Abstract title: “Diario della salute”, a school based intervention aiming to promote subjective well-being among Italian early adolescents: a clusterised, non-randomised controlled study

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Abstract:

Background - Recent literature highlights the benefits of interventions promoting subjective well-being and positive psychosocial adjustment in adolescence. ‘Diario della salute’ (DDS) is a school based intervention aiming to provide Italian 12-13 years old children with the social and emotional skills to make the most of their potential and to cope with the developmental tasks of early adolescence. DDS uses a combination of (i) five highly-standardised interactive lessons (2-4 hours each) on common psychosocial and health issues in adolescence, administered by previously trained teachers; (ii) a booklet for adolescents telling the story of four same age students, and (iii) a booklet for parents telling the experience of two parents with teenage children.

Objective. To evaluate the effectiveness of DDS on self-reported subjective well-being.

Methods. The study was registered on Clinicaltrials.gov (reference number NCT01720199). We used mixed effects generalised linear models, with school as a random intercept to account for the clusterised structure of the data. Intervention effect was adjusted for outcome variable at baseline, sex, age, parental socio-economic status, and nationality of parents.

Results - Sixty-two middle schools were sampled and equally allocated to intervention or control arm. 1462 students (82.79% of eligible students) in the intervention group and 1465 students (85.67%) in the control group filled in the baseline survey. Subjects in the intervention group had 24% greater odds of reporting non-specific somatic pain compared to subjects in the control group (odds ratio [OR] 1.24; 95% confidence interval [C.I.] 1.05, 1.46); 30% greater odds of low morale (OR 1.30; 95% C.I. 1.10, 1.52); and 32% greater odds of irritability (OR 1.32; 95% C.I. 1.13, 1.55).

Conclusion - An increased perception of psychosomatic symptoms among students exposed to the intervention may be suggestive of increased emotional competence, a factor positively associated with well-being over the course of life.