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HOW GENDER-SPECIFIC IS MALE DEPRESSION?

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Although there is a large amount of clinical evidence for a male-type depression, scientific evidence is still limited, especially in non-clinical populations with regard to gender differences in symptoms.

In a sample of college students (518 males, 499 females) the relationship between male depression, sex and gender-role orientation was examined. Contrary to expectations, female students had a greater risk of male depression than male students (28.9% vs. 22.4%; $p < 0.05$). Overall, depressive symptoms as well as male-type distress symptoms were more pronounced in females. In the subgroup of those at risk for male depression sex and kind of symptoms were unrelated. With regard to the impact of gender-role orientation, feminine and undifferentiated orientation predict significant higher risk of male depression (30.7% and 38.1%), independent of biological sex, and were associated with different symptom factors.

The results suggest that male depression might not only be a male phenomenon, at least in college students, since young women have adopted male attributes. In conclusion, gender studies in depression should not rely on biological sex, but include measures of gender-related selfconcepts and normative orientations.