

NORDIC SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES WITH TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS

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THIS PROJECT

- Qualitative systematic review of Nordic articles regarding school staff's, parents' and students' experience of school absenteeism
- Part of Erasmus + project and report
- An independent article
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AIM



Students



School staff

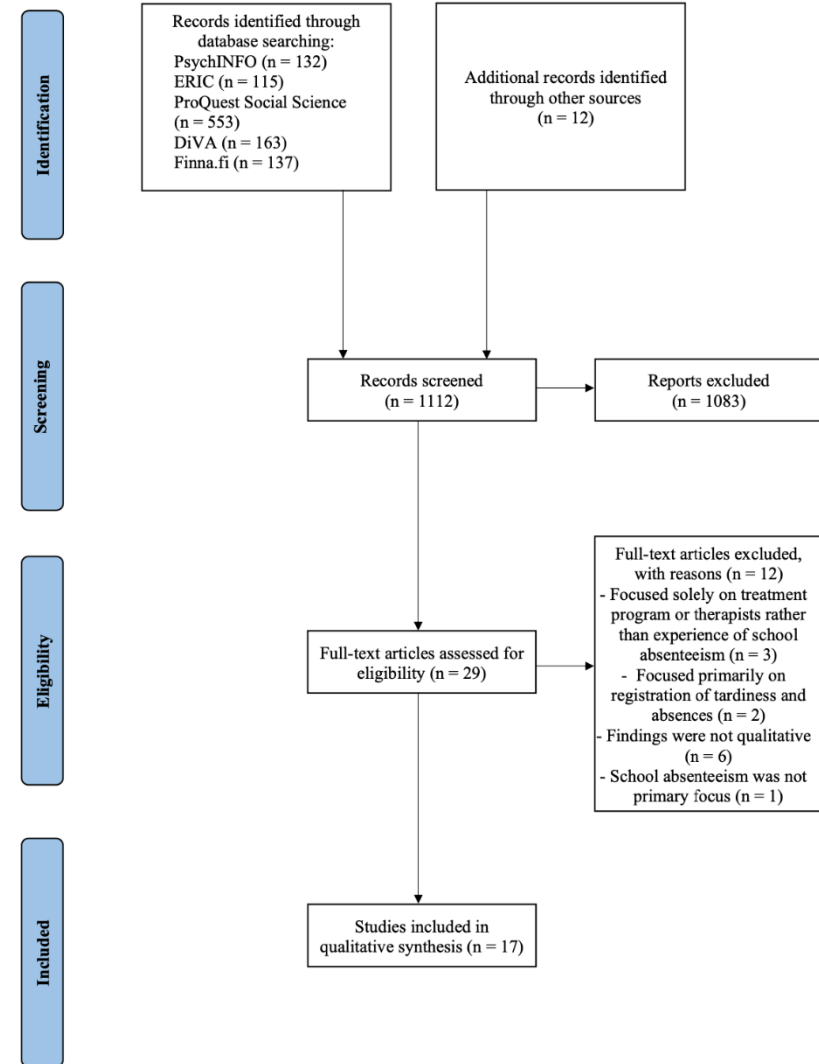
**Differences? Similarities?
Understanding how to create better
collaboration and communication**



Parents

METHODS

- A total of 17 articles were included
- Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland
- Databases, Nordic colleagues, reference lists
- Qualitative studies, interviewing either parents, students or school staff
- Quality appraisal (CASP)
- Meta-ethnographic method



FINDINGS



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VOICES OF PARENTS

Of the 17 articles, seven included parent's perspectives:

Summary themes:

- Parent-child relationship
- Parent-school relationship



PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Parents lack knowledge and understanding:

Carl's dad:

- *“No, I don't know what it is that's triggering him [Carl]. I don't know what it is that's making him unable [to go to school]. (Carl's dad), (Dannow et al., 2018, p. 32).*

Parents struggle to know how to best help their child:

Anton's mom:

- *“We also push him [Anton]. And the school pushes him. And it's always that balance between how much you push, before you push him off the edge, because that we have tried. So it's really difficult to find that right level.” (Anton's mom), (Dannow et al., 2018, p. 31)*



PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP



Parents perceive school-related factors as relevant for changing their child's absenteeism:

"I remember telling the principal in second grade that we try very hard at home, asking for someone to meet Mona at school... But we did not get anything from the school side (...). You can motivate your child to attend school, but you cannot do anything on the other side [implies a parent cannot change the school]." (Havik et al., 2014, p. 142)

PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

Discrepancy between what parents want and what they get in the collaboration with the school:

- *“It is actually about creating a dialogue, about what is mine [Jon’s parent] and what is yours, and the school has to be the ‘grown-up’ in this relationship.”* (Havik et al., 2014, p.141).

Often, an opposite pattern emerges:

- *“I think that it’s been us who have had to reach out to them [the school]. And it’s been us who’ve had to suggest some things that we could do. (...) And I of course approached the school psychologist and said: “we need to have a chat about this.”* (Anton’s mom) (Dannow et al., 2018, p. 30).



PARENT-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

Confusing and frustrating process:

- *"I simply have not been able to find out who I have had to contact and who takes care of what, who sets what in motion, what is PPR - and should they be part of the process, and when, and who will take care of it? And reports, and BUC, so it flies around with technical terms and names on different institutions, which are very difficult to navigate in when you are "just a parent." (Mother of a boy in sixth grade) (Nielsen & Thastum, in press)*

Consequences: Emotional distress, taking a sick leave, getting fired and seeking help elsewhere

- *"Well, we have to seek psychological help [private] and see how they can help. Because I don't think it's coming from the school." (Anton's mom) (Dannow et al., 2018, p. 30).*



IN TERMS OF COLLABORATION



Feels a discrepancy between what they want and what they get from schools. Primary initiators and coordinators.

VOICES OF SCHOOL STAFF

Of the seventeen articles, eight investigated the perspective of school staff

- Summary themes:
 - A lack of resources
 - Home-school relationship
 - Interactions with professionals external to the school
 - Perspectives on school absenteeism
 - Emotional responses



HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

Mismatch between needed abilities and actual abilities in dealing with parents and children with SAPs:

- *"(...) I've thought about it a lot, and we're not trained for this at all. We are not trained for the amount of conflict mediation that we are involved in. We are not trained for these really difficult conversations (...) We are not at all prepared for it, we are not."* (Analyse & Tal F.M.B.A., 2021, p. 96) [author's translation]"



HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIP

**Perceiving
parents to
be
contributors
to SAPs**

"In my experience worrying absenteeism is almost always caused by problems in the home – and as a teacher, I cannot really do anything about that."

(Analyse & Tal, F.M.B.A, 2021, p. 27) [author's translation]

INTERACTIONS WITH EXTERNAL HELP

The external helping system is hard to reach.

"The pupils become pawns in the helping system, and it often ends up with the school being solely responsible for these pupils. It is unacceptable as long as we have neither the knowledge nor the resources to follow up on this in a good enough way. BUP disclaims responsibility for all problems related to school refusal, also for those students who already have contacts there. The PP service has long waiting lists, and no opportunities to step in at short notice. And the child welfare services drop the messages of concern we send when everything is fine at home. I experience a great degree of powerlessness in such a situation."

(Amundsen et al., 2020, Hjelpeapparatet section)

[author's translation]



IN TERMS OF COLLABORATION



Mismatch between the responsibility they have to carry and the time and knowledge they have. Caught in between parents and professionals external to the school

Perceiving absenteeism as caused by home factors

Perceiving absenteeism as caused by school factors



Feels a discrepancy between what they want and what they get from schools. Primary initiators and coordinators.

VOICES OF STUDENTS

- Of the 17 articles, 11 included the perspective of students
- Three summary themes were identified:
 - Common characteristics and trajectories
 - **Social relations**
 - School environments and interventions



LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

“(...) My mother knows how bad I feel, but still doesn't really understand it.”
(Børns Vilkår & Egmond Fonden, p. 29) [author's translation]



LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

"Why just say: "You need more confidence" and then leave it be? They should have spoken to me or said: "Do you know what it is?" It is also probable that they have asked me 'why do you not want to be together with the other students,' 'why do you not raise your hand more', but that is really hard to describe for me. Sometimes I don't even notice myself." (Børns Vilkår & Egmond Fonden, p. 46) [author's translation]



PROBLEMS IN COLLABORATION



Feels misjudged and misunderstood in instances when people try to help



Mismatch between the responsibility they have to carry and the time and knowledge they have. Caught in between parents and professionals external to the school



Feels a discrepancy between what they want and what they get from schools. Primary initiators and coordinators.

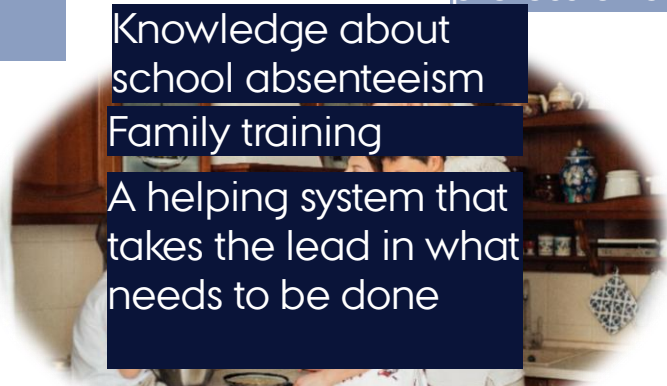
IDEAS FOR BETTER COLLABORATION



Feels misjudged and misunderstood in instances when people try to help



Mismatch between the responsibility they have to carry and the time and knowledge they have. Caught in between parents and professionals external to the school



Knowledge about school absenteeism
Family training
A helping system that takes the lead in what needs to be done

Educate in school absenteeism

Allocate resources/involve professionals with resources and knowledge

A middle man?

Feels a discrepancy between what they want and what they get from schools. Primary initiators and coordinators.



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