



Providing parenting support to vulnerable parents of young children: Evaluation of the enhanced Growing up Together programme in Croatia

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ABOUT THE INTERVENTION...

The Centre for Parenting Support ‘Growing up Together’, in partnership with UNICEF and the Croatian Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth and Social Policy, is implementing the project ‘Supporting sustainable provision and availability of the parenting support programmes for parents of young children, especially vulnerable parents, exposed to adverse circumstances’, aimed at strengthening and expanding services for vulnerable families with children. It introduces a new service for parents of young and preschool children, especially to those at risk for child abuse and neglect, since such service was lacking from the social welfare system.

The service consists of a group-based parenting support programme targeted for low SES parents, users of social welfare services, and a group-based resilience-oriented programme for their young/preschool children, entitled „Growing up Together 2”. They aim to contribute towards parents’ and children’s wellbeing and the fulfilment of a number of children’s rights (e.g. the right to protection of violence, to participation, to adequate parenting support for his/her parents). This comprehensive, evidence-informed programme of targeted and indicated parenting support addresses parents’ and children’s heterogeneous and complex needs for support through 15 weekly one-and-a-half-hour-long workshops for parents, with 15 parallel workshops with children, followed by 15 - 30 minutes of joint parent-child activities.

The first test implementation of this programme was conducted by professionals from family centres and two kindergartens with 8 groups of parents in the period from February to July 2018.

ABOUT PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS...

Parents who participated in the programme (N=80) were users of social welfare measures and services: financial aid (35%), intense professional assistance and supervision order over parental care (27%), parental counselling and supervision over parental care (15%), warning on omissions and mistakes in parental care (10%), users of shelters for battered women (8%). 10% of participants came from minority groups (Roma, Kosovo). Third of parents raised children in single-parent families.

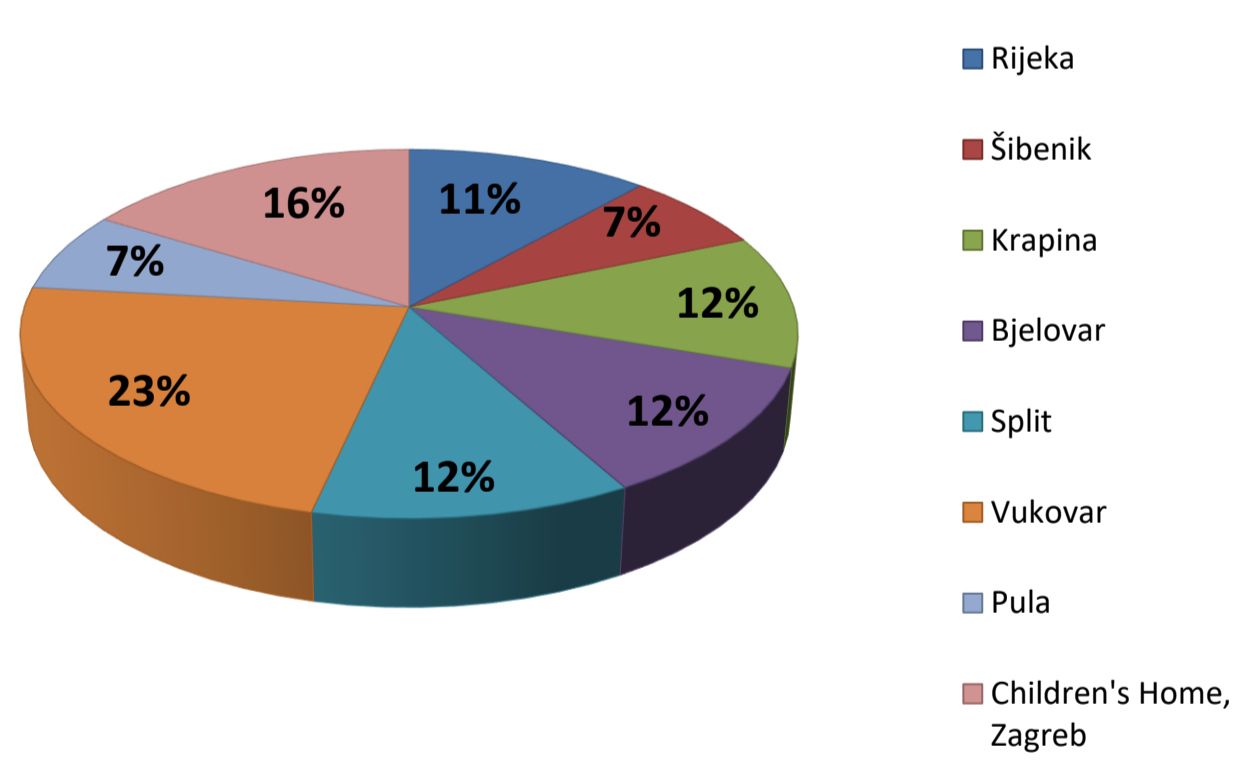
While over 80 participated in programme, only 50 have completed it. However, only 43 have completed both, pre and post questionnaires. Regarding dropping out, it is evident that over a half of the parents and children have completed programme, which is expected in working with vulnerable parents, users of social welfare services.

ABOUT EVALUATION METHOD...

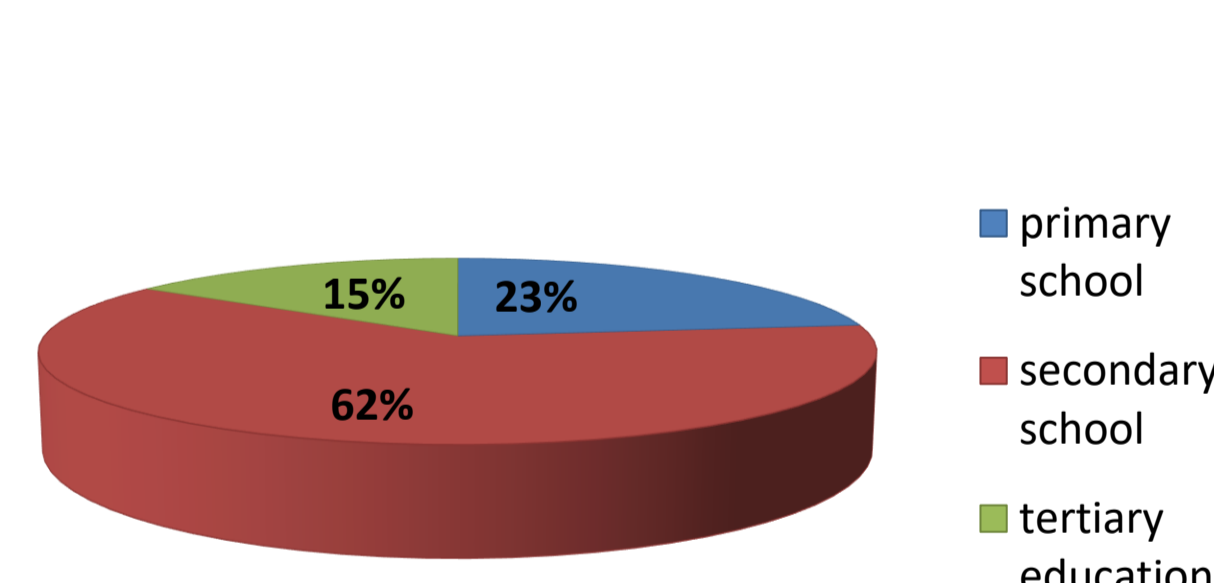
In order to test effects of the new programme parents were given questionnaires at the first and last sessions. Measures included Parenting Daily Hassles (Crnic & Greenberg, 1990); Parental self-efficacy (adjusted PSOC; Johnston & Mash, 1989; Kerestes et al., 2009); Parent’s reactions to child’s misbehaviour, which included attempted understanding and angry outbursts (Stattin et al., 2011); developmentally positive (reading, playing) and negative (shouting, hitting) interaction (Pecnik, 2014); Parental beliefs (Pecnik et al., 2011); The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) for child that has also participated in programme, in parallel workshops for children, and questions about sociodemographic variables. Some of the results are listed below.

SOCIDEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THE PROGRAMME (N=43)

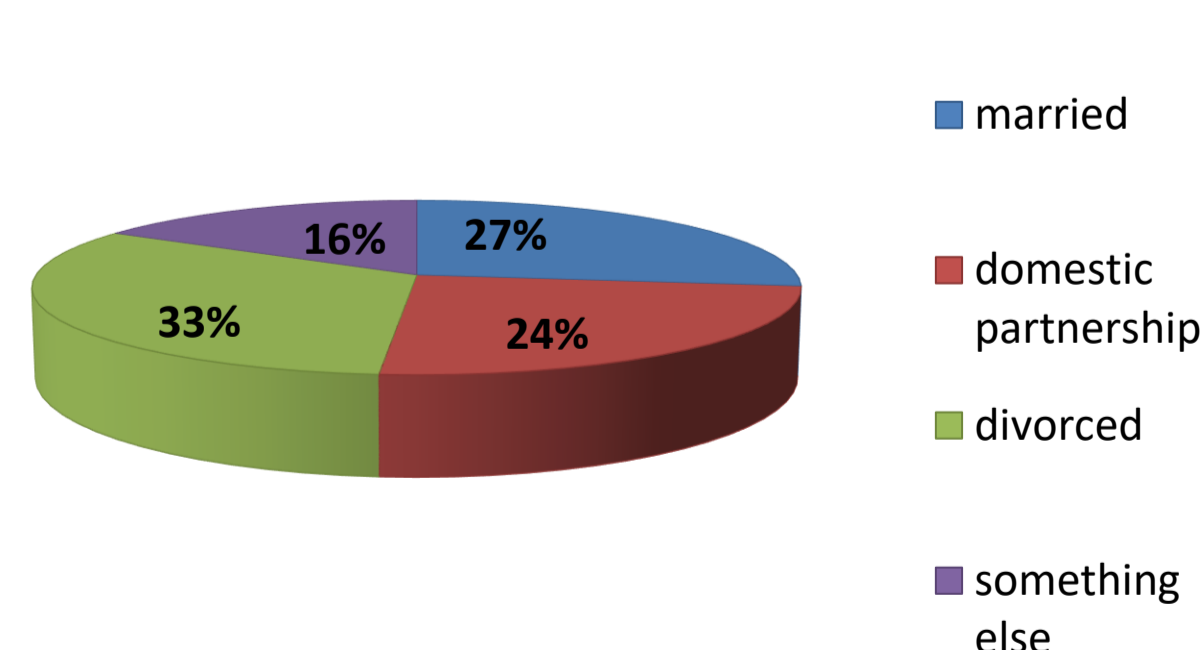
Parents who have completed country-wide Programme during



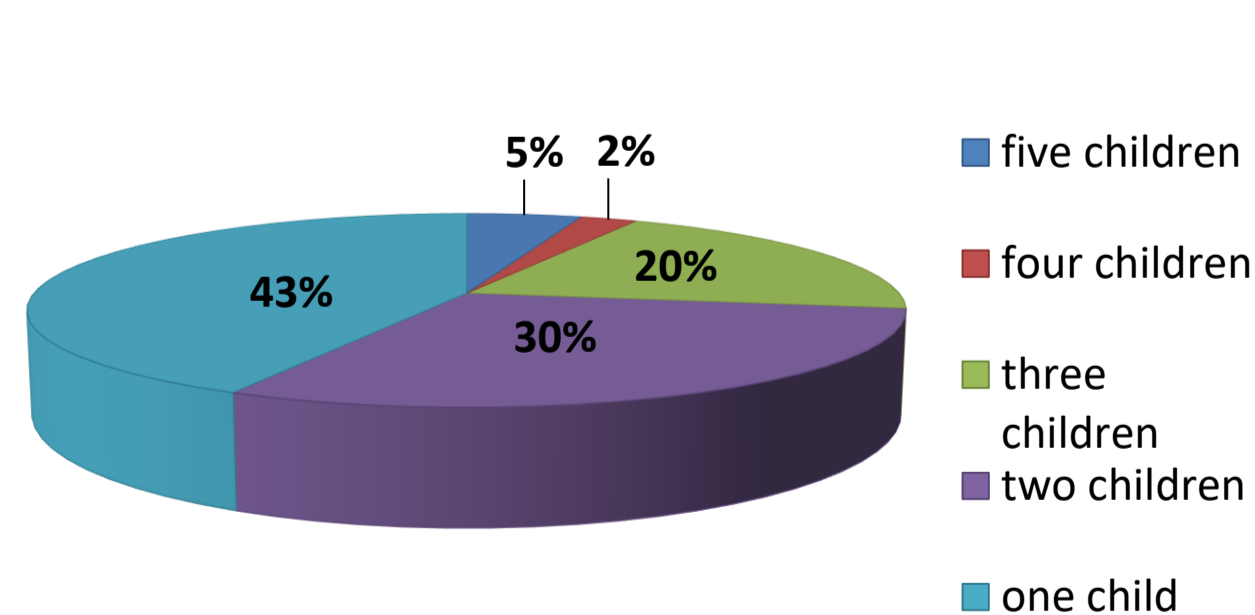
Educational level of parents who have completed Programme



Marital status of parents who have completed Programme

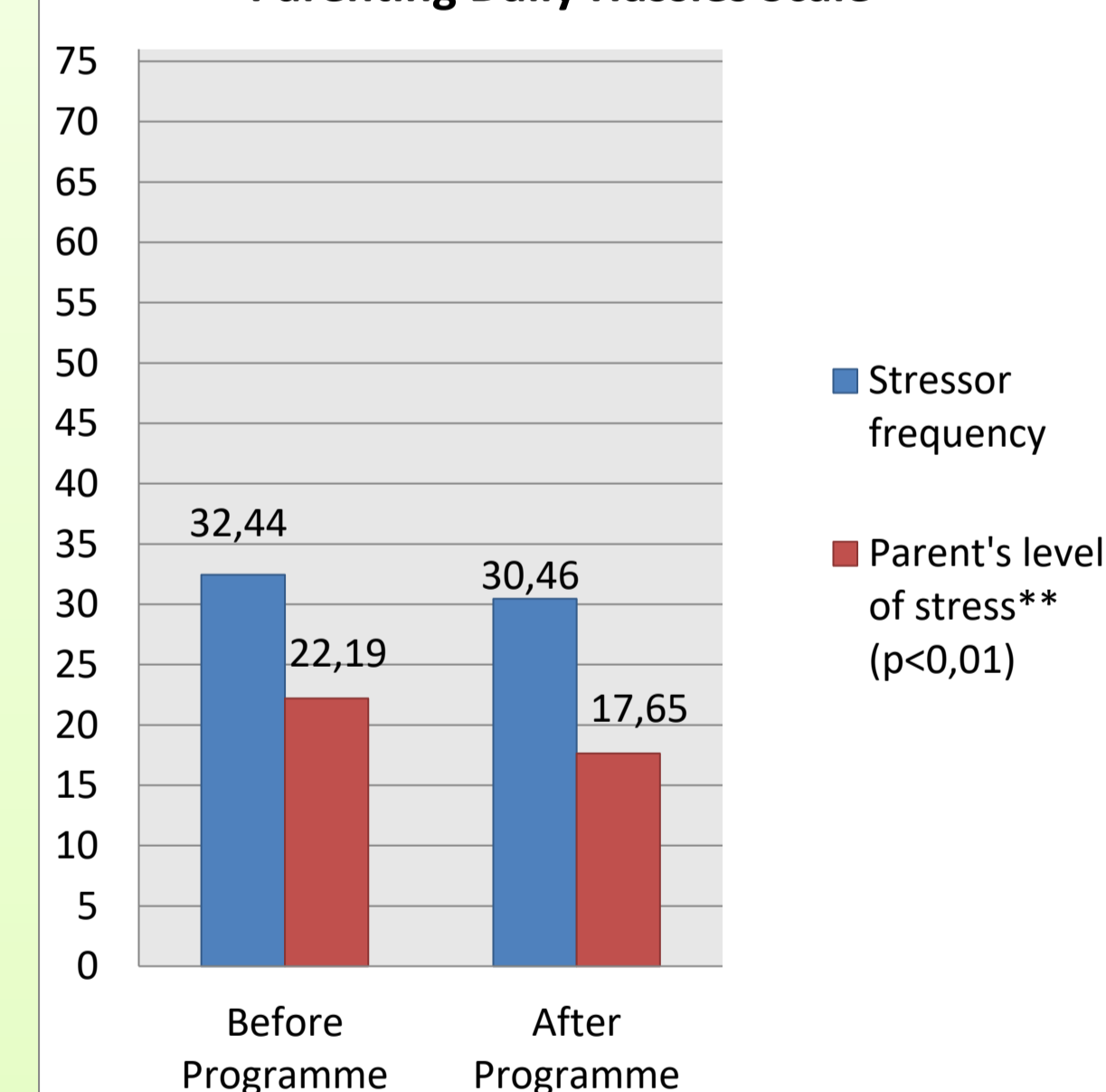


Number of children of parents who have completed Programme

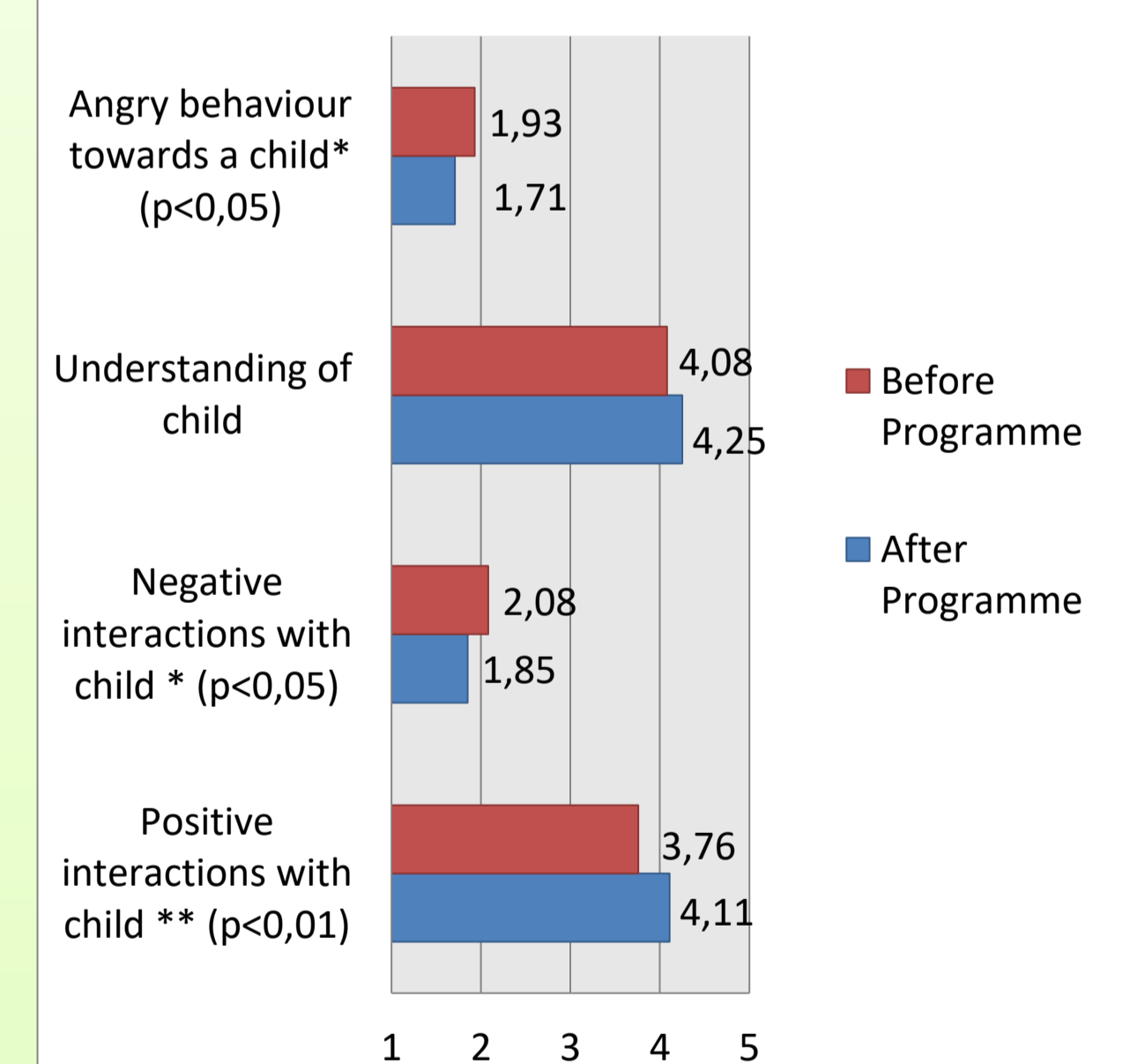


RESULTS BEFORE/ AFTER INTERVENTION

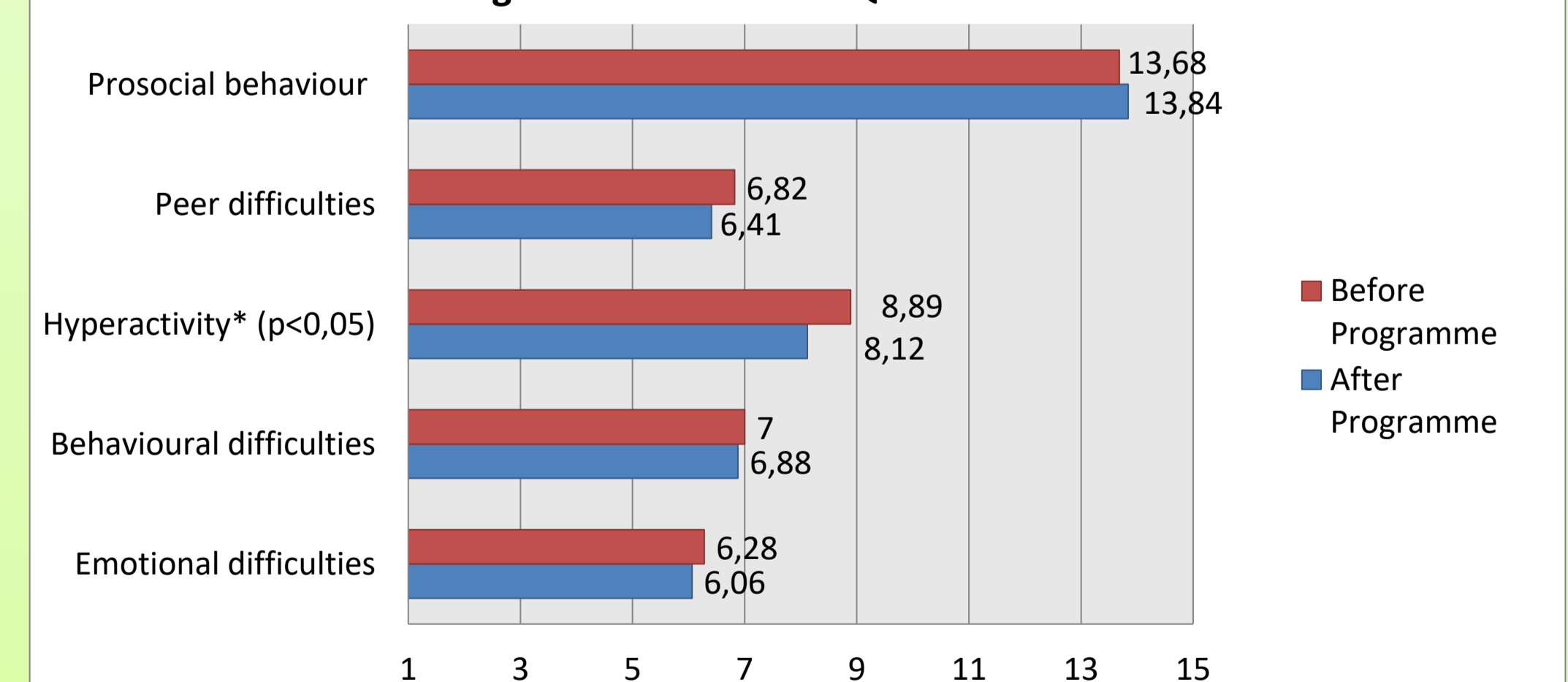
Parenting Daily Hassles Scale



Parental interactions with child



Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire



CONCLUSION

Pre- and post-intervention self-report data collected from parents who had completed the enhanced „Growing up Together” programme of 15 workshops indicates that parental level of parenting stress has decreased significantly after the programme. Parent-child interaction also changed in the expected direction: after the programme parents reported less frequent angry outbursts on child’s misbehaviours as well as less frequent shouting and hitting of the child. However, parents’ developmentally desirable practices (undivided attention, playing, reading) became more frequent after the programme than before. Parent report on SDQ showed that child’s hyperactivity scores decreased after the programme. In conclusion, the enhanced Growing up Together programme is a promising intervention for parenting support of parents at risk of child abuse and neglect that requires further development and evaluation.