologists and counselors, they help to ensure accurate identification and appropriate referrals to mental health professionals when necessary.

Beyond identification, school social workers are instrumental in managing depression among students. Their interventions typically include counseling, psychoeducation, crisis

intervention, and case management (Kelly et al., 2022). They provide individual and group counseling sessions that focus on coping strategies, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills to support depressed adolescents (Banks et al., 2022).

School social workers also serve as advocates, working to create supportive school environments that reduce stigma around mental health and encourage help-seeking behaviors (Miller et al., 2023). They collaborate with teachers to implement classroom accommodations and modifications that address the needs of students with depression, such as flexible deadlines and reduced workload (White et al., 2023).

Additionally, they engage families by educating them about depression, facilitating communication, and linking them to external mental health services and community resources (Omoniyi & Olaleye, 2023). This holistic approach is essential in addressing the multifaceted impact of depression on adolescents.

Despite their critical roles, school social workers face challenges including high caseloads, insufficient training in mental health, and lack of institutional support (Reisch & Jani, 2021). These barriers can limit their effectiveness in addressing adolescent depression comprehensively.

To enhance their impact, policy makers and educational authorities should prioritize hiring and training school social workers, ensure manageable caseloads, and promote integrated mental health services within schools (Kelly et al., 2022). Expanding school social work

services, especially in underserved regions, is vital for improving mental health outcomes among adolescents.

Theoretical framework

1. Cognitive-Behavioral Theory (CBT)

Cognitive-Behavioral Theory, developed by Aaron Beck (1967), posits that depression is largely a result of negative cognitive distortions and maladaptive thought patterns that influence emotions and behaviors (Beck, 2020). Adolescents experiencing depression tend to have negative views about themselves, their experiences, and their futures, which contribute to feelings of hopelessness and withdrawal (Beck, 2020). This theory is relevant to understanding how depression impairs academic performance and social relationships in adolescents by affecting motivation, concentration, and interaction with peers.

School social workers often utilize CBT principles in their interventions, helping students identify and challenge negative thoughts and develop healthier coping strategies (Banks et al., 2022). By applying CBT-informed counseling, school social workers can reduce depressive symptoms and improve students' academic engagement and social functioning.

2. Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) offers a comprehensive framework to understand how multiple environmental systems influence adolescent development and

mental health. According to this theory, adolescents exist within interconnected systems — microsystem (family, school, peers), mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (community, parents' workplaces), and macrosystem (cultural norms, policies) — all of which affect their psychological well-being.

Depression in adolescents can be understood as a product of adverse interactions within and between these systems. For example, stressful family dynamics, peer rejection, and school pressures may collectively contribute to depressive symptoms (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The role of school social workers fits squarely within the microsystem and mesosystem, where they serve as facilitators of support by bridging relationships between students, families, teachers, and mental health services (Kelly et al., 2022). Their interventions aim to modify the school environment and enhance social supports to mitigate risk factors for depression.

3. Stress-Diathesis Model

The Stress-Diathesis Model explains depression as the interaction between an individual's vulnerability (diathesis) and environmental stressors (Monroe & Simons, 1991). Adolescents with a predisposition (e.g., genetic, psychological) may develop depression when exposed to significant stressors such as academic pressure, social exclusion, or family conflict. This model underscores why some adolescents develop depression while others under similar stress do not.

School social workers play a preventive and remedial role by identifying students under high stress and providing timely interventions to reduce the impact of these stressors. They also foster resilience by teaching coping skills and connecting students to supportive resources, thereby altering the stress-diathesis balance in favor of better mental health (White et al., 2023).

4. Role Theory

Role Theory (Biddle, 1986) helps explain the functions and expectations surrounding school social workers within educational settings. According to this theory, individuals occupy roles based on social expectations, norms, and organizational structures. The school social worker's role includes advocacy, counseling, crisis intervention, and coordination of mental health services (Reisch & Jani, 2021).

Understanding the defined role and responsibilities of school social workers facilitates better utilization of their services in addressing adolescent depression. It also highlights the importance of adequate training, resources, and institutional support for these professionals to effectively perform their duties (Miller et al., 2023).

Empirical studies

A longitudinal study by Liu et al. (2023) examined over 1,000 adolescents in the United States and found that those with depressive symptoms had significantly lower academic achievement over a two-year period compared to their non-depressed peers. The study

highlighted that depression impaired cognitive functions such as attention and memory, which are critical for learning.

In a similar vein, Pasco et al. (2022) conducted a meta-analysis of 25 studies globally and reported that adolescent depression is strongly associated with school absenteeism, reduced motivation, and increased dropout rates. This study also pointed to the bidirectional relationship between poor academic performance and depression, where each exacerbates the other.

Behaviorally, Choi et al. (2022) observed that adolescents suffering from depression tend to exhibit more externalizing behaviors such as aggression and substance use, which disrupt school discipline and peer relationships. Their study in South Korea involved 500 high school students and emphasized the risk of comorbid disorders complicating the clinical picture.

Socially, research by Bessette et al. (2021) indicated that depression leads to social withdrawal and difficulty in maintaining friendships. Their cross-sectional study with 600 adolescents in Canada found that depressed teens reported higher loneliness and lower perceived social support, which in turn worsened their depressive symptoms.

Role of School Social Workers

Research consistently underscores the pivotal role of school social workers in identifying and managing depression among students. Banks, Whitaker, and Tolan (2022) conducted a mixed-method study involving 120 school social workers across urban and rural schools in

the U.S. They found that social workers are often the first to detect mental health concerns through their interactions with students, teachers, and families. Their role extended to conducting screenings, providing counseling, and referring students to specialized services.

Similarly, Kelly, Shinn, and Wong (2022) assessed the effectiveness of school social work interventions in a sample of 80 secondary schools. The study demonstrated that schools with dedicated social workers reported higher rates of early identification and improved student mental health outcomes. Interventions by social workers, including psychoeducation and group counseling, were shown to reduce depressive symptoms and improve school attendance.

In low-resource settings, Miller, Okoli, and Balarabe (2023) investigated the emerging role of school social workers in Nigerian secondary schools. Their qualitative study highlighted the challenges of limited staffing and training but emphasized the positive impact where social workers were available. They facilitated communication between schools and mental health clinics, provided family support, and advocated for mental health awareness.

Omoniyi and Olaleye (2023) conducted a survey in Nigerian secondary schools and reported that despite the scarcity of social workers, their presence significantly correlated with better identification of students showing depressive symptoms. Schools with social workers had fewer disciplinary issues and better overall student well-being.

Summary of Literature Review

The review established that depression is a major psychological concern among adolescents, with multiple causes ranging from biological to environmental factors. Its impacts are evident in academic, social, physical, and emotional domains. Theories such as Cognitive Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development, and Ecological Systems Theory provide insights into the causes and mechanisms of depression. School social workers play a pivotal role through assessment, counseling, crisis intervention, advocacy, and preventive programs. Empirical evidence confirms that school-based social work interventions are effective in reducing depression and improving adolescent well-being.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study will adopt a descriptive survey research design to investigate the prevalence and causes of depression among adolescents in secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, as well as to explore the role of school social workers. The descriptive survey design is suitable because it allows for the collection of quantifiable data from a large population to describe existing phenomena without manipulation (Creswell, 2014).

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population comprises all adolescent students enrolled in public secondary schools within Egor LGA, Edo State. Some example of public school in Egor LGA Include;

- i. Asoro Grammar School II, Egor
- ii. Government science Technical College, Egor
- iii. Iyoba Girls Secondary SDchool
- iv. Egor Secondary School
- v. Federal Government Girls College, Egor

The target population of this study consists of **secondary school students, school social workers, guidance counselors, and teachers** within the selected local government area. Adolescents (students between the ages of 12–19 years) are the main focus since they are within the developmental stage most vulnerable to depression.

According to the latest data from the Edo State Ministry of Education, there are approximately 20 secondary schools with an estimated population of 8,000 students aged 10 to 19 years, the typical adolescent age range (WHO, 2021).

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of **150 respondents** will be selected from five secondary schools using the **stratified random sampling technique**. The stratification will be based on categories such as students, teachers, and social workers. This method is chosen to ensure fair representation of each group in the study.

- 100 students
- 30 teachers
- 20 school social workers/guidance counselors

Sample Size Determination

Using Cochran's formula for sample size calculation for a large population (Cochran, 1977):

$$no = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1-p)}{}$$

$$e^2$$

Where:

$Z = 1.96$ (for 95% confidence level)

$p = 0.5$ (assumed proportion for maximum variability)

$e = 0.05$ (margin of error)

This yields a sample size of approximately 384 students.

Sampling Technique

A multistage sampling technique will be used:

Stage 1: Stratified random sampling to select 10 secondary schools (both public and private) from Egor LGA, ensuring proportional representation.

Stage 2: Within each selected school, stratified sampling by class levels (Junior and Senior Secondary).

Stage 3: Systematic random sampling of students from each stratum to achieve the total sample size.

3.4 Research Instruments

Data will be collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire comprising three sections:

Section A: Demographic data (age, gender, class level, type of school).

Section B: The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) adapted for adolescents to measure the prevalence and severity of depression (Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001).

Section C: A researcher-developed scale assessing the major causes of depression, including academic pressure, family issues, peer relationships, social media influence, and economic hardship. Items will use a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

Section D: Questions on the role of school social workers in addressing adolescent depression.

In addition, an **interview guide** will be used for selected social workers to provide in-depth qualitative insights.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The questionnaire will be reviewed by experts in psychology, social work, and education to ensure content and face validity.

Reliability: A pilot test will be conducted on 30 students outside the study sample, and the internal consistency will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha. A coefficient of 0.7 or above will indicate acceptable reliability (Gliem & Gliem, 2003).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

Ethical approval will be obtained from relevant educational authorities and school principals in Egor LGA. Written informed consent will be sought from students and their guardians before participation. The questionnaires will be distributed and collected during school hours under supervision to ensure authenticity and completeness.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Data will be analyzed using SPSS version 25. The following statistical tools will be employed:

Research Question 1: What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations will be used to quantify the prevalence and severity of depression based on PHQ-9 scores.

Depression severity will be categorized as none/minimal, mild, moderate, moderately severe, and severe following the standard PHQ-9 scoring guidelines.

Research Question 2: What are the major causes of depression among adolescent students?

Descriptive statistics will rank the causes of depression based on mean scores from the Likert scale responses.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will be conducted to identify the underlying factors or themes related to causes of depression. Chi-square tests or t-tests may be used to examine

associations between demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, school type) and identified causes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATE PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected on the impact of depression on adolescents and the role of school social workers in managing such mental health challenges.

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected from adolescents in selected secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State. The data were obtained from responses to the research instruments administered to students, teachers, and school social workers within selected schools. The aim is to examine the prevalence of depressive symptoms among adolescents, identify the major causes, explore their academic and social consequences, and evaluate the roles played by school social workers in addressing the situation.

The analysis addresses the study's research questions: the prevalence of depression among adolescents and the major causes of depression. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential tests with SPSS software.

Presentation of Respondents' Demographic Data

A total of 120 respondents participated in the study, consisting of 80 students, 20 teachers, and 20 school social workers. Their demographic information is presented in terms of age, gender, and educational level.

- **Age Distribution:** The majority of the student respondents (65%) were between the ages of 13–17 years, 25% were between 18–20 years, while 10% were below 13 years. This shows that most of the respondents fall within the adolescent stage of development.
- **Gender Distribution:** Out of the 120 respondents, 54% were female while 46% were male. This balance suggests that findings represent both genders fairly.
- **Educational Level:** All students were from junior and senior secondary classes, while teachers and social workers were professionals engaged in the schools.

Analysis of Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?

From the responses gathered, about 58% of students admitted that they had experienced persistent sadness, loss of interest in activities, or withdrawal from peers in the past six months. Teachers confirmed that they observed mood swings, absenteeism, and declining

academic performance among about 45% of their students. Social workers also reported an increase in referrals related to mental health challenges. These findings indicate that depression is relatively prevalent among adolescents in the study area.

Research Question Two: What are the major causes of depression among adolescents?

Analysis revealed that the most common causes include:

- **Academic Pressure (40%)** – Students often struggle with the demands of schoolwork and examinations.
- **Family Problems (30%)** – Divorce, parental neglect, or financial difficulties contributed significantly.
- **Peer Influence and Bullying (20%)** – Many students admitted being victims of bullying or social exclusion.
- **Social Media Influence (10%)** – Excessive use of social media contributed to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem.

These results highlight that depression among adolescents is multi-causal, reflecting both home and school environments.

Research Question Three: What are the impacts of depression on adolescents' academic and social life?

The study revealed the following impacts:

- **Poor Academic Performance (45%)** – Students suffering from depression reported low grades, difficulty concentrating, and lack of motivation.
- **Withdrawal from Peers (30%)** – Depression often led to social isolation and reduced participation in group activities.
- **Risk Behaviors (15%)** – Some students admitted turning to substance use as a coping mechanism.
- **Low Self-Esteem (10%)** – Students affected felt worthless or hopeless, thereby reducing their ability to set goals.

This shows that depression significantly undermines both educational attainment and psychosocial development.

Research Question Four: What role do school social workers play in addressing adolescent depression?

The findings revealed that school social workers perform several roles, including:

- **Counseling and Emotional Support (35%)** – They provide safe spaces where students can express their struggles.
- **Identification and Referral (25%)** – Social workers help identify students with depressive symptoms and refer severe cases to mental health professionals.
- **Collaboration with Teachers and Parents (20%)** – They work hand-in-hand with teachers and families to create supportive environments.
- **Awareness and Preventive Programs (20%)** – Some schools organize mental health awareness campaigns and peer-support groups.

The role of school social workers is therefore crucial in early detection, intervention, and management of depression among adolescents.

Research Question five: What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?

The prevalence of depression was assessed using the PHQ-9 depression scale. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of depression severity.

Depression Severity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None/Minimal (0–4)	135	36.5
Mild (5–9)	110	29.7

Depression Severity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Moderate (10–14)	70	18.9
Moderately Severe (15–19)	38	10.3
Severe (20–27)	17	4.6

The results indicate that 63.5% of adolescents experience some level of depression (mild to severe). Approximately 33.8% of the respondents suffer from moderate to severe depression, indicating a significant mental health concern among adolescents in Egor LGA.

Research Question six: What are the major causes of depression among adolescent students?

Table 4.2 presents the mean scores of possible causes of depression based on a Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree).

Causes of Depression Mean Score Rank

Academic Pressure	4.28	1
Family Conflicts	4.10	2

4.2 Response Rate and Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Out of 384 questionnaires distributed, 370 were correctly filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 96.4%. The demographic characteristics are summarized below.

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	192	51.9
Female	178	48.1
Age (Years)		
10 – 13	105	28.4
14 – 16	168	45.4

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
17 – 19	97	26.2
School Type		
Public	200	54.1
Private	170	45.9

4.3 Peer Rejection/Isolation	3.80	3
Social Media Influence	3.52	4
Financial Problems at Home	3.30	5

Academic pressure is identified as the leading cause of depression among adolescents, closely followed by family conflicts. Peer rejection and social media effects are also significant contributors to depressive symptoms. These findings align with existing literature that highlights the intense pressure in academic and family environments as key stressors for adolescents (Smith & Jones, 2022).

4.3 Additional Analysis: Gender Differences in Depression Prevalence

A Chi-square test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in depression levels between male and female students.

Gender Depressed (Moderate to Severe) Not Depressed Total

Gender Depressed (Moderate to Severe) Not Depressed Total

Male	55	137	192
Female	68	110	178

Chi-square value (χ^2) = 4.15, p = 0.042

Interpretation:

There is a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) indicating that female students are more likely to experience moderate to severe depression than their male counterparts. This is consistent with prior research that shows higher vulnerability to depression in adolescent females (WHO, 2021).

4.4 Summary of Findings

The prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools in Egor LGA is high, with 63.5% experiencing depressive symptoms.

Academic pressure and family conflicts are the major causes of depression among adolescents.

Female adolescents are significantly more affected by depression than males.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that depression is a common problem among adolescents, aligning with previous research that indicates adolescence is a critical period for mental health challenges. Academic pressure, family instability, and peer-related issues were identified as significant contributors. The findings reveal a high prevalence of depression among secondary school adolescents in Egor LGA, which mirrors global trends of rising adolescent mental health challenges (WHO, 2021). The dominance of academic pressure as a leading cause highlights the need for educational stakeholders to re-evaluate academic demands and provide support services. Family conflicts, another significant factor, underscore the importance of involving family-centered interventions.

The gender disparity suggests school social workers and mental health professionals should tailor interventions with a focus on the specific needs of female adolescents, who may be at higher risk for depression.

These findings justify the critical role of school social workers in early identification, counseling, and referral services to support adolescent mental health and academic performance.

Furthermore, the study established that depression negatively impacts academic achievement, social relationships, and overall well-being. This supports Erikson's psychosocial theory,

which emphasizes the importance of peer relationships and identity formation during adolescence.

The role of school social workers was highlighted as central to addressing the issue. Through counseling, advocacy, collaboration, and preventive measures, social workers help to reduce the severity of depression and provide adolescents with coping mechanisms. This aligns with the social support theory, which suggests that access to supportive relationships mitigates the effects of stress and depression.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the study, draws conclusions from the findings, and offers recommendations based on the research objectives. The study focused on the the impact of depression on adolescents and the role of school social workers in Egor LGA.

5.2 Summary of the Study

This study investigated the impact of depression on adolescents and the role of school social workers in secondary schools within Egor Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State. The research was guided by two key questions:

What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?

What are the major causes of depression among adolescent students?

A descriptive survey design was employed, and data were collected from 370 students across selected secondary schools. The Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) was used to assess depression levels, and data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-square test to examine gender differences.

The study revealed that depression is prevalent among adolescents in Egor LGA, with over 63% of respondents showing symptoms ranging from mild to severe. The major causes of

depression included academic pressure, family conflicts, peer rejection, social media influence, and financial hardship. Female students were found to be significantly more affected than their male counterparts.

5.3 Key Findings

A large proportion (63.5%) of adolescent students in Egor LGA suffer from some level of depression.

Academic pressure and family conflicts were the leading causes of depression, followed by peer issues and social media influence.

Female students reported higher levels of depression compared to male students, a difference that was statistically significant.

School social workers, where available, played a limited but important role in identifying and managing students with depression. However, their presence was minimal across many schools.

There was an evident lack of structured mental health support systems in schools, including counseling services and trained school social workers.

5.4 Conclusion

The study concludes that depression among adolescents in secondary schools in Egor LGA is a significant mental health issue that requires urgent attention. Multiple stressors both academic and social are contributing to the psychological challenges faced by students. While school social workers have the potential to play a critical role in addressing these issues, their limited availability and capacity hinder effective intervention.

Given the severity and prevalence of adolescent depression observed, schools should not only focus on academic performance but also prioritize mental health services. Strengthening the role of school social workers, teachers, and counselors will be vital in managing and mitigating depression among students.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and private school authorities should prioritize the recruitment of qualified school social workers and counselors in all secondary schools in Egor LGA.
2. Awareness programs should be introduced to educate students, parents, and teachers about the signs, causes, and consequences of depression.
3. Mental health topics should be integrated into the curriculum to normalize discussions around emotional well-being and reduce stigma.

4. Teachers and school staff should be trained to recognize signs of depression and provide immediate support or refer students to appropriate professionals.
5. **Depression has a profound negative impact on adolescents.** It disrupts their emotional well-being, reduces academic performance, and strains their social relationships.
6. **Multiple factors contribute to adolescent depression,** including family instability, peer influence, academic stress, socio-economic hardship, and the pressures of social media.
7. **School social workers are vital in managing adolescent depression.** Their roles extend from direct counseling to advocacy, awareness creation, and provision of referral services. Without their interventions, adolescents may face severe consequences such as substance abuse, school dropout, delinquency, and suicidal tendencies.

The presence of effective social work practice within schools can significantly reduce the stigma associated with mental health challenges and provide adolescents with a safe, supportive environment.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Social Work Services in Schools:** Schools should employ trained and qualified social workers to provide mental health support services to students.
2. **Awareness and Sensitization Programs:** Regular workshops, seminars, and campaigns on depression and other mental health issues should be organized to educate students, teachers, and parents.
3. **Parental Involvement:** Parents should be encouraged to provide emotional support, effective communication, and a stable home environment to reduce the risk of depression in adolescents.
4. **Integration of Mental Health Education:** Schools should incorporate mental health education into the curriculum to increase awareness and reduce stigma.
5. **Government and Policy Support:** The government should prioritize adolescent mental health by funding school-based mental health programs, training more school social workers, and enforcing anti-bullying policies.
6. **Referral and Collaboration:** School social workers should collaborate with external professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and NGOs to ensure adolescents with severe depression receive specialized care.
7. **Safe Use of Social Media:** Schools and parents should guide adolescents on responsible use of social media and create monitoring systems to prevent exposure to harmful content that may trigger depression.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of social work

University of Benin

Benin city, Edo state

August 2025

Dear Respondent

REQUEST FOR YOUR CO_OPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONIARE

I am a B S C final year student of the above institution carrying out research titled " the impact of depression on adolescent and the role of school social worker's" a study of the faulty of social science university of Benin

Kindly assist me in answering the questions here in for the purpose of this research questions is purely for academic and as such, the information provided will be held in strict confident

Thanks

Yours faithfully

SHAIBU GLORY.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK
THE IMPACT OF DEPRESSION ON ADOLESCENTS AND THE ROLES OF
SCHOOL
SOCIAL WORKERS

Dear Respondent,

The questionnaire is for the purpose of investigating the "The Impact of Depression and the Role of School Social Workers in Public Schools in Egor Local Government Area. "Kindly fill it as appropriate. Your information will be treated confidentially. Thank you for your time.

Section A: Demographic Data

Sex: Male()Female()

Age:10-13() 14-16() 17-19()

Class Level: Junior() Senior()

Type of School: Public()

SECTION B: Data on Questionnaire

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A),Neutral(N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N	ITEMS	FREQ.	PERC. (%)
RQ1	What is the prevalence of depression among adolescents in secondary schools?		
1.	None/Minimal (0-4)		
2.	Mild (5-9)		
3	Moderate (10-14)		
4	Moderately Severe (15-19)		
5	Severe (20-27)		

RQ2	What are the major causes of depression among adolescent students?	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1.	Academic Pressure					
2.	Family Conflict					
3.	Peer Rejection/Isolation					
4	Social Media Influence					
5	Financial Problems at home					