

Impact of an Attachment-Based Prevention Program B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching: A Program to Counter Aggression and Anxiety and to Promote Empathy and Sensitivity

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INTRODUCTION Empathy and prosocial behavior are negatively correlated with aggression. Children who lack empathy tend to behave more aggressively toward their peers in conflict situations; they are also more likely to have developed an insecure attachment (Parens 1993; Parens & Kramer 1993). Promoting the ability to empathize and the development of self-reflection is necessary to help these children to react less aggressively or fearfully when they are unable to interpret the emotions and intentions of others.

B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching (**B** = Babywatching, **A** = Against Aggression and Anxiety, **S** = For Sensitivity, **E** = for Empathy; Brisch, 2004) is an attachment-based prevention program to counter aggression and anxiety and to promote empathy and sensitivity.

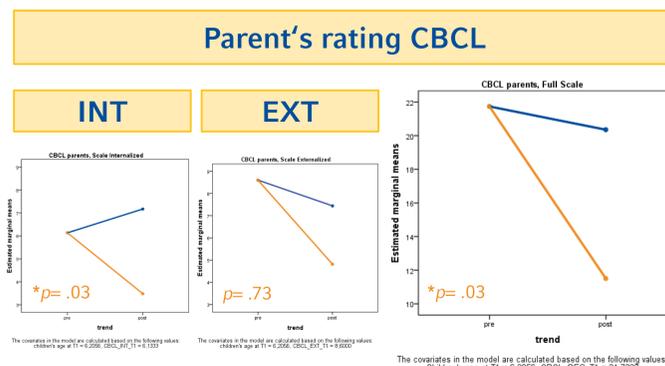


B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching After a one-day seminar, teachers or nursery teachers will be qualified to conduct a B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching group at their school or nursery school. A mother or father and her or his several-week-old baby visit a preschool or school group once a week for 8-months. Sitting in a circle, the children watch how the baby grows from week to week until s/he is able to walk. With a B.A.S.E.[®] group leader serving as facilitator and the special set of B.A.S.E.[®] questions, they learn through their weekly interactional observations to empathize better with the mother or father and baby.

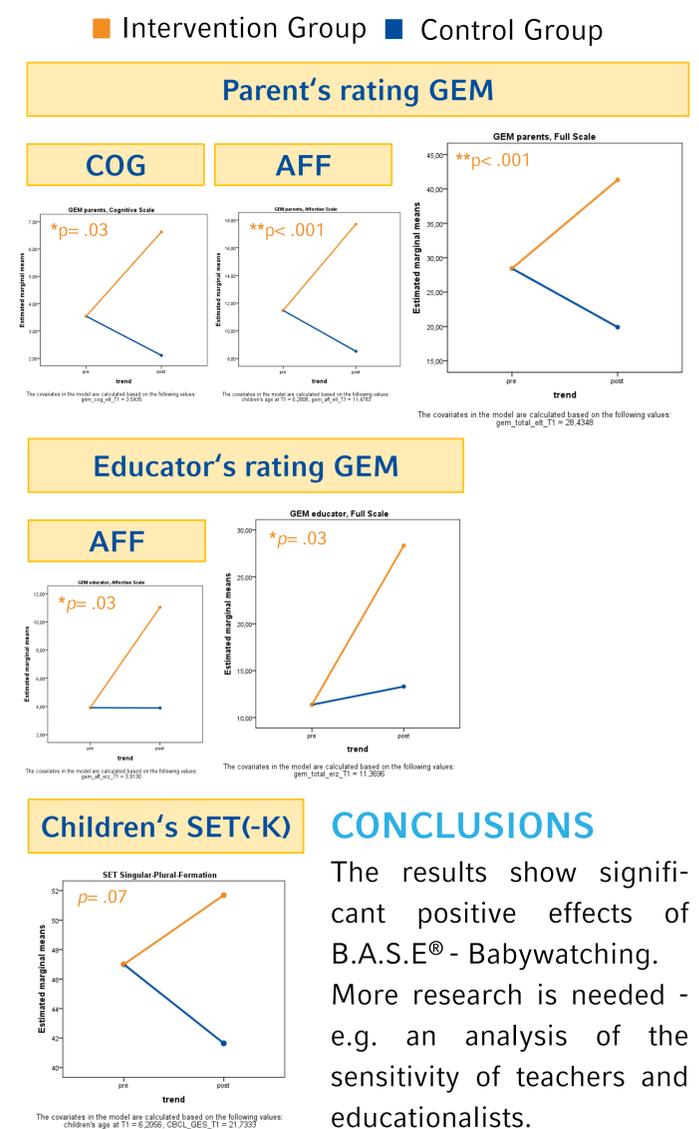


MATERIAL & METHODS A longitudinal and matched-pair design with two groups (intervention group, control group) was applied. The sample consisted of 3 to 11 year-old, healthy children ($N = 46$; $M = 76.90$ month, $SD = 31.45$, Range = 32-143) from urban neighborhoods and different socio-economic backgrounds.

$N = 19$ children were allocated to the control group (8-months waiting period) and $N = 27$ to the intervention group (8-months intervention period). B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching was implemented in preschools ($N = 2$) and schools ($N = 2$) of the intervention group over 8 months. To evaluate children's speech proficiency (SETK 3-5; Grimm, 2001; SET 5-10 Petermann, 2010), empathy (GEM; Dadds et al., 2008), and aggression and anxiety level (CBCL 4-18 Achenbach, 1991) parents and professionals completed questionnaires pre- and post-intervention.



RESULTS Repeated measures ANCOVAs with baseline levels as covariate, show significant group*time effects with an increase in children's affective and cognitive empathy (GEM), a decrease in aggression and anxiety (CBCL) and a more distinctive ability to form singular-plural formation (SETK & SET) from pre- to post- intervention in the intervention group compared to a decrease in empathy (GEM) and rather stable aggression and anxiety level (C-TRF) and a decrease in sentences and singular-plural formation in the control group.



CONCLUSIONS

The results show significant positive effects of B.A.S.E.[®] - Babywatching. More research is needed - e.g. an analysis of the sensitivity of teachers and educationalists.