Health Promotion Intervention, with Emphasis on Existential Aspects of Quality of Life for Adolescents in Sweden — A Pilot Study

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Abstract:
Objectives:
This presentation introduces a health promotion initiative emphasising existential issues related to spiritual, religious and personal beliefs (SRPB), undertaken in a Swedish upper secondary school.

Background:
International research shows that the existential domain accounts for an important part of variation in health-related quality of life (HRQL). Such findings are worthy of attention in countries like Sweden, which are experiencing increased mental health problems in adolescents, and where traditional arenas for existential issues, such as religion and politics, play decreasing roles in everyday life for young people. In 2002, WHO introduced an instrument for measuring HRQL comprising physical, psychological, levels of independence, social relationship, environmental, and SRPB facets (WHOQOL-SRPB). The BREF versions of the instrument were developed from this, with 32 items.

Material & Methods:
120 students were involved. 45 were selected in three intervention groups with additional school staff, which met once a week for eight weeks. Tools were developed to facilitate the participants' thoughts, feelings and actions regarding issues related to the eight existential SRPB aspects in WHOQOL-SRPB: Spiritual connection, Meaning and purpose in life, Experience of awe and wonder, Wholeness and integration, Spiritual strength, Inner peace, Hope and optimism, and Faith. The promotion included cards for staff-supervised group discussions related to existential issues. Interim tasks were also distributed between the meetings that focused on each theme. The control groups continued with student centred conversations as normal, during the time.

Results & Conclusion:
A mixed-method evaluation follows the classic before and after design with control groups. Qualitative data was generated from focus groups with students and staff, and quantitative data was based on a modified and psychometrically tested adolescent version of the WHOQOL-SRPB BREF instrument. This presentation will focus on the basis of the intervention procedures, including the tools related to the existential domain developed for this intervention.

Key words: Health Promotion; Intervention; Adolescents; Existential; Quality of life