Emotional development in persons with intellectual disabilities: A study into the design and the effectiveness of a support method

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Background and relevance

• Growing interest for emotional development and development of personality, especially in support of people with intellectual disability (ID).

• Neurosciences: impressive progress concerning comprehensions on the emotional brain (Kandel 2006; Panksepp & Biven, 2012; Damasio, 2010): Cognitive brain and emotional neuro-system are different, although not separable entities, who interact (Kandel, 2006; LeDoux, 2002).

• Developmental approach (Došen, 2014; Fonagy et al., 2002): link between emotional development and vulnerability, psychopathology and mental health.

• Persons with intellectual disability have a considerable risk on psychiatric and/or behavioral problems (30 à 50% (Došen, 2014)), and Quality of Life in persons with ID is therefore under pressure (Morisse et al, 2014).

• Caregivers often feel reluctant to act, which can coincide with a restrictive discours and a highly prevalent use of control and freedom-impeding measures and use of psychotropic drugs.

• Despite the previous tendency is often observed, there is a dearth in academic research on causes, assessment and support strategies.

• In the past, mental health (MH) care for persons with ID focused mainly on detection and treatment of psychiatric problems. An approach based on the emotional development, emphasizes more on recognizing and stimulation of ‘normal’, adaptive behavior.

Objectives

• Focus of the main study is not (the treatment of) the client, but the emotional availability of caregivers: the ability to adjust to basic emotional needs of clients.

• Goal of this study is to develop a method, in which care-givers are systematically coached, based on a solid assessment of the client, into the capacity of ‘reading’ behavior and support needs. Simultaneously care-givers are strengthened in their sensitive responsiveness.

Methodology and planning

WP1

WP2
- Quantitative study to design and psychometric properties of Scale for Emotional Development-Revised (Claes & Verduyn, 2012)
  a) Reliability (SED-R) (n=67) and validity SED-R (n=62).
  b) Development shortened SED-R (European project)

WP3
- Conceptual-theoretical study on the developmental approach and support needs of people with ID and MH-problems

WP4
- Explorative-descriptive single case study (N=1): N= one team of staff members in one residential organisation for people with ID (as a laboratory; ethnomethodological perspective)

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