Mental health and well-being in children and young people in the EU

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Background
WHO declared „Child mental health is a key area of concern“ (2003, 2005)

- Childhood health and illness has changed considerably over the past century and had lead to a higher importance of mental health problems and of socioeconomic influences on health – “New Morbidity” (Palfrey et al. 2005)

- WHO states, that the „development of a child and adolescent mental health policy requires an understanding of well-being and the prevalence of mental health problems among children and adolescents“(2006)

- However, quantifying well-being and the burden of mental disorders in children and adolescents in Europe is a difficult task.
Results on mental well-being in children from 3 recent European studies
HBSC findings: percentages of European girls and boys reporting high life satisfaction (LS) (n > 160,000)

Here is a picture of a ladder. The top of the ladder ‘10’ is the best possible life for you and the bottom ‘0’ is the worst possible life for you. In general, where on the ladder do you feel you stand at the moment? Tick the box next to the number that best describes where you stand.

Adapted for HBSC survey 2001/02, 2005/06

... girls are less likely to experience high life-satisfaction than boys
... girls are less likely to experience high life-satisfaction than boys in almost every country.
The KIDSCREEN Index:  
a cross-cultural indicator of mental well-being and quality of life

- Fifth EC Research Framework Programme; area Public Health  
  (European Commission's grant number QLG-CT-2000-00751)
- European project to develop a **standardised cross-cultural generic tool** to assess **mental well-being / quality of life** in children and adolescents

During the past week …

1. Have you felt fit and well?
2. Have you felt full of energy?
3. Have you felt sad?
4. Have you felt lonely?
5. Have your had enough time for yourself?
6. Have you been able to do the things that you want to do in your free time?
7. Have your parent(s) treated you fairly?
8. Have you had fun with your friends?
9. Have you got on well at school?
10. Have you been able to pay attention?

Ravens-Sieberer et al. (2006) Pabst Science Publisher
European KIDSCREEN-Study: Average scores in mental well-being items 12-18 year old girls and boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Quite Often</th>
<th>Very Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you had fun?</td>
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<td>Have you felt cheerful?</td>
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<td>Have you been in a good mood?</td>
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<td>Have you felt satisfied with your life?</td>
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<td>Have you felt pleased that you are alive?</td>
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<td>Has your life been enjoyable?</td>
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On average, children and adolescents in Europe would give a positive response when asked about their mental well-being.
European KIDSCREEN-Study:
However a noticeable percentage of respondents report poor mental well-being – this figure varies across countries ...

... between 4% to 29% of children and adolescents in European countries report noticeable low mental well-being.
European KIDSCREEN-Study: Age differences - mental well-being decreases with age, and gender differences in mental well-being increase with age.

... the average level of positive mental health and well-being shows a decrease while the respondents grow older – but especially in girls.
European KIDSCREEN-Study:
Gender differences - a larger proportion of girls than boys report noticeable low mental well-being

... the proportion of girls with low mental well-being exceeds that of boys in almost every European country. The girls to boys ratio ranges from 1.1 to 2.3
European KIDSCREEN-Study: Ressource Social Support (Oslo Social Support Scale, OSSS):

An association between the OSSS and KIDSCREEN-52 Psychological Well-being in all countries is apparent. High OSSS => high mental WB

... strong social support is significantly associated with higher mental well-being
European KIDSCREEN-Study: Socioeconomic differences
- A statistically significant association between familial affluence and positive mental health for all countries is apparent ...

... high familial affluence is significantly associated with higher mental well-being
Macro-dimension: mental health data and socioeconomic data
Flash EUROBAROMETER Series #246
Parents’ views on the mental health of their child
Conducted by The Gallup Organization, Hungary
upon the request of EU Directorate General Health and Consumers

- Flash Eurobarometer (No 246) measures parents’ views on the mental health and QoL of their child using the KIDSCREEN 10 index.

- Fieldwork was carried out 2008

- N=12,750 randomly selected parents of 6 -17 year-old children were interviewed in the 27 EU Member States.
National wealth and adolescents’ mental well-being

Association between QoL/MH index mean scores (Proxy) and GDP (Purchasing Power Parity) per capita

\[(R=0.49; R^2=0.24; p<.01)\]

... young people from wealthy countries are more likely to experience high levels of mental well-being
National wealth and adolescents' mental well-being

Association between QoL/MH index mean scores (Proxy) and youth unemployment rate

(R = 0.41; R² = 0.17; p < .01)

... higher levels of youth unemployment rates are associated with lower mental health

Few UnR high MH

Austria, Netherlands, Ireland, Germany, UK

Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, France

high UnR low MH

Youth unemployment rate

KIDSCREEN-10 Country Mean Score
National wealth and adolescents’ mental well-being

Association between QoL/MH index mean scores (Proxy) and annual expenditure on public and private educational institutions per pupil/student in EUR PPS (R=0.46; R²=0.21; p<.01)

- Higher annual expenditures on education are associated with higher levels of mental well-being

- Higher annual expenditures on education are associated with higher levels of mental well-being

... higher annual expenditures on education are associated with higher levels of mental well-being
Summary

- Different dimensions of inequalities in mental well-being are apparent for young people including gender, age, geography and affluence/SES.
- Many aspects of young people’s mental health / well-being are also affected by national wealth.
- A European indicator for monitoring child well-being is available. The analyses of the KIDSCREEN data shows the advantages and possibilities of comparable European survey data.

Implications

- The evidence on mental health inequalities among young people has implications for policy development at national and international levels.
- Programs devised to improve young people’s health need to take into the existing inequalities and avoid making the gaps wider.
Thank you!

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www.child-public-health.de
References:


This paper was produced for a meeting organized by Health & Consumers DG and represents the views of its author on the subject. These views have not been adopted or in any way approved by the Commission and should not be relied upon as a statement of the Commission’s or Health & Consumers DG’s views. The European Commission does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper, nor does it accept responsibility for any use made thereof.