

RESEARCH REVIEWS

Solution-Focused Practices: Pick of the (Other) Papers 2021-2023

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This new feature of the Journal of Solution Focused Practices puts a spotlight on papers published elsewhere which we think are worth wider attention within the field. These are not only articles about empirical research but also process studies, a bibliometric analysis and a theoretical paper with implications for future research and practice development. For each paper we provide a summary of the work and why we think it's particularly important or interesting.

In this new feature for the Journal of Solution Focused Practices (JSFP), JSFP editor Mark McKergow, together with Andreea Žak and Rytis Pakrosnis - European Brief Therapy Association (EBTA) Research Task Group members coordinating and updating a list of references to research and other relevant publications on the solution-focused (SF) approach, present a selection of some recent publications which, we hope, could be of potentially wide interest for the SF community. For more empirical research we recommend readers consult the [full EBTA list of references](#), alongside the [Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association \(SFBTA\) list of solution-focused brief therapy research](#) and the [Solution Focused Universe searchable database](#) to be informed with what has been studied before and by whom. Here we focus on papers published outside the JSFP – you should be up to date with this journal already!

For this first edition, we have selected various types of papers published between 2021 and 2023, including outcome and process studies, a bibliometric analysis, and a theoretical paper with implications for future research and practice development. Our selection of papers is oriented not only at showing the benefits of the solution-focused approach as applied in different contexts but also at revealing the process behind the change. We will be producing further editions for each issue of JSFP.

For each paper we provide a summary of the work and why we think it's particularly important or interesting. Readers can follow the links to read the full abstracts. In some cases, the papers have open access, which is noted by each reference.

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Recommended Papers

Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a solution-focused intervention in child protection services

Authored by: Antonio Medina, Mark Beyebach, Felipe E. García

Published in: Children and Youth Services Review, Volume 143, 2022, 106703, ISSN 0190-7409, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106703>

Availability: Open access

This well-done and large-scale study demonstrates the benefits of introducing solution-focused practices to child protection professionals in Tenerife (Spain). Outcomes (e.g., goal achievement, well-being, statutory measures) of 271 client families of 73 child protection specialists, who participated (randomly assigned) in 30 h of SFBT training followed by another 30 h of supervision, were tracked over a year and then compared to similar outcomes of 206 client families of 79 control group specialists, who had no SFBT training. Results revealed that after training child protection specialists extensively used elements of SFBT in their work and their clients' outcomes after a year were significantly better than those in the control group along with a smaller number of sessions and fewer additional resources used. This study is important because it demonstrates that the solution-focused approach is effective even when applied not only by the qualified proponents of the approach but also by newly trained professionals with no previous knowledge or interest in the approach.

The effect of mechanical feedback on outcome in self-care support tool based on solution-focused brief therapy

Authored by: Gen Takagi

Published in: Psychotherapy Research, (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2184732>

Availability: Subscription or purchase required

This is an original and thought-provoking study on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for improving outcomes in solution-focused practices. A randomized controlled trial was conducted to examine the effect of the feedback provided by AI as part of a self-care support tool that used solution-focused brief therapy. For this purpose, 501 participants from Japan were recruited online and asked to fill in a survey by describing an ongoing problem, answering the miracle question, setting a goal in line with the provided answer, and then redefining the goal to make it more concrete and realistic. Prior to re-defining the goal, the experimental group received automatic feedback developed by AI based on its evaluation of the goal for concreteness and reality characteristics. Further participants continued filling in the survey which ended with ideas for possible solutions.

Compared to a control group not receiving any feedback, the AI generated feedback was associated with participants' increased probability of problem-solving. However, the AI generated feedback made no between-group difference on participants' positive or negative affect, solution-building, or probability of living an ideal life; an increase in all these outcomes was noted in

both the experimental and control group as an effect of answering to solution-focused specific questions. This study is important as it shows that solution-focused intervention can have positive implications for users even when applied online in an automatic form. This is of particular importance in the light of current tendency to develop self-help apps.

The impact of clarifying the long-term solution picture through solution-focused interventions on positive attitude towards life

Authored by: Gen Takagi, Kazuma Sakamoto, Naoto Nihonmatsu, Miki Hagidai

Published in: PLoS ONE 17(5): e0267107. (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0267107>

Availability: Open access

This process-outcome study was performed in Japan and examined the solution-focused approach in the context of workers' mental health. By using an experimental design, the study compared the effect of various combinations of solution-focused questions on participants' clarification of long-term goals, attitude towards life, and ideal level of life. 94 participants were randomly assigned to three experimental groups, each receiving a particular set of questions, i.e., (1) exception questions only, (2) exception and miracle questions, and (3) exception, miracle, and time-machine questions. The difference between the miracle question and the time-machine question consists of the time frame, the former being focused on the near-future set tomorrow. In contrast, the latter is focused on the long-term future set further on the timeline axis. The time-machine question was developed in Japan and is culturally fit, inspired by the popular manga character Doraemon, which can move freely through time.

Results showed that the clarification of long-term goals increased significantly with the addition of time-machine questions, while positive attitudes towards life and the ideal level of life increased significantly in all three experimental conditions regardless of the set of solution-focused questions used. This study is important because it shows how the use of different sets of solution-focused questions influences the clarification of the client's goal.

Comparing three coaching approaches in pediatric rehabilitation: Contexts, outcomes, and mechanisms

Authored by: Gillian King, Fiona Graham, and Schirin Ahkbari Ziegler

Published in: Disability and Rehabilitation (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2023.2229731>

Availability: Subscription or purchase required

This perspective article compares three modes of coaching in pediatric rehabilitation (Coping with and Caring for Infants with Special Needs (COPCA), Occupational Performance Coaching (OPC), and Solution-Focused Coaching in Pediatric Rehabilitation (SFC-peds)), with the final aim to discuss the conceptual base, outcome evidence, and potential mechanisms of change and thus inspire future research and practice on pediatric rehabilitation. Despite differences in theory, the authors argue for the similarity

in the mechanism of change and outcome across the coaching models, all promoting a specific relationship with the client; requiring specific attitudes from a practitioner's side, such as openness and curiosity; and emphasizing client empowerment over the expertise of the coach. Potential practical implications of using coaching in the pediatric rehabilitation context are discussed, stressing the focus on empowering both the child and its family, despite the existing medical condition and the expertise of the medical staff.

Simply effective? The differential effects of solution-focused and problem-focused coaching questions in a self-coaching writing exercise

Authored by: Lara Solms, Jessie Koen, Annelies E. M. van Vianen, Tim Theeboom, Bianca Beersma, Anne P. J. de Pagter, and Matthijs de Hoog

Published in: *Frontiers in Psychology* 13:895439 (2022) <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.895439>

Availability: Open access

This process-outcome study conducted in a medical setting in the Netherlands aimed to analyse the differential effect of problem-focused vs solution-focused coaching questions. 183 participants were randomly allocated either to the problem-focused condition (receiving questions about the problem) or to one of two solution-focused conditions (receiving either the miracle question or the exception question).

Results revealed that participants receiving solution-focused questions reported feeling better and more motivated to reach the goal, than those asked to focus on the problem description. Nevertheless, focusing on solutions did not lead to a significant difference in perceived self-efficacy or desire to avoid or take steps toward solving the problem. The authors explained this lack of difference based on the potential need to be aware of the problem (its existence, causes, and implications) as a first step to solving it, to trigger the motivation to take action. In this view, solution-focused questions can complement problem-focused questions by helping individuals stop ruminating on the problem, start feeling better despite having a problem, and start focusing on its solution. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between the two solution-focused questions, indicating that focusing on desired future or analysing past successes have a similar effect on affect, self-efficacy, and goal orientation.

Solution focused brief therapy presuppositions: A comparison of 1.0 and 2.0 SFBT approaches

Authored by: Adam S. Froerer, Cecil R. Walker, and Paula Lange

Published in: *Contemporary Family Therapy* 45, 425–436 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-022-09654-5>

Availability: Subscription or purchase required

This interesting and discussion-stimulating process study used microanalysis to examine the differences in the use of presuppositional language between the experts of the original solution-focused approach, a.k.a. SFBT 1.0 (i.e., Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg, and Yvonne Dolan) and experts who work on continuous development of the approach, a.k.a. SFBT 2.0 (i.e., Chris Iveson, Elliott Connie, and Evan George). Presuppositional

language refers to assuming the existence of information by the practitioner, e.g., assuming the existence of change or past successes or implying a different meaning to what the client said (e.g., assuming that the client wants something instead of what he/she described as part of the problem, or that other people can see the change happening).

Results showed significant differences in the use of presuppositional language. SFBT 2.0 practitioners used significantly more presuppositional language overall, more interactional presuppositions (by including the view of different persons from the client's life), but less action-oriented presuppositions (by focusing more on building descriptions of how life will once the goal is reached, rather than describing steps to be taken) than SFBT 1.0 practitioners. Yet, both groups of experts used significantly more presuppositional language based on the client's content (by building more on what the client previously said) than by implying content outside the client's language, suggesting that, despite the evolution of the approach in other aspects, solution-focused practitioners continue leading from one step behind and following clients' lead in the co-construction of solutions.

Bibliometric differences between WEIRD and Non-WEIRD countries in the outcome research on solution-focused brief therapy

Authored by: Mark Beyebach, Marie-Carmen Neipp, Ángel Solanes-Puchol, and Beatriz Martín-del-Río

Published in: *Frontiers in Psychology* Volume 12 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.754885>

Availability: Open access

This large-scale systematic literature review using bibliometric methodology aimed to identify possible differences in conducting outcome studies on the solution-focused approach between the so-called WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, Democratic) and non-WEIRD countries. The authors identified 365 original outcome studies which were published between 1991 and 2021 and examined the solution-focused approach as a psychosocial intervention by including at least one solution-focused specific component. As expected, a similar distribution of studies was found between the so-called WEIRD and non-WEIRD countries (47.95% vs. 52.05%), showing a similar interest in the effectiveness and efficacy of the solution-focused approach. Yet, significant differences were found between WEIRD and non-WEIRD countries regarding the methodology and intervention. As such, in the research coming from non-WEIRD countries, the solution-focused approach was more predominantly examined as the main intervention, in a group or family format, using randomized controlled trials than naturalistic or qualitative designs. This study is a key piece of research showing that solution-focused interventions have been researched all over the world, though with some significant variations in the way of application and research design which invite the reader to ponder on these cultural differences.

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