FAMILIES AT RISK – PERCEPTION OF PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN PUBLIC AND CIVIL SECTOR

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Content

Context of research

Research objective and methods

What professionals said about families at risk, resilience, their work with families?

Contemporary and future challenges
Context of research

• Supplement of main study „Specific characteristics of families at risk: contribution to complex interventions planning – FamResPlan (Croatian Science Foundation, IP-2014-09-9515)

• The overall objective of main study - identify characteristics of specific groups of families at risk, their resilience, readiness for change, readiness for intervention; complex family interventions planning

• Main focus on the families and their perspective

• Research gap - perception of professionals working with families at risk (Short-term project support from the University of Zagreb)
Why is it important to fill the gap?

- **Family resilience concept** is new, under-researched process, many challenges in conceptualization and operationalization.

- **Complex needs of families at risk vs. current intervention system** – matching is permanent challenge.

- **Importance of perception of professionals** – ”the doers of the action”, day by day with families at risk, professional challenges.

- **Interdisciplinary approach and cooperation** – need and challenge.

- **Social Welfare Center (public sector)** – first point in risk situations and problems, current capacity is only for administrative and financial help and services.

- **Nongovermental sector (NGOs)** – extended hand of public sector, the number of services depends on the locality and current projects priorities, inidividual and group services for children and families at risk.
Research
Families at risk - perception of professionals working in public and civil sector

The main objective

Insight in experiences and perceptions of professionals working with families in risk, concerning family resilience

Research questions

1) What professionals define as risks and needs of families at risk?
2) How do professionals describe family resilience?
3) How do professionals describe interventions with families at risks?
4) How do professionals see their competences and capacity of system for working with families at risk?
Two focus groups conducted in 2018

Participants
- 11 professionals working in public and civil sector – Social Welfare Center Zagreb and NGOs Ambidekster and Children First
- Only females, work experience is from 3 to 35 years
- Professions: social pedagogues, psychologists, social workers
- Specific neighborhood in Zagreb, large number of families at risk

Data analysis
- Qualitative approach, thematic analysis
Results

FAMILIES RISKS AND NEEDS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF FORMAL DEFINITIONS

DIFFICULTIES IN DEFINING FAMILY RESILIENCE

RISKS
Multiple risks
Service system
Values and culture

PROTECTIVE FACTORS
Individual factors
Family factors
Community

RESILIENCE AS OUTCOME
From individual to family resilience
Attachment, communication and adaptability
Community support

Model of resilience as process (Ferić, Maurović, Žižak, 2016)
Professionals describing interventions for families

- Complex (simultaneously more types, two or three systems, intensive)
- Flexible (time, individual and family risk, needs, strengths)
- Need for participation (for everybody included, outcome that is relevant for family)
- Family readiness for intervention and individual non readiness for change
- Many outcomes of interventions (difficult to manage and describe)

- Are needs complex because the existing interventions can not match them or the interventions are ineffective because the needs are so complex? (Rankin, Regan, 2004)
- Desinging interventions depends on understanding the underlying problem and context (Campbell et. al, 2007)
Professionals working in public and civil sector

SOCIAL WELFARE CENTER

• Lower readiness for change
• Traditional risk orientation in assessment of families
• Poor experience of direct work with families at risk
• Lack of relevant support and feeling exhausted (no influence, no resources, we vs. them)

NGOs

• Resilient and skillful
• Orientation on strengths, dynamic risks and needs
• Enthusiasm and flexibility
• Experiences of financial risks
• Problems of local coverage and overlapping services
Families at risk need professionals who are...

**People friendly**
- Authentic
- Patient
- Caring and interested
- Culturally sensitive
- Participation oriented

**Professionally skilled**
- Good assessment of family skills (strengths oriented)
- Good social skills
- Ready to lifelong learning

**Networked**
- Continuously working with one family
- Ready for cooperation with other providers of services
Overcoming the barriers - contemporary or future challenge?

A family’s ability to be resilient in the face of normative or significant risk is related not only to their internal processes but also to the risks or opportunities in the social systems in their ecological context (Patterson, 2002)

- **Insight into perception of professionals** – new knowledge of understanding families at risk and planning interventions
- The importance of **empowering professionals who work in public sector**
- Need to **improve cooperation between Centers and NGOs** – balance in providing services, transparency and sector intervention planning
- Strong message for **future professionals** who will work with families at risk - new knowledge for curriculums, study programs
- **Our current projects in process**..
In the end...

“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD. INDEED, IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.”

- MARGARET MEAD
Thank you for your attention!
Grazie mille!
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