

Evaluating the Impact of a Training Program for Early Childhood Caregivers: Advancing Diversity and Inclusion in After-School Programs

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Abstract:

This study evaluates a training program aimed at enhancing early childhood caregivers' abilities to integrate cultural diversity and social-emotional learning (SEL) into after-school programs. The program included eight group training sessions and personalized coaching, offering targeted support to foster caregivers' skills.

Methodology: A mixed-methods approach assessed program effectiveness and areas for improvement. Data collection included written materials, online surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Sixteen caregivers completed the questionnaire, seven joined a focus group, and two trainers shared their insights.

Findings: Participants expressed high satisfaction with the program's structure and content. The training significantly improved caregivers' understanding of cultural diversity, inclusivity, and SEL strategies. Persona dolls emerged as a key tool for teaching social skills and facilitating discussions on cultural diversity. Caregivers reported increased confidence in addressing cultural topics and fostering inclusive practices.

However, the program's eight-session format was identified as a limitation. Caregivers found the time insufficient to fully internalize and implement the strategies. Extending the duration of training and reinforcing concepts through ongoing coaching were recommended to ensure sustainable changes.

Conclusion: The program effectively enhanced caregivers' capabilities to create inclusive environments, meeting its primary goals. To maximize long-term impact, future iterations should include longer training sessions and institutionalized coaching. These adjustments will enable caregivers to embed diversity and tolerance principles more deeply into their practice, better supporting children in diverse social settings.