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Promoting financial capability within the field of social work practice among families with children: a systematic review

Taloudellisen toimintakyvyn edistäminen lapsiperheiden parissa tehtävässä sosiaalityössä: systemaattinen kirjallisuuskatsaus

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ABSTRACT

Financial difficulties have a severe impact on families and children who grow up in poor families. Social workers can help families address their financial problems through a variety of practice settings, hence simultaneously promoting financial well-being. We investigate how financial capability among families with children has been promoted in social work practice. We generated a systematic review by following the PRISMA standards and applying the concepts of the CAIMeR theory. Two hundred seventy-seven references were identified, of which a total of 14 articles were analysed. We found there was a large understanding about the phenomenon, but the knowledge of contexts was limited, with a lack of evidence-based knowledge. Formal interventions in social work practice emphasise financial education as a key contributor to financial capability. Likewise, the improvement of financial inclusion is underlined. The literature indicates that interventions provide tools for clients to help strengthen economic self-sufficiency and increase financial confidence. However, social work practices often concentrate on money management, ignoring the ways in which clients can increase income and other resources or avoid future risks. Implementation of interventions requires attention. Unique situations in the family should be considered closely, and the implementation should rely more consciously on the psychosocial elements of support.

ABSTRAKTI



Taloudellisilla vaikeuksilla on vakavia vaikutuksia perheisiin ja lapsiin, jotka kasvavat köyhissä perheissä. Sosiaalityössä voidaan auttaa perheitä ratkaisemaan heidän taloudellisia ongelmiaan erilaisten käytäntöjen avulla ja samalla edistää perheiden taloudellista hyvinvointia. Tutkimme artikkelissa, miten perheiden taloudellista toimintakykyä on pyritty sosiaalityössä edistämään. Toteutimme systemaattisen kirjallisuuskatsauksen seuraamalla PRISMA-standardeja ja soveltamalla KAIMeR-teorian käsitteitä. Tietokantahaussa tunnistettiin 277 artikkelia, joista analysoimme yhteensä 14 artikkelia. Havaitimme, että ilmiöstä oli laaja ymmärrys, mutta kontekstien tuntemus oli rajallista, samoin tutkimukseen perustuva näyttö. Interventiomallit, joita sosiaalityössä käytetään, korostavat talouskasvatusta

KEYWORDS

Financial social work; systematic review; financial capability; psychosocial support

ASIASANAT

taloussosiaalityö; systemaattinen kirjallisuuskatsaus; taloudellinen toimintakyky; psykososiaalinen tuki

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keskeisenä taloudellista toimintakykyä vahvistavana elementtinä. Myös taloudellisen osallisuuden vahvistamista painotetaan. Kirjallisuus osoittaa, että interventiot tarjoavat asiakkaille keinoja vahvistaa taloudellista omavaraisuutta ja lisätä taloudellista luottamusta. Sosiaalityön käytännöt keskittyvät kuitenkin usein rahanhallintaan jättäen huomiotta tavat, joilla asiakkaat voivat lisätä tuloja ja muita resursseja tai välttää tulevia riskejä. Interventioiden implementointi vaatii huomiota. Perheiden yksilöllisiin tilanteisiin tulisi kiinnittää erityistä huomiota, ja implementoinnissa tulisi nojata tietoisemmin psykososiaaliseen tukeen.

Introduction

The needs of financially vulnerable individuals, families, groups and communities have long been an objective of social work (Stuart, 2013). Social work clients are among the most financially vulnerable populations and often face complex financial problems, such as poverty, indebtedness, lack of access to financial services and utilisation of high-risk alternative financial products (Sherraden, 2013). They also have challenges in financial literacy and financial management. Thus, there is growing global recognition that social work should play a key role in improving the financial capability of their clients and helping them achieve financial well-being.

Social work has tackled the question of financial vulnerability using a wide-ranging approach to practice. One is financial social work (FSW), emphasising the importance of financial capability within social work practice (Sherraden & Huang, 2019). Financial capability provides a theoretical lens for social work practice. It connects micro and macro realities, and stresses the importance of changing unjust financial systems, while paying equal attention to helping people improve their financial understanding and ability (Huang et al., 2021, p. 690). The scope of FSW practice is broad, and the potential for FSW innovations is limitless (Callahan et al., 2019). FSW can address a large diversity of areas, including transformational life phases (adolescence, retirement, divorce), empowerment for survivors of intimate partner violence, health and labour issues or problems with gambling and other addiction disorders.

In this literature review, we investigate how financial capability among families with children has been promoted in social work practices. We focus on what social workers do to respond to their clients' financial problems. The focus is on research-based or experimental studies where a specific method, intervention, tool or practice model were implemented or examined. By reviewing the literature, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- What sort of research contexts and actors are included in previous studies promoting financial capability among families with children in social work?
- What methods and interventions are described in the studies?
- What kinds of psychosocial mechanisms and results have been found in the studies?

We draw on the concept of financial capability from Johnson and Sherraden (2007), who define financial capability as an inclusive framework combining the concepts of financial literacy and financial inclusion. The individual idea of financial literacy, referring to the ability to act (financial knowledge and skills), combines the idea on a structural level, discussing the opportunities to act (Johnson & Sherraden, 2007; Sherraden, 2013). This is followed by the notion that individual characteristics, for example, financial knowledge and skills, are correlated with greater financial capability, while the appropriate institutional arrangements are inclusive, available and accessible (Sun et al., 2022).

This review expands our understanding of the ways in which social work can promote financial capability among families with children. First, previous systematic reviews and meta-analyses in

this area (Birkenmaier et al., 2022; Fernandes et al., 2014; Kaiser & Menkhoff, 2017, 2020; Miller et al., 2015) have not focused explicitly on families as a target group. This is a considerable research gap because financial difficulties are common among families with children. In 2020, 24.2% of children in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (Eurostat, 2022). Financial difficulties and poverty have a great impact on families, particularly on children who grow up in poor families. Compared with higher-income families, poor families are less able to financially invest in their children, which is known to impair children's cognitive development and social relationships. Parents with parenting styles that are less sensitive to the needs of children experience more stress, depression and anxiety (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, 2019; Van Lancker & Vinck, 2019). Moreover, many families report experiencing stress or anxiety about personal finances (Lin et al., 2022). Thus, the promotion of financial capability is an essential professional activity for social work to promote the economic well-being of families with children.

Second, social workers can help clients address their financial problems through a variety of practice settings, yet little is known about how they do so. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the methods and interventions for social work clients are operative. Third, social work clients' financial concerns can be complex and are often intertwined with psychosocial stressors. Thus, we synthesise and analyse the methods and interventions in relation to the intersection between financial and psychosocial factors (Callahan et al., 2019) to see how psychosocial stressors have been handled in social work interventions. Addressing financial difficulties and stressors together is an effective way to enhance financial well-being (Anvari-Clark & Frey, 2019; Callahan et al., 2019). Similarly, the elements of social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients, which have been emphasised to affect the intervention process (Blom & Morén, 2010, p. 110), are observed.

Methodology

In social work, a systematic review of literature often means identifying, evaluating and summarising the findings of all relevant individual studies, thus making the available evidence more accessible to decision-makers and other readers (e.g. Kennan et al., 2018; Zuchowski et al., 2019). This review highlights the international literature on FSW, identifying the practices that aim to enhance the financial capability of families in social work. We apply the CAIMeR theory (Blom & Morén, 2010) as a loose framework to synthesise and analyse the methods and interventions in previous research in relation to the intersection between financial and psychosocial factors (Callahan et al., 2019).

Search strategy and selection criteria

Our inquiry included studies aiming to improve financial capability among families with children within the context of social work or other social services. Financial capability-enhancing studies were defined as research-based or experimental studies where a specific method, intervention, tool or practice model is examined. The definition allows for the inclusion of interventions that appear in any format: individual, family or group within a social work context. The inquiry did not exclude interventions on competence to strengthen financial capability among social workers working with families.

The studies had to meet the following criteria: (a) on the financial capability of family within a social work context, (b) included some investigation mechanism or intervention, and (c) was published in English. The exclusion criteria were as follows: not about financial capability with a connection to the social work context or to a family's or household's economy or not published in English (e.g. editorial text, review article that did not directly include clear research setting within social work practice).

We searched Ebsco (SocINDEX With Full Text and Academic Search Premier), ProQuest (Social Science Database and Sociology Database), Web of Science and Scopus. The search terms were *family** OR *household** OR *parent** OR *child**, *'social work*'* OR *'social welfare*'* OR *'social service*'* used in combination with *'financial literacy'* OR *'mone* literacy'* OR *'econom* literacy'* OR

'financial knowledge' OR 'mone* knowledge' OR 'econom* knowledge' OR 'financial capa*', intervention* OR method* OR tool* OR practice* OR orientation*.

Selection of studies

To provide a general and clarifying overview of the selection process, we used a flowchart, per the PRISMA guidelines (Figure 1). A total of 277 articles were identified. Using titles and abstracts, a total of 222 articles were removed because of duplicates or not focusing on this research. Fifty-five articles were included for screening based on titles and abstracts by two reviewers to assess their eligibility for inclusion. The software programme Covidence was used to structure this selection. If the inclusion criteria were met, the full text screening was performed. Two reviewers read a total of 30 articles. If there was any uncertainty about eligibility, the reviewers assessed criteria together with a third reviewer. In total, 14 empirical articles were included (Table 1).

Data extraction

The information was extradited by reading the texts and providing answers to research questions based on categorisation of the data: authors/year/country, research context and actors, methods or interventions, mechanisms as psychosocial aspects of support and results. The conceptual CAIMeR framework (Blom & Morén, 2010) were used in data extraction as a loose frame of thought. CAIMeR constructs a conceptual framework to explain how the results in social work practice arise from interventions and their contextual contingencies (Blom & Morén, 2010). The framework contents are (a) contexts referring to the intervention context and client's lifeworld, (b) actors referring to persons involved in the intervention process, (c) interventions referring to the interventions of workers, clients and potential other partners, (d) mechanisms referring to

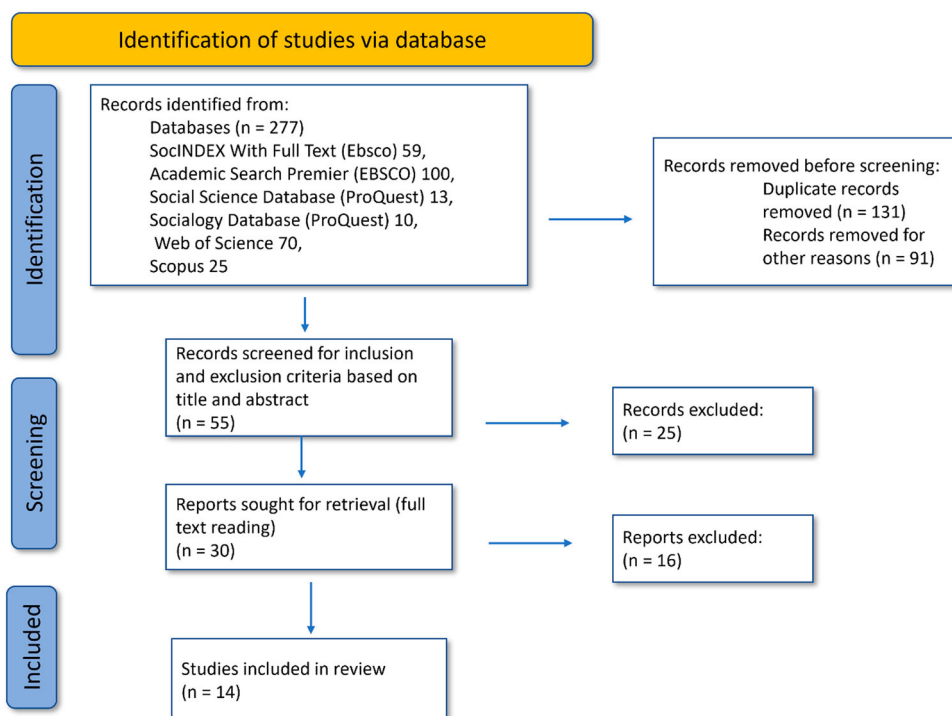


Figure 1. Flow chart for the search and inclusion process.

Table 1. Overview of the included articles.

Author (year)	Castro Baker & Keene (2016)	Despard et al. (2012)	Huang et al. (2013)	Huang et al. (2016)
Area	Pennsylvania/New York (USA)	North Caroline (USA)	Oklahoma (USA)	Oklahoma (USA)
Research context and actors (incl. data and/or object of the study)	Qualitative research using in-depth interview data on homeowners at risk of financial default (N = 55), investigating experiences about partnering with a financial counselling agency and social work agencies that provided financial counselling and an array of social services programming.	Qualitative methods and descriptive statistics, using an internet survey of social workers and other human service professionals (N = 56), investigating social work methods and respond to client's financial problems.	Based on a data (the SEED for Oklahoma Kids) from a state-wide randomised experiment, used a probability sample of infants (N = 2 651) to examine how participants' financial knowledge and participation in a CDA intervention affects 529 college savings plan account holding among caregivers.	Quantitative research: baseline survey of the SEED OK experiment, using a sample of primary caregivers, e.g. mothers of infants (N = 2 529), and investigating the effects of financial capability on the risk of material hardship.
Methods or interventions	No intervention	Financial education (incl assessment, case management, financial counselling or coaching etc) as the primary means of intervening.	Child development account (CDA) intervention based on the idea of financial capability (e.g. access to appropriate financial services and ability to act).	Integration of financial access (CDA) and financial knowledge improving financial capability and reducing material hardship among mothers.
Mechanisms as psychosocial elements of support *How are the mechanisms addressed?	Providing emotional support is important for clients (trust, experiencing respect, to get needs heard, receive aid, empathy) even if housing and monetary troubles remain unsolved. *As an aspect based on the findings and results of the study.	*Not addressed	*Not addressed	*Not addressed
Results	The participants used several strategies to navigate mortgage strain and reported negative and positive social service encounters. Social work's responses to financial concerns are connected to the categorical level of the objective as a social problem.	The participants characterised clients' financial problems as the result of making poor financial decisions. Financial education is used mostly as a technique to respond. The participants faced workplace barriers to help their clients with financial problems (a lack of expertise, time etc).	Financial knowledge increased participant-owned account-holding rate in the treatment group but not in the control group. Financial education and training are not alone sufficient to expand financial capability. Equally important is a supportive institutional setting.	Financial access is particularly critical for improving financial management and reducing the risk of material hardship among mothers. Financial access was positively associated with financial management behaviours, partially reducing the mother's risk of experiencing material hardship.

Author (year)	Huang et al. (2019)	Huang et al. (2022)	Murshid (2018)	Postmus et al. (2012)	Sanders (2016)
Area	Oklahoma (USA)	Oklahoma (USA)	Bangladesh	New Brunswick (USA)	Boise (USA)
Research context and actors (incl. data and/or object of the study)	Data from SEED OK (subsample, total N = 426), to explore the potential effects of integrating a CDA intervention with other social programmes.	Data from SEED OK (total N = 825: treatment N = 410 and control group N = 415) to examine the effects of a CDA intervention on the use of mainstream financial products among young mothers.	Quantitative research: Nationally representative survey on women (N = 6,150) and on their ability to control resources in household decision making and involvement in making economic decisions.	A longitudinal, exploratory study examining the impact of a financial literacy programme on survivors of intimate and partner violence, IPV (N = 120).	Descriptive and quantitative study exploring financial capability initiative using the Treasure Valley Economic Action Programme (TVEAP) among women (N = 288) incarcerated for community re-entry.
Methods or interventions	CDA combined with social services for vulnerable families	CDA and access to financial products, knowledge and skills	Microfinance programmes including a range of financial instruments such as micro-loans	Financial literacy programme: Moving Ahead through Financial Management	TVEAP
Mechanisms as psychosocial elements of support *How are the mechanisms addressed?	*Not addressed	*Not addressed	*Not addressed	*Not addressed	The provision of classes that are empowerment and consciousness raising approach-based help clients to develop critical insight into personal choices. *As an aspect discussed based on the findings and results of the study.
Results	The CDA intervention had statistically significant impacts on financial and social development outcomes. Empirical support for a new model integrating accounts with other social services for economically vulnerable families.	Asset- and debt-product use was higher among young mothers in the treatment group than among those in the control group. The treatment-control difference partially results from the combination of young mothers' access to the CDA policy, financial knowledge and financial skills.	Control over resources plays an important role in bargaining that increases odds of having decision-making power in the household.	Economic abusive behaviour drove IPV victims towards poverty. Experiencing economic abuse and economic control predicted a decrease in economic self-sufficiency. The intervention helped victims with the prevention of future abusive relationships and the identification of abuse in current relationships.	The participants benefited from the classes. TVEAP (curriculum) promoted women's empowerment and financial autonomy, provided practical skills, increased knowledge and access to financial resources, increased women's self-confidence in managing and coping with financial affairs and helped women find feasible repayment plans and long-term financial goals.

Author (year)	Silva-Martínez et al. (2015)	Tlapek et al. (2022)	Tuominen and Thompson (2015)	Warren et al. (2019)	West et al. (2017)
Area	Puerto Rico (USA)	Columbia (USA)	Ohio (USA)	Western Australia	Tennessee/Kansas (USA)
Research context and actors (incl. data and/or object of the study)	Qualitative study on advocates' experiences (N = 19) in providing a financial literacy programme to victims of domestic violence	Pilot study on the implementation of financial capability and asset building (FCAB) programming for survivors in domestic and sexual violence agency	Ethnographic methods (observation, document analysis and in-depth interviews) to explore experience of participants, low-income families (N = 18), in financial literacy programme	Mixed methods in a study piloting domestic violence financial literacy curriculum, using pre-post measures and focus groups. Data: refuge staff (N = 6) and participant women (N = 11)	Mixed methods research: survey, in-depth and follow-up interviews for parents of kindergarteners to explore the role family composition plays in the way that households accumulate liquid assets
Methods or interventions	Financial literacy programme: Moving Ahead Through Financial Management	FCAB programme	Smart Money Financial Training	DFV-informed financial literacy curriculum	No intervention
Mechanisms as psychosocial elements of support *How are the mechanisms addressed?	Compensation is one way to motivate advocates to learn new interventions and how they can use these with victims of IPV. *As an aspect based on the findings of the study.	The effective implementation of an FCAB intervention depends on its timing, sequencing and delivery. The staff's limited financial literacy and self-efficacy could be a barrier to delivering the programme. *As an aspect based on the findings and results of the study.	The narratives and experiences of low-income participants ought to get heard. *As an aspect reflecting the experiences of families participating in a financial literacy programme.	Building financial confidence is important. Discussion of own experiences, knowledge and strategies increased financial confidence and helped participants with health symptoms and worries. *As an aspect or component of a curriculum.	*Not addressed
Results	Advocates expressed complexities in providing financial literacy to survivors. The findings indicate that the curriculum needs to be implemented in a way that suits the clients' particular situations.	Pre-existing knowledge of financial literacy influences staff actions. There were also substantial barriers to FCAB programmes (inappropriate timing, programming not meeting clients' actual financial needs etc).	Positive changes by implementing budgets and saving small amounts. Still, it is limited to longer-term economic self-sufficiency and economic stability. Tensions between the ideology of individualism and personal abilities.	The programmes gave effective outcomes. Staff who participated in the programme reported having a stronger awareness of economic abuse patterns after the programme.	Lower-income single mothers reported little savings and aspirations towards very short-term savings horizons, did not identify institutional saving mechanisms. The composition of a family impacts reasons, obstacles and strategies for saving.

elements in the social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients and (e) results and effects referring primarily to client effects and outcomes, such as changes in the client's life situation following the intervention (Blom & Morén, 2010, pp. 107–111).

Analysis

Research context and actors

The analysis began with the concepts of the research context and actors. Blom and Morén (2010) have developed the concept of context in a broad way referring to different contexts such as the intervention context and client's lifeworld. In our analysis, context refers mainly to the research context, which handles analysis of study designs. The literature consists of studies based on quantitative (7/14) and qualitative (5/14) data methods, as well as studies with mixed methods (2/14). Quantitative study designs rely strongly on one state-wide experiment in the USA, with four articles (Huang et al., 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022) from a baseline survey of the SEED OK experiment. Additionally, it is worth noting that most of the previous research comes from Anglo-Saxon countries: the USA (12), Bangladesh (1) and Australia (1). These countries are marked by an overall low level of financial support for families, and a neoliberal environment might increase the financial vulnerability of families (Engelbrecht & Ornellas, 2019).

As actors, the literature includes (a) primary intervention actors and (b) clients (Blom & Morén, 2010, p. 109). Primary intervention actors refer to professional actors who are mainly social workers (Despard et al., 2012) but also other service professionals such as domestic violence advocates (Silva-Martínez et al., 2015) and staff for the survivors of domestic and sexual violence (Tlapek et al., 2022). Clients refer to special clients or target groups, here consisting of parents/families/households or clients of social work/of an agency and groups of individuals described as having essential financial problems. Client groups consist mainly of female target groups in the literature. A relevant target group is mothers as caregivers, especially in the baseline survey SEED OK (Huang et al., 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022).

The client's lifeworld is related to multiple aspects of family life. Gaining financial literacy is studied through the experiences of low-income families participating in a financial literacy programme in Tuominen and Thompson (2015). The composition of the family is understood to impact financial capability in West et al. (2017), where lower- and higher-income single- and two-parent families characterise the reasons for saving, obstacles and strategies to save. Women's microfinance participation and decision-making power in the household (Murshid, 2018), homeowners at risk of financial default (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016) and incarcerated women and promotion of financial capability for community re-entry (Sanders, 2016) are all target groups linked to the issue.

Likewise, the survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) or women who experienced domestic or sexual violence are an essential client group. In Postmus et al. (2012), the intervention group is survivors of intimate partner violence (e.g. mainly women with a higher risk of falling into a financially vulnerable position). Warren et al. (2019) piloted a financial literacy curriculum with women who have experienced domestic and family violence (DFV). In Tlapek et al. (2022), the study piloted a programme for survivors of domestic and sexual violence and gathered data among clients, staff in an agency and among other stakeholders.

Methods and interventions that enhance financial capability

The definition of methods and interventions signifies formal interventions conducted by social workers or other professionals (Blom & Morén, 2010, pp. 108–109). Interventions and methods can refer to different models, strategies and programmes categorised in two categories: (a) models promoting financial capability through financial educational programmes and (b) structural interventions utilising financial services such as account and microfinance systems. The

categories might overlap. Two articles (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016; West et al., 2017) included no formal intervention or method integrated in the study design.¹

Financial education is one of the key building blocks of financial capability (Sherraden, 2013, p. 9). A variety of programmes initiated financial education for families and individuals in different life situations. The interventions emphasised financial education through programmes such as Treasure Valley Economic Action Programme (TVEAP²) in Sanders (2016), Smart Money Financial Training in Tuominen and Thompson (2015) and Moving Ahead through Financial Management Programme in Postmus et al. (2012) and Silva-Martínez et al. (2015). In Warren et al. (2019), the intervention of financial education refers to a financial literacy curriculum delivered by two refugee workers in a group format and a financial first aid document to aid refuge staff in identifying and responding to economic abuse. In Sanders (2016), community-based education is seen as an opportunity to facilitate financial capabilities. Thus, the programmes are tailored to provide education for different target groups. Furthermore, in the literature, financial education is offered to social workers and other professionals (Despard et al., 2012; Tlapek et al., 2022).

Second, the promotion of financial capability appears through interventions utilising financial systems for families and households. Components of inclusion and methods in expanding participation are a vital element of financial capability in social work practice (Sherraden, 2013). In Murshid (2018), this is initiated through microfinance programmes and micro-loans and in Huang et al. (2013, 2016, 2019, 2022) through the child development account (CDA) system. Previous research has pointed out that securing financial access is essential for building financial capability through organisations and institutions (Murshid, 2018).

Consequently, the integration of financial products or systems with social services is explicit (Huang et al., 2019). Interventions or methods are integrated into financial support that enhances financial literacy (often financial education, financial knowledge, etc.) combined with appropriate financial and social services. This perspective highlights coworking between social agencies and bank organisations to solve low-income families' financial problems (Huang et al., 2019). Accordingly, social work interventions not only rely on the notion of financial management, financial education and financial knowledge, but supportive institutional settings of practice are crucial as well (Huang et al., 2013, 2016).

Mechanisms as psychosocial elements of support

The interest in examining mechanisms as psychosocial factors of support is in the conception that intersection between psychosocial and financial aspects, and addressing these together is an effective way to make a difference in people's lives (Anvari-Clark & Frey, 2019; Callahan et al., 2019). Blom and Morén (2010) suggest that social work interventions contain social, psychosocial and psychological mechanisms; they underline that social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients can impact the effects of social work: social worker–client conversations can change the client's inner dialogue (internalisation). Under certain circumstances, social psychological mechanisms can work in the other direction (externalisation of the psychological interaction; Blom & Morén, 2010.) In our analysis, the psychosocial factors of support refer to handling psychosocial stressors in social work practice and the elements in the social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients.

As seen in Table 1, the psychosocial elements of financial support receive attention mainly in discussion sections (Sanders, 2016; Silva-Martínez et al., 2015; Tlapek et al., 2022; Tuominen & Thompson, 2015). It is worth noting that psychosocial stressors and elements in social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients do not function in the study designs as an object of study nor as a variable of the study.

The literature names the following elements in the social interaction and dynamics between social workers and clients as impacting the interventions and methods: confidence among participants (Warren et al., 2019), trust, respect and emotional support (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016),

confidence in financial literacy among the staff, and intervention factors such as timing, sequencing and delivery (Tlapek et al., 2022), empowerment and consciousness raising (Sanders, 2016), empathy among staff (Tuominen & Thompson, 2015) and beliefs among the staff (Silva-Martínez et al., 2015).

The mechanisms are mainly concerned with psychological elements of support on the individual level, depending on the identified characteristics of social workers or clients, thus impacting the process of interaction (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016; Silva-Martínez et al., 2015; Tlapek et al., 2022; Tuominen & Thompson, 2015; Warren et al., 2019). Still, none of the studies explore financial and psychosocial factors associated with family dynamics or within child and parent relationships (see Huang et al., 2019).

The results of social work practice

The results refer primarily to client effects and outcomes, such as changes in the client's life situation following the intervention (Blom & Morén, 2010). As result, we categorise three thematic entities regarding the results: (a) positive though not uncomplicated results from promotion of financial capability in client's life situation, (b) the need to enhance financial literacy among professionals and (c) relevance of structural interventions.

The CDA intervention (Huang et al., 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022) was considered as having positive, statistically significant impacts on financial outcomes among families. The findings (Huang et al., 2019) provide empirical support for a new model integrating CDA accounts with other social services for economically vulnerable families. Overall, implementing interventions were quite positive. Financial literacy programmes (intended for victims of domestic and family violence, etc.) gave effective outcomes (Postmus et al., 2012), increased financial confidence among participants (Warren et al., 2019), and promoted empowerment and financial autonomy (Sanders, 2016).

Despite these good results, the literature acknowledges hindering effects for the implementation of interventions. Longer-term results in economic self-sufficiency and economic stability are limited though there were positive impacts from budgeting and saving small amounts (Tuominen & Thompson, 2015). Client's needs and (cognitive and emotional) ability to receive help require more attention to success with the implementation of the interventions in social work (Tlapek et al., 2022; Tuominen & Thompson, 2015; Warren et al., 2019). Social work is still too often concentrating on money management or how to decrease expenses and debt instead of exploring ways to increase income and resources or avoid future risks (Despard et al., 2012). Thus, although the results are quite positive in general, they are not uncomplicated.

Another result is the need to pay attention to financial literacy and financial knowledge among professionals. The response the client receives from the social worker impacts the promotion of financial capability (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016; Tlapek et al., 2022). Agencies and social service expertise are shaped not only by social policy or empirical interventions, but also by tacit practice knowledge and knowledge and skills among professionals (Castro Baker & Keene, 2016; Despard et al., 2012; Silva-Martínez et al., 2015). Social workers and other professionals consider financial education, assessment and financial counselling the best way to help clients with financial concerns, but they have reported a lack of expertise (Despard et al., 2012). Professionals need an understanding of what best suits the client's situation (Silva-Martínez et al., 2015).

One result is also the relevance of structural interventions that create an impact through supportive institutional settings to promote financial capability. In Huang et al. (2013), this setting and empirical support of studies for financial access is seen as crucial for expanding financial capability. The emphasis on financial access is based on the notion that financial knowledge and education alone are not sufficient in enhancing financial capability (see Huang et al., 2016, 2013; Murshid, 2018). Instead, children and families can gain the best support by policy that integrates interventions with social services.

Discussion

The promotion of financial capability among families with children has been examined in social work through a variety of experiments, with one baseline survey (the SEED OK experiment) being stressed in the literature. Thematically, financial capability is connected to several issues of family problems, such as intimate or domestic violence. The literature contains several actors (families, parents and professionals) and multiple aspects of family life. Families and households have a large range of factors linked to the promotion of financial capability in social work. The knowledge of contexts is limited, but there is a large understanding about the phenomenon. A lack of evidence-based knowledge is obvious. The findings support Birkenmaier et al.'s (2022) results, who have conducted a systematic review on financial capability interventions: the evidence is sparse about whether the interventions improved participants' financial behaviours and/or outcomes. The lack of evidence across interventions points to the need to develop a more definitive evidence base for financial capability interventions regarding financial outcomes (Birkenmaier et al., 2022).

Formal interventions and methods themselves in social work practice to promote financial capability are twofold. These emphasise financial education as a key contributor to financial capability. The cognitive and behavioural perspectives are underlined. A variety of tailored programmes are intended to increase financial knowledge and skills through educational goals. At the same time, enhancing financial inclusion is highlighted. Interventions are integrated through strengthening accessibility and appropriability in services. Thus, interventions and methods in the literature demonstrate that improving financial capability in financially vulnerable families is not only a matter of impacting individual behaviour and literacy, but also a matter of changing institutions and impacting financial opportunities to act. This means that we need interdisciplinary and multidimensional knowledge to ensure that our expertise in social work is based on a reliable understanding.

There is a lack of strong evidence, even for the mechanisms such as psychosocial elements of support. Controversially, however, certain psychosocial elements of support, such as trust in the person delivering the intervention, are named in the literature as impacting the elements in the implementation of the programmes. Scholars have repeatedly discussed factors such as the client's inner trust and confidence towards the programme impacting the implementation. Thus, these studies imply that psychosocial elements of support can facilitate the success of the intervention and activate that intervention.

The results of financial interventions, methods and mechanisms have been brought up to be quite positive. The literature indicates that interventions promoting financial capability provide tools for clients to help strengthen economic self-sufficiency and increase financial confidence. Financial literacy has also been reported to reduce physical health symptoms related to clients' concerns, thereby increasing their general well-being.

Despite these positive results, social work practice too often concentrates on money management, such as budgeting or how to decrease expenses and debt, failing to explore the ways in which clients can increase income and other resources or avoid future risks (Despard et al., 2012). The focus should be enlarged from the question of how to survive financially towards how to improve financial well-being. Financial inclusion and financial access are highlighted as important perspectives.

Social work practice and policy should consider implementing different interventions to respond to the unique experiences of poverty, the needs of support and relying more consciously on the psychosocial elements of support in the families. The implementation of methods and interventions requires special attention. Every family has a unique situation, and listening to family member's stories and experiences can strengthen understanding about family life and the need for support. It is important that social workers or other workers fit the interventions and methods to the unique situation. The right timing, sequencing and delivery are crucial. Thus, the knowledge of interventions and methods is important in social work, but equally important is knowing how to use the methods in the right way.

Finally, we conclude that though the review is based on studies conducted in non-European countries the findings are relevant in the European context as well. Findings from this review exemplify the need to strengthen knowledge on financial capability interventions recognising the value of context-specific characteristics. Evidence-based practice and the development of financial capability interventions on sound evidence is critical in the field of European social work. Promotion of financial capability within the field of social work can support facilitating sustainable development and well-being and combating inequality.

Notes

1. Based on the notion that the articles addressed the use of interventions and strategies that promote financial literacy in families or households supported the inclusion of the studies in the review.
2. TVEAP (Treasure Valley Economic Action Program) is a community-based economic education initiative for the victims of IPV. It includes financial education and a credit counseling program. In the program they use REAP curriculum to underscore safety issues as a central component; including discussion of economic abuse in intimate partner relationships, and short- and long-term financial goals, and focus on not only strategies that address basic financial skills. It also empowers women and gives them a sense of hope about their financial future (Sanders, 2016).

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