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Cooperation between the Research Team of the Institute of Pedagogy and Actors in the Local Social Prevention System: A Report on the Implementation of Research Projects

Współpraca zespołu badawczego Instytutu Pedagogiki z podmiotami lokalnego systemu profilaktyki społecznej. Sprawozdanie z realizacji projektów badawczych

ABSTRACT

This article presents the experiences of collaboration between the research team from the Department of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation at the Institute of Pedagogy, Jagiellonian University, and various entities within the local social prevention system for children and young people in Krakow.

KEYWORDS

local social prevention system, Educational Counselling Center, cooperation, drug addiction, psychological safety

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

lokalny system profilaktyki społecznej, poradnia pedagogiczna, współpraca, uzależnienie od narkotyków, bezpieczeństwo psychiczne

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Articles and dissertations

The research, conducted between 2019 and 2023, focused on diagnosing community resources for prevention and designing and implementing prevention programs. The diagnosis formed a basis for developing educational and preventive programs for children and adolescents in Krakow schools. These programs were carried out in psychological and educational counselling centers as well as primary schools, with some undergoing evaluation.

This article is a report summarizing the research team's experiences over several years of collaboration with the local community in Krakow. The research was based on evidence-based practice and the principles of tailoring interventions to specific needs.

The study methodology involved analyzing research reports, prevention and educational programs, notes, and class registers compiled over multiple years of research into interinstitutional cooperation in Krakow. Collaboration between academic research teams, schools, and other educational institutions—particularly educational counseling centers—is an important and necessary component of the system for preventing risk behaviors among children and adolescents.

ABSTRAKT

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie doświadczeń współpracy zespołu badawczego Zakładu Profilaktyki Społecznej i Resocjalizacji Instytutu Pedagogiki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego z podmiotami lokalnego systemu profilaktyki kierowanej do dzieci i młodzieży w Krakowie.

Badania przeprowadzono w latach 2019–2023 w Krakowie. Obejmowały one diagnozę zasobów lokalnego systemu profilaktyki oraz projektowania i wdrażania programów profilaktycznych. Diagnoza stanowiła podstawę do projektowania programów profilaktyczno-edukacyjnych dla dzieci i młodzieży w krakowskich szkołach. Programy te były wdrażane w poradniach psychologiczno-pedagogicznych i szkołach podstawowych, a część z nich poddano ewaluacji.

Artykuł ma charakter sprawozdawczy, referuje doświadczenia zebrane przez zespół badawczy w ciągu kilku lat współpracy ze społecznością lokalną Krakowa. Teoretyczną podstawę badań diagnostycznych i ewaluacyjnych stanowiły podejście oparte na dowodach i przyjęcie odpowiednio dopasowanych programów profilaktycznych.

Metoda badawcza obejmowała analizę raportów z badań, programów profilaktyczno-edukacyjnych, notatek i dzienników zajęć w ciągu kilku lat działalności badawczej w zakresie współpracy międzyinstytucjonalnej

w Krakowie. Współpraca zespołów naukowo-badawczych ze szkołami i innymi placówkami oświatowymi, w szczególności z poradniami edukacyjnymi, jest ważnym i niezbędnym elementem systemu profilaktyki zachowań ryzykownych dzieci i młodzieży.

Introduction

Cooperation is an interdisciplinary concept, but in the context of social interactions, it is based on the consensual and voluntary activities of multiple entities (individuals, social groups, institutions) within the local environment, aimed at achieving common goals in teaching, education, and care (Lalak, Pilch 1999: 345–346; Szafrńska 2017: 171). In addition to teaching and educational activities, prevention efforts are also a responsibility of schools and educational institutions operating within the local community.

According to Polish educational law, schools and educational institutions are required to implement prevention and educational programs that include content and activities designed for students, teachers, and parents. These programs are developed based on the results of an annual diagnosis of students' developmental needs, taking into account protective and risk factors, with particular emphasis on threats related to the use of psychotropic substances, substitutes, and new psychoactive substances (Education Act of December 14, 2016: Art. 26). Schools and educational institutions should implement these programs in cooperation with various local entities, and these efforts may form part of a municipality's prevention strategy, which includes initiatives to combat alcoholism, drug addiction, and domestic violence. (In line with current terminology, the term *counteracting disorders related to psychoactive substance use* would be more appropriate.).

Schools and educational institutions carry out preventive actions in collaboration with non-governmental organizations and public entities such as universities and research institutes. Such cooperation facilitates the transfer of the latest scientific knowledge into educational practice. The research projects described in this paper are based on the theoretical and methodological principles of evidence-based practice (Sackett et al. 1997: 71), while also adhering to the principle

of tailoring programs to best suit the needs of their target groups and environments (Ostaszewski 2019: 39; EMCDDA 2011).

Applying this approach, the objective of the research team from the Department of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation at JU's Institute of Education was to collaborate with the local Krakow community, drawing on the latest knowledge in prevention. This was based on the understanding that "knowledge of risk and protective factors is the basis for the development (and evaluation) of successful prevention programs and strategies... The main source of knowledge on the effectiveness of prevention is methodologically sound evaluation studies of prevention programs and strategies" (Ostaszewski 2016: 4). Between 2019 and 2023, three projects were carried out in cooperation with Krakow's schools and educational institutions. The first project, titled "The Diagnosis of Resources and Needs of Krakow's Schools in Terms of Prevention," laid the groundwork for further collaboration with the Educational Counseling Center No. 3 and the Specialist Educational Counseling Center "Krakow Therapy Center."

The experience of JU's research team in working with Krakow's schools and educational institutions was analyzed using the desk research method—specifically, content analysis of research reports. This involved reviewing research reports, prevention and educational programs, interinstitutional agreements, memos, and class registers compiled over several years of research into interinstitutional activities in Krakow. Some of these research reports were published as open-access materials and were included in the research base for this paper. The main research question that this article seeks to answer is: What are the experiences of cooperation between the research team of the Institute of Pedagogy at Jagiellonian University and Krakow's local community in the field of prevention directed at schoolchildren and adolescents?

Project I

Project I, called "The Diagnosis of Resources and Needs of Krakow's Schools in Terms of Prevention," took place between 2019 and 2020. The project's main goal, focused on the local environment, was to identify research conducted in Krakow on aggression and the sense of safety among youth, as well as actions taken by schools,

educational institutions, and public organizations to reduce risk behaviors among students and increase their psychological safety. Studies of Krakow's local environment were preceded by an examination of the broader context of child and youth prevention efforts in Poland. Consequently, another goal of the research team was to identify studies conducted across Poland on school aggression and initiatives aimed at mitigating it. These research objectives allowed Krakow's situation to be viewed within the broader context of nationwide studies. Thus, the desk research provided the foundation for presenting Krakow's specific prevention needs and available resources.

The method used in the nationwide research was a systematic review (Matera, Czapska 2014) (scoping review), aimed at identifying effective and beneficial solutions in education and prevention. This approach highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of current knowledge on reducing risk behaviors, particularly aggressive behaviors that threaten children's and adolescents' sense of safety. Additionally, the diagnostic research employed document and content analysis, which allowed for the identification of how prevention programs were implemented in everyday practice and the conditions under which schools and local communities utilized these programs (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 76). The following inclusion/exclusion criteria for research reports were applied in the systematic review: research on children and/or youth, research conducted since 2005, research conducted in Poland, verbal aggression as a behavior occurring between children and/or youth at school, and/or the sense of psychological safety among children and/or youth at school.

The qualification criteria for the analysis of actions—i.e., programs, projects, and social campaigns—were as follows: programs/projects relating to or concerning children and/or youth; programs/projects conducted since 2010; prevention, limitation, or elimination of verbal aggression as a behavior occurring between children and/or youth at school described as either a general or specific goal; program assumptions either as a subject or goal of individual classes within the program/project; and sense of psychological safety—building or strengthening it among children and/or youth in school—described as either a general or specific goal, with program assumptions included as a subject or goal of individual classes within the program/project (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 91).

The research material consisted of Polish literature on the subject, including published reports from empirical studies, recommended prevention programs and projects—among others, those recommended by the Education Development Center or the National Bureau for Drug Prevention (now the National Bureau for Addiction Prevention)—as well as prevention-focused social campaigns listed in the “Recommended Programs” online database (www.programyrekomendowane.pl) and the “Safe School” online database at that time. Additionally, the research material included legislative acts regulating prevention activities in schools and educational institutions, as well as documents referenced in research—such as information sets collected by schools, educational institutions, and public institutions implementing educational goals in Krakow—related to prevention programs designed to build and strengthen the sense of safety and prevent verbal aggression between students in schools (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 77).

The review and desk research took several months and was completed at the end of 2019. The results led to the conclusion that there was significant diversity and varying substantive and methodological quality among the 17 research reports selected in accordance with the aforementioned criteria. Consequently, when justifying the need to implement prevention programs based on a diagnosis of the scale of the phenomenon, one should be cautious when relying on the available research reports (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 113–114). In principle, nationwide research often sought to determine the scale of aggression among students. Three research reports also dealt with the level of parental knowledge or awareness of the studied phenomena (two reports) and their attitudes.

The analyzed recommended prevention programs mainly focused on general developmental goals for children and youth (four programs) and addiction prevention. Additionally, four programs focused on building or strengthening safety, while one program was specifically geared towards preventing aggression (including cyberviolence), which strongly justifies the need to take action to prevent aggression (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 102–103). The programs were implemented mainly by NGOs (15); only two recommended initiatives were carried out by public institutions. The quality assessment of the recommended prevention programs included only process

evaluation. The programs were designed for students, teachers, and parents, with the majority targeting all three groups. This allows for the conclusion that involving all school educational entities is fundamental in the process of building a prevention system for risk behaviors.

The study of schools and educational institutions in the local Krakow environment involved collecting data via the Department of Education of the Krakow City Hall. Requests for information on prevention activities were sent to schools and institutions, including the Municipal Police Headquarters, Voivodeship Police Headquarters, Municipal Addiction Prevention Center, and educational counseling centers. In response, 138 feedback forms were received.

The results indicate that prevention activities in Krakow were conducted in 97 schools, including 73 primary schools and 24 secondary schools (10 general secondary schools and 14 vocational schools), as well as in 16 preschools, 2 dormitories for secondary education, 1 youth educational center, 8 cultural centers (including the “Krakowiak” Inter-school Folk Song and Dance Ensemble), 1 Krakow Sports Center, and 2 educational counseling centers (one of which reported that it did not conduct such activities) (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 128–129). In summary, prevention activities in Krakow were carried out by 150 entities, including NGOs that served as external implementers of prevention initiatives in educational institutions. This category includes, among others, the following institutions:

Four institutions at the voivodeship level: the Voivodeship Board of Education, Voivodeship Police Headquarters in Krakow, Voivodeship Sanitary and Epidemiological Station in Krakow, and Jagiellonian University’s Institute of Psychology.

Seven institutions from the Krakow Municipality: the Municipal Police Headquarters in Krakow, Krakow City Guard, Municipal Addiction Prevention Center in Krakow, Department of Security and Crisis Management of the Krakow City Hall, Municipal Fire Service Headquarters in Krakow, and two educational counseling centers (Borkowska-Żebrowska et al. 2020: 129).

The programs were conducted at all three levels of prevention: universal, selective, and indicated. They targeted children and youth/students, parents, and teachers, who participated either individually

or in groups. The programs were implemented in various formats, including one-off meetings, systematic year-round activities, or a series of sessions within a specific cycle. Some programs were proprietary initiatives incorporated into or adapted for the education-prevention campaign of an educational institution. Based on the formulated conclusions, the research team made recommendations for a comprehensive diagnosis of existing studies on school-based prevention and prevention activities in Krakow. This would help determine performance indicators for programs aimed at preventing verbal aggression and building or strengthening students' sense of psychological safety. The collected data and its analysis would enable the development of a prevention program based on the diagnosed resources of schools and educational institutions in Krakow.

The research results were presented at a conference organized by the Department of Education of the Krakow City Hall in January 2020, where the initiative for systemic support of schools and educational institutions in prevention programs was born. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic forced educational institutions to manage education under conditions of isolation. The pandemic brought all spheres of social life to a standstill, delayed the application of research findings to prevention practices and interrupted cooperation between the university and the local community.

Project II

It was not until 2021 that the project "Strengthening the Cooperation Between School Education Entities" was initiated by the Educational Counseling Center No. 3 in Krakow. The research team from the Department of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation at JU's Institute of Education became involved in response to the center's need for support in educational and prevention efforts for students and their families. The foundation for this project was the 2019 diagnostic study, supplemented by interviews and a review of documents from Educational Counseling Center No. 3 in Krakow. The goal of this in-depth supplementary diagnosis was to identify individual needs in the area of prevention as well as human and environmental resources in Krakow's Podgórze district, over which the center has

territorial competence. A report on the diagnostic research, along with recommendations, was published in 2021 (Kusztal et al. 2021).

This diagnosis was intended to lay the groundwork for designing a prevention program for students, which could be implemented online during the pandemic and later in classroom settings when students returned to school. The goal of the REWIA W (SZ)KOLE campaign was to strengthen students' psychological well-being and reduce the risk of psychosocial difficulties by developing social skills, shaping healthy normative beliefs, encouraging a class culture that promotes safety and well-being, and building a positive classroom climate. Additionally, the program aimed to enhance cooperation among school education entities (Piasecka, Kusztal 2021).

The REWIA w (SZ)KOLE program was affiliated with the Educational Counseling Center No. 3, and schools in the area could access support from the Center and the research team during the program's implementation and evaluation in primary school classrooms. The prevention campaign included a module for teachers, counselors, and school psychologists, who were to implement the program with students in the online format during the COVID-19 pandemic and in person when schools returned to in-person classes. The program was implemented and subjected to a process evaluation using questionnaires, group interviews, and document analysis. The next iteration of the program was conducted after the assessment, but due to institutional barriers (including a change in the Center's management), the program's effectiveness was not evaluated. The program ran from July 1, 2020, to November 30, 2020. All primary schools within the territorial jurisdiction of Center No. 3 in Krakow's Podgórze district were potential participants. In the end, 7 fourth-grade classes from primary schools participated, and the program was delivered by 22 teachers.

The campaign consisted of 3 modules: a teacher module with four 45-minute training sessions and one summary session; a student module with six 45-minute sessions conducted by previously trained teachers; and a parent module with two 90-minute sessions conducted by trained teachers. The topics covered in the sessions included: difficult situations—how to deal with them; online safety—ensuring student well-being, building relationships in both the real and virtual worlds, and managing one's image both online and offline (Kusztal, Piasecka, Nastazjak 2020: 3).

Project III

The next research project was also a result of the diagnosis of environmental resources and needs in the area of prevention and aimed to support the staff of the Specialist Educational Counseling Center “Krakow Therapy Center” in the preparation and evaluation of the prevention program. The goal of the initiative, created with the support of the research team from the Department of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation of the JU’s Institute of Education, was to strengthen the sense of psychological safety among fourth-grade students in Krakow by building a safe climate, developing constructive teacher-student and student-student relationships, and supporting positive interpersonal relations between students. It also aimed to increase the sense of personal competence among the fourth-graders by developing skills in understanding, naming, and expressing emotions, as well as recognizing conflict situations and reinforcing constructive conflict-resolution strategies. The KOT-WICA program was created at the Krakow Therapy Center and consisted of two 6-month editions. The program was subjected to formative and process evaluation by the research team, but for formal reasons, the evaluation of the results was not performed.

The program participants included 6 fourth-grade classes in the first edition, and a similar number in the second and third editions. Teachers, counselors, and psychologists from Krakow’s primary schools were invited to participate in the selection process. The program was implemented by class tutors, counselors, and psychologists cooperating with tutors at schools. Each team consisted of a maximum of two class tutors and either a psychologist or a counselor. One team, comprising a class tutor and a counselor or psychologist, implemented the prevention program in three fourth-grade classes at one primary school, while the remaining teams implemented it in only one fourth-grade class. The program’s implementation in each class was preceded by a diagnosis carried out by class tutors to tailor the education-prevention program to the needs and expectations of the fourth-graders who were the recipients of the prevention actions (Kusztal, Piasecka, Czaczuń 2023: 27).

The evaluation results of the program, implemented in eight fourth-grade classes of Krakow’s primary schools, were published

in 2023 (Kusztal, Piasecka, Czachuń 2023). However, the article, which formed a part of the research report, focuses only on a section of the evaluation research performed using the projection method (Kusztal, Piasecka 2023).

Summary

In this summary, it is worthwhile to briefly evaluate the cooperation between academia and Krakow's local environment in the area of optimizing activities aimed at preventing risk behaviors among students in schools and educational institutions. The cooperation took place between 2019 and 2023 and involved systematic efforts by the research team from the JU's Institute of Education for the local community, including schools and educational counseling centers.

This collaboration featured a diagnosis commissioned by the Department of Education of the Krakow City Hall to assess needs and resources in terms of prevention. It later extended to supporting the design, implementation, and evaluation of prevention programs for educational counseling centers. These centers are tasked, according to regulations, with supporting schools and educational institutions in their teaching, educational, and prevention efforts. The cooperation involved not only the centers' staff—psychologists, counselors, and other specialists—but also primary school principals, teachers, and parents. The implemented prevention programs also included actions targeting students' parents. The collaboration on evaluation encompassed designing the evaluation framework, supporting its implementation, or conducting the evaluation directly by the research team. The evaluation reports, along with recommendations for optimizing cooperation between educational entities, were presented to the centers' directors or prevention action coordinators at schools.

The challenges faced by the research team from the Department of Social Prevention and Rehabilitation at the JU's Institute of Education mainly included strengthening cooperation with the local Krakow and regional community. While the current collaboration has helped identify several needs, it also highlighted the necessity to support institutions for socially maladjusted students, care facilities, and centers for students affected by the refugee crisis or at risk of

addiction. The experience gained also allowed the identification of difficulties and barriers in interinstitutional cooperation, such as frequent changes in the management of educational institutions, financial constraints in implementing prevention actions, and frequent changes in legal regulations related to education and prevention.

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