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Sadness among adolescents: An embodied emotion?

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Introduction

There is growing concern that adolescents' mental health is deteriorating. Additionally, concepts of embodiment have gained increasing importance in research in recent decades. Since emotions are expressed in the body, it can be challenging to understand what adolescents' health complaints stand for and how they can be responded to.

Sadness is a common emotion that repeatedly occurs during life, but sadness is also one of the main symptoms of depression. A large body of previous research has examined depression among adolescents, but little is known about nonpathological sadness and the relationship between sadness and other health complaints.

Aim

The study aimed to investigate sadness and other health complaints among adolescents.

Methods

Swedish adolescents completed a survey with a cross-sectional design ($n = 1489$, 15–17 years old), and a logistic regression analysis was used to analyze the relationship between sadness and other health complaints.

Results

Sadness was related to health complaints [headache (OR: 1.58), sleeping difficulties (OR: 2.00), reduced appetite (OR: 1.43), tension (OR: 2.44), and concentration difficulties (OR: 2.75)].



Conclusion

A possible interpretation of the relationship between sadness and other health complaints may be an embodiment of emotions. Different understandings of how emotions arise and are expressed lead to different treatments and care. By not considering embodied emotions, there is a risk of medicating a normal emotional state. Therefore, it is important to reflect on what adolescents' health complaints are an expression of and take into account the body as physical and psychological intertwined. This might entail person-centered support that hopefully leads to an improvement in adolescents' well-being.

Reference

Garnow, T.; Einberg, E.-L.; Edberg, A.-K.; Garmy, P. Sadness and Other Health Complaints among Swedish Adolescents: A Cross-Sectional Study. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2021, 18, 3999. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph1808999>

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