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Clinical Psychology



Mental health and emotional literacy in children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities: self-report and performance measures versus teachers' ratings (*Emma Jackson and Biza Stenfert Kroese, Investigating the relationship between emotional literacy and mental health using an adapted self-report measure*)

Stream 3 of the wider project: Gathering feedback and measuring outcomes and change with Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities (LD)
Good practice example from 'Hearing the Voice' of children and young people with moderate, severe or multiple and profound learning disabilities

We were interested in hearing about helpful ways to listen to the 'voice' of children and young people with moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities. When we say 'voice' we mean communication, in whichever form works best for the child or young person.

We asked people to write a summary of what they are doing and send it to us. Below we list summaries of what people did, what was helpful and what were the barriers. The summaries contain lots of ideas that can be applied to working with children and young people of different ages with a range of complex needs across the levels from own life, through service development, training and research and community and cultural change.

Find more information here:

<https://www.corc.uk.net/outcome-experience-measures/feedback-and-outcome-measures-for-children-and-young-people-with-learning-disabilities/>

Good practice example from 'Hearing the Voice'

Gathering feedback and measuring outcomes and change with Children and Young People with Learning Disabilities (LD)

BACKGROUND

The present study investigates the relationship between emotional literacy (EL) and mental health in children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and whether EL moderates the strength of the relationship between self and teachers' reports of mental health. A further aim was to explore the utility of an adapted self-report measure of mental health, as existing screening methods solely rely on data from parents and/or teachers.

METHODS

A series of tasks were used to assess children's EL. The teacher version of the Nisonger Child Behaviour Rating Form and an adapted self-report measure, Me and My School, were used to measure children's mental health and behaviour. Correlations were applied to identify the relationship between self-report and teacher scores of mental health, along with a moderation analysis of EL.

FINDINGS

A moderate significant positive correlation was found between teacher and child reported scores of mental health and behaviour, with many subscale scores correlating in the predicted direction, suggesting criterion validity of the adapted Me and My School measure. Children's EL did not moderate the strength of the relationship between self and teacher reported scores.

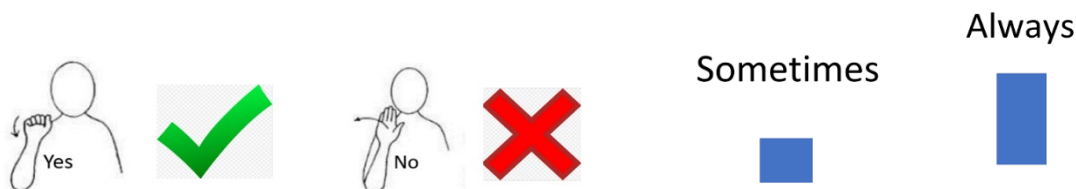
CONCLUSIONS

The ceiling effect observed for EL tasks may explain the lack of moderation effect between self and teacher-reported scores of mental health and behaviour. Findings have implications for how the mental health of children with SEND can be screened in school settings and may lead to further validation of self-report measures of mental health for children with SEND.

WHAT HELPED?

- Ensuring measures were simplified, adapted and that accessible language was used, with an example question to help children understand the response scale and further standardised prompts if required. Response scales and questions were asked and explained verbally alongside visual aids.

Examples of the adapted response scale for the mental health and behaviour screening tool, Me & My School (Me & My Feelings) (Deighton et al., 2012):



Good practice example from 'Hearing the Voice'

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- Liaising with teachers before speaking to the children ensured that any additional needs or requirements were planned for prior to administering the tasks and questionnaire.
- The study taking place in a room which children were comfortable in, as well making children aware of the option for breaks if needed and that a familiar member of staff could be present if they wished to put them at ease.

WHAT WERE THE BARRIERS?

- Utilising emotional literacy tasks which were accessible to children with a range of learning difficulties and disabilities, but also challenging enough to differentiate those with lower emotional literacy skills. Tasks appeared accessible and acceptable to all children who took part, but a ceiling effect was observed for many of the children, therefore tasks were unable to differentiate between those children with higher and lower ability levels regarding their emotional literacy skills.

Trying to adapt tasks to include children who were not able to communicate with single word responses. Therefore, these children unfortunately had to be excluded from the study.

CLINICAL IMPLICATIONS

Clinical implications of the present study are that findings may influence how the mental health of children and young people with SEND is screened in schools, and potentially within clinical practice. Improved mental health screening of this population, which incorporates self-report measurement may lead to earlier interventions that are more tailored to children's needs. A further implication may be the use of the SEND version of Me and My School as an outcome measure in the evaluation of mental health promotion and emotional literacy intervention programmes, within clinical and SEND educational settings. Valid and reliable mental health screening for children with SEND should be a priority and of an equal standard to children without SEND; even more so because these children are four and a half times more likely to develop mental health difficulties (Emerson & Hatton, 2008). This research hopes to influence how the mental health of children with SEND is screened and inspire researchers to establish further validation of the Me and My School measure for children with SEND.

Resources used and/or publications/websites to signpost /reference:

Aman, M., Tassé, M., Rojahn, J. and Hammer, D. (1996). The Nisonger CBRF: A child behaviour rating form for children with developmental disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, 17 (1), 41-57.

Deighton et al. (2013). Me and My Feelings School measure. Wellbeing Measurement Framework for Primary Schools. EBPU/Anna Freud Centre.

Tassé, M., & Aman, M. (1996) Nisonger Child Behavior Rating Form (NCBRF) Parent and Teacher versions. Nisonger Child Behavior Rating Form - Nisonger Center (osu.edu)