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REVIEW ARTICLE

Parental competence programs to promote positive parenting and healthy lifestyles in children: a systematic review[☆]

Q2 Cayetana Ruiz-Zaldibar^{a,b,c,*}, Inmaculada Serrano-Monzó^{a,b,c}, Agurtzane Mujika^{a,b,c}

^a Universidad de Navarra, Facultad de Enfermería, Pamplona, Spain

^b Universidad de Navarra, Grupo de Investigación IMPULS, Pamplona, Spain

^c Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria de Navarra (IdiSNA), Pamplona, Spain

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KEYWORDS

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Abstract

Objective: To analyze the available evidence regarding the efficacy of interventions on parents whose children were aged 2–5 years to promote parental competence and skills for children's healthy lifestyles.

Source: Articles published in English and Spanish, available at PubMed, Psycinfo, CINAHL, Web of Science, Eric, and Cochrane Library were reviewed.

Summary of the findings: The literature search yielded 2282 articles. Forty-one full texts were retrieved and assessed for inclusion using the PRISMA flow diagram. Twenty-six articles were excluded, as they did not meet the inclusion criteria. In the end, 15 studies were included. The studies were conducted between 2003 and 2016, nine in North America, four in Europe, and two in Asia. Extracted data were synthesized in a tabular format. CASPe guide was used to assess the quality of studies that was moderate overall. Parental self-efficacy was the main construct assessed in most studies. Four studies reported an increase in parental self-efficacy, although most of them were studies without control groups.

Conclusions: Outcomes of interventions to improve parental competence in order to promote children's lifestyles are promising, but inconsistent. Additional studies with higher methodological and conceptual quality are needed.

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail: cruiz.9@unav.es (C. Ruiz-Zaldibar).

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PALAVRAS-CHAVE

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Programas de competência dos pais para promover parentalidade positiva e estilos de vida saudáveis em crianças: uma análise sistemática**Resumo**

Objetivo: Analisar as evidências disponíveis com relação à eficácia de intervenções em pais de filhos com idade entre 2 e 5 anos para promover a competência e as habilidades dos pais a respeito de estilos de vida saudáveis para as crianças.

Fonte: Foram analisados artigos publicados em PubMed, Psycinfo, CINAHL, Web of Science, Eric e Biblioteca Cochrane. Inglês e espanhol.

Resumo dos achados: A pesquisa da literatura encontrou 2282 artigos. 41 textos completos foram selecionados e avaliados para inclusão utilizando o fluxograma PRISMA. 26 artigos foram excluídos, pois não atendiam aos critérios de inclusão. Por fim, 15 estudos foram incluídos. Os estudos foram realizados entre 2003 e 2016. Nove estudos foram conduzidos na América do Norte, quatro eram de origem europeia e dois de origem asiática. Os dados extraídos foram sintetizados em formato de tabela. O guia CASPe foi utilizado para avaliar a qualidade dos estudos, que, em geral, foi moderada. A autoeficácia dos pais foi o principal dado avaliado na maioria dos estudos. Quatro estudos relataram um aumento na autoeficácia dos pais, apesar de que a maioria eram estudos sem grupo de controle.

Conclusões: Os resultados de intervenções para melhorar a competência dos pais para promover os estilos de vida das crianças são promissores, porém incoerentes. São necessários estudos adicionais com melhor qualidade metodológica e conceitual.

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Introduction

Childhood health promotion that fosters the adoption of attitudes and healthy lifestyles might be considered one of the most cost-effective interventions, given the potential impact throughout the life course of individuals.^{1,2} Child development is crucial between 2 and 5 years, as this stage is characterized by emotional, social, cognitive, language, and motor skills development. Early childhood is therefore the best time to carry out activities that promote the acquisition of healthy lifestyles.^{3,4} This period in children's development has a peculiarity; parents play a vital role in providing their children a positive environment and atmosphere to ensure a healthy development and lifestyle. Therefore, parents represent a key target if children's health is to be promoted.⁵⁻⁷

Identifying the underlying mechanisms through which parents exert healthy parenting is key to developing effective interventions. Parenting is influenced by multiple determinants including personal resources of parents, child's characteristics, and social sources of stress and support.⁸ The interaction between this amalgam of factors modulates parental competence, which has been defined as the feelings, abilities, and skills that parents have in raising their children.^{9,10} Depending on the development of this parental competence, parents will be able to promote healthy lifestyles in their children.⁹⁻¹²

There is evidence suggesting the need to help parents in promoting healthy lifestyles among their children within a positive parenting framework.¹³⁻¹⁶ The aim of this systematic review was to explore the available evidence on intervention studies directed at parents whose children were aged 2-5 years to promote parental competence and

skills for children's healthy lifestyles. This review also set out to specifically assess the interventions and the underlying mechanisms in detail, as well as to explore their impact.

Methods**Data sources**

Searches were conducted in a number of databases, including PubMed, Psycinfo, Cinhal, Web of Science, Eric, and the Cochrane Library. Search terms encompassed terms related to parental competence and intervention strategies. These included: *parenting, parental competence, positive parenting, parenting practices, strategies, intervention, programme, program, treatment, and health promotion*. All terms were combined with the Boolean operators AND and OR. The interventions considered in this review were those carried out more on an individual level than on a health policy level. No attempt was made to search for unpublished works, such as dissertations and theses, neither limits were established in relation to the year of publication. Articles in English and Spanish were reviewed.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

This review focused on intervention studies that sought to increase the development of parental competence or any of the abilities that parents need in order to promote healthy lifestyles among their children.⁹ For this purpose, studies were included in the review if they met the inclusion criteria. These were established according to the different characteristics shown below.

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