

Teacher Mental Health Literacy

Assessment and promotion of teacher mental health literacy in order to promote child related mental health.

Dirk Bruland, Dr. Paulo Pinheiro and Prof. Dr. Ullrich Bauer, Bielefeld University

Project Start
March 2015

Background

TEACHER-MHL investigate pupil-related mental health literacy in teachers with a focus on children of mentally-ill parents:

- over 3 million children experience at least one parent with mental disorder in Germany every year (Mattejat 2008) (approx. 25% of all students)
- and have considerably higher risk of developing serious mental health problems
- Importance of schools & teachers:
 - burdens & coping strategies often manifest in children's school lives
 - teacher see children every day

School = creation of risk potentials or protective function?

But: Lack of information on the extent of teachers' abilities

Objective I

- **measure** the extent of pupil-related mental health literacy in teachers (grade 1-6)
- focus on knowledge about the children's living conditions and psychosocial strains

Objective II

to promote the health of a high-risk group
develop and test a training program for teachers within the framework of the professional role based on the results of research stage

Methods

- 6 databases searched in English & German
- different search terms for example: 'teacher' AND "mentally ill parents" 'school' AND 'awareness' AND "mentally ill parents"

Inclusion criteria:

- studies about teachers capability of identifying pupils with a mentally ill parent and how they deal with this situation (1990 – 2015)

Quantitative Results

- **only three studies specifically focusing on teachers and children of mentally-ill parents** (Bibou-Nakou 2004, Reupert and Maybery 2007, Brockmann 2014)
- several articles focused on mental health literacy of teachers & mental illnesses of students/children
- search strategy was modified and broadened (by e.g. using cross-referencing, or looking at specific diseases, as depression)
- authors of these articles have been contacted & confirmed the gap found in the state of the art

Narrative Content Analysis

- **difficulty for teachers to identify burdened pupils (i.e. no formal school structures)**
- mostly teachers know about parental mental illness through informal interactions with colleagues (Not clear why colleagues knows)
- or communication with the community (relatives or friends of the family)
- **If Teacher identify pupils living with a mentally ill parent, they are usually troubled by the situation of the child and the consequences for that child**

Conclusions

- **research gap**
- main focus: pupils mental health problems - not including family environment adequately!
→ research on teacher mental health literacy focuses on children's problems but not on children at risk!!!

Stage 1
Systematic
Literature
Review

Current Step

Stage 2
Qualitative
Interviews

Methods

- interviews are guideline-based (respond to Mental Health Literacy)
 - evaluation Method: Content analysis
- Sample** (n=24) based on typical structures prevailing in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia for example: school type, area, age

First Impressions (up to now 9 interviews)

- **confirmation of Literature Review Results:**
- teachers' knowledge is deficient and they are stressed of those situations
- but they also report that if they know, school behaviour is explainable and it helps to react more adequately to those pupil's
- **teachers report substantial needs**

Stage 3 (in 2016)

Quantitative Online Survey:

- based on results Stage 2
- approach: assess the extent of socio-analytical skills in general as well as in relation to institutional and individual characteristics
- circa 2.500 teacher in the federal republic of North Rhine-Westphalia

Stage 4 (in 2017)

develop and test a **training program for teachers** based on results of Stage 2 and 3

Expected Outcome (2018)

Enhancing profession-specific mental health literacy gives reason to expect high long-term effectiveness:

- in schools children are especially „accessible“ for measures of health promotion
- leads to teachers' discharge
- and increases school health promotion

Next Steps
and
Outlook

References:

- Bibou-Nakou I. (2004): Helping teachers to help children with a mentally ill parent. School Psychology International, 25(1), 42 – 58. (Greece)
- Brockmann E. (2014): Kinder psychisch kranker Eltern in der Schule. Unpublished doctor thesis. (Germany)
- Mattejat F. (2008). Kinder mit psychisch kranken Eltern. Was wir wissen und was zu tun ist. In: Mattejat F, Lisofsky B. (eds.). Nicht von schlechten Eltern. Kinder psychisch Kranker. Bonn: BALANCE buch + medien.
- Reupert A.; Maybery D. (2007) Strategies and issues in supporting children whose parents have a mental illness within the school system. School Psychology International, 28(2), 195-205. (Australia)

Contact:

Dirk Bruland
Bielefeld University
Faculty of Educational Science – CPI
dirk.bruland@uni-bielefeld.de

