



FINDING SPACE TO MENTAL HEALTH

- Promoting mental health in adolescents (12-14 year-olds): Preliminary results of the pilot study

Luisa Campos^{1,2,3}, Filipa Palha^{1,3}, Pedro Dias^{1,2}, Elisa Veiga^{1,2} & Ana Isabel Duarte¹



¹ Faculty of Education and Psychology, Oporto Regional Center, Catholic University of Portugal, Oporto, Portugal | ² Center for Studies in Human Development, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Oporto Regional Center, Catholic University of Portugal, Oporto, Portugal | ³ ENCONTRAR+SE – Association to Support People with Severe Mental Illness, Oporto, Portugal

Introduction

The lack of information and stigma associated with mental disorders are major obstacles to the promotion of mental health (Pinfold, Stuart, Thornicroft & Arboleda-Flórez, 2005; Stuart, 2006). Young people are an important target population for mental health promotion (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson & Ciarrichi, 2005; WHO, 2010) and stigma reduction (Corrigan & Watson, 2007) for three main reasons: (1) natural risk of developing a mental disorder [1/5 adolescents will experience a mental disorder (Patel, Flisher, Hetrick & McGorry, 2007); 25% of adolescents (Social Cohesion, 2008)]; (2) most of the mental health problems are developed in the youth (Kelly, Jorm & Wright, 2007; Patel, *et al.*, 2007); (3) stigma associated with mental health problems seems to arise from the age of 5 (European Commission & Portuguese Ministry of Health, 2010), and adolescence is considered a stage where attitudes can be changed (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). The "Finding Space to Mental Health" is a 3 years project that aims to develop a school-based intervention to promote mental health literacy (Jorm, 2000, 2012) in young people.

Goals

- (1) Describe the psychometric characteristics of the assessment instrument developed and;
- (2) Verify the adequacy of the mental health promotion intervention developed.

Design and Method

During the first year of the project a pilot study was carried out focusing on the development of an assessment instrument and a mental health promotion intervention.

Mental Health Literacy questionnaire

The assessment instrument comprises a social-demographic form and 49 items focused on mental health literacy.

Data from 239 Portuguese students aged between 12 to 14 years-old ($M=12.95$; $SD=0.88$), 116 of them male and 99 female, were used for psychometric analysis.

Mental health promotion intervention

70 Portuguese students aged between 12 to 14 year-olds ($M=13.11$; $SD=0.81$), 39 male and 28 female participated in the intervention.

The intervention includes 2 sessions, 90 minutes each, one-week interval. Sessions focus on mental health literacy – knowledge and beliefs about mental health disorders which aid their recognition, management or prevention (Jorm, 2000) –, and follow an interactive methodology, using group dynamics, music, videos, group discussions and disclosure.

The study of the intervention's effectiveness was conducted through a pretest-posttest design using the assessment instrument developed - Mental Health Literacy questionnaire.

Additionally, a focus group was carried out with students to discuss intervention methodologies and obtain students' feedback.

Results

Mental Health Literacy questionnaire's exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of three factors, (1) knowledge, (2) first aid skills & help seeking and (3) self-help strategies. Preliminary results concerning internal consistency showed a Cronbach's *alpha* of 0.71 in knowledge, 0.82 in first aid skills & help seeking, and 0.65 in self help strategies.

The post intervention assessment showed a significant increase in knowledge (pre: $M= 3.92, DP=0.30$; post: $M= 4.29, DP=0.230$; $p=0.00$), first aid skills & help seeking (pre: $M=4.19, DP=0.58$; post: $M=4.44, DP=0.48$; $p=0.00$) and self-help strategies (pre: $M=4.19, DP=0.48$; post: $M=4.65, DP=0.41$; $p=0.00$).



Conclusions

Cronbach's *alpha* regarding sections of the Mental health Literacy questionnaire stated satisfactory levels of internal consistency.

In what concerns to the mental health promotion intervention, results suggest the adequacy of the methodology used. According to student's opinion, intervention's strategies were dynamic and appealing, which are essential elements to the success of mental health promotion interventions.

Although the questionnaire and the intervention developed appear to be adequate to the purposed goals, improvements of both the assessment instrument and the intervention will be discussed.

References

Corrigan, P. & Watson, A. (2007). The stigma of psychiatric disorders and the gender, identity and education of the Perceiver. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 52(10), 629-635. doi: 10.1177/0898010107305006

Corrigan, P. & Watson, A. (2006). Understanding the impact of stigma on people with mental illness. *World Psychiatry*, 5(2), 16-20.

European Commission & Portuguese Ministry of Health. (2010). *Mental Health Literacy: Promoting the recognition, management and prevention of mental disorders. Final Report of the Project*. Oporto, Portugal: Jorm, A.

Jorm, A. (2000). *Mental Health Literacy: Promoting the recognition, management and prevention of mental disorders. Final Report of the Project*. Oporto, Portugal: Jorm, A.

Jorm, A. (2012). *Mental Health Literacy: Promoting the recognition, management and prevention of mental disorders. Final Report of the Project*. Oporto, Portugal: Jorm, A.

Patel, S., Flisher, A., Hetrick, S., & McGorry, P. (2007). Mental health of young people: a global public health challenge. *Lancet*, 369(9585), 1302-1313. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(07)60387-9

Pinfold, V., Stuart, R., Thornicroft, G., & Arboleda-Flórez, G. (2005). Working with young people: the impact of mental health awareness programmes in schools in the UK and Canada. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 187, 448-452. doi: 10.1192/bjp.2004.125.448

Rickwood, D., Deane, P., Wilson, J., & Ciarrichi, G. (2005). Young people's help seeking for mental health problems: a review of the literature. *Journal of Mental Health*, 14(4), 391-404. doi: 10.1080/09638230500046387

Social Cohesion. (2008). *Mental Health Literacy: Promoting the recognition, management and prevention of mental disorders. Final Report of the Project*. Oporto, Portugal: Jorm, A.

Stuart, H. (2006). *Reaching Out to a High School Youth: The Effectiveness of a Video-Based Awareness Program*. *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 51(10), 647-653. doi: 10.1177/0898010106287006