Abstract

In order to assess the frequency and correlates of self-injurious behavior (SIB), 569 Portuguese adolescents aged 12 to 20 years completed questionnaires assessing SIB and psychopathological symptoms. Almost 28% (n = 158) reported a lifetime history of SIB and nearly 10% had performed it in the previous month. The most frequently injured body parts were arms, hands and nails. Most of the self-injurers admit that "now and then" they feel some "mild" to "moderate" pain during SIB. Most of them admitted using these behaviors to avoid/suppress negative feelings, painful images or memories, to punish themselves and to avoid doing something bad. Positive emotions increased significantly after SIB. The self-injurer group reported more psychopathological symptoms. SIB appears to be a common phenomenon with specific functions in adolescence and this must be addressed by clinicians and educational professionals.