PARENTS’ SUPPORT IN PARTICIPATING IN ORGANIZED LEISURE
TIME ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

A family is not just a group of individuals but it is distinguished by the complexity of family members’ mutual relationships. The family, as a primary group based on different relationships and functions, performs, firstly a generational, cultural, historical and religious transfer (Mijatović, 1995). Its members know each other well and they are relatively tightly connected with the feeling of togetherness and solidarity, and satisfy within the family their basic needs for security, belonging, support and the sense of self-worthiness. The family generationally transfers to its members the standards of behavior and establishes a system of value enabling the basic physical, social and psychic conditions for adjustment. Taking into consideration the development age of the child or adolescent, the development tasks of the family change making the role of the parent changeable. Caring for a child refers to an appropriate diet, health care, upbringing, social and emotional support and encouraging education, and, to be more exact, refers to the entire care for the child's well-being. The parents' interest in developing potentials does not refer solely to being directed towards the school success of children and adolescents but also to being interested in development in general. They should show interest in leisure time space where intellectual potentials and interests can develop through games, hobbies, out of school activities, visits to cultural institutions (libraries, theaters, museums) joint selection and watching of quality television programs, and conversations on seen and experienced. Clark (1990) indicates how pupils who are included in different activities and out of school forms of studying and who are encouraged by their parents, show a high school success. The work shows the research results performed on examples of 970 elementary school pupils in the region of two Croatian counties and refers to the support parents offer to pupils engaged in organized activities in their leisure time.

Keywords: parents, pupils, organized activities in leisure time, support.

1 INTRODUCTION

Continuous observation, monitoring and study of specific dimensions of socio-pedagogical space and the active action within it contributes to the increase in the quality of pedagogical work in upbringing and education. One of the fields in which school and the family as basic instances of socialization can and should act in synergy is leisure time. Domestic and foreign research indicate the need and justification in studying leisure time of children and youth. However, pedagogical theory in Croatia deals with leisure time insufficiently or sporadically as its own scientific preoccupation. It is extracurricular and out of school activities, in theory and practice, that affect to some extent the culture of conducting leisure time [1]. In order to develop the culture of leisure time in pupils, and its influence on future life in general, it is not unimportant whether leisure time is spent in walking, going out, reading, listening to music, watching television, being by the computer, following a cultural and entertainment program or giving way to “risky” pastime activities. The socialization of children is conducted in a wider social and cultural context, in interaction with family members, peers, friends, neighbours, and teachers. We can define socialization as a “process during which society shapes a child’s assurances, expectations and behavior” [2]. The family represents an important factor in the context of a child’s social development, while a strong emotional connection created in childhood is the basis for the future success of a child’s emotional, social and intellectual skills [3].

Klarin emphasizes that “upbringing should be observed as a part of the social context”, while parenthood as a social process that includes offering assistance and support to a child during socialization in different social environments [4]. Ecologically directed development psychologists are of the opinion that the development of a child includes the continuous joint action of its innate traits and the influence of the environment. It is possible, among other, to observe the socialization process within the Brofenbrenner theory of the ecological system that is made up of four basic structures: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. It namely concerns a series of connected
structures in which the daily life of a child (man) is conducted and which has a significant influence on its development. The microsystem factors here have the strongest influence on a child’s development, while factors from more distant structures have an indirect influence on the child.

Parenthood is one of the most important roles that an individual takes upon himself, and the social context in which it is realized has a significant influence on how it will be, taking into particular consideration the fact that it does not take place in a space and time vacuum but is influenced by all social processes (economic, demographic, value system changes and similar) [5]. Parents are the first individuals that influence a child’s physical, social, intellectual, emotional and moral development is stated by Rosić and Zloković, and they point out that parents’ positive encouragements and offering assistance to a child help significantly in the child’s development [6]. Numerous works speak of the influence of the upbringing style and risk/protection factors of parents influencing the development and behavior of a child from the family point of view [7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13].

Darling and Steinberg conclude that the style of the parents represents a constellation of parents’ attitudes towards a child, which determine the emotional climate where specific parent behavior is shown, and they point out the significance of the integrative model of parenthood [14]. According to their opinion, parents’ procedures have a direct influence on specific child behavior as, for example, a child’s academic achievements and characteristics such as the confidence of a child, adoption of the value system unlike the parent style that indirectly influences development.

The new concept that is being promoted through the activities of the European Council is positive parenthood, which can be observed as a positive end to the continuum between hostile, discouraging and incoherent parent behavior and friendly, accepting and participatory parent behavior [15]. The frequently studied dimension of the parenting style is the involvement of parents, which Maccoby and Martin describe as a measure where parents are interested in the child’s life, how much they know of the child’s life and how actively they participate in it [16]. However, this dimension of parents’ style includes offering the child determined resources such as spending time with the child, showing interest and attention to the child, and, unavoidably, offering emotional support [17]. Pulkkinen has long since noticed how high levels of parent inclusion are connected to competence and motivation in a child’s achievement, while Stevenson and Baker [18,19] confirm the positive connection between parent inclusion in school activities and a child’s school success. The research of Topor and associates speaks in favor of the herein mentioned whereby it was found that an increased parent inclusion was significantly connected with the child’s perception of his own cognitive capacities [20].

2 METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to examine whether pupils in their leisure time were included in organizing extra-curricular and out of school activities, and acquired the support of their parents in participating in the selected activities. The research started with the assumption that (H1) pupils included in extra-curricular and out of school activities acquired the satisfactory support from their parents in participating in such activities, and (H2) that there was a connection between the family structure (wholeness) and the support parents give to their children in participating in extra-curricular or/and out of school activities.

2.1 Instrument

A survey questionnaire was drawn up for the needs of the research and it consisted of questions on the socio-demographic features of the examinees. Examinees were, furthermore, questioned on whether they participated in the work of organized free time activities in school and outside school, the type of activity and the time spent in the activity, family structure. The examinees evaluated the relationship of parents towards participation in extra-curricular and out of school activities at the 5th degree of Likert’s scale of negative polarized with values from 1 (I completely disagree) to 5 (I completely agree) which consisted of 9 confirmations.

2.2 Sample structure

The research was in nine primary schools of Zadar and Šibenik-Knin county. The sample consisted of higher grade elementary school pupils in a total of 970 pupils, 477 (49.3%) boys and 491 (50.7%) girls respectively. The sampling method was applied due to the possibility of examining all elementary school pupils. Taking into consideration the grade they were attending, 322 (33.2%) sixth grade pupils, 313 (32.3%) seventh grade and 335 (34.5%) eighth grade pupils were examined. Among all
respondents (N=970), 99.3% are answered the question about the structure of the family. 88.7% of the respondents confirmed that live with both parents, 10.8% with one parent and 0.7% without parents.

3 RESULTS

From 970 examinee pupils 34.6% (N=336) participated in extracurricular activities in school, while a much greater number 65.4% (N=634) did not participate in the mentioned activities. The results showed a relatively low percentage of pupil participation in extracurricular activities organized by the school. With contrast to extracurricular activities, a greater number of pupils 53% (N=514) spent their time in organized out-of-school activities. Some respondents also participate in extra-curricular and out-of-school activities.

The basics of descriptive statistics of the parental support scale are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particles of the parental support scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>AA</th>
<th>Mod</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Asymmetrical distributions (Skewness)</th>
<th>Flattening distributions (Kurtosis)</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Stat. signific.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents encourage me to choose activities</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.620</td>
<td>-3.772</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>16,660</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I speak with my parents on activity work and events</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.905</td>
<td>-1.980</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>3.896</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents help me if I have some problem with my activities</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.947</td>
<td>-1.793</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>2.808</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents expect me to participate regularly in activity</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>-1.180</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>1.159</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents follow trainings, rehearsals and other events connected with my participation</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.239</td>
<td>-.868</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>-.193</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents know my peers with whom I go to activities</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.187</td>
<td>-.900</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>-.127</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are proud of me for my participation and success realized in activities</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td>-2.550</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>7.366</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents support me in being persistent in participating in activities</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.656</td>
<td>-2.790</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>9.261</td>
<td>.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.318</td>
<td>-2.503</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td>4.388</td>
<td>.563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High values of central tendency measures (arithmetic environments and modes) considering the scale direction indicate the offer of high positive support of parents in engaging in activities.

The Chi-squared test (for one sample) tested the differences between theoretic and empiric frequencies. Taking into consideration the statistical significance in all particles, we can conclude that we are dealing with differences considering the distribution of theoretic and empiric frequencies, dealing with the direction of attitude (positive) which is respectively in line with high arithmetic environments. It also concerns the left asymmetric distributions, which are of significantly leptokurtic distribution in the majority of particles, and in line with low variance values (dispersion measure) which implies perception uniformity.

The highest arithmetic medium, besides the undetermined particle Other (AS=4.89), is born by the particle My parents encourage me to choose by myself the activities in which to participate (AS=4.78). 639 pupils of the total sample (N=970) of participants answered the question, from which (84.8%) agree completely and (11.3%) mainly agree whereby parents encourage them to choose by themselves the activities in which to participate, while 2.2% agree partially with 1.7% pupils that do not agree at all. This result points to the democratic upbringing style with reference to parents and pupils examinees.

The particle that takes second place according to arithmetic environment values (AS=4.71) is My parents support me in being persistent in participating in activities because they know how it is important for me. 78% of the total number of pupils (N=639) that answered this question agree.
completely while 15.2% mainly agree on how their parents support them in their work and participation in activities. According to the partial agreement expressed, 4.5% of pupils do not acquire sufficient support from parents in being persistent in their work, while 1.4% do not agree with the support relationship from their parents.

The particle **My parents are proud of me for my participation and success realized in activities** follows, and its arithmetic medium is 4.66. Pupils’ answers from the sample (N=639), which is complete agreement (76.25%) and main agreement (16.4%) speak of the positive parent relationship towards the success realized by their children, while partial agreement is confirmed by 5.3% of pupils. However, 2% of pupils confirm disagreement with the mentioned answer saying that their parents are not proud of their realized success.

The particle **I speak with my parents on activity work and events** has the value of arithmetic medium 4.46. 65.3% of examinees completely agree, and 22.4% mainly agree that they speak with their parents on what they do and which are the events at their activities, partially confirmed by only 7.8% of pupils. 4.5% completely or mainly do not agree that they speak with their parents on the events at their activities. Parents with such a relationship, disinterested in the contents and events respectively, have a dissuasive influence on the child’s further participation in activities, and if such an attitude is transferred onto school tasks and other child activities, it makes it possible being deprivation in upbringing. However, more than 87% of pupils talk to their parents on their work and events in extracurricular and out of school activities.

The particle **Parents help me if I have some problem with my activities** (AS=4.42) speaks of how parents are there for their children when they have difficulties. The sample of 20.7% mainly agree and 64.6% completely agree in having their parents help them in connection with an activity where they have an issue or problem. However, 9.1% of pupils partially agree with the fact that parents help them in solving eventual issues, while 5.6% of pupils confirm that they do not get any help.

The arithmetic environment (3.91) of the particle **My parents know my peers with whom I go to activities** has a somewhat lower value. In its partially (18.5%), mainly (29.3%) and completely (42.1%) agreeing, a large number of examinees confirm that parents know their peers who participate in activities with them, while a certain amount of pupils mainly (8.3%) or completely disagrees (5.3%) with this. Namely, some parents know their children’s peers participating in activities with them because they may be friends for which the child has chosen the activity, classmates, children from the same school or neighborhood, or a peer the child made friends with at extra-curricular and out of school activities. Some parents do not know their children’s peers for they are not interested, they do not speak with their children on the subject or do not have the possibility of meeting them in not having followed the events connected with the activities, which is confirmed by the following results.

In line with the high values of central tendency measures (Chi-squared test) the H1 assumption is confirmed in which children included in extra-curricular and out of school activities get a satisfactory support from their parents for participating in such activities.

The research has also confirmed that there is a connection between the structure (wholeness) of the family and the support parents give to their children for participating in extra-curricular and out of school activities. In order to establish the connection between the mentioned variables is the non-
parametric Spearman correlation coefficient. The correlation levels and statistical significance are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Correlations between family structure and parent support**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family structure</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents encourage me to choose activities</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents help me if I have some problem with my activities</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents expect me to participate regularly in activity</td>
<td>-0.024</td>
<td>-0.091*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents follow trainings, rehearsals and other events</td>
<td>-0.087*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents know my peers with whom I go to activities</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents are proud of me for my participation</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents support me in being persistent in participating in activities</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| * level of statistical significance 0,05

As it is visible in Table 2, there is a statistically significant connection between the family structure and particles *They know the peers with whom I go to activities* (ρ=-0.091) and *They are proud of me for my participation and success realized in my activities* (ρ=-0.087). Even though the correlations are statistically significant, and of very low negative sign, we cannot initiate a significant connection between the family structure and parents’ relationship towards the participation in extra-curricular and out of school activities.

### 4 CONCLUSIONS

A strong emotional connection created in childhood is an assumption for the successful development of a child’s emotional, social and intellectual skills. It is, therefore, important for children and adolescents to acquire the corresponding “directions” of development from their parents as the most significant people in the environment connected to school tasks as well as in the field of leisure time affirmation through the participation in organized activities.

Shaw and associates [21] confirm that the family has an important role in creating the context of leisure time. Parents significantly influence children and adolescents in choosing the contents of their leisure time entertainment and recreation. With their (non)participation, they facilitate or limit in numerous ways the development of interest and capacities in their children. However, through their own and joint activities in leisure time as well as the material, organizational and time resources they put at disposal, parents have a positive influence on shaping the whole personality of their children and contribute to leisure time culture development.

A good relationship between parents and children consists in establishing a balance between their independence and protection, setting limits and respecting the rules of conduct. An inappropriate relationship, from any side, between parents and children/adolescents slows down and restrains the optimal development of self-understanding that can stimulate the development of depression [22]. Therefore, a consistent parental control and inclusion in daily activities is necessary along with understanding, love and support.

Bandura states that children with a high self-respect come from parents that offer them support, accept and support them in versatile development [7]. Pupils included in different activities and forms of out of school learning, and who are encouraged, realized high school achievement [10]. On the other hand, the feeling of rejection from parents contributes to the development of different types of behavioral disorders: aggressive, delinquent and addictive behavior [13]. The social environment influences the value of children and adolescents. Those pupils who participate in the work of organized activities are under the influence of culture and experience and the experience thus acquired [23], and most extracurricular and out of school activities are governed by an atmosphere
that promotes prosocial values and behavior. Therefore, engagement in organized activities supported by parents has multiple implications on the development of children and adolescents.

REFERENCES
