



The role of Sense of Coherence in the health of adolescents: a systematic review

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INTRODUCTION

Sense of Coherence (SOC) is the main construct of the salutogenic model and is strongly related to positive health. The relationship between SOC and adolescent health has been widely studied for the last decade and has been found to be similar to the position in adults¹. However, revisions that provide an updated framework for the topic are scarce.

AIM

To analyze the empirical evidence of the association between adolescent SOC and different health indicators.

METHOD

Search strategy: using strategies of other reviews^{2,3}, papers were found by searching on PubMed, Scopus, Web Of Science and ProQuest. The keyword used in the search was "sense of coherence".

Inclusion criteria: articles published in English, between 2001 and 2016, with samples with a mean age in the range of 11–18, describing the association between SOC and quality of life, lifestyles, risk behavior and externalizing-internalizing dimensions were selected.

Study selection: title and abstract of articles were read. If the abstract contained insufficient information for the decision on whether to include or exclude, full-text article was obtained and reviewed.

RESULTS

Finally, **49 papers were selected:**

Most samples were composed by normative adolescents. Adolescents with special characteristics were included (e. g., who lived in high-risk environments or with congenital cardiac disease).

SOC was related to lifestyles (e.g., oral hygiene, eating habits or medicine use); to life satisfaction; to risk behaviors (e.g., substance use, criminal offense or gambling behavior); and to internalizing / externalizing symptomatology (ADHD symptoms, suicidal tendencies or psychosomatic symptoms).

Generally, higher levels of SOC correlated with better quality of life, better mental and physical health, healthier lifestyles, lower levels of internalizing and externalizing symptoms and lower risk behaviors. Only in one paper the relation between SOC and the health indicator (i. e., gambling behavior) wasn't significative.

In some papers the effect of SOC along with other psychological variables (e. g., optimism, hope or self-efficacy) was analyzed. In most cases, SOC was the most predictive variable of adolescent health.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the heterogeneity of the papers, this review shows that **adolescents SOC is an important salutogenic factor to promote positive health.**

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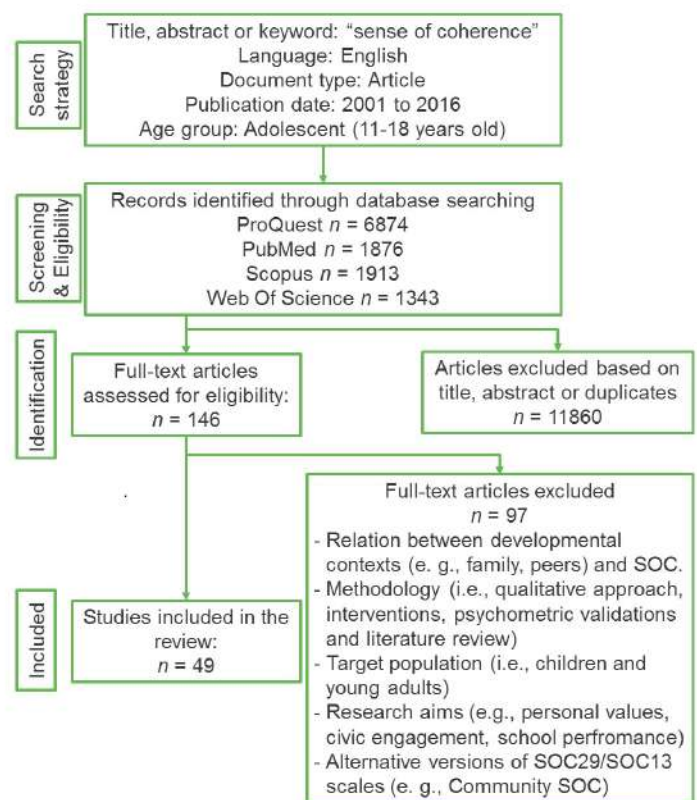


Figure 1. Flow diagram of search strategy and screening procedure.