

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	Teachers' experiences of adolescents' pain in everyday life —a qualitative study
AUTHORS	Rohde, Gudrun; Westergren, Thomas; Haraldstad, Kristin; Johannessen, Berit; maHøie, Magnhild; Helseth, Sølvi; Fegran, Liv; Slettebø, Åshild

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Vervoot, Tine Ghent University
REVIEW RETURNED	20-Apr-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>This manuscript reports on a study that examined teachers' experience of adolescents' pain in a school setting. The design of the study consisted of focusgroup methods. Qualitative content analysis was used to identify themes amongst the data. Findings indicated that pain is perceived as a biopsychosocial phenomenon comprised of a number of other themes related to challenges of living/coping with pain and with strenuous lives in general and teachers' support strategies.</p> <p>While the understanding of teachers' perspectives of adolescents' pain is critically important given their significant role in child education and relatedly, pain management, this study has a number of limitations that should be addressed in order to improve the manuscript.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within the introduction, it should be spelled out more clearly-based upon available evidence- whether teachers have a sense of how to deal with adolescents' pain. Does previous evidence indicates difficulties within teachers to adequately deal with pain? 2. It should also be motivated why a qualitative approach was chosen 3. Final sentence within the introduction: please spell out whether the study is about adolescent coping with pain and/or teachers' coping with the child's pain. 4. 22 teachers participated: please spell out how many teachers were asked to participate. Did those who participated differ from those who didn't? Are those who participated the ones who are particularly interested in pain / more sensitive to pain? This (selection bias) should also be addressed as a potential limitation 5. Please provide a bit more information about the semi-structured interview guide. At present, this is described rather vaguely (i.e., how adolescents' express pain, how they cope with pain and how the teachers cope with the adolescents' pain): were there any questions about how teachers conceptualize adolescent pain, in terms of causes, consequences, ...
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	<p>6. Please explain what NVivo software does</p> <p>7. Page 9: the information on the 'first impression' the researchers got: this information is presented twice: at page 9 and again at page 10. I suggest to spell this out in the results section.</p> <p>8. The labeling 'an increasing and interwoven' phenomenon is unclear: what do the authors mean with this? Increasing in what sense? Interwoven with what?</p> <p>9. Page 13: information on familial transmission of pain and social support: it is unclear in what way this information fits into the theme 'living strenuous lives': this appears to be a different theme. Overall, boundaries and content of themes should be described more precisely.</p> <p>10. Page 17: teachers in the current study did not seem to have problems in dealing with adolescent pain. They did not seem to find it hard or were not feeling insecure about how to best deal with adolescent pain? In what sense are these findings comparable to previous literatures? (and relatedly, to what extent is this teacher sample a selective group of teachers who understand child pain very well in comparison to other groups of teachers who may not have been willing to take part?)</p> <p>11. It should be spelled out more clearly what the implications of the present study are. What are implications of the insights that this study offers, in terms of guidelines / directions towards potential development of school-based interventions, or in terms of potential consequences of identified teacher coping with adolescent pain, or in terms of future research directions on e.g. impact of social media on adolescent somatic / pain complaints.</p>
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REVIEWER	Alisic, Eva Monash University, Monash Injury Research Institute
REVIEW RETURNED	04-Jun-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>There are a few places where the presentation of the arguments and findings can be improved. I have indicated those below. In particular, it would be helpful to see more evidence-based arguments for how important this topic is for teachers (e.g. compared to other issues, compared to the past, within the bigger picture of adolescent wellbeing).</p> <p>All the best, Eva</p> <p>Abstract: - The topic of pain comes a bit out of the blue in the objectives, maybe add a sentence how prevalent pain is among adolescents.</p> <p>Introduction: - What are the arguments/evidence for the claim that the number of adolescents experiencing pain is increasing? There is a statement that pain increases with age but not that the overall number of complaints increases. - I understand that pain is an individual, subjective experience. However, 73% is a very high percentage to deal with: what does it mean and is it really experienced as a major problem by all of these 73%? E.g. how many children in a typical school class use pain medication on a regular basis (e.g. every week)? How many children miss school days because of pain? How much do they see their pain as a problem?</p>
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	<p>- “significant adults .. may help to improve the health of children and adolescents with pain” >> is health improvement indeed needed for all 73% (e.g. thinking of menstrual pains)? Sometimes it may be helpful to ease the pain but there is no need for any improvement of general health?</p> <p>Method</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The research design and its place in qualitative research (e.g. vs. grounded theory etc) can be described more clearly. Beware of confusing sentences (e.g. ‘the text was analyzed with analysis’) - Regarding the teachers who worked as counselors; did they still teach or did they have a full-time counseling position? If the latter is the case, should they be included within the larger group or are they a separate group (e.g. in the results the teachers refer to the counselors as partners) - ‘the pain adolescents experience is an increasing and interwoven phenomenon as experienced by the teachers’ >> could you explain this a little more? How do you see adolescents’ vs. teachers’ experiences exactly? Some of the subthemes appear to refer to the former, some to the latter (also applies to the findings section). <p>Findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In my view it’s important to keep stressing that the findings are the teachers’ impressions (e.g. ‘one of the reasons why adolescents nowadays express more pain’, ‘more girls than boys express pain’); although they may be true, they may also not be true. - Sometimes there seems to be repetition (e.g. regarding expecting ‘immediate relief’) - What is meant by ‘it is just to make a click for solutions’? - Is there a contradiction between stating that the adolescents have limited experience in managing resistance and stating that adolescents have to deal with many demands, even more than previous generations? - I’m not sure what is meant by the expression ‘I don’t know how much pain it [mobile phone] makes’ ? - Because the findings only relate to adolescents with pain, it’s hard to assess what the actual impact on the classroom as a whole is; can you give some indication of this? <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good overview - ‘Norwegian national guidelinesearlier days.’: is a word missing here after perform? E.g. ‘better’ / ‘to a higher standard’ ? - There is repetition regarding Logan’s dualistic approach. - With large qualitative studies being conducted often these days I would be cautious in stating that the current study with N=22 involves a relatively large group of teachers. <p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - My impression is that the language can be improved. However, I am not a native speaker myself, so will leave that to another reviewer/the editor.
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REVIEWER	Juth, Vanessa Pennsylvania State University
REVIEW RETURNED	05-Jun-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	This paper makes an interesting contribution by applying qualitative
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	<p>methods to the topic of adolescents' pain experiences and potential sources and explanations for their pain. Having teachers provide personal accounts of what they believe to be the causes of their students pain is helpful in that this provides insight on adolescents' pain experiences at school, an environmental context in which they spend a lot of time. I think the research question as well as the findings are interesting, but I think the paper would benefit from clarifying and adding more context to both; I describe this further below.</p> <p>In order to clarify the research question, it would help to use different language. Based on the abstract, for example, the study's objective was difficult to understand because of the following word: "...how teachers experience adolescents' pain and management of their pain..." This suggests that teachers will be commenting on how they are affected by adolescents' pain and pain management. Instead, I believe that the purpose of the study was to have teachers report on their classroom experiences with (1) adolescent's self-reported physical pain symptoms, (2) adolescents managing their pain on their own, and (3) helping adolescents manage their pain. This needs to be clarified and edited in the title, keywords, abstract, as well as throughout the rest of the paper, in particular, the Introduction lacks a clear and complete description of the study aims. (Note, the objective is clearly mentioned in the Data Collection section, where the "main theme" of the interview sessions are discussed; this language should be used in the other sections of the paper.)</p> <p>In regard to my comment about adding more context: As it is currently presented, the Introduction provides little explanation for why the study objective is important, where the study objective came from/what research questions or gaps in the literature it is addressing, and what this study adds to the existing understanding of adolescents' pain. In addition, a greater explanation should be given for why teachers may be uniquely well-placed to report on adolescents' pain experiences (e.g., they may be less biased reporters than adolescents' parents, etc.).</p> <p>Given that other work is cited that has found similar results, more care should be taken to differentiate this study from prior work in the Introduction, for setting up the need and importance of this study, and in the Discussion, for clearly presenting the novel contributions from this study.</p> <p>The results may be organized better and would more clearly follow the main objective of the study. The subheadings that are currently there are helpful, but having them organized within one of the three themes presented in the Data Collection section would help readers clearly follow the results.</p> <p>Overall, I think the paper makes a valuable contribution, but they need to be explicitly mentioned and highlighted in the paper. By clarifying the study objectives, adding more context to the study topic, and reorganizing the results, would greatly strengthen this paper.</p>
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

1. Within the introduction, it should be spelled out more clearly- based upon available evidence- whether teachers have a sense of how to deal with adolescents' pain. Does previous evidence indicates difficulties within teachers to adequately deal with pain?

Reply: We agree with the reviewer and more information has been added in the introduction regarding this p.7-8.

2. It should also be motivated why a qualitative approach was chosen

Reply: Our motivation for using qualitative approach has been emphasized under the heading Method p.8

3. Final sentence within the introduction: please spell out whether the study is about adolescent coping with pain and/or teachers' coping with the child's pain.

Reply: We have tried to make the aim of the study more clear p.8

4. 22 teachers participated: please spell out how many teachers were asked to participate. Did those who participated differ from those who didn't? Are those who participated the ones who are particularly interested in pain / more sensitive to pain? This (selection bias) should also be addressed as a potential limitation

Reply: Unfortunately we have no specific information about the teacher who did not want to participate or how many teachers that were invited. In was the school principle who asked the teachers to participate. The limitation of this has been emphasized both in the method p.8 and discussion p.20-21.

5. Please provide a bit more information about the semi-structured interview guide. At present, this is described rather vaguely (i.e., how adolescents' express pain, how they cope with pain and how the teachers cope with the adolescents' pain): were there any questions about how teachers conceptualize adolescent pain, in term of causes, consequences, ...

Reply: More information about the interview guide has been added under the heading Data collection p. 10

6. Please explain what NVivo software does

Reply: More information of how we used NVivo has been added under the section Data analyses

7. Page 9: the information on the 'first impression' the researchers got: this information is presented twice: at page 9 and again at page 10. I suggest to spell this out in the results section.

Reply: We have now spelled this out in the start of the findings

8. The labeling 'an increasing and interwoven' phenomenon is unclear: what do the authors mean with this? Increasing in what sense? Interwoven with what?

Reply: We have changed the words to make the message clearer

9. Page 13: information on familial transmission of pain and social support: it is unclear in what way this information fits into the theme 'living strenuous lives': this appears to be a different theme.

Overall, boundaries and content of themes should be described more precisely.

Reply: We have made some changes to the organization of the results and hopefully these fit with your suggestions.

10. Page 17: teachers in the current study did not seem to have problems in dealing with adolescent pain. They did not seem to find it hard or were not feeling insecure about how to best deal with adolescent pain? In what sense are these findings comparable to previous literatures? (and relatedly, to what extent is this teacher sample a selective group of teachers who understand child pain very

well in comparison to other groups of teachers who may not have been willing to take part?)
Reply: More information about previous studies has been added in the introduction and our findings have also been discussed in light of these findings

11. It should be spelled out more clearly what the implications of the present study are. What are implications of the insights that this study offers, in terms of guidelines / directions towards potential development of school-based interventions, or in terms of potential consequences of identified teacher coping with adolescent pain, or in terms of future research directions on e.g. impact of social media on adolescent somatic / pain complaints.

Reply: The implications have been added in the conclusion

Reviewer: 2

Abstract:

- The topic of pain comes a bit out of the blue in the objectives, maybe add a sentence how prevalent pain is among adolescents.

Reply: More background information has been added.

Introduction:

- What are the arguments/evidence for the claim that the number of adolescents experiencing pain is increasing? There is a statement that pain increases with age but not that the overall number of complaints increases.

Reply: More information has been added in the introduction.

- I understand that pain is an individual, subjective experience. However, 73% is a very high percentage to deal with: what does it mean and is it really experienced as a major problem by all of these 73%? E.g. how many children in a typical school class use pain medication on a regular basis (e.g. every week)? How many children miss school days because of pain? How much do they see their pain as a problem?

Reply: Previous studies do not provide the information including what the reviewer ask for. However, we have tried to add more information to illustrate how pain influences the adolescents at school.

- "significant adults .. may help to improve the health of children and adolescents with pain" >> is health improvement indeed needed for all 73% (e.g. thinking of menstrual pains)? Sometimes it may be helpful to ease the pain but there is no need for any improvement of general health?

Reply: We agree with the reviewer and re-writing the information

Method

- The research design and its place in qualitative research (e.g. vs. grounded theory etc) can be described more clearly. Beware of confusing sentences (e.g. 'the text was analyzed with analysis')

Reply: The text has been rewritten and the chosen design described more clearly. The confusing sentence has also been rewritten.

- Regarding the teachers who worked as counselors; did they still teach or did they have a full-time counseling position? If the latter is the case, should they be included within the larger group or are they a separate group (e.g. in the results the teachers refer to the counselors as partners)

Reply: More information has been added to make this clearer.

- 'the pain adolescents experience is an increasing and interwoven phenomenon as experienced by the teachers' >> could you explain this a little more? How do you see adolescents' vs. teachers' experiences exactly? Some of the subthemes appear to refer to the former some to the latter (also applies to the findings section).

Reply: We agree with the reviewer and hopefully have our changes made this clearer

Findings:

- In my view it's important to keep stressing that the findings are the teachers' impressions (e.g. 'one of the reasons why adolescents nowadays express more pain', 'more girls than boys express pain'); although they may be true, they may also not be true.

Reply: Some of the sentences in the findings have been changed to make this clearer.

- Sometimes there seems to be repetition (e.g. regarding expecting 'immediate relief')

Reply: The redundancy has been deleted.

- What is meant by 'it is just to make a click for solutions'?

Reply: The phrase has been re-written.

- Is there a contradiction between stating that the adolescents have limited experience in managing resistance and stating that adolescents have to deal with many demands, even more than previous generations?

Reply: We do not think this is a contradiction, and have not made any changes according to this.

- I'm not sure what is meant by the expression 'I don't know how much pain it [mobile phone] makes' ?

Reply: The phrase has been re-written.

- Because the findings only relate to adolescents with pain, it's hard to assess what the actual impact on the classroom as a whole is; can you give some indication of this?

Reply: Some indication has been added, although not how many hours.

Discussion:

- Good overview

- 'Norwegian national guidelinesearlier days.': is a word missing here after perform? E.g. 'better' / 'to a higher standard' ?

Reply: The word has been added.

- There is repetition regarding Logan's dualistic approach.

Reply: In our opinion: the first time we mention Logan's dualistic approach we refer to causes of pain while the second time we discuss consequences, and therefore we find it difficult to delete one of them.

- With large qualitative studies being conducted often these days I would be cautious in stating that the current study with N=22 involves a relatively large group of teachers.

Reply: The phrase large has been deleted

General:

- My impression is that the language can be improved. However, I am not a native speaker myself, so will leave that to another reviewer/the editor.

Reply: The manuscript has been edited by OnLine English one more

Reviewer: 3

In order to clarify the research question, it would help to use different language. Based on the abstract, for example, the study's objective was difficult to understand because of the following word: "...how teachers experience adolescents' pain and management of their pain..." This suggests that teachers will be commenting on how they are affected by adolescents' pain and pain management. Instead, I believe that the purpose of the study was to have teachers report on their classroom experiences with (1) adolescent's self-reported physical pain symptoms, (2) adolescents managing their pain on their own, and (3) helping adolescents manage their pain. This needs to be clarified and edited in the title, keywords, abstract, as well as throughout the rest of the paper, in particular, the Introduction lacks a clear and complete description of the study aims. (Note, the objective is clearly mentioned in the Data Collection section, where the "main theme" of the interview sessions are discussed; this language should be used in the other sections of the paper.)

Reply: The purpose of the study has been re-written and hopefully it is clearer what the purpose of the study is.

In regard to my comment about adding more context: As it is currently presented, the Introduction provides little explanation for why the study objective is important, where the study objective came from/what research questions or gaps in the literature it is addressing, and what this study adds to the existing understanding of adolescents' pain. In addition, a greater explanation should be given for why teachers may be uniquely well-placed to report on adolescents' pain experiences (e.g., they may be less biased reporters than adolescents' parents, etc.).

Reply: More information of the context has been added and an explanation why teachers can contribute to the knowledge of adolescents' pain.

Given that other work is cited that has found similar results, more care should be taken to differentiate this study from prior work in the Introduction, for setting up the need and importance of this study, and in the Discussion, for clearly presenting the novel contributions from this study.

Reply: We have tried to emphasize the unique contribution of the study in the Introduction and discussed in comparison to previous studies.

The results may be organized better and would more clearly follow the main objective of the study. The subheadings that are currently there are helpful, but having them organized within one of the three themes presented in the Data Collection section would help readers clearly follow the results.

Reply: Some reorganization in the findings has been made.

Overall, I think the paper makes a valuable contribution, but they need to be explicitly mentioned and highlighted in the paper. By clarifying the study objectives, adding more context to the study topic, and reorganizing the results, would greatly strengthen this paper.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Vervoot, Tine Ghent University
REVIEW RETURNED	27-Jul-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	The reviewer completed the checklist but made no further comments.
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REVIEWER	Alisic, Eva Monash University, Monash Injury Research Institute
REVIEW RETURNED	09-Jul-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	I see a couple of remaining language errors, for example: - p. 9 of the manuscript: "The main theme... was..." should be plural - p. 11 of the manuscript: A period is lacking after "phenomenon" and "For subcategories emerge" >> should be emerged - p. 17 of the manuscript: "and partly by contrast...teachers revealed..." >> should probably be 'in contrast to/with'. Also revealed is in past tense here while in most of the manuscript it's used in present tense.
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REVIEWER	Juth, Vanessa Pennsylvania State University
REVIEW RETURNED	23-Jul-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	While some of the reviewer's comments have been addressed, there are remaining concerns about this manuscript. Mainly the overall purpose of the study, the relevance it may have for the existing literature, and its implications for adolescents' health, school settings, or the medical and psychological treatment of adolescents' real and psychosomatic pain symptoms are still not clearly presented and integrated; this makes it difficult to identify the contributions of this paper. It was hoped that a revised manuscript based on the reviewer's suggestions and comments would have remedied some of these issues and provided more depth to the manuscript. In addition, there are still considerable issues with the clarity and logic of the writing, with some text appearing seemingly unrelated to the topic at hand. Also, without any information on the data that was collected, it seems that the topics are somewhat arbitrarily chosen based on a few single quotes. Should these issues be resolved in future versions of this manuscript, the topic of the paper could be of interest to readers and make a stronger contribution to the literature.
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VERSION 2 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 2

Reviewer Name Eva Alisic
Institution and Country Monash University, Australia

Thanks for your revisions, you have addressed my comments. I see a couple of remaining language errors,

Reply: Hopefully, we have changed the remaining language errors

Reviewer: 3

Reviewer Name Vanessa Juth
Institution and Country Penn State Univ, USA

Mainly the overall purpose of the study, the relevance it may have for the existing literature, and its implications for adolescents' health, school settings, or the medical and psychological treatment of adolescents' real and psychosomatic pain symptoms are still not clearly presented and integrated; this makes it difficult to identify the contributions of this paper. It was hoped that a revised manuscript

based on the reviewer's suggestions and comments would have remedied some of these issues and provided more depth to the manuscript. In addition, there are still considerable issues with the clarity and logic of the writing, with some text appearing seemingly unrelated to the topic at hand.

Reply:

Hopefully our message has been more clearly expressed. We have reorganized some of the text in the findings and have deleted some text. We have also added a paragraph about implications for practice.

Also, without any information on the data that was collected, it seems that the topics are somewhat arbitrarily chosen based on a few single quotes. Should these issues be resolved in future versions of this manuscript, the topic of the paper could be of interest to readers and make a stronger contribution to the literature.

Reply: Our findings have emerged through the analyses steps described in the method section and not arbitrarily chosen