

# Negative body image and self esteem issues in combination with prepubescence



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Puberty is a time in one's life largely associated with transformation, a complete revolution that consists of self-discovery, learning and friendship. It brings rapid change and has many emotional highs and lows. One key characteristic of puberty is pubertal timing. For women, the timing could have devastating impacts on emotional and social development. Early pubertal timing is indicative of depression, body image issues, and behavioral problems. A larger database of knowledge to begin addressing the problem would help young women in the future. However, there is a historic lack of research on the impact of low self-esteem and body image among prepubescent girls, *a federally funded program targeted to 8 year old children in every school institution would be instrumental in filling this gap.* This perception uses research from the fields of psychology; education; and cultural & ethnic studies.

### **Psychology**

The field of psychology provides crucial insight into one's developing mind. Throughout life, the brain undergoes crucial development and growth. By the time of adolescence, the structure of the brain has undergone various transformations as a result of pubertal changes. And as brain chemistry starts to change so does the body. During puberty, a girl's body begins to mature and grow hair around the genitals and in no sequential order a period may follow or it may begin before the hair appears. Nevertheless, the changes of the body is beginning to take place and it normally occurs around the ages of 12-13 years old. However, studies have shown that young girls are exhibiting puberty at much younger ages, even as young as 8 years old. A period of time that children are naturally unequipped to handle. Perhaps <https://assignbuster.com/negative-body-image-and-self-esteem-issues-in-combination-with-prepubescence/>

more disturbingly, the rate at girls experiencing prepubescence are linked to increased rates of depression that may likely persist throughout life (Lewis et al., 2018); in their study depression accounted for the girls who developed breast earlier, marking their transition into adulthood by societal expectations. Their study also called for further research since there is little known about the direct connection of pubertal timing and depression and further funding needs to be implemented to seek answers. The study urged researchers to examine hormones and stressors involved during the time of early maturation. Psychological research has suggested early puberty among girls are a key marker to other psychological interferences as well. In a study conducted by Boynton-Jarrett et al. (2013) prepubescent girls were seen to be at high risk of victimization as a result of their maturing bodies. Early puberty can cause serious detrimental effects, depression and victimization are only a few of the devastating outcomes that can appear throughout a girl's development. Both studies call for further research since there is little known about the direct connection of pubertal timing and cognitive problems. It is apparent that the necessity of extensive research in regards to women is important and worth exploring. Women are a vulnerable demographic of the population and if studies show that symptoms of depression are showing up in young girls, there is obvious actions that need to take place for resolution. The study of psychological can make huge strides in discovering what variables play a role in cognitive disorders. By exposing and shedding light on this issue, many women can likely live a healthier lifestyle. One that does not include a lifetime of low self-worth and depression.

## Education

Education is a field of study central to the development of children and emerging adolescence. It is common for students to use their school as a setting to play, form friendships, and build social skills. However, school can sometimes bring unwanted experiences and can have detrimental effects to the development of one's life. Research from Reynolds and Juvonen (2011) argue that the education institution can breed negative social phenomena. Since prepubescent girls exhibit signs of development at a much younger age (8-9 years old) than normal maturing girls (12-13 years old), the difficulty to manage the changes in school are heightened. Research from Reynolds and Juvonen (2011) argue that prepubescent girls experience a paramount of negative social encounters by their later maturing school peers; their research discovered that early developing bodies put prepubescent girls at risk of being teased and even envied by their counterparts. These harmful social interactions make it tough for girls to properly navigate their changing bodies and increases their odds of body image issues and low self-esteem. Reynolds and Juvonen (2011) state that nasty rumors and gossip are often directed to prepubescent girls in schools, causing further frustrations and internalization amongst the girls. A similar study was done of prepubescent girls showing signs of emotional distress from peer interactions and influences in the school setting (Mrug et al., 2014). Another study (Selkie, 2018) supports the connection between early pubertal timing and increased odds of emotional problems, while also shedding light on the inability for these young girls to cope with the new

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environmental changes. Prepubescent girls are not only incapable of properly accessing their emotional issues they are also ill-equipped with the skills needed to manage expectations that their growing body entails. (Selkie, 2018). Often times, prepubescent girl's growing body do not match the age she appears to look like and the expectations given to prepubescent girls through society is especially harmful to their development. Prepubescent girls are clearly vulnerable to emotional distress and it is important to tackle the issue early on. Because there is limited data on the consequences of prepubescence in girls in school settings, the urgency and need for the field of Education to take on this issue is vital for proper human development. The benefit the field will gain through its implementation of extensive research will help young women thrive. The school setting can have devastating consequences to young girls' ability to become healthy adults. If this issue is left neglected young girls will continue to exhibit symptoms and as a result, other developmental inhibitors may arise. A further reason to improve understanding about the link between early puberty and emotional problems is the empowerment of young girls everywhere. Young girls will likely thrive well in the world if topics like this are addressed early on and solutions may come about in classroom settings.

### Cultural and Ethnic Studies

Cultural and Ethnic Studies is field of work that provides valuable data in regards to race and culture, the understanding allows for comparisons among cultural assumptions related to lifespan development and key cultural factors that shape changes across the stages of the adult life course.

However, there is a lack of existing literature in regards to distressed young  
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people of different racial/ethnic, gender, and social class. Research from Carter et al. (2009) (as cited in Herman-Giddens et al., 1997) explain that because African American girls tend to develop much earlier, the need to analyze the implications it may have on one's emotional wellbeing is necessary if improvements are to be made in the population. Carter et al. (2009) study specifically called for further research to be conducted in connection with pubertal timing in African American girls and emotional problems. The need for extensive research come from their study, which found that prepubescent African American girls, living in economically disadvantaged communities, exhibited signs of emotional distress as a result of their peer's reactions to their developing breasts. This caused the girls to feel different from their on-time maturing peers and subsequently leading the girls to risky behaviors and showing signs of low self-esteem and body issue problems. A similar study was done of prepubescent African American girls and Euro American girls that placed special focus on early menarche. The study found that both races were highly susceptible of emotional and mental distress (Carter et al., 2012). The study placed focus on early menarche to look at the relationship between both racial identities and found striking similarities between the two races. The study goes on to state that it collected data from the prepubescents girls through self-assessments and that the results may have had a different effect if a parent or a teacher may have taken it. The study did not include any parent or teacher feedback either, which in turn calls for more research to measure variables that both these studies were unable to collect. Further studies in respect to Cultural and Ethnic Studies would benefit young girls in the long run. If measures are taken to collect data from various cultures, ethnicities, gender, and social

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class, many women will benefit immensely. They will have access to information that is specifically targeted to their own demographic. This is especially important data to circulate to young girls in classroom institutions.

## Conclusion

Normally the time of puberty is a difficult period for young girls between the ages of 10 and 14 but it is especially difficult for prepubescent girls who are experiencing early maturation as young as 8 years old. The emotional problems that arise from early exposure to changes of the body are harmful in that of a young girl and they are at a higher risks of depression, body image issues, low self-esteem, amongst other developmental interferences. That is why it is imperative for a federally funded program targeted to 8 year old children in every school institution to help fill in the gap. This perception uses research from the fields of psychology; education; and cultural & ethnic studies

## Self-Reflection

As a women of Asian descent, I was taught at a very early age to go to school and obey my teachers. All of what I learned about the world around me was in the school institution. I learned about American history in the school setting and just about any topic normally presented to Californian schools. During early childhood, my household did not introduce me to the biological changes that would change the course of my life. Instead, when I got my first period at around 9 years old I was confused and ultimately scared. I had to ask friends what was happening and because I was growing at a faster rate than my peers, no one could help me. Luckily, while in the <https://assignbuster.com/negative-body-image-and-self-esteem-issues-in-combination-with-prepubescence/>

school's bathroom I overheard an older girl talking about her period that I realized what I was going through

As I reflect back to my adolescent years I do remember being sexualized earlier because of my developing body.

I wonder what other emotional distresses could have interfered with my development. As an Asian women, my culture does not tackle issues involving sex often and because of it many of my peers have grown to suppress their emotions and tendencies. I, on the other hand have picked up a very western way of viewing sexuality and I am open as a result. I wonder what it may be like for other girls growing up in Asian household

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