

Teachers and Sports Coaches Supporting Young People's Mental Health

The roles of teachers and sports coaches in promotion, prevention and early intervention for
young people's mental health

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Abstract

This thesis by published works contributes to the knowledge of how adults in community-based roles influence and support young people's mental health through promotion, prevention and early intervention. It makes an original contribution to this field by advancing the understanding of the specific actions that adults, such as teachers and coaches, perform to support young people's mental health, and their role perceptions related to these activities. The goal of the research was to inform ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Australian young people by enhancing the conceptual and practical understanding of the positive contributions that adults in community-based settings can make to young people's mental health. The research aimed to achieve this by investigating teachers' and coaches' perceptions of their role, influence, and involvement in young peoples' mental health through promotion, prevention and early intervention.

This research used a mixed methods design that was comprised of three phases. These phases were developmental in nature, whereby the findings of each phase informed the next. Phase I used a qualitative approach and investigated how teachers and coaches perceive their role to be relevant and effective in promotion, prevention and/or early intervention for young people's mental health. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 21 teachers and 13 sports coaches of young people aged 12 to 18 in Canberra, Australia. Thematic analysis was employed to identify main themes from the interview transcripts. Phase II addressed a significant gap in the literature by developing a measure of promotion, prevention and early intervention behaviour for mental health using a consensus technique involving 10 experts in the field. Phase III used this measure to examine the influence of role related perceptions on teachers' and coaches' involvement in supporting young people's mental health. An online survey was completed by

117 teachers and 131 coaches from Canberra, Australia. Multiple group path analyses were conducted to determine common and unique behaviour and relationships for teachers and coaches.

Five research papers resulting from the three phases of research are presented. The main outcome of paper one was that teachers and coaches perceived having influential but slightly different roles in supporting mental health. Paper two reported teachers' views of their role breadth and highlighted their perceived lack of knowledge and skills in mental health related areas. Paper three revealed that coaches held expectations of themselves to support youth mental health and were comfortable talking with young people about related concerns. Key findings from paper four indicated both teachers and coaches frequently performed activities to promote young people's mental health, and that teachers more commonly engaged in behaviour that supports prevention and early intervention for mental health than coaches. Paper five revealed three types of role-related perceptions—role breadth, instrumentality, and efficacy—significantly influenced teachers' and coaches' involvement in supporting young people's mental health.

This thesis has contributed significant new conceptual knowledge by defining specific activities that characterise promotion, prevention and early intervention for mental health and creating an instrument to measure these constructs. This investigation of teachers and sports coaches, whose opportunity to contribute to this area is less well recognised, should extend the awareness and knowledge of the variety of settings and people that are influential and have potential to benefit young people's mental health. Encouraging and assisting adults in community-based settings to engage in promotion, prevention and early intervention behaviour will strengthen and diversify young people's access to mental health support and help to reduce the burden of mental health problems.

Key words: Youth mental health; mental health promotion; prevention; early intervention; teachers; sports coaches; role breadth; self-efficacy; community

List of Papers for PhD by Published Works

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Paper 1 | Mazzer, K. R., Rickwood, D. J., & Vanags, T. (2012). Teachers and sports coaches supporting young people's mental health: Promotion, prevention and early intervention. <i>World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, International Science Index</i> 66, 6(6), 462 – 468. | Published |
| Paper 2 | Mazzer, K. R., & Rickwood, D. J. (2013). Teachers' role breadth and perceived efficacy in supporting student mental health. <i>Manuscript submitted to Advances in School Mental Health Promotion.</i> | Submitted for publication |
| Paper 3 | Mazzer, K. R., & Rickwood, D. J. (2013). Mental health in sport: Coaches' views of their role and efficacy in supporting young people's mental health. <i>Manuscript submitted to International Journal of Health Promotion and Education.</i> | Submitted for publication |
| Paper 4 | Mazzer, K. R., & Rickwood, D. J. (2013). Community-based roles promoting youth mental health: Comparing the roles of teachers and coaches in promotion, prevention and early intervention. <i>International Journal of Mental Health Promotion</i> , (Online pre-print). doi: 10.1080/14623730.2013.781870 | Published |
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