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Development of the Group Intervention Program for Parents - Competence: To be P+
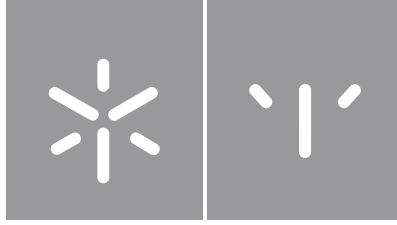
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Universidade do Minho
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Development of the Group Intervention Program for Parents - Competence: To be P+

Dissertação de Mestrado
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STATEMENT OF INTEGRATY

I hereby declare having conducted this academic work with integrity. I confirm that I have not used plagiarism or any form of undue use of information or falsification of results along the process leading to its elaboration. I further declare that I have fully acknowledged the Code of Ethical Conduct of the University of Minho.

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Ana Sofia Ramôa de Carvalho

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Desenvolvimento de um Programa de Intervenção em Grupo para Pais - Competência: Ser P+

Resumo

A literatura científica mostrar que os pais que aprendem competências parentais positivas melhoram não só o seu bem-estar, como também o dos seus filhos. Este estudo descreve o desenvolvimento de um programa de intervenção em grupo para pais de adolescentes do 10° ao 12° ano, intitulado ''Competência: Ser P +'', juntamente com as etapas envolvidas na criação da estrutura e conteúdo do programa (sessões, objetivos, atividades e materiais). O "Competência: Ser P +" é um programa de prevenção que procura educar os pais sobre os conhecimentos, recursos e competências necessárias para o dia a dia com seus os seus adolescentes, com base nos seguintes conceitos: parentalidade positiva, desenvolvimento na adolescência, fontes de conhecimento parental e comportamentos de cuidar. Estes conceitos traduzem-se nos seguintes objetivos, promover: a parentalidade positiva, o conhecimento sobre o período da adolescência, um relacionamento saudável entre pais e adolescentes e ajudar a prevenir o envolvimento de adolescente em comportamentos de risco. Além disso, este estudo também descreve o planeamento de um estudo piloto com o objetivo de avaliar se a estrutura do programa (i.e., duração das sessões e atividades, linguagem do material e instrumentos) e o conteúdo são relevantes e adequados para a população-alvo.

Palavras-chave: intervenção positiva em grupo, parentalidade positiva, relação pais-filhos, adolescência.

Development of the Group Intervention Program for Parents - Competence: To be P +

Abstract

Research shows that parents who learn positive parenting skills improve not only their well-being but their children's as well. This study describes the development of a group intervention program for parents of adolescent's in grades 10th to 12th, titled "Competence: To Be P+", along with steps made in creating the program's structure and contents (sessions, aims, activities and materials). "Competence: To be P+" is a prevention program that strives for educating the parents on knowledge, resources and the skills needed on a day to day basis with their adolescents. The present program is based on the following concepts: positive parenting, adolescence development, sources of parental knowledge and nurturing parental behaviors, that translate into the following main aims, promoting: positive parenting, knowledge about the period of adolescence, a healthy parent-adolescent relationship, and help prevent the adolescent's involvement in risky behaviors. In addition, this study also describes the planning of a pilot study, which aims to assess if the structure of the program (e.g., duration of the sessions and activities, language for the material and instruments) and contents are considered relevant and adequate for the target population.

Keywords: positive group intervention, positive parenting, parent-child relationship, adolescence.

Tables List

Development of the Group Intervention Program for Parents - Competence: To be P +

The adolescence period is marked by challenges that adolescents need to overcome and as such, can be demanding for both youth and those who surround them, especially their parents. Examples of these challenges are, exploration of new roles (social and sexual), physical changes, identity formation, planning of the future, and changes in the relationship with their parents (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). The shifts in the parent-adolescent relationship occur due to hormonal changes, and the development of the adolescents' abstract reasoning during puberty. These combined make the adolescents strive for a more horizontal, reciprocal, and egalitarian relationship, in opposition to a vertical relationship, in which parents hold higher knowledge and social power (Branje, 2018; Smetana, 1989). Vertical relationships evolving into horizontal relationships can create conflict. These conflicts surface when expectations concerning appropriate behavior differ for parents and adolescents regarding their timing of transition (Collins et al., 1997; Smetana, 1989). Adolescents want to achieve authority, autonomy, and responsibility more rapidly than they develop self-regulation, while parents want a more balanced relationship between these dimensions (Collins et al, 1987). Since the changes during puberty occur at a swift pace if the adolescents do not have the necessary resources to surpass them, it can lead them to embark on maladaptive trajectories (Bizarro,1999). As a result, the changes associated with puberty are often viewed as negative more than positive, and thus leads society and parents to describe teenagers as "puzzling, troublesome, angry, and ungrateful" (Lerner & Galambos, 1998) and adolescence as the "stormy years" (Steinberg, 2001). However, an outlook on positive youth development has been growing in the last decades, which focus on the qualities, strengths, interests, and potentialities that youth has and how to promote these for their future in an optimal way (Lerner & Galambos, 2002). Changing the idea that youth is problematic to society for youth as resources (Damon, 2004). It is this view of positive development that surfaced on the scientific literature that needs to reach the parents, since the most optimal adjustment for adolescents cannot happen without encouragement from the parents and their family (Allen, 2010).

Parenting can be a strong determinant of adolescent's health and well-being, or if negative, parenting can influence the development and maintenance of problem behaviors, such as externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, drug use, underage drinking, deviant peer affiliation and opposition) and psychopathologies (e.g., humor disorders) (Hoskins, 2014; Morris et al., 2017; Sanders, 2012). Subsequently showing parents the influence that parenting has during adolescence and its consequences is crucial, since this impact stays with the adolescents into adulthood (Hoskins, 2014).

This study will detail the steps involved in developing an intervention program for parents of adolescents. Starting with a revision of group intervention norms, current scientific literature on parenting to the construction of the program (aims, sessions and activities), and finally planning the evaluation of the program (pilot study: methods and instruments).

Principles of Effective Programs and Group Intervention for Parents

Nation et al., (2003) proposed a set of principles that constitute an effective prevention intervention program, these are: to be comprehensive, theory driven, appropriately timed, socioculturally relevant and have varied teaching methods, sufficient dosage, positive relationships, outcome evaluation, and well-trained staff. Being comprehensive means to be a multicomponent intervention that address several critical domains (e.g., family, peers, community). To be theory driven, the program needs to be based on accurate information, and supported by empirical research, while for being appropriately timed and socioculturally relevant, it means that the program is initiated early enough to have an impact on the development of the targeted problem, is sensitive to the developmental needs of participants, and is tailored to fit the cultural norms and community of the participants. To include varied teaching methods is important since it increases the awareness of the participants to the problem and to acquire new enhancing skills. Sufficient dosage is crucial, so the intervention produces the desired effects. Promoting positive relationships, entails enriching strong relationships and supporting positive outcomes. Finally, an effective program should have outcome evaluation and well trained staff, which involves the setting of aims and documenting the results relative to these aims to gather if the strategies used worked, as well as, providing the staff with enough training regarding the implementation of the program. As described, these are important principals to achieve in building an effective program, and thus they will guide the construction of the group intervention program: "Competence: To be P+".

Intervention programs created to be held in group offer an ideal environment to learn and discuss subjects linked to adolescence and parenting, since the parents can experience a greater sense of commonality and belonging, variety of resources and viewpoints, and real-life approximations with the other members of the group (Jacobs et al., 2015). Many parents may believe that what they are experiencing or what their children are experiencing throughout adolescence is unique, thus having parents together in a group allows them to discover that they are, in fact, not alone in their experiences, and often identify with one another in their difficulties and achievements which grants a greater sense of commonality and belonging (Jacobs et al., 2015). In group settings it is easier to find a larger variety of resources and viewpoints, since each member can contribute with a multiplicity of different views on the

same subjects and therefore enrich the experience for the group (Jacobs et al., 2015), especially in groups where discussion is welcomed, as it is in our mentioned program. In group settings it is possible to replicate real-life situations better than in individual interventions, which facilitates the learning experience for the members of the group that have access to a safe atmosphere where then can share their emotions, attitudes and action to be discussed (Jacobs et al., 2015).

Additional to the four previous reasons mentioned to conduct a group intervention, are commitment and efficacy (Jacobs et al., 2015). When interventions are conducted in group, a higher level of commitment is achieved, since the motivation to honor the commitment proposed, is higher if made to several people, opposed to one person (Jacobs et al., 2015). This also rings true to intervention for parenting which often require work on specific concerns and thus a stronger commitment is required to achieve desired results (Jacobs et al., 2015). Finally, efficiency is greater in group settings, since it can save considerable time and effort (Jacobs et al., 2015), a larger number of parents have access to our intervention in a smaller period of time, often saving resources.

Positive Parenting

According to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe launched Recommendation 19 (2006) on ''Policy to Support Positive Parenting'', Positive Parenting is defined as "parental behavior based on the best interest of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child". Thus, positive parenting strives for encouraging respect for the children, development of their self-esteem, self-confidence, responsibility, and resourcefulness (Rodrigo, 2010), with its main goal being promoting positive parent-child relationships and improving the child's potential development and well-being (Ahmann, 2002). When positive parenting is practiced, outcomes such as fewer behavioral and emotional problems in children, less parental conflict, and more positive parent-child interactions are achieved (Sanders, 2012). Furthermore, additional research on interventions for parenting demonstrate that when parents learn positive parenting, there is an improvement of their parental practices (Sanders, 2012), parents feel good about parenting, and consequently are more likely to engage positively with their teenagers (Ahmann, 2002), with this, more pleasure is derived from parenting and they feel more competent and less stressed in their parenting role (Moretti & Obsuth, 2009). Demonstrating that interventions based on positive parenting not only yield benefits for the children but also for their parents, since it results in improved mental health for both, as well as an increase in the positive engagement between parent and child (Sanders, 2012).

The Conceptual Framework of the Group Intervention Program "Competence: To Be P+"

This study describes the development of a psychological group intervention program for parents titled "Competence: To Be P+" (Competence: To be P plus). This program is part of the intervention program called "Competence: To Be +" for adolescents from 10th to 12th grade, integrated into the "To be +" (To be plus) project, which has the main aim to equip teenagers with skills, allowing them to develop a healthy life trajectory. In turn, the "To be +" project is divided into three intervention programs dedicated to the different phases of adolescence: "Challenge: To be +" (from 7th to 9th grade), "Competence: To Be +" (from 10th to 12th grade), and "Decision: To be +" (1st year of university, currently being develop). This project is funded by the Gulbenkian Academies for Knowledge, an institution dedicated to preparing children and young people for the future, through the development of skills that will qualify them to deal with complex problems and expand their opportunities for success.

The group intervention program "Competence: To Be P+" is then developed to be a prevention program with a psychoeducational base for parents that complements the group intervention program for adolescents "Competence: To Be +", and as such, the parents and children participate in their designated programs simultaneously. While "Competence: To Be +" aims to provide adolescents with skills that enable a healthy development; maximize adaptative behaviors and implement daily knowledge of positive personal characteristics, consequently preventing youth involvement in risky behaviors.

The "Competence: To Be P+" strives to promote positive feelings about parenting through positive parenting, knowledge about the period of adolescence with a focus on teaching parents current, and up to date scientific based literature to help prevent the adolescents involvement in risky behaviors. At the same time promote their optimal development and enhance parent-adolescent relationships. To achieve these set aims, three main topics were selected as base for the "Competence: To Be P+" program: adolescence development, sources of parental knowledge, and nurturing behaviors, based on the literature that follows.

Adolescent Development and Misconceptions

To be able to distinguish common behaviors from "problem" behavior, during each stage of development, parents need to learn and understand normative development (Ahmann, 2002). Thus, one of the main aims of the "Competence: To Be P+" program is to show parents what are the biological, psychological, and social challenges youth goes through in adolescence and demystify common beliefs the public and consequently the parents have about this period of development.

Typically, as mentioned previously, conflicts between parents and adolescents tend to give adolescence a negative connotation, yet conflicts can help teenagers develop emotional regulation skills, emotional variability, autonomy, and readjust parent-child relationship towards a more horizontal and reciprocal one (Branje, 2018; Collins et al, 1997). Thus conflicts can have positive outcomes when there is a context for teenagers and parents to express their negative emotions, and this context is restricted in time and space (e.g., when parents and teenagers show disagreement about the a subject, but express support and interest regarding other subjects a moment right after, being that the conflict ended with the previous subject and did not interfered with the next ones) (Branje, 2018). However it is still extremely important to mention that, in contrast, too many conflicts are a risk for adolescents and can affect their well-being, resulting in lower levels of self-esteem, adjustment at school, and more frequent substance use (Branje, 2018). Therefore, it is important to show the parents participating in our program that conflicts are not strictly something bad and undesirable, but there is a need for balance and appropriate handling of these arguments so the benefits can occur without the possible described downsides.

Another misconception previously considered in this study, is the idea that adolescence is just a "stormy" period (Steinberg, 2001), which usually originates from the false impression that the majority of adolescents develop psychopathologies like anxiety or get involved in risky behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Yet most adolescents do not, as reported by Bandura (1964) and more recently Hollenstein & Lougheed (2013). Why does the public and parents still believe this misconception? Usually it derives from the depiction of adolescence by the media as such, a period of conflicts and risky behavior (Bandura, 1964; Arnett, 1999). Yet, in the last decades, a view on positive youth development has emerged. This view surged from the need to prevent the onset of behavioral problems in adolescents, rather than just treat them when they appear (Lerner et al., 2000). To accomplish this, promoting adolescents' social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development has become the key to preventing behavioral problems (Catalano et al., 2004), thus focusing on the skills and potentialities that the adolescents have and can develop.

The final misconception is the notion that adolescents only care about their friends. Although a small portion of adolescents say that their relationship with their parents deteriorates in the first years of adolescence, in general, youth feels close to their parents, think positively of them, and want to spend time with them (More et al., 2004). In a study by More, et al., (2004) with adolescents from the ages of 14 to 17, 84% of adolescents, strongly agreed that they think highly of their mother while 81% think highly of their fathers. Additionally, 79% reported that they really like spending time with their mothers, while76%, really like spending time with their fathers, thus showing that the idea that most adolescents do not enjoy

their parents' company is incorrect. If parents think, mistakenly, that their adolescents do not care about them and do not like to spend time with them, might lead to a serious risk of parents not involving themselves with their children (More et al, 2004). This shows the importance of clarifying the reported misconception, since an optimal development requires the support and involvement of the parents with their children (Allen, 2010).

Sources of Parental Knowledge

A key component of "Competence: To be P+" is showing parents ways to gather parental knowledge of their adolescents' daily activities and how important this concept is in helping prevent adolescents embarking in risk behavior.

Higher levels of parental knowledge are associated with lower levels of risky behavior during adolescence (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Soenens et al., 2006), as well as higher well-being (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). Parental knowledge involves both parental dimensions: solicitation (parents asking their children, their children friends or others for information about their children), and control (restricting the freedom children have to engage in activities parents do not know about, through creating rules and restrictions concerning the activities their children partake in); and children dimensions: child-disclosure (children spontaneously communicating to their parents information about their lives) (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Child-disclosure has been continuously found to be the strongest predictor of parental knowledge when compared to parental solicitation and control (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Soenens et al., 2006), and an overall important predictor of adolescents' good adjustment (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). Disclosing personal issues to parents was associated with less anxiety and depression (Smetana & Metzger, 2008), conversely, non-disclosure was associated with depressive mood and behavioral problems (Frijns et al., 2005). Still, a good relationship between parents and children should consist of a bidirectional process, including parent's solicitation of knowledge and control, and children's child-disclosure, since a parent-child relationship supported only in one of the members is unlikely to protect children from antisocial behavior (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). However, parental knowledge tends to decrease as children enter adolescence, thus emerging the need to promote it and its dimensions, specially child-disclosure (being the strongest predictor of parental knowledge) in adolescents to prevent risky behavior and promote good adjustment (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Racz & McMahon, 2011; Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

To promote child-disclosure, in a more straightforward way, parents can use solicitation, but only if it is used in a caring, respectful, and non-intrusive way, otherwise solicitation can be viewed as an

inhibitor of adolescents' self-disclosure, resulting in adolescents feeling overly controlled (Finkenauer et al., 2002; Hawk et al., 2008; Kerr & Stattin, 2000). A second way to promote child-disclosure is parents own self-disclosure (parental self-disclosure) viewed by their children as a supportive parental behavior (Cozby, 1973; Tokić & Pećnik, 2011). Finally, a warm climate, that encourages openness and communication at home promotes self-disclosure, and in turn seems to be greatly effective in protecting teenagers from risky behaviors (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Nurturing Parental Behaviors

Across literature, research has linked positively parental nurturing behaviors to adolescents' disclosure (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Snoek & Rothblum, 1979). Consequently, teaching parents nurturing parental behaviors (parental warmth and support, parent-child communication, and inductive reasoning), will likely increase parental knowledge (particularly child-disclosure), and in turn help prevent teenagers from partaking in risky behaviors. In addition, higher levels of nurturing parental behaviors alone, are associated with lower levels of risky behaviors and adjustment problems, as well as, higher levels of self-esteem and well-being, facilitating positive adolescent adjustment (Hoskins, 2014).
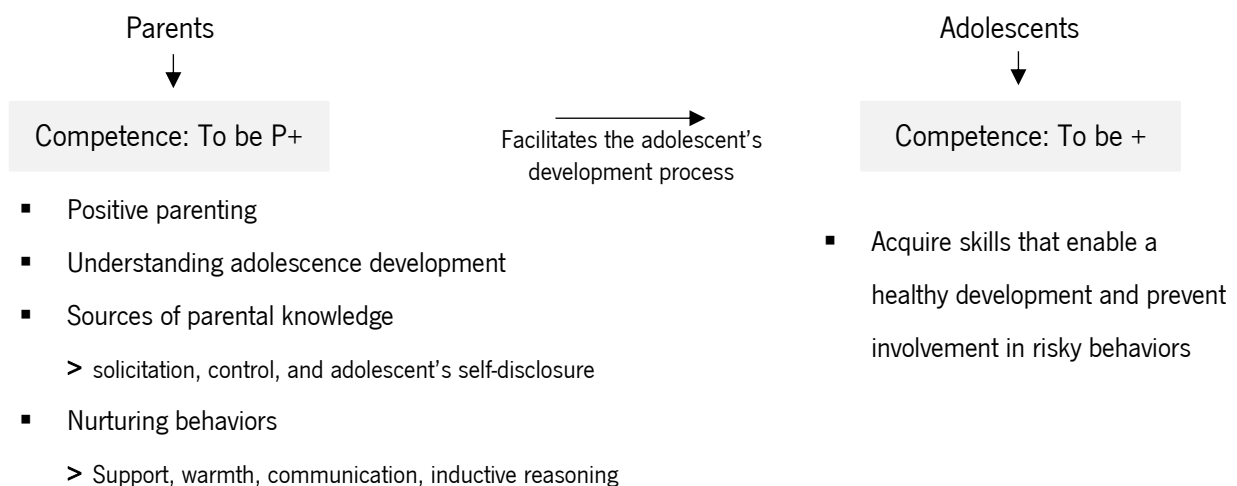
Parental warmth is the degree to each an adolescent is loved and accepted, it is associated with lower levels of externalizing behaviors (alcohol consumption and substance use), and with higher levels of self-esteem over time (Hoskins, 2014; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Doyle & Markiewicz, 2005). Parental support is defined as a close and accepting relationship between adolescents and their parents (Barnow et al., 2002). Higher levels of parental support are associated to lower levels of adjustment problems, and lower levels of irritability and depressive symptoms in adolescents (Aquilino & Supple, 2001). Parental support and warmth were found to decline from early to middle adolescence (Feinberg et al., 2003; Shanahan et al., 2007a; Wickrama et al., 1997) establishing the need to promote these aspects with "Competence: To be P+". Parent-child communication is defined by the frequency (in the last year) that adolescents communicated with their parents about several topics, for example, alcohol, sex or personal problems (Cleveland et al., 2005). An environment where communication is cherished and practiced is associated to teenagers who are successful all through adolescence, without developing problem behaviors (Hoskins, 2014; Smetana et al., 2002). Lastly, inductive reasoning, is used when parents want to help their children identify problems and consequences, providing them with explanations through prompting ideas from them (in contrast to coercive discipline) (Critchley & Sanson, 2006). This form of eliciting thinking from youth is of great importance, since it promotes their capability to evaluate and deal with future similar situations (Critchley & Sanson, 2006; Hoskins, 2014).

Parental nurturing behaviors objective is to provide a positive environment for the parent-child relationship and for the child's emotional development, subsequently parental nurturing behaviors are part of positive parenting, which aims to promote an optimal development for the adolescent, a positive parent-child relationship and well-being for both, just like we propose and aim to achieve with "Competence: To be P+", thus proving to be a key element for integrating to the program.

In Figure 1 we can better see an illustration of the multiple theoretical concepts integrating the "Competence: To be P+" intervention program and its desired contributes to the participants of the "Competence: To be +" intervention program.

Figure 1

The Influence of "Competence: To be +" (Present Program) Towards the "Competence: To be +" (Corresponding Program for the Adolescents)

Parents → Competence: To be P+

- Positive parenting
- Understanding adolescence development
- Sources of parental knowledge
  > solicitation, control, and adolescent's self-disclosure
- Nurturing behaviors
  > Support, warmth, communication, inductive reasoning

Facilitates the adolescent's development process →

Adolescents → Competence: To be +

- Acquire skills that enable a healthy development and prevent involvement in risky behaviors

Aims of the Present Study

The original aim for this study was to develop and conduct a pilot study for the intervention program "Competence: To Be P+". However due to Covid-19 and the measures adopted in Portugal to contain the pandemic that this virus originated throughout the world, conducting the pilot study proved to be impossible. There were no conditions to gather the parents in a group setting and continue the pilot study in safety for everyone involved (parents and staff). Consequently, this study gained a new aim and course of describing in detail the process of development of the group intervention program "Competence: To be P+", as well as the planning of a future pilot study to assess the program and obtain feedback.

Method

Participants

The "Competence: To Be P+" intervention program is targeted at Portuguese parents of the adolescents in the 10th, 11th and, 12th grades, who are participating in the "Competence: To Be+" concurrently.

Procedure for Developing "Competence: To be P+"

To develop "Competence: To be P+" an extensive literature review was done and the topics of positive parenting (what it is and its benefits for both parents and their children), development during adolescence (normative development and common misconceptions), sources of parental knowledge, and nurturing behaviors were selected to frame the contents for the program. In addition, research on interventions in group (understanding its benefits for the target population) and preventive intervention guidelines was done to help build the program in the most effective manner. From the selected topics, the general aims for the program were established, which allowed the creation of each session theme and tittle. After, aims for each session and activities along with the duration of each activity were created. This preparation process involved the design of a technical manual, with guidelines to ensure that the program is implemented consistently in its future, along with the materials used in every session for each activity. The guidelines consist of the description of the sessions: themes, aims, activities, duration, and materials for every activity. After concluding its development, a plan for the program to undergo a pilot study to assess its structure (e.g., sessions, duration) and contents (e.g., themes) adequacy was created.

Figure 2

Steps Involved in Developing "Competence: To be P +" and Planning its Assessment
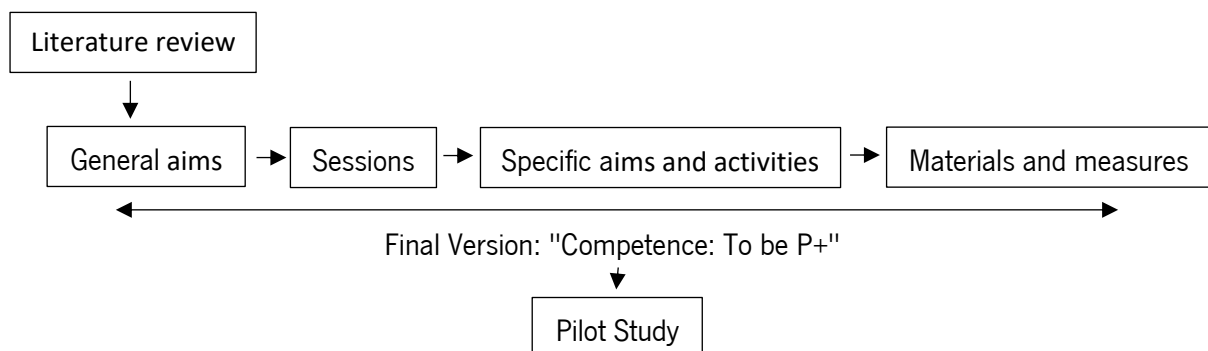
Results: The Group Intervention Program "Competence: To be +"

Program Structure

Four sessions of 90 minutes each (six hours total) originated from the general aims for the program. These four sessions were coordinated with the 10 weekly sessions the adolescents (children of the parents participating in the "Competence: To be P+") partake in their counterpart program: "Competence: To Be +". With session number one of "Competence: To be P+" occurring at the same time with session number one from "Competence: To Be +", then session number two, three and four of the program for the parents happening, respectively, at the same time sessions three, six and nine of the program for adolescents.

An additional fifth encounter was designed together with the adolescents participating in the counterpart program. In this final encounter the participants receive feedback about their participation in the programs, the worksheets they completed along the program (previously kept by the staff to gather the information for evaluating the program), and a certificate of participation in the programs.

Program Content

General and Specific Aims for the Program

The established general aims for the group intervention program "Competence: To Be P+" are, promoting: positive parenting, knowledge about the period of adolescence, a healthy parent-adolescent relationship, and help prevent the adolescent's involvement in risky behaviors. These general aims were the ground for the creation of each of the session's themes, and in turn, the development of specific aims for each of the four sessions. The specific aims can be better examined on Table 1.

Table 1

Structure of the Program "Competence: To Be P +"

Session	Theme	Aims	Activities
1	Knowing the programs and the group	Address the relevance of the program as well as the importance of the parent's participation. Explore the expectations of the participants in relation to the intervention program. Present the themes, aims, and the overall structure of "Competence: To be +" and "Competence: To be P +"	Presentation P+ Relevance of the program Program overview End of session

		Create an atmosphere of openness and trust, favorable to sharing and active participation in the group	
2	Understanding adolescence	Demystify the period of adolescence Characterize the period of development during adolescence and promote a positive focus on it	Myths...? Development through adolescence Adolescence... End of session Inter-session challenge
3	Parents as agents in the promotion of positive youth development	Explore positive parenting Establish the sources of parental knowledge and promote an alternative view of these Demonstrate the importance of adolescents' self-disclosure as the best predictor for less risky behavior in adolescence Establish the bidirectionality of parent-child relationships Promote positive parenting strategies: Caring behaviors	Inter-session challenge: discussion Sources of parental knowledge Child-disclosure and Positive Parenting End of session Inter-session challenge
4	A tour through the sessions	Promote a critical reflection about what was learned during the intervention program Raise awareness of the importance of transposing the various aspects examined and reflected throughout the program into daily life;	Inter-session challenge: discussion A tour of the sessions End of session End of Program

Sessions and Activities

All four sessions of the "Competence: To be P+" program entail activities for learning, evaluation and a reflection moments.

Each session is composed of several activities that address the themes of the program and have different durations according to their goals. These activities can be oral, written, expositive, done alone or in group. However, there is a focus on interactive group work and discussions, this means that, although some activities are meant for the participants to do alone, there is always a subsequent moment of discussion in group about said activity.

So, parents can take home the concepts they learn in the program, and further witness them in their daily lives, inter-session challenges are provided in two of the session (session 2 and 3). These

challenges must be completed in the time between sessions to be shared and discussed in group, in the beginning of the following session.

Additionally, all sessions on the program require a set of materials, these range from worksheets to media support (use of PowerPoint to help guide the sessions and activities) along every activity. Since this program focuses in educating the parents about parenting and adolescence, the PowerPoint format is used to guide the sessions, and keep the pivotal information on display so the process of learning is facilitated. For sessions 3 and 4 the materials include a pamphlet that summarizes the key concepts discussed in these sessions. The pamphlet is provided to the parents at the end of the sessions to take home.

For every session, included in the "Ending the session" activity, a reflection on the learned concepts of that session is made in group with the participants.

The evaluation moments on each session are part of the "Ending the session" activity, where participants can evaluate qualitatively the session they just had, as well as in the final session, with the activity "End of the program" to evaluate the program as a whole. In the beginning of session 1 and end of session 4, another moment of evaluation occurs, where the participants complete the instruments chosen to assess the effects of the program.

Going session by session, the first session "Knowing the programs and the group" begins with an interactive activity for knowing the group, where parent get to know each other, and their prospects for integrating the program. The following activity centers on exploring the participants expectation towards the program, along with explaining to the parents the relevance of creating this intervention program and the importance of their participation. After, both "Competence: To be +" and "Competence: To be P+" intervention programs are presented to the parents (their structure and aims are explained). In addition, for "Competence: To be +", its constituting modules are described, so parents can understand what their adolescent are learning and its importance for their development.

Session two, "Understanding adolescence" aims to demystify the developmental period of adolescence. This is achieved with an activity where parents are exposed to common incorrect beliefs the public has about adolescence, followed by deconstructing these beliefs (firstly in a group discussion and further by the staff guiding the session). This activity is also used to prompt a positive view on adolescent development. This positive view centered on the opportunities for the adolescents is explored and a bridge is made with the "Competence: To be +" program, where the adolescents are learning and practicing new skills to help them succeed in the future. The final learning activity for this session is centered around characterizing the period of adolescence development. The social, cognitive, and emotional changes

adolescents go through from early adolescence, across middle all the way to final adolescence. As an inter-session challenge the parents are asked to look for positive behaviors their children developed going into adolescence that they never noticed before.

For session 3, "Parents as agents in the promotion of positive youth development" , the first activity consist of introducing the concept of parental knowledge (solicitation, control e child-disclosure) to the parents and emphasize the importance of adolescents' self-disclosure as the best predictor of less risky behavior in adolescence along with establishing the bidirectionality of parent-child relationships. In the next activity, parents are introduced to the concept of Positive Parenting as a key ingredient in promoting adolescents' self-disclosure. Following, the nurturing behaviors are introduced, their benefits and help in promoting adolescent's self-disclosure, as part of positive parenting. Finally, for the Inter-session challenge, the parents are informed that they will receive a link to an online form where questions are made to prompt them to reflect on the later session learned themes (e.g., "In your daily life, have you used or thought of the knowledge you have acquired in the last session?").

Finally, in session 4, "A tour through the sessions", the parents in a group, are guided to connect and reflect on the concepts learned along the three prior sessions. The program concludes by positively reinforcing the active participation of parents throughout the four sessions and the importance of transposing what they learned with the program to their daily lives is reinforced.

Planning of the Pilot Study to Evaluate the Structure and Content of the "Competence: To be P+" Program

A pilot study will be conducted with a small group of participants that represent the target population (parents of the adolescent participating in the program "Competence: To be +") to obtain feedback on the program. This pilot study aims to assess if the structure of the program (number of session, duration of the sessions and activities, activities, materials and language used both for the material and instruments) and content (presented themes) are relevant and adequate for the target population.

Promotional/Advertising Materials

To recruit future participants for the pilot study an advertising flyer was created. This flyer was designed to target the participants for the programs: "Competence: To be +" and "Competence: To be P+", that is, both the adolescents and their parents. Since both programs were developed to be delivered in school and community contexts, the flyer will be distributed both digitally, (through social media and

in the university institutional email) and printed (delivered to the targeted high schools and other relevant places).

Figure 3

Flyer Created to Advertise the Programs: "Competence: To be +" and "Competence: To be P+"

Instruments and Methods for Evaluating the Intervention Program "Competence: To be P+"

Qualitative Measures. For the qualitative evaluation of the program, a form with open-ended questions will be used, regarding the participants perceptions and appreciations for each session and the whole program (e.g., "What I liked most about this session/program was..."; "This session/program was important to me because...").

To elicit feedback during the pilot study, the thinking aloud method (Goldman, 1971) will be used. With this method we can prompt the participants to verbalize their thoughts about each activity, instrument (both qualitative and quantitative instruments), and material, the way they approach these and processes them, as well as any difficulty they may encounter while doing it (Almeida & Freire, 2008). Using this method, we can identify errors or ambiguities in the instruments used, if the instructions are clear and sufficient for the proposed activities, and the attitudes of the participants face each of the

themes, sessions, and activities. Overall, the thinking aloud method is a great way to obtain feedback on each moment of the sessions and program overall.

Quantitative Measures. To evaluate the effects of the program on parents' type of parental knowledge and nurturing behaviors two instruments will be used. These instruments were translated to a version in Portuguese for research (both will be validated after the pilot study). Furthermore, both instruments have a version for children that will be used on the counterpart program "Competence: To be +" for adolescents. In addition, two more instruments, regarding psychological well-being, and satisfaction with life, will be used to assess how the program impacts these dimensions of the parents lives. The instruments were chosen based on their widely use in research and because they present good psychometric properties for their Portuguese validations. Finally, it will be measured how much the participants liked participating in the sessions (at the end of each session) and in the program (in the final session).

How They Know It: Sources of Parental Knowledge (Kerr & Stattin, 2000). The translated version for research will be used. This scale is a 15-item questionnaire of the potential sources of information about adolescent's activities (only the parent's version will be used). All items are answered according to a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (no, never) to 5 (yes, always). The three subscales: child disclosure, parental solicitation, and parental control present Cronbach's alpha values of .80, .69, and .75, respectively.

Parental Acceptance Rejection/Control Questionnaire (PARQ) - Parents version (Short form) (Rohner, 2005). The translated version for research will be used. This questionnaire consists of 24 items on a Likert scale (4, almost always true to 1, almost never true) which evaluates parental acceptance/rejection behaviors with their children, with an alpha coefficient of .95.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Portuguese validation by Laranjeira, 2009). The SWLS is an instrument used to evaluate the degree of satisfaction a person has with their living conditions. Contains five items, each item is rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scores range from minimal satisfaction with life (5) to very high satisfaction with life (35). The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .89.

The Scales of Psychological Well-being (Portuguese version of Novo et al., 1997) is used to measure psychological well-being. This measure has 18 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale (1, strongly disagree to 6, strongly agree). It comprises six scales of five items: Autonomy, Environmental mastery, Personal growth, Positive relations, Purpose in life and Self-acceptance. Higher scores on each scale

mean greater psychological well-being. The questionnaire has shown indexes for internal consistency ranging from .45 to .64 in the different scales.

Quantitative evaluation of the sessions and program. At the end of each session and at the end of the program, the participants will answer the following questions: "How much did I like this session?" and "How much did I like participating in this intervention program?" respectively. These are answered using a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("In general, I did not like this session") to 6 ("In general, I liked this session very much").

Discussion

This study describes the development of a group intervention program for parents, as well as the planning of its pilot study. "Competence: To Be P+" strives for the parents to acquire knowledge, resources and the skills needed to apply these resources on a day to day basis with their adolescents. To achieve this goal, one of the more important ingredients in a quality program is the planning process that takes place before its implementation. In this sense, the "Competence: To be P+" program was planned and built to abide by the principles of an effective prevention program by Nation, et al., (2003), and as such, seeks to follow them all. "Competence: To be P+" is comprehensive since it touches multiple critical domains: the parents, their adolescents and the parent-child relationship. The program is theory driven, as described along the study, to develop "Competence: To be P+" one of the first steps into building the program was to do an extensive literature review of the empirical research on parenting, adolescence and intervention in group. According to literature, intervention programs during the adolescence period help prevent adolescents from partaking in risky behaviors specially when the programs not only work with the teenagers, but with their parents as well (Caroline et al., 2012; Cohen & Linton, 1995). Furthermore, it is during this period that the risk for involvement in maladaptive behavior increases, and at the same time child-disclosure decreases, the biggest predictor of sources of parental knowledge which is associated with lower levels of risky behavior during adolescence (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Soenens et al., 2006). Thus, creating an intervention program for parents that focuses on helping prevent the development of risk behaviors on adolescents, promoting positive parenting, and a healthy parent-adolescent relationship during adolescence appears to be appropriately timed. The sessions, activities and how the theoretical concepts in the program are presented, were tailored to the targeted population, the Portuguese parents, thus making "Competence: To be P+" socioculturally relevant. The program uses varied teaching methods throughout each session (expositive and interactive methods, with resource to media and worksheets for the activities). The sessions appear to be long enough to present the program contents and thus, the

program dosage seems sufficient, consisting of four sessions of 90 minutes each, which in total equates to six contact hours, with additional challenges to take home. Effective programs promote positive relationships, and since the present program is a positive based program, one of our main aims is to promote a better parent-child relationship and according to the literature, positive intervention programs promote positive parent-child interactions (Sanders, 2012), therefore fulfilling this principle. The present program has clear aims and established ways to measure if these aims are being met, with continuous feedback for each session, thus including outcome evaluation. Finally, "Competence: To be P+" will include well-trained staff. The staff will be comprised of psychologists that undergo training to implement the program and have access to the technical manual with guidelines that include all the relevant information for guiding the program. Consequently, the "Competence: To be P+" intervention program abides by all the efficiency principals and seems to be fitting to achieve the proposed aims.

However, completing all the efficacy principals does not guarantee a successful implementation of the program, thus conduction a pilot study prior to massively implementing the program is of extreme importance. Pilot studies can be a "small scale version[s], or trial run[s], done in preparation for the major study" (Polit et al., 2001). Therefore conducting a pilot study makes it possible to find situations where the main research project could fail, where guidelines may not be followed (e.g., whether the participant does not understand them or for lack of time), determining the resources (e.g., staff) needed for the planned study, and whether the proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated for the target population (Van & Hundley, 2001). In addition, it is also useful to assess if the advertising flyer for recruiting the participants is adequate and fulfills its role. With the feedback from the pilot study, the group intervention program: "Competence: To be P+" can be improved in preparation for its mass implementation prior to executing it.

Limitations and Future Directions

This intervention program was developed, exclusively, to be implemented in-person, on school or community contexts. This entails that when conditions oppose the in-person context, the whole preparation and implementation for the program to happen get harmed. As happened with the current circumstances with the closing of schools and community sites due to Covid-19. Thus, as a future direction, it would be important to adapt the program to an online version of itself. This online version would permit the implementation of the program even if circumstances occurred that would prevent its in-person version to happen, salvaging resources and time for the staff involved and the experience of learning for the participants.

As for additional future recommendations, it would be vital to continue the work started with this study and execute the pilot study for a small group of the target population to acquire feedback on the current program content and structure, to further carry with adjustments if needed.

Secondly, the two scales translated into Portuguese during the construction process of the program, should be validated for the Portuguese population, as well as, later the whole program.

Lastly, it would be of great interest to adapt the current program for the parents of the adolescents participating in the "Challenge: To be +" (from 7th to 9th grades) which comprise the youth in the early stages of adolescence and their parents. Since it is the beginning of the adolescence developmental period, a prevention program for their parents would be of great value to help promote an optimal trajectory.

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Appendix

Universidade do Minho

Conselho de Ética

Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas

Identificação do documento: CEICSH 037/2020

Relator Marlene Alexandra Veloso Matos

Título do projeto: *Projeto SER+: Programas de intervenção em grupo para a promoção do desenvolvimento positivo de adolescentes e dos seus pais, e de jovens adultos*

Equipa de Investigação: Ana Sofia Ramôa de Carvalho, Ana Rita Azevedo Alves e Eva Lima, Mestrado Integrado em Psicologia; Janine Alves Dias, Bolseira de Investigação; Teresa Raquel Pereira, Doutoramento em Psicologia Aplicada; Margarida Pinho, Psicóloga Clínica; Professora Doutora Teresa Freire (Orientadora e IR) Centro de Investigação em Psicologia (CIPsi), Escola de Psicologia, Universidade do Minho

PARECER

A Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (CEICSH) analisou o processo relativo ao projeto de investigação acima identificado, intitulado *Projeto SER+: Programas de intervenção em grupo para a promoção do desenvolvimento positivo de adolescentes e dos seus pais, e de jovens adultos.*

Os documentos apresentados revelam que o projeto obedece aos requisitos exigidos para as boas práticas na investigação com humanos, em conformidade com as normas nacionais e internacionais que regulam a investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas.

Face ao exposto, a Comissão de Ética para a Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (CEICSH) nada tem a opor à realização do projeto, emitindo o seu parecer favorável, que foi aprovado por unanimidade pelos seus membros.

Braga, 3 de junho de 2020.

O Presidente da CEICSH

(Acílio Estanqueiro Rocha)