

School nurses' experiences of working with students with mental health problems

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Conclusion

The school nurse can, with his or her unique position, provide security for students with mental health problems. Given optimal conditions, school nurses have the opportunity to pursue their work with these students in the best way, which in return can strengthen both school nurses and students.

"You are very lonely in your professional role. I thought that I was prepared but I do not think that I really was. I do not think that you really can prepare yourself on how lonely you are."

"Well, in the beginning, I was a bit choked over the massive mental health problems among the students. I felt kind of scared. Can I deal with this? Do I have enough knowledge in this field?"

"I feel that what I am doing so very meaningful and that each day I can make something good for another person."

"[The school nurse office and the anteroom] is kind of a small oasis where you can go where it is silent and someone is there who are interested about asking me about how I do. So I think I do have a tremendous benefit."



Background

According to World Health Organization, WHO, more than 10% of the adolescents in Europe suffer from some sort of mental health problem, which makes this the leading cause of health problems among adolescents. Anxiety, self-injury, depression, substance abuse and eating disorders are some of the problem areas in children's mental health problems that school nurses encounter.

Aim

The aim of this study is to describe how school nurses' experience working with students with mental health problems in compulsory primary education in Sweden (children aged 7-15 years).

Method

A qualitative study with inductive approach was conducted through interviews with 14 school nurses in different municipalities in southern Sweden. The material was analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Results

Two themes were identified through the analysis process; demanding and meaningful. The school nurses stated that working with students with mental health problems gave them a feeling of being insufficient, experiences of worry and a feeling of frustration. But they also described their work as meaningful. They felt that they could make a difference in promoting mental health for school-aged children, and that this work provided them with positive feedback from the students. The independence and the variations of the work contributed to their feeling of meaningfulness.



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