

Cost of Raising a Child Module: 2023-2024 Academic Year

Brief Report

October 2024

BACKGROUND

Parenting can be difficult, especially for teenagers who often have fewer resources and support. Many programs help parents after they have children, but Parenting: It's a Life (PIAL) offers a prevention-based program. PIAL informs teens about essential life skills and the realities of parenting. This brief report summarizes student responses to participating in the Cost of Raising a Child (CORAC) module from the PIAL program.

Data were collected from youth in six Iowa schools that voluntarily requested the PIAL team to facilitate the CORAC module from February to May 2024. Pre-module surveys were electronically administered to youth seven to 10 days before the module facilitation at their school, while post-surveys were electronically administered immediately after the module ended. The pre-survey included 10 items, and the post-survey included five items. Demographics were collected in the pre-survey. Both surveys prompted participants to answer one open-ended question: what they most wanted to learn about before the facilitation and how they would apply what they learned from the module afterward. Survey items measured content-based knowledge of the cost of raising a child. This report focuses on the participants who completed all or nearly all items on both pre- and post-module surveys. More detailed results are provided in the long report.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does participant knowledge about the cost of raising a child change after the module?

2. How do participants plan to apply knowledge gained from the module to their lives?

3. How did participants rate the module?

RESULTS

After participating in the CORAC module, respondents demonstrated a significant change in responses to the content-based knowledge items. See the long report for information about each of these items. Participants were significantly more likely to answer Question 1 correctly by choosing "housing" after the module (Figure 1). The results also demonstrated a significant difference in participant responses to Question 2. However, participants were less likely to answer Question 2 correctly, as the correct answer was "seek out childcare assistance programs" (Figure 2).

Five themes emerged from the qualitative responses where participants identified their plan to apply the knowledge they gained from the module to their lives. These themes indicate that although participants plan to utilize their knowledge – for example, by saving/spending money wisely or not having/waiting to have kids – a relatively high percentage of responses suggested that about one out of every three participants will plan for their future family. Participants demonstrated this by reporting that...

Figure 1. Question 1: What is the most expensive cost associated with raising a child? (n = 101)

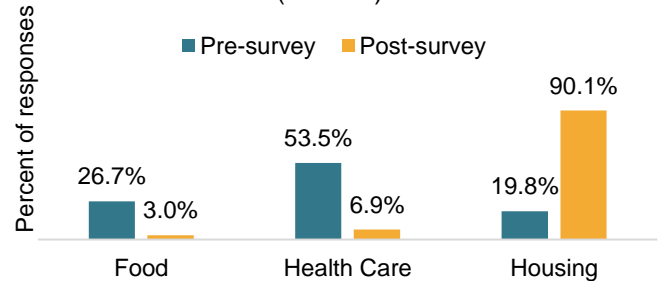
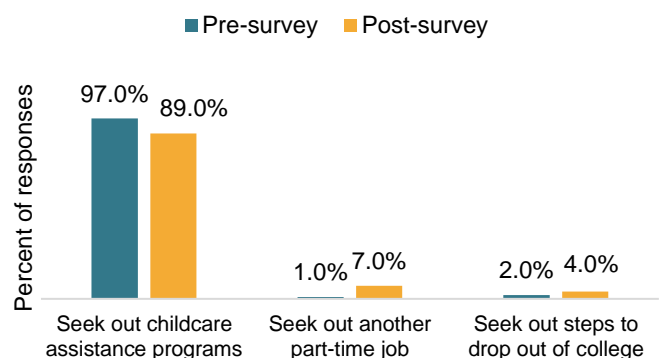


Figure 2. Question 2: Which priority should Ally focus on first? (n = 100)



...they would think about their future children, consider external factors like insurance, or be financially stable before becoming a parent (Figure 3).

When prompted to rate their overall experience with the CORAC module, participants overwhelmingly rated the program as “Excellent” or “Good” (Figure 4). This demonstrates that CORAC module participants generally have positive experiences with the module content, activities, and facilitators.

Figure 3. How Participants Will Use Learned Knowledge (n = 98)

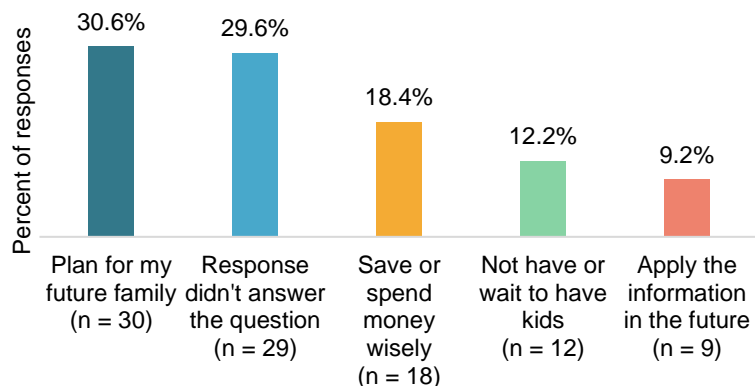
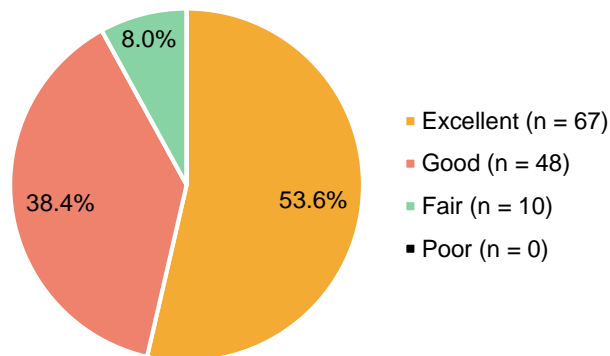


Figure 4. Participant Rating of CORAC Module (n = 125)



KEY FINDINGS

Participant responses indicated a change in responses to each of the two content-based survey items. However, responses to Question 2 demonstrated a decrease in correct responses, which is not what we expected to see.

Most participants reported that they plan to apply what they learned from this module by planning for their future family, but it would be beneficial to encourage participants to consider how to utilize the information provided in the future.

Participants generally agreed that their experience with the CORAC module was positive.

LIMITATIONS

The report is based on a pre-post design using data collected within a short timeframe.

Analyses conducted show general trends only.

Participants were overwhelmingly female, White, and non-Hispanic/Latino.

Facilitations could be interpreted as “pilot facilitations.”

Responses were self-reported, which may result in distorted data such as response style or acquiescence bias.

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

Emphasize how participants can apply module information to their lives during facilitation.

Collaborate with schools that have more diverse student demographics.

Continue to implement the module statewide to collect data and increase generalizability of findings.

Continue to adjust surveys as necessary to allow accurate reporting of what participants learned and will apply after participating in the CORAC module.

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