

# EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Volume 32 Supplement 3

## SUPPLEMENT

### 15TH EUROPEAN PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

Strengthening health systems: improving population health and being prepared for the unexpected

Berlin, Germany

9–12 November 2022

#### ABSTRACT SUPPLEMENT

**Guest editors: Reinhard Busse, Verena Vogt, Dineke Zeegers Paget**

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## 10.K. Workshop: School health during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Perspectives from the COVID-HL school principal study

### Abstract citation ID: ckac129.655

Organised by: EUPHA Working Group on Health Literacy, COVID-Health Literacy Network, Fulda University of Applied Sciences, Technical University Munich (Germany)  
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The COVID-19 pandemic is associated with far-reaching challenges for the educational system, which impact the health of all involved in the school context, making it a critical public health topic. Consequences include school-closures, a switch from face-to-face classroom learning to homeschooling via online learning, resulting in uncertainty, stress and an increased risk of reinforcing already existing inequalities. Since the pandemic started, some research has been conducted in child and adolescent populations. However, there is very limited research available exploring the effects of the pandemic on school principals, who are responsible for all aspects of the school life and therefore have to cope with particularly high demands as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pre-pandemic research shows that school principals report high work-related stress and more frequently psychological and physical burden compared to other professional groups (Dadaczynski et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2008). Moreover, little attention has been paid to what health promotion activities are implemented by schools during pandemic times and what the schools' needs are in this area. To provide empirical evidence on that matter, a school principal survey was conducted within the international COVID-Health Literacy Research Network ([www.covid-hl.org](http://www.covid-hl.org)), that aimed to assess (1) work-related stress and strain, (2) corona-specific health literacy among school principals and (3) the implementation status of activities in school health promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic. This workshop aims to present and discuss findings of the COVID-HL school principal study from Germany, Italy, Poland, Switzerland and Wales, which have used the same instrument and study design. The first presentation will focus on the pandemic as a potential disruptive event impeding the implementation of holistic activities on school health promotion and prevention. In their presentation, Chiara et al. analyse beliefs about vaccines among principals and its associations with COVID-19 information satisfaction. The third presentation originates from Poland and will introduce findings regarding work-related coping behavior and its association with mental health of school principals. While the fourth presentation from Switzerland focus on the relationship between health literacy and health promoting activities implemented by schools, Marchant et al. explores the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on senior leaders experiencing high job demands. Each project will be given ten minutes to present their findings, including questions, which will be followed by Q&A and an open discussion with the audiences. This workshop offers a forum for researchers, practitioners and policy-makers interested in school health promotion and school staff health. By dialogue and two-way communication, vivid interaction will be ensured, allow building synergies, and facilitate networking and capacity building.

#### Key messages:

- School leaders should be systematically supported as 'gate-keepers' of school health promotion.
- School principals represent a largely neglected target group for school health promotion.

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#### The COVID-19 pandemic as an disruptive event in school health promotion. Survey results from Germany

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#### Background:

This study examines the extent to which schools implement activities on health promotion and prevention during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, potential differences with regard to demographic variables, school type, state, and participation in state public health and health promotion initiatives are determined.

#### Methods:

As part of the international COVID-Health Literacy Research Network, an online-based cross-sectional study was conducted from March to April 2021 with 2,186 school principals from three German federal states. The implementation status of COVID-19 related school health promotion was assessed using a self-developed instrument. After examining the factorial structure of the instrument, univariate and bivariate data analyses were performed.

#### Results:

Three dimensions of implementing school health promotion can be identified (1. COVID-19- related support for pupils, 2. Health promoting design of teaching, learning and working conditions, 3. Principles of Health Promoting School). A low level of implementation can be observed for aspects of teaching, learning and working conditions (31%) as well as for participation (52%) and cooperation with community stakeholders (42%). Significant differences can be determined with female, older and primary school principals reporting a higher implementation status while for federal state mixed results are found. Stratified by participation in state health promotion initiatives, only schools with a certificate in health promotion show a higher level of implementation.

#### Conclusions:

The results indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is a disruptive event for schools, impeding the implementation of holistic activities on health promotion and prevention. In addition to systematic support for school principals in the area of health promotion and prevention, it should be ensured that existing initiatives are provided with sufficient resources, especially in times of crisis.

### Abstract citation ID: ckac129.657

#### Beliefs about vaccines and information about coronavirus, COVID-19 and the pandemic. Findings from Italy

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**Introduction:**

In Italy, COVID-19 vaccination campaign for school personnel started in February 2021 and began mandatory from 15th December 2021 to all the people who work within schools. Here we described Italian school principals' beliefs about vaccines and its association with feelings about information regarding coronavirus, COVID-19 and the pandemic.

**Methods:**

Data collection started in October 2021 and is ongoing. Beliefs about vaccines were investigated both for COVID-19 vaccination and for vaccination in general.

**Results:**

A total of 726 questionnaires were analyzed so far. The majority feels to be well informed about the coronavirus or the pandemic (75%) and not at all nor a little confused about COVID-19 information (89%). Only 2% disagree/strongly disagree with the statement "vaccination is compatible with my attitudes or religious beliefs". Beliefs regarding vaccines in general are correlated with those regarding COVID-19 vaccines. When different beliefs are described, we observed a trend towards considering COVID-19 vaccines less safe and effective, but more important to protect themselves and their family than other vaccines. Moreover, beliefs about vaccination in general and regarding COVID-19 are associated with how well they feel informed about the coronavirus or the pandemic, and whether they feel confused about COVID-19 information. In particular: the better they feel informed about the coronavirus and the related pandemic, the higher the perception of vaccines in general and COVID-19 vaccine as important, safe, and effective; the less they feel confused about COVID-19 information.

**Conclusions:**

School principals showed a high level of confidence on vaccines. The association between beliefs in vaccinations and the characteristics of information about COVID-19 supported the effectiveness of Italian vaccination policy and information campaigns.

**Abstract citation ID: ckac129.658**  
**Life-work balance of school-principals during the COVID-19 pandemic in Poland**

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**Background:**

The health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the education sector and its whole community. Due to their responsibility for organizing schoolwork, school managers were in an extremely challenging position. The main objective of the present study is to reveal the extent to which school principals in Poland put aside their own needs in favor of fulfilling their professional duties during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Methods:**

The results come from an online survey among school principals in Poland, which is part of the international COVID-19 Health Literacy School Principals Survey. The survey was conducted in 8 out of 16 provinces in Poland between June 2021 and December 2021. 1899 school principals participated in the survey, of which 928 completed the questionnaire.

**Results:**

The study revealed that 68,3% of school principals often and very often worked longer than contractually agreed and 71,3% reported to be available for their colleagues, pupils, and parents in their free time. Most of them also had to give up leisure activities in favor of work (67,9%), work extra hours in their spare time (60%), waive breaks during working hours (57,3%), and did not get sufficient sleep in favor of work

(50,5%). Devoting more time to work and high stress levels during the pandemic were associated with somatic complaints among respondents (e.g. muscle pain (neck, shoulder, or back) and headache).

**Conclusions:**

The results suggest that Polish school principals worked at the expense of their free time and health during the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, findings emphasized a lack of life-work balance and the need to raise their awareness of the consequences of self-exploitation in work in challenging times. The ability to set healthy boundaries between work and private life among managers is one of the health promotion tasks in demanding times.

**Abstract citation ID: ckac129.659**  
**School health promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic: Associations with school leaders' health literacy**

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**Background:**

School leaders are credited with an important role when it comes to school health promotion. During the COVID-19 pandemic, much health-related information was available and had to be interpreted and acted upon by school leaders. Therefore, it is crucial that they have sufficient health literacy as the ability to gain access to, understand and use health-related information. A study in Germany showed that limited health literacy among school principals was associated with low levels of health promotion activities. This paper explores the association between school leaders' health literacy and school health promotion in Switzerland, addressing the following questions: 1. What is the relationship between health literacy of school leaders and the implementation of school health promotion? 2. Does health literacy explain variance above and beyond other antecedents, such as principals individual mental health and attitudes?

**Methods:**

The quantitative analysis is based on an online survey conducted among school leaders in the German- and French speaking parts of Switzerland in June 2021 as part of the project "COVID-19 health literacy school principals survey". The final sample comprised N = 339 school leaders. The data were analyzed using stepwise regression with health literacy, stress, wellbeing and attitudes toward school health promotion as antecedents and COVID-19 related school health promotion as the outcome.

**Results:**

The results show that health literacy of school principals has played an important role in the implementation of school health promotion during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explains additional variance beyond other antecedents.

**Conclusions:**

One way to promote implementation of school health promotion is to strengthen the health literacy of school leaders.

**Abstract citation ID: ckac129.660**  
**The COVID-19 HL School Principal Survey (Wales) linked to routinely collected anonymised health data**

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**Background:**

Evidence before the pandemic suggests that school head-teachers report high work-related stress and psychological/