

**ERD 2022**  
**Education, Reflection, Development****THE REWARD IS REWARDED – TRIPLE-P STRATEGIES  
APPLIED IN PREVENTION**

Elena-Ioana Botărel (a)\*  
\*Corresponding author

(a) Babes Bolyai University, Cluj- Napoca, Romania, ioanabotarel@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The article “The reward is rewarded – Triple-P strategies applied in prevention” aims to identify the extent to which a world-renowned and recognized educational program, Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, contributes to improving parenting style, parenting skills, and increase life satisfaction in adults after participation parents to training. The content of this article aims to present the approach of the educational training Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, training attended by parents with children aged from 7 to 12 years old, organized in a preventive and rehabilitative institution. By participating in Triple-P educational training, parents can identify both the importance of good parenting quality and the importance of a good method of educational counselling that will help them with one great, if not their greatest task, that of raising their children. The current article aims to approach the concept of Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, so I decided to apply The Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, level 4 approach in the preventive and rehabilitation clinic of the type "Mother-Father and Child", in an adjusted version, maintaining fidelity to the basic concept of the program.

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## 1. Introduction

Parents are the key to many educational processes, and they are given great responsibility for the optimal development of their children. However, many parents feel powerless in the face of the demands of today's society or doubt their own skills and the role of parent is perceived as an obstacle that many of them have to face. That is why today, more than ever, parental support is an important service. The educational counselling centres offer parental support in problematic educational situations, in situations where decision-making is endangered by the parental style or the child's maladaptive behaviour, but also services for organizing daily family life.

Parents need definite, firm self-confidence, parental acknowledgement, and satisfaction, appropriate skills and behaviours, and of course, at times, they also need support from professionals.

The content of this thesis aims to present the approach of the educational training Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, training which is attended by parents with children aged 7-12 years, organized in a preventive and rehabilitative institution, a "Mother - Father and Child" clinic of the type, in southwestern Germany. By participating in the Triple-P educational training, parents can identify both the importance of good parenting quality and the importance of a good method of educational counselling, that will help parents with the most important task of their lives "that of raising the new generation" (Sanders, 2008).

We presented and applied this educational program in the "Mother-Father and Child" clinic as an important source of educational strategies that can be appropriated by research participants in the experimental group. By applying the positive educational strategies presented in the program, the educational process becomes more relaxed.

## 2. Problem Statement

Pedagogical research in "Mother-Father and Child" clinics has not been carried out at all or only very little. Instead, there have been numerous studies over the years focusing on the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program concept. The present article reviews the research aimed to address the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program concept in a way that has not been done before.

### 2.1. Application for a preventive and rehabilitative cure in the "Mother-Father and Child" clinic

The legal basis for being able to undergo treatment in a Mother and Child Clinic is anchored in the German Social Code, in articles 24 and 41 SGB V, which states, among other things, that everyone has the right to rehabilitation treatment with the aim of curing, alleviating or preventing the worsening of an illness. According to § 24 SGB V such preventive medical treatment is always carried out in a clinic, even if the beneficiary has other opportunities to improve his problems, for example through regular sessions with a psychotherapist, treatment by a nutritionist or a physiotherapist (§ 24 Abs. 1 Satz 4 i.V.m. § 23 Abs. 4 Satz 1 SGB V).

The application for a preventive and rehabilitative treatment in the Mother and Father and Child Clinic is made by a standard application, at the request of the beneficiary or at the indication of the family

doctor, the application being sent to the health insurer. The health insurer, with the help of the medical service on duty, decides on the need for rehabilitation treatment and approves or rejects the request.

There are guidelines for taking such a decision, which can be found in the law that entered into force on 1 April 2004 (Joint Federal Committee, 2020).

These guidelines are formulated and approved by the federal joint committee of doctors and national health insurance companies.

## **2.2. Educational strategies in the Triple-P programme**

Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, contains 17 parenting strategies, strategies that help parents strengthen their relationship with their children. These strategies for strengthening the parent-child relationship are divided into four categories.

- i. strategies to create a strong bond between parents and children.
- ii. strategies with which parents can promote appropriate behaviour.
- iii. strategies with which parents can help children learn new skills and behaviours.
- iv. strategies with which parents can meet maladaptive behaviour.
- v. (Sanders et al., 2000).

## **2.3. Strategies to optimise the parent-child relationship**

Three factors are important in building a good and stable parent-child relationship: time, communication, and affection. Strategies recommended by Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program for all ages.

### **2.3.1. Time**

A parent-child relationship is built over time. Building a good parent-child relationship takes time and depends primarily on precious parent-child time spent together. It can be good or not so good.

Triple-P, the Positive Parenting Program, says that a short time span of up to two minutes, during which the child gets the parent's undivided attention as often as possible, is better than a long-time span, rarely spent with the child.

Children benefit from the short time but also from the affection they receive on many occasions. The wishes of each family member are respected.

Spending precious, quality time with the family does not mean expensive trips, excessive gifts, rather it means giving the child attention when they need it.

Examples of precious time for parents and children could be a song sung together, rhymes made together, social games played by parents with children, poems read together, fairy tales listened to or played together, music, hiking, museum visits and more.

The time spent with the child, in which the parent focuses on the child's interests, is called precious time.

### **2.3.2. Communication**

Communication in the family is crucial and contributes both to the development of a child's vocabulary and to the learning of basic communication rules.

Children learn to talk, to listen, to be patient until the other person finishes talking, basic rules in communication. Eye contact is important because it signals to the child that they are being listened to, that someone is interested in their needs or requirements. This builds the child's self-confidence. However, a distinction must be made between communication and discussion. As a rule, every discussion leads to conflict. That is why the parent is the one who must stop as soon as possible any communication that may turn into an argument, because from such an experience the child does not learn to communicate, rather he learns that arguments are an effective method when you want to impose your point of view or when you really want to achieve something.

### **2.3.3. Affect**

The type of affection the child receives should be pleasant and accepted by both parent and child, i.e. each should feel comfortable and at ease when giving or receiving affection. In this way, the child naturally learns to receive affection and pass it on, attachment grows and mutual trust takes root.

The child learns to receive and pass on affection in a natural way later in life as a teenager or adult, in intimate or friendly relationships with other people.

Not every child can be hugged, not every parent can kiss or hug their child. In such cases, the accepted and desired mode of affection is sought, such as a touch on the shoulder, a look, walking arm in arm, an activity done together, etc. These are some of the options chosen by many parents (Turner et al., 2006).

## **2.4. Strategies for developing positive behaviour**

Such positive behaviour development strategies help parents to support their children, show positive behaviours as often as possible and can be applied to children of all ages.

Descriptive praise, positive attention and engaging children in interesting activities are the three types of methods proposed by Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, for raising, supporting and developing positive behaviour.

### **2.4.1. Descriptive praise**

Parents focus their attention on their children's positive behaviours, and with descriptive praise, they help and encourage them to show those behaviours more often.

If children do what they are told or show appropriate behaviour on their own, and parents want that behaviour to be picked up and maintained in their child's behavioural repertoire, they can use descriptive praise, an effective method for developing and sustaining positive adaptive behaviours. At the same time, children's self-confidence is developed and strengthened, and appropriate behaviour is reinforced.

#### **2.4.2. Attention**

This strategy is also called the non-verbal form of praise; it can replace descriptive praise or even support it. If children receive attention for an adaptive behaviour, they will always try to show that behaviour.

Through cues, children receive nonverbal confirmation for the adaptive behaviour shown, positive attention and encouragement, which motivates them to show the adaptive behaviour more and more often in the future. Adaptive behaviour encouraged by attention can be a handshake, a nod of the head in approval, a pat, a thumbs up, a thumbs down, an "okay", etc.

Interesting concerns both outside and inside the home

Children behave much more cooperatively and show maladaptive behaviour less often if they receive encouragement and positive attention for adaptive behaviours but also when they are involved in various interesting activities that arouse their curiosity, activities in which they can spend their time. Children who are involved in different pursuits rarely develop maladaptive behaviour or are bored. Parents decide for themselves what skills, norms and values they want to pass on to their children. Depending on this they involve children in appropriate activities (Sanders et al., 2002).

#### **2.5. Strategies for parents to help children learn new skills and behaviours**

Children are in a constant process of learning. They have to learn to go to the toilet on their own, to dress and undress themselves, to brush their teeth or hair, etc. Each child develops at their own pace. Parents cannot force a child to show a behaviour if the child is not ready.

Four ways parents can support children to learn the skills they want or to better master and reinforce what they have learned are presented in this category of positive strategies. These strategies can be applied to children of all ages.

##### **2.5.1. Parent as role model for the child**

Children learn from role models. They learn by watching other people, by imitating what they see. Parents are seen as the first people children relate to, and therefore the first role models.

"How does my behaviour influence my child's behaviour?" is a question all parents should ask themselves. The example children receive from their parents leads to appropriate behaviour but at the same time it can also lead to maladaptive behaviour.

##### **2.5.2. Casual, casual learning**

This strategy is ideal because parents can use it throughout the day, several times a day. Situations when children come and want something from their parents, want to show them the drawing they coloured earlier, when children ask or want to know something are considered appropriate, good times to apply this strategy.

The recommended age of application is from one year upwards. The procedure is as follows: parents direct their attention to their children, and instead of answers like: "Yes" or "No", they encourage the children to look for answers on their own by being close to them, helping them. The aim of this

strategy is to motivate children to learn to find solutions and answers on their own, to learn where they can find information if the parent is not near the child. Children's efficiency increases, their vocabulary develops, their general knowledge is enriched, and they learn skills to cope on their own when needed. Learning takes time. It is desirable to keep these parent-child interactions as short and relaxed as possible, as long as the children are interested. If children's interests wane, it is advisable to stop the action and wait for another time of day when this strategy can be applied. The strategy described is effective if it takes place in a short and pleasant time frame.

### **2.5.3. Question-Answer-Action method**

This positive parenting strategy, described by Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, is suggested for acquiring complex skills such as tying shoelaces, going to the toilet by oneself, brushing teeth or hair. Parents who plan to use this strategy need to know that it takes time and needs to be reassuring. Lack of time or stress can make this strategy ineffective (Sanders et al., 2006).

The recommended age for this strategy is 3-12 years. The basic idea of this strategy is to break down the skill to be learned, which is complex, into several steps, and for each step the parent applies the question-answer-action strategy. In this way, children are supported in learning new skills. Children learn to master the desired skills and perform them themselves.

### **2.5.4. Reward**

Reward is a good strategy for motivating children to learn something new or even a strategy that can be used in the absence of a behavioural problem, such as no screaming, no tantrums from children, no inappropriate vocabulary, etc. The recommended age for applying this strategy is 2-12 years. Together with the child it is decided which behaviour will be rewarded. For example, the child receives a reward every time he or she puts toys in the toy box. It is recommended that parents use only positive rewards. Young children are often happy with colourful stamps, pictures of animals, etc. For older children you can go for an extra reward.

For example, on accumulating ten points, the child goes on a bike tour with the family, the child prepares a delicious dinner with his mother or together with his father the child repairs a bike in the garage. Less appropriate rewards are activities and expensive gifts. Children's motivation to show adaptive behaviour increases if they are successful in the first few days after applying this strategy. If children fail to achieve their final goal in the first few days, then they do not receive the final reward. It is important not to take back points already received.

When children are increasingly able to show the desired behaviour or when maladaptive behaviour has disappeared from their repertoire, rewards as an educational strategy may end and be replaced by descriptive praise when children try hard and/or show appropriate behaviour (Sanders et al., 2002).

## **2.6. Strategies with which parents can address maladaptive behaviours**

People are lifelong learners. Most of the time they learn from their mistakes. From mistakes we learn about ourselves, about others, about life in general. No person is always doing well, is always

positive, cooperative and in a good mood. It would be unrealistic to expect children to always behave cooperatively, to always do everything we tell them, to never contradict us. From the age of 3, the following strategies are recommended.

Children's behavioural problems make it difficult for many parents. But there are good ways, without violence or punishment, for parents to help children learn appropriate behaviour and develop well and healthily.

Triple-P, the Positive Parenting Program, offers parents 7 positive parenting strategies they can use to manage their child's behaviour.

### **2.6.1. Family rules**

Family rules work well if they are few, positively worded for the whole family, and understandable to children. The recommended age for applying this strategy is three years and up.

A few basic rules show children what they are and are not allowed to do and teach them to take control of their own actions.

It is preferable that the rules tend towards a positive orientation, towards a positive alternative to maladaptive behaviour. Rules are usually formulated together with all family members. If the child is already three years old, he or she can also be involved in setting the rules.

Children need rules to learn what they are allowed to do, what is expected of them, how to behave and what they are not allowed to do.

Examples of rules might be: Talk to each other in a quiet tone of voice./ Stay on our playground. / We wash our hands before eating.

#### **Direct action when breaking the rules**

This strategy is used when children are cooperative. Children are briefly explained, without long lines, why their behaviour is a problem and are given the opportunity to practise the desired behaviour in the same situation. This strategy means recognising maladaptive behaviour and giving them the opportunity to practise appropriate behaviour. From the age of three, children can be confronted with this strategy. For example, the child comes to the table with dirty hands.

This is a good time to remind them of the established rule, for example: "Before meals we wash our hands". The child is encouraged to practise the desired behaviour, in our example, washing hands before eating.

This strategy works effectively if it is applied without criticism, without punishment, by direct and immediate action when the child forgets or breaks a rule and by positive encouragement.

#### **Intentional ignoring**

This strategy can be applied when children are spoiled, when they have learned to get what they want through maladaptive behaviour. The recommended age is one year and up.

By ignoring a behaviour, that behaviour is deprived of attention. The parent signals to the child that they do not want to support such maladaptive behaviour.

Those who intend to use this strategy should think in advance about what they can do when the child tries by all possible means (excessive crying, tantrums) to attract the parents' attention. A few breathing exercises and leaving the room are some good ways of coping that parents can apply.

Deliberate ignoring ends as soon as the child shows adaptive behaviour. At that point the child should be praised. Another situation is when the child's maladaptive behaviour, which is intended to be ignored, gets out of control and the child starts destroying things or getting injured.

One obstacle encountered in this situation that prevents the successful use of this method is the difficulty for parents to intentionally ignore a behavior, especially when parents feel obnoxious towards other people. A distinction must be made between ignoring maladaptive behaviour and ignoring the child. The behaviour should be ignored, not the child.

### **2.6.2. Clear and calm instructions**

In the context of the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, there are two procedures that parents can use Start-Routine and Stop-Routine. The recommended age is two years and up.

Start-Routine is used when the child needs to stop one activity and start a new one. The parent speaks an instruction, no more than twice. The instruction is said once, then waited for, because the child needs to complete an activity in which he/she is involved. The child does what he/she is told and follows the instruction given, should be encouraged by descriptive praise.

If the child does not do what he/she is told, the instruction is repeated once more, after which a consequence appropriate to the given situation is applied.

Stop-Routine is used when the child needs to start a new activity or when the child needs to stop showing maladaptive behaviour. In this case the instruction is given once, after which the consequence is applied. The way children receive instructions is important and decisive.

Instructions must be specific, clear, positively worded, telling children exactly what to do. If instructions are vague or too many at once, children can learn to ignore them.

### **2.6.3. Logical consequences**

Logical consequences help children if they are short. Children should be given an immediate opportunity, preferably in the same situation, to practise and learn the desired behaviour. This strategy can be applied from the age of two.

For example, the child's play stops for a few minutes because the child has thrown the toy. After two minutes, the child gets the toy back with instructions to play with it.

Many parents do not use this strategy because they are afraid of their child's reaction when the toy is taken away.

### **2.6.4. Quiet time**

Quiet time is a strategy that gives the child and the parent the opportunity in a conflict situation to calm down, sort out their thoughts and calm down in silence.

The strategy is effective in conflicts that cannot be resolved immediately or when trying to avoid conflict. Quiet time is effective in regulating emotions appropriately, in calmly resolving conflicts or avoiding them in the future. This strategy can be applied as early as one and a half years old.



### **2.6.5. Time out**

A strategy for correcting maladaptive behaviour. Time out works when the relationship between parents and children is stable and good, when children get enough attention every day for positive behaviours. For this strategy too, it is recommended that children should be at least one and a half years old.

If the child shows maladaptive behaviour and the situation can no longer be properly controlled, the child is removed from that situation and sent to another room for a few minutes in order to calm down. He can resume his activity, in an appropriate way, when the time out is over.

It is up to the parent to decide how long the child should stay in that room and when the child can resume activity. In the case of time out the child is removed from the place where the conflict took place. For a child between three and four years old, three, maximum four minutes of time out is sufficient. The time out starts when the child is quiet.

Parents who want to apply this strategy should familiarise themselves with the steps that need to be taken before applying it in order to achieve the desired goal.

If children suffer from certain disorders such as anxiety, fear of the dark, are depressed, phobic or if the relationship between parents and children is not stable, this strategy is not indicated. In such cases it can lead to an increase in the intensity of the existing disorder. If the parent-child relationship is stable, then it doesn't hurt any child when they are sent to another room for a few minutes (Sanders et al., 2002).

Parents participating in the Triple-P parenting training, Positive Parenting Program, are also encouraged by some useful tips to carry out one of their hardest tasks: "that of educating and raising the next generation" (Sanders, 2008).

## **2.7. These tips are:**

### **2.7.1. Parents to take care of themselves!**

Take care of themselves. Ask themselves what their own wants and needs are, who is helping them at the moment and where they can find help if they need it.

Parents are suggested to stay in touch with someone from the Triple-P group they have been part of for further exchange of experiences or mutual help.

### **2.7.2. Detecting and preventing risk situations!**

What situations make it difficult for things to run smoothly in the family? In which situations do parents feel powerless? Which situations are very difficult to overcome?

Making an activity plan, coordinating time more efficiently, focusing more on the child's positive behaviour are just some of the impulses that parents receive to help them overcome critical moments in family life.

### **2.7.3. Teamwork!**

Teamwork offers stability and mutual support. Children learn from an early age that each family member has their own interests and desires. They learn to respect each other's wishes as well as their own. The relationship between parents and children is strengthened.

### **2.7.4. Avoid arguments and conflicts in front of children!**

Children need a warm and loving atmosphere to develop healthily and well. Many children grow up in families where arguments are a daily occurrence. This leaves particularly serious traces in children's development and can lead to similar behaviour in their adult lives.

### **2.7.5. Seek support!**

Every parent at some point needs support and help in raising children. At such times a friend, a good neighbour, a paediatrician, an educator, a teacher, a social worker, an educational counsellor or perhaps even a child psychotherapist can help. There is nothing wrong with seeking, asking for and receiving help when needed. Many parents are surprised how good it feels when they receive and follow the advice of a professional.

### **2.7.6. Treat yourself to a break!**

Parenting becomes much easier if parents allow themselves a short and well-deserved break every now and then. Children also enjoy having the opportunity to spend a few hours or even days with other families, relatives or friends (Sanders et al., 2002).

## **3. Research Questions**

The main question to be answered is whether or not the parents' participation in the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, an educational program conducted in a "Mother-Father and Child" preventive and rehabilitation clinic, results in a significant improvement in parenting style, a development of parenting skills, and an increase in life satisfaction.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

With this research we aimed to identify the formative effects of the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, Level 4 intervention, in an adjusted and modified form, on the relationship between parents and children in terms of parenting style, parenting skills, children's behaviours, and parents' life satisfaction after parents' participation in the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, the research taking place in a preventive and rehabilitative "Mother-Father and Child" clinic in south-western Germany.

Research Methods

The reviewed research has used as main method the experiment, consisting of two groups, one experimental and one control, divided into stages: pre-experimental stage, experimental stage, post-

experimental stage and retest stage. We used this method to analyse the independent variable on the dependent variables in a controlled environment, namely in a clinic, in order to verify the research hypotheses.

The research took place over 6 months, with the dependent variables being measured in the pre-experimental stage, the post-experimental stage and the retest stage on both the experimental group, who actively took part in the Triple-P educational training, and the control group, who did not participate in the training.

With the experiment we tested the contribution of the Triple-P training, Positive Parenting Program, on the experimental group. For the pre, post and retest evaluations we used questionnaires, observation method and role-play. The results of the two research groups were evaluated, assessed, analysed, interpreted, and compared using the questionnaire method. In each application of the questionnaires, we used unique identification codes for each participant.

## **5. Findings**

We presented and applied this educational program in the Mother-Father and Child Clinic as an important source of educational strategies that can be appropriated by the research participants in the experimental group. By applying the positive educational strategies presented in the program, the educational process becomes more relaxed.

Participants in the experimental group learn new things about themselves and their children. They learn, for example, that parenting styles can change, which is a momentary finding. The parents' participation in the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, an educational programme run in a preventive and rehabilitative "Mother-Father and Child" clinic, leads to a significant improvement in both parenting style and parenting skills, which helps to reduce their children's maladaptive behaviour.

## **6. Conclusion**

In the present research, we started from the premise that an established and internationally recognized educational program offered to parents in a preventive and rehabilitative "Mother-Father and Child" clinic has beneficial effects in developing and maintaining a good relationship between parents and children. In the present research we applied the Triple-P educational program, Positive Parenting Program, in a "Mother-Father and Child" type rehabilitation and recovery clinic.

Such an approach has never been done before. The Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, is widespread in Germany, not only in educational counselling centres but also in social welfare centres, in psychiatric hospitals for children and young people, in private educational and psychological clinics and especially in mother-dad and child clinics. We have tried, as a novelty, the following approach of the Triple-P educational program, Positive Parenting Program.

In conclusion we can say that such an approach of the Triple-P, Positive Parenting Program, in a "Mother-Father and Child" clinic is beneficial for both parents and children.

A positive effect of this research can be considered that the improvements followed during the parenting training increased during the period of stay in the clinic but also after six months after the first measurement.

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