

Context and Implications Document for: Mixed methods systematic review on effectiveness and experiences of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management program

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Author's Introduction

Children's mental health issues are a substantial public health problem globally. Although there are some variations across context, prevalence statistics indicate that upwards of 10% of school-age children suffer from clinical-level difficulties across conduct and hyperkinetic (attentional) domains, with an additional 20% of children experiencing heightened problems at sub-clinical levels. This is a problem in school settings, with teachers regularly reporting that they feel underprepared for the reality of managing a classroom. Of the many programs developed to train teachers in classroom management strategies, this mixed methods systematic review focuses on one: the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (IY TCM) program, which is based on its highly researched and robustly supported parenting program. Trials that evaluate the effectiveness of programs like IY TCM regularly now include qualitative components, which can illuminate processes and experiences that help contextualise outcomes. This mixed methods systematic review uses innovative methods to a) explore the effectiveness of IY TCM, b) examine the theoretical understanding of how IY TCM operates, c) understand how IY TCM is experienced by people, and d) integrate these three areas to illuminate the many ways by which it can be judged effective. In this way, it aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of IY TCM and how it is received by users to inform key decision-makers at various levels of practice and policy. The results of this review suggest that intervening to change teachers' classroom management strategies can address both teachers' needs for increased skills in their profession and children's social, emotional, and behavioural needs. Potentially, this provides a scalable public health solution to problems of wide concern to society and the education system.

Implications for Policy

Concern over children's mental health and violence in schools is global, and the results of this review (including data from five countries) support the use of IY TCM as an intervention to address these issues. This systematic review finds a reduction in school violence both from lessening teachers' use of negative strategies as well as through improvements in behaviour from high-risk children in the classroom. Although the evidence comes primarily from high-income settings (England, Ireland, Wales, and the United States), data from Jamaica demonstrate that clinically significant benefits can also occur when implementing IY TCM in low-resourced urban settings within a middle-income country. Moreover, Jamaican teachers showed the greatest improvements in positive classroom management strategies and greatest reductions in negative strategies, suggesting that this program can be of particular benefit when implemented with classroom teachers who have fewer qualifications. Across all of the reported teacher- and child-level outcomes, policy-makers can have increased confidence in

these findings because these data incorporate both teacher-/parent-reports as well as independent observations, which have reduced bias because of blinding to treatment condition.

Educational policy-makers should consider how they might incorporate training in classroom management in their context, and they can use results from the qualitative meta-synthesis of stakeholders' experiences of IY TCM to inform how they might integrate this program into their context. This includes making more educated choices regarding how the training will be introduced, implemented, and measured. When considering taking a program like IY TCM to scale, extensive work in Wales provides key considerations for large-scale success, including having a local champion, linking the program into public policy, and rigorously evaluating the program in the new setting (Hutchings & Williams, 2017).

Whenever an intervention is taken to scale or otherwise rolled out to reach a broader population, policy-makers must consider concerns over (un)intentional adaptations that might change the way the program is implemented from how it was intended to be deployed. Clear recommendations emerge from this review regarding how teachers in non-American settings would prefer to have adapted IY TCM video vignettes, which although requiring an upfront expenditure of resources, could improve engagement among and relevance for participating teachers. For contexts where the costs of adapting the video vignettes are too high, the evidence suggests that the program can still produce effective results for teachers and children. This is supported in related research by Leijten and colleagues (2016) showing that comparing transported parenting programs to homegrown parenting programs resulted in no statistically significant difference on effectiveness. This finding held across different program brands, including the IY parenting program, and regions (including non-Western countries and low- and middle-income countries).

Implications for Practice

This mixed methods systematic review produces results that are directly relevant to educators in their day-to-day work, particularly by identifying an evidence-based program that is both grounded in theory and supported as effective in rigorous evaluations. Head teachers (principals) can benefit from the converging data demonstrating that this IY TCM program produces desired benefits to teachers and children alike, and that teachers report positive experiences from attending it. In fact, teachers report the desire for this to be taken up across entire schools, so that other teachers and support staff consistently implement these classroom management strategies. This suggests that school-wide training and policies which support the development of educators' classroom management skills in and across classrooms are needed and should be prioritised.

Additionally, teachers can benefit from this review by understanding that any current isolation they might feel in their classrooms and stress due to challenging classroom behaviours need not be permanent. Data from studies included in this review show that challenging behaviours are a regular experience for teachers, and teachers can implement strategies in their classrooms to mitigate and prevent these problems. Specifically, proactive management strategies, including building positive teacher-child relationships, praising children's good deeds, and ignoring minor misbehaviours can result in reduced noncompliance and aggression in the classroom. For more challenging cases, establishing an individual behaviour plan can assist in supporting high-risk children. In implementing any of these strategies, teachers should note that the evidence suggests practice is an important part. Teachers in the included studies of this review practiced outside of the classroom (during group training sessions) as well as over many months in the classroom, and relied on support from other teachers to reflect on their practice.

Teacher-educators and university degree programs can use the results of this review to consider what instruction they offer on classroom management, and how they might structure class discussions and learning for trainee-teachers. Initial teacher education programs would do well to incorporate compulsory modules on classroom management into their curricula, especially during placements where trainee-teachers have the opportunity to practice and reflect on their skills whilst actively teaching in classroom settings. Continuing professional development opportunities on this topic should be made available for educators.

Resources for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education

Author Recommends

Subject Readings:

1. Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2013). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. London, UK: Routledge.
2. Korpershoek, H., Harms, T., De Boer, H., Van Kuijk, M., & Doolaard, S. (2016). A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Classroom Management Strategies and Classroom Management Programs on Students Academic, Behavioral, Emotional, and Motivational Outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(3), 643–680. Available from <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654315626799>
3. Webster-Stratton, C. (2001). The Incredible Years: Parents, teachers, and children training series. *Residential Treatment for Children & Youth*, 18(3), 31–45. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1300/J007v18n03>

Theory Readings:

4. Bandura, A. (1978). Social learning theory of aggression. *Journal of Communication*, 28(3), 12–29. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1978.tb01621.x>
5. Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and loss*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
6. Patterson, G. R., DeBaryshe, B., & Ramsey, E. (1990). A developmental perspective on antisocial behavior. *American Psychologist*, 44, 329–335. Reprinted in: Gauvain, M. & Cole, M. (Eds), *Readings on the development of children*, 2nd Ed. (1993, pp. 263-271). New York, NY: Freeman.

Methods Readings:

7. Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
8. Higgins, J. P. T., & Green, S. (Eds). *Cochrane handbook for systematic reviews of interventions* Version 5.1.0 [updated March 2011]. The Cochrane Collaboration, 2011. Available from <http://handbook-5-1.cochrane.org/>
9. Nye, E., Melendez-Torres, G. J., & Bonell, C. (2016). Origins, methods and advances in qualitative meta-synthesis. *Review of Education*, 4(1), 57–79. Available from <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3065>
10. Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *The foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques in the social and behavioral sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Focus Questions

Subject Questions:

1. Classroom management is a construct that involves a wide range of teacher actions which in turn may serve a variety of purposes. Make a list of classroom management

strategies and connect each one to the purpose(s) it aims to serve. How might these be implemented in practice?

2. In their 2013 *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*, editors Evertson and Weinstein write that, “*how* a teacher achieves order is as important as *whether* a teacher achieves order” (p. 4). Do you agree or disagree with this statement and why? Use examples of different ways of achieving order to support your position.

Theory Question:

3. How are social learning theory, attachment theory, and childhood aggression theory integrated together to form the underlying rationale for an intervention such as the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management program?

Methods Questions:

4. What are the benefits of contextualising quantitative outcome data (i.e., effectiveness) using qualitative experiential/process data? Are there any drawbacks? Consider different perspectives in your response (e.g., teachers, school leaders, researchers, policy-makers).
5. There are many approaches to mixed methods research, including a convergent parallel design (used in this systematic review) as well as explanatory and exploratory sequential designs. How might these different designs be used in evidence syntheses?