

Organizational readiness for the implementation of multilevel school mental health support systems

Preparación organizacional para implementar sistemas de apoyo en múltiples niveles en salud mental escolar

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Background

Strategically, schools represent the best context for addressing mental health problems in the school population. They have almost universal coverage, provide a context for interventions that can be delivered by teachers and professionals with whom students establish strong emotional relationships, and have the potential to increase socioemotional well-being and reduce the risk of mental illness. In this sense, multilevel support systems are ways to effectively organize mental health interventions in schools, installing school-based preventive systems embedded in local networks through collaborative implementation of evidence-based interventions, data-driven decision making, and early detection of mental health needs. To achieve all of these benefits, it is important that these systems are successfully implemented, so schools must be prepared for them. However, research has paid little attention to this preparation process.

Aims

The objective of this research was to examine the levels of organizational readiness perceived by management teams and psychosocial intervention teams in Chilean public schools. We sought to describe organizational readiness and then relate it to the determinants of implementation already existing in the schools, in order to identify those that should be intervened to enhance readiness for change.

Method & procedures

This non-experimental research was carried out with the participation of 178 people from 54 public schools. The Organizational Readiness for Change Implementation Scale and the Implementation Determinants Survey were administered online. Descriptive statistics were calculated to evaluate the responses, mean difference tests between the different groups (management staff and psychosocial intervention teams) and linear regressions to investigate the effect of the determinants of implementation on organizational readiness and its dimensions.

Results & discussion

A high level of commitment to implementation was found, but a low perception of the level of capabilities to execute the changes. Regarding implementation, it was found that psychosocial professionals perceive a low level of technical empowerment compared to their coordination capacity, as well as a low level of perceived support from the educational community. Significant differences were observed in all dimensions, with the scores of the management staff being higher than those of the psychosocial intervention teams. Finally, organizational disposition was found to be significantly related to coordination and perceived support. These results suggest that practices aimed at

improving coordination and articulation between the different actions carried out in the school and the perception of collective support in the school are factors associated with readiness.

Conclusion

It is concluded that schools are committed to generate changes that favor the mental health of students, however, they are not prepared to implement Multilevel Support Systems, requiring not only more and better skills, knowledge and resources, but also coordination and support from the rest of the educational community. Possible explanations for the differences in the perception of organizational readiness between psychosocial intervention teams and management staff are raised, depending on the type of activities, responsibilities and relationships that are created in the institutions. And the need to invest in greater implementation support and take concrete actions to reduce or close these gaps is discussed, in order to adequately discern the organizational needs that schools must meet to be prepared for a successful implementation of Multilevel Support Systems.

Keywords: mental health, multi-tiered systems of support, organizational readiness, schools

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