

PARENTS PARTICIPATION IN CHILDREN DAY CENTRE ACTIVITIES: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SOCIAL WORKER

Loreta Klokmanienė

Panevezys University of Applied Sciences
Lithuania

Audronė Rimkuvienė

Panevezys University of Applied Sciences
Lithuania

Inga Janiseliene

Pasvalys St. John the Baptist Parish Children's Day Center
Lithuania

Annotation

One of the most vulnerable groups in society is children who due to their age, are unable to take care of themselves, so their rights must be taken care of at national level. For children who face a certain social risk because of circumstances of life in which the conditions for their successful education are not fully ensured, appropriate conditions are created in children's day care centers. The aim is to analyze the attitude of social workers to the participation of parents in the activities of the children's day center. The article on the basis of the data of qualitative research presents the experience of social workers working in the children's day care center and the involvement of parents in the activities of the children's day care center. Seven social workers working in Catholic children's day care centers were selected for the research. The results of the research revealed that in children's day care centers, social workers provide various services to children and their parents, including socio-cultural, lesson preparation, social skills development, individual and group counseling, work skills development, and free meals. Parents' participation in children's day care centers is very important, as their values change, new and improved social skills are acquired, communication and creative skills are revealed, they learn to deal with material difficulties, and responsibility for one's children and family is strengthened.

Key words: children day center, a child, social skills, empowerment.

Introduction

The concept of child well-being encompasses both physical and psychosocial spheres. Children growing up in families with problems such as family living conditions (alcohol consumption, violence, neglect, non-compliance with social norms, etc.) are more vulnerable, face poverty, primitive value orientation, negative psychological climate, upbringing mistakes, and are living growing in a stressful environment, where the risk of the child becoming socially vulnerable predominates. Therefore, today it is relevant to analyze the impact of the family on the socio-cultural development of a child's personality, as it introduces social roles, provides with the necessary knowledge and skills that facilitate the child's positive social adaptation in society. However, not all families perform this social role and function delegated to them. Rapid changes in the economic and social situation make it difficult to adapt to changing living conditions that is why some families experience crises, find it difficult to socialize in society and create special conditions for their children to develop and integrate successfully as equal members.

In the Lithuanian Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030" (2014), the priority is to reduce social exclusion and create a smart society. Contemporary school is not always able to provide equal educational opportunities for all students with unequal experiences, living conditions, and children growing up in families with problems are the most vulnerable. The Children Day Center (hereinafter referred to as CDC) provides such an opportunity because it functions as a mean of ensuring the rights of the child, positive socialization by providing comprehensive assistance to children and their parents who are unable to perform their duties properly.

The activities of CDC organizations are analyzed in various aspects by Lithuanian and foreign researchers. Several Lithuanian authors analyzed the services provided by children's day care centers and their need: I. Liepinskaite, R. Motieciene (2017), V. Gudzinskiene, S. Burvyte, M. Barkauskaite, (2017) (2018) emphasized the importance of mentoring in gaining

parental trust creating a safe environment for participation in the activities of the center and the development of positive parenting skills. N. P. Veckienė and J. Eidukeviciūtė (2015, 2019) emphasized the importance of the relationship between the social worker and the client in children's day care centers and the role of the social worker. S. Cojocar, G. Alexandra, R. Delia, (2015) examined aspects of parental participation in children's non-formal education, A. Ansari, E. Gershoff, (2016) explored the benefits of parental involvement in children's diverse education, D. Wilkins, C. Whittaker (2018) discussed barriers to the successful implementation of child rights protection when working with parents. However, much in-depth research analyzing aspects of parental involvement in children's day care centers activity has not been conducted. The scientific research is more focused on children and their needs as the main clients of children's day care centers.

The object of the research is the attitude of a social worker to the participation of parents in the activities of the children's day center.

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The goals:

1. Describe the activities of children's day care centers.
2. To describe the services provided by social workers in the children's day center.
3. To study the opinion of social workers about the importance of parental participation in the activities of the children's day center.

The methods:

- * Analysis of scientific literature.
- * Qualitative research - semi-structured interview.
- * Content analysis

Activity of children day centers

Children are the part of society that needs to be given the highest priority, as they depend not only on the current state and characteristics of society, but also on the community and society of the future world or individual countries. The development of the Day care centers sector intensified with the approval of the National Program of Non-Governmental Children's Day Care Centers for 2002-2004. An opportunity to receive funding from the state budget for Day care centers appeared. The main documents are the National Children's Day Centers Programme, 2005-2007, which is still relevant today, the Law on Social Services (2006) and Catalog of Social Services (2006), the Law on Minimum and Average Child Care (2007), Recommendations for the Activities of Children's Day Centers (2015), Child Welfare action plan for 2019-2021 (2018), Caritas Lithuania child protection policy for children and other vulnerable persons (2019). CDCs organize their activities on the basis of the legal framework of the programs, which corresponds to the legal framework of the European Union and Lithuania, as well as the Christian values defined by the teaching and tradition of the Catholic Church.

Grizaite (2011) describes a children's day center as a social service institution with the aim to provide day care, occupation, leisure and other services to children, while improving the quality of life for children from low-income families and normalizing their relationship with the social environment. Day centers act as family support to ensure children's rights if the child's family does not ensure them. According to Gudzinskiene and Railiene (2012), in day care centers children acquire the necessary social skills - they become more independent, gain self-confidence, become more polite, learn to solve their own problems, learn to communicate with others, react more calmly to comments. Their progress in school is improving, they are less likely to miss classes, and relationships with teachers and peers are improving as well. Koivula and Hannikainen (2017) state that in children's day care centers, positive daily preparation habits are formed for children, by participating in collective activities; the child feels part of the community and learns social responsibility. The social skills acquired in a children's day care center help a person to successfully adapt to the life of society, to cope with the needs and problems of everyday life. Social skills, according to many researchers, are the ability to respond in a way that is acceptable to society and to all individuals with whom the child communicates.

According to Gudzinskiene (2014), children's day centers, which provide extracurricular activities and educational assistance, function as a mean to ensure children's rights and positive socialization, i.e. social, psychological, special, pedagogical, informational and etc. In these organizations, children need time to play, research, create, learn new skills, and relax. Therefore, children's day centers should offer the child as much free time as active activities, which should be fun, interactive, helping children to develop, acquire social skills, develop self-esteem, be able to resolve conflicts. According to Targamadze (2017), children's day centers can provide various social and educational services, and the development of their activities

depends on objective factors (legal basis, funding, specifics of activities, etc.) and subjective factors (competencies of the center manager and staff, local community needs and etc.). The attitude of municipalities and their council members has a great influence on the emergence of centers and the development of their activities.

Summarizing the opinion of scientists, it can be stated that a children's day center is a non-governmental organization that provides social, educational and occupational services, preventive and intervention measures that ensure the child's well-being, reduce social risks or other problems faced by families and children, strengthen empowerment in the implementation of the rights of the child, ensuring the positive socialization of children, well-being by developing children's resilience to the negative influences of the social environment and social risk factors. This is emphasized by the Minister of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania in the order no. A1-612 of 5 November, approving Child Welfare action plan for 2019-2021, the purpose of which is to create a system of services and measures ensuring the welfare of the child, which would create favorable conditions for the child to grow up in a safe family environment and receive the necessary complex (social, legal, medical or other) services and assistance. The aim of this plan is to create preconditions for the child to grow up in a biological family, to increase the availability of preventive comprehensive services for the child and his / her biological family in crisis situations or victims of violence, and for a child deprived of parental care - by creating appropriate care or adoption conditions, which meet the best interests of the child and the need to grow up in a family environment or in the environment close to the family, to be properly prepared for independent living in the family and society. It should be noted that in order to ensure the child's right to grow up in a family, the activities of children's day centers were developed in municipalities, providing non-residential day care services for children growing up in families at social risk. This document states that since 2017 outpatient day care services are provided to all children, without excluding children at social risk.

The Caritas Lithuania Child and Other Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy Document No.1 approved by the Caritas Council of Lithuania meeting on 28 August, 2019 came into force on 01-01-2020. This document is still being improved and will be used in the structure of Caritas Lithuania, working with vulnerable groups of the society and ensuring their safety, as well as protecting Caritas employees from unjustified discredit. New staff, volunteers and trainees must be familiar with the Child and Vulnerable Protection Policy and the Code of Conduct within 5 working days and start working by signing the Caritas Protection Policy documents, noting that they are familiar with and committed to protection and moral standards. Caritas staff and volunteers are expected to contribute to the creation of a harmonious work environment based on team spirit, mutual respect and understanding.

Caritas Lithuania "Child and Other Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy" is based on the fundamental principles of how everyone has the right to be protected from violence and exploitation, the right to full development, the diversity of each person is accepted and he/she must be able to express himself or herself, workers have a responsibility to promote and nurture the care and protection of vulnerable people.

Eidukeviciute (2019) emphasizes that social workers working in children's day centers, as institutions operating in the community responsible for the protection of the child's well-being, balance between child protection and family support. Children's day centers aim to provide the family with services that enable the family to ensure the child's well-being, to avoid the dismantling of the family as a unit and the transfer of children to the care system, and these services are implemented by social workers working in the centers. The main goal of social workers is to enable the family to change. Therefore, the relationship of adult family members becomes an essential goal for the professional care provider.

According to Dromantiene, Indrasiene and Sadauskas (2016), a social worker must be able to successfully organize the social work process with the client, identifying and assessing social needs and social problems, and this requires constant improvement. This is also emphasized by O'Reilly and Dolan (2016), who argue that professional development in a social worker can effectively help their clients build mutually meaningful and problem-solving relationships. Wilkins and Whittaker (2018) note that the successful implementation of social work with a child and family can be hindered by three main factors: inadequate preparation of the social worker, underestimation of the child's complex situation and non-involvement of parents in the child support process.

In order to help the whole family, children's day centers, according to Ansari and Gershoff (2016), implement a two-generation activity model in which activities are organized for children and their parents. Parental participation in children's day centers is usually implemented in two ways - parental participation in parenting skills development activities or positive parenting programs organized by CDC and volunteering. Parenting skills development activities in children's day care centers focus mainly on managing the correction of child misconduct and

finding forms of nonviolent parenting. Physical violence as a means of punishing a child is often common in families attending children's day centers, which is why children's day centers focus on finding positive parenting tools. According to the researchers, parenting programs are effective when participants are offered the widest possible range of knowledge with practical tasks, help parents discover and exploit the strengths of communication with the child, do not distract the participant from additional services and engage in meetings as much as possible. According to Wilkins and Whittaker (2018), equal participation of parents and children in activities organized by the CDC is seen as a central axis of social work with the family. According to Burvyte and Gudzinskiene (2018), the help provided by social workers to parents must be diverse, intelligent, complex, based on intelligent education and integrating different disciplines, such as psychology, management, sociology, economics and human development.

According to Liepinskiate and Motieciene (2017), one of the key aspects related to the participation of parents in the activities of the center increases the empowerment of parents to solve problems in the family independently. Empowerment is an extremely widely used concept in the social work scientific literature and is associated with the provision of the necessary tools, methods, knowledge and skills to enable a person to deal independently with the problems that lead to specialist help.

Cojocar, Alexandra, and Delia (2015) emphasize that children whose parents participate in CDCs activities change habits of misbehavior more quickly and successfully, and more easily adopt positive forms of emotional expression. Researchers Ansari and Gershoff (2016) note that the educational outcomes of these children improve faster than those of children whose parents do not participate in CDC activities. Parental involvement in the education of children has a positive effect not only on learning achievements, but also on children's future prospects, mental health and social relationships with others. According to Wang (2016), parents' willingness to participate in center activities may be inhibited by negative experiences of such participation, if activities require too much time, energy and involvement of parents, they will tend to avoid active involvement in CDC activities in the future.

In summary, parental involvement in Children's Day Centers activity is crucial for parents, children and professionals working at the center. The benefits to parents are usually associated with improved parenting skills and a wide range of knowledge required in the child's upbringing process and enhanced interrelationships with the child. Parental involvement in CDC activities is a slow process that can be very difficult to start, but once they feel the benefits, parents are willing to spend their free time with their offspring and build harmonious relationships, and social workers have a better understanding of the child's cultural, social environment and home education. It can be said that specialists, acquainted with the child's parents, can better respond to the child's needs and interests, thus ensuring the effectiveness of social work activities, but the incompatibility of the agenda with parents becomes an obstacle for them to participate in the Children's day center.

Research of Social Workers' Opinion on the Importance of Parents' Participation in the Activities of the Children's Day Center

The qualitative research method chosen for the research is a semi-structural interview, which allows getting closer to the perception of people's experiences, the definition of the situation, and the interpretation of reality. The obtained data provide detailed information about the object of the research, which can be clarified by asking additional questions to the research participants. The data obtained during the research are analyzed using content analysis.

The research involved 7 social workers working in Catholic Children's Day Centers Lina, Rasa, Ruta, Daiva and Milda working in the town's Children's Day Center, and Aiste and Vilma in the rural Children's Day Center (the names of the study participants were changed). The activities of these centers are closely related, they carry out various project activities together, constantly cooperate and collaborate. These centers are run by the same person.

The research was conducted in March-April 2020, based on the principles of research ethics: the participants were introduced to the purpose of the research, the method of data collection, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured.

Analyzing the answers provided by CDC specialists to the question of what services this organization provides, the category CDC services and 6 subcategories were distinguished (see Table 1).

Services provided by Children's Day Center

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statements
Services provided	Sociocultural services	... <i>"We participate in a museum where clay molding lessons are held, we go to a stud farm, in summer, we camp in a rural tourism homestead"...</i> (Rasa)... <i>"We play games, conduct educational classes that teach creativity and ingenuity..."</i> (Ruta)... <i>"children go on tourist trips and journeys together with their parents ..."</i> (Milda)... <i>"Once a week we participate in Holy Mass ,organize various celebrations..."</i> (Daiva)... <i>"Celebrating the holidays, making decorations, parents are also involved in this activity, we watch movies"...</i> (Lina).
	Homework preparation	... <i>"Children prepare lessons"...</i> (Rasa, Milda)..., <i>there is a particular need for assistance for young children"...</i> (Vilma)... <i>"Children are in great need of help with lessons, many of them have learning difficulties"...</i> (Aiste)
	Development of social skills	... <i>"They are taught to behave politely, participating in the events and various activities they get acquainted with the environment and broaden their horizon"...</i> (Lina)... <i>"Social skills development is very purposeful during summer camps, we have been camping in a rural tourism homestead for several years"...</i> (Rasa)... <i>"Through various games, social skills are learned, how to behave beautifully at the table, dress up, and so on."...</i> (Aiste).
	Counseling	... <i>"Parenting training is organized, psychologist and medical consultations are provided for children and parents"...</i> (Rasa, Lina) ... <i>"There is regular individual and group counseling for children and parents, which helps to get to know themselves better, parents are counseled on various issues by various specialists"...</i> (Ruta)..., <i>"We provide consultations to parents on the issues of raising and caring for children, there is no psychologist in the village, although parents are very eager for these services."...</i> (Aiste).
	Development of working skills	... <i>"Children prepare food, serve a table, wash dishes, tidy the premises"...</i> (Ruta)..., <i>In the village, children manage the environment, plant flowers in summer, rake leaves in autumn, and snow in winter"...</i> (Aiste)... <i>"We run a weekly session "Sweet Workshops", during which children make sweets"...</i> (Vilma).
	Catering	... <i>"Children receive free meals"...</i> (Lina, Daiva, Milda, Aiste)... <i>"Children receive food rations at home, and parents provide food before the annual holidays"...</i> (Rasa)... <i>"we provide food for low-income families"...</i> (Daiva)... <i>"Children receive free meals and have the opportunity to bring food home daily"...</i> (Ruta).

The obtained data allow stating that the services provided in both urban and rural areas are similar: preparation of lessons, development of social skills, free meals, trips, camps, consultations for parents and children. Daiva emphasized the participation of children in Holy Mass, as most children prepare for First Communion. Aiste and Vilma emphasized that the consultation of a psychologist is not provided in the rural children's day center, although it is very necessary for parents as well as children. Children in rural areas, due to lack of funds for excursions, have the opportunity to go only once a year. It can be said that the range of services offered in the Day center operating in town is larger and more diverse, as it employs more social workers, volunteers who can provide a wider range of activities, have more opportunities to go on excursions. In a rural area, limited access to the town makes it more difficult for families to get psychological counseling and staff has to organize and take children and parents to a psychologist. The workers try to consult parents and answer their questions.

Social workers told about the children's favorite and disliked activities at the CDC. According to social workers, children living in both rural and urban areas prefer more active activities such as excursions, camps, games, celebrations that give self-confidence, develop communication skills, understanding, friendliness, and a stronger sense of respect. During excursions and trips, children's behavior changes, they try to behave politely, their sense of respect grows, and they learn creativity, organization and decision-making skills. However, the results of the research revealed that children do not want to prepare homework, read books because it requires concentration, book evaluation, learn hygiene skills, participate in St. Mass and First Communion lessons.

Social workers constantly try to keep in touch with parents, communicate on the phone, through social networks, encourage participation in activities, and share information. Building sincere relationships, understanding, provides an opportunity to gain the trust of parents and

thus enable them to participate in activities. Milda emphasized that parents are most motivated to participate in the activities of the CDC by getting food support. According to Ruta, motivation and personal invitation also increase motivation. Daiva stressed the importance of accepting parents without being condemned and immortalized.

Having inquired about the activities in which parents usually participate in, the category Activities for Parents was distinguished and the six important subcategories are events, meetings, handicrafts, parenting skills training, volunteering, individual consultations (see table 2).

Parents participation in Children's Day Center activities

Table 2

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statements
Activities for parents	Events	... <i>"Mostly parents participate in festive events such as Christmas, Easter"...</i> (Rasa, Lina)... <i>"We went on a hike with Nordic sticks, parents were willing to participate"...</i> (Ruta)... <i>"On artistic creative afternoons we produce decorations before festivities in which children participate with their parents" ...</i> (Aiste, Vilma).
	Meetings	... <i>"Parents come to meet with doctors, representatives from employment services, a number of parents participate in a lecture about family budget"...</i> (Ruta)... <i>"Parents participate in conversations with a psychologist"...</i> (Daiva)... <i>"There are no many meetings with various specialists in the village, so we take parents to the Day center in town"...</i> (Aiste, Vilma)... <i>"Meeting with clergy take place before Christmas and Easter"...</i> (Lina).
	Handicrafts	... <i>"There are moms who like handicrafts, they knit, braid bracelets, make various things from beads, this activity is especially liked"...</i> (Milda)... <i>"Moms enjoy attending decoupage classes"...</i> (Daiva)... <i>"We went from the village to town to attend decoupage, painting on water classes, mothers liked them very much" ...</i> (Aiste, Vilma).
	Parental skills training	... <i>"Few parents wish to participate in parenting skills courses"...</i> (Lina, Ruta)... <i>"Parents prefer individual conversations about childcare, they do not want participate in group classes"...</i> (Daiva).
	Volunteering	... <i>"They participate very actively in Maistobankas campaigns"...</i> (Ruta, Lina, Daiva, Milda)... <i>" Many mothers volunteer in charity canteen"...</i> (Rasa)... <i>"In the country parents unwillingly contribute with their work, when we ask to help only mother comes"...</i> (Aistem).
	Individual consultations	... <i>"Parents want to talk, they want to be heard, mothers like to talk most"...</i> (Lina)... <i>"Parents trust us, ask for advice on various issues"...</i> (Daiva)... <i>in the country parents really need a psychologist's consultations, we don't have them, so take them to town"...</i> (Aiste).

In summary, it can be said that mothers are more involved in activities, and some discover their favorite activities and are willing to get involved. There are parents who enjoy sports; mothers are involved in handicraft activities. Some willingly participate in Maistobankas campaigns, meetings with various specialists, festive events. Rasa emphasized the mothers 'active volunteering in the charity canteen. Social workers working in rural areas emphasized the need for individual counseling. However, according to all social workers, very few parents want to participate in parenting skills training.

The social workers involved in the research expressed their views on the benefits of parental participation in the activities of the CDC for themselves and their children (see Table 3).

Importance of parents' participation in activities

Table 3

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statements
Importance of participation in activities	Social skills training	... <i>"They learn to cope with domestic chore tasks"...</i> (Daiva.)... <i>"The understanding about personal hygiene and dressing style is changing" ...</i> (Ruta) ... <i>"they start to better understand how to handle the financial affairs of the family"...</i> (Milda). <i>"They learn to cook"...</i> (Vilma)

Category	Subcategory	Confirmatory statements
	Parental skills	... <i>"Parents learn to understand their children and recognize feelings" ... (Daiva)... "they learn how to raise children without punishments and how to talk nicely with them"... (Aiste). "They start to notice their talents of their children, because they often do not know what their children are capable of"... (Lina).</i>
	Communication	... <i>"They learn to resolve the conflicts peacefully"... (Ruta) ...,"they acquire new communication skills, their speaking style is changing, they use less swear words"... (Daiva)... "They have more self-confidence"... (Aiste)... "There is an opportunity to spend time in another environment and share the experience and acquire new communication skills"... (Vilma).</i>
	New interests	... <i>"They learn to cook a variety of dishes"... (Milda). ... "While volunteering they acquire new knowledge"... (Rasa)... "By participating in artistic activities they have an opportunity to make decorations for their homes and themselves... (Aiste, Vilma).</i>
	Values	... <i>"The feeling of respect grows stronger"... (Rasa)... "They strive to change the lifestyle"... (Lina) ... "The responsibility for family is growing"... (Milda) ...,"During pastoral classes some parent change their lifestyle"... (Daiva).</i>

The results of the research revealed that parents' participation with their children in the CDC provides them with an opportunity to get to know their children better, spend time creatively in other environment, discover new hobbies, improve work skills, learn to change themselves and change lifestyle. According to the social workers, the participation of parents in the activities of the CDC is beneficial for the parents themselves because it provides an opportunity to change the value attitude towards the family, they can realize themselves. There are fewer cultural events in the rural areas, so the CDC is a place where parents can learn about novelties and have a good time.

Social workers need to make a significant effort to reach the change by collaborating and building relationships with parents. Problems often arise due to lack of parental motivation, lack of responsibility, unwillingness to cooperate and accept help, lack of awareness of one's responsibility for children, unwillingness to change lifestyle by giving up harmful habits, distrust of social workers. Sincere communication, understanding in the provision of various services gives positive results, but change is achieved through long and hard work, which provides peace of mind, helps to learn appropriate behavior and not to be socially excluded.

Conclusions

The Children's Day Center is an institution that provides services to children living in families with difficulties. The goal of the Children's Day Center is to encourage a child to feel a full member of society, to develop his / her self-expression, and to expand a child's cognitive and creative horizons.

In order to improve and normalize the relationship with the social environment, children's day centers organize leisure activities, lessons, free meals, and development of social and hygiene skills.

The research revealed that social workers in children's day care centers provide various services to children and their parents, such as socio-cultural, lesson preparation, social skills development, individual and group counseling, work skills development, and free meals. The most popular activities of children are excursions, camps, table games, watching movies, sports games, celebrating holidays as well as art classes. Children are reluctant to take part in homework assignments preparation, reading books, handicrafts, and pastoral care and hygiene skills.

According to social workers, parental participation in the activity of Children's day centers is very important, as their values change, new and improved social skills are acquired, communication and creative skills are revealed, material difficulties are learned, responsibility for one's children and family is strengthened. Some parents actively participate in events, meetings, handicraft classes, volunteering, individual consultations, but most parents do not want parenting skills training.

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Received: 15 December 2020

Accepted: 31 May 2021