

#### **4. Getting A Grip on My Depression: A Grounded Theory Explaining How Latina Adolescents Experience, Self-Manage, And Seek Treatment for Depressive Symptoms**

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##### **Purpose**

Latina adolescents are more likely to experience depressive symptoms and less likely to receive mental health services than White peers. Although evidence-based treatments exist to treat adolescent depression, few treatments have been modified to meet the cultural needs of this population. In order to develop culturally sensitive strategies for preventing, identifying, and treating depressive symptoms in Latina adolescents, it is necessary to understand how they experience, self-manage, and seek treatment for their depressive symptoms over time from their own perspective. The purpose of this study was to develop a theoretical framework that explains how Latina adolescents experience, self-manage, and seek treatment for their depressive symptoms.

##### **Methods**

Constructivist grounded theory methods were used to develop the theoretical framework. Twenty-five Latina adolescents and young adults (mean age=16) with a history of depressive symptoms during their adolescent years were recruited from primary care and community settings using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately one hour, were conducted in English with all participants. Data analysis procedures followed guidelines described by Charmaz and included four levels of coding (initial, focused, axial, and theoretical).

##### **Results**

Participants experienced a psychosocial problem that we labeled Being Overburdened and Becoming Depressed. Participants described how family conflict, pressure to succeed, discrimination, and fears of deportation contributed to the formation of their depressive symptoms. They responded to this psychosocial problem through a psychosocial process we labeled Getting a Grip on My Depression, which consisted of five phases: 1) hiding my depression, 2) keeping my depression under control, 3) having my depression revealed, 4) skirting treatment for my depression, and 5) deciding to move on from my depression. The Latinx family, peer groups, and mainstream authorities were influential in how participants experienced these phases.

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**Conclusions**

This study contributes to our understanding of how Latina adolescents experience and self-manage depressive symptoms and has important implications for research, practice, and policy. Future research should further refine this framework through recruiting a larger and more diverse sample of Latinx youth. Practitioners can use this framework as a springboard for discussions with Latina adolescents about cultural stressors they may be experiencing and the impact of those stressors on their mental health. Because participants resolutely hid their depression from parents, practitioners should provide confidential consultation to Latina adolescents and be transparent about instances in which they may need to break confidentiality. National immigration policies that provide more expedient pathways to citizenship and allow immigrant families to remain together in the United States will minimize the stress that this population experiences, ultimately promoting psychological wellbeing for Latina adolescents.

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