

REPSSI promotes EQITABLE ACCESS to quality education in caring, supportive school communities

IMPROVED PSYCHSOCIAL WELL-BEING AMONGST TEACHERS AND CHILDREN AS A RESULT OF THE REPSSI TEACHERS' DIPLOMA IN PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE, SUPPORT AND PROTECTION EVIDENCE FROM A RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL IN ZAMBIA.

Education is a critical component of regional and national development. Throughout East and Southern Africa, multiple barriers and challenges affect children's school attendance and performance. REPSSI promotes the creation of enabling environments for communities and families to provide psychosocial support to children and youth. The *Teachers' Diploma in Psychosocial Care, Support, and Protection* focuses on teachers, the children they teach, and their school environments, including the schools and communities.

THE QUESTIONS

Does the Teachers' Diploma improve the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers and increase their awareness of children's psychosocial needs?

Do students exposed to teachers trained in the course have greater self-efficacy, higher self-esteem, greater hope for the future and higher levels of emotional literacy?

Does the school environment change as a result of the course with increase in cleanliness, improved perceived safety, and improved disciplinary practices?

THE RESEARCH

A randomized control trial was conducted in Zambia between January 2013 and June 2014).

Zones within four districts in two provinces were randomized such that schools within that zone were invited to receive the Teachers' Diploma Course in 2013 or in 2015 (waitlisted control design).

Teachers from schools within the selected zones, and students (grades 3 and 4) from 40 government basic schools took part in the study.

Students and teachers completed baseline (pre-intervention) and post-intervention surveys. At post intervention, 325 (72%) of teachers and 1378 students from grades 3-4 (76.9%) had completed both questionnaires.

FINDINGS:

Through a statistical analysis that controlled for age, gender, and education for teachers and age and gender for students, and looked at change over time between baseline and post intervention, the following domains changed significantly:

Teachers	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Self-care increased ($p < 0.05$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Response to sexual abuse improved ($p < 0.01$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Use of resources increased ($p < 0.01$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Future orientation increased ($p < 0.001$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">School safety increased ($p < 0.001$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A sense that the school respected them increased ($p < 0.05$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">School physical environment improved ($p < 0.05$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">School safety increased ($p < 0.001$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Observed bullying (in classroom) decreased ($p < 0.05$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">School physical environment improved ($p < 0.05$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender equity boys ($p < 0.01$) and girls ($p < 0.05$) increased	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bullying others (physical) decreased ($p < 0.01$)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Perceived school support increased ($p < 0.01$)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bullying others (emotional) decreased ($p < 0.001$)

We did not find significant changes in self-care (physical, psychological, and social), positive feelings about teaching, self-efficacy (school environment, community engagement), providing psychological and HIV support, teaching approaches, observed bullying in school as a whole, classroom safety, equitable school environment, interschool teacher's relations, teacher-caregiver relationships and school-caregiver relationships. In students, we did not find changes in self-esteem, emotional literacy, self-assessed school performance, perceived social support, being bullied (physically and emotionally), gender equity, student-teacher relationships, and caregiver's school involvement. In addition, we saw unexpected change in two domains: actions to stop bullying ($p < 0.05$), self-efficacy for child well-being ($p < 0.01$).

Conclusion:

Findings from this study suggests that the **Teachers' Diploma in Psychosocial Care, Support, and Protection** improves the psychosocial environment of schools, the psychosocial wellbeing of teachers and the learners in their schools in a number of key areas. The Ministry of General Education in Zambia is moving ahead with mainstreaming psychosocial support into pre-service teacher training. REPSSI is offering this course to ministries of education in other East and Southern African countries.



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