

Transnational Perspectives on Student Mental Health: A Comparative Analysis across Five European Countries

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Abstract

Adolescent mental health has emerged as a central challenge for European education systems, requiring evidence-informed, preventive strategies. Drawing from the Erasmus+ *School Mental Health* project, this research examines the state of student emotional well-being across Spain, Iceland, Romania, Lithuania, and Cyprus. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, comprising expert interviews, student focus groups, and structured surveys, the study investigates individual, relational, digital, and systemic factors shaping psychological outcomes among adolescents aged 12 to 18.

The findings reveal a consistent divergence between overall self-rated mental health and measured emotional well-being (via the WHO-5 index), pointing to a widespread normalisation of psychological distress. Academic pressure, i.e. specifically grade-centric anxiety and heavy workloads, alongside overexposure to social media and family instability emerge as primary drivers of distress across all jurisdictions. Despite the widespread existence of school support services, significant barriers such as social stigma and mistrust hinder their utilization. Differences across nations highlight the impact of distinct educational models, with countries such as Spain and Cyprus experiencing higher grade-related stress compared to more integrated systems like Iceland. This research concludes with practical recommendations to embed mental health directly into core educational practices.

Keywords: Adolescent Mental Health, Emotional Well-being, Whole-Institution Approach, Comparative Cross-National Study