

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN THE FIELD OF MENTAL HEALTH: REVIEW OF THE TOOLS

Dr. Irena Makivić¹, Anja Kragelj¹, Dr. Špela Selak¹
¹ National institute of public health, Ljubljana, Slovenia

INTRODUCTION

Mental health related learning content, transferred to individuals and groups through educational processes, empowers individuals with competencies to perform professional work, to care for their own mental health and to care for mental health of other people in the community. Therefore, a good needs assessment is important to plan and carry out effective educational processes with the implementation of appropriate and needed mental health related content.

The purpose of the review is to recognize which needs assessment tools have been used to assess educational needs in the field of mental health.

METHODS

A comprehensive literature search (in August 2021) with selected key words (mental health AND needs assessment) was conducted in electronic bibliographic databases PubMed and PsychInfo. Searching was carried out with the following inclusion criteria: no time or other limits, qualitative and quantitative articles, English language. The exclusion criteria were: unavailable articles, other languages, books and thesis.

RESULTS

After excluding all duplicates and taking into account all criteria, 28 sources remained for analysis.

Analyzed articles were describing qualitative and quantitative approaches to needs assessment. Some described needs assessment tools used both approaches (Figure 1).

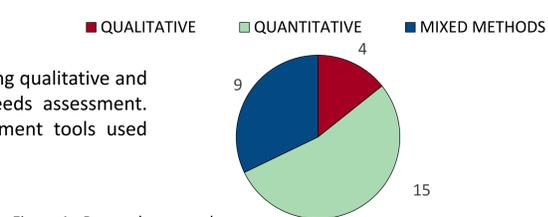
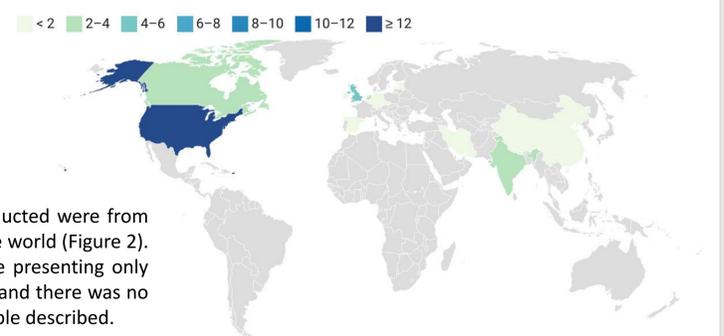


Figure 1.: Research approaches



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Figure 2.: Country of origin (sample)

Articles were addressing educational interventions for different groups and with different educational purposes (Figure 3).

Description of categories:

- **PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE:** Educational interventions for mental health professionals in order to upgrade their competencies to be able to carry out their work with the highest level of quality. Or educational interventions for public health or other healthcare professionals in order to gain different additional mental health competencies.
- **MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN THE COMMUNITY:** Educational interventions for other members of community (e.g. teachers, youth workers, youth peer educators, homeless shelter employees) to be able to provide (better) support and care for mental health of community members.
- **OWN MENTAL HEALTH:** This category includes the acquisition of mental health competencies that can enable an individual to take care for her/his own mental health (e.g. educational interventions for service users).
- **MENTAL HEALTH CARE IN THE COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE:** This category combines two of already mentioned categories "professional performance" and "mental health care in the community" that are described above.

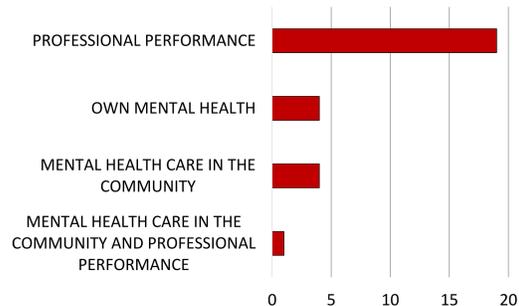


Figure 3.: Purpose of educational intervention

Most of the articles were addressing continuing professional or job-related education, therefore education for employees after entering the labour market (Figure 4).

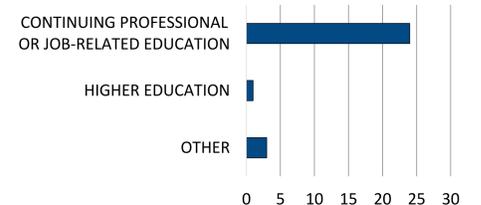


Figure 4.: Forms of lifelong education

Description of categories:

- **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL OR JOB-RELATED EDUCATION:** Education that is intended for acquiring competencies needed to perform the working tasks with quality, to adapt to the requirements of the working environment or to follow the development in particular field of expertise.
- **HIGHER EDUCATION:** Education that is part of the higher level of educational system.
- **OTHER:** Education that is not part of educational system and is not related to working environment. For example, educational interventions for youth peer educators or service users.

For the purpose of needs assessment qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used.

QUALITATIVE data were collected by using methods from:

- document analysis
- observation
- interview
- to focus group discussion.

Two consensus methods were used:

- Delphi technique
- and nominal group technique.

For gathering QUANTITATIVE data surveys were used. Questionnaires were either newly developed and not necessarily validated or already existing (already used elsewhere).

To mention some of them:

- The Public Health Profile and Training Needs Assessment questionnaire
- Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
- The Recovery Knowledge Inventory
- The semantic scale used in Servais and Saunders
- Work Environment Scale Questionnaire
- Barriers to Change Questionnaire
- Attitude Subscale of the Opening Minds Scale for Health Care Providers
- Educational Needs Questionnaire.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- There were different approaches and tools used for educational needs assessment in the field of mental health.
- There was a shortage of studies conducted in Europe.
- Needs assessment for implementing mental health content in educational system (from preschool to higher education) was missing. There was one article addressing higher education (doctoral level).
- The majority of articles were addressing educational interventions for mental health or healthcare professionals intended to upgrade their professional performance, less for other members of the community.

The review of the tools is useful for country specific use as well as international comparisons and therefore for effective scaling up in this field. Needs assessment is important part of continuous evaluation process for further implementation and ongoing process of quality improvement.