

## **Assessment of the effects of a violence prevention programme on cognitive and behavioural factors from the subjective perception of teachers and adolescents**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study was to assess the effects of the *Dando pasos hacia la paz* (Taking steps towards peace) intervention programme, which seeks to encourage respect for human rights and prevent violence. The sample consisted of 191 15-17 year old teenagers ( $M = 15.54$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) and 9 teachers who implemented the programme. The teenagers were 10<sup>th</sup> grade students from schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country. The intervention consisted of ten 90-minute sessions at the end of which the teachers and teenagers completed a questionnaire assessing their experience of the programme and evaluating its effects on people's social and emotional development. The findings showed that the teachers who had implemented the programme: 1. positively assessed 14 of its qualities-utilities; 2. regarded that, in general terms, the experience was very positive and they were going to keep implementing it in the future, and 3. noticed that their students showed a medium-high level of change in 7 social and emotional development factors, namely communication, social behaviour, emotions, violence, conflict resolution, prosocial and human right values, and psychological well-being. The teachers' perception coincided with that of the students' perception of change. The debate now turns around the potential roles of these programmes in the prevention of political violence.

**Key words:** assessment, programme, political violence, peace, adolescence.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Throughout history human beings have often been seen to carry out violent actions which have harmed other people and have generated intense and long-lasting pain and suffering. Violence can be defined in many ways. The World Health Organization defines it as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation." (WHO, 2003, p. 5) Starting from this definition, it can be stated that violence has always been a part of human experience. Its effects can be seen in different ways all over the world. Over the last few years, the problem of youth violence has been the object of increasing worldwide interest for education and mental health professionals.

As a consequence, one line of research has focused on designing and assessing programmes to prevent and diminish violence. The findings of these studies have shown interventions to be efficient in school contexts (Dawn and Shaughnessy, 2005; Díaz-Aguado, 2005; Dole, 2006; Farrell, and White, 2001; Garaigordobil, 2004, 2008b; Garaigordobil, Maganto and Etxebería, 1996; Roberts, White and Yeomans, 2004; Segawa, Ngwe, Li and Flay, 2005; Simon *et al.*, 2008; Slone and Shoshani, 2008), in clinical contexts (Chandy, 2007; Freiden, 2006) and in community contexts (Sege, Licenziato and Webb, 2005).

Cooperative programmes for the prevention of violence carried out with children and teenagers in school contexts have confirmed the positive effects of these interventions as they have boosted prosocial behaviour (Garaigordobil, 2008b; Garaigordobil *et al.*, 1996), have increased empathy, self-concept, self-esteem, the positive image of the others and the ability to analyze feelings, and have also decreased anxiety (Garaigordobil, 2004). All in all, these experiences play a significant role in the prevention of violence.

Farrel *et al.* (2001) assessed the effects of a violence prevention programme that combined a problem

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solving social and cognitive model with specific abilities for the prevention of violence. The participating subjects were six grade students from three urban schools aged 10.2-15.3, who had randomly been assigned to the intervention ( $n = 321$ ) and control ( $n = 305$ ). Those students who participated in the programme less often infringed the law with violent crimes, were sanctioned less over a longer time, used peer mediation more often in conflictive situations and reduced injuries associated with fighting. The programme had a greater impact on the violent behaviour of those participants who had shown high levels of problematic behaviour in the pre-test.

Sege *et al.* (2005) carried out a community intervention programme for the prevention of violence which had been proposed by the Massachusetts Medical Society. Since 1996 they have developed materials to support those doctors willing to incorporate prevention of violence in emergency primary health care and medical assistance. They have put together information addressed to parents, a clinical guide and on-line education in partnership with the Harvard Prevention of Youth Violence Center, which has provided technical assistance. The great number of community organizations from all over the USA who have turned to this information is evidence of the success of this project and the usefulness of information in the prevention of violence.

Simon *et al.* (2008) have recently assessed the impact of a prevention of violence programme applied in schools, in its effects on a number of social and cognitive factors associated with aggression and non-violent behaviour in early adolescence. The assessment was carried out with students from 37 schools ( $n = 5,581$ ) and the findings confirmed that high risk students reduced their beliefs in and attitudes of support to aggression, improved self-efficacy, as well as their beliefs and attitudes of support to non violent behaviour.

Although there are various types of violence (bullying, racist, sexual...), and all of them are a source of concern and, in consequence, should become the object of intervention programmes, this study is especially concerned with the violence having political motivation. In this context, this study assesses the effects of an intervention programme to prevent violent behaviour, to educate in the peaceful resolution of conflict, to enhance respect for human rights and to increase sensitivity to the victims of political-terrorist violence.

A review of the literature highlights the small number of intervention programmes applied to social contexts in which there is a conflict of political violence and terrorism. Among the most recent research studies on the issue, it is worth drawing attention to the school prevention programme developed to cope with political violence in Israel by Slone and Shoshani (2008). Three factors, social support, self efficacy and a sense of attribution, were incorporated into the programme, which was administered in primary schools. The results of the study, which had incorporated a design of repeated measures and control groups, confirmed that social support mobilization could be modified. The findings reinforce the role of the educational context to promote resilience in children who live in conflictive environments.

Most present day theories on violence hold that violent behaviour results from a number of causes, among them psychobiological and environmental. Nevertheless, this research study bears the cognitive perspective in mind (Beck, 2002, 2003; Beck and Pretzer, 2005),

which argues that people's thoughts decisively affect their emotional responses and behaviour and, in consequence, certain ideas, beliefs or thoughts can actually encourage and justify violence. This study proposes to implement intervention (independent variable) from a cognitive and behavioural perspective, as we believe that the programmes which promote the moral analysis of thoughts, ideas and beliefs, that promote empathy towards the victim, as well as the sense of responsibility for the behaviour carried out can actually have an important effect in the prevention of violent behaviour.

The aim of this study is to assess the effects of the *Dando pasos hacia la paz* (Taking Steps Towards Peace) programme, which seeks to enhance coexistence, respect for human rights and to prevent violence. Specifically the subjective perception of the teachers who have implemented the programmes is assessed: 1. on the qualities and usefulness of the programme; 2. on the comprehensiveness of the experience, and 3. on the effect that the programme has had on seven dimensions of the social and emotional development of adolescents, comparing this evaluation with the one by the adolescents who underwent the programme. Complementarily, the study analyzes the programme strengths and weaknesses through an open-ended evaluation carried out by the participating teachers. The teachers provided qualitative information at the end of the programme (more and less interesting activities, negative aspects, and so on), which was very useful, as it has allowed for the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the programme, which will contribute to carrying out further reformulation and improvement.

The research sets out three hypotheses: 1. The programme will be valued positively by the teachers in relation to a combination of qualities and usefulness (interesting, useful, educational, effective etc); 2. The teachers will assess the experience as comprehensively positive and will think of continuing to implement it in the future with other groups; and 3. The teachers will perceive positive changes in the development of the teenagers who have participated in the programme in seven dimensions of their social and emotional development related to respect for human rights and the prevention of violence (communication, social behaviour, emotions, violence, conflict resolution, pro-social human right values and psychological well-being). Furthermore, the teachers' assessment will show a high degree of convergence with that of the participating youths' perception of the effect that the experience has stimulated in them.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The sample consists of 191 tenth-grade students aged 15-17 distributed into 9 groups from 4 schools. Out of them, 49.7% are males ( $n = 95$ ) and 50.3% are females ( $n = 96$ ). Their average age is 15.54 years ( $ST = 0.69$ ). Furthermore, the sample includes 9 teachers who implemented the intervention programme. Out of the total number of Compulsory Secondary Education schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country (ARBC onwards) ( $n = 340$ ), a list was made which differentiated state schools from private schools and rural schools from urban schools. However, the four schools selected for our study are not a really representative sample of the ARBC; for the sample selection both

criteria were kept in mind, selecting an urban state school, another rural, a private urban school and another rural.

### Instruments

In order to assess the effects of the programme, 2 programme assessment questionnaires (PAQ) (CEP in Garaigordobil's (2008a) original work) were administered which were highly specific, that is to say, they were especially focused on the specific goals of the pilot intervention programme.

*Programme Assessment Questionnaire. Teacher's edition (PAQ-T) (CEP-P in Garaigordobil's (2008a) original work).* The first section of the questionnaire asks the adults who have implemented the intervention to assess 14 qualities and uses of the programme by indicating on a 1-10 scale (1 = not at all; 10 = very) the extent to which they consider the experience useful, educational or effective. Secondly, the questionnaire asks the adults to make a global assessment of the programme by responding about their degree of agreement (1 = highly disagree; 10 = wholly agree) with 11 affirmative statements about the programme. Thirdly, the questionnaire presents 43 statements and asks the adults from their subjective perception to appraise the change (1 = no change at all; 10 = a great deal) experienced by their students as an effect of the intervention on 7 factors or dimensions of their social and emotional development:

1. Intragroup communication, for example by expressing opinions, listening actively
2. Social behaviour: prosocial behaviour of helping and cooperating, respect towards other people, aggressive and rejective behaviour.
3. Emotions, expression, understanding, empathy.
4. Violence: sensitivity towards victims of violence, recognizing their suffering and supporting them, attributions of violent behaviour and consequences of violence.
5. Conflict solving; analysis and identification of techniques for the solution of human conflicts.
6. Pro-social values and Human Rights: equality, justice, freedom, solidarity, dialogue, tolerance, respect for nature, peace, ...
7. Subjective psychological well-being.

Complementarily, the PAQ-T includes open-ended questions about activities which have been more or less successful, or about any negative aspects of the experience. Reliability studies on the PAQ-T with the data of this study sample have confirmed that the internal consistency of the test is very high (Cronbach's alpha of the 14 items in the first section of the PAQ-T = .95; Cronbach's alpha of the 11 items in the second section of the PAQ-T = .84, and Cronbach's alpha of the 43 items in the third section of the PAQ-T = .93). Furthermore, the MANOVA results which compared the change estimated by the students (PAQ-S) and teachers (PAQ-T) in previous studies (Garaigordobil, 2008a) (Pillai's trace,  $F = 1.19$   $p > .05$ ) showed inter-rate reliability. PAQ-T validation studies which have compared the changed observed by the teachers in the PAQ-T and the pretest-post test experimental change produced by the programme in a set of variables (such as empathy to violence victims, racism, conflict solving strategies, positive social behaviour, and so on) have highlighted significant correlations that gives validity to the instrument.

*Programme Assessment Questionnaire. Stu-*

*dents' edition (PAQ-S) (CEP-A in Garaigordobil's (2008a) original work).* The PAQ-S contains 48 statements registered into eight social and emotional dimensions, seven from the PAQ-T and one more associated with self-concept, the image of the others and that of the human being in general. The questionnaire for students asks them to give their subjective perception and appraise the change they have undergone as an effect of the programme within a 1-10 rating scale (1 = not at all; 10 = a lot). Reliability studies of the PAQ-S conducted with the data obtained by this study (Cronbach's alpha = .98) show its high internal consistency. Validation studies of the PAQ-S which have compared the change appraised by the students in the PAQ-S and the pre-test post-test experimental change produced as an effect of the programme in a set of variables (ability to show empathy towards victims of violence, racism, positive attitudes to values, prosocial behaviour and the ability to identify causes that encourage violence) have highlighted significant correlations that give validity to this test.

### Intervention programme

The *Dando pasos hacia la paz* (Taking Steps towards Peace) intervention programme (Department of Education, University and Research of the Basque Government, 2008) consisted of one weekly 90 minute intervention session for three months amounting to a total of ten sessions, which joined together group dynamic activities and debates related to peace, violence and problem solving techniques. The sessions were led by teachers from the participating schools (form teachers or teachers of Ethics, among others), who were trained in order to carry out the intervention.

The programme sessions are distributed into two blocks of activities with differentiated goals. Block 1, "Constructing values", has six objectives:

1. To widen the perspectives of analysis and experience of the reality in the Basque Country as a multifactorial, multicultural and diverse society.
2. To identify the different types of violence and acknowledge human rights as the framework to overcome violence.
3. To acquire a humane vision of conflicts and transform them into opportunities for individual and group growth.
4. To develop attitudes and behaviour of reflection, search for alternatives and commitment with the use of non-violent strategies.
5. To give a sense of peace in all its aspects as much from the ethics of justice as well as from the ethics of personal commitment.

To advocate a life project based on a choice of values such as justice, solidarity, respect for differences, sensitivity and autonomy of criterion.

Block 2, "We're with the victims," has five objectives:

1. To generate attitudes of empathy and active listening to those who have directly suffered political or terrorist violence.
2. To develop attitudes and reflective behaviour, to seek alternatives and commitment to the use of non-violent strategies.
3. To generate the ability to dream about new relationship frameworks for victims of violence so that they can recover their trust in a society and institutions which they do not feel to be

- close enough to them.
4. To value opening attitudes to reconciliation, and
  5. To discover new ways to take care of and be fair to people who are suffering.

The programme uses a variety of group dynamics such as debates, role plays, videos, brainstorming, and so on. For example, in the “Fennis match” activity, one of the classroom walls represents the “Yes” side, whereas the opposite wall represents the “No.” The group members stand in the middle of the class-room and the teacher reads a statement aloud. The members of the group must move to one of the class-room walls, depending on the degree of agreement with the content of the statement. Later on the teacher asks the participants why they have moved to that particular wall. At the end, all of them try to agree on a statement which may provide consensus on its content. This technique allows debating statements such as “The use of violence is sometimes legitimate,” “Some people have been attacked by ETA because they must have done something,” “the death penalty should not be eliminated because what goes around comes around.”

One more activity of the programme consists of watching a video in which an ETA member can be seen to plant a bomb which accidentally kills his baby sister. The debate turns around the consequences of violence and the identification of non-violent strategies to solve human conflicts.

In another activity, testimonies by victims of political or terrorist violence, such as relatives of murdered people are listened to, then the situation is role played and a debate gives to thinking about violence in the Basque Country, about the consequences of hatred and violence, and the importance of dialogue, forgiveness, repentance and empathy to solve conflicts.

### Procedure

First of all, the *Dando pasos hacia la paz* (Taking Steps Towards Peace) intervention programme was applied to nine experimental groups. Ten intervention sessions were given to each group. Secondly, when the intervention process finished, the programme assessment questionnaire was administered to the adolescents who had gone through the experience (PAQ-S) and to the adults who had directed it (PAQ-T). Before using the programme, there were meetings in the four schools with the headmasters and teachers of all the groups. After presenting the project, the putting into practice of the programme and participating in it received unanimous support. The decision was taken with the agreement of the parents of the teenagers involved in the project after having arranged a meeting in which they were informed about the work that was going to be carried out. The adolescents were asked to sign a consent form.

## RESULTS

### Teachers’ assessment of the qualities and usefulness of the programme

The PAQ-T asked the teachers to assess the experience they had developed in their group as regards qualities and usefulness. The results obtained (means and typical deviations), were ordered according to their degree of appraisal, are shown in Table 1.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Training oriented, educational	9.00	1.15
Motivating	9.00	0.81
A well used time	9.00	1.15
Effective, positive for the group members	8.75	0.95
Interesting	8.75	1.25
Renovating	8.50	1.73
Useful	8.50	1.00
Utopian but positive	8.50	1.73
Practical	8.25	1.50
Satisfactory	8.00	1.63
Complete	7.25	2.21
Realistic	7.00	0.00
Efficient, as it has met the goals	6.75	1.25
Easy to develop	6.25	2.36
<b>Global</b>	8.10	1.17

*n* = 9

**Table 1. Teacher’s assessment of the qualities or usefulness of the programme**

The results of assessing 14 qualities of the intervention programme (See Table 1) show its good valuation. On a 1-10 rating scale, the mean in global assessment was 8.10, and the means of the assessment of the items range between 6.25 and 9. Thus, the qualities and usefulness of the programme have been graded quite highly. The teachers considered this experience as having been training oriented, educational, motivating and as well as time well used (*M* = 9). It was also perceived as an effective and positive experience for the group members, interesting, renovating, useful, utopian but positive, practical and satisfactory (*M* = 8 - 8.75). Finally, even though the level of assessment was somewhat lower (*M* = 6.25 - 7.25), the group of teachers considered that the programme had been full, realistic, efficient in the sense that the programme objectives were achieved, and easy to develop.

### Teachers’ global assessment of the programme

The PAQ-T asked the teachers to give their degree of agreement with 11 affirmative statements referring to the programme. The results obtained (means and standard deviations), are shown in Table2.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I think that it is important to carry out school activities such as the ones in the programme so that the students may find alternatives to violent behaviour and be encouraged to develop positive social values such as solidarity or equality.	10.00	0.00
I am interested in going into the issue in depth.	9.25	0.95
This experience has been positive for me as a professional educator and as a person	9.00	1.15
I would recommend other professional educators to apply the experience.	8.75	1.50
I will keep applying the experience to other groups in the next school year.	8.75	2.50
The training received to apply the programme has been adequate.	8.75	2.50
There has been enough material.	8.50	1.73
The material has been adequate.	8.25	1.70
It should be applied to all the school groups and in all schools	8.00	2.44
This experience has promoted positive changes in my relationship with the students in my group, that is, I have a more positive image of them, more communication with them, or more knowledge about them.	7.50	0.57
The general conditions have been adequate.	6.50	0.57
<b>Global</b>	8.27	0.92

*n* = 9

**Table 2. Teachers’ global assessment of the programme**



The results of assessing the 11 statements on the programme were very positive (See Table 2). On a 1-10 scale, the mean scores range between 6.50 and 10, and the global mean score is 8.27. Thus, the programme's level of assessment was very high. First of all, the adults considered it important to carry out activities in schools such as the ones undertaken in the programme in order for the students to seek alternative behaviour to violence and to encourage them to develop positive social values such as solidarity or equality, etc ( $M = 10$ ). Secondly, ( $M = 9 - 9.25$ ) the participating adults state that the experience had been positive for themselves both professionally and personally speaking and that they were interested in going deeper into the issue. Thirdly ( $M = 8.75 - 8$ ), they say the following: 1. They recommended other professionals to undergo the experience. 2. They intended to keep implementing it in the following school year with other students. 3. The training received to put the programme into practice had been adequate. 4. There was enough material and 5. The programme should be used in all the groups in their schools and implemented in all schools.

Even though they assess it lower ( $M = 7.5 - 6.5$ ), they state the following: 1. The experience had promoted positive changes in relation to their students, namely more communication, more knowledge about them, and 2. The general conditions had been adequate.

**Teachers' assessment of the students' social and emotional changes**

The PAQ-T asked the teachers to assess the changes experienced by their students as a result of the programme. A total of 43 statements were assessed, which centre on seven dimensions of social and emotional development. The results obtained are shown in Tables 3 and 4, which illustrate the means and standard deviations obtained from each of the statements and from each one of the seven dimensions assessed.

The results obtained confirm (See Tables 3 and 4) that the programme brought about positive changes in the adolescents from the teachers' subjective perception, given that, on a 1-10 scale, all the statements assessed show mean scores ranging between 5.25 and 8.75. Consequently, the teachers observed that their students had a medium-high level of change in a set of factors related to social and emotional development and education in human rights. When the means obtained in each of the seven dimensions assessed by the PAQ-T were analyzed (See Tables 3 and 4), a high degree of change was confirmed in factors related to the following: 1. Violence: sensitivity towards victims, attributions and consequences of violent behaviour. 2. Pro-social values and human rights. 3. Intra-group communication: listening and expression. 4. Emotions: expression, understanding, empathy. In addition to these changes, a medium level of change can be seen in factors related with: 5. Social conduct: pro-social or aggressive behaviour. 6. Conflict solving: analysis and resolution. 7. Subjective psychological well-being.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Inter-group communication: expression and listening</b>	<b>7.21</b>	<b>0.41</b>
More information on other people's perceptions	8.00	1.41
More awareness about perceptions of self, the perceptions they have about reality and their stereotyped feelings	6.75	0.50
More participation of the group members in the sessions	7.25	0.95
More expression of opinions by the group members	7.50	0.57
More group cohesion, more union among the group members	6.75	0.95
Assertive communication, that is, greater expression of opinions, thoughts or feelings without humiliating or hurting the others.	7.50	0.57
An increase in the acceptance of other group members	7.25	0.50
Better listening and development of active listening habits	6.75	0.95
<b>Social behaviour: pro-social and aggressive behaviour</b>	<b>6.90</b>	<b>0.84</b>
More behaviour towards helping among group members	7.00	1.41
An increase in the cooperative ability of the group	6.75	0.50
More flexible and respectful attitudes and better consideration of others in the debates generated by the activities or in their general behaviour	6.25	1.25
The self-control of their impulses and less aggressive expressions	7.25	0.95
Decrease in rejection behaviour among the group members.	7.25	0.95
<b>Emotions: expression, understanding, empathy</b>	<b>7.15</b>	<b>0.61</b>
They have learnt to differentiate feelings that help in life (love, solidarity) from negative feelings (anger, jealousy, greed)	7.50	1.00
Increased empathy and interest in other people's feelings	7.00	1.63
More expression of feelings	7.00	0.81
Ability to analyze causes, consequences and ways to cope with various emotions	6.75	0.95
They have learnt more adequate ways to express negative feelings such as sadness, anger or fear.	7.50	0.57
<b>Violence: sensitivity towards victims, attributions and consequences of violent behaviour</b>	<b>7.72</b>	<b>0.48</b>
More awareness of the negative consequences always brought about by violent behaviour	7.50	1.29
Increased knowledge about the concept of violence and ability to differentiate types of violence	6.75	1.70
Belief that the victims do not have any responsibility in what has happened to them and that anybody can be the victim of someone else's violence	8.00	0.81
Increased sensitivity to victims of violence in general, victims of any kind of violence (at school, political, sexual, racist or structural)	8.75	0.95
Increased sensitivity towards the victims of classroom violence at school	7.50	0.57
Ability to recognize or identify worldwide situations of poverty and inequality as violence	7.25	1.50
Importance of recognizing the suffering of victims of violence	8.25	0.95
Importance of showing support to victims of violence	7.75	0.95
Increased sensitivity to victims of political violence, such as those attacked by ETA.	7.75	0.50

*n* = 9

**Table 3. Means and standard deviations of the teachers' appraisal of changes in communication, social behaviour, emotions and violence**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Conflict solving: analysis and resolution</b>	<b>6.78</b>	<b>1.57</b>
They freely express different thoughts or points of view within the group even when they believe the others do not agree or are not going to share this opinion	7.25	1.50
They respect more different points of view	7.00	0.81
Increased ability to discuss and debate human problems or conflicts	7.00	1.41
Wish to learn more procedures and techniques to tackle debates on a number of conflicts	7.00	1.15
When they have a conflict, they try to show themselves as part of the conflict, think over their situation and analyze how they can cope with it in a constructive way	5.75	2.63
Active and positive interventions to help when other classmates have a problem or conflict	7.00	1.41
Increased ability to positively take part in situations of conflict or aggression when others in the group have conflicts	6.75	2.21
Increased level of commitment when conflicts arise	6.50	2.38
<b>Pro-social values and human rights</b>	<b>7.60</b>	<b>0.75</b>
Knowledge widened on the concept of peace and associated values such as equality, ability to stand in someone else's shoes, solidarity, freedom or justice.	8.25	0.50
Reflection and more awareness of the need to live on the bases of pro-social values such as equality, justice, freedom, solidarity, dialogue, tolerance, respect for nature or peace.	7.25	1.25
More awareness that the Basque Country has people with a variety of beliefs and values and that a common culture should be constructed by all and for all	7.50	1.00
Increased ability to recognize discriminating, excluding attitudes towards other human beings due to race, gender, religion or the belonging to another group.	7.75	0.95
Positive appraisal that the social and political reality that we are living in can be discussed at school, and that this reflection can help to have a commitment with society	8.00	0.81
The group members can understand the negative consequences of aggressive behaviour, both physical and psychological	7.50	1.29
The group members attitudes are more tolerant, that is to say, they accept people's opinions even though they do not agree and so put up with them	7.00	0.81
<b>Subjective psychological well-being</b>	<b>5.25</b>	<b>2.21</b>

*n* = 9

**Table 4. Means and standard deviations of the estimation of the changes in conflict solving, pro-social values, human rights and well-being or pleasure as assessed by teachers**

**A comparative analysis of teachers' and students' programme assessments**

The MANOVA results, Multivariate Pillai's Trace,  $F(1,198) = 1.83$   $p > .05$ , comparing the perception of change undergone by the teenagers who had experienced the programme (PAQ-S) and the perception of the teachers (PAQ-T) who implemented it do not show significant differences. Therefore, a high level of convergence is to be seen in the changes observed by both sources. The means, standard deviations and variance analysis were calculated (ANOVAs) for each dimension and shown in Table 5.

	Teachers ( <i>n</i> = 9)		Adolescents ( <i>n</i> = 191)		<i>F</i> (1,198)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Pleasure or subjective psychological well-being	5.25	2.21	6.16	2.30	0.61
Intra-group communication: expression and listening	7.21	0.41	5.25	1.97	3.42
Social behaviour: pro-social and aggressive behaviour	6.90	0.84	4.79	2.31	3.25
Emotions: expression, understanding, empathy	7.15	0.61	4.89	2.19	4.16 *
Violence: sensitivity to victims, attributions and consequences of violent behaviour	7.72	0.48	5.42	2.24	4.16 *
Conflict solving: analysis and resolution	6.78	1.57	4.88	2.23	2.82
Pro-social values and human rights	7.60	0.75	5.07	2.12	5.62 *

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 5. Means, standard deviations and variance analysis of the changes in the seven dimensions of social and emotional development as assessed by teachers and students**

The results (See Table 5) stress the lack of significant differences between the evaluation of change estimated by the adults and the teenagers in 4 dimensions: psychological well-being, intra-group communication, social behaviour and conflict solving. However, differences were noticed in 3 dimensions: emotions, violence and pro-social factors – human rights, with higher scores in the adult assessment.

**Qualitative information on the programme: strengths and weaknesses**

From the qualitative answers provided by the teachers (PAQ-T) who implemented the programme, we can arrive at the following conclusions: 1. In relation to the most interesting activities in the programme, the level of agreement was very high in adults; in particular, the 'temis match', the role-play about violence victims, listening to testimonies and the 'ball of wool' all stand out. 2. In relation to the negative aspects of the programme they would change, there is more variety in their observations. Nevertheless, it is worth drawing attention to the conceptual-theoretical activities and also to the time pressure due to the difficulty of integrating the programme within the lesson timetable of each school.

Among the positive changes observed in the teenagers, the teachers highlight that the sessions created a positive environment, a tendency to listen to one another, to listen more and to share their own experiences; encouraged the group members to get to know and respect one another more, and to understand, more in depth, the concept of empathy and the idea that violence should not be responded to by violence. Furthermore, the teachers believed that it was important to have discussed political conflict and the victims, that is to say searching for empathy and for adequate communication, going deeper into them, by taking human rights as the basis.

**DISCUSSION**

The study sought to assess the effect of the *Dando pasos hacia la paz* (Taking Steps towards Peace) intervention programme by exploring the teachers' subjective perception on the following: 1. The qualities and usefulness of the programme implemented. 2. The com-

prehensiveness of the experience. 3. The programme's effect on 7 dimensions of teenage social and emotional development. To do that, their assessment was compared to the one carried out by the students who had experienced the programme. Furthermore, the study analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the programme by means of an open-ended assessment carried out by the teachers.

First of all, the results have confirmed a means in the global assessment of the 14 qualities and the usefulness of the programme which can be considered quite high ( $M = 8.10$ ). Therefore, the results confirm the validity of Hypothesis 1. Secondly, the results obtained when the 11 positive statements on the programme were assessed by the adults who implemented the intervention were very positive ( $M = 8.27$ ) and indicate a very high level of assessment. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is ratified. However, it should be said that although the teachers' assessments have been high, the usefulness of the programme cannot be affirmed only on this basis, as these statements have not being compared with any other contrasting source.

Thirdly, the results suggest that the adults who have directed the intervention have observed a medium-high level of change in their students ( $M = 5.25 - 8.75$ ) in a set of factors related to social and emotional development and education in human rights (communication, social behaviour, emotions, violence, conflict solving, pro-social values-human rights and psychological well-being).

From the teachers' subjective perspective, the programme has developed in the participating teenagers a *high or superior* level of change in factors related to: 1. *Violence*: by increasing sensitivity towards victims of violence and towards the importance of acknowledging their suffering and declaring support for them, by enhancing the internal attributions of violent behaviour and the belief that victims are not at all responsible for what has happened to them, and by increasing the ability to identify and differentiate different types of violence and to analyze the consequences of violent behaviour. 2. *Pro-social values and human rights*, (peace, tolerance, justice, equality, solidarity or freedom, etc), increasing the positive considerations of pro-social values and the importance of respect for human rights, improving the ability to recognize attitudes of discrimination, improving tolerance towards other people and awareness that in the Basque Country there are people with a variety of beliefs and values, and thus the need to construct a common culture which includes everybody. 3. *The ability for intra-group communication*, by increasing the ability to express thoughts and beliefs, to listen to others, and to accept different points of view, all of which enhances social cohesion. 4. *Emotions*, by increasing the ability to use adequate emotional expression, to understand the reasons, consequences and ways to cope with negative emotions and to feel empathy in order to become cognitively and emotionally aware of the emotional states of other human beings.

Furthermore, the assessment confirmed a *medium* level of change in factors related to the following: 1. *Social behaviour*, by increasing the pro-social behaviour of assistance to, cooperation with and consideration towards other people, as well as decreasing aggressive behaviour. 2. *The ability to analyze and solve conflicts*, increasing the capacity to express different points of view, the respect for other points of view as well as the

techniques to discuss and solve interpersonal conflicts in a constructive way. 3. *Psychological well-being*, associated with positive, pleasant feelings experienced during the course of the programme.

The assessment of the teachers showed a medium level of convergence with the estimation of the changes that the teenagers had as a result of the stimulus that the experience had stimulated in them, especially in 4 dimensions (psychological well-being, intra-group communication, social behaviour, emotions and conflict solving). Thus, the results obtained confirm Hypothesis 3, which postulated that the programme would stimulate positive changes in 7 dimensions of social and emotional development both from the adults' and the teenagers' perspectives.

Finally, it is also worth noting that the qualitative information on the programme provided by the adults at the end of the intervention has been very useful, as it has allowed for the identification of the strengths of the programme (keeping some specific activities, especially the ones focusing on the victims of political violence, debates and those activities improving self-concept); as well as the programme's weaknesses (heavily theoretical or conceptual activities, and the time organization of the programme within the school schedule).

The overall results indicate a favourable assessment of the programme and point in the same direction as other studies which have evaluated the effects of intervention programmes addressed to preventing or reducing violent behaviour in school contexts (Dawn and Shaughnessy, 2005; Diaz-Aguado, 2005; Dole, 2006; Farrell, Meyer and White, 2001; Garaigordobil, 2004, 2008b; Garaigordobil, Maganto and Etxeberia, 1996; Roberts, White and Yeomans, 2004; Segawa, Ngwe, Li and Flay, 2005; Simon *et al.*, 2008; Slone and Shoshani, 2008), in health care clinical contexts (Chandy, 2007; Freiden, 2006) and in community contexts (Sege, Licenziato and Webb, 2005).

The study confirmed that, from the teachers' and students' perspectives, the programme had stimulated an improvement in a number of factors of social and emotional development associated with respect for human rights, positive social behaviour and the prevention of violence, having practical implications, as it provides an intervention tool to enhance personality development. The assessment results permit the suggestion of: 1. The application of the programme to all the schools in the Autonomous Region of the Basque Country. 2. Incorporating activities or debates in the programme which permit the reinforcement of the thesis that, some ideas, some ideologies are negative because they lead to conduct which jeopardize human rights. 3. Implementing specific programmes for all educational stages. 4. Contextualizing the intervention in terms of education in values and preventing violence away from the classroom, that is to say, in the school, in the family and in society.

On the basis of the study by Farrell *et al.* (2001), which assessed the effect of a violence prevention programme combining a problem solving socio-cognitive model and specific abilities to prevent violence, it is worth emphasizing that future studies should measure intervention effects on those participants who used to display a lot of violent behaviour or a high level of attitudes favouring violence before starting to participate in the programme.

The data emphasizes the idea that applying programmes during adolescence can be very useful, as it is a favourable stage in developing a number of resources and competences such as trust, connection with others or empathy, among others. Adolescence offers a valuable opportunity for change, as it is a developmental period that may affect the course of current and future relationships. Furthermore, if the conclusions of the studies by Chandy (2007) and Sege *et al.* (2005) are borne in mind, it is interesting to propose including parents in further implementations of the programme, in order to reinforce its benefits.

Among the research limitations, it is worth pointing out that even though this work has actually studied the effects of the programme on individual psychological characteristics such as communication, social behaviour, empathy, pro-social values, attitude to violence, and human rights, etc, we should not forget about the psycho-social focus on violence, as violent groups include people with very different personalities.

In order to analyze and account for the social and political phenomenon of terrorism, not only should we bear in mind social determining factors such as poverty, or psychological factors, such as personality traits, but it is also essential to take into account a psycho-social analysis, that is, the group dimension. From the perspective of the psycho-social approach, de la Corte, Kruglanski, de Miguel, Sabucedo and Díaz (2007) who conceptualize terrorism on the basis of the 7 following principles: 1. Terrorism is a method of social and political influence. 2. The attributions of terrorists are modelled by social interaction processes. 3. Terrorist organizations are analogous to other social movements. 4. Terrorism is possible only when the terrorists and their allies have access to a number of essential given resources. 5. The decisions adopted by terrorists respond to ideologized collective motives. 6. Terrorist actions and campaigns respond to strategic reasons. 7. Terrorist activities partly reflect the internal characteristics of their organizations.

Although the programme adopts a psychological and psychosocial perspective of the phenomenon as regards the activities that it consists of and the corresponding reflections on them, the assessment of the effects of the programme focuses on the individual teenagers' psychological changes, especially on variables that are considered to be able to positively affect the prevention of violence. The reason is that increasing communicative abilities, enhancing active listening allows seeing other points of view, empathizing with victims of violence, or analyzing the consequences of violence makes it possible to raise expectations and to put a damper on teenage violent behaviour and on their incorporation into social movements that encourage violence.

One more limitation of the study is related to the assessment methodology used. Without knowledge about the previous level of competence and their specific assessment, it is not possible to know whether or not they have changed, as the participants' interpretations, carried out later, can be very much influenced by subjective factors and by a certain amount of social desirability. Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that, together with a measure of the students' previous competences, it would also be desirable to have a control group that these measures could be contrasted with. On the basis of the limitations pointed out, future research stud-

ies should contrast the effects of the intervention by means of behavioural assessment instruments which allow for the exploration of behavioural changes; with a variety of informants, such as parents or teachers, among others, and with a pre-test post-test methodology with control groups.

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