



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Powerful Parenting Impact and implementation

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Childhood Development Initiative

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Childhood Development Initiative (CDI)

- CDI is a **non-profit organisation** established in 2007 and based in Tallaght, a town in South Dublin County
- CDI aims to design, deliver and evaluate a suite of services to **improve outcomes for children and families**
- CDI developed a parenting support model: **Powerful Parenting**



Powerful Parenting

- A dedicated **Parent/Carer facilitator (PCF)** offers support to parents within Early Learning and Care (ELC) services
- **Aims** to improve outcomes at three levels:
 - **Service** - Quality of **relationships** between parents and the ELC service
 - **Parents**
 - **Engagement** in children's learning
 - **Parental stress**
 - **Children (3-6 years old)**
 - Achievement of **developmental milestones**
 - Preparedness for the **transition** to school
- Available to support **all parents** and particularly those experiencing **poverty or social exclusion**
- Aims to engage **fathers and other caregivers**, along with mothers





Powerful Parenting

- The work of PCFs with parents includes:
 - Identifying **needs**
 - Offering **support**
 - One-to-one (centre-based or home visits)
 - Group activities
 - Coffee morning, family events
 - Parenting education programme - Parents Plus Early Years Programme (positive parenting strategies)
 - **Coordinating with other services** (e.g., education, health and social services)
- Powerful Parenting has been implemented in **eight ELC services in Tallagt**

Parent Engagement Research Project

- **Aim:** To study the **implementation** and impacts of Powerful Parenting
 - Contribute to the development of **effective parenting support** policies and practices
- **Team**
 - Supervisors
 - **Marian Quinn**, CDI CEO
 - **Nóirín Hayes**, Professor, Trinity College Dublin
 - Research Fellow: **Catarina Leitão**, CDI
 - **CDI team**

Thank you to all the PCFs and ELC managers who supported this research and all the participants!

Implementation study: Objective

- To study the implementation of Powerful Parenting regarding:
 - **What activities** were implemented during 2020-21?
 - How was the implementation of Powerful Parenting **supported organisationally**?
 - To what extent did parents **utilise** Powerful Parenting?
 - What were the **perceived benefits** of Powerful Parenting?
 - What were the **strengths** of Powerful Parenting, and what could be improved?

Implementation study: Methodology

- **Participants**

- 8 PCFs
- 7 ELC managers (one of the managers coordinates two ELC services)
- 27 Parents

- **Procedures**

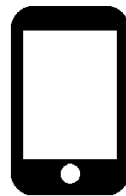
- Interviews with PCFs, ELC managers, Parents:
 - At one point in time (May-June 2021)
 - Interviews conducted by four parents from the community (**Peer researchers**) and the research fellow
- Thematic analyses; Descriptive statistics

Implementation study: Results

What activities were implemented during 2020-21?

Type of activities

- **One-to-one** support (the most frequent)
 - **Coordination** with other services (e.g., Speech and Language therapy, applications for Access and Inclusion Model)
- **Group activities for parents**/coffee mornings (e.g., mental health, transition to school)
- **Group activities for children and parents**/family mornings (e.g., dance, baking, bedtime stories)
- **Home visits/delivery of resources or packs** (e.g., to do activities at home; food packs)



Implementation study: Results

Dimensions addressed by the activities

- **Parenting support**
 - Children's development and behaviour management (e.g. home activities; transition to the next academic year; toilet training)
- **Emotional support** (e.g. social isolation, bereavement)
- Engagement with **other services** (including practical support, e.g. filling forms)
- Support regarding families' **primary needs** (food resources)
- Connection with the **ELC service** and other families (e.g. gardening, painting, calendar events)



Implementation study: Results



How was the implementation of Powerful Parenting supported organisationally?

- **Community of Practice** meetings with the CDI Parenting Specialist and PCFs (monthly)
 - PCFs: Relevant for reflecting on the work, sharing insights, and networking

“The Community of Practice meetings can be a good learning point because we can kind of suggest what we'd like. They are things that interest us and that are coming up for us, so that is really important”. (PCF)

- **Planning meetings** with the CDI Parenting Specialist and PCFs (semi-annual)
 - PCFs: Pertinent to guide future work

“We have had planning meetings this year, and they have been really good. The parent specialist kind of came together and did like a standardised plan for all PCFs. So, it is good when you have a plan to work”. (PCF)

- **PCFs' WhatsApp group**

Implementation study: Results



How was the implementation of Powerful Parenting supported organisationally?

- **Meetings** with the CDI Parenting Specialist and **ELC managers**
- **Training** provided or organised by CDI
 - PCFs and ELC managers: Describe as relevant and as a valuable support

“What I absolutely love about CDI is the training opportunities that come through, the networking, that chance to discuss with other managers, a chance to discuss with other services.”. (ELC manager)

Implementation study: Results



To what extent did parents utilise Powerful Parenting?

Attendance

PCFs and ELC managers: Parents were acknowledged as **interested**, although there was variability among parents, activities, services, and throughout the year

- Higher engagement of **fathers** and other caregivers besides mothers

“I think the majority, the 99.9% of the parents, are definitely willing to participate. They want to be involved in their children’s lives. This year there is a huge amount of fathers being involved. This year, I don't know if it is to do with the way the situation is for parents in general, there was a real bond between them”. (PCF)

Barriers

PCFs and ELC managers:

- **Covid-19**
- Lack of **availability, confidence** to reach out, or **motivation**
- First **language** other than English
- Use of **technology or writing**
- Possibility of parents feeling **overloaded** with services

Implementation study: Results

Motivation

From 1=Low to 5=High	Parents (Mean)
Motivation to participate	4.67
Perception that own interests and needs are considered	4.93

In general, parents positively characterised the activities.

“The activities she organises in the school are brilliant and I know every family really enjoys them and benefits from them”. (Parent)

Examples of activities described as positive by parents:

- **Morning** drop-offs
- Events for which **fathers** and other cares were invited
- Events where parents can see the **activities of their children**
- Parenting **course** (Parent Plus)



Implementation study: Results



What were the perceived benefits of Powerful Parenting?

Outcome (ratings from 1=Low to 5=High)	PCFs Mean	Parents Mean
Strengthening parenting skills	4.13	
Promoting the understanding of the child's development	4.81	4.64
Providing new ways to interact with children	3.88	4.72
Promoting the Home learning environment	3.63	
Promoting the Parents-ELC service relationship	4.56	4.75
Engaging both parents or other carers	4.50	
Preparing transition to school	4.69	
Involving families with other community services /Learning about them	4.19	4.60
Reducing parental stress or anxiety		4.60

ELC managers: Promotion of **parents' engagement** in children's life, **connectedness with the service**, and **mental health**.

"I think the integration. It draws the parents in, to be quite involved in their child's life". (ELC manager)

Implementation study: Results



Other benefits:

- PCFs:
 - Parents being supported regarding **queries/challenges and emotionally**; managing **children's behaviour**; investment of parents in **themselves** (e.g. back to work, education); a **connection between families**, and sense of **belongingness to the community**.

“I think that it helps for a stronger relationship with the parents and families. It also supports the manager and the childcare workers more, because they know that a person is linking with the families, and that information is being shared”. (PCF)

- Parents:
 - For children: **Developmental** benefits (e.g. transition to primary school); **socio-emotional** benefits
 - Parents: **Socio-emotional** benefits (e.g. reduced stress and isolation; meeting other families); improved access to relevant **information**
 - For ELC practitioners: increased **support in their work**

“She [the PCF] showed me how to play with my child and how to communicate better. Also, how to understand my daughter and her needs, as well as learning more about myself”. (Parent)

Implementation study: Results



What are the strengths of Powerful Parenting, and what could be improved?

Strengths

- PCFs and ELC managers:
 - **Tailoring** of support according to parents' needs, interests, capabilities, and pace
 - Activities for **all parents** and **involving parents** in the **creation** of activities
 - Focus on **building a trusting relationship** with parents
 - Having a **dedicated person** to support parents and to do assessments of needs
 - **Diversity of supports**
 - Support the **link between the parents** and the **ELC service**
 - **Support** and **networking** provided by CDI

"It is someone there that has the time to spend with the parent, will do follow-ups, look for supports, do calls and make the link". (ELC manager)

"To do it in an efficient way, that will have two parts. One will be to create strong relationships, so parents work with me. Another thing is to adjust the content to what is really needed". (PCF)

Implementation study: Results



Strengths

- Parents:
 - **Extra support** for:
 - **Parents** (e.g. help on different topics, being informed, having someone that listens to and checks how they are)
 - **Children** (e.g., by creating a positive learning environment)
 - **ELC staff**
 - PCF as a **central point of contact** that **bridges the home and the classroom**
 - **More activities** and activities that are **inclusive** of all parents
 - The **link with other services**
 - **PCFs' characteristics**: high interest showed in all families; adaptation to parents' and children's needs; approachable/easy to communicate with; and open to parents' suggestions.

“Having that person there to bridge the gap between home life and classroom, it really is invaluable so I would definitely see the benefit of it overall”. (Parent)

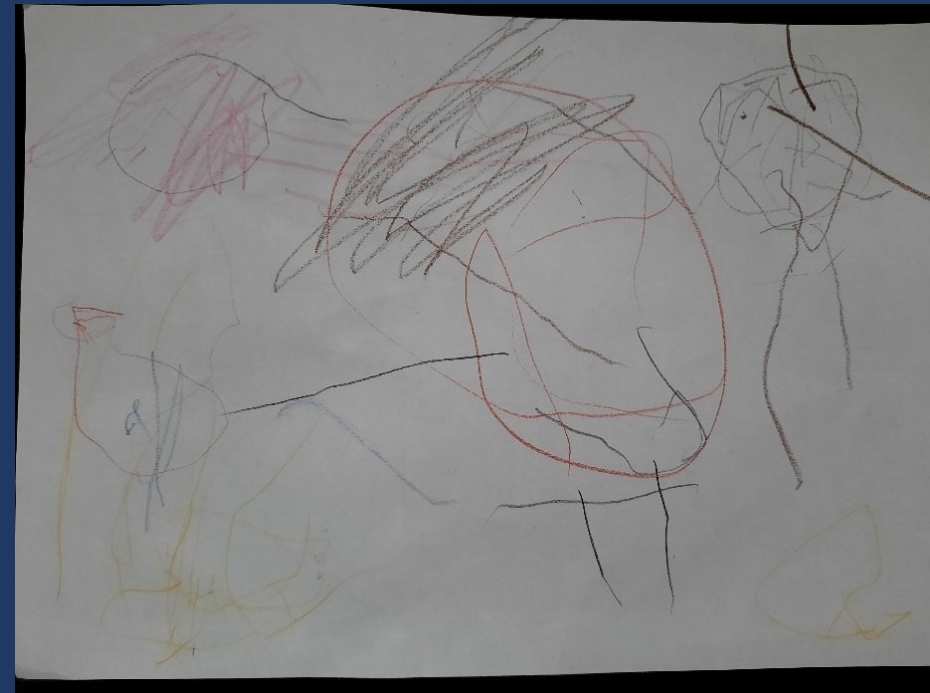
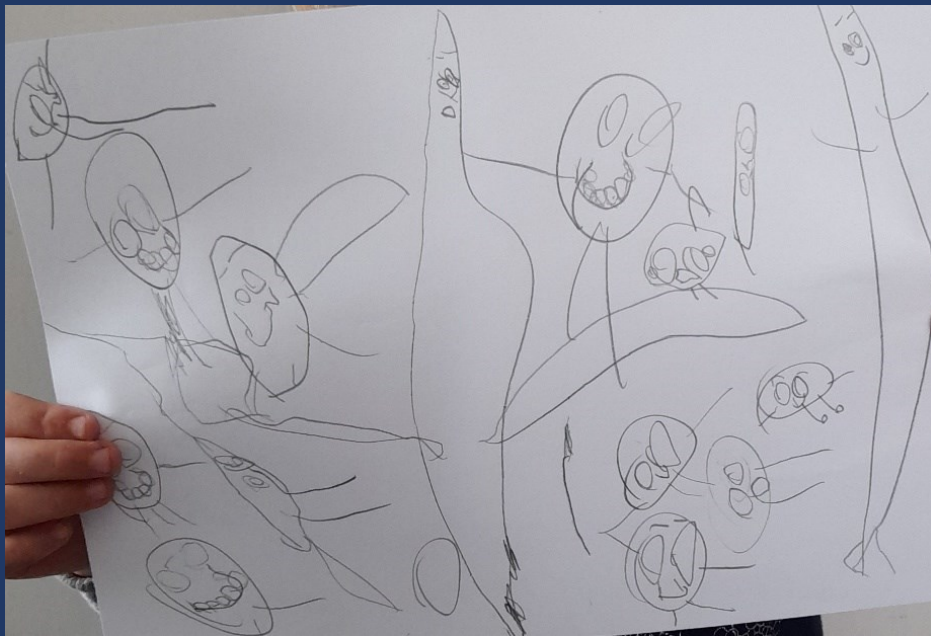
Implementation study: Results

Suggestions

- Parents:
 - **More activities** for families (they can be important to meet other families)
 - Events in the evening (or that can be attended by **working parents**)
 - Extra support for those with **extra needs** (e.g. home-visits)
 - More information o children's day and progress
 - The PCFs' role does not include this responsibility

Implementation study

Drawings by participating children about their families



Mother: *What are we doing [in the picture]?*

Child: *We are in the playground.*

Mother: *Are we all in the playground playing?*

Child: *Yes, playing on the slide.*

Impact study: Objective

- To evaluate the impact of Powerful Parenting on parents, namely:
 - The quality of the **relationship** between **parents and ELC practitioners**
 - The quality of the **home learning environment** (e.g. reading to the child)
 - **Parental stress**
 - Parents' views on the **equal participation** of women and men in caregiving (given the focus on engaging fathers)

Impact study: Methodology

- **44** parents with Powerful Parenting in their ELC services (**intervention group**) were compared on the measured outcomes to **35** parents without access to it (**control group**)






Invited through other ELC services in Dublin
(not randomly assigned by group)

- **Online questionnaire** at two times (T):
 - **T1**= December-January 2020
 - **T2**= May-June 2021

Impact study: Methodology

Participants in the final sample

	Demographics (T1)	Intervention	Control
	Age	4 y	4 y
	Age*	33 y	36 y
	Mother	93%	97%
	Ethnicity White Irish*	89%	66%
	Tertiary education*	25%	62%
	Paid employment*	52%	71%
	Two parents living together†	71%	86%
	No medical card*	41%	69%

The intervention group had:

- **Younger** parents
- Higher % of parents with **White Irish** ethnicity
- **Lower socio-economic status** (based on the demographics measured)
- **Lower % of parents living together**

Differences between groups (t/χ^2): *= $p < .05$; †= $p < .10$

Impact study: Methodology



- Analyses:
 - We sought to **make the groups more equivalent** using statistical methods (propensity scores), but differences between groups continued to exist in some demographics.
 - We conducted **regression analyses** accounting for:
 - **Scores at T1**
 - **Demographics:**
 - Year in ELC service
 - Parent's ethnicity
 - Education level
 - Type of household
 - Medical (having or not)

Impact study: Results

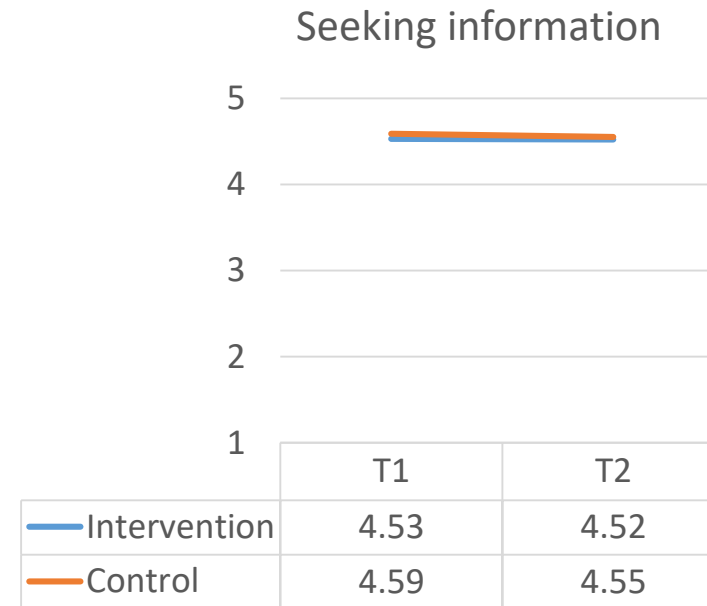
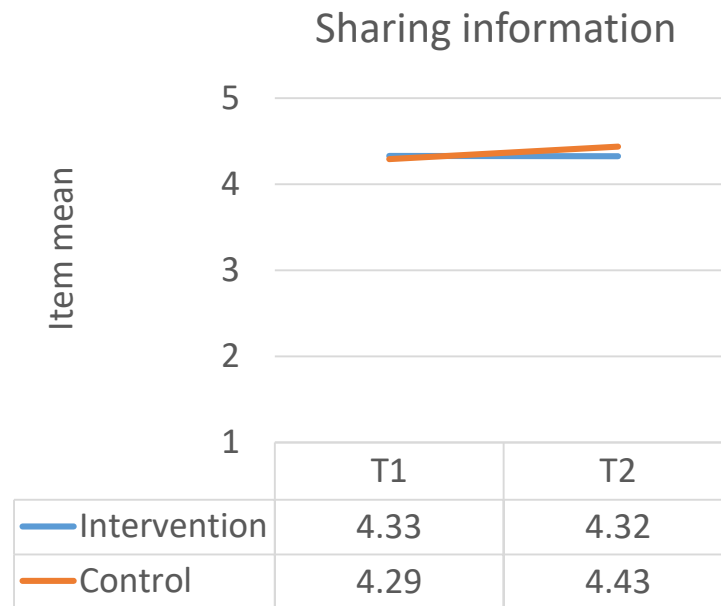


Quality of the relationship between parents and ELC practitioners

(Caregiver-Parent Partnership Scale; Ware et al., 1995)

Frequency of partnership-relevant behaviours

From **1=highly unlikely** to **5=highly likely**



The intervention group reported marginally significantly **fewer behaviours of sharing** ($t(60)=-1,858$, $p=.068$), and **seeking information** ($t(62)=-1,759$, $p=.083$) than the control group.

Impact study: Results

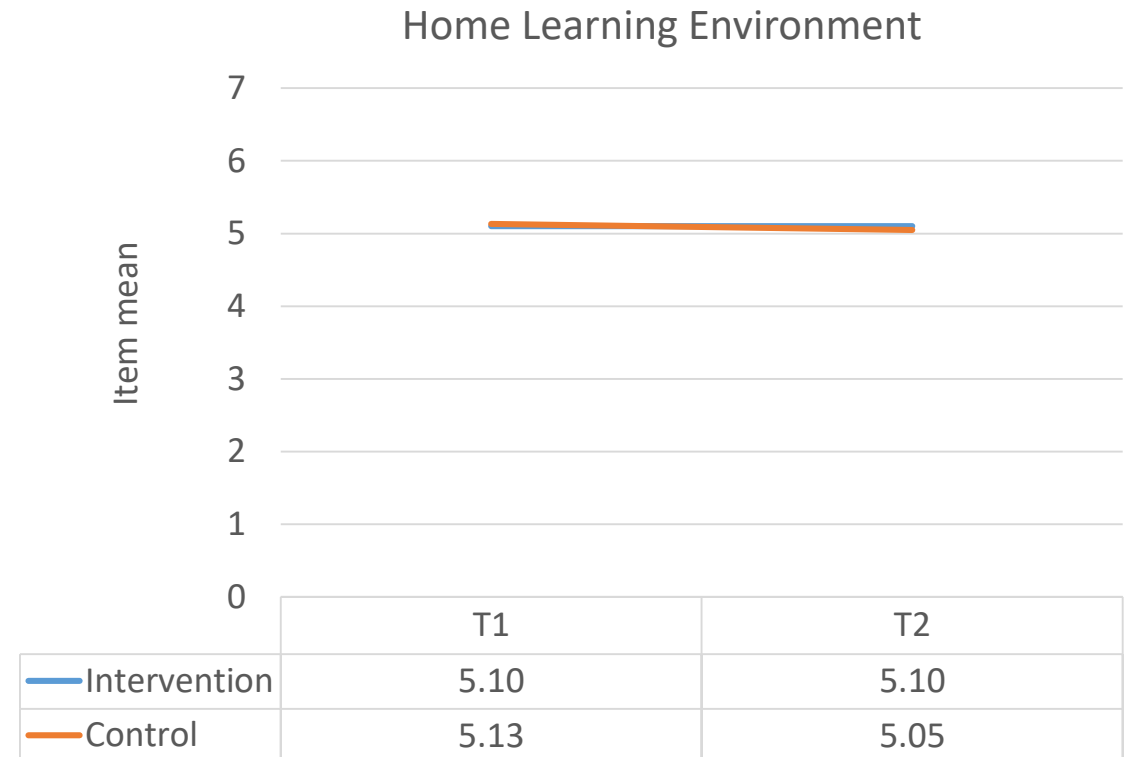
Quality of the Home Learning Environment

(Home Learning Environment Measure; Melhuish et al., 2001; GUI, 2018)

Frequency of activities known to promote children's learning in the home environment (e.g. reading to the child; playing games)

From **0=Zero days per week** to **7=Seven days per week**

No significant difference was found between the intervention and control groups ($t(59)=0.717$, $p=.476$).



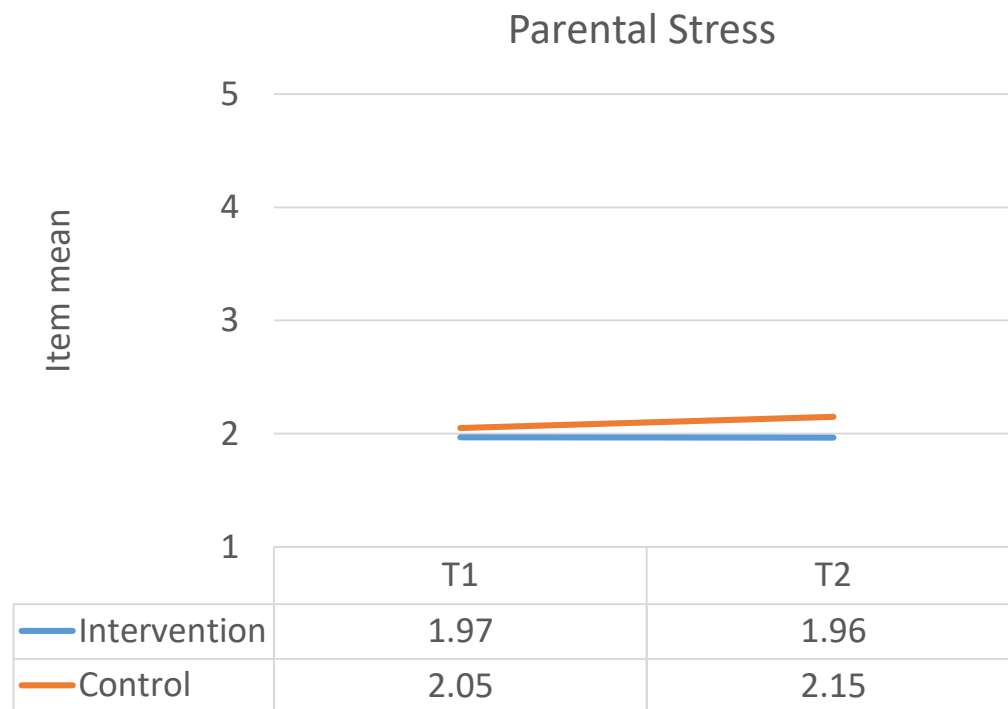
Impact study: Results

Parental stress

(Parental Stress Scale; & Jones, 1995)

Positive themes of parenthood (emotional benefits, self-enrichment, personal development), and **negative** (demands on resources, opportunity costs and restrictions)

From 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree - The **higher the score**, the **higher the level of parenting stress**



No significant difference was found between the intervention and control groups ($t(58)=-1.490$, $p=.142$).

Impact study: Results



Equal participation of women and men in caregiving

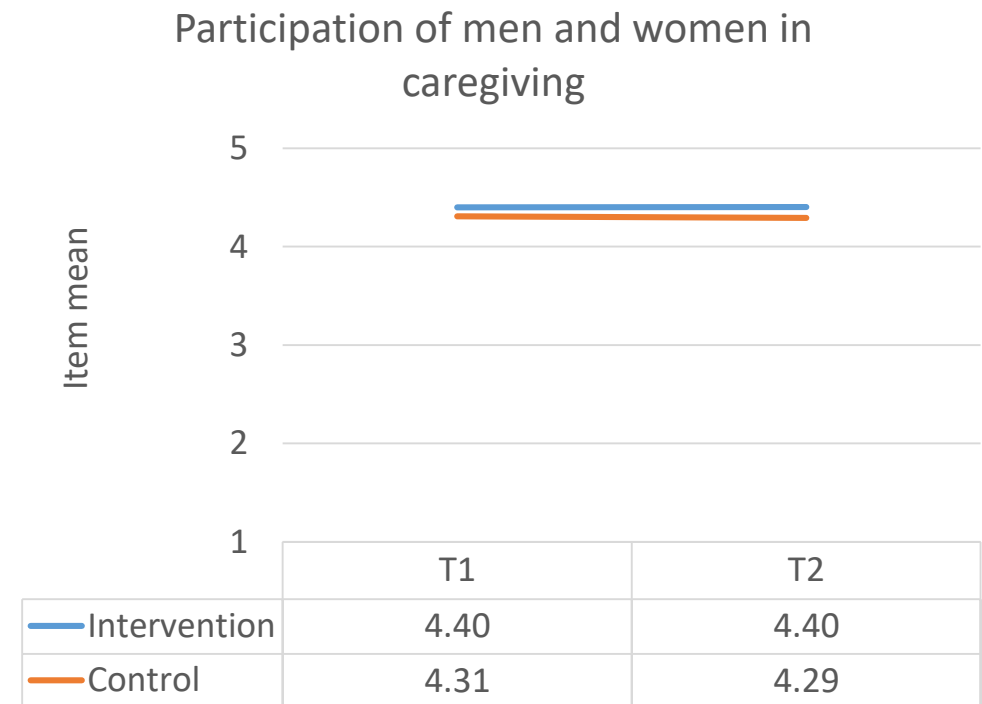
(based on International Social Survey Programme, European Social Survey, European Values Study, and Generations and Gender Programme)

Examples:

- *A single father can bring up his child as well as a single mother*

From 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree - The **higher the score**, the **higher the agreement** with equal participation

No significant difference was found between the intervention and control groups ($t(61)=-0.577, p=.566$).



Impact study: Discussion



- The intervention group **did not differ significantly** from the control group regarding the **majority of the outcomes** measured
 - However, the intervention group had, on average, younger parents, a lower socio-economic status, and a lower percentage of parents living together
 - The **differences** between groups in their **demographics** made it more difficult to determine the impacts of Powerful Parenting
- Concerning the fewer behaviours of **sharing and seeking information** with/from the ELC practitioners in the intervention group, it is important to consider the possibility of parents exchanging information with the PCFs
- **T1 and T2** were conducted with only **some months of interval** (around four months), due to changes in the methodology to comply with Covid-19 public health measures.
 - It can be more difficult to detect changes.

General discussion



- Although we did not find significant higher benefits for parents with access to Powerful Parenting when compared with parents in the control group, **several benefits were described** by parents, PCFs and ELC managers.
- Powerful Parenting’s strengths include elements that have been considered effective in parenting support: a focus on **more than one area of need**; being **easily accessible**; continuity between **universal and targeted** provision; and **coordination** with other services (Cadima et al., 2017).
- Powerful Parenting also includes aspects associated with successful outreach: **tailoring of supports** to adapt to parents/families’ characteristics or incorporate their knowledge/needs; and building **trusting relationships** with parents/families (Anders et al., 2019).

General discussion



Recommendations

- To include **children, parents, and professionals** in the development, evaluation and monitoring of supports for families
- To develop support for families within ELC services as part of **high-quality** early education and care
- To invest in the **PCF's role**:
 - Continuing to implement **professional development strategies** (e.g. Community of Practice meetings)
 - Defining its **expectations and duties**
- To develop models of parenting support that consider:
 - **Core components** while allowing for **adaptability** and **tailoring** to the target groups and context
 - The importance of **building trusting relationships** with parents/families
 - The **coordination with other services for families** (e.g. health, social services).
 - The possibility of addressing **multiple needs**
- To continue to involve **peer researchers**.

Thank you

Go raibh mile maith agat

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