

Peer Review

Review of: "An Attempt to Explain Why There Are No Psychology Courses in the School Curricula of Nearly All Countries Worldwide"

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I really enjoyed reading this article, and I find the topic to be compelling and important. I have some general suggestions to improve this paper, but I don't think it will be truly helpful until there is a survey of those with more capacity to know why psychology is not being offered at the primary and secondary levels in Poland. I discuss my general suggestions and this overarching issue below. I also offer a suggestion for how you might design a paper greatly expanding on your research on countries in which psychology is taught at the primary and secondary levels.

A couple of smaller things: Define what you mean by "school" at the outset. It later becomes clear that you mean primary and secondary education, but this should be clarified right away. Please provide more information about the World Justice Project and its relevance to your thesis. The reader should not have to click on links to understand how this fits.

Your premise is that psychology education at all levels would lead to important societal changes. As a psychology educator who also works to build awareness of the benefits of studying this subject, I tend to agree with you (and hope this is true)! But what is the evidence that a psychology course leads to a change in values and related behaviors? Have studies shown this link? Please provide any evidence, or discuss what evidence would be helpful in making this case.

Please be specific about your findings regarding the teaching of psychology at the primary and secondary levels. How many countries did you review? How did you acquire these data? In how many countries was psychology taught at these levels? For each level, what proportion of schools included a psychology course in countries that did? Why the focus on Scandinavian countries? [If you greatly

expanded this part of your research, this could potentially be a stand-alone paper with value to audiences trying to understand the reach of psychology at these levels. You could check out the US organization dedicated to psychology in secondary schools (TOPSS: <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/topss>) as well as the European one (<http://www.efpta.org/home/>) if you have not already. Are there similar organizations elsewhere? If you decided to focus on this as an entire article, it would also be interesting to learn more about what was covered in primary and secondary psychology courses across countries and regions.]

“We believe that if the population of a given country were convinced of the beneficial impact of psychology education on society’s spiritual and health-related well-being, then it would likely be a compulsory subject for all students — perhaps only within a relatively short period of schooling, for example, in the final year of high school.” – What evidence would you use to convince the population? What means – e.g., the media? Is there existing research that has tried to do this?

For each proposed reason that psychology is not taught in primary/secondary schools, please cite the source in which it was proposed. Currently, all of your sources are grouped together above these reasons. (This is a general comment I have across the paper. It is not always clear which reference pertains to which claim you are making.)

You note that “We assume that the results of such a survey will allow us to formulate an initial working hypothesis explaining the avoidance of psychology instruction in high schools.” I’m not sure that surveying students will help explain why school systems are not offering psychology instruction. I’d also like to see more discussion about the limitations of a survey of a small number of students in a specific field (nursing), as well as more information about your participants – e.g., were they all Polish, and had they all studied in Poland throughout their education?

The biggest issue: For you to draw conclusions about why psychology is not being taught in Poland, I think you would have to conduct at least one similar survey of secondary educators, who may have a better sense of the reasons that psychology is not offered at this level. You could also conduct a second similar survey of primary educators. Without these surveys, I don’t think the survey of students is sufficient to make this paper helpful for policymakers within the schools and in the government.

The graphs should include all the information necessary to interpret them without returning to the text. For example, you could either include a key with shorthand for each question or use the shorthand as the label.

A lot of what is in the Discussion would fit better in the Introduction to help set up why you were interested in this project – e.g., the political situation, more about the new Health Education module.

As far as I know, many of the theories you present in the discussion (e.g., Freud, Jung) don't have evidence that suggests they lead to the changes in psychological well-being, etc., that you discuss in this paper. I suggest you instead discuss the evidence for what affects psychological well-being, reduces conflict and polarization, combats misinformation, etc. It is these areas that are likely to have the most evidence backing them as a means through which psychology education impacts society. But I'd still want to see this evidence.

This is coming back to something I noted earlier, but can you outline some data that support this premise?: "Taken together, these observations point to a persistent tension: as soon as psychological theories highlight the complexities of human behavior, they risk conflicting with traditional values, societal expectations, or personal comfort."

In conclusion, I hope you will continue to do this work. It's important, and I agree that psychology education – designed with an emphasis on teaching concepts that research has shown to change values and behavior – could have positive societal effects. I hope my comments will be helpful, and I'll be happy to review your future work!

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.