

IPSY – Evaluation of a Life-Skills-Program against Substance Misuse in Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of consumption of legal substances increases during adolescence. Prevention of behaviors related to misuse (i.e., early entry age and high rate of acceleration of consumption rates) is possible through the promotion of generic Life-Skills combined with substance-specific skills and knowledge (Fig. 1). Against this background, the program IPSY was developed, implemented and successfully evaluated in 40 schools in Thuringia/Germany.

IPSY (Information + Psychosocial Competence = Protection)

- Basic program developed for grade 5 students (15 units) with two booster sessions in grade 6 (7 units), and 7 (7 units); implemented by teachers in schools on the basis of a comprehensive teaching manual
- Interactive, resource-oriented teaching methods (role play, discussions etc.)
- Combination of different approaches (Life-Skills, social influence approach)

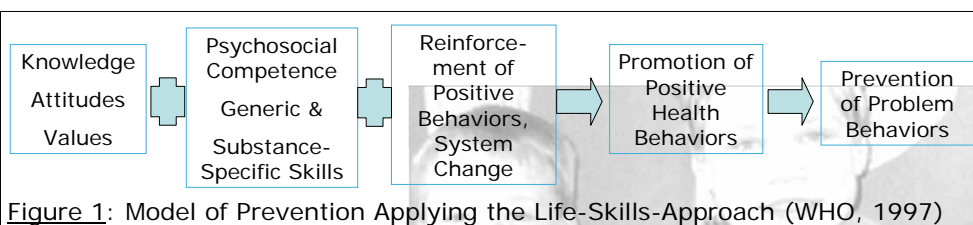


Figure 1: Model of Prevention Applying the Life-Skills-Approach (WHO, 1997)

AIMS

- Replication of pilot-test results on a large-scale sample
- Implementation and evaluation of the program within different school types
- Analysis of long-term effects of the program
- Investigation of moderators and mediators of program effects
- Cross-cultural evaluation of the program

FUTURE PLANS

Currently, the main evaluation study is about to be finished. Furthermore, an intensive study with qualitative longitudinal analysis of peer interactions for investigating proximal processes mediating the effects of the program on substance use is underway. Finally, the IPSY teaching manual will be published and the program will be integrated in the Thuringian school curriculum.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

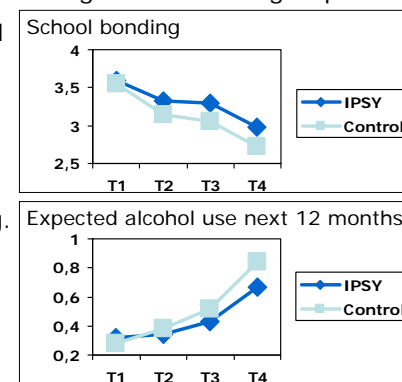
Pilot Study

First implementation of the program, comparison of effects of the program IPSY implemented by different facilitators (teacher vs. older peers) with control group (N=105); Positive program effects when implemented by teachers.

Large-scale Evaluation

Main evaluation of the program over 3 years in 40 schools in Thuringia; 4 waves of data collection (T1: N=1800); Questionnaires for students and teachers in college-bound and lower track schools; Quasi-experimental design with control group.

- High acceptance of the program in students and teachers; Teachers profit from IPSY regarding their own teaching methods.
- IPSY-students increase in their resistance skills, knowledge about assertiveness, and school bonding. They delay onset in drinking/smoking and keep a high distance to smoking and drinking. Even those who already drank reduced their consumption rates after the program. Furthermore, IPSY-students are less likely to have experiences with binge drinking (5 or more drinks at an occasion) at T4 (age: 13 years).



- Positive program effects were independent from school type (Regelschule vs. Gymnasium) and gender. Change in school bonding turned out to be a partial mediator of most program effects on substance use. Moreover, by means of person centered analyses (growth mixture modeling) it was revealed that IPSY was most effective for the majority of adolescents (80%) following a normative pathway of alcohol use relatively free of predisposing factors in late childhood. For the minority (20%) pursuing a problematic alcohol use trajectory in early adolescence, that was associated with childhood risk factors (difficult temperament, social problems), more intensive treatments might be indicated (e.g., family interventions).

IPSY in Italy – Cross-cultural Evaluation

Implementation of the program in Italian schools; Cooperation with the University of Torino (N=181); Positive program effects on skills and substance use similar to the German results.

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