

A Qualitative Study on the Implementation of the FRIENDS Anxiety Management and Mental Health Promotion Program

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Overview

- ✓ Brief Introduction to the FRIENDS program
- ✓ Orientation to my study
- ✓ Using CIT
 - ✓ With examples from my program implementation research

FRIENDS
- FOR LIFE -

Introduction

- ✓ FRIENDS is an Australian-developed, world leading school-based anxiety prevention and resiliency building program for children and youth (ages 7-16).
- ✓ FRIENDS is a user-friendly early intervention program used as a universal preventative program.
- ✓ Purpose: To help children cope with and manage anxiety and depression now and in later life.
- ✓ Developed by: Dr. Paula Barrett, a Clinical Child Psychologist and Associate Professor at Griffith University.

The FRIENDS Program

- v FRIENDS program also called FRIENDS for life:
 - q Assists children and youth in developing life skills to effectively cope with difficult and/or anxiety provoking situation (Barrett, 1998).
 - q Promotes self esteem, and self-confidence.
 - q Builds emotional and psychological resilience and problem-solving skills.
 - q Encourages positive peer-learning, positive relationships and builds peer support networks.
 - q Effectively prevents anxiety and depression in children and youth (WHO, 2004).

Reasons for Topic Interest

- ✓ As a past teacher, I know that most children with anxiety will benefit from the skills learned from FRIENDS.
- ✓ FRIENDS is a universal preventative program and does not involve any clinical assessment or diagnosis and avoids labelling students.
- ✓ Personal interest because as a mother of 3, I would like to see all schools actively participate in programs that combat anxiety and depression in children.

Rationale for Implementing FRIENDS

- ✓ Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problem facing children today (Costello, Mustillo, Erkanli, Keeler & Angold, 2003).
- ✓ If left untreated, childhood anxiety may lead to severe adolescent and adult depression (Kashani & Orvaschel, 1990).
- ✓ All children experience anxiety as part of their normal development. However children experience different levels of anxiety (Barrett & Ollendick, 2004).
- ✓ Early intervention programs are necessary and beneficial for children as they help to prevent the development of anxiety and depression

Percentage of Children and Youth with Anxiety Disorders

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Overall Rates</i>
<i>8 year old</i>	<i>25.7%</i>
<i>12 year old</i>	<i>15.7%</i>
<i>17 year old</i>	<i>21.4%</i>

Key Concept: Implementation of FRIENDS

v FRIENDS

- q classroom based universal prevention program
- q comprises of 10 sessions – one session per week (takes about an hour to complete)
- q Run by Teachers in normal class times
- q Described by teachers as a rewarding educational experience to share positive emotions with their students.

- v The question is why are some educators not implementing it in their respective schools?

Theoretical Perspectives

- ✓ The implementation of FRIENDS within schools is an:
 - q Evidence-based program
- ✓ It is the only evidence-based program endorsed by the World Health Organization as an effective program for the prevention and treatment of anxiety and depression in children and youth (WHO, 2004).

Theoretical Perspectives Cont'd

- Cognitive-behavioural program which emphasizes:
- **Physiological**: Awareness of body clues (includes sweaty palms, nausea and increased heart rate)
 - Implementation teaches: Relaxation / deep breathing
- **Cognitive**: Negative self-talk, negative view of self, worrying, helplessness and hopelessness.
 - Implementation teaches: Positive self-talk, self-reward.
- **Learning**: Negative social learning experiences, lack of positive coping skills and problem-solving deficits.
 - Implementation teaches: Coping skills, problem-solving skills and peer support.

The Development, Maintenance and Experience of Anxiety

FRIENDS

Feelings

Remember to relax

I can do it! I can try my best!

Explore solutions and coping step plans

Now reward yourself! You've done your best!

Don't forget to practice!

Smile! Stay calm for life!

Research Questions

- ✓ Type of research: Qualitative
- ✓ Research Questions 1: What will help educators in implementing FRIENDS as required by the licensee?
- ✓ Research Question 2: What is hindering educators in implementing FRIENDS as required by the licensee?

Lit Review on Program Implementation

- Policymakers, program developers and program managers are responsible for promoting programs
- Implementation research seeks to understand:
- Why a program operates as it does (Werner, 2004).
- Develop recommendations for change or lessons for effective program design and administration.
- Implementation research:
- Can uncover plausible reasons why a program is working or not
- Can build hypotheses, themes and theories (Shannon, Robert & Blevins, 2009).

Lit Review on Program Implementation

(Cont'd)

- ✓ Implementation studies according to (Jenson & Fraser, 2006) is quite different from Evaluation research:
 - q It does not estimate the impact, programs have on clients and other stakeholders
 - q It does not answer what would have happened in the program's absence
- ✓ Rather implementation research:
 - q Looks at what is happening in the design, administration, operation and services
 - q Explains the effectiveness and efficacy of the designed program (Quint, Fink & Rowser, 1991).

Lit Review on Program Implementation

Cont'd

- ✓ The core mission of implementation research is:
 - q To describe, assess and explain “what is happening and why”
- ✓ Reynolds, 2000; Werner, 2004 and Mertens, 2005 agree that:
 - q Program Implementation research asks the question;
 - ∅ “Are program processes and systems operating as planned and if not, how and why?”

Factors and Issues in the

Implementation of FRIENDS

- v The literature on the FRIENDS implementation is quite scarce as research on FRIENDS has been mostly conducted to look at the effectiveness and impact studies. However, 3 issues stand out the most in the implementation of FRIENDS:
 - q The role of the school (Misfud & Rapee, 2005; Chavira & Stein, 2005, Lockman et al., 2009 & Samson, 2009).
 - q Parental concerns (Farrell & Barrett, 2007; McLone et al., 2006).
 - q Treatment fidelity (Miller, 2008; Evan & Weist, 2004; Henggeler et al., 1997).

Research Paradigm

- v Post Positivist Paradigm and Constructivist paradigm
- q Post Positivist (more prominent in data analysis)
- ∅ Objectivity –reality does exist but can only be known imperfectly because of researcher's human limitations.
- ∅ Thus a level of detachment will be maintained from participants.
- q Constructivist (when collecting data)
- ∅ Emphasizes a relativistic nature of reality, rejecting the notion of an objective truth.
- ∅ Participants and researcher construct reality and meaning throughout the study.

Proposed Sample

- ✓ School District 33, Chilliwack
- ✓ Because 1) an environmental scan has shown that schools in this district do not adhere to treatment fidelity and 2) educators in this district have a minimal show-up rate at the FRIENDS training program.
- ✓ Sampling strategy: Criterion Sampling
- ✓ Sample size: 12
- ✓ Focus is on:
 - q Principals and grade 4/5 teachers who have in the past implemented FRIENDS.
 - q Those who are currently/or not doing it.

Method

- ✓ Critical Incident Technique (CIT) – because it is a unique research method that encompasses both qualitative and quantitative aspects of research to explore and analyze a social problem.
- ✓ Purpose – CIT is used to describe an experience by identifying helpful as well as hindering critical incidents related to a specific experience such as FRIENDS.
- ✓ Usefulness - We are using CIT to understand what helps and hinders educators in the implementation of FRIENDS in schools.

Method Cont'd

- ✓ CIT is also a flexible method comprising of 5 steps:
 - I. General aims of the study
 - In my study this implied knowing 1) the objective of the FRIENDS program and 2) what is the teacher or student who engages in FRIENDS expected to accomplish?
 - II. Plans and specifications of the study – Plan and specify how critical incidents regarding the general aim will be collected.
 - Attention was focussed on maintaining consistency to increase credibility.

Method Cont'd

III. Data Collection

- 1) interviews with teachers and school workers who are implementing FRIENDS and
- (2) interviews with teachers and school workers who are NOT implementing FRIENDS. Critical incidents were reported and reviewed.

Note: Redundancy = Comprehensiveness and Accuracy

In CIT the number of incidents extracted is more important than the sample size.

Method Cont'd

IV. Data Analysis

- Most important because the categorization scheme that is used will determine how the data can be interpreted and by whom.
- For example the data from the FRIENDS study will be used for program evaluation.

V. Interpreting and Reporting the Data

- Consider all the previous steps, biases, credibility and limitations of the study.

Rigour

- v Nine credibility checks to uphold rigour of the study (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson & Maglio, 2005).
- v These include:
 - q Participant cross-checking – to ensure interpretative validity and respect to participants.
 - q Independent judges to check for reliability – to ensure that research produces same results when replicated.
 - q Redundancy – tracking the point at which new categories stop emerging to prove comprehensiveness and accuracy.

Preliminary Findings

- ✓ Analysis of the interviews from the 12 participants that were recruited so far for this study produced a 267 incidents.
- ✓ All educators, 5 principals and 7 grade 4/5 classroom teachers.

Results so far showed:

- ✓ Helping Incidents – 120
- ✓ Hindering Incidents – 147

Emerging Categories

- ✓ Lack of knowledge about the program
- ✓ Time
- ✓ Training
- ✓ Resources
- ✓ Administration support
- ✓ Teacher modelling
- ✓ Program validation
- ✓ Enthusiasm and passion
- ✓ Classroom Dynamics

Emerging Themes

<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Hindering</i>
<i>Easy to follow program manual</i>	<i>Lack of knowledge</i>
<i>Passion about the mental health of children</i>	<i>Time to implement the program</i>
<i>Principal and District support</i>	<i>Training</i>

Preliminary Findings

The main overarching categories of both helping and hindering incidents

- q Program Awareness
- q Time
- q Training Educators
- q Administration Support
- q Program design

Potential Implications for Practice

- ✓ Findings may serve as useful feedback to those who implement FRIENDS
- ✓ Greater adherence to program/treatment fidelity and whether the interventions are contributing to the desired outcomes for the children
- ✓ Transferability findings may be relevant for educators and schools in similar circumstances.
- ✓ New insights for therapists promoting efficacious school-based programs that provide psychosocial benefits and mental health promotion initiatives.
- Heuristic value for policy makers, program developers and program managers.

Key References

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Acknowledgements

A special thanks to my family for all their support and patience in helping me engage in this research opportunity which is not yet complete.

Thank you to Dr. Robert Lees and Dr. Marvin McDonald especially for their encouragement and feedback throughout my research journey.

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