

An evaluation of the Act Belong Commit mental health promotion initiative in disadvantaged community settings in Ireland

Authors:

Patricia Harte
Verna McKenna
Margaret M. Barry

Affiliations:

University of Galway, Ireland

Introduction

People who live in disadvantaged communities are a priority group who experience poorer mental health than the general population.¹ Community-based mental health promotion initiatives that promote participation, such as Act Belong Commit (ABC), can improve mental health and social outcomes for community members.²

The ABC initiative encourages community members to engage in mentally healthy activities that foster social connection: Act-do something active, Belong-do something with someone, Commit-do something meaningful to you. These activities are provided by community partner organisations (CPOs). ABC has been shown to improve the mental wellbeing of the general population, as well as priority groups.³ In the Irish context, there is a policy-to-practice gap in the provision of targeted mental health promotion interventions for priority groups.⁴

This PhD study aims to address this gap by exploring the impact and implementation of ABC in disadvantaged community settings. ABC will be piloted in three purposively recruited communities over a 12-month period by the Health Service Executive, in collaboration with community and voluntary sector organisations. The focus will be on implementing ABC with priority groups, including Irish Travellers, refugees, and people experiencing social isolation.

Aims

- To examine the impact of ABC on the mental health and wellbeing of people living in a disadvantaged community setting.
- To explore the experience of staff in CPOs in implementing ABC.

Hypothesis

- ABC will significantly improve the mental health related beliefs and behaviours, quality of life, social connectedness and mental wellbeing in the intervention group (IG) compared with the comparison group (CG).
- ABC will increase the mental health promotion capacity of CPOs.

Methodology



Study Design

- Quasi-experimental
- Mixed methods approach



Sampling

- Participants: N=120 (IG n=60, CG n=60)
- Staff of CPOs: N=6



Data Collection Tools

- Questionnaires
- Group discussions
- One-to-one interviews

Process Measures

- Reach
- Impact of delivering ABC for CPOs
- Adoption
- Implementation, including ABC activities delivered, barriers, facilitators
- Maintenance

Outcome Measures

- Beliefs and behaviours concerning mental health and wellbeing (ABC-MHPB Scale)
- Quality of life (WHO-5)
- Social connectedness (UCLA-3 adapted)
- Mental wellbeing (SWEMWBS)

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