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A PILOT STUDY ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENER@T PROGRAM

*Ainoa MATEOS INCHAURRONDO, Aida URREA MONCLUS,
Juan LLANES ORDONEZ, Daniela COJOCARU*

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A Pilot Study on the Implementation of the GENER@T Program

Ainoa MATEOS INCHAURRONDO¹, Aida URREA MONCLUS²,
Juan LLANES ORDONEZ³, Daniela COJOCARU⁴

Abstract

This study analyses the effects of the “GENER@T” Program concerning the prevention of dating violence in adolescents. The study’s main aim is to know the impact of the program on students and teachers, assessing the effectiveness and adequacy of the program, as well as the satisfaction of the agents involved. A total number of 62 adolescents have participated in the study, all from 2nd year Secondary School classes, plus five teachers. The design of the evaluative study has followed a multi-method approach with a descriptive-comprehensive purpose. It combines techniques of quantitative data collection (pre-test and post-test) and qualitative one (students: portfolio and focus group, teachers: focus groups and diary). The implementation and evaluation of such a program in a secondary school, this has meant an educational innovation. The results point to high levels of satisfaction with the program, as well as a higher awareness of the implications of dating violence among adolescents.

Keywords: adolescence, prevention, dating violence, secondary school, relationship, prevention, intervention.

¹ University of Barcelona, Department of Methods and Diagnostics in Education in the Faculty of Education, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: amateos@ub.edu (Corresponding autor)

² Autonomous University of Barcelona, Department of Systematic and Social Pedagogy, Faculty of Science Education, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: aida.urrea@uab.cat

³ University of Barcelona, Department of Methods and Diagnostics in Education in the Faculty of Education, Barcelona, SPAIN. E-mail: juanllanes@ub.edu

⁴ Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Department of Sociology and Social Work, Iasi, ROMANIA. E-mail: dananacu@gmail.com

Introduction

The investigation of violence between partners over many years has widened the awareness of dating violence and especially among older partners (Boira, Carbajosa & Marcuello, 2013; Rubio-Garay, Carrasco, Amor & López-González, 2015). However, we must also take into account the violent actions within the early stages of relationships too which can take place even before arriving to adulthood (Matud, 2007).

According to data from various sources, in Europe one in every three women over the age of 15 has suffered from physical or sexual violence and some 43% have suffered from psychological violence (FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). In Spain, the information from the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality (2016) signal that 10.2% of girls between 16 and 24 have suffered physical violence from their partner. In 2017, the total number of women attended to by the Catalan Police was 14,911, of which 6.2% were minors (Institut Català de les Dones, 2017).

Nevertheless, the data reflects quite varied results that arrive on account of the diversity of attributions for a single concept. In English the term dating violence is classified under many different variants: domestic violence, violence between couples, violence in sentimental relationships amongst adolescents, etc. Foshee, Bauman, Linder, Rice & Wilcher (2007) define it as behaviour of an aggressive nature, whether it be verbal, psychological, physical or sexual, that is seen within adolescent relationships. In accordance with the prevalent information of this phenomenon and given the fact that dynamics established in these situations is not the same (Viejo, 2014), it is necessary to undertake studies directed specifically in treating violence amongst adolescent couples (Mateos, 2011).

To explain dating violence we come across varying, mainstream theories (Alencar-Rodrigues & Cantera, 2012): biological, generational, systemic, psychological and ecological. Following on from Dardis, Dixon, Edwards & Turchik (2015), there are three theories that are commonly used in social sciences to explain the perpetration of domestic violence within adolescent couples: socio-cultural, from intergenerational and individual transmissions. The socio-cultural or feminist theories underline the social construct of masculinity. In the words of Ruiz-Jarabo & Blanco (2017, p. 33) “the man has learned socially and culturally to place himself in the position of control and has incorporated violence as a way to interact with women”. We understand dating violence as a result of “socialization” differentiated between men and women just as the socio-cultural context configures, develops and justifies the use of violence resulting in the maintenance of masculine domination in different areas: family, work and community (Matud, 2007). The theories of intergenerational transmission or theories of social learning put forward the idea that the individuals learn such aggressive behaviours from other individuals through observation, imitation and modelling. For example, the children that are

witnesses of violence have a higher probability of carrying out the same act (Bandura, 1977). Finally, the individuals' theories or personality suggest that using violence as a character trait (Dutton, 1995) are related with personal variables (psychopathology, disorders), historical (attachments), interpersonal (relationship conflicts and stress) or contextual (reasons for carrying out violent acts).

Explaining the function that each factor associated plays with regards this violence results in an important element in design terms of preventive measures taken to increase the effectiveness and efficiency (Rubio-Garay *et al.*, 2015). The literature points towards many risk factors as protection (Jennings *et al.*, 2017; Vézina & Hébert, 2007). Following the structure of the systemic evolutionary model (Capaldi & Gorman-Smith, 2003), there are three types of risk factors. The personal factors such as self-esteem (De la Villa Moral, García, Cuetos & Sirvent, 2017), the risk behaviour (González-Ortega, Echeburúa & Corral, 2008) or the attitudes/ beliefs with respect to sentimental relationships and previous experiences. Authors such as Yela (2003) consider that the attitudes of adolescents base themselves on a vision that is both traditional and conserving the couple's relationship as seen in romantic tales and scriptures such as "love conquers all", considering the aggressions as something inherent towards the relationship. Other studies confirm the difficulty of identifying the first signs of violence in young couples who fall under the umbrella of love (Díaz-Aguado & Carvajal, 2011). The contextual factors centred onto the relationships between equals and the close community where they establish aggressive behaviours can transfer itself onto the couple (Garthe, Sullivan & McDaniel, 2016) standardizing the acceptance of violence between partners (Foshee, Linder, Mac Dougall & Bangdiwala, 2001) and which in turn links to family context and the exhibition of family violence (Hébert *et al.*, 2017). Also, the factors of being in a couple: time together in the relationship, internal conflicts, satisfaction, jealousy, control, etc. and the relational dynamic between both members (Vézina & Hébert, 2007). In terms of factors of protection that stand out: communication skills and conflict resolution skills; high academic performance; and assertive educational skills (Boira *et al.*, 2013; Rubio-Garay *et al.*, 2015).

All of these theories and factors come together to portray the causes of violence amongst adolescents. Such violence presents itself in a very subtle way in the early stages and benevolent in appearance: humiliations, isolation, hostile attitudes and other coercive interactions that aim to take the power and control of the relationship (Rubio-Garay *et al.*, 2015). Its shape and intensity increases in size which in turn increases the dependability within the relationship (González, 2008). This appearance legitimizes and instils itself in the base of the relationship and drives towards the peak of violent episodes that present themselves in a cycle – tension, aggression and honey moon – (Walker, 2000). The *Voces* study (Ruiz, 2016) notes that 51% of the victims of violence were not aware it was happening. Authors such as, Ubillos, Goiburu, Puente, Pizarro & Echeburúa (2017) suggest that amongst adolescents exists a tendency to portray themselves less favourably

towards sexist beliefs but rather they confirm that social desirability influences the answers among younger girls.

The information confirms the need to implement prevention programs within an education setting (De La Rue, Polanin, Espelage & Pigott, 2017). These programs should include all different forms of violence, warning signs, the dynamics of intimidation, implicit power and control, as well as improving communication skills, conflict resolution, risk factors and first warning signs (Mateos, 2011).

Although preventive actions arrive to 41% of the adolescent population, there has to be measures taken to guarantee that it arrives to the entire population (Díaz-Aguado, Martínez-Arias & Martín-Babarro, 2013). The authors cited suggest providing to teachers the necessary tools to carry out the intervention in a systematic and efficient manner. In this sense, schools are spaces in which students and teachers share a lot of time, experiences, life lessons, etc., constructing itself into a “micro-society” (Grau & García, 2018). Thus, the schools become a fundamental space for sensitivity and detection of dating violence (Ruiz, 2016). As a response to the need of increasing preventive measures, justified by scientific research, the idea of implementing and evaluating the impact of the GENER@T Program (Mateos, 2013) within students and teachers of Secondary School was considered.

The GENER@T Program (Mateos, 2013) is directed towards the prevention of dating violence among adolescents, especially between the ages of twelve and fourteen, in order to prepare themselves for their first intimate relationships. This program is the fruit of a diagnostic investigation with adolescents and teachers within a Spanish context (Mateos, 2011). The program has an innovative nature and a double meaning with regards dating violence: on one hand, it aims to prepare oneself prior to their first intimate relationship, directing the procedure towards pre-adolescence; on the other hand, the 24 sessions that make up the program are undertaken as an “optional subject” in schools or as a workshop in a leisure centre (Mateos, Amorós, Pastor & Cojocarú, 2013).

This article presents the results of the implementation and the evaluation of the program among students in secondary school. Specifically, it analyses the efficiency, adequacy and satisfaction of the program.

Methodology

Participants

The sample size is comprised of 62 students, 55% girls and 45% boys, between the ages of 12 and 14 in second year of Secondary School (all students from this year group have been analysed). The participants were divided into groups of 4: G1, 21 people (34%); G2, 19 (31%); G3, 10 (16%); G4, 12 (19%). Groups 1 and 2 presented a higher academic performance than the rest.

5 teachers, of different specialties and more than 13 years of experience participated in the implementation of the program. The teachers were the tutors of the groups. In one of the groups two teachers substituted one another halfway through the course. To ensure there was no change to the daily routine of the students, the researchers decided not to change the structure and planning of the school day. They remembered to implement it through the selected subject: “Ethical Cultures and Values” and with the natural distribution of students and teachers.

The GENER@T Program was implemented and evaluated in the *Instituto de Educación Secundaria La Caparrella*, within the 2016/2017 course. This specific institution was selected on account of the viability of the implementation. After presenting the program to various institutes we decided to select the school most open to developing the idea. The school is situated a couple of kilometres outside the city of Lleida⁵. The general population is made up of multicultural, middle class families, mainly from rural areas.

In keeping with the ethical criteria that was followed, the nature of the study, and progress towards the sensitivity of the topic at hand, it was decided not to carry out a classic approach of a strictly randomized and controlled investigation (Morales, Gonzalo, Martín & Morilla, 2008). Furthermore, being a multifaceted procedure, it was decided to undertake the program with every student in the year being analysed, aiming to collect as much evidence as possible for the analysis (Campbell, 2000) and therefore compensating for the limitation of participant numbers.

Resources

Presented below is a summary of the resources used (*Table 1*) for the data collection, objectives and informers.

⁵ This city finds itself based with the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, in the northeast of Spain. Lleida is a city of approximately 137.735 inhabitants.

Table 1: Resources used for the data collection

| | Technique | Objectives | Description |
|----------|----------------------------|--|--|
| Teachers | Focus Group FG (continued) | To know the program process To assist the teachers through the process | The FG has structured itself by following a guide of 10 questions that attempt to gather information during the implementation process of the program about: the elements that make difficult or facilitate the implementation and viability of the program, as well as, sharing an educational space to solve any doubts about the implementation process. The FG has a double objective: evaluative and educational. |
| | FG (final) | To study the level of achievement from the program objectives. To evaluate the impact of the program amongst the adolescents. | The FG has structured itself by following a guide of 21 questions that attempt to gather information at the end of the implementation process of the program, The discussion bases itself around the following: program adaptations, students participation, impact (students, teachers, school), continuity of the program within the school, etc. |
| | Diary | To collect systematically the activities evaluation | The diary of the teachers allows, during the application of the program, to register evidence of development throughout the sessions (evaluation of the application process). To help the record, an item guide is used to facilitate the relative reflection sessions, structure, objectives, group dynamics and considerations for the upcoming sessions. |

| | | | |
|-------------|------------------------|--|---|
| Adolescents | Pre-test/ Post-test | To evaluate the degree of knowledge on the subject at the beginning and end of the program. | The test (pre and post) allows an objective evaluation of the knowledge of the students (cognitive dimension) in regards dating violence. The evaluation consists of 10 questions and 3 multiple choice answers. |
| | FG | To study the degree of achievement in regards to the objectives of the program. To evaluate the impact of the program amongst the adolescents | The FG has structured itself by following a guide of 15 questions that attempt to gather information during the implementation process of the program on the students: learnings and changes (cognitive, attitudinal and behavioural) evaluation methodology and activities, satisfaction, etc. |
| | Portfolio | To collect the findings and reflections of the participants during the program development. | The portfolio has a double function: (1) it is a didactic strategy that permits individual learning and self-evaluation, (2) it allows a systematic organization of the material which will be able to be evaluated by the teachers. |

Procedure

To evaluate the impact of the GENER@T program an evaluative study was undertaken with a multi-method design and a descriptive-comprehensive purpose. The program promotes reflection on a conceptual level in relation to dating violence and a change in attitudes and behaviours towards relationships. This consists of 24 one hour sessions (*Figure 1*). The activities are developed by means of different didactic strategies, each dealing with a specific style or focus of the learning, which the teachers bring to reality in each class group.

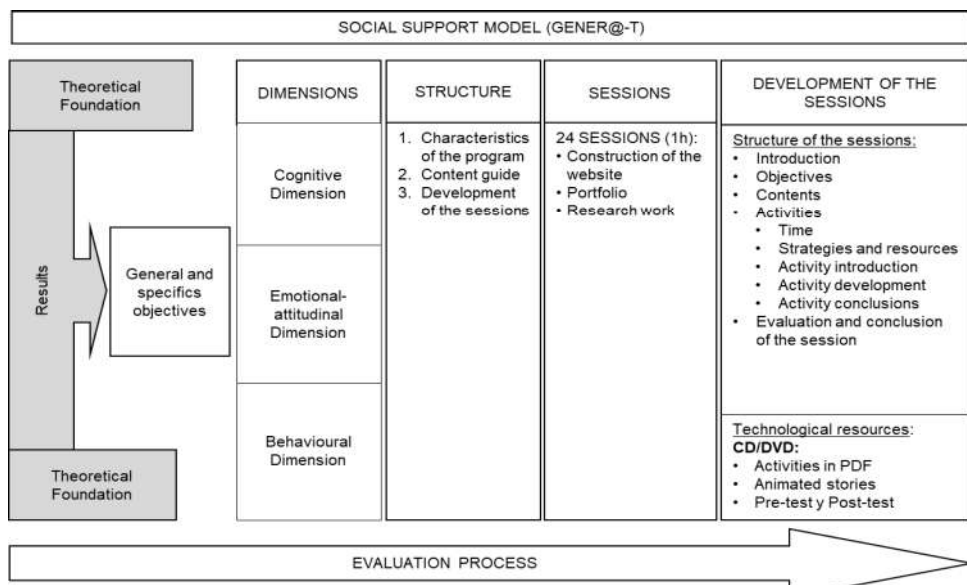


Figure 1: Structure of the GENER@T Program

For the implementation and evaluation, the following actions were carried out: 1) 5 hours of teachers training at the beginning of the course where the program contents were explained and any queries were solved (the contents in book format had been received prior to the training); 2) accompaniment of the research team during the development of the program; 3) initial evaluation –pre-test – and shared the results with the teachers; 4) process evaluation –informal interviews and FG with the agents involved; and 5) final evaluation –FG, diaries and portfolios analysis and post-test.

The collection of the quantitative data was undertaken by means of the pre-test and post-test online. Each student accessed the test through a web link. Here, the students answered 10 questions from the test and registered their answers both initially and retrospectively. The online application allows identify the answers of each person by means of acronym, the name of the group and the name of the school. The information identified allows the comparison of initial and final answers of each person while respecting their right to anonymity.

The collection of the qualitative data was undertaken by means of three different way: (1) the diaries of the teachers involved in the program of which a textual analysis of the documents was performed; (2) the portfolio of the students of which the researchers revised the work of the students and their reflections in relation to the main axis of the program; and (3) the focus groups lasted between one and two hours. An audio was recorded (with full prior consent) and a textual transcript was realized for the subsequent analysis.

Analysis of information

The quantitative analysis has consisted of the comparison of the results of the pre-test and post-test starting from the SPSS statistic package. The information contrasts itself between the two sexes and academic performances. For the qualitative information, the analysis was developed through a method of constant comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 2009), carrying out a first set of independent coding and categorization by two researchers as well as a subsequent revision of the coding by the third and fourth investigator. From this analysis a system of categories was derived (*table 2*).

Table 2: System of categories

| | Dimensions | Categories | Instruments |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Teachers (Te) & Students (St) | Program efficiency | Changes in attitudinal, cognitive and behavioural level Range of objectives Effects of the program Influence among the involved agents | FG_Te EvaluationSheet_ Te FG_St Pre-test/Post- test_St |
| | Program adequacy | Session lengths Context advantages or disadvantages Teachers ability Students characteristics Program schedule | FG_Te Diary_Prof FG_St |
| | Satisfaction level | Topic interest Level of agreement with the activities General results obtained Teachers implication Students results | FG_Te Diary_Te FG_St Portfolio_Te |

For assurance the quality of the process of data analysis was competed using a triangulation between researchers, researching the coherence between the results and the accounts of the participants. Additionally, for the implementation of the process within the program the collaboration of a teacher from the school was needed who acted as the link with the researchers, the teachers that applied the program and the students. This collaborator, also contributed to the validation of the instruments and the viability and coherence of the process to help facilitate the integration of the program.

Additionally, the diary and the portfolio have been instruments that have allowed understand the learning process, the assimilation of the contents and the evaluation itself. All of this has contributed towards the researchers collecting the elements that allowed the realization of the program objectives and also those that subsequently hampered the program.

Results

The data founded respond to the contributions of teachers and students regarding the three dimensions of evaluation of the program: efficiency, adequacy and satisfaction level.

Efficiency of the program

The percentage of good choices in the test allows us to view the results positively in respect to the cognitive dimension of dating violence. The test is composed of 10 questions with three multiple choice answers per question, with only one correct answer.

Students progressed in the pre-test in 7 out of the 10 questions. The best results ranged between 4.84% and 20.97% (*Figure 2*). Specifically, non-parametric tests were applied, as in agreement with Kolgomorov-Smirnov they did not meet the standard. The Wilcoxon test showed significant statistical differences in two of the ten questions -9 and 10-, improving these questions in the post-test. A general lineal model was undertaken for repeated measurements, via estimation of the size of the effect (η^2), the effectiveness of the treatment, where the main contributor is the phase (pre-test/post-test) in both of these questions. As much for question 9 “The roles of gender are...” ($z=-2.600$; $p=.009$; $\eta^2=.11$), as for question 10 “Dating violence happens in...” ($z=-2.309$; $p=.021$; $\eta^2=.9$), the results indicate a limited effect but significant for the program. If we individualize the results by student, it shows a 50% improvement in their answers, while 24% stay the same and 24% see their results decrease.

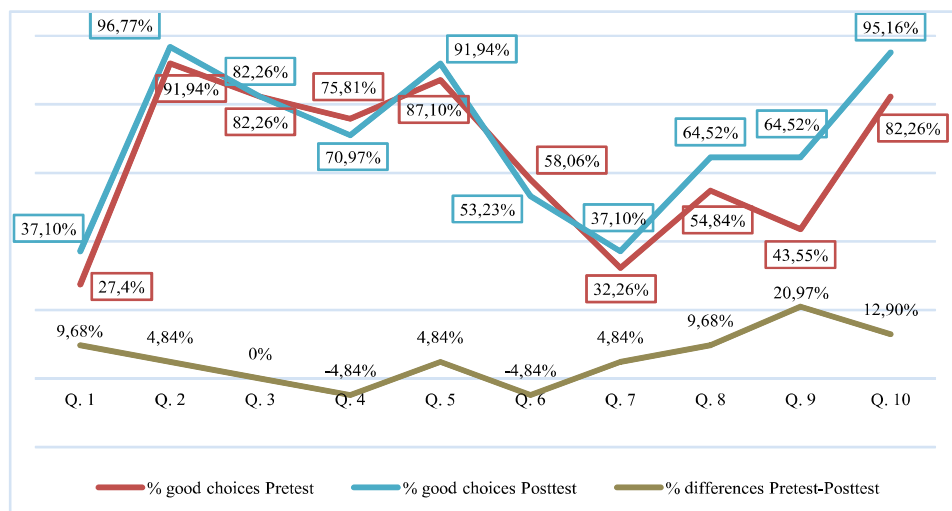


Figure 2: Results of the pre-test-post-test

With respect to the sex variable, in the pre-test it was confirmed that girls were more accurate in the majority of their responses than boys. However, after participating in the program, their results did not improve. On the contrary, the boys showed an improvement in the post-test producing an increment from 39.3% to 60.7%. After carrying out the non-parametric test for independent samples –segmentation of the reduced intra-group sample– and so to not follow normality, based on the Mann-Whitney U test, significant statistical differences were confirmed in regards to the good choices of question 7 “The jealousies within a couples relationship are...” and an elevated size of the effect ($p=.022$; $d=.617$), being the girls who were most accurate. In other words, although the boys saw more of an improvement in their results, the girls have more previous knowledge on the subject and have maintained that level throughout the program. Although we see a conceptual improvement from the beginning of the program, this trend must continue in order to further consolidate understanding and how the adolescents express themselves.

“We must continue working on the program, now we’re beginning to understand everything they have given us... there is still a lot to learn E7. (FG_St, April, 2017)

Regarding the analysis on the basis of academic performance (high: 1 and 2, low 3 and 4), tests were carried out that determined differences between the groups in the pre-test/post-test study. The non-parametric test for independent samples in relation to the Mann-Whitney U test showed significant statistical differences in the pre-test as well as an elevated size of the effect for questions 4

“What law regulates dating violence in Spain?” ($p=.004$; $d=.741$), 6 “The causes of dating violence are...” ($p=.011$; $d=.710$) and 7 ($p=.006$; $d=.760$). The significant statistical difference in the post-test is observed in the question 8 “In a relationship ... (*question about the control pattern*)” ($p=.004$; $d=.774$). The more advanced group improved in almost all the questions minus question 7 (question about the jealousies between couples) and although there were no significant statistical differences found in the post-test between the groups, the lower level group scored better in this section.

In relation to this variable, when we compare the average academic performance of the course with the final grade obtained in this subject, we see how the 66.7% and the 60% of the students from groups 3 and 4 increased their grades in respect to the academic average (*Figure 3*).

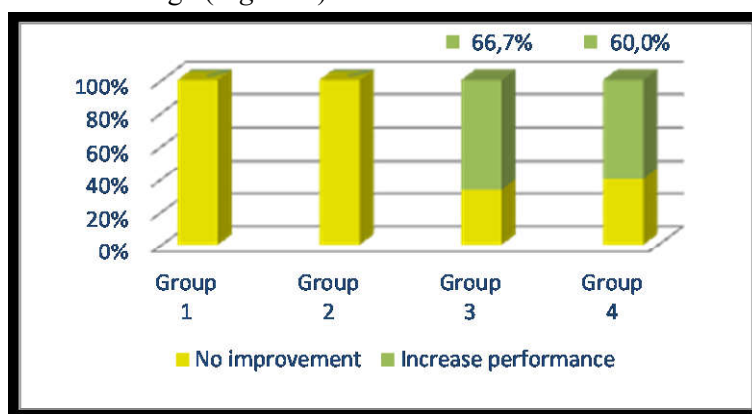


Figure 3: Differences with respect to the course average

Concluding the comparative data of the pre-test and post-test with the teachers FG, these results underlined that, in their opinion, the students with low academic performances benefited most from the program because “*they are boys and girls from the streets*”, referencing that they have more experience in a social and sentimental context. They eluded towards an influence of attitudinal and behavioural variables among adolescents with low academic performance.

“The more lively boys and girls connected most with the program because many of the questions they have already experienced”. (FG_Te, April, 2017)

Taking into account the results of the test and the qualitative information collected that explore the valuation of the activities in respect to raising awareness about the topic, they underline the impact of the program in relation to: the role of the teacher, the level of knowledge and the training received on the part of the teacher, the motivation towards the content and activities of the program, as well as the awareness of the answers that provoked doubts and insecurity within the students. The adolescents (both male and female) involved in the FG verified the

information described prior to the program and mentioned the positive impact. They signalled that the program has helped them raise awareness about dating violence (in relation to their attitude) and they recognize that they didn't know the diversities of typologies of violence that exist nor that sexism is so prevalent in their surroundings. They believe it is important to educate yourself to live within society, to know how to act in such a situation (in relation to their behaviour) and they consider that the program has contributed not only to learning more on the topic (in relation to cognitive learning) but also to placing value on the need of reflecting and modifying attitudes and conducts.

"If you were to recommend this program, what part would you say has been most beneficial? To learn (E6). It makes you reflect a lot (E5). To look towards the future (E3)". (FG_St, April, 2017)

However, teachers consider that students do not have the ability nor the maturity levels required to carry out the argumentation activities. An opinion which is contrasted to that of the students and of the results of the test.

"Lack of time. The age of the students doesn't allow us to go faster". (Session 5, Diary_Te_G1, May, 2017)

Another factor is the effect of the program on the educational community. Teachers mentioned that the school management knew the program but that it would have been notable to make the information available to the rest of the staff or to share tasks such as the web development or the processing of some specific content in other subjects. They also underline the need to inform and include the families and to even make it available to the entire community.

"Perhaps it should be necessary to make it available to everyone, with a day of temporary exhibitions, etc. In the parent-teacher meetings nobody asked me for information". (E5. FG_Te, April, 2017)

Adequacy of the program

In this category the results were grouped in relation to their own program and the conditions of implementation. Students, with regards to the program contents, signalled that some activities were short and they would have wanted to delve deeper into certain aspects of the program. For example, the different types of violence or the associated stereotypes. On the contrary, teachers observed that the content was too much and that the groups were oversaturated with information.

"When they said that we would have two semesters we believed it was too long, but once we started... I could have continued doing it into the third semester". (E3. FG_St, April, 2017)

"The group are showing signs of saturation on the subject". (Session 10, Diary_Te_G3. May, 2017)

In relation to the methodology, teachers highlighted that the program is well structured and is very complete. However, they added the necessity of carrying out adjustments to the typology of each group. One of the most controversial activities has been the creation of the website. For reasons of motivation, time and self-management, teachers viewed it as quite complicated that students must undertake this task alone.

"We manage the website ourselves, the students filed everything and we uploaded it ourselves because we didn't see another option". (E3. FG_Te, April, 2017)

Teachers have put a lot of emphasis on the previous training received in regards the theory questions as well as the practical and the program evaluation. They highlight the need to organize themselves as a group of teachers to plan prior to the sessions and carry out the relevant adjustments to each group.

"The more you read, the more you prepare, [...] but it's true that we should have prepared it with more time". (E2. FG_Te, April, 2017)

In regards to the category of implementation conditions the teachers signalled the importance of the student's maturity level. It is not so much to do with the students' age but rather their level of understanding particular concepts and their ability to search for information, as well as summarizing it. They consider that the adolescents of second year of Secondary School have had difficulties linked to different aspects of the program and that it would be better working on it at a later stage. However, students highlight that it should be around 2nd year that they begin learning about this topic.

"You would get more out of the program with 3rd years. It's when they begin to express their opinions and learn. They have more life experiences". (E3. FG_Te, April, 2017) "Work on this theme with students between 13-14 years old (E2). At this age it's when we start relationships and this can perfectly happen to you". (E3. FG_St, April, 2017)

Another element to take into account in the planning is the social-demographic profile of the students. With the same age, there are those who have had much greater life journeys (more social experiences) than others (an overprotected background and thus less experiences).

"I am sure that the experiences of certain children in the school...The academic level can be associated with their social status". (E2. FG_St, April, 2017)

Lastly, they highlight the adjustments that make reference to the teacher's profile. Teachers consider, unlike adolescents, that those who provide the program shouldn't provide other subjects to the students.

"If the person wasn't to be from the school it wouldn't help improve the participation" (all teachers). (FG_St, April, 2017)

"They won't say anything on front of the teacher that compromises them because they believe the teacher would inform the parents". (E3. FG_Te, April, 2017)

Level of satisfaction

Both teachers and students place importance on the adjustments of the program, its social relevance and the benefits of the methodology used.

"This project has been a way of working with the students, complicated but needed at their age. It has served to awaken the curiosity about a theme that is close to home and a way of opening their eyes". (E2. FG_Te, April, 2017)

"Do you think that there are people typically uninterested in other subjects who have applied themselves more here? Yes, I normally do nothing but in this class yes". (E5. FG_St, April, 2017)

Discussions

To approach the topic of dating violence prevention it is crucial that adolescents learn to identify the macho behaviour in relationships and that the preventive programs can anticipate them. The GENER@T program starts from a previously diagnostic study among adolescents (Mateos, 2011) that justifies, not only the need for this preventive action but also the importance of planning an on-going systematic intervention. The evaluative results of the program show that this is effective in the increase of knowledge among adolescents (both male and female) on the topic of dating violence (in 70% of cases). However, due to the honesty that governs the study, one must not claim that, due to the positive results of the program, the same results would be produced in different contexts (Dardis *et al.*, 2015).

The changes relative to knowledge are easier to detect and evaluate than the changes of attitude and behaviour. These changes require more time to crystallize and longer studies. Hence, in terms of efficiency, it deduces itself to the challenge of planning the necessary preventive actions throughout the course and the education cycle. For that purpose, methods that guarantee the durability of changes are required. The studies about the effectiveness of dating violence prevention programs are scarce (Mateos, 2011) and these results open a door towards the need of further evaluation of the results discovered.

The variable sex, in a study of this nature, is particularly relevant. In the evaluation it was proven that initially the girls had more prior knowledge on the topic. This information, is coherent with other studies of great sensitivity and dismissal towards violence (Hernández & Doménech, 2017; Ruiz, 2016; Ubillos *et al.*, 2017). Despite the uneven starting point, the boys improved their knowledge of the topic considerably, almost equalling the girls.

The results show a connection, on a cognitive level, between the academic performance of students and the results of the test. Those with a lower academic level improved their knowledge of dating violence more. Including the question regarding attitudes towards jealousies and love in a relationship, these have received better results than their colleagues of a higher academic performance. This data results in a significant contrast to the scientific literature in this field; which points towards the academic performance among the study variables as the origin of dating violence. In this way, Hébert *et al.* (2017) discover that the socio-demographic variable shows results of consistent weakness with the outbreak of violence. However, they find an elevated relation of the outbreak of violence among the variables of school dropouts. In this study, those two groups with a weaker academic background have displayed better participation and engagement with the program than their other subjects. This active participation is possible because the topic is more present in their everyday life as they find themselves more at risk to suffering from it or because they have already suffered from it (Boira *et al.*, 2013; Rubio-Garay *et al.*, 2015). The result on a preventive level is positive, given that the students face more social risk have engaged with the program, it aligns with the reduction of the risk factor associated with school dropouts or low academic performance. Thus, the life experiences of the participants influence their motivation and engagement.

In relation to the adequacy of the program, teachers felt limited at some moments and with the feeling of having repeated the content. However, students have assessed remarkably the experience of participating and they have demanded to further their knowledge of the topic. It is curious that put before the same experience and reality, both agents (teachers and students) show uneven attitudes and perceptions. This same inconsistency has manifested itself at the age on which the teachers would recommend doing the program. They would suggest applying it in third year of secondary school whereas the students would insist that second year was much too late. These differences of perception could be linked to the insecurity manifested among teachers in respect of approaching a topic outside of their specialty. Authors such as Freixa *et al.*, (2017) point to the importance of having a versatile role as a teacher.

In this sense, some of the teachers' characteristics to implement the program are visible: previous training on the topic, subject planning and teachers' sensitivity about the theme. Teachers must rely on their concrete attitudes as adaptability, flexibility and communication. In this regard, some authors point towards characteristics that must be considered within the prevention (Valdés-Cuervo,

Martínez-Ferrer & Carlos-Martínez, 2018). These and other questions worked themselves into the final training, although it shows the need to make this training more extensive and to highlight the need of continued teacher training so that socio-educative initiatives can be developed (Díaz-Aguado *et al.*, 2013).

As much the adolescents as the teachers there were satisfied in relation to the program, especially with the group learning methodology. It should be noted, the students desire to continue working on the theme to promote changes in their attitudes and behaviours among their equals in the constitution of couples free from violence (Ubillos *et al.*, 2017), among the themes of interest they highlighted the traditional gender stereotypes. A topic which has resulted of special importance as some studies have found roots from these traditional gender stereotypes as much within students as a with teachers (Pacheco-Salazar, 2018; Raveendran & Chunawala, 2015).

Conclusions

One of the future challenges is making the program more visible within the school and within the community, as well as gathering a regular group of teachers to lead the project. Coinciding with the work of Parages and López (2012), teachers and an educative model are required to consider that what is most important in the school does not lie within the teaching of pre-established curricular content. Contrarily, a method of coexisting and integrating oneself within their own culture to be able to focus more on gender equality (Nagalia, 2018) is preferred. In this sense, the need to include families in this project must be mentioned, because even just being aware of the potential risk and/or protection factor it was not a viable option to include them on this occasion.

As with all studies, certain limitations have presented themselves along the way given the nature of the study and the population evaluated. A small sample size implies the risk of unreliable results with significant statistical differences or the difficulty of not being able to replicate some results. However, given the nature of the study, the context of development and the educative innovation that has been assumed by the school, it proved to be impossible to find adequate formulas to resolve this stumbling block. The inexistence of group control within the evaluation stage is another difficulty. Being able to rely on this would have had multiple advantages in evaluative terms, but it implied the exclusion of one of the class groups during the intervention which was seen as a disadvantage in respect to the other groups. A third difficulty, it should have been adequate to unite the groups in one single class and execute the program together to be able to control unexpected variables.

Even so, it is important to highlight the social and educative relevance that this experience has allowed, as well, the significance of the positive results and

the effect of this, especially among the adolescents with a profile of greater social risk and a lower academic background.

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