

IMPROVING LIFE SKILLS



Prevention Program on Addictive Behaviours in Eastern Porto Schools

Monteiro, A.¹; Faro, S.¹; Malheiro, R.²; Viana, D.²; Almeida, S.²; Duarte, G.²; Figueiredo, A.²; Leal, V.²; Mansilha, R.²; Matos, C.²; Moreira, J.²; Nascimento, A.²; Tavares, A.¹
ARS Norte, ¹Divisão de Intervenção nos Comportamentos Aditivos e Dependências, ²ACES Porto Oriental

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental period during which youth face biological and psychological changes and transitions, favorable to experimentation and risk taking, including increased risk for substance abuse.

Social emotional competencies promote interpersonal connection and relationship building which are significant protective factors for substance abuse (Tolan & Haegerich, 2008).

This knowledge and the results of a prior study (previous step of our Local Program for the Prevention of Addictive Behaviours) led to the implementation of “Eu e os Outros” Life Skills Training Program.

METHODOLOGY

Students intervention started in 2018 and involved all 5th and 6th grade classes of two pilot schools from East Porto.

The intervention was directed to 377 students in pilot schools, distributed by 13 classes of the 5th grade and 12 of the 6th grade. Target group ages ranged from 10 to 15yo (mean age 10,36 for 5th graders and 11,67 for 6th). Girls constituted 48,3% of the sample (N=182) and boys 51,7% (N=195).

Intervention outcomes were measured using the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ, Neill et al., 2003), a self-report questionnaire that measures eight social emotional dimensions: Time Management, Social Competence, Achievement Motivation, Intellectual Flexibility, Task Leadership, Emotional Control, Active Initiative and, Self Confidence.

LEQ was applied in a pre-post format as defined by the assessment program design.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used as procedures for data analyses.

DISCUSSION

Analysis demonstrated positive effects in the Emotional Control dimension (specially in boys and in 5th grade students). Research suggests that difficulties in emotional regulation and emotionally driven behaviors may be important predictors of risky behaviors in adolescence (Cooper et al, 2003). Adolescents who lack skills for dealing with their emotional experiences may be more likely to engage in risky behaviors, including substance abuse (Hessler & Katz, 2010).

On the contrary, the other significantly results revealed regressions in Active Initiative and Task Leadership dimensions which was the opposite of the expected. Both of these dimensions involve leadership and take action competencies that may be linked to impulsive and acting out behaviours (related by the teachers as frequent in many classes). If Emotional Control was developed it might be expected that such impulsive behaviours decreases. In this assumption, this regressions might signify that the intervention could have contributed to refrain impulsiveness. But we, unfortunately, can't assume that. Reflexions have to be made in order to adjust measurement procedures and tools to a more realistic evaluation and to potentiate the intervention efficacy.

References

- Cooper et al. (2003). Coping, expectancies, and alcohol abuse: A test of social learning formulations. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. 1988;97:218–230.
Hessler, D. & Katz, L. (2010). Brief Report: Associations between Emotional Competence and Adolescent Risky Behavior. *J Adolesc*. 2010 Feb; 33(1): 241.
Matos et al. (2011). The role of social and emotional competence on risk behaviors in adolescence. *The International Journal of Emotional Education*. Volume 4, Number 1, April 2012 pp 43-55
Neill et al. (2003). The Life Effectiveness Questionnaire: Development and psychometrics. <http://wilderdom.com/abstracts/NeillMarchRichards2003LEQDevelopmentPsychometrics.htm>.
Tolan, P. & Haegerich, T. (2008). Core competencies and the prevention of adolescent substance use. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cd.228>

RESULTS

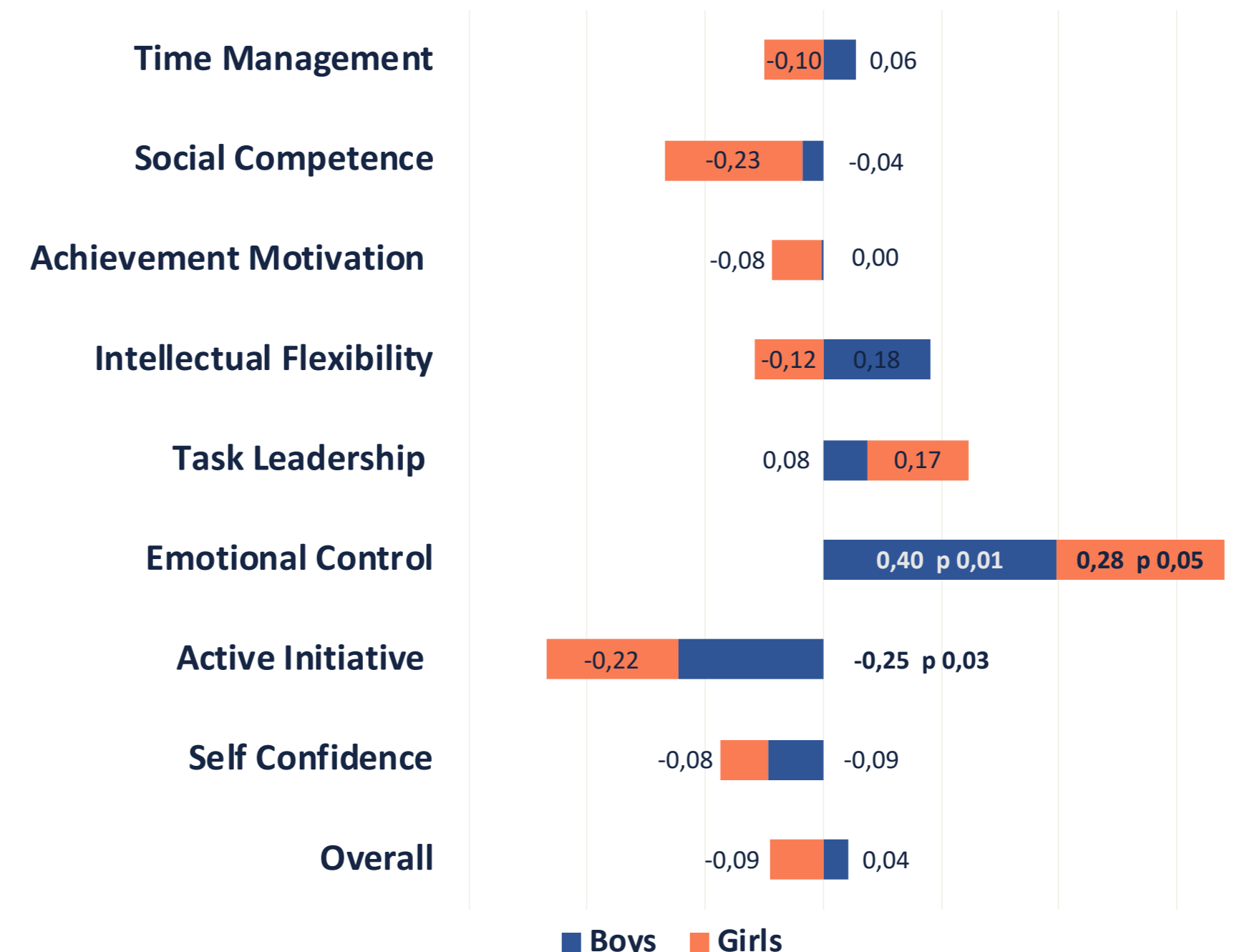
LEQ Dimensions



Effect Size by Dimension and Grade



Effect Size by Dimension and Sex



Special thanks to all participants: students, teachers and colleagues

The authors disclaim any conflict of interest