

Everyone Can Sing: A Feasibility Study of Class Choir as a Mental Health Promoting Intervention Among 0-3rd Grade Students in Denmark

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Abstract : Background: The World Health Organization (WHO) has emphasized the critical need for feasible and effective school-based mental health promotion interventions. High-quality music education in school has been suggested to promote well-being, inclusion, and positive relations, which are essential for children's mental health. This study explores the potential of choir singing as a distinct approach to enhance children's mental health within the school setting. 'Everyone Can Sing' is a class-based mental health promotion intervention for children in grades 0-3 (ages 5-10) in Danish primary school, which integrates choir singing into the students' normal school schedule twice a week to promote mental health through the increase of school well-being, class coherence and social inclusion. The intervention uses trained choir leaders to lead the lessons in close collaboration with the class teacher, placing a distinct emphasis on well-being and the inclusive aspect of musical expression through body and voice. Aim: The aim of the study is to evaluate the feasibility of the Everyone Can Sing intervention with the specific objective to assess implementation and changes in mental health parameters, including school well-being, class coherence and social inclusion. Methodologies: The study is a feasibility study of a one-year intervention, which started in January 2024 and is being implemented in grades 0-3 (ages 5-10) across three different Danish primary schools. It is designed according to a mixed methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. Baseline questionnaires were obtained from students, parents and teachers, and follow-up is planned at 12 months. Participant observations of class choir and individual and group interviews with students, teachers, choir leaders, and school management are collected during the intervention period. The study uses the validated 'Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire' for parent- and teacher-reports. The student questionnaire, which assesses school well-being, class coherence, social inclusion and indicators of mental health, was developed and validated for this study. Participant observations and interviews provide in-depth insights into the implementation process and participants' experiences of the mental health-promoting potential of the intervention. Findings: The study included 41 classes across three schools (N=904) and questionnaire data from students (n=845, = 93%), teachers (n=890, = 98%), and parents (n=608, = 67%) at baseline. Follow-up data will be obtained in January 2025. While collection and analyses of data are still ongoing, preliminary implementation findings based on interviews and observations indicate high levels of engagement and acceptability. At 6 months into the intervention period, the study protocol is on track and suggests that the intervention is well-received. Further findings and analyses will be presented. The final results of the study will be used to decide whether the AKS intervention should proceed to a future, full-size effectiveness trial, return to refinement of the intervention or the evaluation design, or stop. Contributions: This study will provide valuable insights into new approaches to school-based mental health promotion initiatives. If feasible, the vision is to implement the intervention or elements of it in primary schools across all five Danish regions, potentially lowering the mental health burden.

Keywords : child mental health, early childhood, mental health promotion, mixed methods research, school-based intervention.

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