

THE PREVALENCE OF SELF-HARM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN DENMARK AND THEIR PARENTS' KNOWLEDGE OF AND ATTITUDE TO SELF-HARM

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An increasing number of young Danes harm themselves either by taking an overdose of pills or by cutting their wrist. A large number of international research projects have been carried through which expose the factors that may place the young person in the risk group. The chief part of these studies are based on data from adolescents who are hospitalized or who are undergoing treatment.

This study focuses on adolescents who are not hospitalized. The study is the Danish part of the Child & Adolescent Self-harm in Europe (CASE) study, which is a multi-centre project with collaborators from Belgium, Denmark, England, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway – and Australia.

More than five thousand 15- and 16 year-olds in Denmark have responded to an anonymous self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire is developed and the study conducted in collaboration with the Child and Adolescent Self-harm in Europe (Case) study as part of an international investigation of self-harm among young people.

Similarly, more than four thousand parents have responded to an anonymous self-report questionnaire. The questionnaire for the parents has been developed by me.

The aim of the project is to expose and to pinpoint 1) the extent of adolescent self-harm 2) the parents' knowledge of and attitude to their son's or daughter's acts of self-harm and 3) adolescent views as to whom they matter to and whose help they can count on.

The survey focuses on the importance of social relations, which are crucial to the endeavours at minimizing adolescent self-harming behaviour. Most adolescents consider their family to be an important ingredient of the good life. Still, many young persons feel that they face essential decisions on their own. This can be difficult – especially when they want to have a family to lean on. This matter calls for a different approach to the sort of help the young person wants.