

Early-life stressors' long-term effects on mental health among Danish children aged 10-14

Rasmus Bræmer

Abstract

Background and Objectives

In Denmark, 20% of 11-15 year olds show signs of a bad mental health.

Early life stress is a risk factor for bad mental health.

This objective is to explore the long-term effects of stressful events occurring in the early stages of the children's life on mental health of children aged 10-14 years old.

The importance of family structure will also be assessed.

Methods

This study is a conductive cohort study using data from the Danish National Birth Cohort.

38682 children participated. The early life stressors examined are at-home conflicts, whether the parents are divorced, mothers' socioeconomic level and maternal relationship.

Results

If mothers reported they had experienced 'some' or 'many' at-home conflicts, an OR for increased risk of any type of psychiatric diagnosis of 1.27(95% CI: 1.10;1.48) and 1.49(95% CI: 1.27;1.99) was observed. If mothers reported a very low degree of maternal attachment, an OR of 1.78(95% CI: 1.07;2.98)

If mothers reported a 'bad' or a 'very bad' mental health when children were 6-18 months old, ORs of 1.71 (95% CI: 1.29;2.60) and 2.28 (1.63;4.46) were found.

The analysis for family composition resulted in mainly statically insignificant results.

Conclusion

An association between early life stressors and adverse long-term effects on mental health was found. It also found that self-reported maternal mental health when the child was 6-18 months old had a long-term adverse effect.

However, it is assumed that early-life stressors are important, but it is more likely a combination of many, complex factors.