

# Designing the Systemic Model of Child Welfare Moving from Child Protection to Development of Psychosocial Support for Families

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## AIM

This poster explains the current practice of child welfare system in the context of Lithuania. Based on statistical analysis generated results from a recent study. The poster will discuss how child neglect and violence against a child is conceptualized, what nature of intervention is dominant, and possibilities for the development of psychosocial services.

## INTRODUCTION

This project seeks to explore current practice of child welfare system in the context of Lithuania. Systematic approach based on ecological perspective is used in terms of the child welfare, which is considered as the interaction of the child development, parenting issues and social environment. In Europe, research on child welfare has long history, however, Lithuanian child welfare situation has not been systematically studied, nor has it been provided with the research-based knowledge necessary for the development of the system.

## CHILD WELFARE IN EASTERN/CENTRAL EUROPE

In the arena of child welfare Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries are faced with similarities, but each of it has its own different cultural, historical, political, social, economic backgrounds whose were strongly influenced by the Soviet ideology (Anghel, Herczog, Dima, 2013). In all CEE countries significant influences have been initiated by the ratification of UNCRC in the 1990s, which has according to Melton et. al. (2013) universalized demands for democracy and challenged the belief that even the smallest and most vulnerable as a child could be justifiably denied full recognition as persons entitled to human rights. Anghel, Herczog, Dima (2013) argued that the gap between policy and practice became extremely visible, whilst a child became invisible or was named as a group of "children left behind". The practice of child welfare is built mainly on political documents without the investment into the analysis and evaluation of the services and need (Anghel, Herczog, Dima, 2013). In Lithuania, child protection units are separated from social work services in child and family welfare (Nygren, Naujaniene, Nygren, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

Structured questionnaire has been developed on the grounds of Gilbert's model, the conceptual definitions by Gilbert were utilized for defining the research dimensions and generating corresponding items. Scale of Problem Frame, Scale of Aims of Interventions, Scale of Modes of Intervention, and Scale of State-Parent Relationship were built. The research sample was comprised of 498 respondents across Lithuania, representing different actors of the family and child welfare system. Statistical analysis generated results that allow to discuss how child neglect and violence against a child is conceptualized, what nature of intervention is dominant and possibilities for the development of psychosocial services. 7 type ranked responses from 1-never, 2-once, 3-several times at all, 4-rarely, time to time, 5-rarely, repeatedly, 6-often, repeatedly, 7-almost every day, were presented to the respondents. Through the Scales of State-Parent Relationship, 7 type ranked responses were presented from totally not agree to totally agree to identify the expectations of respondents with regard to State-Parent Relationship mode. Explorative factor analysis was used for data analysis in applying Alpha Factoring method and Varimax rotation. Factors were interpreted and labelled on the bases of the items and its correlations to the factors. Non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis H test ( $p < 0,05$ ) was used to identify the differences of perceptions of the respondents.



Source: lt.wikipedia.org



## RESULTS

### Problem Frame

Three factors were extracted from the Problem Frame scale that have been interpreted and labelled as "Harm to a child" (factor 1), "Abandoning parenting" (factor 2) and "Lack of accessibility to services" (factor 3). Two items on the disability of a child or parents, as well as one item on the CRC have been differentiated as having autonomous purport, thus, two-item group labelled as "Disability of a child or of parents" and one-item "Disregard the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child" (factor 5) have been identified. Five factor structure was justified and identified as problem frame for further analysis of child welfare system in Lithuania. The value of all five factors have been evaluated. Abandoning parenting have been identified as the most concerning factor that is met by child welfare professionals' repeatedly in their practice (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1. Values of the factors of Problem Frame (M)

By the area of responsibility, harm to a child, abandoning parenting and accessibility to services are comparatively urged more by Child Rights Service providers, when by social workers it urges the less.

### Aim of Intervention

Three factors were extracted from the Aim of Intervention scale that that have been interpreted and labelled as "Child's protection from a harm" (factor 1), "Parental empowerment" (factor 2) and "Guarantees for ensuring child's development and rights" (factor 3). Guarantees for ensuring child's development and rights have been identified as the most used aim of interventions that is met by child welfare professionals repeatedly in their practice, similarly as parental empowerment (Fig. 2).

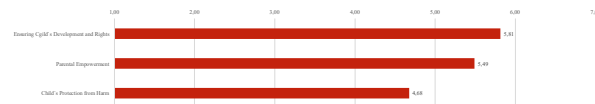


Fig. 2. Values of the factors of Aim of Interventions (M)

By the area of responsibility, child protection from the harm is most observed by Child Rights Service providers, empowerment of parents as well as ensuring child's development and rights are most observed by social workers.

### Modes of Intervention

Five factors were extracted from the Modes of Intervention scale that that have been interpreted and labelled as "Parenting Support" (factor 1), "Family Empowerment" (factor 2), "Accessibility of Services" (factor 3), Child's Rights Guaranties (factor 4), Family consultation and psychotherapy (factor 5). One item "Administrative penalties are imposed on parents for neglect of the child" have been differentiated and identified as well for further consideration.

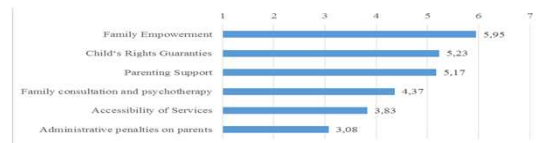


Fig. 3. Values of the factors of Modes of Interventions (M)

Family empowerment have been identified as the most used mode of interventions that is met by child welfare professionals repeatedly in their practice, child's rights guaranties and parenting support close to it. By the area of responsibility, guaranties for ensuring child's rights and administrative penalties are observed by Child Rights Service providers, when guaranties for ensuring child's rights, administrative penalties to parents and family empowerment are less observed by social service providers (managers and specialists).

## DISCUSSION

- Results of the study demonstrate that in unit 'problem frame' abandoning parenting have been identified as the most concerning factor that is met by child welfare professionals' repeatedly in their practice. Lack of parenting skills and parental addictive diseases are most commonly named as characteristic of a problem. It resonates with problem frame in 'child protection' orientation so named by Gilbert (2012).
- Social workers who are delegated to work with families more often aims intervention to support parents/caregivers or other family members by developing their paternity capacity and to decrease socio-economic stress (unemployment, poverty, etc.) that parents experience. While Child Rights Service providers' aims to protect children from physical, psychological harm and from sexual violence.
- Family empowerment have been identified as the most used mode of interventions that is met by child welfare professionals repeatedly in their practice, child's rights guaranties and parenting support close to it. When factor of administrative penalties on parents have been identified as the least used.

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