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The Impact on Parent Training on Marital Functioning: A Comparison of Two Group Versions of the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program for Parents of Children with Early-Onset Conduct Problems

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1.1 Aim

The study aimed to determine whether the provision of group PST as an adjunctive intervention (EGTP) would enhance the effects of a standard group intervention (SGTP).

2.1 Hypotheses

It was predicted that at postintervention, parents in both SGTP and EGTP conditions would perform similarly and report significant improvements on measures of child and parent adjustment and marital functioning.

However, by following-up, it was predicted that:

1. EGTP condition would be associated with greater long term improvements on measures of disruptive child behaviour;
2. dysfunctional parenting;
3. parental depression, anxiety and stress;
4. and parenting conflict, marital satisfaction and communication.

It was also predicted that at 3-month follow-up, a greater proportion of families in the EGTP than the SGTP condition would show clinically significant improvements on measures of disruptive child behaviour as assessed by functional recovery and the reliable change index (Hypothesis 5).

Hypothesis 6 predicted that parents in both the SGTP and EGTP conditions would report similarly high levels of consumer satisfaction.

3.1 Results

1. As predicted in hypothesis 1, both SGTP and EGTP were associated with significant improvements across measures of child behaviour. However, at follow-up the expected advantage for EGTP did not occur.
2. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. There were significant improvements for both conditions in dysfunctional parenting from pre- to postintervention. While changes in parenting did not maintain as well as the changes made in disruptive child behaviour, levels of dysfunctional parenting were still significantly below preintervention levels.
3. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
4. Parents in both conditions reported significant changes from pre- to postintervention on marital adjustment measures. However, the condition by time effects were not significant for most measures (Hypothesis 4 partially supported).
5. Hypothesis 5 & 6 were supported.

4.1 Findings

The present study contributes to the growing evidence that BFI programs that primarily target the parent-child relationship can have pervasive effects on other aspects of the family system, including the marital relationship. There is now considerable evidence to show that parenting interventions are often associated with decreased parental stress and depression, increased parental efficacy, and improved marital functioning.

5.1 Summary and Implications

In this study, two versions of the Triple P, Standard Group Triple P (SGTP) and Enhanced Group Triple P (EGTP), were compared using parents of children who exhibited conduct problems. All parents were in couple relationship where there was significant conflict over parenting issues between partners. The present study sought to extend our knowledge of the effects of Triple P on family functioning by including a comprehensive assessment of marital functioning, including measures of marital satisfaction, parenting conflict, marital communication and marital quality. The results of the present investigation are encouraging. Further research would be useful to determine whether increasing the intensity of the partner support component produces further improvements in the marital effects on parenting intervention.

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