

Running Head: PARENTING PROGRAM

**Outcome Evaluation of the Center for Women, Children and Families'
Parenting Program**

Capstone Project, Spring 2006

presented by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation of family support programs employing parent education to achieve prevention of child abuse and neglect is an important consideration for professionals as it can provide a good insight into possible improvements of a program.

A parent education program administered by the Center for Women, Children and Families (CWCF) was assessed using participants' pre- and post-program scores on the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) from 148 parents.

Statistical analysis indicated that parenting knowledge has significantly improved on all five dimensions measured following program attendance. This finding supported the answer to the first research question. To answer the second research question, bivariate correlations were performed to assess whether parent characteristics differentiate between the parenting attitudes after the program completion. Findings showed that differences in program effectiveness according to age, gender, marital status, educational level, race and income level were minimal, which suggests that the CWCF's parenting program is an effective intervention for the diverse population it serves.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Monitor the parenting program during its implementation through mid session evaluations based on the model employed in this study to minimize the number of participants showing no improvements in their parenting attitudes upon completion of the program.
- Restructure the database used to maintain program assessment data to facilitate future program assessments by storing participant demographics collected during the intake process with AAPI-2 scores.
- Extend the period of lectures on specific constructs on which parents are maintaining negative attitudes given the assumption that the length of the programs can be responsible for the parents' maintaining low scores on some constructs even after the program's completion.
- Conduct a more thorough study to assess participants who completed the program and to follow up with parents several months after program completion to assess the program's long term effects on parenting attitudes.

Although this study has some limitations, it provides preliminary evidence that the parenting program offered by the CWCF does improve parenting knowledge among the at risk parents the program serves.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parenting attitudes are the expressions of learned morals, values, and behaviors during the process of growing up and continue to be developed during one's life.

No consensus exists on what types of programs and services should be offered to promote positive parenting attitudes and behaviors, in part because given the complexity of the problem, there is not a universally accepted ideal approach to parenting (Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, & Dowell, 2003).

Nonprofit organizations address many social problems, and in doing so they shoulder much of the government's burden in providing social services and programs at the community level (Eadie, 1997). The Center for Women, Children and Families (CWCF) is a good example of a small social service nonprofit agency that provides family support programs and services. The CWCF's Parenting Program is a primary prevention initiative focused on improving parental attitudes. Specifically, the goal of the Parenting Program is to prevent child abuse and neglect through educational intervention with at risk parents. The program is based on empirical evidence that suggests parenting education is an effective first step in preventing inappropriate child-rearing behavior.

Numerous parent education programs have been developed and implemented by public, private or nonprofit agencies. Many of them, such as the CWCF's parent education program, have a focus on short-term interventions to improve parenting skills, knowledge, or behaviors. Understanding the performance of programs having as goals the primary prevention of child maltreatment or abuse can increase the programs' positive outcomes long-term.

This study will assess the effectiveness of the CWCF's Parenting Program, which is geared toward the prevention of child maltreatment or abuse among at risk parents. The study will explore the relationship between the parent's characteristics and the scores on the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2) pre- and post-test, Form A and Form B, respectively, before and after the program was administered. Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. Is parent education given through the Parenting Program at CWCF effective?
2. Are there parent characteristics that differentiate between the parenting attitudes after the program completion as indicated by the difference between the scores on the AAPI-2 Form A (pre-test) and Form B (post-test)?

OVERVIEW OF CENTER FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The Center for Women, Children and Families, Inc., is a United Way of the Bluegrass agency that was formed in 1996 from the merger of the Lexington Child Abuse Council and the Women's Center of Central Kentucky. The agency has conducted group programs designed to prevent child abuse and neglect since 1984. CWCF is dedicated to combating the complex problem of child abuse and neglect in the community, approaching it from a holistic viewpoint; that is, in order to heal the child, the family must be healed. All services are offered free to the clients to eliminate any potential financial barriers from parents needing assistance. Each year, hundreds of struggling women, children, and families benefit from the services offered at the Center.

The six programs offered at the Center are *The Nest*, *Self-Help Parenting Programs*, short to intermediate term *Counseling Services* to victims of domestic

violence and other violent crimes, *Comprehensive Problem Solving and Resolution (Crisis Case Management) Program*, *Children at Risk* and *Circle of Healing*. *The Nest* is the only respite crisis day care center for families in the Lexington-Fayette County area for children up to five years of age deemed at risk for abuse and neglect. CWCF's Parenting Program is not offered elsewhere within the Lexington-Fayette County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Child maltreatment survivors often suffer long-term psychological and behavioral consequences. Although there is widespread agreement that there are four general types of child maltreatment – physical abuse, child neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse – what behaviors constitute child maltreatment vary from state to state (Bethea, 1999).

However, there is some agreement on the factors that contribute to poor parenting. Pezzot-Pearce & Pearce (2004) contend that the parents' history of maltreatment, mental health problems such as depression and psychosis, alcohol and drug abuse as well as family conflict and spousal abuse are important factors to consider in parenting assessments because they limit the parents' abilities to care for their children. Poverty and lack of social supports are also recognized as factors contributing to poor parenting skills. Bethea (1999) suggests that exposure to both societal and television violence and reliance on corporal punishment as a disciplinary technique negatively impact parenting abilities. Individual factors such as emotional immaturity and poor parenting skills typical among teenage parents, domestic violence, and financial difficulties are just a few of the factors responsible for abusive and neglecting parenting that constitute "the path to child abuse" as called by the author.

The fact remains that an alarming numbers of child abuse cases are investigated each year. National statistics for 2003 estimate that 2.9 million referrals, involving 5.5 million children, were made to Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies in the United States. The national rate of 39.1 referrals per 1,000 children recorded for 2003 increased by 3.2 compared to the 2002 rate (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2003). Although only two-thirds of the total numbers of referrals are accepted as reports alleging child abuse or neglect, which are further investigated by the CPS agencies to determine whether or not the child was maltreated or is at risk of maltreatment, the number is still alarming.

The direct costs of child abuse and neglect incurred by the society are estimated at \$24 billion each year, while indirect costs associated with special education, mental health and health care, juvenile delinquency, lost productivity, and adult criminality are estimated at \$70 billion each year (Thomas, Leicht, Hughes, Madigan, & Dowell, 2003).

Given the long-term effects on survivors of child maltreatment and the socioeconomic costs of this behavior, effective prevention programs are urgently needed. Historically, research on the prevention of child abuse and neglect focused on home visitation programs, parent education, and school programs for the prevention of child sexual abuse (National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, 2003).

Thomas et al. (2003) defined three types of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities. Primary prevention focuses on preventing child abuse or maltreatment before it occurs. Secondary prevention activities are offered to populations that are at high-risk for child maltreatment. Finally, tertiary prevention activities are a type of reactive prevention seeking to reduce the negative consequences of child

treatment once it occurs and to prevent its recurrence. Although each of these components of prevention are distinct, Thomas et al. cautioned that they are interrelated and therefore should not be viewed as mutually exclusive categories.

Parent education programs and support groups are types of primary prevention activities that focus on fostering parenting roles and responsibilities, child development and age-appropriate expectations, and beliefs in positive parenting behavior and attitudes. Numerous child abuse prevention programs focusing on parent education are offered across the U.S. with state or federal support and targeting various populations. Program evaluation can be a useful tool to assess program effectiveness in terms of fostering positive parenting attitudes and behaviors as well as to provide lessons learned to disseminate to the professional community.

However, little is known about the impact prevention programs have on children and families and about how effective the programs are in preventing child maltreatment long term because follow-up studies are rarely conducted (Thomas et al. 2003).

In a meta-analysis that included randomized and quasi-experimental studies, Layzer, Goodson, Bernstein, & Price (2001) assessed the outcomes of family support programs and services. They found that most of the programs (98%) offered some form of parent education, be it through information about parenting strategies, parenting classes, classes for parents and their children, parent groups, or simply through printed materials. Rather than directly with children, most family support programs worked primarily with parents to foster nurturing and supportive family environments. They found that family support programs had small but statistically-significant positive effects

on parenting behavior, child cognitive achievement, and child social and emotional functioning.

Considering that, typically, the family support programs are small-scale efforts with limited budgets, the authors caution that assumptions such as a program's overall effect on the families' lives are not validated (Layzer et al., 2001).

Layzer et al. (2001) found that parenting programs with narrowly focused target populations were more effective than programs directed toward all low-income families in poor neighborhoods. While parenting education is present in some form in many of the family support programs provided across the country, those programs using professional staff and providing parent education through group meetings have been more effective.

A review of the literature researching the impact parenting education programs have on improving parenting skills provided ways to approach the research design for this study.

The Parenting Assessment Project was an outcome evaluation of all participants in parenting programs funded by the Florida Department of Children and Families (Bavolek & Weikert, 2005). Using the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory – the same instrument used by the CWCF's Parenting Program to assess parenting attitudes – results indicated that program completion was correlated with improvements in parenting attitudes.

Program facilitators may also play an important role in shaping participant experiences and outcomes. In terms of inter-group comparison based on the analysis of the scores on AAPI-2 administered to professional parent educators, Bavolek (2001) reveals that there are significant differences between the parenting skills of males and

females and between Black, White, and Hispanic professionals. Gender and culture (race differences) differentiate significantly the parenting attitudes of professional parent educators. Female professionals display significantly more nurturing parenting attitudes than male professionals. In the same way, significant differences exist between Black and White female and Black and White male professional parent educators. Also, White and Hispanic female professionals differ significantly in all five AAPI-2 constructs (Bavolek, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample was comprised of 148 parents who completed the CWCF's Parenting Program during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. The data set was extracted from the database of the Center for the fiscal year 2004-2005 for the Parenting Program summarizing the scores on the AAPI-2 inventory, with its forms A (pre-test) and form B (post-test) and demographics for the sample of parents participating and completing the parent education classes for the above mentioned fiscal year.

Procedures

The Parenting Program offered at CWCF consists of 10 units, including different topics, each being covered during a separate session.

Parents initially attend an intake assessment to complete several forms: the Client Information Form, Intake Form, Counseling Agreement, Parenting Agreement, Parenting Class Information sheet, Release of Information Form (for an organization only, such as the Department for Community Based Services, court, law firm, or mental health

agency), and the AAPI-2 Form A. Assessment results on the AAPI-2 are recorded as pass or fail, based on the AAPI's standardized 10-point scores for each construct. Parents must then attend at least 8 of the 10 Parenting Program sessions to obtain a Certificate of Completion. Upon completion of the program, a post-test is administered using the AAPI-2 Form B to reassess parenting attitudes.

Measures

The AAPI-2 is an inventory designed by the Family Development Resources, Inc. as an instrument to assess high risk parenting behaviors and child-rearing attitudes among adult and adolescent parents and parents-to-be who might be at risk for perpetrating child abuse and neglect. The AAPI-2 has two forms, Form A and Form B, each comprised of 40 5-point Likert scale items with response options ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

The AAPI-2 provides an index of risk on five parenting constructs, and each discriminates between the parenting behaviors of known abusive parents and the behaviors of non-abusive parents. Scoring the responses on the 40 items on each AAPI-2 forms is determined with a plastic scoring stencil placed over the form. Then, total raw scores are calculated for each of the five constructs, by adding the numerical values corresponding to the response circled by the individual. Further on, total raw scores are converted into standard ten scale scores, so-called sten scores using the norm tables corresponding to the type of population (adult and adolescent parent, and adult and adolescent non-parent) the individual fits into. Sten scores are a reflection of the parenting attitude, and low scores mean agreement in the five constructs known to

contribute to abusive and neglecting parenting behaviors, and therefore indicate a high risk for child abuse and neglect. (Family Development Resources, 1999).

Both adult and adolescent parent-to-be population as well as parents as young as 13 years old can have their parenting skills assessed based on the AAPI-2 inventory. AAPI-2 has an assessed fifth grade reading level. Norm tables are available for both parent and non-parent populations (Family Development Resources, 2006).

Construct A: Inappropriate Expectations of Children

Abusive parents tend to have inappropriate expectations of their children and inaccurately perceive the skills and abilities of the child. This is believed to be due to the fact that parents lack knowledge and understanding of the abilities of children corresponding to particular stages of their development (Bavolek, 2005).

Construct B: Parental Lack of Empathy towards Children's Needs

Parents may not understand what children are going through in their lives, including children's feelings and state of mind. Inadequate ability to empathize with one's child during the child's infancy and early childhood has detrimental consequences for the child's normal development. Children whose emotional needs are unmet develop a low sense of self-esteem and lack confidence in themselves and their abilities (Bavolek, 2005).

Construct C: Strong Parental Belief in the Use of Corporal Punishment

Physical discipline of children is problematic, regardless of whether the parent simply lacks emotional control or is motivated by well-intentioned yet misguided notions of parenting. Corporal punishment has tremendously negative effects on children, and is therefore never an appropriate disciplinary measure (Bavolek, 2005).

Construct D: Reversing Parent-Child Family Roles

Parent-child role reversal often occurs in potential abusers whose basic needs as children were unmet and is motivated by the parental desire to establish a close friendship relationship with children. However, these parents tend to abuse their children by beating, belittling, or ignoring as an expression of their disappointment when their children fail to reciprocate (Bavolek, 2005).

Construct E: Oppressing Children's Power and Independence

Parental oppression of children's power and independence has similarly negative effects on children's healthy development as physical punishment or a lack of empathy. Bavolek (2005) contends that parental demands for obedience and compliance to parental authority result in feelings of inadequacy, powerlessness, and rebelliousness on the part of children. Authoritarian parents also tend to produce children who are overly concerned with compliance and who are susceptible to feel compelled to submit to peer pressure and engage in negative behaviors and practices. Moreover, obedience breeds followers and children therefore will be unlikely to develop leadership skills and more likely to apply a generalized learned response of compliance to every aspect of their lives, which has adverse personal effects but also helps to perpetuate a cycle of dysfunctional parenting (Bavolek, 2005).

Design

A quasi-experiment design was employed. Essentially, a pre-test (AAPI-2 Form A) was administered, then the intervention (Parenting Program) took place, which was followed by a post-test (AAPI-2 Form B).

Variables

The data were obtained from CWCF's database and included participant demographics provided by parents during the intake process.

Independent Variables

Independent variables included participants' age, gender, marital status, education, race, and income.

Age was a scale variable based on the participants' reported age.

Gender was a dichotomous variable coded 1 for males and 2 for females.

Marital status was a nominal variable coded 1 for single, 2 for married, 3 for separated, 4 for divorced, 5 for co-habiting, and 6 for widowed.

Education was an ordinal variable coded 1 for less than high school or a GED, 2 for high school graduates or GED, 3 for vocational training, 4 for some college, 5 for college diploma, and 6 for graduate diploma.

Race was a nominal variable coded 1 for Black, 2 for White, 3 for Hispanic, 4 for Asian, 5 for bi-racial, and 6 for other.

Income was an ordinal variable coded 1 for \$0-9,999, 2 for \$10,000-19,999, 3 for \$20,000-29,999, 4 for \$30,000+, and 5 for other.

Dependent variables

Pre- and post-test sten scores and the difference between pre- and post-test sten scores on each of the 5 parenting constructs of the AAPI-2 inventory were used as the dependent variables. The standardized pre- and post-program sten scores ranged from 1 to 10. Sten scores of 1-4 generally indicate a high risk of abusive and neglectful parenting

behavior. Scores of 7-10 reflect a nurturing, non-abusive parenting philosophy. Mid-range scores of 4-7 represent average parenting attitudes for the general population.

Analytical Technique

The SPSS statistical software package is used to analyze the data.

Descriptive statistics provided an overall picture of the data and helped to identify the sub-populations most commonly served by the CWCF's Parenting Program.

A series of five paired sample t-tests were performed to assess the effectiveness of the program. Then, Pearson and Spearman bivariate correlations were conducted to investigate whether there is a significant correlation between the six independent variables (participant characteristics) and the dependent variables (scores on the pre- and post-tests, and the change in scores between the pre- and post-test for each construct).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis of the central tendency statistics and frequency tables as well as cross tabulation for independent variables computed with SPSS reveals the following summarized demographic pattern:

1. Female parents accounted for 62.8% whereas males are only 37.2% of the total individuals completing the Parenting program.
2. Approximately 60.1% of the parents are of ages between 23 and 36 with a significant concentration of 20.3% in the 25 to 29 year age range.
3. Most of individuals (76.2%) completing the program are either single or married. The rest of 23.8% are divorced, separated, co-habiting, or widowed. More female single parents (66%) were accounted than nearly 34% male single parents. The

same pattern was accounted for married parents with more females (56.3%) than married male parents (43.8%).

4. Parents with less than and higher than high school education or GED accounted for 64.8% of the served population. Female parents with less than high school education or GED accounted for 72.7% of all parents in that category and for 44% of all women in the population served.
5. Whites accounted for the majority (77%) of individuals completing the program. Blacks accounted for only 18.2% of the total number of 148.
6. Almost half of the individuals completing the program earned less than \$9,999 annually, 23.6% had incomes between \$10,000 and \$19,999, 14.2% had incomes between \$20,000 and \$29,999, and 16.9% earned more than \$30,000.

A summary of descriptive statistics for scores on the pre-test and post-test for each of the five constructs is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary descriptive statistics for pre- and post-test AAPI-2 scores on each construct.

	Construct A		Construct B		Construct C		Construct D		Construct E	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Mean	5.05	7.24	5.29	7.48	5.78	7.83	5.22	7.69	5.72	7.10
Median	5	7	5	7.5	6	8	5	7	6	7
Mode	5	7	7	10	6	10	4	10	5	6

Table 2 presents cumulative percentages for frequency counts of scores of 4 or less on the pre- and post-tests for the five constructs that are predictive of high risk of

abusive and neglecting parenting behavior. Frequency counts of the difference of 0 or less than 0 between the scores on the pre- and post-program are also presented.

Table 2. Cumulative percentages for frequency of scores on the pre and post-tests for each of the five constructs

Tests on constructs	Construct A		Construct B		Construct C		Construct D		Construct E	
	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
Frequency of scores of 4 and less than 4 (%)	36.5	4.1	36.5	6.8	25.7	2.0	42.6	5.4	33.1	13.5
Frequency of the difference score of 0 or less than 0 (%)	23.0		26.4		27.0		23.0		42.6	

From the analysis of the descriptive statistics for the sample used in the study, a difference score between post-test and pre-test scores on all constructs of 0 or less than 0 was accounted for at least 23% of the participants in the program.

The first research question was examined using a series of paired samples t-tests for each construct with the following null hypothesis H_0 : There is no difference between the means of the scores on the pre-test and post-test on each of the five constructs. Given that multiple tests of significance were conducted, an adjustment was made for the alpha level (α) of .05 to control for Type 1 error. The initial .05 level of significance was divided by 5 (the number of significance tests) to arrive at a more stringent .01 level of

significance. The results of the all five paired samples t-tests for Test Value = 0 and degrees of freedom df=147 for paired pre- and post-test scores on each of the five constructs are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Summarized statistics for paired sample t-tests

	Mean Difference	t	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
				Lower	Upper
A pair Pre-test & Post-test scores	-2.196	-12.060	.000*	-2.55	-1.83
B pair Pre-test & Post-test scores	-2.189	-10.097	.000*	-2.61	-1.76
C pair Pre-test & Post-test scores	-2.047	-12.141	.000*	-2.38	-1.71
D pair Pre-test & Post-test scores	-2.473	-11.866	.000*	-2.88	-2.06
E pair Pre-test & Post-test scores	-1.385	-6.070	.000*	-1.83	-.93

*difference in means is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) adjusted for multiple related t-tests

Examining the results depicted in Table 3, the null hypothesis can be rejected at the .01 level of significance for each AAPI-2 construct; mean post-test scores are

significantly different than pre-test scores, and these differences are unlikely due to chance. In other words, the probability that the program was not effective and the means of scores on pre- and post-test differ by chance is less than 1 in 1,000.

To answer the second research question, more statistical analysis is needed. First, an assessment of a significant correlation between different parent characteristics and their scores on the pre- and post-tests is performed. Bivariate correlations were run in SPSS to determine what independent variables have a statistically-significant relationship with the dependent variables pre- and post-program scores for each of the five constructs.

Upon analysis of frequency counts for different levels of the independent variables age, marital status, education and race, categories with too few observations were found. Therefore, the different categories describing the independent variables have been compressed into fewer categories for a better picture of the categories of population served by the CWCF as well as more statistical power. The new variables recoded are described below:

The independent variable age was recoded as an ordinal variable where 1 represents ages of 17 through 26, 2 means ages of 27 through 35, 3 means ages of 36 through 45 and 4 means ages of 46 through 64.

Marital status was recoded to 1 for single, 2 for married and cohabiting, 3 for separated, divorced, and widowed.

Educational level was recoded 1 for no GED/high school, 2 for GED/high school, 3 for vocational training or some college, 4 for college or graduate diploma.

Race was recoded 1 for Whites and 2 for Non-Whites.

Pearson and Spearman bivariate correlations were performed to assess the extent to which the dependent variables pre- and post-test scores for each construct are related to the six independent variables: gender, income level, and the recoded variables: age (ageR), marital status (maritalR), race (raceR) and education level (educationR) at the 0.05 level of significance. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Summarized Correlations between Independent Variables and Dependent Variables

Tests on constructs		Construct A		Construct B		Construct C	
		Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
AgeR	Coefficient	.147	.288**	-.069	.143	.026	.152
	p-value	.074	.000	.406	.084	.753	.064
Gender	Coefficient	-.200*	-.190*	-.154	-.109	-.107	-.113
	p-value	.015	.020	.061	.189	.197	.171
MaritalR	Coefficient	.231**	-.028	-.007	.114	-.038	-.015
	p-value	.005	.732	.930	.166	.648	.856
EducationR	Coefficient	.047	.074	.109	.102	-.122	.130
	p-value	.576	.373	.190	.223	.145	.120
RaceR	Coefficient	-.259**	-.028	-.110	-.212*	-.090	-.107
	p-value	.002	.736	.187	.011	.280	.199
Income	Coefficient	.137	.208*	.070	.081	.011	.130
	p-value	.098	.012	.403	.329	.899	.117

* correlation is significant at the 0.05% level (2-tailed).

** correlation is significant at the 0.01% level (2-tailed).

Table 5 (continued) Summarized Correlations between Independent Variables and Dependent Variables

Tests on constructs		Construct D		Construct E	
		Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
AgeR	Coefficient	.134	.076	.026	.112
	p-value	.105	.359	.756	.177
Gender	Coefficient	-.104	-.271**	-.164*	.060
	p-value	.209	.001	.047	.469
MaritalR	Coefficient	.133	.017	.185*	.052
	p-value	.108	.836	.024	.0534
EducationR	Coefficient	.277**	.055	.310**	.242**
	p-value	.001	.509	.000	.003
RaceR	Coefficient	-.268**	.056	-.204*	-.112
	p-value	.001	.501	.014	.180
Income	Coefficient	.130	.124	.113	.092
	p-value	.116	.135	.171	.267

* correlation is significant at the 0.05% level (2-tailed).

** correlation is significant at the 0.01% level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 5, five of the six independent variables had a statistically significant ($p < .01$) correlation with scores on pre- and post-test on some constructs, but none of them was consistently significant across all constructs. For Construct C, and Construct B there was no significant correlation between any of the six independent variables and scores on pre- or the post-test neither on the. Significant correlations ($p <$

.01) were found between the variable age and post-test scores on Construct A, marital status and the pre-test scores and race and pre-test scores for Construct A. The variable gender was correlated ($p < .01$) with post-test scores on Construct D, and the variable race with pre-test scores on the same construct. And last, the variable education was significantly correlated ($p < .01$) with pre-test scores on Construct D, and pre- and post-test scores on Construct E.

The independent variable income had no statistically significant relationship ($p < .01$) with any of the pre- and post-test scores for the five constructs.

The results above are worthy of further analysis, especially in terms of examining whether the five independent variables that differentiate significantly between the scores on pre- and post-tests on some constructs maintained the same relationship with the difference in scores on pre- and post-tests after the program completion.

Table 6 depicts the summary of the correlations found after performing Pearson and Spearman bivariate correlations using the difference between the scores on pre- and post-tests as the dependent variable. Fewer independent variables were significantly correlated with the difference score between the pre- and post-tests. Out of thirty possible correlations between the six independent variables age, gender, marital, education, race and income and the dependent variable difference between the pre- and post-test scores on the five constructs, only three were statistically significant ($p < .01$). The probability of a correlation by chance between education and the difference in scores on the pre- and post-test on Construct D and E, and between race and the difference in scores on Construct D is less than 1 in 1,000. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is “no” because consistent correlations across all constructs were not found for any of the

parent characteristics to support the hypothesis that parent characteristics differentiate between their parenting attitudes after the completion of the program.

Table 6. Summarized Correlations between Independent Variables and Difference Scores

Tests on constructs		Construct A	Construct B	Construct C	Construct D	Construct E
AgeR	Coefficient	.093	.131	.103	-.091	.046
	p-value	.259	.112	.211	.272	.579
Gender	Coefficient	-.023	.050	.011	-.118	.188*
	p-value	.778	.546	.895	.154	.022
MaritalR	Coefficient	-.178*	.094	.024	-.122	-.122
	p-value	.030	.257	.771	.140	.140
EducationR	Coefficient	.022	-.024	.237**	-.249**	-.065
	p-value	.794	.774	.004	.003	.437
RaceR	Coefficient	.170*	-.066	-.001	.279**	.092
	p-value	.041	.433	.995	.001	.269
Income	Coefficient	.066	.001	.091	-.027	-.030
	p-value	.429	.992	.272	.747	.715

* correlation is significant at the 0.05% level (2-tailed).

** correlation is significant at the 0.01% level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to show if the parent education offered at the CWCF is effective. Moreover, the research shown investigated whether there is a relationship between the parent characteristics and their parenting attitudes after the program completion.

Analysis of the data, performed with related paired samples t-tests for each of the five constructs at the .01 level of significance showed that the means difference between the scores on pre-test and scores on post-test is not due to chance. Therefore there is a significant correlation between the parents' completing the program and the improvement in their parenting attitudes. For the above reasons, it can be stated with a probability of error of 1 in 1,000 that the parent education given through the Parenting Program at CWCF is effective. Therefore, analysis revealed that the answer to the first research question is "yes".

The results of the bivariate correlations conducted showed five independent variables that differentiate significantly between the scores on pre- and post-tests on some constructs. However, these results did not occur consistently for both pre- and post-test on all constructs. Moreover, correlations found after performing Pearson and Spearman bivariate correlations using the difference between the scores on pre- and post-tests as dependent variable showed even fewer independent variables that maintained the same type of correlation with the difference score between the pre- and post-tests after the program completion.

Out of thirty possible correlations that could have indicated that parent characteristics (age, gender, marital, education, race and income) differentiate between the parenting attitudes displayed by participant after the program completion, only three were statistically significant. Therefore, the second research question cannot be answered affirmatively because there was no consistent correlation across all constructs for any of the parent characteristics. The program had the same effect overall of improving

parenting attitudes of the participants who completed the program. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is “no”.

The results of the evaluation of CWCF’s parenting program are consistent with the results of the Parenting Assessment Project, a six-year study implemented in Florida, showing that there is a significant correlation between parents’ completing their program and their improvement in parenting attitudes.

The study’s finding that the independent variables do not correlate consistently at accepted levels of significance with the scores on all five parenting constructs are not in line with the results of the Florida Parenting Assessment Project, where gender and race are found to differentiate significantly between the parenting attitudes of participants.

Thus, it can be inferred that the CWCF’s parenting program produces consistent results for all categories of individuals participating in the program regardless of their age, gender, marital status, race, education or income level. This is actually a positive result for the CWCF. If different categories of individuals had been found to differentiate significantly between the difference score achieved on pre- and post-tests after the program completion, adjustments had been needed to the program to tailor the parent education to those specific categories found to have an effect on higher or lower scores.

LIMITATIONS

This study has its limitations as any other study. Selection threat to the internal validity of the study is present because participants have not been randomly selected to the experimental conditions where the program has been given.

Also, history poses a threat to the internal validity of the study. In the absence of a control group that could have controlled for any events likely to affect the dependent variables, it can only be inferred that the differences between the parents' attitudes toward parenting were caused by the independent variables.

Moreover, because the study was designed to evaluate the Parenting Program at CWCF and assess the relationship between different parent characteristics and high scores on parenting skills inventory administered before and after the program is given it does not have external validity. The results of the analysis refer to the individuals served by the Center and therefore cannot be generalized to other populations of adult or adolescent parents.

Also, long-term effectiveness of the Parenting Program is not addressed. A longitudinal follow-up study is recommended to be designed and conducted so that parents are retested and their parenting skills acquired through program attendance are tracked over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A first recommendation the CWCF might want to consider is to add an objective to the existing parenting program that will allow a closer monitoring of the program during its implementation. This is needed to minimize the percentage of participants who did not show improvements in their parenting attitudes even after the completion of the program as resulted from this study. Monitoring can be achieved through mid session evaluation when an analysis similar to the one employed by this study can be performed. Results obtained will allow the program to modify its intensity (in length) for participants who do

not show significant improvement from one session to another, or an overall improvement at the time of the mid session evaluation.

A second recommendation refers to the restructuring of the database on the parenting program, so that data storage include participant demographics (age, gender, marital status, education level, race and income level) provided by parents during the intake process. This is a solution very easy to implement that will facilitate a better assessment of the performances of the program, and allow improvements to the program in the future to be identified.

Scores of 0 or less than 0 on the difference between post-test and pre-test scores on all constructs for at least 23% of the participants in the program were found. Due to the confirmed validity and reliability of the AAPI-2 instrument by numerous studies conducted by researchers at the Family Development Resources Inc., one cannot say these results are due to either guessed responses on the 40 items on form A and B of the AAPI-2 inventory or inflated responses to present a positive parenting attitude. Thus, the short length of the programs can be assumed as responsible for parents' displaying negative attitudes on the above mentioned constructs even after the program completion. This is true especially for constructs B, C, and E that might be a reflection of misguided notions of parenting or old mentalities and deeply rooted parenting beliefs and attitudes such as the benefits of spanking in rearing a child. Therefore, a third recommendation is made that an extension of the period of lectures should be considered on those constructs where negative parenting attitudes are maintained even after the program completion.

Last, more research is needed to see if the evaluation results are consistent for each year of the program's implementation. This study only gave grounding for a more

thorough study. A more extensive study is recommended to assess parents who completed the program and follow up with them after several months after the program completion. Thus, the long term effect of the program on parenting attitudes can be assessed. This will prove extremely helpful to the agency in supporting future grant applications.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study has provided some insight into the parenting program offered at the Center for Women, Children of Families. Without exhausting all the research questions that can be asked about the parenting program this study provided a picture of the demographic pattern of the population completing the program. Moreover, employing different statistical analyses, this study has shown that for the sample under analysis, the parent education program differentiate significantly between the parents' attitudes reflected by the standard ten scale scores before and after the program's completion which are attributable to improvement in their parenting attitudes.

Limitations to the study were acknowledged and the probability for error when multiple statistical computations within the same sample are performed with the SPSS software was addressed where possible.

Finally, this study laid the groundwork for a more thorough research and provided recommendations for improvement of the CWCF's parenting education program in the future.

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