What is the evidence for factors protective against violence in an intellectually disabled population?

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Abstract

Factors underlying violent behaviour are wide and the interplay between these factors is extremely complex. Factors may operate both negatively and positively, with protective factors thought to be variables that reduce the effect of risk factors or influence the outcome independently. Though there is an increasing amount of research into this area, the research into the role of risk and protective factors for people with an intellectual disability (ID) is limited.

One assessment tool designed to assess the factors protective against violence, the Structured Assessment of Protective Factors for violence risk (SAPROF) is currently being used in clinical practice but there has been some query as to the generalizability of it to an ID population. As a team we are developing an additional manual for the SAPROF to be used in this population (SAPROF-ID). To ensure that any changes are evidence based we are attempting to identify any relevant research in the field. A systematic review of protective factors for violence by adults with an ID conducted earlier in 2015 found very limited evidence therefore we propose to conduct a scoping review to widen the search.

Scoping reviews enable researchers to rapidly identify and map the literature relevant to a particular clinical area or research question. In scoping reviews the search strategy is a key focus and can be iterative in nature. Relevant papers identified can then be used to identify additional search terms and the search strategy expanded and rerun. This iterative process is ideally suited for this study where it is possible that research has been conducted on protective factors but they have not been identified as such.

An iterative search for relevant studies (including grey literature) will be conducted using nine electronic databases. The search strategy will be developed using key words identified from a variety of sources. These sources will include client focus groups, discussion with clinical experts and data mining of key papers identified in recently conducted systematic reviews of risk assessment tools, risk factors and protective factors. Predefined inclusion criteria will be applied by one reviewer using an inclusive approach, to titles and abstracts of identified papers then full papers, decisions will be checked by a second reviewer.

Data from papers meeting the inclusion criteria will be extracted into a Microsoft Access database by one researcher and cross checked by a second reviewer. Variables will be limited but include; definition of outcomes, country & setting of studies, number of participants, list of factors measured and author conclusions. The results will be summarised and similar factors grouped and discussed. The results will be used to identify evidence based protective factors to be considered in the development of a SAPROF-ID additional manual. The resulting interrogable database will also serve as a valuable resource of references for the justification of changes to the current SAPROF in relation to an ID population. Results of the scoping review will be presented on the day