Psychosocial Intervention

Editorial Comment

Quality of implementation in evidence-based positive parenting programs in Spain: Introduction to the special issue

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A B S T R A C T

The main contribution of this special issue is to present evaluation studies involving large-scale experiences of implementation of positive parenting programs delivered through home, group-based, and on-line formats in Spain. Two research questions were addressed: (1) what factors affect implementation; and (2) for whom and under which implementation conditions the programs lead to positive outcomes. Target populations were mainly families from low and middle socioeconomic backgrounds, and parents at psychosocial risk attending family support services in need of improving their parenting skills. All the programs fall under the umbrella of the positive parenting initiative launched by the Council of Europe, are evidence-based, follow a collaborative schema with national, regional, or local authorities, have multi-site implementation, and are supported by highly experienced researchers from Spanish universities. Special attention is given to the program adaptations to different contexts, the profile of parents who benefited most from the programs, analyses of the implementation process, and the assessment of parenting programs in the community. The information provided will help to increase our knowledge of evidence-based parenting programs in Spain, their implementation processes and results, and the future challenges that need to be addressed to continue the current expansion of evidence-based parenting programs.

Calidad de la implementación de los programas de parentalidad basados en evidencias positivas en España: introducción al número especial

R E S U M E N

La contribución principal de este número especial es presentar estudios de evaluación de programas de parentalidad positiva en España que implican experiencias de implementación a gran escala mediante formatos domiciliarios, grupales y *online*. Se abordan 2 preguntas de investigación: 1) qué factores afectan a la implementación, y 2) para quién y bajo qué condiciones de implementación los programas alcanzan sus mejores resultados. Las poblaciones beneficiarias son principalmente familias de contextos socioeconómicos bajos y medios, con padres y madres en riesgo psicosocial que asisten a los servicios de apoyo a las familias porque necesitan mejorar sus habilidades parentales. Todos los programas comparten la iniciativa del Consejo de Europa sobre parentalidad positiva, están basados en evidencia, siguen un esquema de colaboración con instituciones nacionales, autonómicas o locales, presentan una implementación en varios lugares y reciben el apoyo de expertos de varias universidades españolas. Los estudios examinan la adaptación de los programas en diferentes contextos, el perfil de padres y madres que más se benefician de los programas, el análisis del impacto del proceso de implementación de los programas y llevan a cabo la evaluación de programas de parentalidad positiva en una comunidad. La información proporcionada puede ser de gran ayuda para mejorar nuestro conocimiento sobre los programas basados

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en evidencia en España, su proceso de implementación y sus resultados, así como para identificar los retos futuros que habrán de abordarse para continuar la actual expansión de programas de parentalidad positiva basados en evidencia.

In Europe there is an increasing use of parenting programs aimed at strengthening and empowering families and communities in the context of family support services. Most of these initiatives are framed in the Council of Europe Recommendation (Rec2006/19) on Policy to Support Positive Parenting (Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, 2006). The notion of positive parenting is defined as: "parental behavior based on the best interest of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent and provides recognition and guidance which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child" (p. 6). The Recommendation places a prevention-based focus on the development of positive parent–child relationships, seeing this as the best way to protect children, preserve their rights, and promote their development (Daly, 2007; Rodrigo, 2010). The recommendation also emphasizes the responsibility of the state to create the best conditions for this by providing parents with sufficient and adequate support. Parenting support includes any intervention for parents or caregivers (i.e., a parenting program) aimed at reducing risks and promoting protective factors for their children, in relation to their social, physical and emotional wellbeing (Moran, Ghate, & van der Merve, 2004). The support is targeted at those who provide significant care for children in a home or family context, and may include biological parents, step-parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, grandparents, or other relatives. According to the recommendation, services should support parents from a variety of family situations, but especially parents and children facing adverse circumstances (e.g., couple violence, low educational background, poverty, lack of social support, or substance abuse). Finally, diversity should be recognized and respected in relation to family patterns and cultural and gender differences, while keeping in mind the best interest of the child.

Since 2009, Spain has also adopted a prevention approach to family support, inspired by the Council of Europe's positive parenting framework. To promote this initiative, a partnership was created that brings together the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services, and Equality, the State Federation of Towns and Provinces (FEMP in Spanish), and a consortium of six Spanish Universities (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de Barcelona, Universidad de La Laguna, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Universidad del País Vasco and Universidad de Oviedo). The first objective of this collaborative venture was to disseminate the positive parenting framework among professionals working in child and family services as well as throughout the network of social, educational, health, and community services (Rodrigo, Máiquez, & Martín, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). Under this partnership schema the platform www.familiasenpositivo.es/ was also created to contribute to the online dissemination of the positive parenting initiative to the public in general (extranet), and to provide the professionals with a space for learning about instruments, programs and research results and for exchanging good practices (intranet).

The second objective of the collaborative venture was to enhance innovative and quality assurance processes in family support services by means of changes to existing organizational cultures and professional practices. To this end, a *Guide of Best Practices in Positive Parenting (Guía de Buenas prácticas en Parentalidad positiva)* was elaborated. This Guide is the fruit of the collaborative work undertaken by the panel of experts from the aforementioned consortium of universities as well as the contributions of professionals and representatives of public and private agencies in Spain, who provided feedback from the field throughout the drafting process. The Guide is a resource directed at the professionals, service users, and policy-makers involved in the process of improving the services offered to families. The best practices outlined in the Guide are organized around three topics: (a) characteristics of family support services and organizational culture; (b) the intervention process with the family (reception, assessment, intervention, and supervision); and (c) the use of evidence-based preventive psycho-educational and community programs targeted at the child and the family. The application of the Guide is facilitated by means of an online protocol hosted on the aforementioned platform: www.familiasenpositivo.es/. The protocol includes 25 best practices and a number of corresponding indicators, which can be used to evaluate the extent to which these practices are present in the preventive work with families in a given service. After all indicators are evaluated a final report is produced with a list of what has already been achieved as well as recommendations for improvement, which may serve as a road map to guide the innovation process.

All of the above initiatives to promote the positive parenting framework are necessary, since taking a preventive stance to family intervention involves a profound shift in the way professionals understand their work with families, moving from a deficit approach to one based on prevention and promotion (Kumpfer & Alvarado, 2003; Rodrigo, Byrne, & Álvarez, 2012). According to this latter view, the focus should be on the promotion of parental capacities and move toward a strengthening approach that identifies parents' existing skills and strengths and builds on these. Professionals should avoid creating excessive dependency on the services, among families, and increase their self-confidence by means of a collaborative alliance. Interventions should also be based on promoting the strengths and resources of the children to help them to communicate their feelings and needs. And finally, the innovative and quality assurance processes should be enhanced by identifying professional best practices and improving the organizational cultures in the services.

Of all the prevention work inspired by the positive parenting framework that has been undertaken in Spain, the flagship initiative involves the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based positive parenting programs. This special issue is dedicated to disseminating examples of this work providing a description of the implementation and evaluation of the parenting programs, along with an illustration of some of the program results. A previous special issue in this journal provided international evidence of psychosocial intervention programs for children and families, underscoring the relevance of introducing preventive early intervention programs (de Paul, 2012). The content of the current issue endorses the same preventive focus and builds on it by including parenting programs implemented in Spain and directed at parents of young and older children and adolescents. A particular emphasis is placed on the way the programs are implemented in the family services—a neglected topic even in international contexts—by identifying the factors affecting the implementation process and assessing their impact on the program outcomes. To this end, this

special issue has selected a variety of multi-site and multi-trial parenting programs to illustrate some of the conceptual and practical challenges that researchers and professionals usually encounter in the implementation work. To provide a common framework for the articles that follow, this introductory article will first address two issues: the evidence-based positive parenting in Spain and the implementation of parenting programs in at-risk contexts. Next the collection of articles will be briefly presented, and finally, we will draw some conclusions and point out future challenges.

Evidence-based positive parenting programs in Spain

Under the impetus of the European positive parenting initiative, the services and resources specifically addressing parents' needs in bringing up children have undergone rapid expansion across the country. A common schema has been followed in the way parenting support is delivered through three levels of responsibility. The development of parental support policies is generally the responsibility of the central government. The central authorities are responsible for the legislative framework and regulations, the drafting of national action plans, and part of the financial support. In turn, the governments of the Autonomous Communities and the Autonomous Cities are responsible for specific legislative regulations, co-funding, and the general organization of services within their territories. The implementation of the programs through the provision of parenting support activities is, in most cases, the responsibility of the local administrations, involving public and private agencies and organizations from the voluntary sector, with varying degrees of coordination and funding.

The current focus on prevention work with families has produced important changes in the specialized social services offered at the municipal level. In the past, the tendency was to mostly target high-need families, with resources exclusively tailored for them. Nowadays, these services tend to provide support to vulnerable families in the context of community-based psychosocial-educational interventions involving a continuum of low-risk to high-risk parents. The focus is on increasing parenting skills and social support across the board to improve parents' autonomous functioning. Parental support is intended to be provided in non-judgmental, non-stigmatizing, participatory, inclusive, needs-led ways that require that parents be placed at the very center of the services (Fukkink, Vink, & Bosscher, 2014). The view is also promoted that the most effective interventions are those that strengthen informal support networks, as these are natural sources of help that increase parents' sense of confidence in their own capabilities (Rodrigo & Byrne, 2011). Finally, there is a clear emphasis on empowering the community and creating participation platforms involving local stakeholders in many communities to strengthen and coordinate the networks of local resources available to families and to the population in general.

A broad variety of preventive services and programs are now implemented at the local social services level (Rodrigo, Byrne, & Álvarez, 2016). Some of the parenting programs offered in the preventive network are evidence-based and delivered through partnership schemes, which is an important step toward introducing the evidence-based movement in the domains of child and family services. Evidence-based programs refer to a specific subset of programs which are theoretically based, with their contents fully described and structured in a manual, their effectiveness evaluated according to standards of evidence, and the factors that influence the implementation process identified and taken into account to explore variations in program results (i.e., Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005; Flay et al., 2005; Kellam & Langevin, 2003). However, there is still little evidence available on the parenting programs implemented in Spain that have demonstrated

effective prevention impact when subjected to rigorous evaluation (Rodrigo et al., 2016; Rodrigo, Máiquez, Martín, Byrne & Rodríguez, 2015). There is a similar need for systematic reviews of evidence-based parenting programs that have been successfully implemented in the rest of Europe (Asmussen, 2011; Boddy, Smith, & Statham, 2011; Eurochild, 2013; Morrison, Pikhart, Ruiz, & Goldblatt, 2014; Rodrigo, Almeida, Spiel, & Koops, 2012; Rodrigo, Almeida, & Reichle, 2015). The current issue may help to identify some of the parenting programs delivered in real world settings in Spain that reach the necessary quality standards, and provide some evidence about their effectiveness and their quality of implementation.

Implementation of positive parenting programs in at-risk contexts

Research consistently demonstrates that parenting programs are effective for improving parental knowledge, parental attitudes about child-rearing issues, practical skills to deal with everyday stressors, parental self-efficacy, and for improving children's behaviors in at-risk contexts (e.g., Chaffin, Bonner, & Hill, 2001; Johnson et al., 2008; Kaminski, Valle, Filene, & Boyle, 2008; Lundahl, Risser, & Lovejoy, 2006; MacLeod & Nelson, 2000). The typical risk profile includes low-income parents exhibiting poor models of parenting, a lack of personal empowerment, inadequate life management skills, inconsistent and unresponsive parenting, punitive approaches to managing children's behavior or inadequate supervision of children and neglect of their basic needs. But families considered to be at-risk due to other circumstances (e.g., difficulties dealing with the period of adolescence, struggles to establish a work–life balance or a family breakdown resulting from an unpleasant divorce) can be found in any social, cultural, and economic context. These families might also benefit from attending a parenting program as a way to promote positive parenting.

Comparatively, little is known about how programs for at-risk parents can best be implemented, leaving practice fields with "the paradox of non-evidence-based implementation of evidence-based programs" (Drake, Gorman, & Turrey, 2002). Implementation research deals with how well a program is conducted during a trial period (Durlak & Dupre, 2008). It is important that researchers make efforts to investigate the quality of the implementation in addition to evaluating the effectiveness of the program in real-world settings. A program's effectiveness may be affected by the field conditions required for the correct implementation of the program (i.e., the adequate dose, selection of participants, procedures used to create groups, strategies applied to reduce attrition rates, didactical and material resources needed). Furthermore, program effectiveness may also be affected by systemic variables related to the prevention delivery system (i.e., organizational functioning) and the prevention support system (i.e., adequate training of professionals and technical assistance). Therefore, research on implementation is a complex undertaking that requires specific funding and the full implication of both the delivery and support systems.

While it is increasingly recognized that the implementation process involves many sources of influences, most studies have focused on single implementation components and single program outcomes. In this regard, there is a need for more comprehensive models that may guide implementation research (Berkel, Mauricio, Schoenfelder, & Sandler, 2011; Durlak & Dupre, 2008). Some of the proposals include several dimensions or components of the implementation process (Berkel et al., 2011): fidelity (i.e., adherence to the program curriculum, dose, duration of the sessions), quality of delivery (i.e., the skill with which facilitators deliver material and interact with participants), program

adaptation (i.e., changes made to the program, particularly material that is added to the program), and participant responsiveness to the program (i.e., participants' level of enthusiasm for and participation in an intervention). The list of components is not exhaustive and probably not shared by all researchers. It is also worthwhile mentioning the lack of reliable instruments and systematic procedures to evaluate the implementation process, which implies an extra effort on the part of the researchers. However, despite the difficulties in designing and carrying out implementation work, the assessment of the implementation process is an essential feature of program evaluations (Bauman, Kohl, Proctor, & Powell, 2015; Berkel et al., 2011; Durlak & Dupre, 2008).

Overview of this special issue

The primary purpose of this special issue is to examine implementation studies in the field of prevention and promotion of parenting capacities by addressing two research questions: (1) what factors affect program implementation; and (2) for whom and under which implementation conditions the program leads to positive outcomes. To answer these questions, a collection of articles describes parenting programs implemented and evaluated in Spain as well as an overall assessment of programs in the Basque Country. All the programs fall under the umbrella of the positive parenting initiative launched by the Council of Europe, are evidence-based, follow a collaborative schema with national, autonomic or local authorities, have a multi-site and sustained implementation and are supported by highly experienced researchers from Spanish universities. This is not an exhaustive list of parenting programs applied in Spain but is intended to include those parenting programs fitting the above criteria.

Target populations of the programs reviewed are mainly parents and families from low and medium socioeconomic backgrounds, and parents at psychosocial risk attending the social services in need of improving their parenting skills. The programs are generally meant to help parents develop and enhance their parenting skills by trying alternate approaches to child-rearing, improving the family learning environment, fostering their sense of personal competence, and strengthening their capability to draw upon available resources—from informal and formal support networks—for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of their young and adolescent children. The program contents are grounded in solid theories and research: attachment, parental cognition and child-rearing practices, social learning, family resilience, parental self-efficacy, family communication and conflicts, life transitions, family stress, and social support. Accordingly, the core contents are very diverse: affection bonds in the family, family norms and values, stimulation and joint leisure activities, emotional regulation, communication and conflicts, healthy peer relationships, coping with daily stress, social support, family–school collaboration, and regulation of Internet use.

The parenting programs included here have been either developed from the ground up or culturally adapted from well-known international programs. Most of these programs receive public or private financial support for their development, implementation, and evaluation. This financial assistance ensures the rigorous evaluation and sustained support needed for the large-scale implementation of the programs. Group facilitators are professionals working in public or private services, who are well-trained by the program staff in the program principles and content, group management, and the implementation and evaluation of the program. A participative and experiential methodology is usually followed in the groups, based on activities and hands on experiences, and cooperative knowledge building. Finally, quality assurance and program fidelity are guaranteed by training workshops, site visits by the program staff, and online supervision.

Apart from these common features, the parenting programs presented here differ in some important aspects, and reflect a variety of formats and implementation conditions. Thus, the programs are delivered through home, group-based, and online formats; are either targeted at parents of children of any age or directed at parents of children of specific ages; and are designed for either the parents only or both parents and children. Also, the articles address different topics such as the program adaptations to different contexts, the profile of parents who benefited most from the programs, the analyses of the impact of implementation aspects, and the assessment of parenting programs in the community. They also use a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and statistical analyses. A more detailed description of each article follows.

The *Growing Up Happily in the Family Program* (*Programa Crecer Felices en Familia*; Álvarez, Padilla, Byrne & Maiquez) is a program targeting parents in psychosocial risk conditions with children aged 0–5 years old, to prevent child maltreatment and promote health and emotional wellbeing. The objective of this article was to evaluate the impact of various implementation components in the group and home-based versions of the program on changes in parental attitudes about child development and education. The study examines program adherence, adaptations to the parents, participant responsiveness to the program, quality of delivery, and implementation barriers as predictors of changes in parental attitudes. The results highlight the importance of taking into account the quality of the implementation process when testing the effectiveness of early interventions in at-risk families.

The *Family Education and Support* Program (*Programa Formación y Apoyo Familiar*; Hidalgo, Jiménez, López-Verdugo, Lorence, & Sánchez) was designed for parents of children of any age under psychosocial risk conditions attending the Andalusian Family Preservation Services delivered at local levels. This article described evidence accumulated across trials on different implementation strategies (organizational support, professional training, adaptability, participant selection, and group composition), as well as different implementation outcomes (fidelity, intensity and dosage and participant responsiveness). The authors also examined the impact of various implementation aspects on program outcomes such as self-esteem, parental sense of control, and parental responsiveness, by performing a clustering of the implementation dimensions. In this way, this study provided relevant information on a variety of implementation profiles and their respective impact on the program outcomes.

The *Learning Together, Growing up in the Family Program* (*Programa Aprender Juntos y Crecer en Familia*; Amorós, Byrne, Mateos, Vaquero & Mundet) targets at-risk parents and children from 6 to 11 years old, with a preventive focus on promoting positive parent–child relationships. The program is widely implemented in many places under the promotion and funding of the Area of Social Integration of the "la Caixa" Foundation. The article examines six topics related to the implementation process: Steps prior to the beginning of the program, fidelity, program organization, facilities provided to the participants, quality of the group facilitator, and coordination with other services. The article discusses the impact of these components on changes in parenting styles and parental competences after the program, as well as on attendance rate, providing guidelines for future implementations.

The *Family Competence Program* (*Programa de Competencia Familiar*; Orte, Ballester, Vives, & Amer) is a selective, multicomponent (i.e., involving parents, children, and the family) prevention program targeting at-risk families attending a drug rehabilitation program (Proyecto Hombre), social services, or services offered in the context of a child protection institution. This

article describes two aspects of the quality of program implementation: the professional evaluation of the role of the group facilitators and the assessment of the family engagement techniques encouraging family participation and motivation. The impact of family engagement on long-term family outcomes was also tested. The study highlights the crucial role played by the facilitators and the difficulties associated with adequate program implementation, and underscores the importance of implementation on the evaluation of program effectiveness.

The *Living Adolescence in the Family Program* (*Programa Vivir la Adolescencia en Familia*; Rodríguez, Martín, & Cruz) is aimed at parents with a psychosocial risk profile who have adolescent children, and is intended to support them in this period of rapid change. This article addresses the adaptation of this program to the social services and secondary school contexts to test its effectiveness in producing changes in parental supervision and resolution of parent–child conflicts. The profile of parents who benefited more from the program in each context is also examined. In this way, the study emphasizes the differences in implementation in both contexts and the potential benefits brought about by introducing a parenting program initially designed for the social services into the school setting.

The *Program-Guide to Developing Emotional Competences* (*Programa-Guía para el Desarrollo de Competencias Emocionales*; Martínez, Rodríguez, Álvarez, & Becedóniz) is aimed at promoting parental competences to support positive parenting of children of any age as a measure for preventing family conflict. This article examines the effectiveness of the program in promoting abilities of emotional regulation, self-esteem and assertion, communication, conflict resolution strategies, and the setting of limits and norms to promote positive discipline. The program forms part of a raft of measures currently supporting an educational and preventive social innovation process to promote positive parenting at the local services in the Principality of Asturias. In this regard, the study emphasizes the contextual, institutional, methodological, and professional issues that need to be taken into account when implementing a parenting program.

The online program *The Positive Parent* (*Educar en Positivo*; Suarez, Rodríguez, & Rodrigo) is framed within the new approach of e-parenting and offers online support to help parents improve their parenting skills and learn more about child-rearing and family issues. The program is installed in the Web-based educational resource for parents 'Educar en Positivo' http://educarenpositivo.es and can be freely accessed by parents, who can work on the module selected at their convenience. This article reports the results of a participant survey to examine changes in online parenting support and satisfaction with the module completed, according to participants' sociodemographic profile, their level of experience with the Internet, and their general and educational use of Internet resources. The study emphasizes the need to offer online support to the large community of Spanish-speaking parents to fill an existing gap in the promotion of positive parenting.

The closing article, *Assessing Positive Parenting Programs in the Basque Country* (Arranz, Olabarrieta, Manzano, Cruz, & Etxaniz), presents the results of a study aimed at identifying and assessing positive parenting programs and activities carried out in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country, within the III Inter-institutional Family Support Plan. The study comprises all positive parenting programs implemented by social services in large municipalities as well as those run by the associations of small local councils and NGOs working with families. The parenting programs and activities were assessed using a set of criteria, most of which had been inspired in the literature on evidence-based standards. The set of criteria applied provide sound information about the quality of the existing programs and useful guidelines for the correct design and implementation of new ones.

Conclusions

The parenting programs reviewed in this issue have provided evidence of their effectiveness by means of rigorous evaluations performed for a variety of geographical and contextual conditions, services, formats, participants, professionals, evaluation designs, and outcomes. These results indicate that the use of parenting programs is an intervention strategy that can be applied with high versatility and flexibility without losing effectiveness. In this regard, the greater involvement of fathers in parenting programs is still a pending issue that should be addressed in future program implementations.

The articles place special emphasis on establishing the conditions that must be met to successfully implement programs across sites. Thus, the programs presented here have assured the fidelity to their core principles and methodology, been advertised properly as a support for positive parenting, motivated participants and performed a careful selection, provided training and continuity of the facilitators, performed an adequate coordination of facilitators with the service and program staff, taken care of transport facilities, refreshments, and parallel activities for the parents and children, and tried to integrate the program into the network of social resources whenever possible. Across the studies, most of these implementation conditions have been shown to be crucial components of the implementation process and are thus associated with better program results and higher attendance rates. Components shown to be of particular importance include fidelity, program adherence, facilitators' appraisal of the program, facilitators' skills and profiles, facilitator training, participant profiles, group dynamics, group climate, family engagement techniques, facilities provided to the participants, and coordination with other practitioners or services.

In sum, the articles are more or less explicitly in agreement with the idea that the effective implementation of parenting programs is a complex undertaking that requires solid conceptual grounding, practical expertise, and the acquisition of cumulative knowledge over repeated trials of the program, with a view to ensuring constant improvement. However, the benefits outweigh the difficulties. Assessing implementation improves our understanding of the strategies that work best with given interventions, settings, and conditions. In this way, the results of implementation studies provide information about the viability of a given intervention and the efforts required to deliver it effectively in real-world settings. Since the level of implementation affects the outcomes obtained in parenting programs, the evaluation of this implementation can help investigators to know if an intervention failed because it was ineffective or because it was implemented incorrectly. Moreover, evaluation research helps to analyze the intended or unintended program modifications carried out during the successive trials and their impact on the program results. Finally, it helps to discover the core aspects that make the program applicable to other contexts without losing fidelity to its principles and objectives.

What is next? Despite the progress made in the right direction, there are substantial issues that remain unresolved. First, the sustainability of the evidence-based parenting programs must be guaranteed and they must be fully integrated into the prevention network. Budget cuts applied in many services have the potential to weaken the prevention network and jeopardize program sustainability. Second, the culture of evaluation following standards of best evidence is still not widespread and therefore evidence-based programs are not extensively implemented. Nonetheless, in times of budgetary restrictions, decision-makers such as funders and service providers are increasingly making programming choices based on the best evidence from research. Third, though some progress has been made to achieve a professional and scientific consensus on best practices in the field of child and family services, the outcome

is not readily adopted, or translated to practice in the field. Fourth, more efforts should be made to fully introduce the prevention focus into child and family services to compensate for the tendency to design interventions exclusively tailored to meet individual needs, without first gaining knowledge of the protection and risk factors underlying the life ecology that surrounds the family and its available social network. In this regard, parenting programs are a good strategy for helping families to gain more autonomy over their lives and become better integrated into the community while improving their abilities to bring up their children and deal with adverse circumstances. Finally, further efforts must be made to build on the initial merging of positive parenting initiatives into the child protection system. The positive parenting programs reviewed in this issue have been successfully applied in family preservation services delivered mainly through social services and other services run by NGOs, and offer a new take on traditional interventions with at-risk families. Having evidence-based parenting programs implemented in the community is a main protective factor for vulnerable families, helping them to thrive in the face of adversity and keep their family united. However, these interventions should be regularly used in casework with families to take full advantage of their possibilities. The authors of this special issue are utterly convinced that the continuation of the partnership schemes bringing together policy-makers, service providers or funders, professionals, and researchers that have led to the current expansion of evidence-based parenting programs in Spain will provide a fertile ground for promoting the positive parenting initiative toward future achievements.

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Conflict of interest

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