



Evaluation of the Functional Adult Literacy Program in South-Eastern Turkey

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an evaluation study comparing the impact of the Functional Adult Literacy Program (FALP) on the language and literacy skills as well as knowledge and attitudes of its participants in three provinces in Turkey: Istanbul, Sanliurfa and Diyarbakir.

FALP is not a new program. It was developed in 1995 and has been evaluated extensively (Please see the reference list at the end). It was also revised various times in response to feedback received from participants, teachers and administrators as well in light of the empirical research on the effects of the program on cognitive, affective, and personal change.

This particular implementation of FALP is focused on South Eastern Turkey. Thus, the content, and methods of FALP have been specially developed for regional needs and characteristics following a needs assessment study. The needs assessment study involved a series of interviews and meetings with potential participants, teachers, administrators and community leaders.

FALP is a basic literacy program and its goal is to increase the literacy skills of its participants. FALP realizes this goal by an emphasis on literacy skills such as letter knowledge, blending, spelling, decoding, reading comprehension, and critical thinking. Thus, in this study we are focusing on language and literacy gains after 120 hours of participation in FALP. A secondary goal of FALP is to impact participants' knowledge and attitudes through the content of literacy education. FALP has a carefully developed sequence of texts and activities that focus on topics that have been found to be of interest to women in Southeastern Turkey based on a needs assessment study performed in the region. These targeted content areas cover a wide range of topics including hygiene, interpersonal communication, education of the girl child, reproductive health, childcare, women's rights and human rights. Hence, this report also focuses on knowledge and attitude change in the content areas targeted by FALP.

METHOD

Participants

There were 109 participants across 11 classrooms in 3 cities, Diyarbakir (DB), Istanbul (IST) and Şanlıurfa (SU). In IST and DB, the courses were selected randomly, but since the courses in SU were just starting and there were only 2 available, both of those courses were included. The participants were tested twice, once at the beginning and once at the end of the course.

	Province			total
	DB	IST	SU	
Number of classrooms	5	4	2	11
Number of participants	40	41	28	109
Number of participants with complete data	27	34	27	88
Number of participants with incomplete data	13	7	1	21

Out of the 21 participants with incomplete data, 6 were absent during the second testing although they had completed the course. The remaining 15 had dropped out. Three were at very low levels at the end the course and they were encouraged to start over again.

For the other 12 participants, the reasons given for dropping out were: health problems (their own or a family member's), having young children at home and pressure from the family not to attend classes.

Tasks

The pre and post-course assessments were identical. They included a cognitive battery and an attitude battery. The pre-course assessments also included a questionnaire to collect demographic and background information on each participant.

Demographic Questions

13 questions were used to establish demographic information in the pre-course assessments. This section was administered before the cognitive battery and was developed in order to obtain information on age, marital status, number of children, educational and linguistic background on the participant and her family. There were also questions about motivations for and expectations from participation in a literacy program. One question probed literacy practices in the household (whether or not newspapers are purchased), while one inquired about the participant's expectations for the future.

Cognitive Battery

This battery, developed to assess participants' the language, literacy, and numeracy skills consisted of seven sections including:

1. **Letter recognition - lower-case letters:** All 29 letters of the Turkish alphabet were presented on a piece of paper and participants were asked to provide the letter-name or the letter-sound for each letter.
2. **Letter recognition - upper-case letters:** This subtest was the same as the lower case letters except upper case letters were presented instead of lower case.
3. **Word recognition:** 12 printed words were presented and participants were asked to name the words. The words ranged from three-letter (TOP) to 6-letter words (BALKON).
4. **Spelling:** Participants were asked to write down the 12 words which were presented one by one, orally by the test administrator. The words ranged from 3-letter to 10-letter words.
5. **Writing numbers:** participants were asked to write down the 8 numbers presented orally by the test administrator. The numbers ranged from single digit to four-digit numbers.

6. **Word definitions:** participants were orally presented with five words for which they were asked to provide definitions.
7. **Listening comprehension:** participants were presented with two short passages which were read aloud by the test administrator (Gülgöz, unpublished test). Following each passage they were presented with four open-ended questions for each passage, about information in the passages.

Attitudinal Battery.

The attitude battery was developed to assess knowledge, attitudes, and practices about women's rights, health, and family dynamics. This section consisted of questions inserted into an unfolding narrative. The narrative was about a young woman and her life experiences such as marriage, birth of a child, superstitious beliefs, actions and beliefs about health issues and marital rights and practices. The test administrator read the narrative aloud and stopped at various points in the narrative to address questions to the participant. There were 12 questions in this section. 7 of the questions were action items asking the participant "what she would do" under the circumstances in the narrative, while the rest were knowledge items asking the participant to explain some event in the narrative. In one part of the narrative, for example, the 20 year old protagonist Belma's father wants to marry her off to a 40-year-old, widowed man. The knowledge question following this introduction is "What are Belma's rights in this situation?". The action question, on the other hand, is "What would you do if you were in Belma's position?" The 12 questions assessed knowledge and attitudes in various topic areas such as:

- Necessity and procedures of a civil marriage
 - Women's rights in choosing a spouse
 - Why one needs to have a civil wedding
 - Need for a national identification card
- Women's rights
 - The right to find employment
 - Rights to family inheritance
 - Domestic violence
- Reproductive health
 - How one has male or female children
- Child care and health
 - What to do for a high fever
 - How to treat diarrhea
 - Diet and nutrition (sources of calcium)
 - Importance of nursing a baby
- Importance of formal education
- Children's rights
 - Child labor

RESULTS

The rest of the report is about course effectiveness and it focuses on the **88** participants who have completed FALP, and describes their development across the three months of participation in the course.

Demographic Characteristics

The following table describes the demographic characteristics of the participants.

	Province			
	DB (n=27)	IST (n=34)	SU (n=34)	Significant?
Age	29.85 (11.3)	39.70 (10.1)	25.52 (9.0)	SU=DB<IST
No. who attended school	6	1	4	
Percent married	56%	91%	41%	DB=SU<IST
No. of living children	3.75(2.2)	3.19(1.6)	5.18(1.8)	DB=IST<SU

Overall, the SU and DB groups are younger and they are more likely to be unmarried. However, the SU group has more children. Although 11 out of 88 participants had previously attended school, it must be noted that their the average length of school attendance was 1.8 years.

Reasons for Previously Not Attending School

The participants were asked their reasons for not attending school when they were young. There were a total of 90 responses (some participants gave multiple responses). The distribution of reasons was as follows:

- 53% the family did not allow them to go to school.
- 20% economic difficulties, the need to work and help out the family
- 14% there was no school or the school was too far from their village
- 13% other

Reasons for Attending FALP

The participants were also asked about their reasons for attending FALP. There were a total of 126 responses (including the multiple responses from some participants).

The distribution of reasons was as follows:

- 52% functional reasons (making it easier to take a bus, go to the hospital, conduct business at a bank...)
- 38% personal development, improving oneself
- 10% other

The data suggests that most participants believed that literacy acquisition would improve their lives but few had information about the applications of literacy beyond functional situations.

Language Characteristics

Turkish is the official language in Turkey although Kurdish and Arabic are the mother tongue for most individuals in Southeastern Turkey.

	Self-ratings	Province		
		DB	IST	SU
Percent speaking another language		89	38	96
Proficiency in understanding Turkish (%reporting) (n=88)	very poor/poor	0	0	0
	medium	26	3	11
	good/very good	74	97	89
Proficiency in speaking Turkish (%reporting) (n =88)	very poor/poor	7	0	4
	medium	22	3	15
	good/very good	70	97	82
Proficiency in understanding Language2 (%reporting) (n=63 with L2) (n=25 with no L2)	very poor/poor	0	3	4
	medium	11	0	0
	good/very good	78	35	93
	No Language2	11	62	4
Proficiency in speaking Language2 (%reporting) (n=63 with L2) (n=25 with no L2)	very poor/poor	0	3	4
	medium	11	0	7
	good/very good	78	35	85
	No Language2	11	62	4

*The numbers may not add up to 100 because of rounding

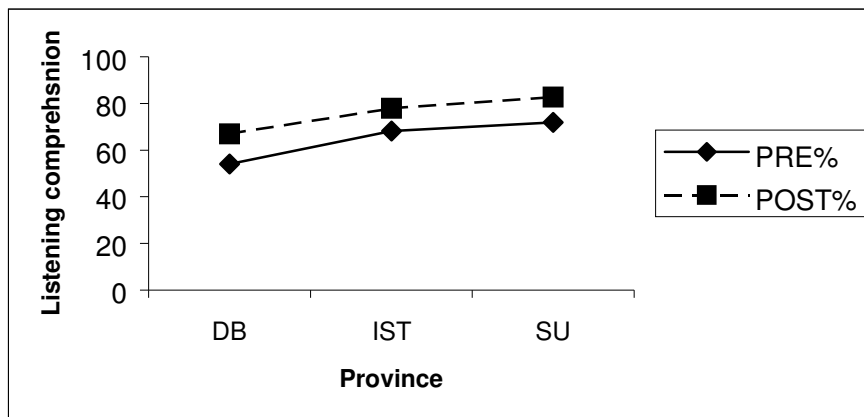
Overall, the Turkish proficiency seems to be weaker in the DB and SU groups, and a large majority (89% in DB and 96% in SU) knows another language (Kurdish or Arabic). However, the self-reports indicate that the participants still rated themselves as good or very good in understanding and speaking Turkish (72% in DB; 97% in IST and 85% in SU).

Cognitive Battery

The details of mean scores, standard deviations and the results of the statistical analyses are given in Table 1. However in the tables below, all tasks are reported in percentages and also as graphs to facilitate easy comprehension. For each task, the mean scores were analyzed using a 2 (Test: Pre/Post) x 3 (Province: DB/IST/SU) Analysis of variance (ANOVA). To anticipate, all scores showed statistically significant improvements. However in several cases, this development was contextualized by the presence of a Test x Province interaction. Below, the measures with no province interaction will be discussed first, followed by the results of the measures showing a Test x Province interaction.

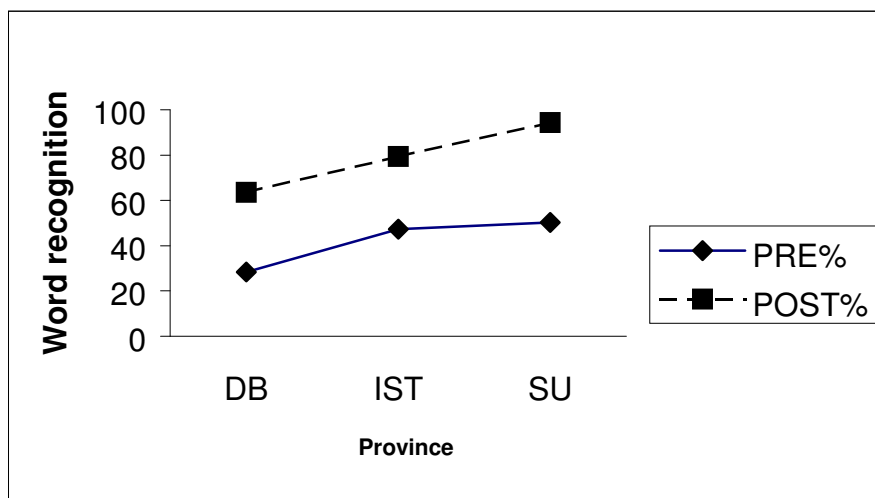
Listening Comprehension

There was no Test x Province interaction in Listening Comprehension. Therefore, the results can be summarized across all provinces. Overall, all participants showed a significant improvement in listening comprehension. The average pretest score across the three provinces was 65%, which increased to 76% at the end of three months.



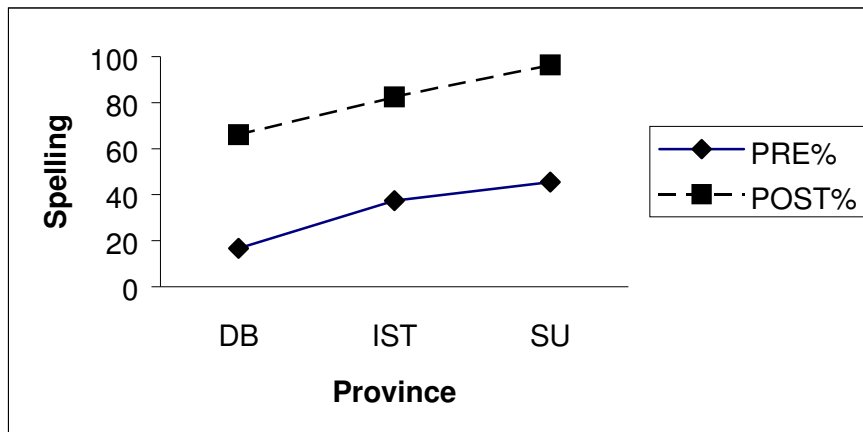
Word Recognition

There was no significant Test x Province interaction, so looking across all three groups, there was a significant improvement, from 50% to 79% in word recognition.



Spelling

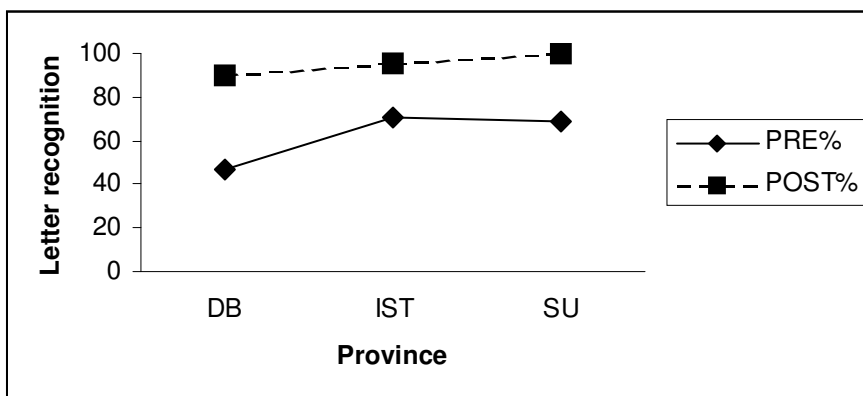
There was no significant Test x Province interaction and hence results are reported across all three groups. Across all groups, there was a significant and dramatic improvement from 45% to 82% in spelling scores.



The remaining three measures showed a Test x Province interaction, therefore the development has been analyzed separately for each testing period.

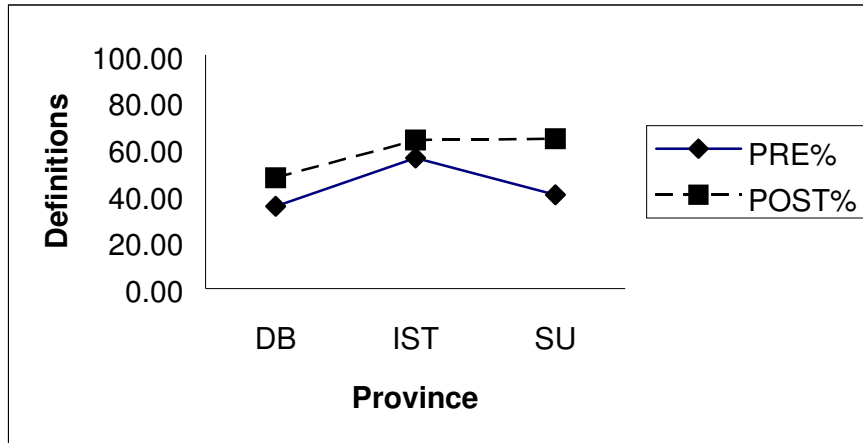
Letter Recognition

All groups showed significant improvements in identifying the 58 (29 upper and 29 lower case) letters of the Turkish alphabet. The interaction is due to the fact that the participants in DB started with significantly lower levels of letter identification levels. However, the main point is at the end of the three months, all groups were recognizing close to 100% of the letters correctly.



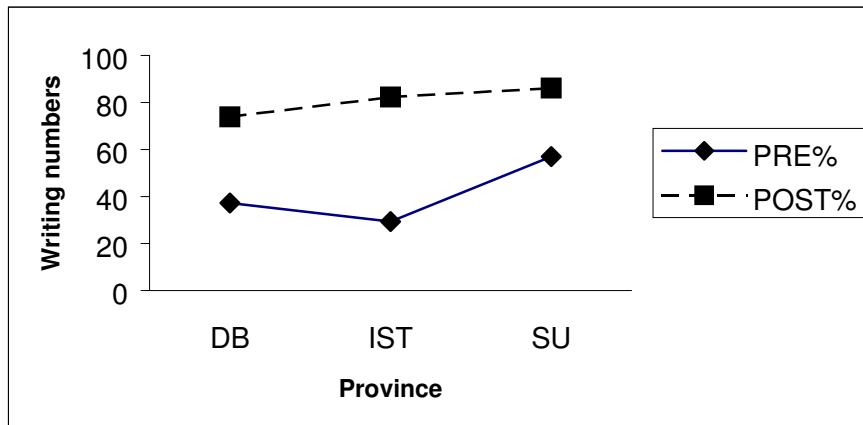
Word Definitions

All groups showed significant improvements in how they defined words in Turkish. However, the pretest levels were equally low for the participants in DB and SU compared to IST. In the posttests, SU showed the highest amount of improvement and reached the levels of IST, but the development of the participants in DB, although still significant, was more modest.



Writing Numbers

In the pretests, SU group was significantly better than IST and DB groups which had similar scores. At the end of the course, all groups showed significant improvement and reached similar levels.

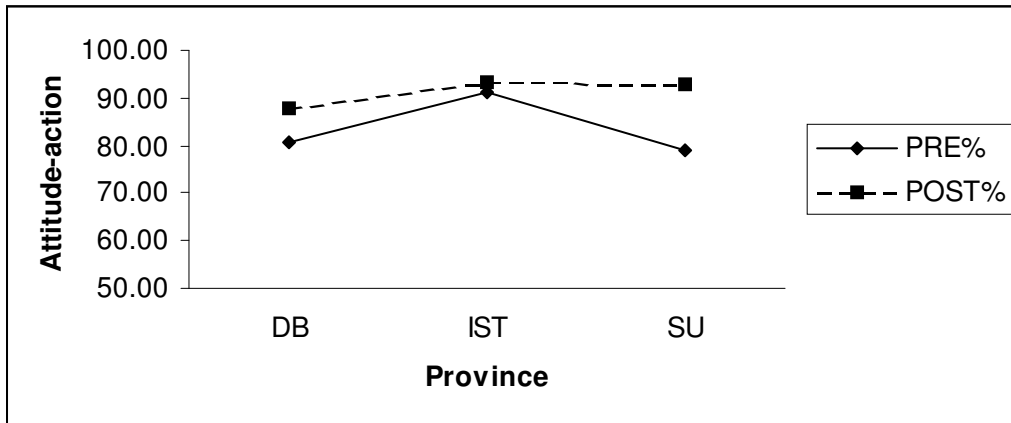


Attitudinal Battery

The attitude battery's action items (7 items worth 4 points each = 28 points maximum) were evaluated separately from the battery's knowledge items (5 items worth 3 points each = 15 points maximum).

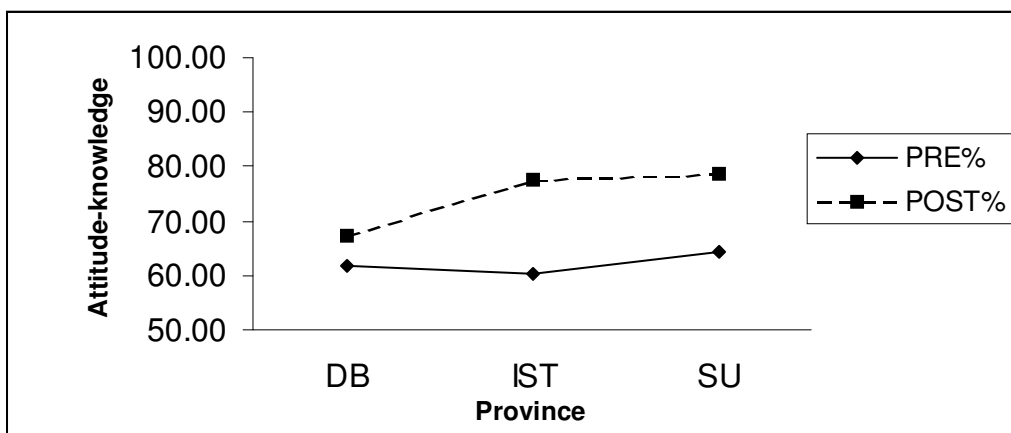
Attitude-Action Items

There was a significant improvement across all provinces, but the interaction of Province x Test indicated that the groups showed differences in how much they changed. At the beginning of the course, the attitude-action scores of the DB and SU groups were significantly lower than that of the IST group. However, on the posttests, the SU group had caught up with the IST group, and the DB group was at a lower level compared to the IST group, although still showing a significant improvement.



Attitude-Knowledge Items

All groups showed significant improvement, but there was a marginally significant Province x Test interaction. On the pretests, the three groups were statistically the same. On the posttest, IST and SU were similar and both were at levels higher than the DB group, although DB group also showed significant improvement.



Item Analysis of Attitude and Knowledge Items

In order to determine in more detail how the empowerment part of the program worked, the individual items on the attitude and knowledge questions were examined as a function of Development across time and Province. The details of these analyses are presented in Table 3.

Knowledge items: These items had a maximum possible score of 3. On the following three topics, participants in all provinces showed significant development:

- Question 6 (importance of nursing a baby)
- Question 7 (sources of calcium)
- Question 9 (what to do for fever)

Moreover the developmental patterns were similar across provinces (as indicated by the lack of an interaction).

On **Question 4 (how to have a male child)**, there was a significant interaction in the data indicating different levels of development across the provinces. While DB and IST groups showed no change in their responses, SU group had a significant development.

On **Question 8 (what to do for diarrhea)**, all groups showed significant improvement, but participants in IST improved most.

Attitude items: These items had a maximum possible score of 4. On the following four topics, participants in all provinces showed significant development:

- Question 1 (choosing one's own husband)
- Question 2 (civil wedding)
- Question 3 (right to find employment)
- Question 11 (domestic violence).

Moreover the developmental patterns were similar across provinces (as indicated by the lack of an interaction):

On **Question 5 (the need for the national identification paper)**, there was no significant development or different development patterns across provinces. On this question all participants had a relatively high level of knowledge. (The pre-test scores ranged from 3.40-3.74) and hence there was not much need or room for improvement.

On **Question 10 (inheritance)**, there was a significant development, but the magnitude of this development was different across the provinces (as indicated by the Development x Province interaction). As can be seen from the table, SU showed the most dramatic changes on this question.

On **Question 12 (child labor)**, there was no significant improvement. Although the participants across all provinces started with average pretest scores (between 2.70-2.82), they did not show significant improvement. One possible explanation is that this topic was covered in Lesson 23. For three instructors, time ran out before they reached that lesson. For three other instructors, the course ended just as they finished Lesson 23 and they may not have had enough time to discuss this topic. In short, this topic was covered fully by only 5 of the 11 instructors. This result strengthens our confidence that changes in attitude occurs as a result of instruction, not just the passage of time. For topics that could not be covered fully in the classrooms, the attitude change is not significant.

Qualitative Analyses of Attitude Change

The responses of participants who showed dramatic improvements in their attitude/knowledge scores (increasing from 1 to 3-4 for attitude or from 1 to 3 for knowledge) were examined more closely to assess the qualitative changes in their responses. As the following examples show, within three months there were some rather large changes in the quality of their responses.

Question 1: women's right to choose a spouse

In this section of the narrative her father wants to marry Belma off to an older man. The participant is asked what she would do if she were in Belma's place.

Participant #4

Pretest : "Her father can give her [hand] even if she doesn't want to get married. She shouldn't go against her father. I wouldn't go against my father either"

Posttest: "She has a right to decide. Her father is marrying her off for money. She should complain to the police. I wouldn't marry off my daughter."

Question 3: right to find employment

In this part of the narrative Belma has married Ahmet who has a limited income. Belma wants to work outside the house to help support her family but Ahmet's family does not permit her to work. The question asks the participant how she would react in similar circumstances.

Participant # 103

Pretest: "If her family doesn't permit, she cannot work. She should talk to them. I would talk to them and if they permitted, then I would work"

Posttest "She has a lot of rights. She should talk with her husband to convince him. I would also talk with my husband to convince him"

Question 11: domestic violence

Belma and Ahmet are having marital problems. Ahmet frequently beats Belma. The question

asks the participant why she thinks Ahmet is behaving in this way and what she would have done in a similar situation.

Participant # 1

Pretest: "He is behaving like that because of work troubles. he is a man, if he doesn't have a job, he may act like that. It is normal. If she asked me, I'd say bear with it, I hope it works out, If it were me, I wouldn't be able to anything, what can I do? If I cannot bear it, I might separate"

Posttest: "He doesn't have a good job, that's why he is upset. He doesn't have a right to behave this way. It will get better in the future. but if it continues like that, I will probably get separated"

Question 12: child labor

In this section Belma's father wants to withdraw Bekir, Belma's 11 year old brother from school so that he can work. The question asks the participant what she would do if she was in Belma's situation.

Participant #41

Pretest: "It is his father. She cannot do anything"

Posttest: "A school-age child should definitely go to school. She should go and talk with her father. If it were my brother, I would support him to go to school. First I would talk to my father to change his mind"

The attitudes covered by the attitude battery all reflect ones that are interrelated to social and cultural beliefs and practices of a population. The changes we have observed in participant's attitudes, knowledge and actions after only three months of participation in FALP are highly significant.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall results as well as cross-province comparisons were encouraging. There were significant gains in almost all of the variables after 120 hours of FALP attendance. Listening comprehension, word recognition, spelling were the three variables where participants demonstrated significant gains irrespective of their province. This means that participants in the three provinces showed equal amounts of improvement in these skills. Data suggests that participants in the three provinces are progressing similarly in developing those skills that are basic to reading and writing.

There were differences across provinces in the development of several cognitive skills. These differences are mainly due to differences in the starting levels across the three provinces. For example participants from Diyarbakir showed lower proficiency in naming letters than the rest of the participants at the beginning of the course. Likewise, participants from Sanliurfa were less skilled than participants from other provinces when they started the course. However, by the end of the course, significant improvements occurred for all participants in letter recognition, word definitions and number writing. Development was more modest for participants from Diyarbakir on the word definitions test. We suspect that this difference may be due to differences in Turkish proficiency. In fact, participants from Diyarbakir reported lower levels of Turkish proficiency for receptive and productive language use.

Overall, we can claim that FALP was an effective intention program to support participants from different regions of Turkey in the acquisition of literacy skills.

The attitude and knowledge measures also showed significant gains across all provinces. However, we observed that participants in the southeastern provinces had lower initial scores on the attitude items. However, although they had lower starting points, these groups performed equally well as the group from Istanbul.

These successful results in three very different provinces support our claims that FALP may be implemented in various regions in Turkey even with different social, economic, and cultural characteristics. After only 120 hours of instruction, there were significant cognitive gains in participants across the three regions, thus replicating the patterns found in our previous studies (see the reference list). In addition, the significant attitudinal changes indicate that the new empowerment component of FALP is also effective.

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