Impact of the Handle with Care Program on Parental Sense of Competence and Parenting Practices

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Introduction

Parental Sense of Competence (PSC) refers to a parent's belief and confidence in their ability to be a successful parent, and this could be applied to specific parenting situations or to the overall perception of their role as a parent. This construct is closely related to the construct Parental Self-Efficacy, which has a broad influence on parenting, both for parenting practices, parenting behaviour, and for the mental health of parents.[1]

- parental competence has been found to be a predictor of discipline style for mothers of 2-8 year olds, for both typically developing children and children with conduct problems[2]
- parental competence of mothers have been found to be associated with perceptions of infant difficulty, depression and marital support[3]

Parents are in need of programs that teach self-care strategies to better help their parenting practices and to improve their perceptions of competence

Handle with Care (HWC) is a program that seeks to improve the mental health of children and parents, with components that address parents' feelings of competence and its association with parenting practices.

Objective

1. **To evaluate the impact of the HWC program on self-rated parenting practices and on parental sense of competence**
2. **To find if there is an association between parental sense of competence and self-rated parenting practices**

Method

Participants. The participants of this study are parents and caregivers (N=30) with completed data at three time points of the study.

Measure. Two measures were used in this study, and both were administered by interview.

1. **Parental Sense of Competence Scale**: This scale presents statements about feelings of competence. (Likert Scale: "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree")
2. **Parental Practices**: This scale contains multiple subscales of parenting practice. Subscales used in this study were "**Harsh Discipline**," "**Appropriate Discipline**," and "**Inconsistent Discipline**".

For the purpose of this study, Inconsistent Discipline subscale of Parenting Practices measure has been used.

Design. These measures were administered at 3 time-points throughout this study. The first time-point was before beginning the HWC program (**pre-intervention**), the second was within one month after the HWC program (**post-intervention**), and the third was 4 months after the program (**4 months follow-up**).

Analysis. A repeated-measures ANOVA was used to examine if responses on these scales changed significantly over the three time-points for parents of low income (below $44,000) and middle to higher income (above $44,000) and a regression was used to examine the possible association between the two scales.

Results

Repeated Measures ANOVA

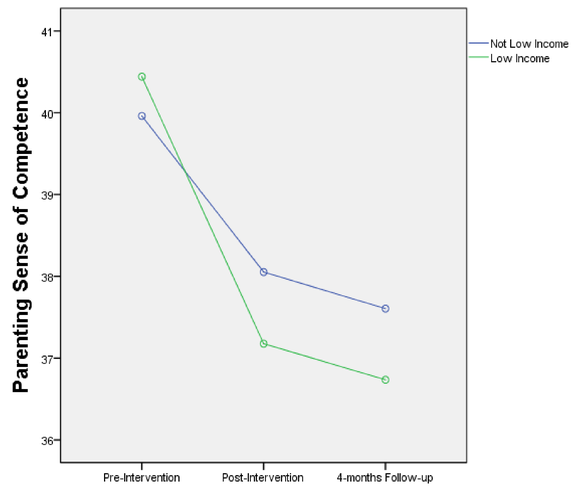

Figure 1. Significant improvement on the Parental Sense of Competence scale, $F(1, 108)=10.110$, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.086$.

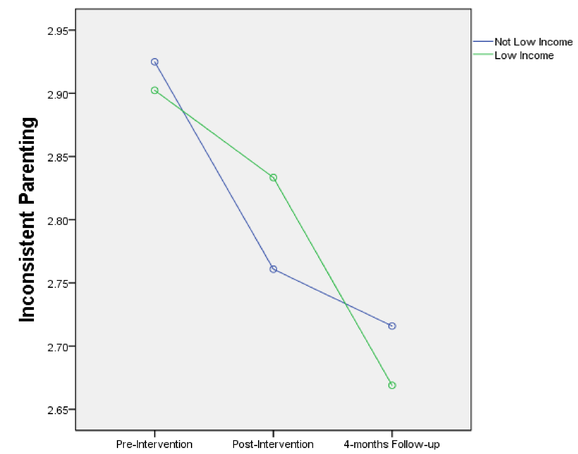

Figure 2. Significant decrease in Inconsistent Parenting, $F(1, 90)=4.285$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.045$.

Regression Analysis

PRE-INTERVENTION	16% of the variance for Inconsistent Parenting is predicted by the Parental sense of Competence, F(1,216)= 41.95, p=.000
POST-INTERVENTION	11% of the variance for Inconsistent Parenting is predicted by the Parental sense of Competence, F(1,210)= 14.6, p=.000

Discussion

1. HWC has been an effective program in improving parental sense of competence and reducing inconsistent parenting for participants regardless of their income

- Regardless of ones socioeconomic status, parenting is a universal challenge that requires appropriate intervention and can be improved through the HWC program
- Building block #2 in the HWC program targets ways to build and enhance self-esteem, perhaps through the training of this building block parents were able to feel more confident in their parenting abilities

2. Better parental sense of competence predicts lower inconsistent parenting

- Consistent with previous research from Sanders & Woolley (2005), who found parental self-efficacy to be a predictor for inconsistent discipline
- One explanation for this could be that parents who feel more confident in their parenting skills would commit to a more consistent discipline style as they are more sure of their ability as a parent.
- A parent who lacks confidence in their parenting may choose uncertain ways of disciplining their child, and may be indecisive in following through with it.

Conclusion

These results suggest that the HWC program has a positive influence on parental sense of competence and parenting consistency. However, further research is needed to improve the program by including other confounding factors that may affect parenting practices.

Acknowledgements

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