

## **EXPLORING HEALTH LITERACY IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE – RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**Introduction:** While recent evidence has highlighted the critical importance of health literacy (HL) for health, health promotion and prevention, little HL research and practice put children and adolescents' HL needs at the core. The German "Health Literacy in Childhood and Adolescence (HLCA)" consortium strives to tackle this gap by conceptualizing HL in an age- and development-appropriate manner and from a multidisciplinary perspective. As such, it specifically aims (a) to scope existing concepts, models and definitions of child/adolescent HL; and (b) to develop an integrated definition and conceptual framework of child/adolescents HL, capturing dimensions related to the target group.

**Methods:** From Mar-Sep 2015, two researchers systematically searched 7 databases (i.e. PubMed, ERIC) to identify HL definitions and models for persons aged <18. Articles selected for full-text analysis were assessed regarding their components and relevant dimensions of HL in children/adolescents. The results inform the development of a definition and conceptual model, which will then be opened up for expert validation.

**Results:** 37 articles were eligible for full-text analysis which is underway. Preliminary results show that identified HL conceptualizations and models either focused on children (n=1), adolescents (n=3), school students (n=3), youth in general (n=2) or mentioned a life course perspective (n= 2). Models dominantly focus on individual skill-sets, with inconsistencies and limitations regarding potential HL mediators and moderators. Especially the role of age, risk patterns as well as developmental and structural factors promoting or limiting the genesis of child/adolescent HL and the acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge have been poorly incorporated in current concepts.

**Conclusions:** Given the poor evidence from the systematic review, future work needs to explore the concept of HL in children/adolescents from a public health perspective. Entry points to consider include inter-generational and power relations, children's rights and responsibilities, cultural and social contexts, as well as age-group specific vulnerabilities and risk patterns. The project aims at contributing to the evidence base and understanding of HL in children and adolescents by providing an integrated definition and hands-on model, to be operationalized within a parallel sub-project, aiming at developing a validated tool for measuring child HL.