

Is school absence related to milder mental health problems in adolescence?

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Why study school absence?



Negative
consequences

Reduced academic achievement

Lack of school completion

Unemployment

Health problems

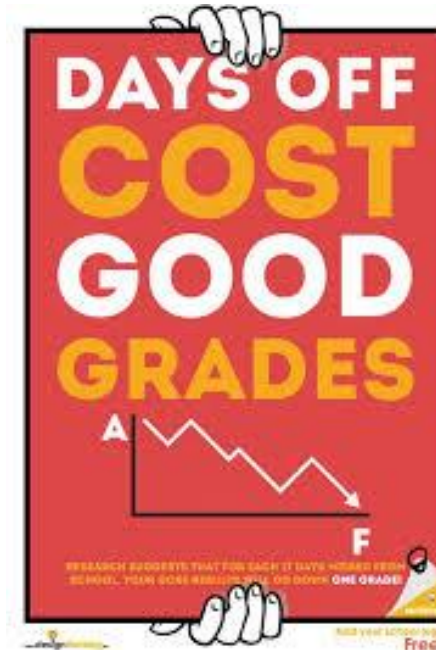
Risk-taking

**ATTENDANCE
MATTERS**
every school day counts.

**EVERY
DAY
MATTERS**

YOU + SCHOOL = SUCCESS

MISSING
(SCHOOL) =
MISSING
OUT



School absence and mental health



Consistently related to mental health problems

- Clinical samples
- Community samples
- Investigating absence atheoretically

Focus of previous research

- Diagnosable mental disorder
- Severe absenteeism
- Cut-offs



Aims

- Investigate the association between absence and symptoms of mental health problems in a population-based sample
 - Depression, ADHD, conduct problems
- Does the association remain stable across different levels of absence?



- The youth@hordaland-survey
 - Conducted spring 2012
- Web-based questionnaire
 - Mental health problems and service use in adolescence
- Participants
 - 10 257 (53%)
 - 16-19 years old





Official school registries



HORDALAND
FYLKESKOMMUNE

Grades
Days of absence
Hours of absence

Sample

8222 adolescents
51.6% female
Mean age 17

Mental health problems



Depression

Short moods and feelings questionnaire (SMFQ)

13 items



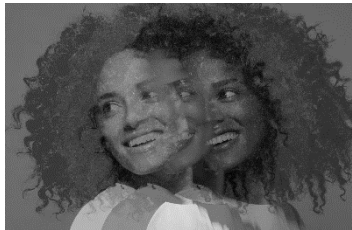
Mental health problems



Depression

Short moods and feelings questionnaire (SMFQ)

13 items



ADHD

World Health Organization adult ADHD self-report scale (ASRS)

28 items



Mental health problems



Depression

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ADHD

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Conduct problems

Youth Conduct Problems Scale (YCD)

5 items

Three models

Model 1

Depression/
ADHD/
Conduct problems

Standardized to z-scores

- Mean 0
- SD 1

Model 2

Depression/
ADHD/
Conduct problems

Age
Gender
Socioeconomic status

Model 3

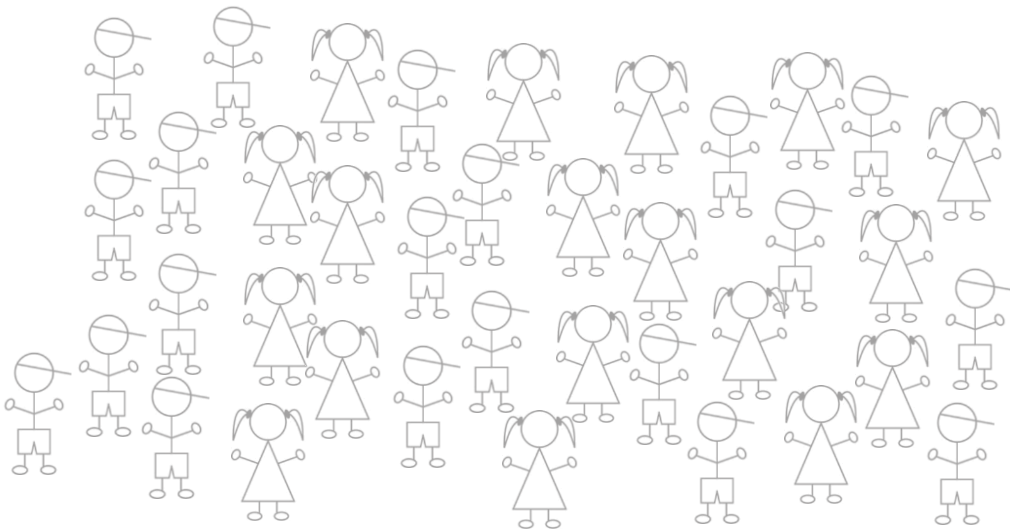
Depression
ADHD
Conduct problems

Age
Gender
Socioeconomic status

Strengths and limitations

Strengths

- Population-based survey
- Data on school absence from official registry



Limitations

- School-based questionnaire
- Cross-sectional design
- No information on the reasons underlying the absence



Summary

- There is a significant association between absence and milder mental health problems
 - For all levels of absence
- Still, milder mental health problems explain little of the total variance in school absence

School Matters!



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Thank you!

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