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ABSTRAC

The first aim of the study was to determine if there were any differences in family variables in relation to the students' typological characteristics. The sample consisted of 87 families of pupils with learning disabilities, with ADHD and normal achievement. Students and parents filled out the *Family Opinions*. Results confirm that contextual family elements present characteristics that are less conducive to learning in families in which children have difficulties. The second objective was to explore the effectiveness of an intervention program in written composition, implemented by parents and teachers, and determine whether the effectiveness of the intervention varied in relation to the environment and the figures involved in its implementation. The sample consisted of 112 students divided in four groups. Results confirm the efficacy of the program and that the educational effectiveness of mothers to teach written composition to their children. During this research study, we received competitive funds from the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation (MICINN) (EDU2010-19250 / EDUC) for 2010-2013, and Excellence Research Group funds from the Junta de Castilla y León (GR259), with FEDER funds from the European Union for 2009-2010-2011 (BOCyL 27 on April 2009). Both were awarded to the Director/Main Researcher (J. N. García)

Key words: ADHD, family educational implication, learning disabilities, writing composition.

INTRODUCTION

The researches have argued that families play an important role in the life and learning of students, both in terms of the influence of structural and dynamic dimensions of the family on the development of children, and as regards the parents' potential for active involvement in education,

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thus fostering significant improvements in student learning (Dumont et al., 2012; Galindo & Shledon, 2012; Puspita & Snjit, 2012; Teodorovíc, 2012; Vellymalay, 2012).

Looking first at the empirical research concerning the relationship between family dimensions and the academic development of students, the findings confirming that structural and dinamic family factors may mediate children's academic outcomes (Bodovski & Youn, 2010; Ghazarian & Buehler, 2010; Zang, 2012). This conclusions are supported in the case of children without difficulties in their natural process of development (NA), but these interactions also appear to hold true in the specific case of students with learning disabilities (LD) or attention deficit disorder with/without hyperactivity (ADHD). In these cases more studies are required. In view of the above, the first objective of this study was to compare the structural and dynamic family context of three different groups of students, namely, children with LD, children with ADHD and children whose academic performance was normal (hereafter NA).

Second, as regards the potential of parents to be actively involved in their children's education, the research results confirmed that parents present a series of individual qualities which contribute to making them excellent subjects for active participation in the enhancement of their children's learning (McElvany & Artelt, 2009; Xu & Filler, 2008). It has been demonstrated that the home context emerges as an exceptional environment for encouraging students to learn the academic skills. In view of the above, the second aim of the study was to explore the effectiveness of an intervention program in written composition, implemented by parents and teachers, and determine whether the effectiveness of the intervention varied in relation to the environment and the figures involved in its implementation

METHODOLOGY

Participants

First objective

87 families of NA, LD and ADHD students in their 4th year of Primary to 1st year of Secondary Education (mean age = 11.27), enrolled in four Spanish schools. 59.7% of family participants were mothers, 7.2% were fathers, in 33% of the cases involved both parents. The average age of the fathers was 44.5 years while that of the mothers was 42.33 years.

Second objective

112 primary school children, with ages ranging from 10 to 13 (mean = 10.46 years), distributed as shown in Table 1.

	PRO			EFP			PAD			OC		
Grade/sex	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*
5th	11	11	22	8	8	16	5	8	13	7	6	13
6th	7	6	13	6	4	10	6	6	12	7	6	13
Total	18	17	35	14	12	26	11	14	25	14	12	26

Table 1. *Sample of students according to their experimental group, grade and sex*

Instruments

Family Opinions Instrument (FAOP, Robledo & García, 2007): assess how parents and children perceived the different dimensions of the family educational context (see Table 2).

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Scale-Construct	*Dimensions*
Satisfaction with education: Satisfaction with education, the school and its professionals	Communication and training. Attention to students and confidence. Attention given for child's difficulties. Attitudes of teachers. Collaboration and individual attention
Parental involvement education: Parental involvement in education	Home involvement dimension. School involvement dimension
Writing practice: Parental role in teaching and motivation of writing	Practice motivation towards writing. Efficacy in teaching writing. Practice psychological processes. Practice writing stimulation
Home: Provision of a home with characteristics conducive to learning and development	Encouraging learning materials. Acceptance-Rejection. Educational styles. Encouraging children's maturity and responsibility
Climate: Social and environmental characteristics of families	Relationship. Personal growth. System maintenance dimension

Table 2. *Description of the scales within FAOP*

Scale-Construct DimensionsSatisfaction with education: Satisfaction with education, the school and its professionals Communication and training. Attention to students and confidence. Attention given for child's difficulties. Attitudes of teachers. Collaboration and individual attention*Parental involvement education:* Parental involvement in education Home involvement dimension. School involvement dimension*Writing practice:* Parental role in teaching and motivation of writing Practice motivation towards writing. Efficacy in teaching writing. Practice psychological processes. Practice writing stimulation *Home:* Provision of a home with characteristics conducive to learning and development Encouraging learning materials. Acceptance-Rejection. Educational styles. Encouraging children's maturity and responsibility*Climate:* Social and environmental characteristics of families Relationship. Personal growth. System maintenance dimension

Writing products were evaluated using two types of measures, some based on objective evidence collected in the text (TBM), including productivity, coherence and structure. Others used subjective criteria, based on the overall interpretation of the text by the reader (RBM), including structure, coherence and quality.

Procedure

First objective

After obtaining their families' informed consent, students underwent the assessments carried out by expert staff in groups. Teachers had to distribute the FAOP questionnaire to families, along with a letter explaining the study and requesting their participation and that of their children, and were responsible for its subsequent collection.

Second objetive

We carried out the design of the writing instructional program. Following this, we planned and developed the parent training program. We carried out a pre-assessment of students and proceeded to the implementation of the interventions; after the interventions, we carried out an post-assessment of students.

On completion of the fieldwork, we corrected the assessments, processed the data for statistical analysis and obtained the results.

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RESULTS

First objective

Tests of inter-subject effects and post-hoc contrast showed statistically significant results with size effects for the variables in Table 3.

VARIABLES	NA		LD		ADHD					POST-HOC
	M	*ST*	*M*	*ST*	*M*	*ST*	*F*	*p*	η^2	
										LD vs. ADHD
Communication school	31.36	5.93	30.2	5.73	34.5	4.9	3.451	.038	.103	.049
School involvement	63.5	8.58	60.6	10.82	69.5	10.56	4.283	.018	.125	.022
Conflict	13	2.81	14.1	2.22	11.3	2.63	5.790	.005	.162	.005
										LD vs. NA
Efficacy teach writing	37.1	4.32	33.1	5.12	34.62	5.66	3.446	.038	.103	.042
Recreation	15	2.16	11.7	3.71	12.2	2.68	7.972	.001	.210	.002
										ADHD vs. NA
Writing stimulation	25.6	3.52	23.55	3.63	22.3	3.07	5.017	.010	.143	.011
Rejection	31.8	6.24	34.2	7.65	38.6	7.56	4.894	.011	.140	.012
Relationships	40.9	6.57	38.8	6.40	35.8	5.86	3.622	.033	.108	.034
Cultural-intellectual	13.2	2.56	12.25	3.02	10.71	3.69	3.646	.032	.108	.033
Recreation	15	2.16	11.7	3.71	12.2	2.68	7.972	.001	.210	.011
Personal growth	49.3	5.36	45	9.02	43.6	6.91	3.677	.031	.109	.041
Attention difficulty	15	3.02	13	3.01	12.5	3.69	4.325	.017	.105	.031
Individual attention	10.4	2.13	9.72	2.05	8.43	2.25	5.893	.004	.137	.004

Note. Multivariate contrasts [F (48, 74) = 2.655, p <.001, η^2 = .633].

Table 3. *Inter-subject and post-hoc test results for groups*

ANOVA showed statistically significant differences for number of children [F (2,78) = 5.401, p = .006], M_{ADHD} =2.22 vs. M_{NA}=1.69, p = .011 & M_{LD} = 1.76, p=.033.

Second objective

Multivariate contrasts of variance·4X2 showed statistically significant results and a large size effect for all measures based on the text and the reader.

Variables	*EFP vs. OC*	*EFP vs. PAD*	*PRO vs. OC*	*PRO vs. PAD*
Productivity	.008	.028	.009	.035
C. Referential	.001	.017	<.001	.003
C. Relational	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
C. total	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Other C.	<.001	.017	<.001	.022
Structure	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table 4. *Post-hoc contrasts in the text based measures*

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Between-effects tests and post-hoc analyses showed statistically significant changes across groups following the implementation of different instructional methods in text based measured listed in Table 4 and in reader based measured represented in Figure 1.

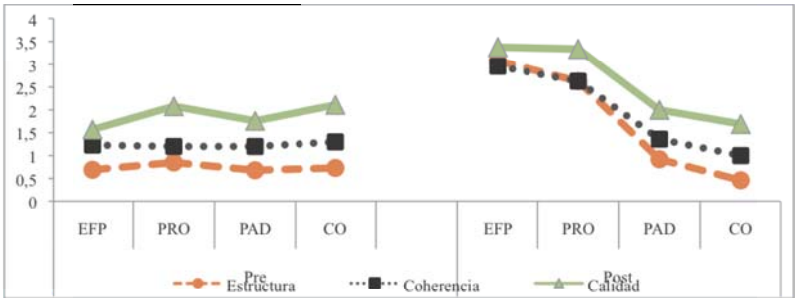

Figura 1. *Post-hoc contrasts in the reader based measures*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In general, the conclusions drawn from the first objetive confirm a trend that links the presence of LD or ADHD in students to the prevalence of contextual family dimensions that could be considered as risk factors for the children's development and learning.

In the first place it can be concluded that the family climate, in the case of students with LD and ADHD this could be less favorable for their development than the climate experienced in homes where there are children with a normal level of achievement (Cussen, Sciberras, Ukoumunne, & Efron, 2012; Trainor, 2005). Moreover, parental collaboration in the education of their children was lower in cases where children had LD than in the case of ADHD or NA children. The parents of students with LD, also show lwer levels of self-efficacy in relation to their ability to help children in aspects associated with writing (Bloomfield, Kendall, & Fortuna, 2010). Meanwhile, families of pupils with ADHD differ from families of NA children regarding stimulation of writing skills. The size of the ADHD families was higher than that of the other groups. Finally, the parents of children with ADHD were the least satisfied with the teachers.

Turning to the findings of the second objective, it can first be concluded that when given the pertinent guidance, parents are capable of helping their children to improve their written communication skills through working with them on their homework and teaching them simple strategic procedures. The data also indicated that the educational effectiveness of family members, in terms of their ability to teach written composition to their children through the implementation at home of the instructional program to promote this skill, was no different from that of teachers who applied the same instructional program in the classroom (Axford, 2007; Feiler, 2003; Saint Lauren & Giasson, 2005).

At this juncture, it is appropriate to acknowledge some of the main limitations presented by this research. For example, the samples consisted of students and families with certain specific attributes, interests and characteristics, and the results obtained therefore relate to very specific realities. In addition, participants collaborated on a voluntary basis. It should also be noted that *Family Opinions: FAOP* it is a subjective self-report scale.

Lastly, it should be emphasized that including the family in the educational process, incorporating the influences of the associated structural and functional dimensions and exploiting the educational potential of the parents, may emerge as a highly interesting option in the field of education as a means to promote the teaching-learning process and the development of the majority of students, and especially of those who have difficulties.

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