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Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention

Diego Gómez Baya¹

1) Loyola University Andalucia, Spain

Date of publication: October 24th, 2014

Edition period: October 2014 – February 2015

To cite this review: Gómez Baya, D. (2014). Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention [Review of the book Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention, by Terje Ogden & Kristine Amlund Hagen]. *International Journal of Educational Psychology*, 3(3), 306-308. doi: 10.4471/ijep.2014.16

To link this review: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/ijep.2014.16>

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Review

Ogden, T & Amlund Hagen, K. (2014). *Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention*. New York: Routledge.

Adolescence is a developmental period characterized not only by the presence of risk factors, but also by the emergence of new strengths, challenges and opportunities to discover. Professor Terje Ogden and Kristine Amlund Hagen offer in this interesting and comprehensive book a positive vision of adolescence, as a period in which most people develop in a healthy way, achieving good school adjustment, maintaining good relations with their families and with their peers, and developing high psychological well-being. In addition, the authors pay special attention to schools as a contexts of particular relevance in adolescent development, because of the presence in them of specific risk and protective factors and because they are excellent environments to implement intervention strategies in the prevention of mental health problems and for mental health promotion.

Professor Terje Ogden works as Research Director at the Norwegian Center for Child Behavioral Development in the University of Oslo (Norway), and professor Kristine Amlund Hagen is Resear Director at the Center for Child and Adolescent Mental Health of South-East Norway. Both authors are contributing their extensive experience in mental health in adolescence, both in the development of several mental health problems as in the implementation and effectiveness evaluation of preventive and treatment interventions.

The book begins with a brief introduction to adolescence, describing the changes that occur at the biological, cognitive and emotional levels, and highlighting, following an ecological and transactional model, the three contexts of relationships in which this development takes place: school, family and peers. Then, the authors provide a simple and complete definition and description of different types of treatments and preventive interventions,

underlining the importance of practices based on scientific evidence. In addition, Ogden and Amlund Hagen debate on the importance of examining the mechanisms of change (or mediators) and the conditions that may affect the effectiveness of an intervention (moderators).

After this conceptual and methodological introduction, three relevant mental health problems in adolescence are described: the externalizing problems (such as aggressiveness, antisocial behavior and delinquency), the internalizing problems (such as anxiety and depression) and alcohol and drug consumption. Every chapter details some definitions, some explanatory theories, the most significant risk factors and the most effective interventions in treatment and prevention. Furthermore, the authors illustrate these interventions with the description of cases in which we can see all the programs' and treatments' characteristics in practical ways.

In the genesis and development of adolescents' mental health problems, school is one of the contexts with greater relevance, as well as family and peers. In the transition from primary education to secondary education some significant changes and challenges emerge to be faced by the adolescent. The characteristics of this transition and the characteristics of the school environment (such as the quality of the context, the quality of relationships with peers and with teachers or the student perceptions on the barriers and facilitators of mental health) can promote new paths of growth or may encourage the emergence of new risk factors for the development of mental health problems, such as depressive symptoms, aggressiveness or substance consumption. But, on the other hand, mental health also acts as a determinant of academic adjustment, thereby establishing bidirectional relationships.

Some of the most interesting contributions of this book are, without any doubt, the description of models for intervention in the area of adolescent mental health from school environments, and the systematic review of interventions in mental health promotion and prevention that have found more empirical support. The Expanded School Mental Health model, the Deployment-focused model and the Integrated Three-tiered Public Health model are analyzed. Among the evidence-based interventions reviewed are the School-wide Positive Behavior Support model, some anti-bullying interventions, and aspects related to teacher-classroom management. On the other hand, Ogden and Amlund Hagen also describe some models and

interventions to promote social competence and social skills among adolescents.

Finally, some special challenges of helping adolescents with mental health needs are discussed, such as treating multi-problem adolescents. The work of Ogden and Hagen is specially inspiring for professionals working in the field of education with adolescents, either teachers or school principals, and for mental health professionals. It is a very complete, clear and motivating approach to mental health in adolescence and to the relevance of school in its development.

References

Ogden, T & Amlund Hagen, K. (2014). *Adolescent Mental Health: Prevention and Intervention*. New York: Routledge.

Dr. Diego Gómez Baya
Department of Psychology, Sociology and Social Work
Loyola University Andalucia
dgomez@uloyola.es