



The judgeMental Project: an evaluation of the effectiveness of short term mental health teaching interventions



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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To discover if classroom-based mental health teaching sessions can be effective in increasing student's knowledge and consequently reducing stigma.
- Gather a greater understanding of students' prior knowledge of mental health conditions

INTRODUCTION

1 in 10 young people have a diagnosed mental health condition (1). Recent studies have endeavoured to discover the effectiveness of integrating mental health lessons into secondary school curricula and the impact they can have on students' knowledge and wellbeing (2, 3). Both Ofsted (4) and the Department for Education (5) have prioritised the promotion of mental health awareness, in particular the role external providers can play in enhancing the teaching of such issues.

METHODS

- The participants were 188 year 7 (11-12 year old) pupils from one secondary school in Cardiff (105 males, 74 females, 9 unknown).
- 8x 1 hour sessions were delivered to mixed gender classes of 15-30 pupils by two medical students and a psychiatrist.
- Sessions consisted of a Myth/Fact game and two informative videos.
- Pre and post-session (true/false) questionnaires were used to measure changes in knowledge surrounding stigma and awareness.
- Data was analysed using Microsoft Excel.

RESULTS

13/15 questions showed an increase in the percentage of correct answers between questionnaires. Q5 ("Young people just go through ups and downs as part of puberty") decreased by 7% and Q8 ("People of all ages can have mental health problems") remained the same.

The largest increase in correct answers was seen in questions 9 ("Many people who experience mental health problems fully recover"), 2 (related to dangerousness) and 6 (self-harm) with increases of 51%, 25% and 25% respectively.

Percentage of correct answers per question in pre and post-lesson questionnaires

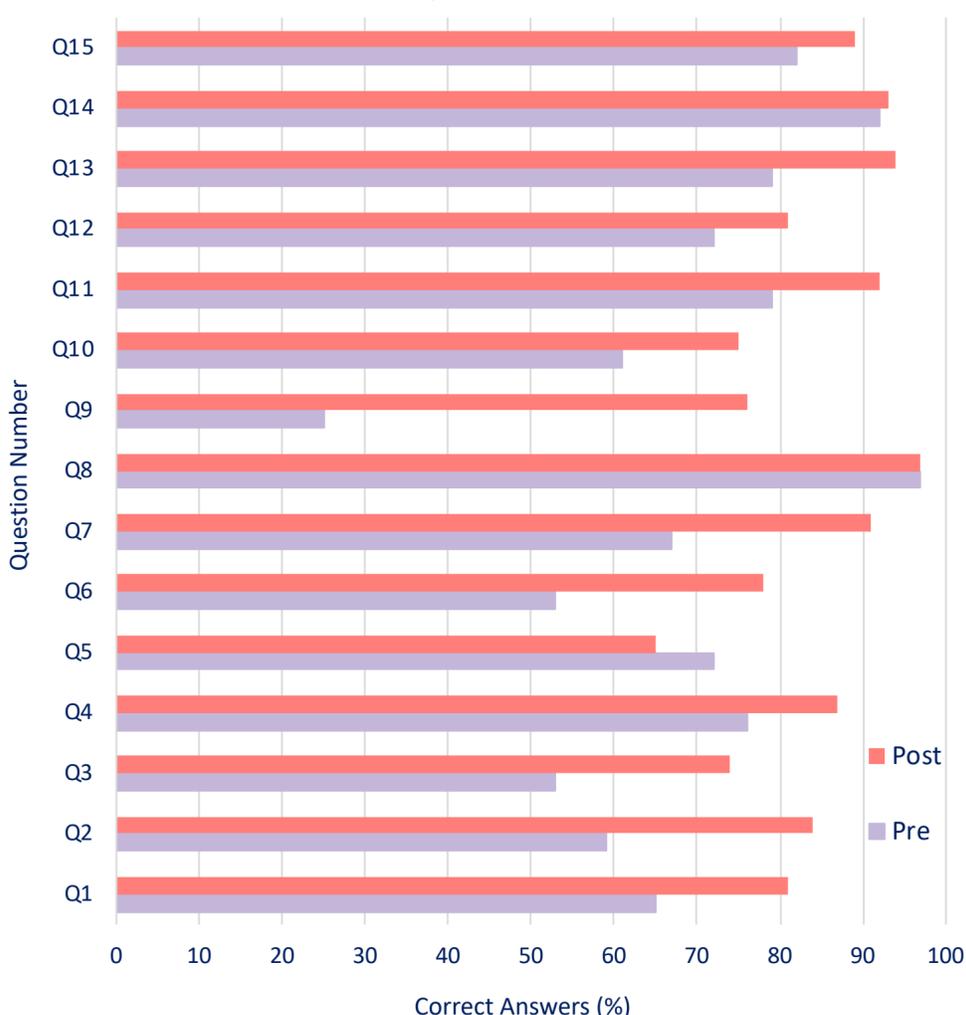


Figure 1: Percentage of correct answers to T/F questions in pre and post questionnaires

Q16 and 17 addressed the pupils' self-reported confidence in searching for mental health support. The post questionnaires showed decreases in the lower scores of confidence and an increase in "Confident"/"Relatively confident" answers.

Q17 – I would know where to look for help if I was worried about someone else's mental health

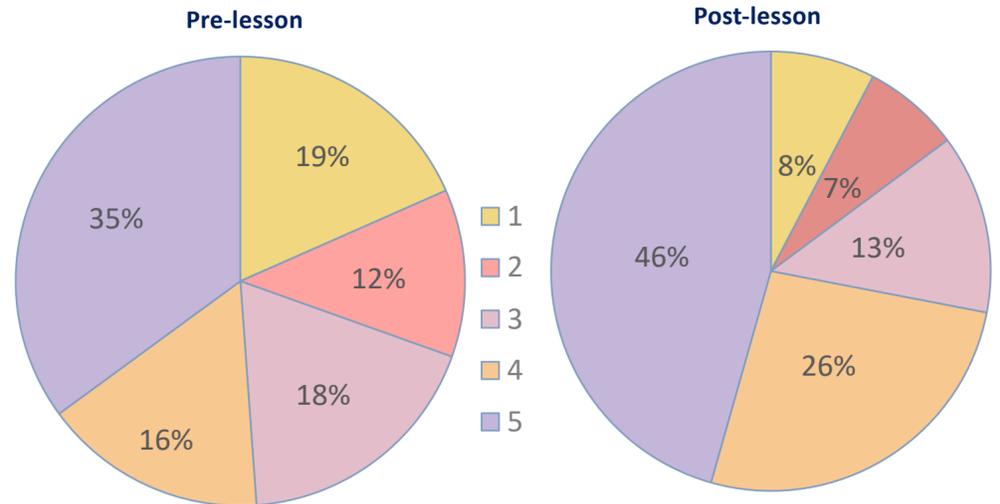


Figure 2: Students scoring 1 (Not confident) – 5 (Confident) in Q17 of the pre-questionnaires.

Figure 3: Students scoring 1 (Not confident) – 5 (Confident) in Q17 of the post-questionnaires.

In Q18, pupils stated how much they felt the sessions had improved their knowledge. 84% stated their understanding had increased "A lot" or "Quite a lot", 14% "Slightly", and 2% "Not at all".

Q18: How much did this session improve your understanding of Mental Health?

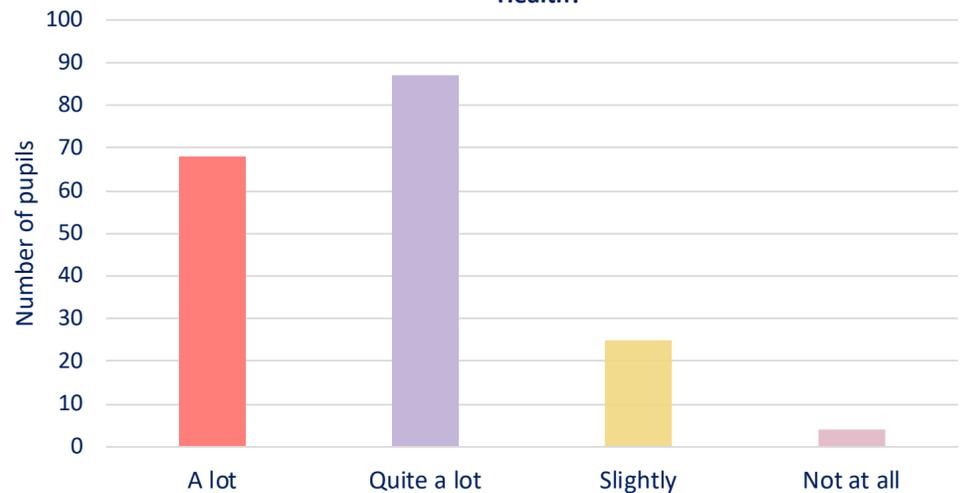


Figure 4: Pupils' self-reported increase in understanding of the subject - Q18 of the post-questionnaires.

CONCLUSIONS

These results show that mental health teaching to this age group is effective in improving knowledge and reducing stigma. The increasing prevalence of mental health conditions in young people shows the ever-important need for early interventions to potentially prevent problems. Although short sessions such as these are effective, longer term integration of mental health and wellbeing teaching into curricula is also needed to sustain a support system for young people and provide better understanding of such key issues.

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