Machine Learning: Childhood Depression

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Machine Learning can be used to identify children who are at high risk of becoming depressed. Childhood depression is not common; however, it also tends to be missed because people tend to think their child's actions are a part of growing teenage pains. This early intervention program can instill into children how to cope with their stressors and continue using these skills as they get older into adulthood. The hope is that early intervention will decrease the number of children who commit suicide, reduce adult depression, and reduce the rate of adult suicide. The machine learning program can look for correlations or patterns that have never been identified, thus making the model stronger in identifying at-risk children.

The drawback in having this type of subject for machine learning is that the data can be incomplete due to childhood depression commonly missed and or misdiagnosed as a learning disability. Also, people have a hard time admitting they are depressed because they don't want that stigma attached to them or feel like they are crazy. Another drawback of this type of machine learning program is that even if we successfully identify these children at higher risk, parents' permission is still needed for treatment. If the child is not crying out for help, the parent could think that nothing is wrong and will not give permission for their child to proceed with the early intervention programs.

With that being said, I would recommend that this project be completed even though it has been identified that there will be incomplete data. The reason why is because our childhood tends to make us the person we are as adults. Adults with depression tend to have some underline issue from childhood that is still affecting them years later. For those reasons, it has been identified that childhood should be the best time to offer these resources too. If I had unlimited funding, I would love to use my machine learning to show the importance of early intervention and get these courses added to regular school. That way, all children can learn these skills and have a safe place to discuss feelings. Also, these courses can be used to continue gathering data on new issues that play into depression, in turn making our model even stronger over time.

References

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