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project facts

Key words

Caregivers, Child outcomes, Early childhood development, Parenting programmes

Behavioral themes

Caregiving
Parenting programmes

Research design

Literature review, key informant interviews with early childhood development (ECD) experts
Technical assistance (TA) sessions with three ongoing parenting programmes in Brazil, Jordan, and Istanbul

Scope

Start date: June 2022
End date: December 2022

Location

Global South

Partner

BVLF (Funder), STC (sub-contractor)

Ethics approval

N/A

How can behavioural science increase the impact of parenting programmes?

Uncovering overlooked barriers to parental engagement and finding innovative and cost-effective solutions for increasing engagement by addressing these barriers.

Background: Improving child outcomes through parenting programmes

Parenting programmes are a key pillar of early childhood development (ECD) policy globally. There is strong evidence that they can significantly improve key ECD outcomes, such as children's cognitive, language, motor and social emotional development. Unfortunately, programmes often encounter challenges with low levels of parental engagement. Parents may be unaware of a programme, not enrol, only attend a few sessions, struggle to absorb the information covered during sessions or seldom implement the recommended practices at home.

Behavioral science can increase the impact of parenting programmes by providing insights on why parental engagement issues arise and recommending solutions to address them.

Conducting the research

We performed a literature review of existing parenting programmes followed by in-depth interviews with early childhood development experts and technical assistance sessions with three ongoing parenting programmes in Brazil, Jordan, and Istanbul.

- » **The parenting programme journey has 5 stages:**
 - Stage 1 - Awareness
 - Stage 2 - Enrolment
 - Stage 3 - Attendance
 - Stage 4 - Learning & Engagement
 - Stage 5 - Application

- » **Caregivers face 11 barriers on the parenting programme journey:** Limited attention, hassle factors, present bias, status quo bias, inaccurate beliefs about who the programme is for, overconfidence, social norms (family or community), planning fallacy, high cognitive load, inaccurate beliefs about the programme's benefits, and perceived lack of self-efficacy.

- » **Programme implementers are susceptible to behavioural biases too:** Aversion to ambiguity, cognitive overload, confirmation bias, planning fallacy, status quo bias, and sunk cost fallacy are all biases that affect programme implementers.

Implications

Parenting programme implementers can use this guide to understand why they aren't seeing the results they expected. It provides a starting point for thinking about parenting programmes from a behavioural science perspective.

Recommendations for future research

We are hoping that users of the playbook could provide feedback on areas we can make stronger.

Further reading

The little book for parenting programmes: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/The-Little-Book-for-Parenting-Programmes-updated.pdf/>

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The aha! moment summarises key facts and insights from Busara's research projects.

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