EQUIP - A multi-component cognitive-behavioural programme designed to reduce antisocial behaviour in juvenile offenders

Submitted by kepavl on Fri, 05/18/2018 - 11:16

At a glance

Country of origin:
USA

Last reviewed:
23.10.2018

Age group:
11-14 years
15-18/19 years
20-25 years

Target group:
Antisocial youth and juvenile delinquents aged between 12 and 22 years

Programme setting(s):
Juvenile justice setting

Level(s) of intervention:
Indicated prevention

EQUIP is a multi-component cognitive-behavioural programme designed to reduce antisocial behaviour in juvenile delinquents. It is intended to stimulate youth to think and act responsibly using a peer-helping approach. EQUIP focuses on three areas of limitations relating to moral judgment and egocentric bias delay or immaturity, deficits and distortions in social information processing, and deficiencies in social skills. It comprises of three 90-minute meetings per week for ten weeks.

Links to this programme in other registries:
No link

Implementation experiences
Read the experiences of people who have implemented this programme.

Contact details:

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Overview of results from the European studies

Last reviewed:
23.10.2018
Evidence rating:
Likely to be beneficial
About Xchange ratings
×Close

About Xchange ratings

Beneficial: Interventions for which convincing, consistent and sustained effects for relevant outcomes are in favour of the intervention as found in two or more studies of excellent quality in Europe.

Likely to be beneficial: Interventions for which convincing and consistent effects for relevant outcomes are in favour of the intervention as found in at least one evaluation study of excellent quality in Europe.

Possibly beneficial: Interventions for which some effects for relevant outcomes are in favour of the intervention as found in at least one evaluation study of acceptable quality in Europe. An intervention ranked as ?possibly beneficial? is suitable for application in the context of more rigorous evaluations.

Additional studies recommended: Interventions for which concerns about evaluation quality or consistency of outcomes in Europe make it difficult to assess if they are effective or not, even if outcomes seem to be in favour of the intervention.

Unlikely to be beneficial: Interventions for which at least one evaluation of excellent quality in Europe shows convincing evidence of no or harmful effects on relevant outcomes.

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Studies overview

The programme has been evaluated in five quasi-experimental studies, two studies in the Netherlands and one across the Netherlands and Belgium evaluated the programme with delinquent adolescents, while one study from Netherlands and one from Spain evaluated the programme implemented as universal prevention in schools.

In two Dutch studies, delinquent male adolescents aged 12 to 21 years recruited from three/four similar high-security juvenile correctional facilities participated, intervention group participants came from one facility while the control group from the remaining. In one study, 7/20 outcomes (measuring moral development, social information processing and social skills) showed a significant positive intervention effect. In the other study, there a significant positive intervention effect on cognitive distortions. The study also measured recidivism: the more participants from intervention group reoffended (53% v 29% at 12 months, and 86% v 65% at 24 months), but the difference was not significant.

234 incarcerated youth from high-security juvenile correctional facilities participated in the study, conducted across the Netherlands and Belgium. Intervention and control group participants came from different facilities. The majority (69%) were males, and the mean age was approximately 15.5 years. Significant differences were found between the experimental and control groups in the development of social skills and moral value evaluation both of which had a small to moderate effect size as the intervention group remained stable while the control group?s scores decreased. No significant differences were found between the
experimental and control groups in the development of cognitive distortions and moral judgment.

Another Dutch study takes a universal preventive approach and was implemented in schools with students with a mean age of 14 years. 9 schools were assigned to groups according to their ability to implement the programme. There was a significant positive effect on self-serving cognitive distortions and attitudes towards antisocial behaviour in the experimental group compared to the control group, but the effect on prevalence of antisocial behaviour and moral judgement was not significantly different between groups.

The Spanish study was also conducted in schools with 89 participants aged approximately 14-16 years, and evaluated an adaption called EQUIPAR, the Spanish version of EQUIP for Educators. The study had mixed effects on thinking errors and no significant effects on victimisation.

References of studies
Click here to see the reference list of studies
×Close

**References of studies**


Close

**Countries where evaluated**

Belgium
Netherlands
Spain
USA
Characteristics

Protective factor(s) addressed:
- Individual and peers: clear morals and standards of behaviour
- Individual and peers: individual/peers other
- Individual and peers: interaction with prosocial peers
- Individual and peers: skills for social interaction

Risk factor(s) addressed:
- Community: laws and norms favourable to substance use and antisocial behaviour
- Individual and peers: anti-social behaviour
- Individual and peers: favourable attitudes towards anti-social behaviour
- Individual and peers: interaction with antisocial peers
- Individual and peers: other
- No defined Risk factors

Outcomes targeted:
- Crime/Delinquency
- Other behaviour outcomes

Description of programme

EQUIP is a multi-component cognitive-behavioural programme designed to reduce antisocial behaviour in juvenile delinquents. It is designed to teach youth to act responsibly and promotes helping behaviours in an intervention based on the Positive Peer Culture model. The programme is implemented within juvenile correctional facilities, with meetings occurring either during school time or in the living unit.

EQUIP focuses on three areas of limitations relating to moral judgment and egocentric bias delay or immaturity, deficits and distortions in social information processing, and deficiencies in social skills. The programme designers developed a four-category typology of self-serving cognitive distortions: self-serving thinking errors, blaming others, minimizing and mislabelling, and assuming the worst.

The programme is implemented with a number of meetings per week—a minimum of three mutual help meetings and two "equipment" meetings. The equipment meetings comprise ten anger management sessions, ten social skills training sessions and ten decision-making sessions. Each meeting lasts approximately an hour and a half and the curriculum can be completed in ten weeks. The meetings aim to identify behavioural issues and distorted thinking and take steps to control and reduce the problems.

Implementation Experiences

Country:
Netherlands
Feedback date:
Tuesday, January 15, 2019
Contact details:
Dr JM (Jan) van Westerlaak
Psychologist and Equip trainer
westerla[at]dds.nl

Number of implementations:
1
Note from the authors:

I should add that I also have implemented it in other European countries such as Belgium, Hungary, Ukraine and Estonia.

Main obstacles:

**With respect to individual professionals**

The main obstacles are/were time, money and schedules. There are working schedules and the Equip Program has to fit somewhere into the schedule of the institution. Then we had/have to train people to work with the programme. So where in the schedule can you find time to train people as they also have to work? There is almost no time (or money) to let them go to training and so on. I think the picture is clear.

**With respect to social context**

I do not have a problem with the individual professionals. Mostly the problems come from the organisation, time/money problems or lack of good leadership.

**With respect to organisational and economic context**

Well, I think I can repeat myself here: the biggest problems are mostly the managers who did not take the Equip Program and all the implementation needs seriously. The professionals mostly were/are very positive about it. The neighbourhood and social system were also mostly positive. Sometimes we would have extra meetings for parents or the young clients? social-care professionals.

How they overcame the obstacles:

**With respect to individual professionals**

By talking over and over and over again about the importance of the programme, the fact that it is evidence based, that I am a highly educated, experienced and trained professional completely capable of training other professionals and so on, and by persevering like this for years and years and years.

**With respect to social context**

Talk and talk and talk and keep talking with the management, to convince them to provide enough time and resources for the implementation (time, money, realising people from schedules).

**With respect to organisational and economic context**

I held meetings for the parents and the clients? social-care professionals and I talked continually about the programme with everybody involved.

Lessons learnt:

**With respect to individual professionals**

It is very important that an institution or company is fully aware that there will need to be enough time and money available to train the professionals to be competent in the programme. In this way the individual professional can feel supported by their organisation.
With respect to social context

Again, that management can be a more difficult obstacle than an individual professional. And that it would be easier if management would take the Equip Program and the implementation time seriously.

With respect to organisational and economic context

Lesson learned: maintain the enthusiasm of the individual professionals and maybe someday the management will see how important it is to involve the whole organisation in as good an initiative as the Equip Program.

Strengths:

Equip is a great evidence-based programme. It is very practical, with handy tools for the individual professional and for the young people/clients. The skills and things they learn can be taken with them to other institutions and used throughout the rest of their lives. Every participant can learn in their own way and at their own level and this brings a positive learning atmosphere to the meetings. The programme also clearly outlines the involvement required of management.

Weaknesses:

It is not very clear how to involve less willing managers in the programme when they think 'We do not have enough time' or 'The Equip Program is not about us' or 'This is a thing for the individual professional'.

Opportunities:

When management can see that it really helps the individual young client and when society sees that it really can prevent criminal behaviour, the Equip Program is a great opportunity not only for the its young clients but, more importantly, also for the whole of society.

Threats:

Competing programmes that are not very good but are easier for management to handle (e.g. more e-learning and pleasing things in it, such as YouTube movies, and programmes with simple requirements) and seem to be doing the same thing but are more compatible with the sometimes lazy attitude of management.

Recommendations:

With respect to individual professionals

Know the evidence-based background and the fact that it makes your work easier once you know the Equip Program and have some experience with it. Furthermore, understand how it can improve your personal life!

With respect to social context

Convince the management that they have to be involved in the Equip Program, that they have to take part in the training and even that they should undertake some sessions with the young people to really understand what is so good about the programme.

With respect to organisational and economic context

First the management has to be convinced that they are a part of this programme and that they have to know
the programme by heart. Then time, money and a place in the organisation’s schedules for the programme are also very important: there should be enough time to train the professionals and have follow-up days at least once a year.

**Country**

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westerlaaldds.nl

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**Links**

[1] mailto:westerla@dds.nl