

2nd to 5th October 2018

EUSARF 2018 PORTO

Socio-Educative Program to Promote Family Reunification: Support for Practitioners through a Virtual Environment

Thursday, 4th October @ 11:00: Promoting Safety and Relationships' Preservation within Families (Venue: Ribeira II)

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The communication presents part of the results of the dissertation “The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for the development of the socio-educative program ‘Walking family’” (Balsells et al. 2015). The dissertation was carried out within an investigation project in which the program was implemented and evaluated. “Walking family” intends to improve the parental skills of families of the Child Welfare System who are experiencing a process of foster care and reunification. In order to achieve this goal, it is essential to train practitioners appropriately and to support them over the implementation of the program.

A Virtual Environment (VE) is used as a media to improve the collaborative work and knowledge between researchers, who have developed the program, and practitioners who implement the program with families. The VE includes a Moodle Platform with a forum and other specific tools, an online tool for evaluation questionnaires, QR codes, digital material, an informative website, the e-mail and the telephone. In this sense, the aim of this study is to evaluate the VE as a group of tools for the training, the communication and the evaluation of the program.

A questionnaire, based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989), was carried out to evaluate the perceived usefulness and the perception of utility of the tools in the VE. The sample is composed by 17 of the 28 practitioners who have implemented the program with families with the support of the research team through the VE. They are social workers, psychologists and pedagogues.

The results show that practitioners usually used all tools provided, with the exception of the forum and QR codes. In general, the VE was considered useful to support the practitioners over the implementation, especially, in order to access to the materials of the program and to exchange data with researchers about the families who are in reunification processes. Moreover, the practitioners considered that the tools were generally easy to use. On the other hand, the high standard deviation shows that participants have different points of view about the use of these tools.

In conclusion, using a VE to support the implementation of a socio-educative program allows to improve the communication between practitioners and researchers. However, all the tools provided didn't facilitate the collaborative and continuous training among practitioners. In this sense, it is proposed for other studies to review which methodologies or approaches can be more suitable to offer a collaborative and online training for practitioners of Child Welfare System. The purpose is giving them enough support to improve the quality of the intervention with families in reunification processes.