

Facing students with chronic pain: a survey with experienced teachers and education undergraduates

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INTRODUCTION

Children with chronic pain (CP), as any other child, must attend school. Students with CP may experience difficulties in social, academic, and physical functioning¹. Teachers could greatly contribute to children's adjustment and help them to improve their quality of life.

The aims of this work were:

- 1) to explore the reactions to students' pain from experienced teachers and undergraduates of the Bachelor's Degree of Education and the problems they foresee in dealing with CP students,
- 2) to identify what might help them to support these students,
- 3) to compare teachers' and undergraduates' responses.



METHOD

Procedure

Teachers were requested to collaborate in the study by email. Those interested had to answer an online survey. Education undergraduates filled in a paper survey at Rovira i Virgili University.

Measures

✓ The Inventory of Parent/Caregiver Responses teachers' version, created to pick up the responses of teachers when dealing with a student in pain. It is based on the Inventory of Parent/Caregiver Responses to the children's pain experience (IRPEDNA)²

✓ Both questionnaires were compound by solicitous, discouragement and coping behaviors.

- Solicitous behaviours (i.e., "I allow a student in pain to do the activities that he /she likes the most").
- Discouragement behaviours (i.e. "I do not give importance because I think he is exaggerating a bit").
- Coping and promoting health behaviors (i.e. "I recommend him/her to relax and breathe deeply").

A list of problems participants may encounter in front of a student with CP:

- CP students' absenteeism.
- Difficulties of CP students doing some activities.
- CP students' requirements of being treated differently.
- Personal lack of knowledge about syndrome and diseases that can cause CP.
- Personal lack of knowledge about what is and what means suffering CP.
- Making adaptations for CP students (i.e. reducing academic standards).
- Facilitating a regular interaction with peers.
- Providing suitable information to other students.
- Combining the needs of a CP student and the others in the class.
- Having meetings with parents.
- Promoting a school policy that facilitates the integration and adaptation of children with CP.

A list of strategies that might help when facing students in CP:

- Having suitable knowledge about what is and what means suffering CP.
- Having guidelines to deal with a CP student.
- Collaboration and support from healthcare professionals.
- Counting on the collaboration of families.

Data analyses

- After calculating percentages for each problem and strategy, **chi square tests** were conducted to study the differences between teachers' and undergraduates' difficulties and strategies.
- **T-tests** were performed to explore the differences between teachers and undergraduates on solicitous, discouragement and coping behaviors.

RESULTS

Table 1. Teachers' characteristics.

	Teachers (n=40)
Age, mean (SD)	41.40 (8.74)
Women	83%
Experience with students suffering CP	34%
Years of teaching experience, mean (SD)	14.41 (9.4)
Teaching level	
Preschool level	5%
Preschool + Primary level	8%
Primary level	22%
Secondary level	65%

*p<0.05
**p<0.01

Table 2. Undergraduates' characteristics.

	Undergraduates (n=155)
Age, mean (SD)	23.5 (5.19)
Women	97%
Experience with students suffering CP	6 %
Training in school placements	79%
Undergraduates' Degree	
Degree in Preschool Education	80%
Degree in Social Education	1%
Degree in Primary Education	19%
Undergraduates' year	
Second year	48%
Third year	3%
Fourth year	48%

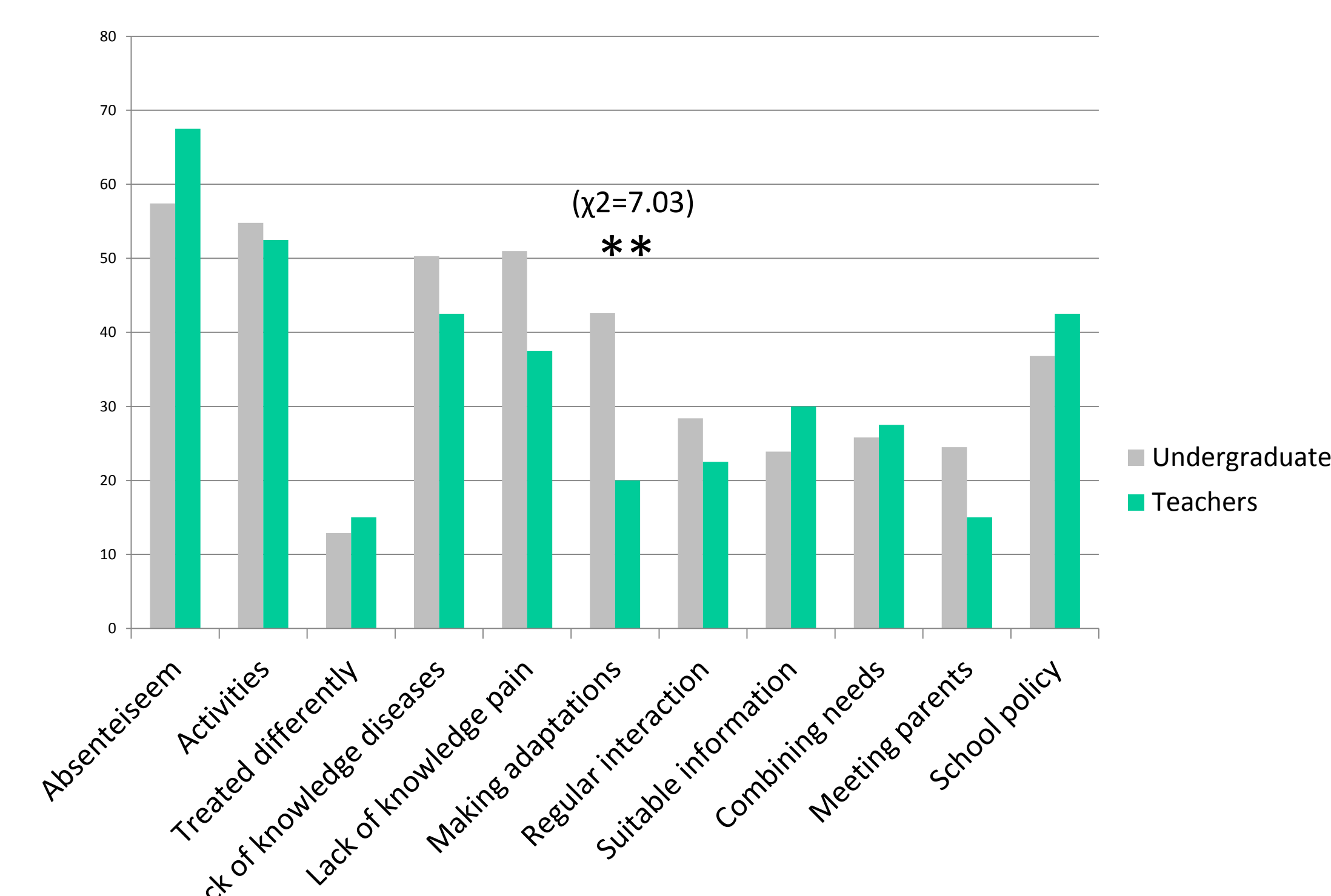


Figure 2. Group differences between teachers and undergraduates on problems.

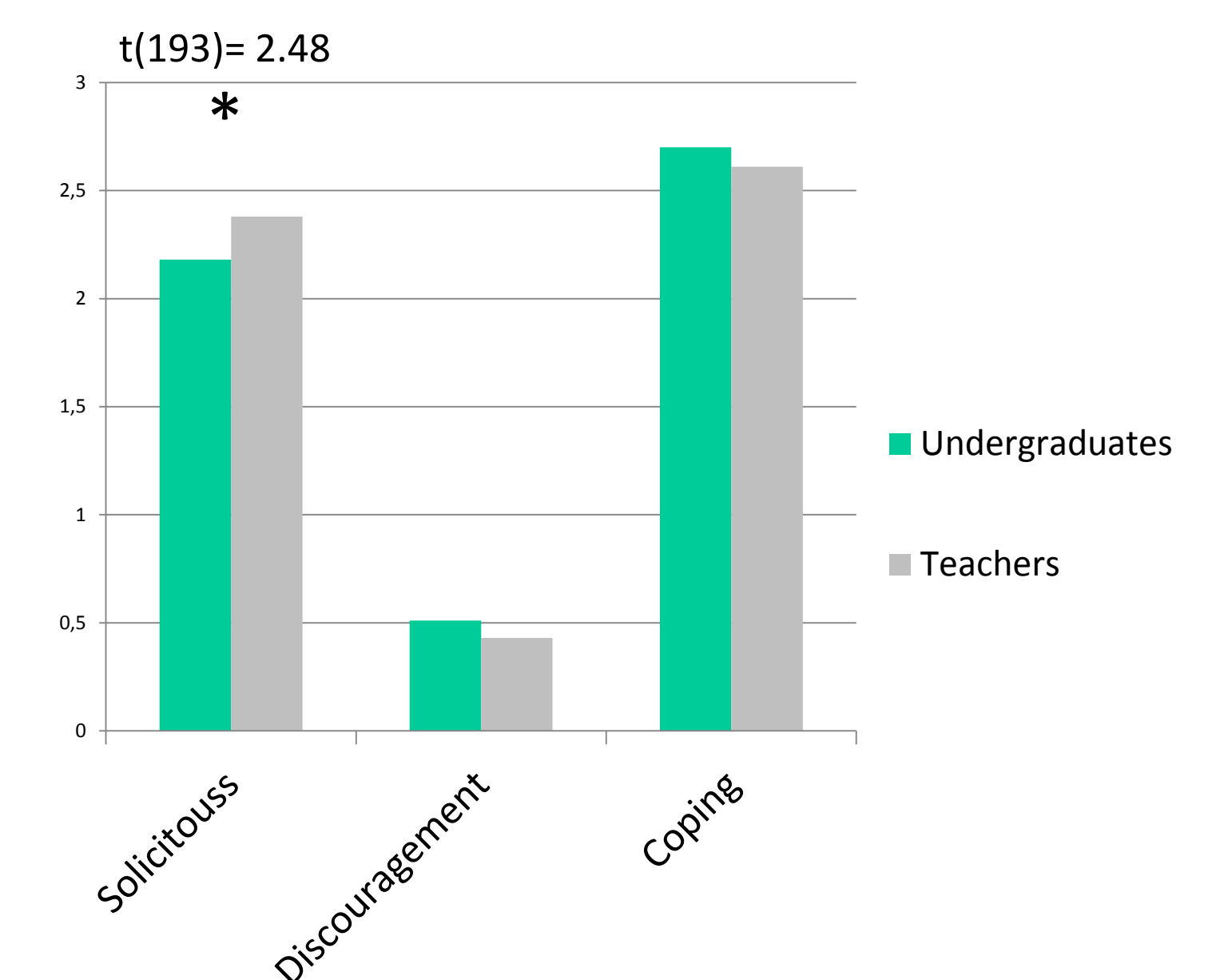


Figure 1. Group differences between teachers and undergraduates on responses to students' pain behaviors.

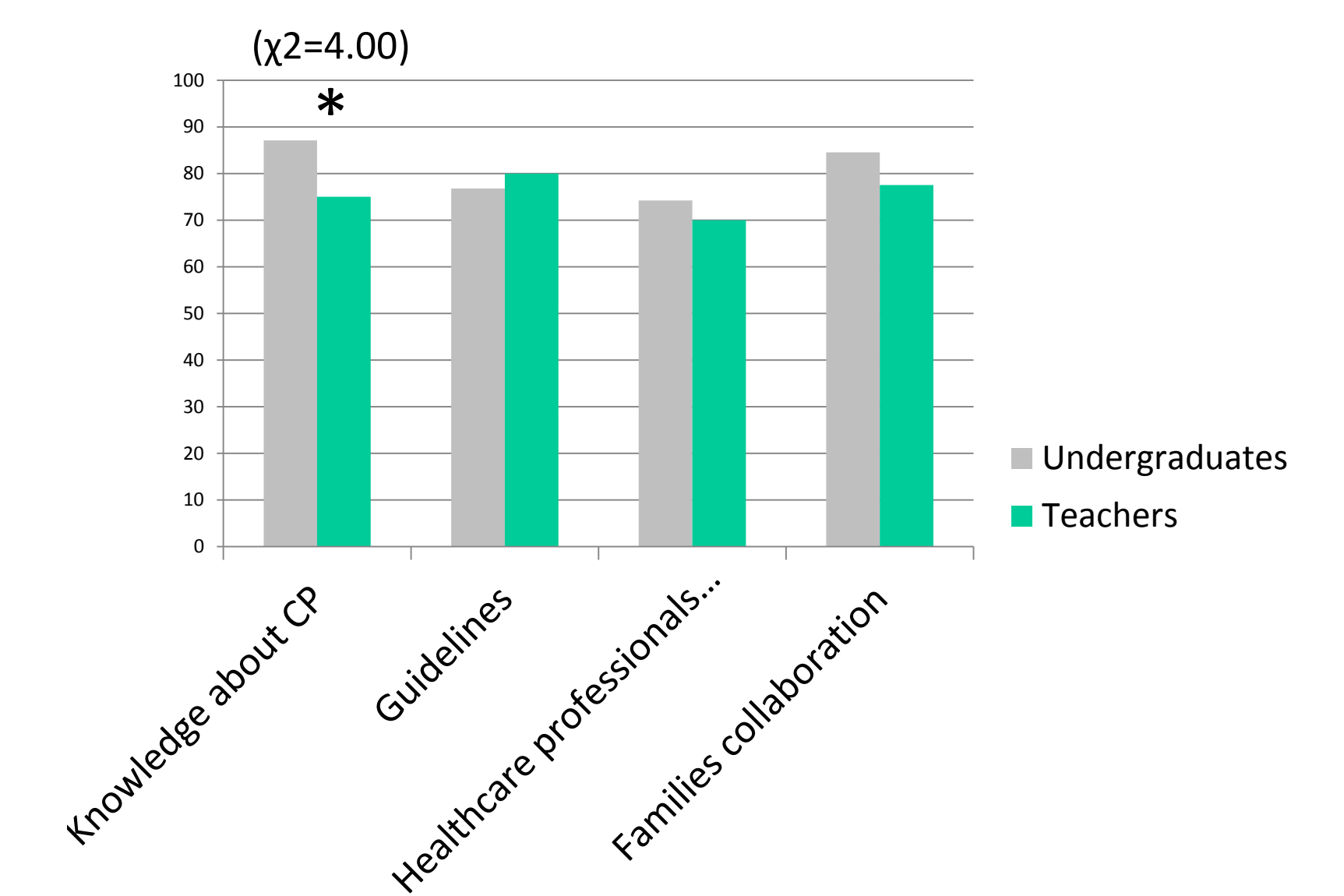


Figure 3. Group differences between teachers and undergraduates on strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

- ✓ A similar pattern of responses, difficulties and supports was reported by expert teachers and undergraduates when approaching students in pain.
- ✓ Results might be of help to develop guidelines to support teacher's actions when dealing with CP students as well as to improve undergraduate's training.

REFERENCES

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- [2] Huguet, A., Miró, J., & Nieto, R. (2008). The inventory of parent/caregiver responses to the children's pain experience (IRPEDNA): development and preliminary validation. *Pain*, 134(1-2), 128–139.

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