



Challenges for parents seeking help for an adolescent mental health concern

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Introduction



- Mental health disorders account for a large proportion of disease burden in young people. What is concerning is the reluctance of young people to seek professional help for mental health problems.
- Parents play a crucial role in the adolescent help-seeking process (Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007).
- Existing models of parental help-seeking are largely based on traditional models of help-seeking (Logan & King, 2001) and suggest a linear process e.g.
 - parent identifies the behaviour is problematic → decides to seek help → identifies an action plan → seeks help
- However there is evidence that within the help-seeking process parents need to overcome a range of barriers around mental health literacy, stigma, access to services etc.



Aims of Research



The overall aim of the project is to gain a better understanding of the parental help-seeking process.

We want to chart the help seeking process so that, in the future, supports can be designed to help parents at critical points of the journey.

The aim of this study was to identify key issues that should be addressed in interviews that are planned with parents of adolescents.



Method



Participants: Recruitment via social media. 106 individuals (parents, siblings, extended family & teachers) participated.

Design: 3 open-ended questions about process of seeking help (or not).

Analysis: Qualitative content analysis by Elo & Kyngäs (2004) and Krippendorff (2004).



Preliminary Findings



The below findings suggest that parental help-seeking for adolescent mental health problems is not a straight forward process. Each of the themes identified will be explored further in interviews.



Figure: Issues to explore in future research



Conclusions



- The overall findings of the study have helped us to identify key aspects of the help seeking process. These will be explored in more detail in interviews with parents that are planned for the next stage of the research process.
- The results were based on open ended responses to survey questions posted on-line. They serve the purpose of identifying issues for further exploration but don't necessarily identify the key themes that will eventually emerge from more detailed research.



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