

Low self-rated mental health among Swedish adolescent boys and its relationship to socioeconomic factors

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Background

Adolescents mental health is a major public health concern and studies have shown that socioeconomic factors contribute to the experienced health of adolescents. Girls' mental health, more than boys' mental health, is often discussed. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the association between self-rated mental health and socioeconomic factors among boys and we hypothesized that household wealth influences the association.

Methods

In 2011, a cross-sectional study was conducted at seven junior high schools in a medium sized town in south western Sweden. The data collected was based on a self-administrated questionnaire regarding socioeconomic factors, household wealth and health related quality of life (Minnesota Minneapolis Quality of Life Instrument (MMQL). In all, 235 boys between 11-13 years old and 254 boys between 14-16 years participated. The items from MMQL were summarized into a total score and dichotomized by the median and low self-rated mental health was defined as below median. Logistic regression analysis was used.

Results

Among younger boys no association between low self-rated mental health and socioeconomic factors were seen. Among older boys with divorced parents, an increased risk of low mental health rating was seen OR: 1.83 (95%CI, 1.04;3.23), however when adjusting for household wealth the association disappeared (OR;1.76, CI 0.98;3.15). Also, having one or two parents born outside Sweden implied increased risk of a low self-rated mental health OR: 2.0 (CI; 1.15;3.47), which remained when adjusting for household wealth variables (OR; 2.16 CI; 1.17;3.99). Furthermore, having two or more negative socioeconomic variables increased the risk of low rated mental health (OR;2.60, CI 1.15;5.90) the association remained after adjusting for household wealth (OR;2.38, CI 1.03;5.33).

Conclusions

Boys with divorced parents, boys from migrant backgrounds and boys with several negative socioeconomic factors constituted the identified subgroups at risk. More research in

public health is essential to meet the special needs of different age groups and backgrounds among adolescent boys.

Key messages

- Among older boys (14-16 years old) with divorced parents, an increased risk of low mental health rating was seen, however when adjusting for household wealth the association disappeared.
- Among older boys (14-16 years old) having two or more negative socioeconomic variables increased the risk of low rated mental health, the association remained after adjusting for household wealth.