

Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA): The Methods of Measuring Health Literacy of Children Project (HLCA-MoMChild)

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Abstract (max. 300 words)

Context and background: Health literacy has gained great attention in health promotion and health education research. While the majority of theories, methodologies and measurements concentrates on assessing adult and young adult health literacy, there is a gap in validity-driven child/adolescent tools and methods. The recently started German Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence Consortium (HLCA) is a partnership of several national universities that will conduct evidence-based health literacy research for three years in ten subprojects within the age group and their environment.

Aim of the study: As sub-project to the HLCA, the “Methods of Measuring Health Literacy of Children (HLCA-MoMChild)” study aims to develop a valid questionnaire to assess the health literacy levels of primary school children (ages 9-10), their health-related knowledge, and age-specific perception and understanding of health concepts. The instrument will be based on an underpinning model of health literacy for childhood/adolescence, to be developed in a parallel sub-project.

Research methodology: A systematic literature review is currently being conducted, exploring existing methodology and measurement of child/adolescent health literacy, as well as intertwining those results with knowledge from pedagogical, psychological and sociological research. A mixed-methods approach will be used, including multi-level perspectives on health literacy, as well as real-life contextual understanding and socio-cultural influences. Initially, (1) a concept clarification and item development guided by a logic model and concept mapping in the developmental stage will be followed by (2) a qualitative pilot study with cognitive interviews (n=25) and (3) a developmental pilot both in the testing stage and finally (4) a quantitative field test (n=300) in the refinement stage.

Expected findings: This will be the first evidence-based data from the target population in Germany, enabling to examine the health literacy state of primary school children. The results will help to develop policy, strategies and interventions for school-based health education.