



The Spanish online program “Educar en Positivo” (“The Positive Parent”): Whom does it benefit the most?



Armanda Suárez^{a,*}, Juan Antonio Rodríguez^b, María José Rodrigo^a

^a Departamento de Psicología Evolutiva y de la Educación, Universidad de La Laguna, Spain

^b Facultad de Educación, Universidad de La Laguna, Spain

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the Spanish online program ‘Educar en Positivo’ (“The Positive Parent”) (<http://educarenpositivo.es>). Eighty-five users were surveyed to examine changes in views of online parenting support and satisfaction with the module completed, as a function of their sociodemographic profile, their level of experience with the Internet, and their general and educational use of Internet resources. Results showed that parents changed their views of online support, the benefits thereof, and their parenting skills. Participants reported high satisfaction with the program’s usability, the module content, and their perception of parental self-efficacy. These findings are moderated by level of Internet experience and educational use of web-based resources, suggesting that improving parents’ digital literacy and promoting Internet use may be an effective avenue for improving access to prevention resources. In sum, this program offers a space for Spanish-speaking parents to learn and exchange experiences, thereby filling a gap in ensuring the promotion of positive parenting in this large community of potential users.

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El programa online en español ‘Educar en Positivo’: ¿A quién beneficia más?

RESUMEN

El estudio analiza los resultados de la evaluación del programa online en español ‘Educar en Positivo’ (<http://educarenpositivo.es>). Ochenta y cinco participantes que se examinaron los cambios percibidos en el apoyo online y en la satisfacción con el módulo realizado, en función de los datos sociodemográficos, su nivel de experiencia en Internet, y su uso general y educativo de Internet. Los resultados mostraron que los padres percibieron cambios en el apoyo online, sus beneficios y las habilidades para la educación parental. Los participantes reportaron una alta satisfacción con la facilidad de uso del programa, el contenido del módulo, y su percepción de autoeficacia parental. Estos resultados son modulados por el nivel de experiencia de Internet y uso educativo de los recursos online, lo que sugiere la importancia de que los padres mejoren su alfabetización digital y promover el uso de Internet con fines educativos. En resumen, este programa ofrece un espacio para que los padres aprendan e intercambien experiencias, contribuyendo a garantizar la promoción de la parentalidad positiva en esta gran comunidad de usuarios potenciales de habla española.

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Introduction

According to Eurostat (2014), 75% of Europeans go on the Internet daily in order to conduct a wide range of activities, such as consulting email (89%), searching for information on goods and services (80%), or reading digital newspapers (60%) (Seybert & Reinecke, 2014; Seybert, 2012). There has also been a massive

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: asuper@ull.edu.es (A. Suárez).

increase in the use of the Internet in day-to-day family life. According to the Eurobarometer (2008), 84% of parents surveyed use the Internet; 54% use it on a regular basis, 22% go online several times a week, and only 8% say they use it occasionally. A growing body of research on parental online activities has shown that, above and beyond the everyday tasks that could be performed online, parents use Internet as an important source of information to support their parenting role (see for reviews, Dworkin, Connell, & Doty, 2013; Nieuwboer, Fukkink, & Hermanns, 2013a; Plantin & Daneback, 2009). The use of the Internet for parenting purposes allows parents to obtain information, exchange experiences and create virtual communities around certain child-rearing topics (Madge & O'Connor, 2006; McDaniel, Coyne, & Holmes, 2012; Muñetón, Suárez & Rodrigo, 2015; Rothbaum, Martland, & Janssen, 2008).

Despite the growing use of web-based resources offering educational content, there is little evidence of the effectiveness of these resources in supporting parenting. The aim of the current study is to evaluate the online program “Educar en Positivo” (“The Positive Parent”) (<http://educarenpositivo.es>), involving training materials and activities, hosted on a website for Spanish-speaking parents. Specifically, this study examines changes in participants’ perceptions of online parenting support and their satisfaction with the parenting content offered, using as moderators the sociodemographic profile of the program’s users, their experience with the Internet, and their use of the Internet for both general and educational purposes. It is increasingly important to understand Internet usage patterns, especially in the new field of the use of the Internet for educational purposes, as these patterns could modulate the effectiveness of online resources as tools for supporting the parenting task.

Online parenting support

In recent years, a rise has been observed in the number of websites offering parenting support (Daneback & Plantin, 2008; Nieuwboer, Fukkink, & Hermanns, 2013b; Sarkadi & Bremberg, 2005). Websites not only include information but also constitute a platform for sharing experiences with other parents and receiving emotional support (Drentea & Moren-Cross, 2005; Hall & Irvine, 2009). Indeed, parents are increasingly aware of the need to seek support, both formal and informal, on the Internet. According to Plantin and Daneback (2009), this trend reflects the weakening of support networks made up of immediate family members, the appearance of new family realities for which traditional family models struggle to find a response, and increased concern on the part of parents for their children’s wellbeing, coupled with a sense of responsibility for ensuring this wellbeing. The new sensibilities to promote positive relationships between parents and their children based on the exercise of parental responsibility are also in line with the Council of Europe’s Recommendation 19 (2006) on “Policy to Support Positive Parenting”. This recommendation is based on the idea that all parents need psycho-educational support (e.g., online support) to better perform their parenting task, thus granting children and adolescents’ rights within their families and optimizing their potential development and well-being (Rodrigo, 2010).

Online support offers a range of opportunities for developing what has been dubbed *e-empowerment* (Amichai-Hamburger, McKenna, & Tal, 2008). Supportive online activities may help parents feel more empowered, while allowing them to better control and transform their family lives and to increase their self-efficacy. Parents can also develop skills in social interactions via online exchanges. Thus, parents may develop a base of knowledge about parenting, through sharing experiences and advice with other parents, to use as a personal frame of reference for their own

experiences (Brady & Guerin, 2010; Drentea & Moren-Cross, 2005; Madge & O'Connor, 2006). They can also provide and receive information in anticipation of childrearing difficulties that are shared by other parents such as infant sleep, breastfeeding, and balancing work and family life (Erera & Baum, 2009; Hall & Irvine, 2009; Nichols, Nixon, Pudney, & Jurvansuu, 2009). In sum, by means of online exchanges parents may share ideas about parenting, normalize their experiences as a parent by trying to determine whether or not behaviors, or circumstances they were experiencing are normal, and confirm child-rearing practices that other parents suggested (Dworkin et al., 2013).

There have been very few studies conducted – and most of them focus on the English-speaking Internet – on the impact of the use of these resources on parenting. In a recent review it was found that parents participating in online support resources tended to experience increasing support, improved knowledge of child development, and use more positive parenting practices (Nieuwboer et al., 2013b). Participation in discussion boards and social support websites have also been found to play a role in parents’ recognition of their own expertise and knowledge concerning child-rearing issues (Brady & Guerin, 2010), helped alleviate feelings of isolation (Chan, 2008; Erera & Baum, 2009; Fletcher & St. George, 2011; Valaitis & Sword, 2005), and increased their responsibility in their role as a parent (Brady & Guerin, 2010; Fletcher & St. George, 2011; Madge & O'Connor, 2006).

Educar en positivo: a Spanish-language web-based resource for parents

To improve the offering of online parenting resources available in Spanish, a program has been created that offers parents a training platform where they can complete activities that promote reflection on their role as parents and expose them to new ways of raising their children. The website “Educar en Positivo” (“The Positive Parent”) (<http://educarenpositivo.es>), together with its related social media profiles (Facebook [facebook.com/educarpositivo](https://www.facebook.com/educarpositivo); Twitter @EducarPositivo), has been in place for one year and already has 981 followers (Torres et al., 2014). One special feature of this website is that, besides providing news, multimedia information and play activities to the family, it offers a structured positive parenting program with a set of training materials to help parents improve their parenting task and their relations with their children. Based on the Council of Europe’s Recommendation 19 (2006) positive parenting involves focusing on showing affection, supporting learning, sharing quality time, and offering positive reinforcement of tasks and behavior in the family life.

The program objectives are as follows: (a) to make explicit parental ideas about child development; (b) to broaden parents’ awareness of alternative ways to raise their children and react to everyday situations; (c) to create the need to share knowledge and experiences with other parents; (d) to make parents more autonomous, aware, and creative in the parenting role so that they can become active agents of change; and (e) to motivate parents to feel more capable and satisfied about their parenting task.

The program is made up of five modules:

1. *The Internet: a resource for the whole family* goes through the pros and cons of family Internet use and encourages parents to reflect on their role as mediators of their children’s online activities.
2. *Helping our family get along better* offers parents the tools they need to create shared spaces for communication and foster positive interpretations of family conflicts between parents and their adolescent children.
3. *Understanding and guiding my young child’s behavior* helps parents of children under the age of six learn to identify their child’s

needs and respond appropriately and positively to undesired behavior.

4. *Our child is different, let's help him/her grow* teaches parents of children with disabilities to recognize emotional reactions in the family and helps them move toward normalization and social inclusion for their children.
5. *Healthy eating habits: a challenge for the whole family* helps instill appropriate eating habits and the development of a healthy diet for the whole family.

Activities of the program are hosted in the Moodle platform that can be accessed freely via the website. Consisted of a set of learning materials in a range of formats, including 120 web-based activities, 40 original video-clips, and over 200 illustrations and animated stories. The program also offers parents the possibility of joining online discussion forums to promote the exchange of experiences. It also includes a space for reflection, in the form of a personal diary that parents can use throughout the learning process. Participants are also offered the incentive of receiving a certificate of participation upon completion, and encouraged to remain connected through associated profiles in social media.

An initial evaluation of the program reported on the results obtained with respect to participants' satisfaction with each of the web-based activities distributed over the five program modules (Torres, Suárez, & Rodrigo, 2014). Generally speaking, greater satisfaction was achieved, with the highest satisfaction ratings being observed for those activities that combined different formats (e.g., video + interactive element). Also, the videos depicting scenes from everyday life were rated more positively than the videos of an expert offering advice. Other popular features included the interactive games with participant feedback, podcasts, and animated clips showing scenes from everyday life.

The present study

The present evaluation of the “Educar en Positivo” program reports preliminary results on parental changes in online support and satisfaction to the program content. Changes in online support were assessed comparing the pre-test/post-test scores in the participants' perceptions of online parenting support, measured at the initial and immediately at the end of the program completion. Satisfaction to the content was assessed at the end of the program and referred to the quality of the contents of the module completed. In both cases (online support and module satisfaction), we analyzed the profile of the users who benefited most from the program, using a range of socio-demographic variables (i.e., parental gender and age, educational level, employment status and professional level, country of residence, number and age of children) as well as of participants' experience with and use of the Internet for both general and educational purposes.

With respect to online support, the aim was to analyze the extent to which the program contributes to increasing participation in, and positive views of, online support programs and resources; maximizing the benefits that are to be had from said participation; and promoting positive changes to parents' performance of the parenting task. There is existing literature that shows that online parenting support can be effective and that parenting information and social support found online can potentially increase confidence and perceived self-efficacy among parents (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Madge & O'Connor, 2006).

To evaluate satisfaction, an analysis was carried out of the usability of the program as a web-based resource (Nathan & Yeow, 2011), the quality of the module content, and its impact on satisfaction with the parenting role. Previous studies have found that parents recognize the benefits of the Internet and that satisfaction with a website depends on its functionality, the relevance of

Table 1

Sociodemographic distribution, Internet experience and use of the participants in the study.

| Variables | M (SD)/% |
|---|-------------|
| Parental gender. Mothers | 81.7 |
| Parental age | 33.1 (0.90) |
| Educational level | |
| Low/middle | 41.7 |
| High | 58.3 |
| Employment status. Employed | 45 |
| Professional level | |
| Low | 30 |
| Middle | 26.7 |
| High | 43.3 |
| Country of residence | |
| Spain | 61.7 |
| Chile | 38.3 |
| Number of children | 1.47 (0.65) |
| Age of children | |
| 0–5 years | 66.7 |
| 6–12 years | 16.7 |
| 13–18 years | 16.7 |
| Internet experience and use (scale 1–5) | |
| Experience | 3.84 (0.74) |
| General use | 3.41 (1.13) |
| Educational use | 3.04 (0.60) |

the information it offers, and the credibility the site enjoys (e.g., Dworkin et al., 2013; Rothbaum et al., 2008).

It is essential to identify the profile of those users who benefit the most from the “Educar en Positivo” program, taking into account not only sociodemographic variables but also users' experience with and use of the Internet, in order to understand how these factors impact on changes in perceptions of online parenting support and satisfaction with the modules. In the previous studies, parental engagement in online exchanges was higher for mothers than for fathers, probably because most websites only focus on pregnancy/childbirth and early childhood development (Hall & Irvine, 2009; Fletcher & St. George, 2011; Madge & O'Connor, 2006; Nieuwboer et al., 2013a). In turn, high-educated parents were more active than low-educated parents in searching for educational issues in Internet (Dworkin et al., 2013; Kind, Huang, Farr, & Pomerantz, 2005; Liu, 2004; Radey & Randolph, 2009; Rothbaum et al., 2008; Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). Therefore, it could be expected that the benefits following the “Educar en Positivo” program would be modulated by parental gender and education, as well as by Internet experience and use, such that those parents who make more frequent use of the Internet and are more familiar with educational resources would obtain a better result from the program.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were the first 60 parents to complete one of the program's modules. Of these, 81.7% were women and 18.3% were men, and they were aged from 20 to 56, more than half with high educational level; 66.7% had children under the age of five. Participants were quite experienced in Internet (M 3.84, SD .74) and the general use of the Internet (M 3.41, SD 1.13) was higher than that of educational use of the Internet (M 3.04, SD .60). 60% of the participants were from Spain and 40% were from Chile, reflecting progress currently being made in the latter country in family policy and, in particular, on online parenting support. The remaining characteristics can be found in Table 1.

Each of the participants had completed one module: 30% participated in M1, 20% completed M2, 21.7% did M3, 15% participated in M4 and 13.3% completed M5. Participant recruitment was carried out through the website (<http://educarenpositivo.es>) where the

“Educar en Positivo” program is hosted, as well as via the program’s social media accounts on Facebook (facebook.com/educarpositivo) and Twitter (@EducarPositivo); recruitment efforts also drew on announcements and talks aimed at parents’ associations at schools. The percentage of individuals who started the program but dropped out before completion was 35%, whereby the profile of program dropouts, measured in terms of sociodemographic variables and in the level of experience and use of the Internet, did not differ in any significant way from the profile of those participants who continued to the end.

Evaluation design and procedure

The complete evaluation design comprises both initial and final measures, as well as measures of participant engagement, defined as participation in forums and personal diaries throughout the program, although the latter measures were not included in the present study. The Internet Experience and Use Questionnaire was an initial measure, the Online Social Support Questionnaire was an initial and final measure, and the Module Satisfaction Questionnaire was a final measure. Data was collected automatically, as participants had to log in to the website in order to gain free access to the program, and filled out the initial and final questionnaires online as well.

Survey measures

Internet experience and use

Internet experience and use, created for this study, with 13 questions divided into four sections

- (a) *Sociodemographic data* (8 items): parental gender and age, educational level, employment status, professional level, country of residence, number and age of children.
- (b) *Internet experience* (3 items): How often do you go online? (scale of 1–5): (1) At least once a month; (2) Once or twice a month; (3) Three or four times a month; (4) Once or twice a week; (5) Three or four times a week or more; How long do you spend online each time? (scale of 1–5): (1) Less than 30 min; (2) 30–60 min; (3) from 1 to 2 h; (4) More than 2 h; (5) Most of the day; How many years ago did you start using the Internet? (scale of 1–5): (1) Less than 1 year ago; (2) 1–2 years ago; (3) 3–4 years ago; (4) 5 years ago; (5) 5–10 years ago.
- (c) *General use* (1 item): Have you ever done any of the following online activities? (scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often) for each category): Sign up for an online course; Look up directions using an online map; Participate in a discussion forum; Download software; Look for a tutorial to learn how to use a computer program; Meet people using an online dating site; Purchase an airline ticket; Book a hotel room; Look for a job; Look up a recipe; Download an app; Make a doctor’s appointment; Do online banking.
- (d) *Educational use* (1 item): Have you ever done any of the following activities related to child-rearing issues? (scale 1 (never) to 5 (very often) for each category): Look for information to help with school homework; Contact a teacher via the Internet; Look for an online educational game; Seek information or guidance on child development; Look up family health-related information; Look for parenting-related topics.

Overall mean ratings were calculated separately for the sections on Internet experience, General use and Educational use (below Table 1). The sample was divided into two groups for each of these sections, with means calculated for each half: low and high level of experience with the Internet, low and high level of general use, and low and high level of educational use; these means were then

used as moderators for the pre-test/post-test analyses of online parenting support and module satisfaction (Tables 2 and 3).

Online parenting support

Online parenting support, adapted by Sarkadi and Bremberg (2005) from the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (SEL; Cohen & Hoberman, 1983), using questions from the “Own constructions of peer (parental) support” and “Appraisal of social support” sections. A three-section structure was created with new headings to facilitate filling out the online form. Since this was an intervention study, a new fourth section was also added looking at the changes to performing the parenting task. The final survey included 22 questions divided into four sections:

- (a) *Participation in online support programs*: 3 questions, scale from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) for each item: Participated in a parenting-related blog, forum or chat on the Internet; Advised or recommended to other parents that they participate in an online parenting support program; Felt that there are web-sites, blogs or forums aimed at fathers and mothers that offer objective insights into the problems that can arise in a family.
- (b) *Views on participation in online support resources*: 4 questions, scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item: Receiving online advice from an expert in child-rearing issues; Receiving online advice from another father or mother on matters related to child-rearing; Showing support for other fathers and mothers by reading and commenting on messages that they have written in forums or blogs; Visiting a website for fathers and mothers to obtain advice on parenting matters.
- (c) *Benefits of participation in online resources*: 4 questions, scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item: Finding people I can trust who understand me and support my views; Finding useful ideas that answer my questions about child-raising; Enriching my views about important parenting matters; Strengthening my self-esteem as a father/mother.
- (d) *Changes in the parenting task*: 11 questions, scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item: Changes the way I raise my children; Improves my family’s health habits; Better management of my children’s behavioral problems; Ability to act more effectively in conflict situations; Improves self-image as a father/mother; Increases awareness of my role in guiding children in their use of the Internet; Teaches me to spend quality time with family; Acquires new skills as a father or mother; Ability to share experiences with others; Increases sense of wellbeing; Decreases sense of loneliness.

The questionnaire was the same for the pre-test and the post-test, except in the section “Changes in the parenting task”, where the items were worded as expectations of change in the pre-test (cf., “I could change the way I raise my children”) and as changes that had actually happened in the post-test (cf., “I have changed the way I raise my children”).

Module satisfaction

Module satisfaction, created for this study, consisting of 14 questions divided into three sections:

- (a) *Web usability*, defined as the user’s perception of whether it was possible to access the program’s web-based resources without an undue use of time (Nathan & Yeow, 2011) (3 questions): Ease with which participants accessed the program, scale of 1 (very difficult) to 5 (very easy); Duration of activities, scale of 1 (very long) to 5 (appropriate), and Clarity of language, scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).
- (b) *Content* (5 questions), scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item: The content was novel; It allowed

Table 2

Means and standard deviations and pre-test/post-test comparisons in online social support, as a function of level of experience with Internet and educational use of the Internet.

| | Pre-test | | Post-test | | F(1/59) | R ² |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------|----------------|
| | Low | High | Low | High | | |
| <i>Level of experience</i> | | | | | | |
| I recommend that other parents participate | 2.54 (1.0) | 2.12 (1.0) | 3.65 (1.0) | 4.00 (1.1) | 4.33* | .22 |
| Participation enriches my views | 4.23 (0.65) | 3.71 (1.0) | 3.73 (1.0) | 4.22 (0.9) | 4.11* | .25 |
| I better manage my children's behavior | 3.92 (0.75) | 3.88 (0.8) | 3.56 (0.8) | 4.32(0.8) | 7.31** | .35 |
| I better manage conflicts with my children | 4.00 (0.6) | 3.65 (0.78) | 3.58 (0.9) | 4.06 (0.6) | 4.03* | .25 |
| I spend quality time with my family | 3.76 (0.83) | 3.59 (0.94) | 3.28 (0.9) | 4.06 (0.8) | 5.92* | .31 |
| I share the experiences of other parents | 3.46 (1.14) | 3.56(0.86) | 3.27 (1.1) | 4.12 (0.8) | 5.22* | .29 |
| It increases my sense of wellbeing | 3.19 (1.2) | 3.24 (1.1) | 3.27(1.1) | 4.12 (0.7) | 4.36* | .27 |
| It decreases my sense of loneliness | 3.23 (1.27) | 3.18 (1.19) | 3.27 (1.2) | 4.06 (0.7) | 4.04* | .25 |
| <i>Level of educational use</i> | | | | | | |
| I receive advice from experts | 3.81 (0.74) | 3.41 (0.9) | 3.52 (1.1) | 3.90 (1.0) | 4.34* | .27 |
| I receive advice from other parents | 3.61 (0.88) | 3.31 (1.1) | 3.61 (1.0) | 4.10 (0.8) | 5.32* | .29 |
| I support other parents | 3.35 (1.0) | 3.17 (1.2) | 3.61 (0.9) | 4.31 (0.7) | 5.63* | .31 |
| I receive support from other parents | 3.74 (1.0) | 3.38 (1.1) | 3.81 (0.8) | 4.17 (0.8) | 4.77* | .29 |
| I find people I can trust | 3.58 (1.1) | 3.24 (0.95) | 3.29 (1.0) | 3.66 (0.9) | 4.42* | .27 |
| It improves my family's health habits | 3.94 (0.72) | 3.62 (0.94) | 3.42 (0.9) | 4.00 (0.9) | 8.05** | .36 |

* $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$.

participants to change how they act; It dealt with interesting topics; The forum content was interesting; The use of diaries was interesting.

- (c) *Impact on parenting* (6 questions), scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for each item: Improve my perception of the parenting role; Reflect on parenting difficulties; Improve my relationships with children; Put into practice the lessons learned; Observe improvements when putting lessons into practice; Continue to participate in program's forums.

Results

Repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA) were used for the pre-test/post-test comparisons of the variables in the Online Social Support Questionnaire. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVA) were employed for the variables in the Module Satisfaction Questionnaire. In both cases, we considered the possible

impact of socio-demographic variables, of the level of experience with the Internet, and Internet use for both general and educational purposes. The statistic R^2 was used as an indicator of effect size (ES), which is considered negligible when $R^2 < .01$, small when $R^2 > .01$ and $R^2 < .09$, medium when $R^2 > .09$ and $R^2 < .25$, and large when $R^2 > .25$ (Cohen, 1988). No significant differences due to the socio-demographic variables in Table 1 were found in either online support or module satisfaction.

Post hoc power calculations, performed using the software G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), demonstrated that the sample size was adequate to detect medium-to-large effect on the results of the repeated-measures ANOVA (effect size f range 0.22–0.38, $p < .05$, $n = 85$, correlations of the repeated measures = 0.17, power range 0.73–0.99) and the Fixed effects, omnibus, one-way ANOVA (effects size f range 0.30–0.40, $p < .05$, $n = 85$, numbers groups = 2, power range = 0.62–0.86). Therefore, not significant results were not likely to be due to lack of statistical power.

Table 3

Participant satisfaction with the module as a function of the levels of experience with Internet and of educational use of the Internet.

| | Low | High | F(1/59) | R ² |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| <i>Level of experience</i> | | | | |
| Duration of the activities | 2.61 (1.32) | 3.16 (0.92) | 4.31* | .27 |
| Comprehension of objectives | 3.56 (1.03) | 4.14 (0.75) | 4.41* | .27 |
| Appropriate language | 3.83 (1.15) | 4.46 (0.69) | 7.10** | .35 |
| Novel content | 3.48 (1.31) | 4.14 (0.67) | 6.57** | .33 |
| Enabled changes to behavior | 3.17 (1.30) | 4.11 (0.84) | 11.42*** | .43 |
| Important topics addressed | 3.09 (1.58) | 3.95 (0.91) | 9.24*** | .40 |
| Interesting discussion forums | 3.26 (1.29) | 4.14 (0.82) | 10.35*** | .42 |
| Interesting diaries | 2.61 (1.20) | 3.57 (1.21) | 8.94*** | .38 |
| Improved perception of parenting role | 3.17 (1.30) | 4.11 (0.84) | 11.42*** | .43 |
| Reflection on parenting difficulties | 3.09 (1.24) | 3.89 (0.74) | 9.98*** | .42 |
| Improved relationships with children | 3.00 (1.24) | 3.70 (0.91) | 6.37** | .33 |
| Applied lessons learned | 3.09 (1.20) | 3.86 (0.88) | 7.93** | .35 |
| Observed improvements | 3.04 (1.26) | 3.81 (0.97) | 7.06** | .36 |
| Continues to participate in forums | 2.78 (1.48) | 3.54 (1.19) | 4.47* | .17 |
| <i>Level of educational use</i> | | | | |
| Duration of the activities | 2.65 (1.0) | 3.28 (0.92) | 6.076* | .33 |
| Enabled changes to behavior | 3.45 (1.2) | 4.07 (0.84) | 4.76* | .27 |
| Interesting forum content | 3.39 (1.2) | 4.24 (0.78) | 10.45** | .42 |
| Interesting diaries | 2.87 (1.28) | 3.55 (1.21) | 4.44* | .27 |
| Improved relationships with children | 3.19 (1.19) | 3.86 (0.99) | 5.52* | .31 |

* $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$.

*** $p \leq .001$.

Online parenting support

Significant differences in online parenting support found in the pre-test/post-test comparisons were significantly influenced by both the level of experience with the Internet and the educational use of the Internet, with a medium to large ES (Table 2); the impact of the level of use of the Internet for general purposes (Look up directions using an online map, do online banking, etc.) was not significant for online parenting support.

Looking at participants' level of experience with the Internet, significant differences were only found following completion of the program in two questions related to participation and recognition of the benefits of the Internet, while there were six questions showing significant changes in performing the parenting task. Thus, parents in both the "low" ($p < .001$) and "high" ($p < .001$) experience groups reported having recommended that other parents should participate in online parenting support programs after the program completion. In the remaining variables in Table 2 there were positive and significant changes in the high experience group, while the scores remain unchanged or are negative in the low experience group. Thus, parents with a high level of experience with the Internet were significantly more supportive of the idea that participation in online support enriches their views, ($p < .05$). They also experienced positive changes after the program in the following aspects: they can better manage their children's behavioral problems ($p < .05$), are capable of managing conflicts with their children ($p < .05$), can spend quality time with their family ($p < .05$), share experiences with other parents ($p < .01$), increase their sense of wellbeing ($p < .001$), and decrease their sense of loneliness ($p < .05$). Parents with a low level of experience with the Internet did not experience significant changes in the aforementioned variables, and even showed a downward trend with respect to the idea that participation enriches their views ($p < .05$) and in spending quality time with their family ($p < .05$).

With respect to the level of educational use of the Internet, there were four significant positive changes in participants' views of online support and two changes with respect to the benefits of online support and to positive changes in performing the parenting task, with small to medium ES. Parents with a high level of educational use of the Internet expressed more positive views of receiving advice from experts ($p < .05$), receiving advice from other parents ($p < .01$), supporting other parents ($p < .001$), and receiving support from other parents ($p < .01$), feel that it is a benefit to find people they can trust on the Internet ($p < .01$), and perceive improvements in their family's health habits ($p < .01$). By contrast, parents with a low level of educational use of the Internet did not exhibit any significant change following the program, and even reported worse family health habits ($p < .05$).

Satisfaction with the module

Table 3 shows the significant results of the impact of the level of experience with Internet and educational use of the Internet on participants' satisfaction with the module completed. The level of use of the Internet for general purposes (banking online, etc.) did not have any significant impact on satisfaction. By contrast, in all cases, participants with more Internet experience and greater use of the Internet for educational purposes expressed satisfaction with the program's usability, the module content, and the impact on parenting, with medium to large ES.

Looking at usability, it was observed that participants with a high level of experience with the Internet are more likely than those in the low experience group to find the duration of the activities to be appropriate, understand the module objectives, and consider the language to be appropriate. With respect to the module content, participants in the high experience group were more likely than

those in the low experience group to find the content novel, to agree that it had enabled changes to their behavior, to consider that it addressed important topics, and to find the forums and diaries interesting. With respect to satisfaction with the parenting role, it was found that parents in the high experience group stated that they reflect more on parenting difficulties, perceive improvements in relationships with their children, apply the lessons learned from the program content, observe improvements after applying lessons learned, and continue to participate in forums.

Finally, participants with a high level of educational use of the Internet expressed more satisfaction than participants in the low group with the duration of the activities, their capacity to change their own behavior, and the forum content; they also were more likely than the participants in the group with a low level of educational use to find the diaries more interesting and state that their children were happier following the program.

Discussion

The present study examined the effectiveness of the "Educar en Positivo" program, analyzing the reported changes in online parenting support and satisfaction with the module completed. None of the sociodemographic variables analyzed in this study contributed to the profile of those participants who benefited the most from the program. Specifically, we had expected that parental gender and parental educational level would modulate the program benefits, as these variables proved pertinent elsewhere in identifying parents who were more skilled in the use of web-based educational resources (e.g., Rothbaum et al., 2008). However, it is likely that in the present case, since most participants were women – as happens in most studies (Daneback & Plantin, 2008) – and the educational level was middle to high, these effects were no longer relevant. It is also remarkable that the country of participants' origin did not influence on the results, suggesting that the program could be useful as a supportive tool for those Spanish-speaking countries well committed to promote positive parenting.

Our results indicate that the variables that most clearly identify the profile of the participants who benefited the most from the program, and expressed the most satisfaction with it, are those relating to the level of experience with the Internet and the use of the Internet for educational purposes. Changes in online parenting support are only reliable for parents with a higher level of Internet experience, as these parents enjoy greater ease of access to the program, are more able to work through the program's web-based activities and content, and can be more consistent in going online regularly to participate. The "Educar en Positivo" program does possess a certain level of technical complexity, as it requires participants to log in to the site, fill out online questionnaires, navigate the Moodle platform where the activities are hosted, participate in forums, and write diaries entries; thus, it is understandable that participants with more Internet experience will find it easier to use. It is worth noting, however, that a lack of Internet expertise did not lead participants to drop out, as this variable was equally present among those who dropped out and those who completed the program. Another key factor would appear to be participants' having had sufficient past motivation to explore the Internet for parenting-related resources, as parental use of the Internet for general purposes did not prove relevant to results. It is possible that these were parents more motivated for child-rearing issues who value the Internet as a tool for supporting parenting and who had already begun their search for information and guidance to help them improve their parenting roles (Madge & O'Connor, 2006).

The results of the pre-test/post-test changes in the perceptions of online parenting support show that the program produces a number of positive changes to views of online support, the

benefits it offers, and, importantly, participants' own perception of their parenting skills. With respect to the first two results – improved views of online support and the benefits thereof – it was reported an increase in recommendations that other parents use this type of support, as well as an enrichment of participants' own views. In terms of parenting skills, a number of changes were reported that could contribute to an improved family life, promoting more positive parenting practices (Daneback & Plantin, 2008; Nieuwboer, Fukkink, & Hermanns, 2013a,b). Thus, improvements were reported in conflict resolution, in quality time spent with the family, and in sharing experiences with other parents, and there were also reports of increased sense of wellbeing and decreased sense of loneliness, probably due to the emotional support received from other parents (Drentea & Moren-Cross, 2005; Hall & Irvine, 2009). In this respect, it is worth noting that parents with more experience in the use of online educational resources renew their trust and confidence on on-line support after finishing our program, as they expressed more positive views of receiving advice from experts, and of receiving and giving support to other parents as well as perceived improvements in their family's health habits. These results suggest that the program satisfies their demands and corroborate reports of increasing recourse to online support in today's society (Plantin & Daneback, 2009; Sarkadi & Bremberg, 2005).

With respect to program satisfaction, the overall ratings were quite high, especially among participants with higher level of experience with and use of the Internet for educational purposes. Participants are satisfied with the program's usability (Nathan & Yeow, 2011) and with the module content, which they consider both novel and helpful, despite the fact that this is a structured program with pre-selected content. Again, we can observe the program's transformative effect on the parenting role: participants became aware of how it benefits their parenting, observing and reflecting on the lessons learned in order to apply them in their lives. It is important to highlight that changes were also observed in parents' ability to reflect on their own role, which is a key step in promoting changes toward more appropriate attitudes and behavior in family interactions. For all of the above reasons, it can be concluded that there was an increase in parental self-efficacy, with a notable improvement in satisfaction with the parenting role (Coleman & Karraker, 2000; Jones & Prinz, 2005; Laws & Millward, 2001). Considering that this was a relatively short program, with modules ranging from one week to one month in duration, these can be considered relevant changes indicating the program's efficiency (cost-benefit balance).

Given the limited number of participants and the possible sociodemographic biases of the sample (mostly women with middle to high educational levels), it is not possible to generalize the findings to the general population. Since this was an online program, it was not possible to create a control group with pre-post values to obtain information on the differential benefits of completing the “Educar en Positivo” program as compared to the habitual use of purely informative websites. Also, the quality of the evaluation instruments used could be improved, allowing for their standardized use in larger samples. Finally, another limitation was the 35% dropout rate, which was observed despite the fact that there were technical and content managers available to answer questions and encourage participants to stay in the program. More efforts should be done to promote adherence to our program, as a personal commitment undertaken online is not the same as one made in a face-to-face format, despite the greater autonomy of use afforded by the former.

To conclude, participation in the “Educar en Positivo” program offered a positive panorama for change in online parenting support as well as a greater satisfaction with the program modules, with both aspects modulated by participants' level of Internet experience and their use of web-based parenting resources. In this regard,

the present findings are relevant in that they place an emphasis on promoting parental literacy in the use of online parenting programs. The changes observed encourage us to continue along the same lines, examining in future studies other facets of program evaluation with a view to demonstrating the evidence-based nature of the program. With the creation of this Spanish program, a key gap has been filled in the web resources available in this language, especially when one considers that it can potentially be used in the large community of Spanish-speaking parents around the world.

Conflict of interest

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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