COSP

Athabasca University

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CIRCLE OF SECURITY PARENTING PROGRAM (QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION)

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

Many parents mistake obedience for connection and miss the communication behind the behaviour - what is hidden in plain sight. When problems arise, they often turn to parent programs for support. The Circle of Security® Parenting™ (COS-P) program shifts the focus from the traditional behaviour management model to focusing on attachment and the parent-child relationship[1]. COS-P is the 8-week version of the original 20-week intervention and delivers the core components of the protocol within a shorter timeframe[2].

This study focused on examining parent's descriptions of shifts in parenting after participating in the 8-week COS-P program comparative to before their participation. Shifts in parenting happen by enhancing the parent's relational capacities through the COS-P program. Another objective of the researcher was to gain awareness of parent's experiences in relation to changes in their perceptions of self and child behaviour. While behaviour change in children is not the focal point of the original or modified COS(-P) programs, it is a consequence that has been identified.

3
research questions

1. What is the parental perception of responses to child behaviour after participating in COS-P?
2. How has perception of child behaviour changed after participating in COS-P?
3. What themes emerged from parents' depictions of how parenting did or did not shift after participating in COS-P?

9
participants interviewed

Seven (7) women and two (2) men aged 30-45 years completed pre- and post-program interviews in person or by phone.
4/9 also completed follow-up interviews via Zoom (one 1 year after, and three 2 years after).
Data were collected at three points in time by two interviewers.

14
themes emerged

Data from the pre- and post- program interviews was analyzed using a qualitative descriptive framework.
Analysis revealed fourteen main themes. Additionally, the research exposed the advantages and disadvantages of using video-teleconferencing (Zoom) to conduct qualitative research.

FINDINGS

The first research question was answered through the emergence of four main findings: *parental responses were more measured, flexible, empathic, and understanding*. The second research question was answered through the emergence of three main findings: *increased parental understanding of behaviour, child behaviour was managed differently,* and *the parent-child relationship during child behaviour was communicative in nature*. The third research question was answered through the emergence of seven main findings: *parent's greater awareness, being a good enough parent, increased parent-child communication, parent's shifts in view of child behaviour, relationship with child over parenting strategy, parent reflective functioning,* and *confidence in a different approach to parenting*.

The ways in which parents spoke about their child's behaviours changed from pre- to post- and behaviour was described in a more positive light post-program. Parents in this study did report experiencing shifts in parenting and described all the COS-P relational capacities targeted by the COS-P program. Post-program parents also saw a shift in the parent-child relationship and became more aware of how their emotional state impacted their children and parent reactions influence either the escalation or calming of a situation. Parents also made connections regarding the role of intergenerational transmission, the impact of how their parents handled behaviour, and the influence it had on their own parenting. Parent's greater awareness about the roles of empathy, 'being-with', focus on relationship over parenting strategy, and helping organize and process child emotions were key pieces in their increased confidence with a different parenting approach and in their ability to be reflective about managing their own emotions to help their children.

Parents reported they would participate in video-conferencing-based research again, supporting its use as a data-collection method. Further, this technology may allow researchers to conduct studies that are larger and more diverse.

PARENT QUOTATIONS

" I cannot expect him to be on all the time. And I think that that was part of my expectation of him, without realizing that that was part of my expectation of him.

I just feel like I have more understanding now that that's what she needs as a [child]. "

" I feel like I understand [the behaviour] more.

Now I can look at it from his point of view and try and work through it with him and help him get to a point where he's no longer frustrated or upset…I try not to rush him through it anymore. I try and…be there with him and help him work his way through it. "

" Just feel more confident in my parenting too, that knowing that is something that happens it's OK, we can repair it, we can move on, it's not the end of the world, I'm not a terrible parent.

REFERENCES

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[2] Circle of Security® International. (2016). Retrieved from http://circleofsecurity.net/

EVALUATING THE CIRCLE OF SECURITY PARENTING PROGRAM EFECTIVENESS (QUANTITATIVE)

RESEARCH AT A GLANCE

The Circle of Security® Parenting™ (COSP™) program is a relationship-based intervention that targets attachment security and caregiver internal working models. Effectiveness and efficacy research utilizing observational measurement of parent-child interaction remains limited in the Circle of Security® literature and no studies had examined changes in dyadic mutuality (the formation and maintenance of emotionally warm, mutually responsive and well-synchronized interactions[1]). The aims of this piece of research were to evaluate the efficacy of the COS-P by examining changes in dyadic mutuality, parent positivity, and parent negativity using PARCHISY, an 18-item global rating scale measurement tool which measures properties of parent-child and dyadic interactions on a 7-point Likert-type scale[2,3]. PARCHISY requires fewer resources than other observational tools and has the potential to be more widely adapted in the measurement of parent-child mutuality. The purpose of this research was to analyze data generated during the 2016 pilot project testing the effectiveness of an attachment-based parenting program (see Fact Sheet 1 for more information about the 2016 pilot).

2
research questions

As measured by the PARCHISY global rating scale following an 8-week COS-P intervention:
1. Is there a change in observed parent-child mutuality?
2. Is there a change in observed parent positivity or negativity behaviours?

16
parent-child dyads

Data set included Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2) from 16 dyads (n=30; 14 parents, 16 children). Parents (12 mothers; 2 fathers) ranged in age from 27 to 42 years (M= 37.07 $\pm$ 4.32). Children (10 male; 6 female) ranged in age from 2 to 12 years (M= 5.31, SD= 3.27).

3
hypotheses

1. There will be an increase in dyadic mutuality across tasks from T1 to T2
2. There will be an increase in parent positivity across tasks from T1 to T2
3. There will be a decrease in parent negativity across tasks from T1 to T2

RESULTS

Following an analysis using the paired t-tests and Wilcoxon-signed ranks test, all constructs of interest in the current study (dyadic mutuality, parent positivity, parent negativity) moved in the theoretically hypothesized directions between T1 and T2 and across tasks. Results for dyadic mutuality indicated a statistically significant increase from T1 to T2 during the clean-up task with a moderate effect size. Parent positivity increased significantly from T1 to T2 during both the play and the clean-up task with large effect sizes for both tasks. And parent negativity did not decrease significantly across tasks (effect sizes were also small). T1 scores for parent negativity were relatively low.

The results of this current study showed promising changes with large effect sizes on changes in dyadic mutuality and parent positivity. This may indicate that COSP programming can influence these constructs and contribute to changes in parent-child interaction. Evidence suggests that changes in overall parent positivity (which had the largest effect size in this current study) can also decrease negative interaction over time and therefore lead to changes in the reciprocal relationship between parent and child. This may also enhance attachment related behaviours in parent child dyads as parents become more effective at maintaining positive warmth and control behaviours and security in the relationship strengthens.

PARCHISY has the potential to capture dyadic changes that might occur between parent/child and may support researchers in better understanding the specific mechanisms of change experienced by families following the COSP program.

These findings can provide additional support for the use of the COS-P™ as a broadly applied community-level intervention for parents and their children and adds to the growing body of literature exploring who might benefit most from the COS-P™ intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

This study addressed a gap in the current COSP literature by examining changes in dyadic mutuality through observed parent-child interactions as measured by PARCHISY. Additionally, the results provide preliminary evidence that dyadic mutuality and parent positivity may be influenced by the 8week COSP intervention.

To further enhance our understanding of COSP outcomes and continue to support the diverse needs of families who are experiencing developmental and attachment-related challenges, future research should consider: (1) implementing rigorous mixed methods/ randomized control design to ensure causal interpretations are possible; (2) adding longitudinal components to examine the long-lasting changes that may occur following COSP™ programming; and (3) comparing various observational instrumentation to obtain data related to changes in parent-child interaction as a result of COSP.

REFERENCES

[1] Deater-Deckard, K., & Petrill, S. A. (2004). Parent-child dyadic mutuality and child behavior problems: An investigation of gene-environment processes. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines, 45*(6), 1171–1179. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.00309.x

[2] Deater-Deckard, K., Pylas, M.V., & Petrill, S. (1997). Parent–Child Inter-action System (PARCHISY). London: Institute of Psychiatry. https://doi.org/10.1080/02699931.2015.1013087

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