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PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PARENTING INITIATIVES: ENGAGING EVERYDAY PARENTS TO PREVENT MALTREATMENT

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science (Psychology)

Lucia Madeleine King
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand
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ABSTRACT

A population initiative to improve parenting knowledge and support is important for preventing child maltreatment. Traditional parent training programmes are expensive and unacceptable to many New Zealand parents, thus an alternative is indicated.

Common change principles and proposals from research suggest that interventions use supports for self-determination - relatedness, competence, and autonomy - as well as relevance, flexibility, and inductive qualities and attention to specific engagement factors. The SKIP population-based initiative uses many of these principles in their efforts to engage and support New Zealand parents. This project investigated two types of SKIP initiatives by assessing parents’ perceptions of their efficacy and acceptability, and the factors that contributed to these perceptions.

Study 1 analysed the impact of a booklet disseminated to shoppers, and provides some evidence that supports for relatedness and autonomy, and an inductive approach, contributed to its effects. These included positive thoughts and feelings about parenting, reflection on parenting values and an intent to reflect more in future, as well as increased parenting confidence and decreased parenting stress.

Study 2 investigated parents’ perceptions of two community-based parenting groups: their effects and the factors that contributed to them. It provides strong evidence that all of the aforementioned principles were important to the outcomes. Parents described an increase in parenting
knowledge, confidence and support, and increased comfort with talking about parenting with others. Other common factors that contributed to success in these initiatives are discussed also.

This project suggests that initiatives such as these, with alternative conceptions of how to achieve education and support, can be highly acceptable and beneficial to ‘everyday’ parents, who might not engage with traditional parent training programmes.
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