

Title: From Early Mental Health to Adult Education Outcomes

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Abstract:

Adolescent mental health is an important determinant of educational outcomes. This developmental period involves substantial biological, cognitive, and emotional changes, during which psychological difficulties may emerge and influence motivation, concentration, and engagement in school. Using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), this study examines how early adolescent mental health profiles are associated with later educational outcomes, focusing on (1) *educational intentions in late adolescence* and (2) *realized post-secondary completion in early adulthood*. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.

Mental health is measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire for adolescents aged 13 and 14. Rather than combining these measures into a single index or analyzing each dimension separately, the study applies latent class analysis to identify subgroups of adolescents with similar patterns of psychological difficulties, capturing how symptoms co-occur across individuals. After identifying these profiles, regression models are used to estimate their associations with two educational outcomes: educational intentions at ages 16 to 17 and post-secondary completion at ages 20 to 22.

This study contributes to the SOEP literature in several ways. Previous research on childhood mental health in SOEP has largely relied on parent-reported measures (Peter and Spiess, 2011; Richter et al., 2018; Runge et al., 2021). By using adolescents’ self-reports, the study captures internal psychological experiences that may not be fully observable to parents. In addition, while other psychological traits in SOEP, such as locus of control, expectations, and noncognitive skills, have been linked to educational outcomes (Piatek and Pinger, 2010; Coneus et al., 2009; Kunz and Staub, 2020), adolescent mental health have received limited attention.

The analysis is ongoing and follows a predefined research plan. Participation in this conference, which focuses on longitudinal analysis and robustness through multidimensional measurement, strengthens the quality of the study and helps guide future work. The author is grateful for your review.

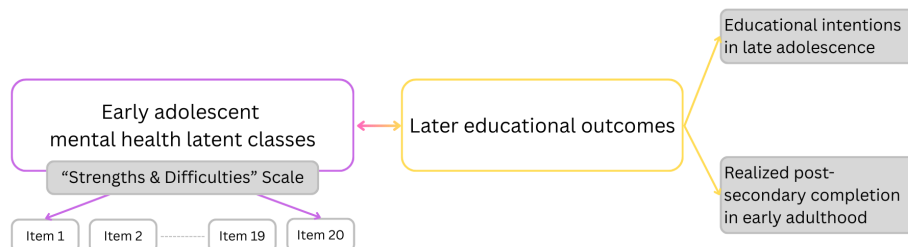


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Adolescent Mental Health and Educational Outcomes