

Review Article

A Systematic Review of Community Prevention Studies Empowering Parents as Vectors of Prevention

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Abstract

Background: Community efforts to prevent substance use and other risk behaviours are an important element of promoting and enhancing health behaviours during adolescence and later years and also to promote public health and achieve collective impact community wide. In this sense, empowering parents to boost environmental prevention is a promising strategy that however only a few programs use.

Aim: To identify and summarize the available studies regarding empowering and engaging parents as active agents for prevention of substance use/problem behaviour among adolescents. The questions that guided this review were the following: (i) which studies regarding community prevention in empowering parents as vectors of prevention have been conducted? (ii) What are the experimental designs and methodologies used to assess the efficacy of these programs?; (iii) what are the main findings after the implementation of these studies?

Methods: For this, English and Spanish articles published between January 2019 and April 2020 available at Scopus, Science Direct, Psych Articles, Psych Info, Redalyc, EBESCO.

Results: The literature search yielded 490 articles, 12 of which fulfilled the inclusion criteria of the systematic review. Most of the studies focused on reducing delinquency and other behaviour problems and on decreasing alcohol and other drug use; and family empowerment and engagement to access resources in their communities as a vector to prevention of risk behaviours.

Conclusions: The results of the studies reviewed here encourage the implementation of community program that engage and empower parents and families as a prevention vector.

Keywords

Self-efficacy, Empowerment, Parents, Community, Prevention, Programs, Networking, Co-production, Environment

1. Introduction

Family structures, school and community systems can influence the occurrence of problem behaviour in youth such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse, violence and delinquency and mental illness [1,2].

Over the past decade, community-based level interventions combining different strategies across multiple settings have been embraced as a promising approach for a broad outreach to address adolescents' problem behaviors, including alcohol and drug use [3,4].

1.1 Parent empowerment

The process of parental empowerment has been conceptualized as a "process of recognizing, promoting and enhancing (parents) abilities to meet their own needs, solve their own problems, and mobilize the necessary resources in order to feel in control of their own lives" [5]. This means that parents gain greater influence on their families, schools, and communities through greater access to networks, resources, and information; and greater skills, which are fundamental for parental engagement [6-8].

Empowerment allows each person to make decisions about their family, organisations and society, depending on diverse life situations and occurrences as well as networks, services and society [9,10]. In this sense, parental empowerment is defined as “knowledge, skills and resources” [11], which allow parents to have positive control over their lives [12]. High levels of parental empowerment result in resilience and confidence in decision-making and proactive behaviour, whereas a lack of empowerment creates helplessness and dependency [13].

Parental empowerment has been found to have an extensive range of positive outcomes such as: improved parenting resources and self-efficacy, less parental stress, better behaviour and development (psychosocial, physical, verbal and social) in children, stronger parental engagement in child care and better parental experiences regarding the accessibility of services and sufficiency of support [14]. However, most literature retrieved regarding empowering parents takes an individual approach – within family household—empowering parents with a top-down approach, where professionals are the ones who know what to do and parents learn from them.

In this context, top down approaches have been shown not to be necessarily successful and in this way programs that work in collaboration with parents using bottom-up strategies are more successful, as they work the other way around, working in collaboration with parental organizations, using collaboration networks and bottom-up strategies to achieve organizational empowerment at community level.

1.2 Substance use, community/family empowerment and prevention

Parent-based interventions implemented in childhood or early-adolescence could reduce the risks of early-onset alcohol use [15,16]. These kinds of interventions focus on parents as the agents of change and have several advantages over those that are directly applied to adolescents.

Interventions focusing on enhancing the way families work and emphasizing pro-social parenting have been found to help address problematic behaviours in adolescents such as drug use, with some studies finding that they have better and longer lasting results than individual interventions [17,18]. In general, family based programs are considered to be more successful and more effective than other prevention programs aimed at young people, to be cost-effective and also provide a way of supporting and empowering parents [1,19,20]. For parent-based interventions to be successful, a strong workforce made possible by empowered families living in supportive communities is needed. In this sense, Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) brings together the community and researchers in order to achieve better knowledge of the communities’ wants and needs.

Interventions based on CBPR are individual and specific for each community, and are tailored to the priorities, needs and preferences of each target group. The need for family-based interventions in preventing problems that can affect young people, such as behavioural problems or drug use and that take factors such as race, ethnicity and culture into account has been pointed out [21]. A clear example of a parent-centered intervention is *The Familias Unidas Intervention*, whose aim is to reduce problematic behaviour, drug use and unsafe sex in the US Hispanic community [22].

The intervention, which has a codevelopmental framework which conceptualizes “the multidimensional processes involved in the development of adolescent problem behaviour according to the multiple social contexts influencing development (e.g., family, school, and peers, the interrelations among those contexts, and the changing nature of the contexts over time, focuses on increasing parental empowerment and involvement with their children, as well as strengthening family functioning and communication about drug use and risky sexual behaviour, and has been shown to have effective results for the target population [23]. Evidence suggests that the programs that aimed to engage parents in an empowerment process are crucial. These programs “first build a strong parent-support network and then use the network to increase knowledge of culturally relevant parenting, strengthen parenting skills, and then apply these new skills in a series of activities designed to reduce risks frequently found in poor, urban environments.”

It is important not only to reinforce more positive and adequate parenting styles, but also to enhance the influence of families on their social environment. The classic family preventive programs that were mentioned before, work primarily by improving family interactions (in the family household), giving parents guidelines for conflict management, decreasing exposure to risk factors and improving the quality of family ties. The problem with these programs is that in order to be effective, considerable hours of training are required, and also the fact that the vision is very paternalistic, using a top-down approach, with professionals “teaching” to parents who “learn”. Further, since it is not easy to involve many families, the application of such programs is rather limited. Although it also takes a lot of time and effort, community-based prevention is said to represent an additional resource as it has been found to reduce the probability of substance use and promote positive development through working with coalitions and co-producing (Speer & Peterson, 2000).

Extent research has identified the positive influence that community participation, as an environmental and learning mechanism, has on empowerment and how it also reduces negative behavioral outcomes. For instance, over the previous decade, studies have demonstrated the positive influence of community participation on substance use prevention as per Peterson & Reid, as

well as leadership qualities. Hence, community-based programs that empower parents differ from traditional parenting programs in both form and function, and aim to provide support and information in ways that help parents become more capable and competent [24,25].

In this sense, community-based programs, which have the greatest promise for positive prevention outcomes, rely heavily on the principles and models of community action for social change, placing a high value on community empowerment, involvement, and engagement. Although these terms are often used synonymously in literature, there are some differences, such as community empowerment moving beyond simple participation, involvement, or engagement to influence power dynamics [26]. Two key components make up community empowerment: community belonging and community participation [13,26,27]. The first, community belonging, refers to one's sense of belonging and connection to one's community, satisfaction and pride in one's neighborhood and community, and a sense of belonging to one or more communities [26,28,29]. The second component, community participation, refers to one's engagement or involvement in community activities or events that might affect decision-making and policy in one's community [27,30]. For programs working with families, community participation also involves contact or interactions with institutional agents, such as teachers and school counselors, who have the ability to provide parents with access to valued relationships and resources, such as course-taking and college information [31]. These relationships are an important form of community empowerment as they give parents access to social capital that helps improve their children's academic success. Therefore, community empowerment not only affects parents but also the broader community through the participation and involvement of key agents [32]. Community programs are based on the belief that when parents receive parenting support as well as other assistance and resources, they are more likely to feel better about themselves and their parental abilities, and in turn will interact with their children in a responsive and supportive way, enhancing the development of their children [33].

The main idea is that prevention programs are likely to be more successful when initiated from within and with families and their social structures. Such programs are based on capacity building as opposed to dependency forming and are founded on principals such as interaction and collaboration.

Previous reviews on community prevention programs reported significant findings that are related to the effectiveness of these programs across community, parent and child outcomes, such as changing parenting behaviour and preventing child behaviour problems [25]. However, these programs did not specifically focus on community programs that engage and empower parents to participate in working coalitions towards prevention.

Findings in the majority of research indicate that parental empowerment has an extensive range of positive outcomes such as: improved parenting resources and self-efficacy, less parental stress, better behaviour and development (psychosocial, physical, verbal and social) in children, stronger parental engagement to child care and parents experiences of the accessibility of services and sufficiency of support as well as the reduction of risk behaviours such as drug use and behavioural problems [14].

Few specifically reviews have focused specifically on community and parenting empowerment and engaging prevention interventions. Therefore, there are still gaps in the literature with regard to recent systematic reviews that focus on community prevention programs that promote parental empowering as a vector of prevention.

The present systematic review aims to critically review and analyse the available studies regarding the effectiveness of community prevention in empowering and engaging parents as a vector of prevention.

The questions that guided this review were the following: (i) which studies regarding community prevention in empowering parents as vectors of prevention have been conducted? ; (ii) which experimental designs and methodologies were used to assess the efficacy/ effectiveness of these programs?; (iii) what are the main findings of these studies?

2. Methods

A systematic review of research on the parental empowerment and community prevention was carried out based on the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses [34]. The process of selection of articles was carried out in three phases described below. The review was conducted by searching in the following databases: Scopus, Science Direct, Psych Articles and Psych Info, Redalyc, EBESCO.

The search for gray literature was performed using for example, Google Scholar database, ISI of Knowledge, the British Library Inspec.

All searches were made between January 2019 and April 2020 with no time limits (studies were included from the earliest time possible due to the lack of data available in this area).

The descriptors "empowerment" "self-efficacy", "parents", "family", "drugs", "alcohol", as well as different combinations, such as, "community prevention"; "drugs community prevention", "alcohol community prevention", and "community participation"; and "community programs based in parents organizations" were used in the searches.

As different types of community programs exist, along with a range of definitions, the present review used the same definition of community-parenting based interventions that was used in a prior paper [25], namely, interventions that

use a structured format, work with parents and aimed at improving parenting practices and family functioning.

2.1 Eligibility criteria: inclusion and exclusion criteria

This review included the following inclusion criteria: (i) original study with empirical data; (ii) the main objective is community prevention interventions that intended to increase parental empowerment to promote healthy lifestyles in children/adolescents, including the prevention of alcohol and drug use; (iii) access to the full text; (iv) be published in Spanish or English (v) both quantitative or qualitative analysis. Further, as there is a shortage of literature in this area, all types of evaluative design were eligible for inclusion. Hence, studies were not selected on methodological quality.

The following were excluded: (i) Reviews, meta-analyses, editorials, books, case, literature reviews, studies, thesis, reports and chapters were not considered for this revision; (ii) studies regarding interventions/programs that aimed to empower parents in their household dynamics or within family relations.

This process involved two independent reviewers who screened titles, abstracts of studies and full texts of potential articles using the search strategy described above, where the inclusion/exclusion criteria were used for the screening.

Each potentially relevant study was obtained in full-text form and assessed for inclusion independently by two reviewers. The two reviewers assessed the extracted data independently and any disagreement was discussed and solved by consensus.

2.2 Selection process

The process of selection of articles was carried out in three phases and the flowchart of the entire selection process is shown in Figure 1.

Phase 1: Descriptors included the main terms and combined terms mentioned above and combined with “prevention”, “participation” “engagement” or “activism”.

A total of 490 articles were identified, precisely 6 from Scopus, 56 from Science Direct, 168 from Psych Articles, 181 from Psych Info, 15 from Redalyc and 5 from EBESCO. As mentioned before, the review firstly included Spanish and English language and there was no time limit.

Phase 2: This phase comprised looking of duplicate studies. In this sense, one study was eliminated for “being repeated” between databases, leaving a total of 36 articles. After this the reading of the abstracts of the articles from the primary search. 439 articles were by applying the exclusion criteria of “not being relevant” to parental empowerment or community prevention.

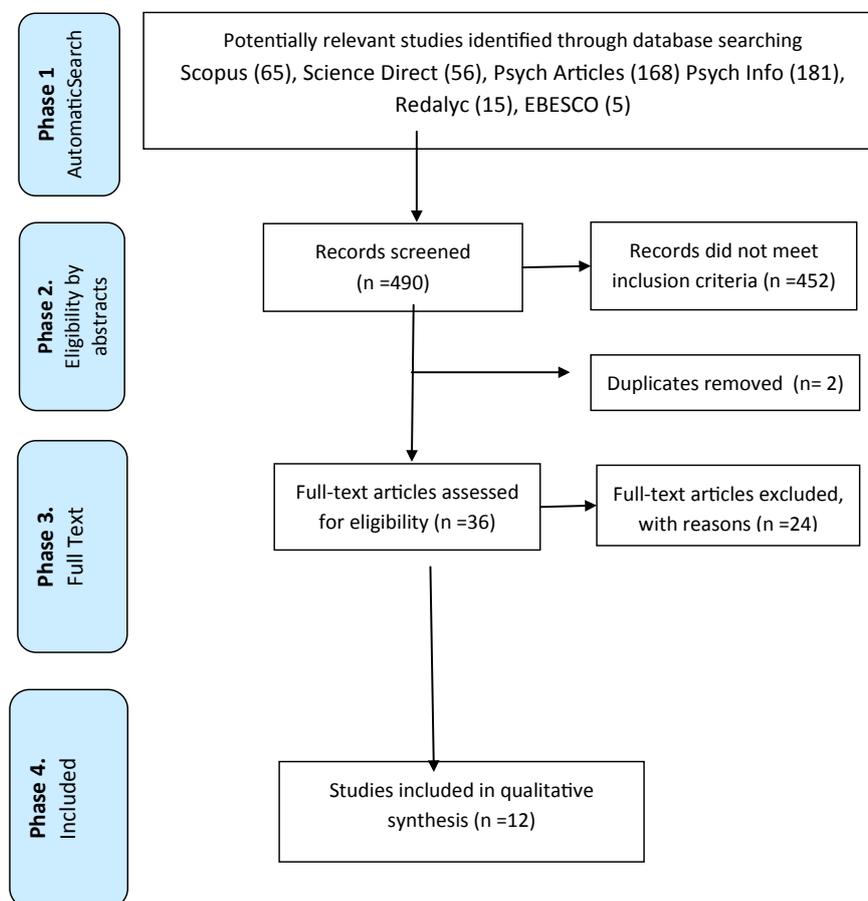


Figure 1: PRISMA fluxogram.

Phase 3: The full text of the selected studies was reviewed and a total of 24 articles were eliminated for not being relevant to this study. Therefore, the final count of studies included in this project is 12.

Extracting information from the studies during the bibliographic review, the following areas were analyzed: variables of the study, instruments of measurement, characteristics of the sample and, lastly, the results of the study.

2.3 Data extraction

The following general information for each study was extracted and compiled in a table: authors, year of publication, name of the program, number of participants, duration of program, evaluation instruments, and main results.

3. Results

3.1 Overall study characteristics and main findings

As can be seen in Table 1, the characteristics and

main findings of the studies described in the 12 manuscripts that were included in the review differed considerably. In general, the studies reported on in the manuscripts investigated the use of effective preventive interventions tailored to communities' specific profile of risk and protection factors and also intent to engage, organize, mobilize and empower parents as a vector of effective prevention and establish an active partnership with communities.

Regarding participants and/or N we have a wide range number of participants, since small communities and group of parents to large samples (that included children/adolescents, parents, broader school community context...).

All of the studies focused on family empowerment and engagement to access resources in their communities as a key/vector to prevention of risk behaviors and to potentiate healthy development trajectories [35-45].

The main focus in the majority of the studies was to reduce or prevent substance abuse (n=10) [35-42, 46, 47].

Table 1: Overall study characteristics and main findings.

Characteristics of identified relevant studies on community-parent interventions: reference, characteristics, design and main findings Study/intervention	Country	Participants and/or N	Characteristics of the study	Design	Main findings
1) Project Northland: Outcomes of a community-wide alcohol use prevention program during early adolescence [35].	USA	Twenty-four school districts and surrounding communities Parents	Consisting of school-based curricula in sixth through eighth grades, parental involvement and educational activities, peer leadership opportunities, and community-wide task force activities. - Each year a specific theme focusing on the developmental stage of the students was used to integrate the five components	Participants were randomly assigned to intervention and delayed program conditions.	- At the end of eighth grade, students in intervention communities had significantly reduced their alcohol use, and baseline non-drinkers (about two thirds of the sample) also reported significant reductions in cigarette and marijuana use - the effects of the Project were mediated by changes in peer norms toward more prosocial behaviors and less support for alcohol use
2) Experimental evaluation of a modular approach to mobilizing anti-tobacco influences of peers and parents [36].	USA	Eight matched pairs of small Oregon communities	Tested the effects of adding a comprehensive community-level intervention to a school-based program. The community program included components of (a) media advocacy for publicizing the tobacco problem, (b) youth anti-tobacco activities, (c) a family communication module designed to promote no-use messages from parents, and (d) activities to reduce youth access to tobacco.	Randomly assigned to receive either a school-based prevention program alone or a comprehensive program including a school-based program plus a community program	Results showed that smoking prevalence in communities with the comprehensive program was significantly lower than that of comparison communities after one year of intervention and a year after the intervention had ended.
3) Effects on adolescent ATOD behaviors and attitudes of a 5-year community partnership [37].	USA	549, 406, and 499 8th-12th graders	The Gloucester Prevention Network is a comprehensive community ATOD prevention partnership with multiple coordinated community prevention activities, including several peer education programs in the schools.		Had a positive effect on all substance abuse outcomes involving older high school students, with the exception of marijuana use.

<p>4) Mexican/Mexican American Adolescents and keepin' it REAL: An Evidence-Based Substance Use Prevention Program[39].</p>	USA	3, 402 Mexican heritage students in 35 Arizona middle schools parents	An evidence-based program designed to reduce drug use in Latino youth developed with the help of partnerships with parents, students, teachers, community partners, stakeholders and key informants [39]. The program teaches students how to say no to substance use using communication and life skills as well as enhancing their cultural strengths and families [39].	pre-post experimental design with three intervention conditions and one control or comparison condition. Self-reported data were collected on two occasions from students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Reduced rates of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use by as much as 45% -Lead to discontinuation of use: Rates of discontinuing all substance use was 61% higher for program participants than for students who didn't receive the program -Lead to more realistic perceptions of peer use, increased anti-substance use attitudes, increased efficacy in resisting offers of substances, improved relationship skills, self-awareness, and responsible decision-making and Did they also report on parental empowerment/impact on effects of family life etc
<p>5) Community Involvement in Adapting and Testing a Prevention Program for Preschoolers Living in Urban Communities: ParentCorps [46].</p>	USA	Parents/caregivers of pre-schoolers (3-4 years)	The goal was to strengthen parenting practices, enhance support for parents. Program aimed to promote school and social competence and prevent conduct problems in youth as well as to empower parents to access resources in their own communities	RCT design (pre and post - test)	Statistically significant effects on children's academic performance and mental health problems, but no effect on early conduct problems. There were also statistically significant effects on parents' knowledge, positive behavior support, and parental involvement, but no effect on harsh and inconsistent behavior management.
<p>6) Early Effects of Communities That Care on Targeted Risks and Initiation of Delinquent Behavior and Substance Use[15].</p>	USA	4407 fifth-grade students surveyed annually through seventh grade.	Science-based approach to prevention in five stages based on the premise that the prevalence of adolescent health and behavior problems (e.g. delinquency) in a community can be reduced by identifying strong risk factors and more fragile protective factors experienced by the community's young people and by then selecting tested and effective prevention and early intervention programs that address these specific risk and protective factors.	Cohort	<p>Primary outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reduction in incidence and prevalence of alcohol and other drug use among young people; -communities' enhanced ability in adopting, and implementing effective prevention and early intervention programmes. <p>Secondary outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduction in delinquency and other problem behaviours among young people. - promote optimal well-being among youth and their families.
<p>7) Using Community Based Participatory Research to Create a Culturally Grounded Intervention for Parents and Youth to Prevent Risky Behaviors[43].</p>	USA	middle school-aged students parents	<p><i>-Families Preparing the New Generation</i> was designed as a complimentary intervention to <i>keepin' it REAL (kiR)</i> It was drawn from the efficacious <i>kiR</i>(Marsiglia & Hecht, 2005) and <i>Familias Unidas</i> programs contents. <i>-Like Familias Unidas, FPNG</i> is a culturally-specific prevention intervention for Latino youth and supports strengthening family functioning as a means of preventing adolescent substance use and other risky behaviors, while also incorporating the voice of the local community.</p> <p>- Community members provided feedback and guidance on the content of the workshops, the activities, the attractiveness, and readability of each workshop, and other important areas.</p>	three data collection points (18 months)	-The intervention was found to be efficacious; children whose parents participated in FPNG benefited the most participating in kiR.

<p>8)Prevention of adolescent drug abuse: Targeting high-risk children with a multifaceted intervention model—<i>The Early Risers “Skills for Success” Program</i>[43].</p>	USA	Children aged 6-12 Parents aged 26-55	<p>An indicated prevention strategy designed to alter the developmental trajectory leading to drug use and abuse in high-risk children as indexed by the presence of early-onset aggressive behavior.</p> <p>Access to services is organized by home-visiting family advocates who provide consultation, support, and brief interventions to assist families in solving daily hardship and stress-related problems.</p>	Longitudinal	The outcomes show increase in social competence, disciplinary practices, behavioral self-regulation, school adjustment and decrease in parenting stress
<p>9) Latino Parent Involvement: Examining Commitment and Empowerment in Schools [55].</p>	USA	Ten parents, 15 community meetings observed	<p>Charter School Parent Initiative :</p> <p>Latino parents participated in the creation of a community-based charter school through a series of inclusive community meetings in Southern California</p> <p>An empowerment project that a community effort with its independent mission and purpose, its self-defined participatory agendas, and its own inclusive governance structure or “grammar of democracy”</p>	Interviews, focus group, community meetings observed	<p>parents’ organizing activities also had a profound transformative impact, creating significant conditions for leadership development and self-actualization, positively influencing dynamics at home and motivating a renewed appreciation for education and schooling as a locus of family empowerment.</p> <p>-interactions became increasingly rewarding for students, parents, and teachers when all participants were able to establish a more inclusive, less hierarchical environment for dialogue</p>
<p>9.1) Project Avanzando Jasis&Mariott (2004) [54].</p>		20 parents, 8 project meetings observed	<p>Community-based empowerment adult education program serving Latino migrant agricultural workers in Southern California.</p> <p>The goal was to observe and analyse the process of parental involvement among these traditionally marginalized sectors of the immigrant community as they become more engaged in their own educational advancement</p>	Interviews conducted, focus group discussions project meetings observed	<p>Interactions became increasingly rewarding for youth, parents, and teachers when all participants were able to establish a more inclusive, less hierarchical environment for dialogue.</p> <p>-At the individual level, the parents’ organizing activities also had a profound transformative impact, creating significant conditions for leadership development and self-actualization, positively influencing dynamics at home and motivating a renewed appreciation for education and schooling as a locus of family empowerment</p>
<p>9.2) Convivencia to Empowerment: Latino Parent Organizing at La Familia[54].</p>		- 10 parents, 13 members of the community	<p>Familia Initiative a Latino parent-organizing project at a public middle school in Northern California: Intention was to mobilize families and establish an active partnership with school with the goals of supporting student achievement through an improved dialogue with school personnel, enhancing student safety and participation, promoting cultural pride, and increasing family engagement at all levels of school life and community.</p>	Interviews conducted, focus group, meetings proceedings	<p>Reported an increased sense of individual and collective efficacy when interacting with school personnel, a factor of importance as schools and school districts learn to establish meaningful educational partnerships with diverse families and communities.</p> <p>At the individual level, the parents’ organizing activities had a transformative impact, creating significant conditions for leadership development and self-actualization, positively influencing dynamic at home and motivating a renewed appreciation for education and school in a locus of family empowerment</p>

<p>10) A social ecological, relationship-based strategy for parent involvement: Families And Schools Together (FAST)[45].</p>	USA	<p>Parents of all first grade students (age 6 or 7) at schools of 52 urban schools with an average of 73% Latino students situated in disadvantaged Parents</p>	<p>Used schools as a site for families to gather and for community networks to grow by building relationships between parents who have same-aged children attending that school. FAST's activities aim to: empower parents, build supportive relationships, enhance family functioning, prevent child from experiencing school failure, prevent substance abuse by the child and family and to reduce stress that parents and children experience from daily life situations.</p>	RCT	<p>The FAST parent empowerment program consistently produces statistically significant improvements in children's behavior, emotional well-being, and academic performance while building social capital among families, schools and communities.</p>
<p>11) Community intervention: assessment of parental training of a family prevention programme of substance use and associated risk behaviours [45].</p>	Portugal	<p>42 adults with parenting responsibilities</p>	<p>- A family and community intervention project to prevent drug use and potentiate resilient developmental, taking a multicausal perspective and the methodological principle of empowerment. This project aimed to intervene in entities that are a source of socialisation for youths, such as the family, school, peer group, and other proximal entities (to reinforce and adjust disciplinary practice and parenting styles, generators of organization and autonomy and empowerment)</p>	<p>Experimental design with a single group (no control group). There were two assessment moments; the first (T1), before the intervention, and the second (T2), a week after the end of the intervention.</p>	<p>The results indicate significant increases in cohesion, expressivity, control, and the orientation for recreational activities. Intervention contributed to the improvement of the various dimensions of the psychological well-being of the studied families, and with that, it is believed that it diminished the risk associated with the adoption of some socially deviant life trajectories, such as the abuse of psychoactive substances -It has also observed a decrease of the educational strategies related to the authoritarian and permissive parent styles</p>
<p>12) Randomized effectiveness trial of a parent and youth combined intervention on the substance use norms of Latino middle school students[42].</p>	USA	<p>532 families (parent-child dyads). The parent-child dyads consisted of one parent and one youth aged 12-14.</p>	<p>Application of a community-based efficacious parenting intervention in parallel with an efficacious preadolescent intervention in changing substance abuse norms among preadolescent Latino youth.</p>	<p>RCT (1) Parent/ Youth: Parent intervention combined with a youth intervention (2) Parent Only: Parent intervention without a youth intervention and (3) Comparison</p>	<p>- Compared to the Comparison group, the Parent/Youth condition was the most effective in changing youth's norms, closely followed by the Parent Only condition. - Findings make a significant contribution in advancing knowledge on family/youth substance use prevention for Latinos in a community environment.</p>

Other studies had combined outcomes. Nine mainly focus on reducing drug abuse and strengthening family competencies and empowerment to access resources in their community[37-42,45, 46]and only two mainly focused on reducing behaviour problems and substance abuse[35,36].

Parental empowerment was explicitly mentioned only by two studies[38,39] while the rest adopted a global perspective to help develop the involvement and empowerment of parents and parents' associations[37-41,45,46].

The majority of studies reported a reduction in the prevalence of drug use and decrease in delinquency and other problem behaviours in youngsters (n= 9) [35-45].

And positive effects on children's academic performance and mental health problems (n=2)[44,45] and one (n=1) have impact only in parents [38].

All the studies used a group session's method to implement their programs/interventions having an additional component beyond sessions, involving activities to be done at home, to facilitate practice [35-40,45,46].

The contexts in which the studies reported on took place included in the majority communities (n= 6)[38-45] as well as both schools and communities (n=6)[35-39,44].

4. Discussion

Although the majority of the studies reviewed varied in regards to some of their characteristics, their main goals were often similar and included: (i) alcohol and drug abuse prevention; (ii) reduction of delinquency and other behavioral problems; (iii) engagement and empowerment of parents to access resources in their community as a key vector to prevention of behaviors and to potentiate healthy development trajectories. The studies recruited

participants mostly from schools and communities [35-39, 42-45].

The results of the studies included in this review encourage the implementation of community programs that engage and empower parents and families as a prevention vector. However, in some studies more evidence is needed regarding outcomes and main findings. The present review found that only five of the studies used an RCT design. Consequently, these results show that future studies should use more sophisticated empirical methodologies, such as RCT.

In this sense, spaces of prevention might be important to promote spaces of prevention: inside/outside and involvement of the educational community, this means that families should participate both within home/schools and at neighborhood or community level. In this sense, educational community should be involved in the preventive strategies families perform. Also implementing evidence-based prevention programs is key to achieve changes at community level. In this sense, family prevention programs have proven to be very effective in preventing substance abuse in young people, and they are much more effective than other prevention programs aimed at young people. It is also important that there are teams of researchers and professionals in preventive practice who act as translators-mediators of knowledge through the creation of structured programmes. When families know other families, they feel more comfortable coming into the school building, and will be more likely to return frequently [47-54].

Other aspect should be planning the continuation and systematic participation of the organizations. In this sense, it is essential to create a system of renewal for the involved organizations to ensure their continuation as key agents of prevention, especially when talking about Parent's Organizations, which usually have a determined lifetime. At last, an effective networking methodology based on collaboration, since studies conducted on evidence-based community prevention programmes show that collaborations that work are needed to implement them [55-59].

5. Final considerations and limitations

First of all, the review demonstrates a current lack of synthesis and coherence in the global view of community prevention programs and parent empowerment as a vector of prevention. The literature is highly fragmented across empowerment, community and parents with patchy synthesis therein. A global representation is lacking, which makes it difficult to extrapolate relevant data from the studies.

Secondly, the review also shows that these interventions are often of poor quality with different designs, methodologies and evaluations.

Despite efforts made to reduce bias, some studies may have been missed as a result of the search filter in English

and Spanish. Overall, these limitations are unlikely to undermine the main findings of the present review.

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