

A summary of our 2022 research paper



Introduction

Our recent study, featured in Wiley's *Journal of Community Psychology* and led by Dr Eli Gardner, provides preliminary evidence for the effectiveness of Kids Matter. The study contributes to a limited but growing body of research that highlights how the relationship between parental confidence and competence can positively impact child development.

The why

Kids Matter aims to see every child in need raised in a strong family. We know that families struggling with financial disadvantages face disproportionately difficult circumstances. These circumstances impact a parent's sense of self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to reach goals and make changes) and wellbeing (how someone feels and copes day to day). Poor parental wellbeing and low self-efficacy are associated with a range of social, emotional and behavioural problems in their children, which continue through into adulthood.

As self-efficacy and wellbeing are malleable, and their benefits are wide reaching, efforts to increase them are worth pursuing. Parenting interventions seek to do this and are key in preventing adverse outcomes in children. With this in mind, we wanted to see whether parents who go through our Kids Matter programme achieve some of these important benefits.

The what

The study evaluated the usefulness of the Kids Matter parenting programme to see whether it positively impacted parents who attended and if so, in what way.

The study specifically tracked whether parental wellbeing and self-efficacy were affected by involvement in a Kids Matter parenting programme. The study also looked at how parental wellbeing and self-efficacy affect each other.

The how

Parents who routinely complete a survey at the end of the first and last (6th) session, and three months later at the booster session. This survey includes two standardised (externally validated) questionnaires that measure wellbeing (WEMWBS) and self-efficacy (TOPSE). Parents' responses were then analysed to measure any changes.

Parents were also asked about their experience of the programme at the end of Session 6.

The findings

The report showed overall:

- Parents found the course enjoyable and useful – they also reported positive changes to their parenting.
- Wellbeing and self-efficacy increased for parents who attended the Kids Matter programme.
- Their self-efficacy increased as their wellbeing increased.
- This improvement was sustained three months later.

Where does this leave us?

This study adds to the picture that parenting interventions are effective. Child outcomes are shown to be better when positive parenting approaches are used¹. Our research supports other research that shows higher parental wellbeing and parental self-efficacy increase the likelihood of positive parenting practices^{2,3,4}.

To build on our research and to confirm our broader conclusions, we see great worth in exploring some direct measures of children's outcomes through standardised measures or observation. Hearing from teachers as to what changes they have noticed would also be interesting and valuable.

The findings of this study also reinforce our understanding that targeting parental self-efficacy and parental wellbeing are effective ways of supporting family life. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that Kids Matter provides an effective parenting programme for the demographic it seeks to reach and holds great promise as an early intervention in communities across the country and beyond.

Reference for the full Kids Matter article:

Esteban-Serna, C., Eisenstadt, M., Gardner, E., & Liverpool, S. (2023). A preliminary evaluation of Kids Matter: A community-based parenting intervention. Journal of Community Psychology, 51(1), 453-467.

References

- 1) *Karen E. Smith, Susan H. Landry & Paul R. Swank (2000) The Influence of Early Patterns of Positive Parenting on Children's Preschool Outcomes, Early Education and Development, 11:2, 147-169.*
- 2) *de Haan, A. D., Prinzie, P., & Deković, M. (2009). Mothers' and fathers' personality and parenting: The mediating role of sense of competence. Developmental Psychology, 45(6), 1695–1707.*
- 3) *Dumka, L. E., Gonzales, N. A., Wheeler, L. A., & Millsap, R. E. (2010). Parenting self-efficacy and parenting practices over time in Mexican American families. Journal of Family Psychology, 24(5), 522–531.*
- 4) *Slagt, M., Deković, M., de Haan, A. D., van den Akker, A. L., & Prinzie, P. (2012). Longitudinal associations between mothers' and fathers' sense of competence and children's externalizing problems: The mediating role of parenting. Developmental Psychology, 48(6), 1554–1562.*