

Ane-Marthe Solheim Skar, *Evaluation of the International Child Development Programme for parents from the general population in Norway and Mozambique, and from prison*, doctoral thesis at the University of Oslo January 2015. Link to the scientific abstract (in English):

<http://www.sv.uio.no/psi/forskning/aktuelt/arrangementer/disputaser/2015/skar/viten.html>

Scientific abstract

Parenting programmes are implemented to build confidence and competence in parents so that they are better prepared to meet the challenges of parenthood and raise their child in a way that will benefit their children. The main objective of this dissertation was to assess the impact of the widely used yet not properly evaluated International Child Development Programme (ICDP) on a general community sample of caregivers in Norway and Mozambique and to investigate the impact of this programme in a sample of incarcerated fathers in Norway.

Methodology: A natural group design was used where parents who were about to take part in ICDP groups for the general caregiver population in Norway were recruited to take part in the study at the first group meeting (N=141). A non-attending community comparison group was recruited from the same areas (N=79). Both groups completed questionnaires before and after the ICDP course. A sub-group of parents in the ICDP community group (N=79) and comparison group (N=62) also completed a questionnaire 6–12 months after programme completion. In Mozambique, parents who had previously taken part in ICDP groups for the general caregiver population (N=75) and a comparison group from the same district who had not taken part in such groups (N=62) were recruited to the evaluation by local recruiters and filled in questionnaires. The prison study comprise fathers who participated in ICDP courses in prison (N=25) and a comparison group of fathers who attended the general community programme (N=36). Both groups completed questionnaires before and after the ICDP course and twenty incarcerated fathers participated in semi-structured interviews after programme attendance.

The questionnaires are covering demographic information, parenting, parental assessment of the child's strengths and difficulties, and psychosocial well-being and mental health in the parents. Quantitative analyses include t-tests and mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on time of measurement. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

Results: The ICDP community group in Norway showed more positive attitudes towards child management and reported better child management, improved parental strategies and less impact of child difficulties from before to after the course. The comparison group showed little change. There was variation in impact depending on the situation of the course attendants. Caregivers with higher education showed greater change in scores on household chaos, and caregivers with higher depression and anxiety scores and lower social support satisfaction scores showed greater change in relation to parenting strategies and household chaos. A community-wide approach thus seems to benefit parents residing in the general parent population, including parents with

psychosocial challenges and parents who might have difficulties in coping with their caregiver responsibility.

ICDP participants in the Mozambique study reported fewer conduct problems in their children, better parenting skills, including a shift in physical punishment away from hitting, higher scores on health, self-efficacy and life quality, and lower scores on mental health difficulties than the comparison group.

In the Norwegian sample, some scores decreased from course attendance to follow-up, suggesting that some effects faded with time. This may indicate that follow-up may strengthen programme effects. Time since ICDP attendance had no impact on the scores in the Mozambique sample, suggesting that the influences of the course were sustained over time.

The results from the prison study showed that the prison group reported better parenting skills and poorer psychosocial health than the comparison group before the course. ICDP attendance was related to increased scores on parenting strategies for both the prison and community group, but on several measures the community group improved, while the prison group revealed the same or lower scores. At interviews, the fathers' accounts suggest that they had become more reflective and realistic about their parental role. However they also reported concerns due to increased consciousness, which might account for the decrease in mental health scores, pointing to a potential need for follow-up.

Conclusions: The results add to the literature on parenting programmes. The findings suggest that ICDP might be an approach that creates positive impact for a variety of parent and child groups under different circumstances and cultures. The current research thus provides tentative support for community-wide implementation of ICDP parenting courses and implementation in a prison context. Further research should be longitudinal and use randomization in order to investigate long-term effects.