



# The Association Between Parenting Styles and Mental Health

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## Introduction

- This research concerns whether parenting styles cause an effect on the mental health of youth later in life, and if so, what kind of effect it may be.
- This research is critical, as there is not yet clear consensus as to whether parents who adopt strict parenting styles actually benefit their children, and it is frequently a point of contention in parenting guides.
- One study found that elderly adults parented in the authoritarian style were found to have higher levels of depression and anxiety, with lower mental resilience.
- Many studies focus on gender, looking at differences between parenting influence on boys and girls.
- Since these studies are less frequently found in the United States, this work will be able to fill in this gap. How will it look when studying an American dataset in two waves?

## Research Questions

- Is there an established relationship between parenting strictness and mental health of adolescents?
- Does this relationship between parenting style and mental health differ on the basis of sex?

## Methods

### Sample

- The data set being used is the Add Health study. It takes the form of an in-home questionnaire, examining a variety of questions related to adolescent health, and comes in two waves, one in adolescence and a follow up in adulthood.
- The first wave was taken primarily in 1995, and interviewed 6504 unique respondents.
  - There were 4294 White children, 1619 Black children, 236 Native American children, 270 Asian and Pacific Islander children, and 425 children who marked other.
  - 3147 identified as male, and 3356 identified as female.
- The follow up study was taken in 2008, and included 15,701 participants.

### Measures

- Parenting styles were measured with the questions:
  - "Do your parents let you make your own decisions about the time you must be home on weekend nights", "Do your parents let you make your own decisions about what you wear?", "Do your parents let you decide the people you hang out with?", and "Do your parents let you decide how much television you watch?"
- In the later wave, mental health was measured with the questions:
  - "How often do you feel isolated from others?", "In the last 30 days, how often have you felt that things were going your way?", and "In the last 30 days, how often have you felt that difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?"

## Results

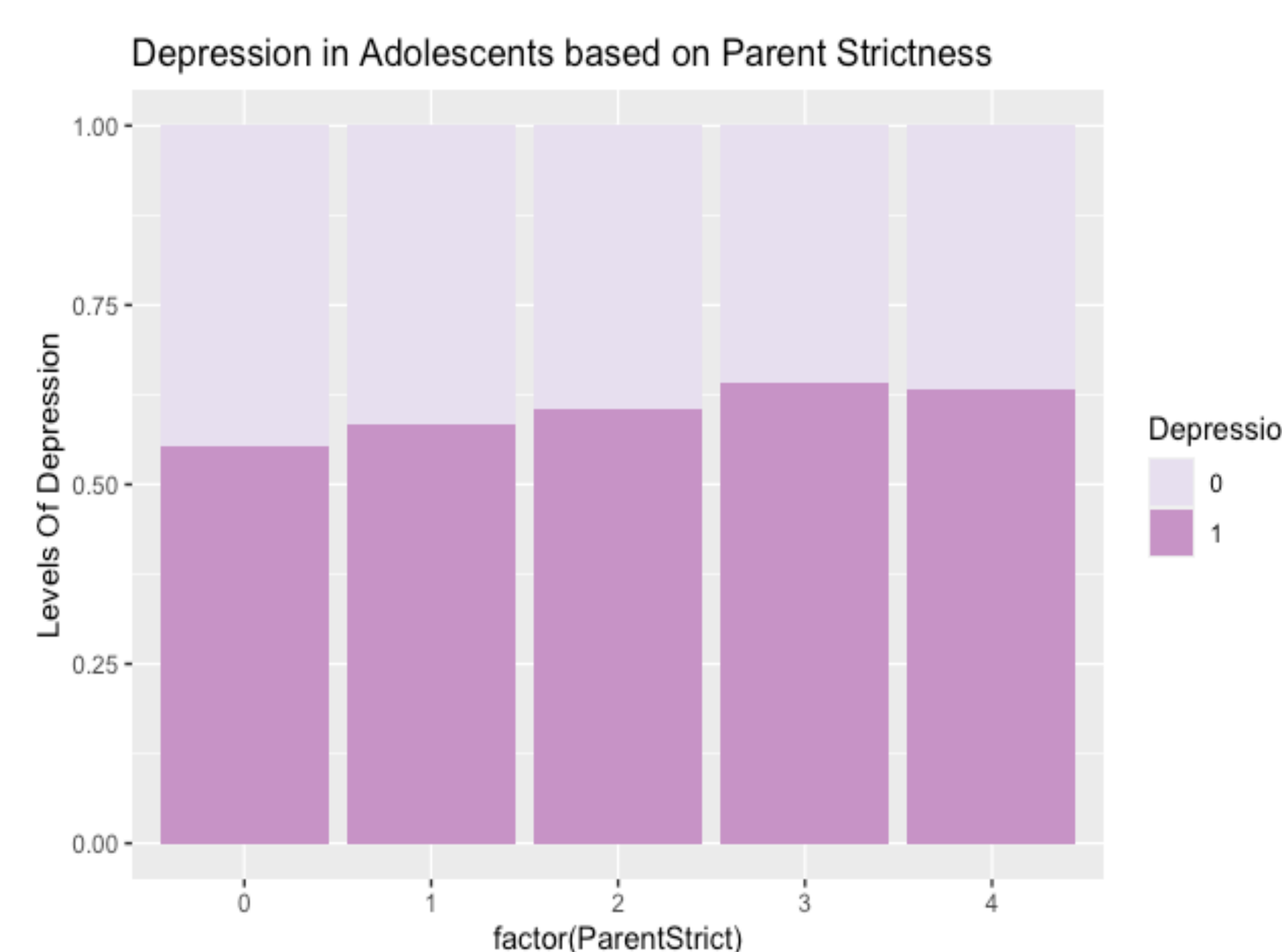
### Univariate

- 45.9% of respondents indicated that they have depressive symptoms.
- 08.3% of respondents had parents whose strictness was classified as 3 or more (severe).

### Bivariate

- As shown in Figure 1 below, the rates of depression as classified by the data management this study rise steadily as parenting strictness goes up.
- A Chi-Squared test of independence showed that the association between parenting styles and depression in adolescents was **significant** (df = 4, p-value = 0.02047)

Figure 1. Depression Levels in Adolescents based on Parent Strictness

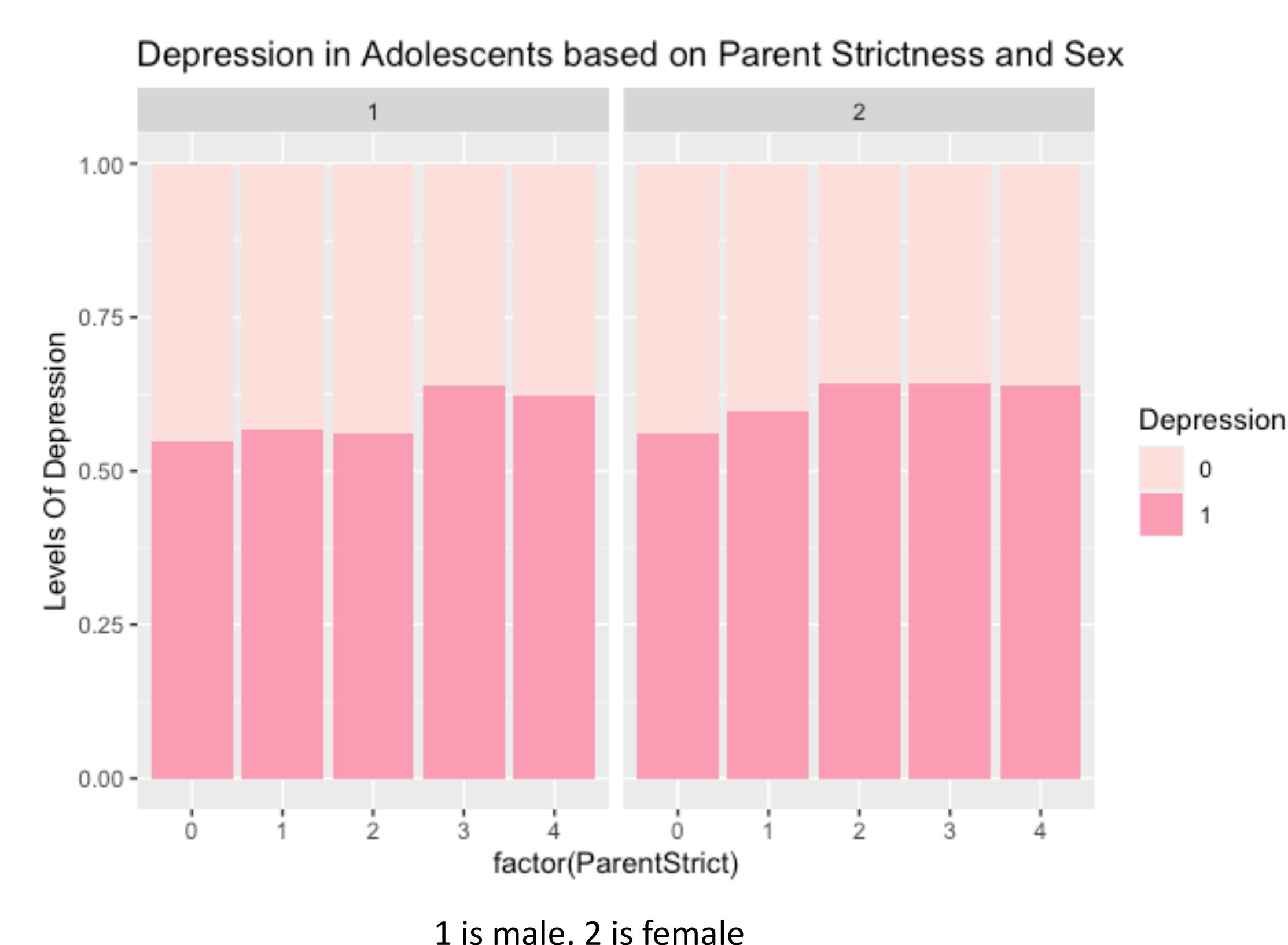


Logistic regression additionally showed that **parent strictness** (O.R. 1.11, CI 1.04-1.18) **was significantly and positively associated** with the likelihood of having depression. (Figure 1).

### Multivariate

- Sex does not appear to moderate the relationship between parenting styles and depression; however, the rates rose differently between males and females (Figure 2).
- When running logistic regression on the explanatory variable of Parent Strictness and the response variable of Depression while controlling for the variable of sex, there is a **significant association** between Parent Strictness and Depression, **even after controlling for sex.** (P-value was 0.00129 for Parent Strictness and Depression, and 0.01452 for Sex and Depression.)

Figure 2. Depression in Adolescents based on Parent Strictness and Sex



## Discussion

- As parenting styles grow more strict, adolescents become more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression.
- Regardless of sex, individuals who were subjected to stricter parenting styles had more symptoms of depression.
- Family counselors and child psychiatrists can use this information to address parenting behaviors, and increase parents' openness to considering less authoritarian parenting styles.
- Further research could center on more relaxed parenting styles, and if there is a point where more relaxed parenting styles could negatively impact adolescent health, so as to find a balance for optimal adolescent health.