

An Extended 4-Phases-Testmodel for Clinical Trials and its Application on Clinical Psychology Publications in the German-Speaking Countries

Background

With reference to the concept of evidence-based psychotherapy, methodology of clinical psychology research focuses on the 4-phases-testmodel for clinical trials adapted from pharmacological research and evidence-based medicine. Questions: Can the literature on clinical interventions from the German-speaking countries be classified according to an extended 4-phases-testmodel? On which phases does research focus and how do foci shift in a time span of 30+ years (1977 to 2007). Method: All clinical psychology publications documented in PSYNDEX, the database for psychological publications from the German-speaking countries,

were classified to the extended 4-phases-testmodel. The automated classification was inspected manually and corrected if necessary. Results: Overall, 16,741 Publications (ca. 8% of PSYNDEX) received a valid classification. Double classification was possible and allowed. Additional therapy resources like treatment manuals, professional guidelines and self-help guides were also identified and received a dedicated classification. The figures show the absolute document counts and the longitudinal changes within relative document counts for the respective phases since 1977.

Extended 4-Phase Test Model of Empirically Supported Treatments

Phase 0: Developmental

- case histories
- case studies
- anecdotic case reports
- clinically relevant experience reports

Phase 1: Screening

- analog studies
- systematic, clinically relevant casestudies
- pre-experimental studies without control groups
- quasi-experimental studies

Phase 2: Randomized Controls

- experimental designs with randomized distribution of patients to a minimum of two groups
- efficacy studies

Phase 3: Test Phase

Large scale testing of intervention methods:

- multicenter studies
- meta-analyses

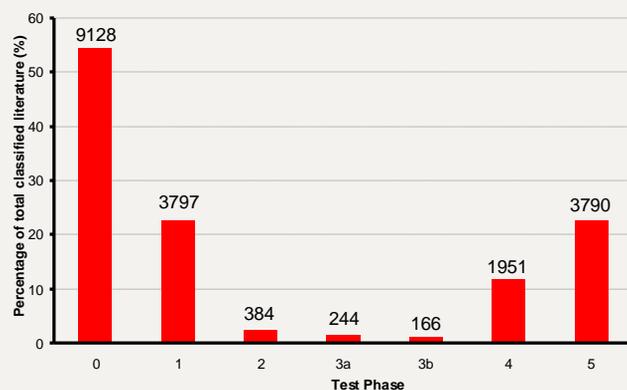
Phase 4: Therapeutic Use

- pre-und quasi-experimental studies under day-to-day clinical conditions
- quality control studies
- effectiveness studies
- generalizability studies

Phase 5: Prevention, Quality of Life

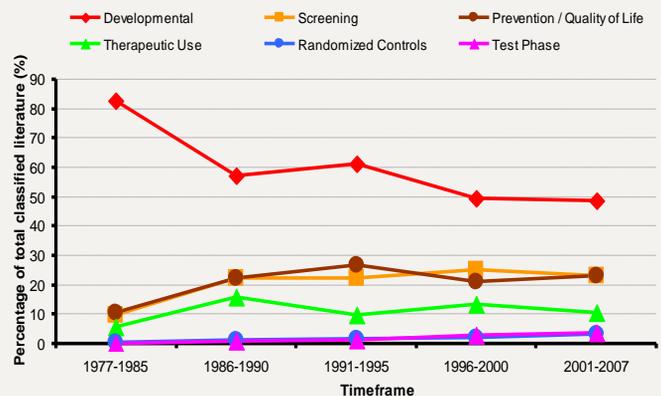
- intervention studies on the development of protective factors, the reduction of vulnerability and risk factors, and the promotion of personal growth

Percentages and absolute values of the separate phases within the total classified literature (N=16741)



3a: Multicenter-Studies; 3b: Meta-analyses. Because of multiple nominations, the sum of the percentages is over 100%.

Development of the percentages of the separate phases within the total classified literature in the timeframe from 1977 to 2007



Perspective

The extended 4-phases-testmodel gives a good illustration of the clinical psychology publications from the German-speaking countries and facilitates access to literature on empirically supported treatments. German clinical psychology has an extensive reservoir of publications on empirically supported psychotherapy at its disposal.

The decreasing, but still substantial percentage of phase 0-studies underlines their prominence within German psychology. Deficits are found in publications on the more elaborate randomized studies (phases 2 and 3). Literature searches using the different phases as search limits are possible in PSYNDEX today.