



***The association between
self-concept and
disability among
adolescents in Ireland: a
secondary analysis of the
Growing Up in Ireland
(GUI) study***

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Background to the study

Adolescence:

- A turbulent time in the life span
- Increased likelihood of mental health difficulties
- Low motivation for learning
- Risk of school refusal
- Less likely to access support services



Background to the study

Adolescents with a disability:

- Increased risk of severe mental episodes
- Increased risk of bullying
- Increased risk of school refusal
- Disproportionately represented in youth justice systems
- Poorer educational outcomes
- Reduced employability



Background to the study

Self Concept:

- An individual's perception of their skills across a range of different domains (e.g. academic status, social status)
- Multi-dimensional construct
- Develops in response to an individual's environment
- Not static- changes over time
- Strongly associated with positive outcomes (emotional well-being, academic achievement, maintaining safe and healthy relationships, acquiring effective coping skills and motivation for learning)



Objectives of the study

- Describe the prevalence and type of disability amongst 13 year olds
- Describe the life circumstances of those adolescents in the sample with a disability compared with adolescents without a diagnosis
- Compare the self-concept scores of adolescents with a disability with those of the adolescents without a diagnosis
- Explore the association between self-concept and types of disability



Method & Analysis

- Cross-sectional study (child cohort at age 13)
- Descriptive statistics & between group analysis (adolescents with and without a disability)
- Variables of interest (extracted from questionnaires) included:
 - *disability status*
 - *socio-demographics*
 - *school context*
 - *support services being received*
 - *self-concept*



Self-concept (*Piers Harris Self Concept Scales*)

Six domains:

- Behavioural Adjustment (BEH)
- Intellectual/School Status (INT)
- Physical Appearance (PHY)
- Freedom from Anxiety (FRE)
- Popularity (POP)
- Happiness and Satisfaction (HAP)



Disability status

- Disability categories included in GUI:
 - Physical and Sensory Disability (PSD)
 - Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)
 - General Learning Difficulty (LD)
 - Speech and Language Difficulties (SLCN)*
 - Autistic Spectrum disorders (ASD)
 - Emotional Behavioural Disorder (EBD)
 - Mental Health Difficulty
 - Assessed syndrome
 - Slow Progress
 - Other



Results

% of adolescents with a disability

N	N adolescents		Total N	% of total
diagnoses	Male	Female	adolescents	sample
0	2,949	3,261	6,220	82.93%
1	533	457	990	13.17%
2	124	73	197	2.62%
3	40	29	69	0.91%
4	33	16	49	0.65%



Results

% of types of disability diagnosis

Disability Diagnosis	N adolescents diagnosed by a health professional	% out of total number of diagnoses (n=1591)	% of entire sample* (n=7515)
SpLD	485	30.48%	6.45%
Physical/Sensory Disability	461	28.97%	6.12%
Learning Disability	181	11.37%	2.40%
SLCN	123	7.73%	1.63%
EBD/ADHD	96	6.03%	1.27%
Slow Progress	88	5.53%	1.16%
ASD	73	4.58%	.98%
Other	84	5.27%	1.11%



Results

Life circumstances

Group differences (those with and without a disability):

- **Gender** (significantly* more boys with a disability than girls)
- **Income** (significantly* greater proportion of adolescents with a disability living in low income families)
- **Deis** school (significantly* greater proportion in DEIS)
- Chronic **health** condition (significantly* greater proportion with additional chronic health needs parent & adolescent themselves)
- Significantly* more adolescents with a disability have a **negative views of school**
- Significantly* more reported **episodes of bullying** by those with a disability

(*significance level of $p < .05$)



Results

Support services received

	Type of SEN Practitioner	N adolescents receiving support	Total N of adolescents with relevant diagnosis	% of adolescents receiving support.
In school support:	SLT (SLCN)	15	123	15.48%
	(ASD)	8	73	11.05%
	Educational psychology service:	45	1305	3.98%
	Resource Teacher:	509	1305	46.02%
	No support:	710	1305	46.40%



Results

Support services received

	Type of SEN Practitioner	N adolescents receiving support	Total N of adolescents with relevant diagnosis	% of adolescents receiving support.
Out of school support:	SLT (SLCN)	37	123	27.11%
	(ASD)	8	73	12.82%
	OT (ASD)	7	73	9.23%
	OT (PSD):	15	461	2.70%
	OT (LD):	11	181	5.25%
	Physio (PSD):	26	461	4.33%
	Psychology (EBD):	32	96	38.16%
	Psychiatrist (EBD):	17	96	20.19%
	No support	956	1305	72.58%



Results

Caregiver views of support

Parent views of support	N adolescents receiving support	Total N of adolescents with relevant diagnosis	% of adolescents receiving support.
Excellent	193	1305	18.89%
Adequate	260	1305	20.90%
Inadequate	200	1305	16.42%
Don't Know	12	1305	1.38%
No support	640	1305	42.21%



Results

Differences in mean scores on self-concept

	PSD	SpLD	LD	SLCN	ASD
BEH			X	X	X
INT			X	X	X
PHY	X		X		X
FRE		X			X
POP	X		X	X	X
HAP		X			X

X = scores significantly different to those of adolescents without a disability ($p < .05$)



Results

Disability & low self-concept

	BEH	INT	PHY	FRE	POP	HAP
	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR	OR
	(95%CI)	(95%CI)	(95%CI)	(95%CI)	(95%CI)	(95%CI)
Disability diagnosis:	1.62* (1.43-1.84)	1.88* (1.66-2.14)	1.19* (1.04- 1.37)	1.27* 1.12- 1.45)	1.53* (1.35-1.74)	1.11 (.98-1.26)

(* = $p < .05$)



Results

Disability type & self-concept

	BEH	INT	PHY	FRE	POP	HAP
	Odds	Odds	Odds	Odds	Odds	Odds
	Ratio	Ratio	Ratio	Ratio	Ratio	Ratio
	(95% CI)	(95% CI)	(95% CI)	(95% CI)	(95% CI)	(95% CI)
PSD:	1.01 (.83-1.26)	1.33* (1.01-2.77)	1.18 (.95-1.48)	1.24 (.98-1.60)	1.38* (1.08-1.78)	1.06 (.87-1.31)
SpLD:	1.35* (1.02-1.78)	1.9* (1.38-2.6)	1.09 (.85-1.39)	1.02 (.92-1.57)	1.13 (.91-1.42)	1.06 (.84-1.32)
LD:	1.97* (1.18-3.2)	2.05* (1.22-3.43)	1.14 (.89-1.46)	1.08 (.86-1.36)	1.25 (.96-1.64)	1.09 (.86-1.37)
EBD:	1.99 (.97-4.10)	1.39 (.78-2.44)	.75 (.44-1.26)	1.12 (.78-1.61)	1.8* (1.02-3.17)	1.14 (.78-1.68)
SLCN:	1.06 (.79-1.42)	1.25* (1.04-1.61)	.90 (.63-1.28)	1.03 (.73-1.48)	1.08 (.82-1.42)	.83 (.57-1.22)
ASD:	.94 (.73-1.20)	1.05 (.82-1.34)	1.19 (.86-1.65)	1.09 (.84-1.41)	1.99 (.81-4.85)	1.13 (.84-1.53)

(* = $p < .05$)



Summary of findings

- Relationship between disability, poverty and health
 - Importance of understanding the person in the context of their lives
 - Interventions/ supports may be needed at many levels not just at the level of the individual themselves (micro, meso, macro levels)
- Nature of support being received
 - Less than half receiving no support for their disability at the time of the study
 - Support e.g. SLT and OT are mostly delivered outside of school - lack of collaboration across health and education
 - How well do we engage parents as partners in how services are delivered?
- Association between self concept and disability:
 - Different patterns of self-concept scores across disability type
 - Interventions to improve self-concept may be warranted
 - Need to develop interventions targeting inclusive practices in mainstream classroom/ school in relation to disability



Limitations

- Cross-sectional study
- Ambiguity in questions
- Debate regarding underlying concepts in relation to disability
- No measure of impact of the diagnosis on the individuals functioning
- Interaction between combination of disabilities not analysed
- One measure of self-concept does not constitute a clinical diagnosis
- Mean score differences do not necessarily mean clinical significance



Thank you.
Questions?

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