

Return to school after absenteeism – What really helped?



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School attendance

– school non-attendance

- "School is an essential developmental arena, providing children with structure, education, and access to supportive peers and adults."
(Darney et al., 2013; Freeman et al., 2018; Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007; Masten et al., 2005)
- School attendance problems (SAP) are an increasing problem in many countries.
- SAP definition & classification
- 4 SAP-types: Truancy (TR), School Refusal (SR), School Withdrawal (SW), School Exclusion (SE)
(Heyne&al.2018; Heyne2019)
- Chronic absenteeism has many negative consequences and may lead to the exclusion.

One excluded adolescent costs 1,2million€. (VTT)





Background and purpose of this study

School attendance problems are internationally widely researched since 1980's.

We know about factors supporting students with SAP and their return to school, like:

- Psychosocial interventions (like CBT)
- Medication
- Educational and pedagogical solutions

What we don't know so well...

but want to find out:

- The personal experience (resilience, coping)

Resilience

The process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands (APA)

- "Ability to bounce back"
- An important factor in explaining why some individuals cope with traumatic injuries more successfully than the others.
- Has relational and contextual nature
(Güngör&Strohmeier 2020)
- 1) Demographic variables (age, gender, ethnical background)
- 2) Psychological variables: a) risk factors & b) protective factors: life satisfaction, optimism, positive affect, self-efficacy, self-esteem, social support (Lee&al 2013)



Search and selection

Search string:

1. "school attend*" OR "school non-attend*" OR "school absen*" OR "school refusal" OR "school withdrawal" OR "truan*" OR "school exclusion"

2. "reintegration" OR "return" OR "re-engagement" OR "resilien*" OR "coping"

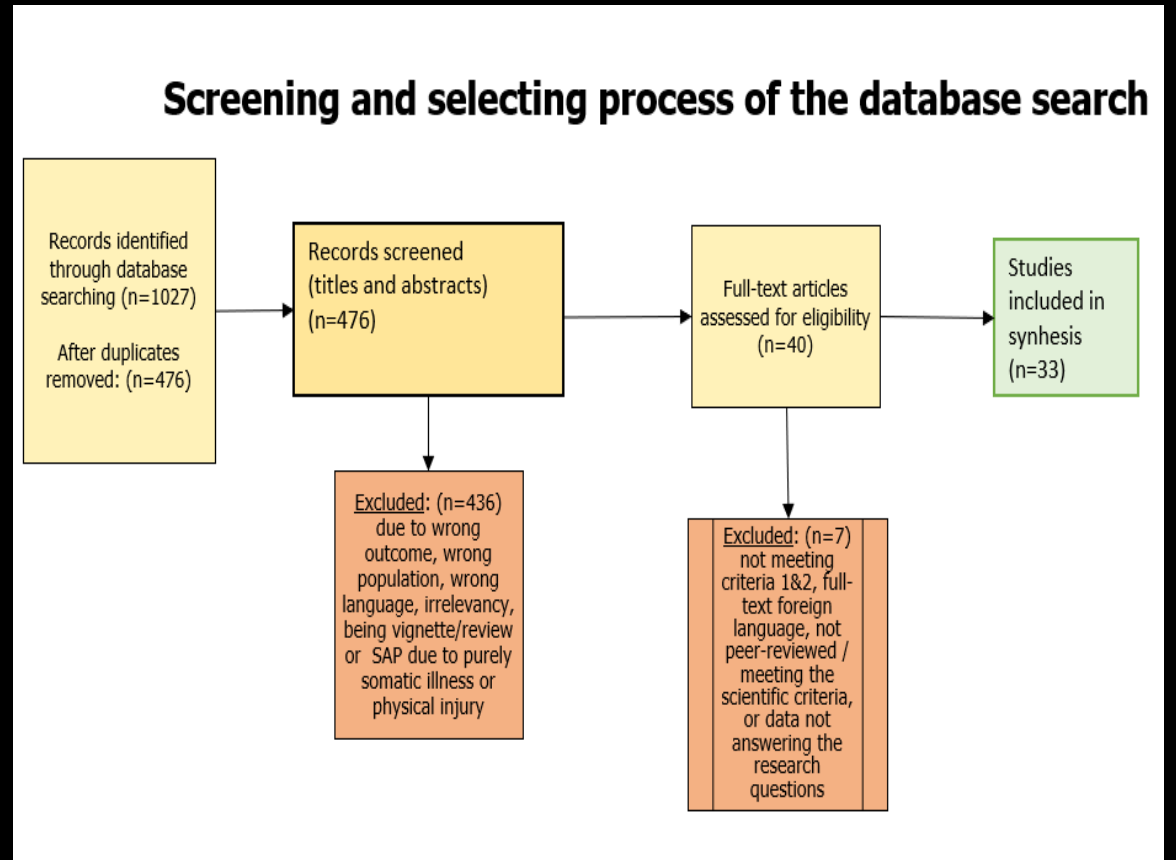
Databases: ERIC, CINAHL, APA Psycinfo, APA PsycArticles, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, Teacher Reference Center & Medline

Limitations:

6-17/18yrs, English, peer-reviewed

Hits:1027 (after duplicates 473)

Date: 02.02.2023



Inclusion & exclusion criteria

Included

- Meets search criteria 1&2
- All informants accepted: students, parents, professionals
- All study designs
- Europe & G20-countries



Excluded

- Review/ model (not-tested)
- Wrong population
- Foreign language
- SAP due to purely somatic illnesses and physical injuries
- Poor quality /irrelevant

Preliminary results & synthesis

- SAP-types: mostly SR (24/33)
- Most studies (+50%) conducted in the field of psychology
- Designs: mostly intervention designs, case studies and cross-sectional studies
- Most articles from the UK (14)

- Published :

1980's 2

1990's 7

2000's 6

2010's 13

2020's 5




- Supporting factors:
 - early identification
 - warm confidential relations
 - good communication –shared understanding
 - emotional support from teacher
 - peer support
 - tailored learning arrangements
 - interventions (especially CBT)
 - interprofessional collaboration
 - personal resilience factors and coping skills
 - own motivation and commitment
 - parents' support & commitment**

Resilience factors and coping supporting the return and reintegration

- Younger age, last born, no or just one psychiatric diagnosis and good baseline functioning
- Warm confidential relations (with peers, within family, with adults in school & care)
- Coping skills for school & social situations (often learnt in treatments or in other interventions)
- Self-regulation & emotional regulation
- Emotional & academic self-efficacy, increased self-esteem



A photograph of two ducks flying over a body of water at sunset. The sky is a mix of light blue and orange, and the water is calm with a small island visible in the distance.

The importance of relations is highlighted promoting student's resilience

*...Relationships have been highlighted as **crucial factors** in creating capacity for learning (Halligan 2022)*

*...The relationship that you develop with a child is **absolutely paramount**' (Brede 2019)*

*...A mutual relationship of '**unconditional positive regard**' (Lohri 2021 citing Rogers 1960)*

*...Adolescents looked for the **person behind the function** (Sibeoni 2018)*

*...Relationship-based contact relies upon professionals' availability and is characterised by a **heartfelt commitment** to those affected by SR, **interest in the person as a whole**, positive attention, nurturance and emotional support, empathy, acceptance, trustworthiness, patience and persistence, and inclusion in decision-making. This helps participants feel safe, supported, and taken seriously. It builds **a sense of belonging and hope**. (Heyne& Brouwer-Borghuis 2022)*

Discussion

- SR mostly researched –Do the same supportive factors support TR-, SW- , and SE-types too?
- School-engagement theories - resilience theories ?
- SAP are a complex phenomena, not child's individual problem. Reflection, therapeutic alliance and tailored solutions needed.
- More school-based interventions needed?
- How do legislation and curriculum support resilience, reintegration, school engagement?
- We hospital school teachers have great opportunities to support student's resilience –Is it /could it be our main task...???
- HERO= Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, Optimism
("Social capital" defined in positive psychology)
- How can we support parents to support their child?





*"In order to make it possible for children to experience **hope**, should also their parent experience it. The hope only arises, when someone shows you caring."*

Ann-Christin Qvarnström-Obrey



Thank you

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