

Perceptions of success of a local UK public health collaborative

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Avon Network for the Promotion of Active Ageing in the Community (AVONet) was a UK collaborative developed to provide evidence-based strategies for active ageing.

Funded for 10 months by the Lifelong Health and Well-Being (LLHW) research initiative (£48 058)



Aim:

This study explored the **success** of **AVONet** in the achievement of its objectives as **perceived by AVONet** Partners

a) academics

b) practitioners (e.g. health professionals, local authority service providers, charitable trust employees and volunteers)

Questions:

The degree to which:

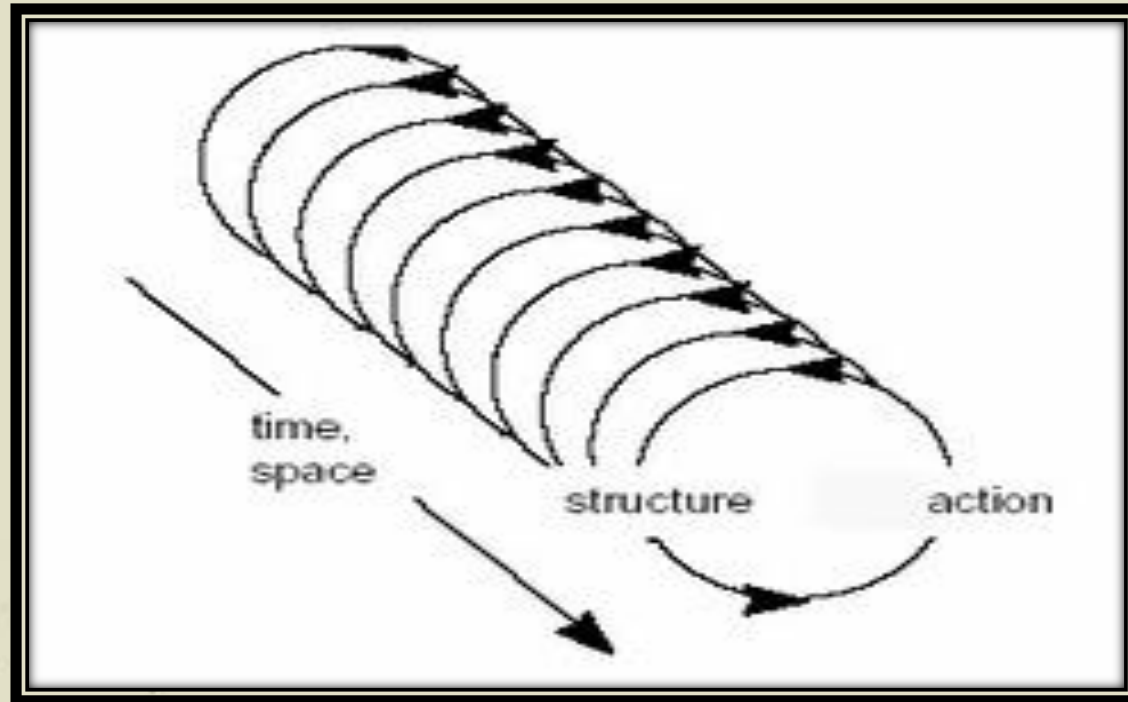
(i) AVONet was perceived by its partners to be successful/unsuccessful in achieving its aims and objectives?

(ii) The structure and partner interactions built within the collaborative were related to its perceived success/lack of success?

(iii) the AVONet was seen to be sustainable? (Potential for sustainability)

(iv) There was a difference in these perceptions between academic and practitioner partners?

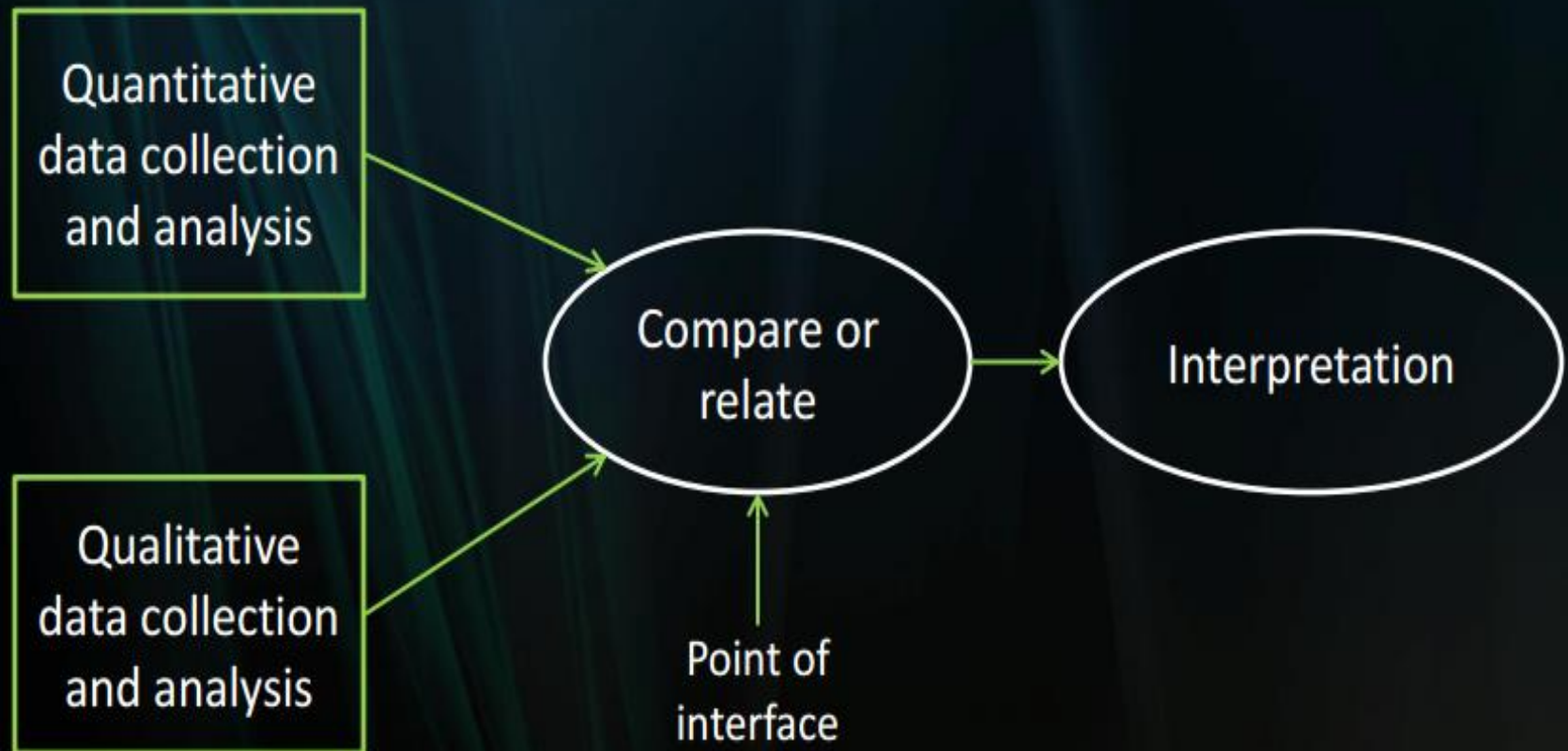
Structuration theory



Method:

Convergent parallel mixed method utilizing a quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured interviews.

- Convergent parallel design (diagram)



Method:

University academics (n = 14) were selected to provide diverse academic perspectives on ageing including primary care, public health, psychology, sociology, transport, as well as PA and were involved in the proposal for funding for the collaborative.

Once funded, practitioners were invited to join the collaborative and five health professionals, 13 local authority service providers and 16 charitable trust employees and volunteers enrolled. This resulted in a total of 48 AVONet contributors.



Survey

Data collection was undertaken in September 2010, 18 months after establishing the collaborative and 6 months after funding had ceased

An anonymous **online survey** was designed using the framework of Structuration Theory.

AVONet partners (**n = 24**) completed a 23-item survey.

Mann-Whitney U-tests were used to compare the distribution of responses.

Spearman's correlations were used to assess the relationships between perceived success, structure, interactions and sustainability.

Interview:

Individuals were purposively sampled from the group of AVONet contributors to participate in a semi-structured interview. Out of 12 purposively selected individuals, 8 agreed to participate in interview (four academics and four practitioners)

Quantitative and qualitative comparisons were made between academics' and practitioners' perceptions of success, potential for sustainability and satisfaction with structure and relationships.

Results:

Participants perceived the AVONet collaborative positively.

Significant between-group (academic vs practitioner) differences in survey responses were observed for success ($U = 19.5$; $p = 0.003$) and structure ($U = 125.5$; $p = 0.001$).

Strong positive correlations were observed between success and structure and balance between information transfer and exchange ($r = 0.756$; $p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Positive responses and group differences for each survey section

	Overall Number/24 (%) of positive responses ^a	Academics Number/11 (%) of positive responses ^a	Practitioners Number/13 (%) of positive responses ^a	<i>p</i> value for group difference in overall responses	Mann– Whitney <i>U</i>
Success in achieving AVONet aims and objectives (eight items)					
Overall feelings	24 (100)	11 (100)	13 (100)	0.013*	113.5
Held series of meetings with multidisciplinary contributions	20 (83.3)	10 (90.9)	10 (76.9)	0.277	91.0
Synthesized the existing evidence	17 (70.8)	9 (81.8)	8 (61.5)	0.424	85.5
Analysed existing relevant local qualitative and quantitative data	18 (75.0)	10 (90.9)	8 (61.5)	0.047*	105.5
Compared options for physical activity promotion against evidence and feasibility criteria	17 (70.8)	9 (81.8)	8 (61.5)	0.207	93.5
Incorporated service user views through workshops and focus groups	17 (70.8)	10 (90.9)	7 (53.9)	0.082	101.5
Synthesized all information to produce a set of ‘best bet’ options for activity promotion	15 (62.5)	11 (100)	4 (30.8)	<0.001**	120.5
Prepared at least one substantial research proposal for evaluation of a ‘best bet’ physical activity promotion	19 (79.2)	10 (90.9)	9 (69.2)	0.035*	108.0

Success:

Quantitative: Significant differences for overall feelings ($U = 113.5$; $p = 0.013$)

Existing local data were analyzed ($U = 105.5$; $p = 0.047$),

Producing 'Best bet' options for PA promotion ($U = 120.5$; $p < 0.001$)

Producing a research proposal ($U = 108.0$; $p = 0.035$).

Qualitative: Academic participants based their positive views of success on development of the research proposal.

In contrast, practitioners highlighted specified practical reasons why the collaborative had been useful for them.

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Structure:

Quantitative: Between-group differences emerged for overall satisfaction ($U = 114.5$; $p = 0.011$)

Degree of interdisciplinarity ($U = 114.0$; $p = 0.013$)

contribution to meeting individual organizations' aims and objectives ($U = 107.0$; $p = 0.035$)

Influence of personal actions ($U = 107.5$; $p = 0.041$).

strong positive correlation between the mean structure and success ratings ($r = 0.756$; $p < 0.001$)

Table 1: Positive responses and group differences for each survey section. Cont.

For all success items	18.4 (76.7)	10 (90.9)	8 (62.3)	0.003**	19.5
Structure (five items)					
Overall satisfaction with structure	11 (45.8)	8 (72.7)	3 (23.1)	0.011*	114.5
Degree of interdisciplinarity	18 (75.0)	10 (90.9)	8 (61.5)	0.013*	114.0
Contribution to meeting AVONet aims and objectives	14 (58.3)	7 (63.6)	7 (53.9)	0.134	97.5
Contribution to meeting your organization's aims and objectives	14 (58.3)	9 (81.8)	5 (38.5)	0.035*	107.0
Influence of personal actions on AVONet structure	7 (29.2)	4 (36.4)	3 (23.1)	0.041*	107.5
For all structure items	12.8 (53.3)	7.6 (69.1)	5.2 (40.0)	0.001**	125.5
Information exchange (one item)					
Good balance between transfer and input from partners	15 (62.5)	9 (81.8)	6 (46.2)	0.134	97.5
Benefits of sustainability (three items)					
For physical activity of local people	18 (75.4)	10 (90.9)	8 (61.5)	0.106	99.5
For research with the AVON area	17 (70.8)	9 (81.8)	8 (61.5)	0.494	84.0
For the achieving the aims of you organization	18 (75.0)	9 (81.8)	9 (69.2)	0.531	82.5
For all sustainability items	17.7 (73.8)	9.3 (84.6)	8.3 (63.9)	0.223	51.0

Structure:

Qualitative: Participants highlighted the importance of the CMG, hierarchical structure and workshops.

The structure was perceived to aid relationship building and efficient use of collaborative partners' time

Interactions within AVONet:

Quantitative: Overall group differences in responses were not significant ($U = 97.5$; $p = 0.134$).

A strong positive correlation was observed between the mean success rating and perceived balance between information transfer and exchange ($r = 0.545$; $p = 0.009$).

Qualitative: Academics commented on useful interactions with practitioners, such as the selection of partners to work with on further research grant applications, and suggested social reasons for success, such as friendly leadership.

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Sustainability:

Quantitative: No significant between-group differences in overall responses ($U = 51.0$; $p = 0.223$).

Qualitative: Suggestions were made regarding format change, such as forming smaller working groups, increasing focus upon service delivery, involving policy makers and budget holders and collaborating with practitioners on successful project bids.

Results:

Qualitative: Interviews confirmed positive perceptions and perceived importance of the collaborative and highlighted the need for further integration and tangible outcomes for practitioners.



Conclusion:


Perceived success in building a multi-sectoral collaborative can be achieved during a 10-month period, despite differing needs of contributors.

Suggestions:

Core management group: Collaboratives should be governed by a fully representative CMG from initiation

Inclusion: Accessible meetings, communication aligned with language of each organization and a dedicated facilitator should be utilized to promote relationship building.

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Aims: Practitioners and end users should be involved from initiation to develop common goals, which are reviewed at regular, pre-determined time intervals.

Smaller working groups: Small, informal working groups should be established.

Funding: Funding for collaboratives of academics and health practitioners with a broad set of aims that include service delivery and evaluation should be encouraged

Thanks for your attention

