

Key messages:

- Everyone involved with the goal health equity, not only those directly involved with the impaired, should be aware of the inequalities in Well-Being between those with impairments and those without.
- Good Well-Being is less common among adolescents with impairments, particularly those with multiple or severe impairments.

Differences in the WHO-5 well-being index among Swedish adolescents with and without impairments 2017

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Background

All children have the right to the highest attainable standard of health. This is stated in The Convention on the Rights of Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. But this is not the case! We know that health and well-being varies between different groups. However, knowledge is needed about differences between adolescents with and without different kinds of impairments. The aim of this study is to analyse whether there are differences in Well-Being, measured with the WHO-5 Well-Being index (WHO-5), among adolescents with and without various kinds of impairments, taking into account the number and severity of impairments.

Methods

A cross-sectional study including all students in grade 9 in compulsory school and grade 2 in upper secondary school (4989 respondents, response rate 77.9%) in a Swedish county 2017. The students answered a questionnaire anonymously during school hours. WHO-5 and prevalence and severity of impairment (Hearing (H), Visual (V), Motor (M), Dyslexia (D), ADHD/ADD/Tourette or similar (AAT), Autism/Autism-like (AAL) and Other (O)) were assessed. Binary Logistic Regression was used to calculate age and gender adjusted OR for good Well-Being (WHO-5 index score >50).

Results

27.6% of all students had one or several impairments. In the impairment group 33.7% had multiple impairments and 25.5% had severe impairments. Compared to adolescents without impairments the impairment group had lower odds for good Well-Being (OR=0.52) and especially those with multiple or severe impairments (OR=0.31; OR=0.43). There was also differences in good Well-Being between those without and those with various kinds of impairments (AAL OR=0.26, M OR=0.37, AAT OR=0.39, H OR=0.48, V OR=0.56, D OR=0.59, O OR=0.38).

Conclusions

Good Well-Being is less common among adolescents with impairments, particularly those with multiple or severe impairments. An especially vulnerable group is adolescents with Autism or Autism-like symptoms.