Trends in adolescent mental health during economic upturns and downturns:

a multilevel analysis of Swedish data 1988-2008

Published in 2018, with Curt Hagquist, in *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 72, 101-108

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The Impacts of Changed Living Conditions On Child and Adolescent Mental Health

What has been done

Thorough investigation of time trend in adolescent mental health in Sweden

What to be done

Explaining time trend
YiV Study

Promising lead

- Adolescents’ worry about family finance and perceived poor health (Hagquist, 1998)*
- Economic recession in 1990s

Economic

Adolescents

Unemployment rate
(of 14 municipalities)

Worry about family finance

Mental Health Problems
(Psychosomatic Symptoms)

Trend of mental health (i.e., psychosomatic symptoms) can be influenced by

- Societal-level unemployment rate
- Individual-level worry about family finance
- The above two factors together
- Interaction between the two factors (e.g., worry about family finance deteriorates one’s mental health more strongly during economic downturns than economic upturns)
Change in unemployment rate over time

Worry about family finance

Girls

Boys
Psychosomatic symptoms: The higher, the more adolescents suffered

Time trend in reality

Time trend after controlling for worry about family finance

Note. † p < .10  * p < .05  *** p < .001

Girls

Boys
Different factors explain the increase in mental health problems in different time periods.

In the mid 1990s, the time trend in mental health problems among Swedish adolescents seems to be influenced by increased worry about family finances during the time period of economic downturns.

While worry about family finances doesn’t seem to contribute to the increase of adolescent mental health problems during more recent decades, economic stress is still an important determinant of mental health problems that needs to be addressed in public health work.
QUESTION

ANSWER

What Who Where When How Why
Thank You