



Country Specific Reports

Integrative Parents' Autism Training
2020-1-EL01-KA204-079195

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**IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY
IPAT ERASMUS+**

CONTENTS

1. Introduction and description of the IPAT training activity
2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the IPAT training activity
3. Challenges encountered
4. Points raised by participants and moderators of the IPAT training activity
5. Suggestions for modification

1. INTRODUCTION

IPAT training consisted of an average of three-hour sessions held on 9 Wednesdays from 16/03/2022 to 10/06/2022 in Turkey. During this four- to five-month period, the breakthroughs learned new information about the developmental problems, sexuality problems or sexual development of children with autism spectrum disorders, by building on what they knew about the understanding of autism or by adding a different perspective to their perspectives. In our country, they learned about the legal rights of people with disabilities and autism, what kind of approach should be followed by people who care for and care for children, what kind of care they should give to children or how they should intervene against emerging behaviour problems. The psychological needs of parents and how to communicate with the institutions established against these needs in the country were discussed. Participants also shared their experiences by interacting with other parents. The education levels of the participants' children (primary, secondary and high school levels) and those who have children in the younger age group because they are in different age groups, the participants with older children benefit from the knowledge and especially the experience of the participants and determine what kind of problems they may face in the future. Provided the participants thought about these issues and had a positive impact on the acceptance processes. In addition, based on the impressions of the instructors, this training process shows a kind of group therapy effect. The IPAT training aimed to provide a comprehensive psycho education program for parents with children diagnosed with autism

**IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY
IPAT ERASMUS+**

and, as a result, to create a community that is currently educated with the most up-to-date information. Psychoeducation; It is a training that aims to increase psychological resilience skills and develop skills to cope with difficulties, to provide information about ways to cope with behavioural and affective difficulties, and to increase awareness. This training is practical directly in a pragmatic dimension. That is; The IPAT training activity is structured and presented in such a way that it has academic content and accessible, applicable, skills development knowledge to have a positive impact on stress levels and perceived quality of life.

First of all, content has been created that explains in detail the participation requirements of the participants in IPAT training activities. This content created afterwards was delivered and invited to all participants who want to come to the centre where education will be held locally in Şahinbey district and Şehitkamil district of Gaziantep province, and to all parents with children diagnosed with autism who have received training in Gaziantep. This invitation was delivered to parents through the guidance service of the schools. All parents who meet the predetermined criteria are invited. These criteria are; a) not to have participated in a psychoeducation program in autism and b) to be able to participate actively until the IPAT training activity is completed. The transportation part was provided by negotiating with the local administrators and the school principal so that they would come and go with the school's shuttles. There were no restrictions on the age and level of functioning of the child with autism. All IPAT sessions are a specialist who has worked with 450 different autism-diagnosed individuals, one of whom has expertise in the field of autism, and has been trained by experts who have written numerous articles in the field of autism nationally and internationally in Turkey, who also has work experience in the field of autism, who is the head of the department in the department of women's rights and social support in local government, and who is a mental health professional the process was managed with three moderators by agreeing with a doctoral student who also has work experience in the field of autism and with a head of a department with a mental health professional the state university. Each meeting followed a fixed structure of four 15' lessons, 10' for questions, 10' for coffee breaks, and 45-60' for reflection and experiential activities. In general, the duration of each meeting was scheduled to be three hours. At the end of each meeting, information was given about the content of the next meeting and the

IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY IPAT ERASMUS+

participants were asked to generate questions and think about it and focused on an efficient process.

2. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE IPAT TRAINING ACTIVITY

Strengths

- Participants showed active participation in discussions and interactive activities with other parents.
- The IPAT educational activity supported parents by enabling them to develop parents' perspectives on autism, how they should be cared for and the development of knowledge and skills in key areas related to understanding autism.
- The content of the IPAT training event consisted of PowerPoint presentations designed for each meeting and accompanied by interactive activities that well complemented the main topic covered by the presentations.
- IPAT training activities, the transfer of the experiences of the participants to other participants in this time about having a child with autism and the sincerity of the ties between them have developed.
- The content of the presentations and events was consistent and based on the experiences of the participants, and explanatory examples were used that revealed theoretical ideas.
- The participants were open-minded and had a high level of readiness, and the cooperation between the moderator and the participants was very strong.
- The communication between the participants and the moderators, their ability to reach each other quickly and the harmony of the moderators directly in the process were at a high level.
- Participation in interactive activities was provided through the exchange of ideas about how parents can think about various issues and how they relate to themselves, their children and their families, and their social contexts in general. Thanks to this exchange of ideas, a very strong emotional bond were formed between the participants.
- IPAT training opened a space for cultural sensitivity.
- It contributed both theoretically and practically.

IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY IPAT ERASMUS+

- The topics were good and appealed to parents.
- Since the moderators have mastered the field, have high field experience and are already experts, all kinds of problems and questions of the participants were answered instantly and the requests of any participant were not rejected.

Weaknesses

- Since the training contents consist of very intensive information, it exceeds the planned time.
- Participants said that the outcome decreased towards the end due to the lengthening of the time, which was relatively more intense in the first two sessions.
- Because the final versions of the presentations arrived late, the translation and the fact that there was little time for the moderators to prepare the content put a lot of stress on the moderators.
- The content is suitable for those working in the field, but in general, it is too academic.
- Special education course were made while transferring the contents due to the low level of education of parents in Turkey, which extended the period.
- 8 weeks can be SHORTENED, it is too long.
- More space could be given to interactive applications.

3. CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

- The main challenge encountered during the IPAT training activity was to ensure the continuity of the participants in the training program. The moderators had to make a great effort to quickly recover after the participants entered the holiday holidays.
- It was difficult to set aside an appropriate time for all parents to participate.
- It was a tiring process for the participants with the meetings having to exceed 3 hours strictly.
- More time was needed to allow longer interactions between participants or participants and moderators.
- Parents who participated in the training had transportation problems.
- Husbands were not included in the program.

IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY IPAT ERASMUS+

- Moderators felt pressured when attendees expected information from them that went beyond the scope of the presentation content.

4. POINTS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS AND MODERATORS

Participants

The satisfaction feedback from the participants was very positive. The parents stated that they were very pleased with the content of the meetings. Participating parents indicated that they had a better understanding of what kind of difficulty or advantage it entailed in having a child with autism. They stated that they had some questions in their minds before participating in the IPAT training and that they could not get answers to these questions, but with this training, they received answers to all the questions that occurred in their minds. Participants talked about the pressure of religious, family and social issues on their children and themselves. At the end of the training module, they expressed that they gained a different perspective on these issues. All participants felt more motivated as they attended the sessions. From the moment the event started, there was a highly positive interaction between the participants, that is, a constructive interaction. As a result of this interaction, they exchanged information about the care of children with autism and various issues such as thoughts and experiences, how they encountered a problem and how they coped with it themselves. The interaction in the meetings and their interaction with each other was at a very high level. The limited duration of the program even caused difficulty in managing the process in terms of time management in terms of interaction. Although experiential exercises and interactions took place at the scheduled time, some of the participants were seen to move their processes away from context while describing the events that happened to them. Finally, at the end of the presentations, the participants stated that they improved themselves further with the interactions and the extra educational content given by the moderators and learned how their children should follow a crisis. At the same time, they learned from the moderators how to intervene in children of a similar nature or similar behaviour patterns, and they interacted with each other and shared experiences and mentioned that this type of educational content could be recreated and expanded. In other words, they wanted to be present in a new project in the future, but rather than educational content, they demanded that they could be trained only on how to work with their children in interactive activities or directly.

**IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY
IPAT ERASMUS+**

Moderators

Overall, the moderators' process experience was extremely constructive, helpful and positive. However, in terms of time management, it was still very difficult to complete the planned 3-hour period without extending the time too long. The moderators stated that the training module could continue so that parents could gain more knowledge and skills. The cooperation between all 3 moderators was at a very high level and the cooperation in the process of preparing and translating the materials was very excellent. The difficulty was because the time left for translation and preparation was very limited. Thanks to the close coordination with other countries, it was very enjoyable and useful to reorganize the content with the feedback of the countries and to manage the process in a constantly dynamic way.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR MODIFICATIONS

- The fact that presentation content was less academic and could have appealed more to an audience of parents rather than professionals with autism. This way the information can be understood more easily. For diagnostic processes, localization can make IPAT more efficient.
- To include input from the field in the subsequent presentations of the training and to carry out the preparation process more efficiently, more time can be devoted to the presentation and event content review and feedback process.
- If some of the participants initiate discussions about their own experiences that are beyond the scope of the presentation, they may be asked to bring these thoughts and share them in the final section of the meeting, dedicated to reflections and the sharing of their personal experiences.
- IPAT training can be planned over 12 – 14 meetings instead of 8 meetings but in 1.5 – 2 hours. In this way, information can be added to the participants through examples with approaches to both experiences and solutions. With the alternative communication methods used for ASD, examples can be multiplied and included in the content.
- In addition to all the content, more emphasis could have been placed on the jobs and employment of older individuals with ASD.

**IO2: Integrative Parents' Autism Training Activity - COUNTRY SPECIFIC REPORT TURKEY
IPAT ERASMUS+**

- It could take part in a country-specific session training module where religious and cultural values were discussed.