International mixed methods review of the effectiveness and experiences of the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management program: Looking at child and teacher outcomes

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Aim
Children’s early problematic behaviours are associated with stressed teacher-child relationships and later deviancy. The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (IY TCM) program trains teachers to use positive, proactive strategies. This mixed methods systematic review answers: What is known about the effectiveness of IY TCM, and how do people experience the program and its effects?

Methods
RCTs comparing IY TCM against treatment-as-usual controls were included in the effectiveness strand. Qualitative interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders were included in the experiential strand. Primary outcomes were teacher management strategies and child conduct problems. Secondary outcomes included teacher-parent collaboration, child prosocial behaviours and academic readiness. Multilevel meta-analysis was applied to effect sizes from RCTs. Grounded theory analysis was applied to qualitative data. Cross-synthesis used framework analysis and integrative grids.

Results
Nine studies from England, Ireland, Jamaica, the United States, and Wales were included. IY TCM significantly reduced teachers’ negative management strategies and high-risk children’s conduct problems. No significant effects were found for improving children’s prosocial behaviours. A cyclical process of training and observing effective outcomes emerged in the qualitative strand. Teachers described benefits relating to increased knowledge, locus-of-control, emotional wellbeing, and practice. RCT and experiential findings were generally harmonious, although qualitative findings suggested a broader conceptualisation of benefits.

Conclusions
IY TCM presents an opportunity to lessen violence in schools, leading to improved learning environments for all. Teachers like IY TCM and benefit from it, as do children at high-risk for conduct problems. The qualitative data mirrored results from the quantitative data and expanded upon these results, and future research should seek to test the processes produced in the meta-synthesis, to better understand mechanisms of change.