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Catastrophic Thinking About Pain is Independently Associated with Pain Severity, Disability, and Somatic Complaints in School Children and Children with Chronic Pain

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Objective To investigate the value of pain catastrophizing in explaining pain, disability, and somatic complaints, beyond negative affectivity (NA). **Method** Two cross-sectional studies, one in a sample of school children ($n = 193$) and a second in a clinical sample of children with recurrent or chronic pain ($n = 43$), were conducted. In both studies, measures of pain catastrophizing and NA were examined for their ability to explain pain, disability, and somatic complaints. **Results** In both studies, pain catastrophizing significantly accounted for the variance of pain, disability, and somatic complaints, beyond the effects of age, sex, and NA. Furthermore, pain catastrophizing significantly mediated the relationship between NA and somatic complaints in both studies and between NA and functional disability in study 1. **Conclusions** Results suggest the importance of assessing for pain catastrophizing in children. Pain catastrophizing is further discussed in terms of communicating distress to significant others.

Key words: children; functional disability; negative affectivity; pain catastrophizing; pain severity; somatic complaints.

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