Teacher Mental Health Literacy

Health Promotion for Children of Mentally ill Parents.
Assessment and Promotion of Teacher-specific Mental Health Literacy

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Structure

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2) Children of Mentally-Ill Parents
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5) Objectives and Methods
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Overview

municipal social services / child & youth services

CHILDREN OF MENTALLY ILL PARENTS

families with at least one mentally ill parent & not yet affected children

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHIATRIC CARE SERVICES

TEACHER-MHL:
Health promotion for children of mentally ill parents. Assessment and promotion of teacher-specific mental health literacy
Children of Mentally-ill Parents

- One of the populations at highest risk for developing mental disorders [Beardslee et al 1998; England & Sim 2009]
  - E.g. offspring of depressed parents: up to 4-fold higher risk of developing depressive disorders than other children [Weissman et al. 2005]

- In Germany, >3 million children/adolescents experience at least one parent with a mental disorder every year [Mattejat 2008]
  
  ➢ About one quarter of students in German schools
Mental Health Literacy

• Term coined in the mid-1990s by Anthony F. Jorm

• Definition:
  
  ➢ Knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention [Jorm et al. 1997]

• Objective: To draw attention on the public as target for better identification/management of mental disorders [Jorm 2012]
Mental Health Literacy

- Emphasis on knowledge that is linked to the *possibility of action* to benefit one’s own mental health or that of others [Jorm 2012]

- Components of MHL
Parents

Siblings

Care deficits

Overstressing

Isolation/ Stigmatization

Disorientation

Networks

Parentification

School

Environment

Lack of information

Feelings of guilt

Parentification

Inverted role relationships

Children at risk assume the tasks of providing care for parents and put own needs aside

Children's Perspective

D isorientation

Feelings of guilt

Care deficits

Parentification

Inverted role relationships

Children at risk assume the tasks of providing care for parents and put own needs aside
Children of Mentally-ill Parents and Schooling

Burden patterns / attempts at coping also become manifest in children's school lives [Beardslee et al. 2010; Griepenstroh et al. 2011]

Impact on school life and academic achievement [Powell 2007; 2009]

- Higher risk of experiencing a "school handicap", i.e., of being excluded from regular schools once a special need of support has been diagnosed
- Increased probability of having a problematic educational biography
- ... new and long term problems occur
Children of Mentally-Ill Parents and Schooling

Social environment can also act protectively:

- Children at risk: only 1/3 permanent disorder but: 1/3 no mental disorder, another 1/3 transient disorder

- Children cope well with a parental mental disorder when they have individual, familial and community resources to accomplish developmental tasks, engage in relationships, and understand their and their family’s situation [Beardslee & Podorefsky 1988; Hammen 1991; Beardslee 2002]
Children of Mentally-Ill Parents and Schooling

School

- Protective function
- Create risk potentials
Schools & Children of Mentally-ill Parents

• Untried possibilities of support: Poor use of attachment to pupils and families

• In Schools: **At best, informal awareness** of this problem


  • **Teachers** not prepared to adequately respond to this situation

  • **Rarely able to decode** phenomena as symptoms of a risk situation

  (awareness not to diagnose!!!)

Poor School Mental Health Promoting
Objective Teacher-MHL

Mentally-Ill Parents

School Mental Health Promotion

Teacher Mental Health Literacy

- Knowledge
- Recognition
- First aid skills
- Help-seeking
Objectives

- Measure the extent of pupil-related mental health literacy in teachers at primary schools (years 1-4) and secondary schools (years 5 – 6)
- Focus on knowledge regarding the children's living conditions and psychosocial strains
- Foundation for the development of a structured teacher training programme
Module 0: structured literature review

Module 1: exploratory quality teacher survey

n = 24 Teachers

- Recruiting by direct approaching
- Mixed school-types
- Different areas
- under 45 years/over 45 years

results: December 2015
Module 0: structured literature review

Module 1: exploratory quality teacher survey

Module 2: quantitative teacher survey conducted by external institute
n = 2,070
1,860 women, 210 men
open interviewing, standardised written survey of a 5% sample and group interviews

Module 3: structured teacher training programme

results: December 2016

March 2018
Current Status Sample

Structured literature review in April/May 2015

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<th>Searchterm/Database</th>
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Databases: Pubmed, Cinahl, Eric, PsycInfo, Cochrane, Psyndex, Web of Science Core Collection

Research gap for teacher-MHL and their skills especially to handle a high-risk-group like children of mentally ill parents
First Results

• Difficult for teacher to identify children with a mentally ill parent in everyday school-life
e.g. 40% of teachers said, they would not be able to easily identify a child living with a mentally ill parent [Bibou-Nakou 2004]

• No common knowledge of mental health problems
Participants’ knowledge about mental health was informed through various informal means such as media, personal experience, connections to personal experience or experience as a teacher [Trudgen and Lawn 2011]
First Results

• Dealing with the situation is perceived as difficult
e.g. homework situation and school marks [Reupert and Mayberry 2007]

• Insecure teacher role [Brockmann 2014]

Reasons: lack of -
training, time
and common school structures/values

Next step:
Teachers will be interviewed to assess
the current status of Teacher Mental Health Literacy
Expected Outcome

• Test a promising health promotion approach to improve the health of children and adolescents by enhancing profession-specific mental health literacy

• For the first time, schools will be addressed as a setting where children and adolescents are especially "accessible" for measures of health promotion

• the occupational group of professional pedagogues and their professional ethos are made the focus of health promotion in middle and late childhood

• gives reason to expect a high degree of effectiveness of the aimed programme
Thank you for your attention