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# An effectiveness study of mentalization based group parenting program in Lithuania: preliminary findings

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# Background

- **Mentalizing** refers to an innate human ability to make sense of both our own and others' behaviour in terms of underlying mental states (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006)
- the capacity to imagine mental states; to be attuned to mental states in self and others; holding minds in mind
- stance of wanting to know/to understand, being curious
- Parental mentalizing - to see a child and yourself accurately (or reasonably accurately)

# Background

- Mentalizing in parent-child relationships:
  - Good parental mentalization as protective factor, plays a role secure attachment, child development
  - Impaired mentalization can be a risk factor for disturbed parenting, child maltreatment and have adverse effect on child development
- MBT interventions might play a role in preventing negative consequences of disturbed parenting for child mental health.
- One of the interventions - MBT parenting group program Lighthouse developed by Gerry Byrne
  - Studies on different version of LPP program (Byrne et al., 2018, Volkert et al., 2019, Slead et al., 2021, Neukel et al., 2021, etc)

# Lighthouse parenting programme

- Aims to enhance parental mentalizing, to improve sensitive parenting and strengthen parent-child relationships.
- MBT principles (individual and group) + specific LP principles
- Group program or group and individual sessions
- Uses metaphors and images to help parents understand mentalization, attachment concepts and dynamics of attachment relationships
- Manualized with flexibility in planning the sessions
- Combines psychoeducation, experiential activities and group processes
- Attention to parents' own attachment experiences and their relationships with children

<http://lighthouseparenting.net/>



# Aim

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the 12 week mentalization-based group parenting program “Lighthouse” for burdened parents in Lithuania.

# Method

- Design: Pretest – posttest – 3 months follow up
- Study setting:
  - VU researchers in collaboration with outside providers of psychological services
  - NGO providing psychological and social services to families, mental health center, educational-psychological service, private centres providing psychological services.
  - 9 groups with at least 2 facilitators, at the beginning - 7 – 15 people in each group



# Participants

Main inclusion criteria:

- have at least one child younger than 12 years old
- and at least on the following:
  - are (were) seeking help for themselves due individual, child-parent relationship or family issues
  - their child was referred for psychological services, parents themselves sought help in relation to child's emotional, behavioural difficulties

Recruitment:

- Through group facilitators and other specialists and institutions working with families, parents, children

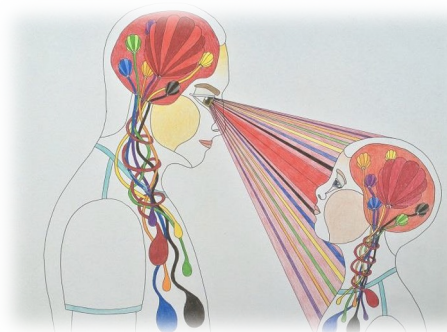
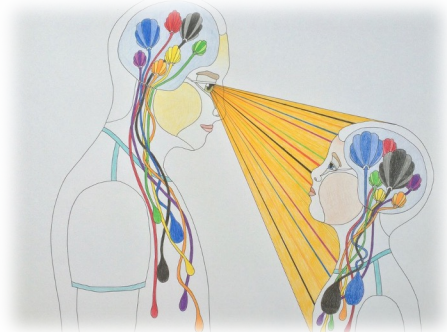


# Participants

- N = 111, aged 24 – 60 ( $M = 39.1$ ,  $SD = 5.74$ )
- 89 mothers (80 %), 22 fathers
- 80% working, 83% with higher education
- 81% – married, 10% - cohabitating, 9 % – single parents after divorce
- Number of children: 23% - one child, 56% – 2, 21% - 3 and more.
- 71% had sought help for themselves (58% receiving help now)
- 81% had sought help for their children (44% receiving help now)

# Intervention

- 12-week Lighthouse group program (Byrne & Ruggiero, 2018), only group sessions
- Individual introductory session with one of the group facilitators before the start of the group
- Each session is around 2 hours long including a break.
  
- At least two facilitators for one group
- Facilitators – qualified psychologists, who received half-day workshop on MBT principles and 4-day Lighthouse training
- Weekly group supervision for facilitators



# Outcome measures

Parenting/parental functioning	Parenting and Family Adjustment Scales (PAFAS, Sanders & Morawska, 2010)
	The Parental Stress Scale (PSS, Berry & Jones, 1995)
Mentalization	Parental reflective functioning questionnaire (PRFQ, Luyten et al., 2017)
	Mentalization scale (MentS, Dimitrijević et al., 2018)
Epistemic trust	Epistemic Trust, Mistrust and Credulity Questionnaire (ETMCQ, Campbell et al., 2021)
Parental mental health	Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9, Spitzer et al., 1999)
	The Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale-7 (GAD-7, Spitzer et al, 2006)
	The Level of Personality Functioning Scale-Brief Form 2.0 (LPFS-BF 2.0, Hutsebaut et al., 2016)
Child emotional-behavioral difficulties	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ, Goodman, 2005)
Personal distress	Psychological Outcome Profiles (PSYCHLOPS, Ashworth et al., 2005), qualitative and quantitative aspects

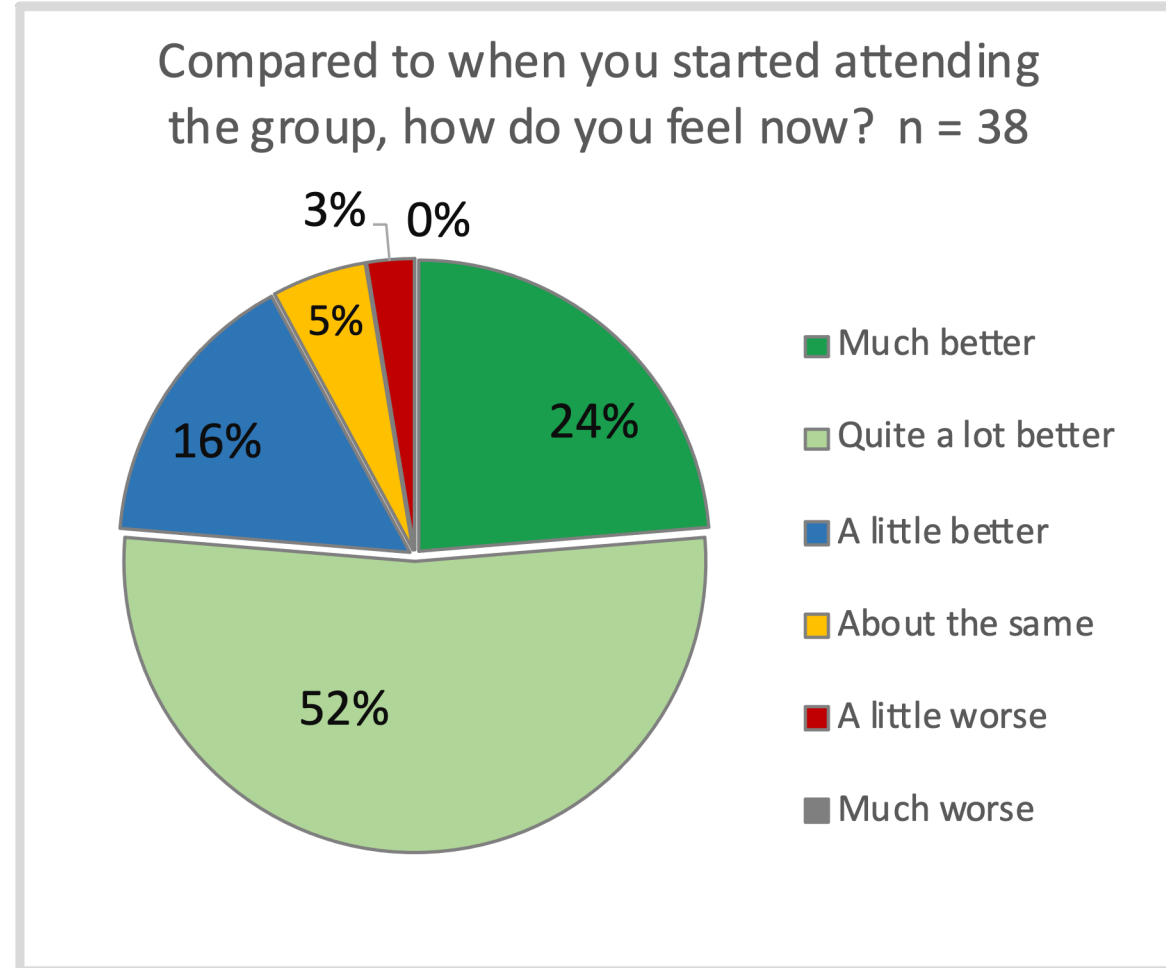
# Measures

- Only at T1 (after the intervention):
- Questions for parents about their experience of the program
- Semi-structured individual interview with parents about the program
  - 10 – 12 parents, ongoing
- Semi-structured group interview with group facilitators
  - 11 facilitators from 18 participated in interviews about the experience of training, experience of running the programme group, their view on impact on parents, etc.

# Some preliminary findings

	Completed T0 assessment	Started the program	After 4 sessions	Completed the program	T1 assessment
N	111	102	96	91	Ongoing
	100%	92%	87%	82%	<i>(completed n=70)</i>
		100%	94%	<b>89%</b>	

# Some preliminary findings



# Some preliminary findings

## Parents' evaluations (n=38)

How do you rate the benefits of the programme you have attended?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Not at all useful					3%	18%	79%	Very useful

How likely would you be to recommend this programme to other parents, friends, acquaintances, or people close to you?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Would definitely not recommend						11%	89%	Would definitely recommend



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# **Some feedback from the parents**

# To sum up..

Very preliminary indications of:

- Acceptability for parents
- Subjective positive evaluations
- Facilitators experience:
  - both challenging and very valuable
- Study aims to contribute to evaluating and further developing MBT interventions for burned parents



*Foto: Marijus Medišauskas.  
Pervalka lighthouse, Lithuania*