PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AT SCHOOL: IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The paper presents the results of an experimental study developed in order to test the efficiency of a mental health curriculum, especially the impact on the teachers' personal development. The curriculum is developed under an Erasmus project and it was validated in trails in six countries. The present study intends to measure the effects of program implementation on teachers' personal development. The experimental design involved 104 teachers, 61 in experimental group and 43 in control group. The experimental group received a training in mental health promotion at school and they implemented approximately 12 activities at class, during the second semester of the academic year 2020 – 2021. The variables measured are teacher self-efficacy (efficacy for student engagement, efficacy for instruction strategies and efficacy for classroom management), resilience and teachers' social- emotional competence. The results indicate a raising of competencies of teachers in experimental group comparing with control group, considering two moments of measurement, pre and posttest.

Keywords: Social-emotional competence, resilience, teachers' self-efficacy, mental health.

1. Introduction

The paper examines the effects of a mental health program implementation on teachers' outcomes. It presents the results of an experiment developed within a European partnership for educational policies innovation regarding implementing a curriculum for mental health promotion at school. PROMEHS is a curriculum created by 7 European teams of researchers from different universities in Italy, Portugal, Greece, Latvia, Croatia, Malta and Romania. The curriculum is based on three dimension and it is provided along with a whole school approach, so that all the teachers, parents community and other community policy makers are reached. The main branches of the curriculum are focused on social-emotional learning, resilience and prevention the difficulties, internalizing and externalizing problems. (Cavioni, C., Grazzani, I., & Ornaghi, V. ,2020). Our study presents the effects of implementation of the mental health curriculum on personal development of the teachers, such as on the self-efficacy, resilience and social-emotional competence. Many studies demonstrated the importance of social-emotional skills of teachers as having a strong impact on students' results, both academically and personally and also emphasize the importance of promoting teachers' own wellbeing and social -emotional competence (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Teachers' social and emotional competence has an important impact on professional activities (Collie, 2017; Hen & Goroshit, 2016) and the personal competence of the teachers impacts the quality of educational process (Ransford et al, 2009) and furthermore the children's competencies ((Lam & Wong, 2017). Social – emotional competence of teachers comprises both personal and interpersonal dimensions, such as student – teacher relationship, interpersonal relationships, emotional regulation, social awareness. (Tom, 2012). Jennings (2011) showed that teachers' SEC are the base for providing supportive relationships in their professional contexts, to be more effective in managing classrooms and better equipped to deliver social-emotional curriculum. A social – emotional competent teacher means to have not only some good skills but also to have the capacity of being aware of themselves and of others so that the best relationships with students could be outperformed. (Elias, 2009)

Teachers resilience as the capacity to bounce back in front of adversities being capable to navigate through the internal and environmental resources (Liebenberg et al., 2016) is an important asset for teaching profession, being related to self-efficacy, motivation and achievement (Gu & Day, 2007)

Teachers' self-efficacy is a concept which appear in the light of many researches, showing a good correlation both with important psychological outcomes and with professional performance quality

(Duffin et al., 2012). According to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1997) the teacher's self-efficacy comprises the beliefs related to teachers' capacities to carry out instructional strategies in the educational context and this affects in a positive way the motivation and achievement.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The sample comprised 104 teachers, 61 from experimental group and 43 from control group. In terms of school level 35 (19 experimental group, 16 control group) were from kindergarten, 27 (16 experimental group, 11 control) from primary school, 26 teachers (13 experimental, 13 control) from secondary school and 16 (13 experimental group, 3 control group) from high school.

2.2. Objectives

The main goal of the present study was to test the impact of a mental health promotion curriculum on the personal development of the teachers who implemented it. The objectives intend to identify the differences related to teachers' sense of self-efficacy, teachers' resilience and teachers' social and emotional competence between pre and posttest phases in experimental group comparing with a control group.

2.3. Procedure

The data collection took place in two moments, in December 2020 and in June 2021. In between the two moments the experimental group of teachers implemented the PROMEHS curriculum, an educational approach to promote mental health at school. The experimental group pursued a 25 hours training course on mental health promotion at school and it implemented in average 12,46 activities for mental health promotion. The Ethics Committee for Humanities and Social Sciences Research Involving Human Participants of the Stefan cel Mare University from Suceava granted permission for the research on 21/07/2022.

2.4. Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were tested in order to fulfill the expected objectives.

H1: There is a positive correlation between teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' resilience and their social-emotional competence after the curriculum implementation

H2: there is a positive impact of PROMEHS program implementation on personal variables such as: teacher's self-efficacy and its dimensions, teachers' resilience and teachers` social – emotional competence and its dimensions

H2a: there is a significant difference between pre and post test related to teachers' sense of self-efficacy and its dimension (efficacy of student engagement, efficacy of instruction strategies, efficacy of classroom management) in experimental group

H2b: there is a significant difference between pre and post test related to teachers' resilience in experimental group

H2c: there is a significant difference between pre and post test related to teachers' social - emotional competence and its dissensions (teacher – student relationship, emotional regulation, social awareness, interpersonal relationships) in experimental group

2.5. Measures

Teachers were asked to fill in the Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD 10)(Connor & Davidson, 2003) and Social and Emotional Competence of Teachers (SECTRS) (Tom, 2012).

We used the short version of The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, containing 12 items, and distributed in three sub-scales: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies and efficacy in classroom management. It has good psychometric properties: alpha Cronbach for TSES – 0.934, and subscales: engagement – 0.849, instruction - 0.874, classroom management – 0.866. Efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies and efficacy in classroom management range from 1 to 9, where the larger the mean score the higher is the teacher's self-efficacy.

CD-10 has ten items, described through a Likert scale from 1- not true at all to 5 - true nearly all the time. It had a good reliability for our sample, alpha Cronbach – 0.913. Resilience ranges from 1 to 5, where the larger the mean score the higher is the teacher's capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

The Social and Emotional Competence of teachers had a very good reliability: alpha Cronbach-0.948. Teacher-student relationship (alpha Cronbach – 0.757), emotion regulation (alpha Cronbach – 0.773), social awareness (alpha Cronbach – 0.698), interpersonal relationships (alpha Cronbach – 0.748), and SEC range from 1 to 6, where the larger the mean score the higher is the social emotional competence.

3. Data Analysis

Several statistical tests were used to analyze the data. The coefficient alpha Cronbach was computed to assess the internal consistency of the items for each used scale. For our study all the values of alpha Cronbach exceeded 0,7, so we consider a good reliability for all the scales.

Correlation analysis was used to determine the relations between variables, and t-test for paired samples in terms of phase (pre and posttest) were used in order to determine the differences of the dependent variables (teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' resilience and teachers' social – emotional competence) for each group: experimental and control.

4. Results

To test the H1 hypothesis we used Pearson correlation analysis and the results are presented in the table below. There are high positive and significantly correlations between all the tested variables (see Table 1 for correlations between Efficacy for Student Engagement (ESE), efficacy for instruction strategies (EIS), Efficacy for classroom management (ECM), teacher self-efficacy (FSE), resilience, teacher student relationship (TSREL), emotional regulation, social awareness, interpersonal relationship, social-emotional competence (SEC).

Table 1. Correlations measuring association between teachers' self-efficacy, resilience and social – emotional competence (n=208) (Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.ESE	--									
2 EIS	,719**	--								
3 ECM	,754**	,715**	--							
4TSE	,923**	,883**	,908**	--						
5 Resilience	,600**	,631**	,563**	,657**	--					
6. TSREL	,628**	,603**	,605**	,675**	,590**	--				
7. EmoRegulation	,535**	,514**	,541**	,584**	,641**	,708**	--			
8. SAwareness	,414**	,479**	,460**	,495**	,329**	,600**	,443**	--		
9.Intrelationships	,626**	,541**	,600**	,651**	,678**	,692**	,659**	,529**	--	
10 SEC	,674**	,667**	,670**	,739**	,717**	,878**	,820**	,730**	,843**	--

To test H2 we used t-test for paired samples having as dependent variables teachers' self-efficacy, resilience and social-emotional competence, and as independent variable the phase with two categories: pretest and posttest. We did this analysis for each group, separately. The results indicates that experimental group experienced an increasing of some variables such as self-efficacy for student engagement, self-efficacy for instruction strategies, self-efficacy for classroom management, resilience, social-emotional competence, teacher-student relationship and interpersonal relationships. T test for paired samples bring out some promising results, showing that implementation of a mental health promotion curriculum could positively impact the personal development of the teachers. According to our study, the teachers experienced increased values of self-efficacy for student engagement (t(120) =-3.907, p=0.00)(pretest M=7.12, posttest M=7.80), self-efficacy for instruction strategies (t(120)=-4.291, p=0.000) (pretest M=7.64, posttest M =8.30), self-efficacy in classroom management (t(120)=-3.616, p=0.000, Mpretest=7.45, Mposttest=8.02), resilience (t(120)=-3.178, p=0.002, M pretest = 4.04, Mposttest = 4.35), social – emotional competence (t(120)= -2.672, p=0.009), M pretest = 4.97, Mposttest=5.19), teacher – student relationship (t(120)=-2.494, p=0.014, Mpretest =5.11, Mposttest=5.35), and interpersonal relationships (t(120)= - 2.743, p=0.007, Mpretest=4.84, Mposttest=5.14). Two of the variables tested did not have significant differences: emotional regulation and social awareness. On the other hand, the results for the control group have no significance in the differences between the pretest and posttest phases. The figures below present the way of variance of the two main variables measured: resilience and social-emotional competence, for the two groups (experimental and control).

Figure 1. The resilience means differences between pre and post test for the experimental and control group, pretest and posttest.
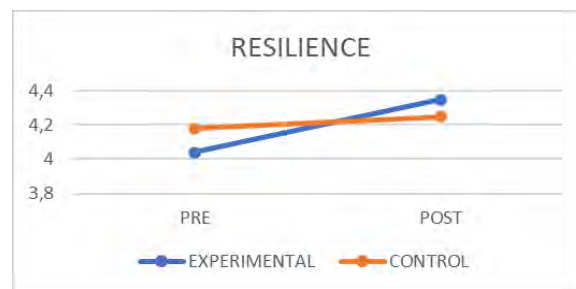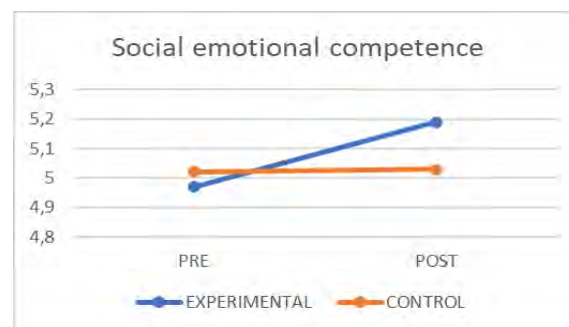

Figure 2. The Social-emotional competence means differences for the experimental and control group, pretest and posttest.

5. Discussion

Testing the impact of a mental health promotion curriculum on the teachers' personal outcomes we obtained improved values for teachers' self-efficacy, teachers' resilience and their social – emotional competence. These results are consistent with other findings from different studies (Blewitt et al., 2020, Langley et al., 2010) showing that the evidence-based intervention make a difference both at students' outcomes and teachers' efficiency. According to Blewitt et. Al, (2020) SEL programs may strengthen teaching quality, particularly the provision of responsive and nurturing teacher-child interactions and effective classroom management. In the same line the results of our study indicate that mental health promotion program contributes to the enhancing the classroom management efficacy, teacher student relationships, efficacy related to instruction strategies. This study provides evidence for efficiency of a mental health curriculum on personal development of teachers, consistently with other research results (Blewitt et al., 2020; Collie & Perry, 2019; Oliveira et al., 2021; Tyson et al., 2009, Unterbrink, T et al., 2010) The results could have implications on teachers training policies.

6. Conclusions

Our study indicates that a student-centered intervention could have impact on teachers as well, contributing to the enhancing of personal outcomes such as resilience, self-efficacy related to professional contexts and social-emotional competence. These valuable results explain the importance of delivering mental health promotion programs at schools, having a positive impact on teachers' personal life, as well.

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