

**Full source reference:**

Tokolahi, E., Vandal, A. C., Kersten, P., Pearson, J., & Hocking, C. (2018). Cluster-randomised controlled trial of an occupational therapy intervention for children aged 11–13 years, designed to increase participation to prevent symptoms of mental illness. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 23(4), 313-327.

**Free access link:**

N/A

**Article Overview:**

This study investigated the effectiveness of an evidence-based occupational therapy intervention run in schools designed to increase participation in daily occupations to prevent symptoms of mental illness for a non-clinical sample of children.

The intervention showed positive effects on child-rated satisfaction with their occupational performance and teacher-rated child anxiety. However, no evidence found on its effect on anxiety and depression, self-esteem and wellbeing outcomes.

**Participants:** non-clinical 11-13 year old children

**Key take home messages:**

1. It is important to promote mental health and wellbeing in children and focusing on participation.
2. Intervention ran for 1 hour a week for 8 weeks during school term and involved groups of 7-12 children aged 11-13 years. Intervention features were:
  - Understanding the thoughts/feelings/behaviour relationship
  - Understanding the relationship between occupations/identity/wellbeing
  - Practicing strategies to promote positive wellbeing, applying this knowledge in planning healthy routines, habits to support self-esteem and participation.
3. Results showed no effect on anxiety, depression, self-esteem, suggesting that improvements in participation need to become more established before they impact symptoms such as depression, anxiety etc.
4. Integrating interventions in the school curriculum seems to result in greater and longer positive effects on children's mental health. Teacher and parents involvement is important to enable generalisation of skills into more environments and having support on building health-promoting routines in their daily lives.
5. Important to target routines and habits as they seem to have a positive impact on children's occupational choices and participation in health-promotion occupations.