Effectiveness of the KIES program for children after a parental divorce

Kim Bastaits, Inge Pasteels & Dimitri Mortelmans

Research Centre for Longitudinal and Life Course Studies (CELLO)

Universiteit Antwerpen

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1. Introduction

- Long tradition of focusing on the absence of problem behavior in studies on children's well-being after divorce
(Carlson, 2006; Flouri, 2006; King & Sobolewski, 2006; Stewart, 2003)

- Children seen as **passive receivers**

↕

- Recent trend: children are considered as **active agents**
(Ben-Arieh, 2000; Ben-Arieh & FrØnes, 2011)

- Focus on the positive indicators of well-being, e.g. self-esteem & life satisfaction
- Focus on perception of the child (self-reports of children)

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1. Introduction

! IMPORTANT: How to give children tools to empower themselves? = **capabilities approach**

- KIES is a program developed to hand children the capabilities/tools to deal with a parental divorce.
- KIES considers children as active agents

→ Not only a focus on the absence of problem behavior but also on **what children** can **actively do** to **deal with problems** and have a **higher satisfaction of life**

2. The KIES program

- KIES = abbreviation for
  "*Kinderen In Echtscheiding Situatie*"
  (CHOOSE = Children experiencing a divorce)

- 8 playing- and talking sessions in groups of 10 children (primary school 6-12 years old)
- 2 meetings with parents

- For pupils with divorced parents
  - Divorce occurred recently, long ago, or is ongoing
  - Children learn from each other, contact with fellow-sufferers → Peer contact is crucial

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2. The KIES program

KIES encourages children:

- to understand the divorce of their parents
- to deal with the loss they experience given their broken family
- to deal with their emotions
- to accept that the divorce is irreversible

KIES aims to improve their resilience/coping mechanisms

Experience of the child = CENTRAL

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3. Research Questions

1. Does the KIES program have an effect on children's coping mechanisms?

2. Does the KIES program have an effect on children's satisfaction with life?

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4. Method

The KIES data-set

- Pre- and post measure design

- Experimental schools versus control schools

- 4 measurements: children, parents & teachers
    - Before program
    - After program (= 8 weeks)
   - After 6 months
    - After 12 months

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4. Method

Analytical sample

- Child data of time 1 (before program) & time 2 (8 weeks after program)
    - → N = 171 (KIES = 107 – control = 64)

- Variables
    - Life satisfaction: Cantril Ladder (Cantril, 1965)
    - Coping: CPIC Coping Efficacy subscale (Grych et al., 1992)
      likert scale 5 items (min score=5 - max score=15)
      cronbach's alpha = 0,53 (T1) & 0,54 (T2)
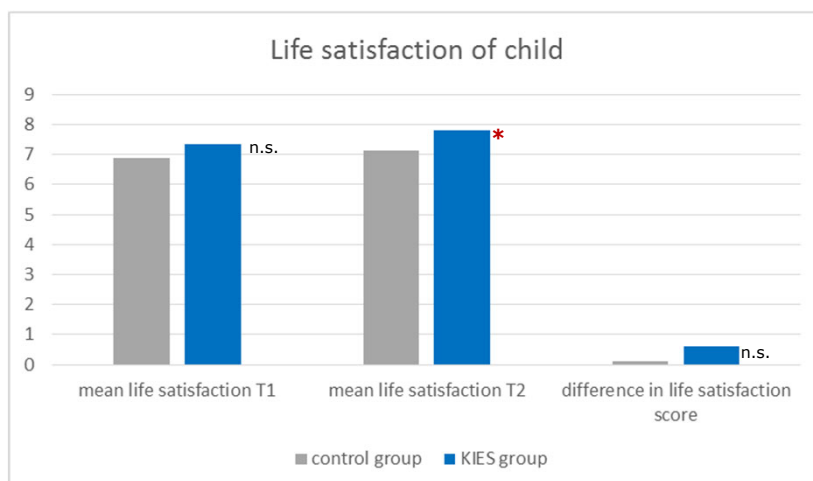   - Characteristics child: gender (T1), age (T2) & nationality (T1)

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5. Bivariate results
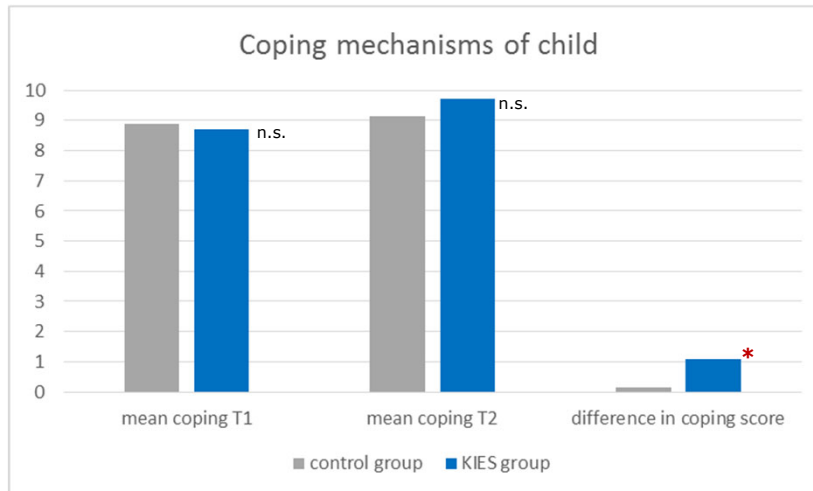
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5. Bivariate results

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5. Multivariate results

	COPING TIME 2
	STEP 1
	b (sd)
Intercept	6.22 (0.83) ***
KIES **(ref = control group)**	0.76 (0.40) °
Coping time 1	0.31 (0.09) ***
Gender child	
Age child	
Nationality child (ref = Belgium)	
	°p<0.07 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001
R² - adjusted R²	0.1287 - 0.1126
n	111

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5. Multivariate results

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5. Multivariate results

	COPING TIME 2	
	STEP 1	STEP 2
	b (sd)	b (sd)
Intercept	6.22 (0.83) ***	5.67 (2.08) **
KIES (ref = control group)	0.76 (0.40) °	0.78 (0.41) °
Coping time 1	0.31 (0.09) ***	0.32 (0.09) ***
Gender child		-0.42 (0.40)
Age child		0.10 (0.17)
Nationality child (ref = Belgium)		-0.42 (0.77)
	°p<0.07 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001	
R² - adjusted R²	0.1287 - 0.1126	0.1486 - 0.1077
n	111	110

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5. Multivariate results

	LIFE SATISFACTION TIME 2	
	STEP 1	
	b (sd)	
Intercept	4.49 (0.58) ***	
KIES (ref = control group)	0.66 (0.35) °	
Life satisfaction time 1	0.37 (0.07) ***	
Gender child		
Age child		
Nationality child (ref = Belgium)		
	°p<0.07 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001	
R² - adjusted R²	0.1717 - 0.1636	0.2093 - 0.1809
n	146	145

5. Multivariate results

	LIFE SATISFACTION TIME 2	
	STEP 1	
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Gender child		
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5. Multivariate results

	LIFE SATISFACTION TIME 2	
	STEP 1	STEP 2
	b (sd)	b (sd)
Intercept	4.49 (0.58) ***	1.53 (1.84)
KIES (ref = control group)	0.66 (0.35) °	0.56 (0.35)
Life satisfaction time 1	0.37 (0.07) ***	0.39 (0.07) ***
Gender child		-0.30 (0.34)
Age child		0.32 (0.15) *
Nationality child (ref = Belgium)		-0.23 (0.75)
	°p<0.07 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001	
R² - adjusted R²	0.1717 - 0.1636	0.2093 - 0.1809
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6. Conclusion

- A trend towards a positive effect of the KIES program on children = proof of principle
  - Bivariate results indicated better coping & higher life satisfaction
  - Multivariate results indicated better coping at trend level (& higher life satisfaction in model without controls)

- KIES fits within the capabilities approach, but main evidence at trend level
  - → small N?

7. Future research

- Regarding the child dataset
  - Establish measurement equivalence for coping scale
  - Incorporate divorce related characteristics
  - Incorporate other data waves
  - Test effectiveness for other child outcomes

- Evaluate the KIES program from a parental and a teachers viewpoint

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kim.bastaits@uantwerpen.be

Universiteit Antwerpen

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The KIES research project

- KIES is an evidence-based program.

- Started in Netherlands
- Exported to Flanders in 2012-2014

  - KIES has been implemented for 100 children
  - 100 children are in the control group.

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Phases in the KIES Program

- How did you heard about the divorce?

  ↓

- How do you feel at this moment?

  ↓

- What do you need to feel more comfortable?

  ↓

- What's your plan for the future?

=> Empowerment and problem solving skills are crucial in each phase

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KIES: 8 meetings

1. Acquaintance and recognition of the own situation
2. Recollection of memories and looking at feelings
3. Dare to trust, share experiences and feelings
4. Dealing with changes, learn to ask help

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KIES: 8 meetings

5. Looking back, draw up the balance sheet and formulate targets
6. Lift blockades, seeing pitfalls and discovering powers
7. Parting from the old situation and starting anew
8. Letting go, building confidence and being autonomous

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