



Evaluation of school-based mental health literacy program in high school students: a scoping review protocol

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Abstract

Background & Aims: Mental health literacy training programs increase knowledge about mental health and mental illness among teenagers, which ultimately reduces the stigma associated with mental illness and increases help-seeking behavior. This study aims to investigate school-based mental health literacy programs in high school students.

Materials & Methods: This study is a scoping review aimed at examining school-based mental health literacy programs in high school students. Studies published from the first year of the article's publication related to the topic until April 10, 2024, were reviewed. Databases including Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and ProQuest, as well as three Iranian scientific databases — Scientific Information Database (SID), Islamic World Science Citation Database (ISC), and Magiran for Persian studies, were searched using keywords of school-based mental health literacy, school-based mental hygiene literacy, school-based mental health, school-based mental hygiene, intervention, program, and curriculum.

Results: Considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the studies will be examined and analyzed, and the information pertaining to these studies will be reported in accordance with the type of school-based mental health literacy training program, the training framework of the program, the program's objectives, and the findings.

Conclusion: In student mental health literacy programs, if incorporating mental health education into school curricula is the ultimate goal, it makes sense for teachers to provide a classroom-based curriculum as they are likely to be the ones putting this into practice in the real world.

Keywords: Adolescents, Guide, Health literacy, Mental health, Program, Review, Schools

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Introduction

Mental health literacy (MHL) has been considered an important strategy for promoting mental health because it enables teens to take better and more positive mental health actions (1, 2). The term "Mental Health Literacy" was defined in the late 1990s as

"knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management, or prevention" (3). Approximately one-fifth of children and teenagers have at least one psychiatric disorder. As a result, promoting teenage mental health is a major priority (4). Adolescents are more at risk of developing mental

health problems than adults (5). Most mental illnesses first appear during the teenage years; however, most teens who have mental health issues do not seek help (6). According to studies, delaying proper care and treatment has negative consequences in adulthood (6–8). As a result, mental health education is required for teenagers to acquire knowledge about mental illnesses and improve attitudes towards them, which may lead to appropriate help-seeking (9). Okan et al. (10) emphasized the importance of MHL in achieving positive mental health and well-being, as well as facilitating access to timely and appropriate care when mental disorders arise.

Hart et al. (11) indicated that teenagers have a relatively poor level of MHL, making it difficult for them to recognize mental diseases and the fundamental causes behind their occurrence, risk factors, and protective factors related to them. Additionally, people are frequently less likely to seek treatment when they have incorrect assumptions about the efficacy of therapeutic approaches. Stigma and infamy associated with mental health disorders can be found at a young age (12). The well-being of adolescents is often overlooked in many developing countries when it comes to mental health. The 2019 national survey of children and adolescents in Iran revealed that 22.31 percent of participants were diagnosed with at least one psychiatric disorder (4).

The low level of MHL is known as one of the most important problems in the treatment of psychological disorders (13), and its increase through education can aid in easing the burden of mental illnesses and promoting mental health (14). More efforts are required in school curricula to promote mental health and prevent mental illness (15, 16). The importance of MHL in school settings has led to the publication of numerous guidelines and policies in the United Kingdom (17), Scotland (18), Wales (19), and Canada (20) and provided policies and statements to support the promotion of MHL in school-aged teens.

Most teens might obtain mental health care for the first time at school (21, 22). Over time, education influences teenagers' cognitive, social, and emotional

development and aids in stabilizing their behavioral patterns, especially their health-related behaviors. The majority of teenagers can be reached at school (23). The MHL training programs provided by teachers in the curriculum are regarded as an effective and viable strategy for laying the groundwork for the early diagnosis and treatment of mental diseases (24). The outcomes of a school-based MHL program in Canada revealed a considerable improvement in students' knowledge and attitudes (25). Studies of a classroom-based education program for 15–18-year-old teens revealed a substantial increase in MHL and help-seeking intentions, and a decrease in stigmatizing attitudes (11).

The study investigates whether providing a school-based MHL curriculum to high school students could improve their MHL. Additionally, it examines whether the MHL program evaluates the role of teachers in MHL. This aim of this study is to investigate school-based MHL programs in high school students.

Materials & Methods

In the present review, with the aim of examining school-based MHL programs, the best evidences will be chosen from databases and keywords related to the subject under study, and by applying inclusion-exclusion criteria based on the study purpose.

The selection criteria will include papers published from the first year of the article's publication related to the topic until April 10, 2024. Additionally, original scientific and research articles written in English and whose target population was students aged 12 to 18 years will be included in the study. On the other hand, studies for which the full text could not be obtained despite two attempts to contact the author, as well as abstracts of conference articles, review studies, and protocols, will be excluded from the study.

Search Strategy:

The research team will choose English keywords based on the study's objectives, and then develop the search strategy across several databases. The screening process will be conducted by two members of the research team using Endnote software (version 8). By

removing duplicates, screening is done in three stages: title, abstract, and full text.

MESH terms will be utilized to select keywords. In this study, a single search strategy will be applied across many databases as follows: School -based MHL, school-based mental hygiene literacy, school-based mental health, school-based mental hygiene, Intervention, program, curriculum.

Keywords will be joined with the "AND" and "OR" operators, and the * and "..." symbols will be utilized to broaden the search. For search strategies, screening, as

well as data selection, papers will be searched and retrieved initially and then all papers with the desired keywords in the title will be included in the study. Following the removal of duplicate publications, the titles and abstracts of the remaining papers will be examined to see whether they fit the inclusion criteria. The Cochrane Handbook was used to guide this scoping review, and it will be reported following PRISMA guidelines (26-28). Figure 1 depicts the PRISMA flow diagram.

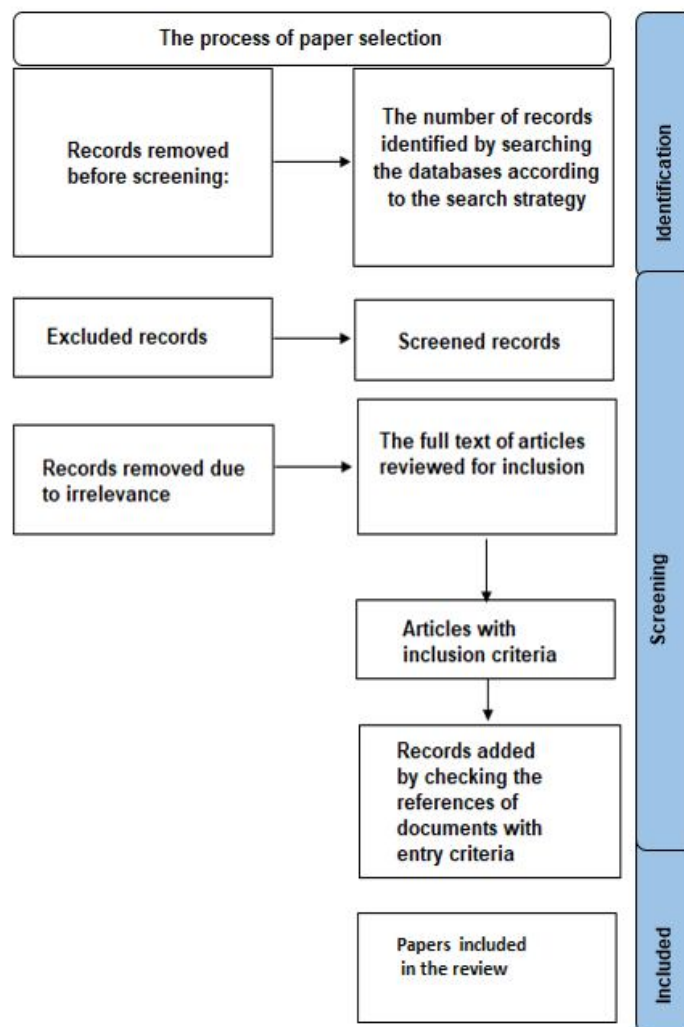


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram

Searched Databases:

Given that a large portion of Iranian Persian journals are currently indexed in the three scientific databases of Scientific Information Database (SID), Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC), and Magiran, these three databases are used to retrieve Persian studies on school-based MHL programs. Additionally, Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, and ProQuest databases will be searched for English

papers. Scopus and PubMed databases were selected due to their high subject coverage. The reason for choosing Web of Science is its extensive coverage of major journals in different subject areas. In selecting the ProQuest database, consideration will be given to the review of theses. Furthermore, to ensure that all available researches are considered, the references of the papers included in the review will also be examined. Table 1 reviews the articles, separately sorted by database.

Table 1. Review of articles separately sorted by database

Database	Single search strategy in different databases
Scopus	("School-based Mental health literacy" OR "School-based mental hygiene literacy" OR "School-based Mental health" OR "School-based mental hygiene") AND (Intervention* OR program* OR curriculum*)
Web of Science (WOS)	
PubMed	
ProQuest	
Islamic World Science Citation Center (ISC)	
Scientific Information Database (SID)	
Magiran	

Selection of Relevant Studies:

The studies will be organized using the EndNote reference manager. To select relevant studies, two researchers reviewed the papers separately based on the title and abstract. In cases where the researchers determined that the abstract and title met the inclusion criteria, the full text of the article was extracted. The full text of the papers was then carefully analyzed to decide on their inclusion based on the inclusion criteria of this study. In cases where the two researchers disagreed, a third researcher with scientific expertise in the field of Scoping Review decided whether the articles should be included.

Tabulating and Summarizing Information and Data:

At this stage, due to the large amount of information gathered, organization was crucial. One method of organizing the obtained information was to use a matrix. The matrix is a spreadsheet with rows and columns in which the characteristics of each study are extracted and summarized (29, 30). In this matrix, the following information was recorded: the title of the article, the author and the year of publication, the country, the type of study, the research community, the type of MHL training program used to conduct the research, and the results (Table 2).

Table 2. Matrix of information and data of articles

Title	Author/year	country	Type of study	Type of MHL training program	Population/community	Results
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Results

Finally, considering the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the studies were reviewed and analyzed. The

information related to these studies, including the type of school-based MHL training program, the educational framework of the program, the objectives of the program, and the results, are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. The results of school-based mental health literacy training programs

Row	School-based MHL training programs	Educational framework of the program	Objectives of the program	Results
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Discussion

This scoping review provides a comprehensive body of evidences examining school-based MHL initiatives for high school students. The studies conducted in the field of educational program with the aim of improving school-based MHL in students aged 12 to 18 years will be reviewed. The primary focus of all studies will be on school-based MHL instruction by certified teachers to high school students. This study will consider the components of MHL in educational programs and whether the implemented mental health educational programs are effective. Studies on school-based MHL programs are necessary to determine the programs' long-term effects because it is necessary for young people to receive support. Therefore, this study addresses the maintenance of MHL promotion over time. According to surveys, there have been numerous studies on student mental health interventions (20, 25, 31). A limitation of the study is that the results of all studies based on Guide Cymru's school-based MHL programs, which are based on a teacher-led classroom curriculum, are not available. Another limitation of this study is the duration of the training programs, which may affect the effectiveness of the program. One of the advantages of this study is that it will exclusively focus on classroom-based, teacher-led mental health education programs.

Conclusion

When it comes to student MHL programs, it makes sense for instructors to provide a classroom-based curriculum if the end objective is to incorporate mental

health education into regular school curricula because they are probably the ones putting this into practice in the real world.

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Authors' Contributions

M.Kh. designed the study, and conceived the review. B.Z. and Kh.A. Performed the searches and screened studies for eligibility. B.Z. and M.Kh. takes responsibility for the paper as a whole. All authors commented and approved the final revised manuscript.

Data Availability

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Statement

This study is taken from the thesis of a Ph.D student in health education and health promotion. Institutional Review Board approval (code: IR.SSU.SPH.REC.1402.089) was obtained.

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