



Hear Me See Me

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Abstract

Dominant sociological and political paradigms have perpetuated stigma and shame in discussions surrounding Mental Health, Mental Illness, and Disorders. Despite the intrinsic importance of Mental Health to each individual, these discussions remain underfunded and undervalued. Current top-down approaches to supporting children's Mental Health often lead to unrealistic expectations, as they are initiated by adults without sufficient consideration of children's perspectives. Furthermore, research on Mental Health frequently overlooks younger children. This paper, "Hear Me See Me," addresses this gap by amplifying the voices of younger children, exploring the influences and impacts they experience in their daily lives that shape their mental well-being.

The research adopts a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology, grounded in a constructivist positionality. Recognizing that experiences and beliefs position individuals within society, the study acknowledges that children construct their reality based on the accumulation of knowledge gained through incidents. Employing the Mosaic Approach, a method designed to authentically capture children's voices, the research ensures that the perspectives of younger children are central to its inquiry. Collaborating with various educational establishments, the study engaged 40 children from diverse settings. The data collected took the form of individual Mosaics, providing a comprehensive overview of the influences and impacts on younger children's Mental Health.

The findings underscore the crucial need for children to be heard, highlighting the prevalent issue of being ignored within educational settings. Children emphasized how procedural aspects of the educational environment impact their ability to meet basic needs, engage in agency, and access play provisions. The research brings to light the interconnectedness between these influences and experiences and how they shape children's perceptions of being heard, as well as their individual strategies for managing emotions.

The significance of this research lies in its departure from traditional top-down approaches by foregrounding the voices of younger children. By incorporating their perspectives, "Hear Me See Me" challenges existing paradigms and offers a fresh understanding of the complexities involved in addressing children's Mental Health. The study's hermeneutic phenomenological approach ensures a nuanced exploration, capturing the depth and richness of children's lived experiences.



The originality of this research stems from its focus on a demographic often marginalized in mental health discourse. By providing a platform for younger children to articulate their experiences, the study contributes novel insights that can inform more effective interventions and support mechanisms. The use of the Mosaic Approach further adds to the originality, allowing for a holistic representation of the multifaceted influences shaping children's mental well-being.

The rigor of the research is evident in its methodological approach, with hermeneutic phenomenology offering a robust framework for interpreting the complex interplay of factors influencing children's Mental Health. The use of the hermeneutic circle ensures a rigorous and iterative analysis, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings. The inclusion of 40 participants from diverse educational settings further strengthens the research's reliability, offering a broad and comprehensive perspective on the subject matter.

In conclusion, "Hear Me See Me" serves as a pivotal contribution to the field of education and mental health. By giving voice to younger children and employing a rigorous methodology, the research sheds light on the often-overlooked nuances of their mental well-being within educational settings. This paper challenges existing paradigms and underscores the imperative of recognizing and addressing the unique needs of younger children in the discourse on Mental Health.

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