

## EPP375

## Self-harm, early emotional neglect and alexithymia in young Italian help seekers

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**Introduction:** Recent studies showed that non-suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) is a transdiagnostic behavior with multiple functions and motivational factors. More specifically, two key functions have been identified: the first is an interpersonal function (hurting/punishing others, influencing others' behavior); the second involves personal goals (emotions regulation, dissociation, self-punishment). Some distal factors may contribute to the onset of this behavior (e.g., childhood abuse, emotional neglect), resulting in emotional dysregulation and alexithymia. Alexithymia, also called emotional blindness, a coping strategy to reduce emotional pain following trauma traumatic life events, emerged as a predictor of NSSI.

**Objectives:** The study aimed to investigate in a sample of young Italian help seekers referred to an early intervention service and a university counseling and consultation service (1) the prevalence of NSSI behaviors; (2) their correlation to early traumatic life experiences and alexithymia symptoms.

**Methods:** From March 2023, the young adults participating in this study filled a standardized battery (through a QR code). In this preliminary analysis, only data concerning the Deliberate Self-Harm Inventory (DSHI), Childhood Trauma Questionnaire – Short Form (CTQ-SF), and the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS – 20) were considered.

**Results:** Nowadays, 73 young adults participated in the study (60% women; mean age 26 years, SD 4.2). A third of the sample reported NSSI behavior lifetime, with a higher distribution among women ( $\chi^2 = 9.425$   $p = 0.002$ ). By comparing the NSSI and No-NSSI groups, only the emotional neglect dimension exceed the clinical cut-off even if statistically significant differences emerged in all the early traumatic dimensions, with higher scores in the NSSI group as regard the emotional abuse ( $F = 18.321$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), physical abuse ( $F = 17.556$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), sexual abuse ( $F = 5.200$ ;  $p = 0.026$ ), emotional neglect ( $F = 20.053$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), physical neglect ( $F = 12.134$ ;  $p = 0.001$ ), minimization/denial ( $F = 13.384$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The alexithymia symptoms, assessed with the TAS-20 scale, the NSSI group showed higher scores with a statistically significant difference compared to the No-NSSI group ( $F = 15.842$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ) and, specifically, in the “difficulty describing feelings” ( $F = 10.351$ ;  $p = 0.002$ ) and “difficulty in identifying emotions” ( $F = 13.543$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ).

**Conclusions:** According to the social neuroscience model, these preliminary results suggested that young adults that practice self-harm behaviors may have experienced early emotional neglect, determining a vulnerability to recognize and regulate emotions in response to stressful events. It is therefore crucial to assess and monitor this behavior in all young people help seekers from mental health services, concerning the history of traumatic events and emotional difficulties, to plan personalized evidence-based interventions.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

## EPP375

## Association between substance use and sleep disturbances among adolescents: Systematic review and meta-analysis

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**Introduction:** Substance use is a major factor contributing to sleep disturbances in adolescents, whose developing brains are especially vulnerable. The previous studies have primarily focused on adults or individual substances.

**Objectives:** This meta-analysis examined the overall association between substance use and sleep disturbances in adolescents.

**Methods:** Relevant studies were systematically searched across multiple databases, including CINHAL (via EBSCOHOST), PubMed, Scopus, Ovid Medline, Embase, PsychINFO (via EBSCOHOST), and Web of Science, from inception until October 2021. A random-effects model was employed to calculate pooled Odds Ratios (OR) with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Forest plots and Cochran's Q statistic p values were utilized to assess heterogeneity among the studies. Subgroup and meta-regression analyses were conducted to compare groups and identify sources of heterogeneity. Study quality was evaluated using the Joanna Briggs Institute tool, and sensitivity analysis was performed to test the robustness of the results.

**Results:** A comprehensive search identified 16,870 studies, of which 18 were included in the review and meta-analysis (Figure 1), published between 1993 and 2021. The studies were of high quality and had a low risk of bias. The results showed that substance use significantly contributes to sleep disturbances in adolescents (OR = 1.70, 95% CI: 1.49–1.94) (Figure2). Alcohol users, coffee drinkers, and smokers were significantly more likely to experience sleep disturbances (OR = 1.77, OR = 1.58; OR = 1.66), while marijuana showed a non-significant association (OR = 1.29) (Table 1). Additionally, alcohol and smoking were significantly associated with insomnia (OR = 1.82, 95% CI: 1.43–2.33 and OR = 1.75, 95% CI: 1.31–2.33), hypersomnolence (alcohol: OR = 1.46, 95% CI: 1.18–1.81), and sleep-related breathing disorders (S-RBD) (alcohol: OR = 2.29, 95% CI: 1.53–3.42; smoking: OR = 2.30, 95% CI: 1.23–4.30), with coffee also significantly associated with insomnia (OR = 1.58, 95% CI: 1.30–1.93). There was considerable heterogeneity among the studies, however, subgroup and meta-regression analysis indicated no statistically significant sources of heterogeneity.

**Table 1** Association between individual substance use and sleep disturbances

	n Study	OR	95% CI Lower limit	Upper limit	Q -value	Heterogeneity P-Value	I <sup>2</sup>
Alcohol	15	1.77	1.55	2.03	102.21	<0.001	86.30
Coffee	3	1.58	1.30	1.93	6.02	<0.005	66.81
Marijuana	3	1.29	0.78	2.13	24.38	<0.001	91.79
Smoking	15	1.66	1.37	2.01	278.13	<0.001	94.96

OR = Odds Ratio, CI = Confidence Interval

Image 1:

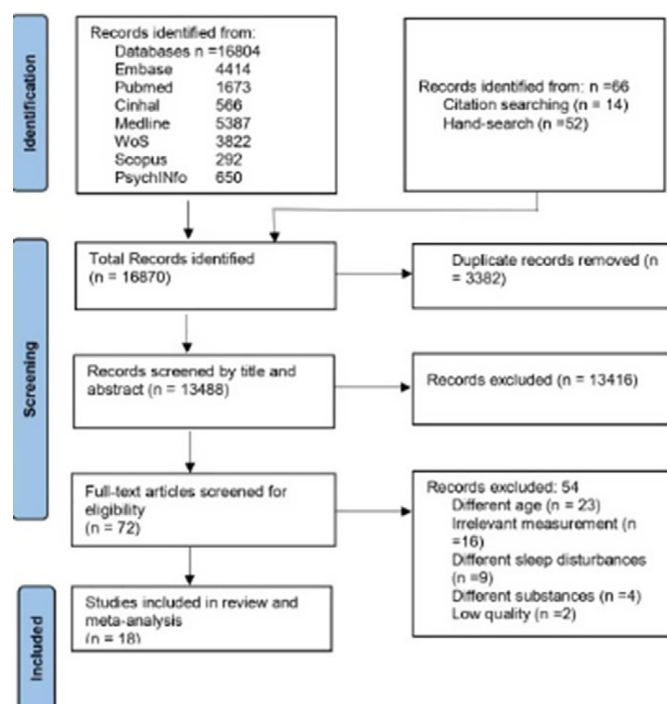
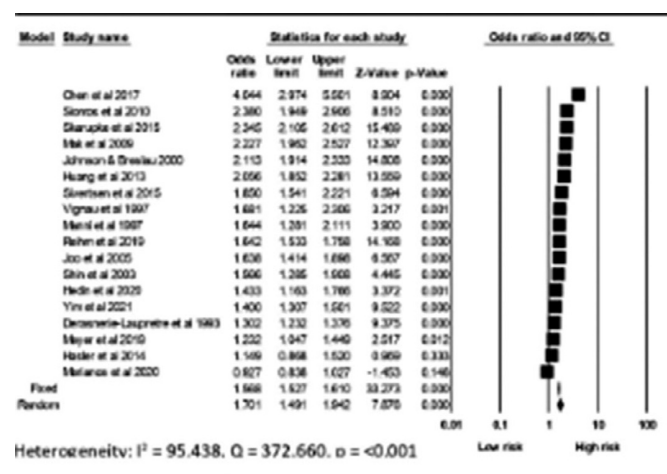


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Chart

Image 2:



**Conclusions:** Substance use significantly increases the risk of sleep disturbances in adolescents, with alcohol, coffee, and smoking showing strong associations. Despite the heterogeneity among studies, the findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to mitigate these risks and improve sleep health in this population.

**Disclosure of Interest:** None Declared

## EPP376

### Let's learn about emotions - a school based universal intervention on socio-emotional learning

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**Introduction:** Socio-emotional problems are widely present in school aged children thus interfering with classroom climate and possibly leading to psychopathology. Several universal interventions exist but evidence-based and motivating interventions are still warranted.

Let's learn about emotions was originally developed in Kyoto, Japan. It is based on cognitive behavioral therapy, positive psychology and socio-emotional learning. It is a highly structured program including 12 lessons to be taught in the classroom by teachers. It has been aimed for primary school aged children. This program was translated in Finnish and culturally adapted to be suitable for the Finnish school environment.

**Objectives:** This study aims to produce an evidence based universal intervention that is feasible for teachers and motivating and inspirational for pupils. The aim is to increase the socio-emotional skills among pupils and teachers. Thus improvement could be noticed within the individuals as well as in the classroom and school environment.

**Methods:** In spring 2023 (study 1) the Finnish version of the intervention was taught to each 4th grader in the city of Hyvinkää, Finland. Data was collected from pupils, parents and teachers before and twice after the intervention with Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and questionnaires of classroom environment, school safety, bullying, feasibility and satisfaction. A single group pre-post test design was used. Qualitative interviews were carried out for parents, teachers and principals after the intervention. Effectiveness on the intervention will be studied in 2025-2026 in a larger quasi-experimental study.

**Results:** Altogether 208 pupils and parents participated in the study 1 in Hyvinkää before and after the intervention. The results showed significant improvement in the parent-reported SDQ scores in conduct problems (0.31 points; SD 1.64,  $p=0.022$ ), hyperactivity (0.37 points; SD 1.36,  $p=0.001$ ), peer problems (0.19 points; SD 1.09,  $p=0.036$ ) and impact of difficulties (0.98 points, SD 3.08,  $p<0.001$ ). No improvement was observed in the pupil report when all pupils were included in the analysis. A Pearson correlation test between self-reports and parent-reports for the SDQ total score revealed significant results for both T0 ( $r = 0.439$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and T1 ( $r = 0.377$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Among the pupils with the top 20% of difficulty scores by SDQ at baseline, significant improvements were observed in the SDQ total score (1.66 points; SD = 4.94,  $p = 0.046$ ), emotional problems (0.90 points; SD = 2.71,  $p = 0.049$ ) and impact of difficulties (0.85 points; SD = 1.43,  $p = 0.005$ ).

**Conclusions:** Let's learn about emotions is showing promising results and it is distinguishable from other universal interventions