Can Solution Focused Interventions be Delivered by Non-Specialist Practitioners in Schools to Support Pupils with their Behaviour?

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**BACKGROUND**

Schools are required to deliver early intervention to support pupils’ mental health (Department of Health, 2018). There is a need to establish effective interventions as delivered by non-specialists in schools.

Solution focused brief therapy (SBFT) and solution focused approaches (SFAs) have been delivered in schools to promote internalising and externalising pupil outcomes (Kim & Franklin, 2009). There has been limited exploration of the effectiveness of an SFA when delivered by non-specialist school staff (Galbraith & Alexander, 2005; Franklin, Streeter, Kim, & Tripodi, 2007; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Kvarme et al., 2010).

**METHOD**

This study employed a single case experimental design with multiple baselines. The participants were four Year 5 and 6 pupils from mainstream schools.

- A specific positive behaviour for each pupil was observed before and during the intervention.
  - **Analysis:** Tau-U and Improvement Rate Difference.
  - Pre and post questionnaires on externalising behaviour using the Brief Problem Monitor (Achenbach et al., 2011) were collected from pupil, parent and a teacher. **Analysis:** The Reliable Change Index.
  - Videos of one session per pupil were analysed to determine the fidelity to the manual and validity of the solution focused conversation.

The solution focused intervention (SFI) was used:

- **Manualised** by the researcher based on key SFBT research and theory (Woods et al., 2010; Bavelas et al., 2013)
- **4 to 5 sessions** for an average of 20.24 minutes
- **Delivered by non-specialist school staff**, supported with training and offered supervision.

**RESULTS – Behaviour**

**RQ1: Can the SFI impact upon positive behaviour?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1:</th>
<th>Verbal interactions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 2:</td>
<td>On-task behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 3:</td>
<td>Positive peer interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 4:</td>
<td>On-task behaviour</td>
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**Effect size findings for specific positive behaviours:**

- **Participants 1 and 2:** Large/very large effect
- **Participant 3:** Medium – large/very large effect
- **Participant 4:** Weak – small/questionable effect

**RQ2: Does the SFI affect externalising behaviour?**

**Externalising behaviour** pre and post questionnaires:

- **Significant reduction of participant 3** (Parent scores)
- **Significant reduction of participant 4** (Parent scores)

**RESULTS – Fidelity and Validity**

**RQ3: Can non-specialist school staff follow the manualised intervention to hold an effective solution focused conversation with a pupil?** - Video analysis

- **Fidelity** to specific questions was ‘low’ for all participants.
  - **Fidelity to SBFT elements** was ‘moderate’ for participants 1, 2 and 4 and ‘high’ for participant 3.
  - The therapeutic alliance was ‘high’ for participants 1, 2 and 3 and ‘moderate’ for participant 4.
  - All participants highlighted at least one key moment of change and an unexpected response to a question.

**CONCLUSION**

- **Non-specialist school staff** were able to apply elements from the manual appropriately to have a positive impact on a specific behaviour for 3 participants.
  - **Limited support** was provided for the SFI in reducing externalising behaviour of two participants.
  - The manualised intervention supported the practitioners to hold a solution focused conversation with some fidelity and to develop aspects of a therapeutic alliance.

**IMPLICATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH**

- This SFI has the potential to be delivered by non-specialist practitioners, however **extended support is needed** for future practitioners. **Educational psychologists** would be well-placed to provide training and ongoing support.
  - Further research of the SFI in **group-based randomised experimental research** with larger samples is needed to establish its effectiveness.
  - The measure of fidelity could be applied in further research.

**References:**


