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CORRELATION BETWEEN WORK ENGAGEMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE OF USERS LIVING WITH SUPPORT IN RESIDENTIAL UNITS

Abstract

Over the past five decades, a number of changes have occurred in the treatment of people with intellectual disabilities. There is a tendency to redesign the society mainly intended for „healthy, capable and powerful“ and to create an inclusive society with equal access to all its citizens. Deinstitutionalization is one of the processes that particularly contributed to improving the quality of life of adults with intellectual disabilities and their social inclusion in all mainstreams of contemporary living. Assessing the quality of life and work engagement of adult users is inevitable, as the process results in new configurations of needs and services for more successful

and better inclusion in society. The survey includes 80 persons with intellectual disability, beneficiaries of residential units with supported living in Skopje and Negotino. The common findings suggest that users of these housing units consider that additional activities are required to organize their spare time. It is also necessary to engage users with more activities as it affects their mood and are considered socially useful citizens. Generally, it can be concluded that work engagement affects the quality of life of this category of peoples, indicating the need to expand the activity of day care centres in Skopje and Negotino and acceptance in the local environment for this category of people. This will contribute to greater independence and social inclusion of adults with intellectual disabilities.

Key Words: intellectual disability, moderate and severe intellectual disability, home engagement and gardening, engagement in day-care centre, engagement in community.

Introduction

The term “quality of life” is a multi-dimensional concept influenced by various environmental and individual factors as well as their interrelationships. It is a complex concept that includes: the psychological state of the person, the physical state, personal beliefs and social relationships, the degree of independence, and so on. This concept takes into account subjective pleasures, individual needs and demands, acts in

accordance with their abilities and improves the overall life of the individual. It performs in accordance with special rehabilitation and education and embraces human values (Kostic-Ivanovic, V., 2015).

During the last two decades, the issue of redefining and promoting the concept of quality of life for persons with intellectual disability has been promoted, both theoretically and in terms of the needs of practical implementation in the defined benchmarks in the field of social policy and in this relation with the creation of a support program and evaluation of services. The values and characteristics of the indicators measuring the quality of life of persons with learning disabilities, depend equally on individuals and on multidimensional features, the strategic approach at different stages of the population's habilitation process. The predictors of quality of life can be grouped into two categories: personal and social. Personal categories include personal characteristics (health status, index of developed adaptive skills and presence of changing behaviour), and social ones refer to the characteristics of the environment such as: social support, living conditions, dynamics of participation in life activities, material security as well as job satisfaction (Kaljača S., Milisavljevič, 2013).

In the last three decades, people with intellectual disabilities tend to be more likely to participate in different life activities in their surroundings, but a satisfactory level of integration cannot yet be

discussed. Primarily because of the fact that the current rehabilitation system does not recognize, to the extent necessary, individual characteristics, specifics of needs and quality of life experiences in those individuals. Inaccessible definitions and evaluations of the type and quality of treatment of these people for participation in the environment arise as an essential task that enables people to truly learn to use strategies to facilitate community engagement. Otherwise, well-defined integration programs can potentially be more harmful and frustrating than useful (Cummins & Lauy, 2003). In the two residential units operating on the principle of supportive living, both in Negotino and Skopje, creative workshops are being prepared within the day centre with beneficiaries participating. Here, people with intellectual abilities have the opportunity to develop and adopt academic knowledge through creative workshops.

Day-care centres, in addition to providing day care, also provide training in educational knowledge and skills, cultural entertainment and recreational activities within their capabilities. All of these activities have one goal, which is to alleviate the consequences of intellectual disability.

According to Petrov, "It is the construction and application of specific and social, medical, special education and other forms of work, which, among other things, should provide basic stimuli and motivation of intellectually impaired persons to overcome many ob-

stacles and problems, such as gaining some experience.” (Petrov R., 1999)

A support system strategy is being developed on the basis of social processes and the social model of disability, as well as socio-environmental concepts that favour the importance of interacting with persons with intellectual disabilities in the environment they are living in. The support system is implemented in the Habitational and Educational Services for the Person with Intellectual Disability. The concept of support implies an assessment of the specific need for adaptation of the individual. Therefore, it defines strategic approaches that are in line with the individual’s personal needs, preferences, desires and socio-cultural norms (Kaljača S., Milisavljevič, 2013).

The Centre for Support of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities “Poraka –Negotino” from Negotino is a parenting, non-governmental organization. The Living with Support Program for People with Intellectual Disabilities is an active part of the work of the Centre for Support for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities “Poraka Negotino” - Negotino. The first residential community was opened in 2008, and by the end of 2009 the Supportive Living Service was fully established. It is the first Living Support Service for persons with intellectual disabilities in the Republic of North Macedonia. Since January 2012, “Poraka Negotino” - Negotino started managing the Community Supported Living Services in Skopje. This Ser-

vice has seven residential communities in Skopje with a total of 32 people with intellectual impairment who were previously housed in the Special Institution in Demir Kapija.

“Poraka Negotino” has established supportive living in Negotino and Skopje. “Poraka Negotino” aims to develop this model of service in other cities in country. The Supportive Living Program for People with Intellectual Disabilities is an active part of the work of the Centre for Support of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities “Poraka Negotino” - Negotino and it currently supports a total of 80 persons with intellectual disabilities in Negotino and Skopje, formerly housed in the Special Institution in Demir Kapija or some other institutions, and some of the beneficiaries come from biological or foster families.

The beneficiaries are from 18 to 63 years old, i.e. this type of support is intended for adults with intellectual disability. The distribution of persons in housing communities by age and type of disability does not exist, and therefore different types of support are offered. But they receive 24-hour support from trained assistants. Supporting these people is realized through performing various activities in their daily lives in their apartments, for the purpose of enabling them autonomy, self-control and self-efficacy. The service as well provides adequate health care by providing a 24-hour family doctor.

Community-supported housing services of “Poraka Negotino” in terms of

equipment, teaching, recreational and other means of work are co-financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Mental Health Initiative from Budapest, in their daily work for organizing better quality services to the users who use these services “Poraka Negotino” - Negotino is working on new projects, innovations and various other activities that involve the users on a daily basis.

Methodology

The survey was conducted with a census of the population users of residential units with support in 2018. At the time of the survey, a total of 80 persons with intellectual disability were beneficiaries of this form of non-institutional protection.

At the level of the Republic of North Macedonia there are housing units with support in two cities, Skopje and Negotino. The survey covered all persons who are beneficiaries of these housing units. At the time of the survey 33 users were accommodated in the first unit for support in Negotino, 16 in the third unit in Negotino and 31 in the second unit for support in Skopje.

The survey questionnaires were completed with the help of assistants employed in the residential units. The type and degree of disability did not allow for independent filling out by users. Where needed, we used help from staff in day-care centres or residential support units. For the purpose of this research a questionnaire with 16 questions on job

engagement assessment was designed. This questionnaire is of a closed type with a five-point Likert-type scale. Six of the statements refer to work engagement at home, 3 to activities in the backyard and in the household economy, 3 to engagement in day-care centre, and 4 to community work.

Results and discussion

Assessment of the quality of life of adults with intellectual disabilities included in the supported living program shows that all respondents belong to the category of satisfied respondents in the community, where two thirds belong to an overly satisfied group. A high percentage of respondents, or 90 percent, consider themselves equally successful compared to other people in their home environment. Many of the respondents perceive themselves as professional and competent, and are satisfied with their jobs. When it comes to autonomy in making different decisions, as one of the indicators of quality of life, it is largely present in everyday activities, such as satisfying marital needs, as well as the way and choice of leisure activities, choice related with employment, disposal of the domestic budget, and treatment, are managed in agreement with the persons providing assistance (Bilić i Bratković, 2004).

At the basic level, at all beneficiaries of Independent Living Services professionals in both cities report positive results. The results suggest that this form of living and the use of resources by the

local community contributes to improving the quality of life of these people. Namely, the majority of users have noticed that there has been an improvement in basic hygiene care - hand washing before each meal, and some users have improved morning hygiene - tooth and face washing skills. Experts point out that users also notice an improvement in the perception of their body hygiene. This is due to the result that users maintain their hygiene at least twice a week whether with verbal or with direct support (Elena Stepanoska, 2012).

In his doctoral dissertation, Kostic-Ivanovic examines the quality of life of 130 adults with intellectual disabilities from different living conditions, concluding that the quality of life differs between the three groups of respondents (those living with their families, institutionally and those living in self-supporting communities). According to the people with intellectual disability, the best quality of life is given to those from families. The quality of life depends on the intellectual, educational and working status of persons with disabilities. The author points out that there is a strong correlation between choices in everyday life (self-determination) and quality of life (Kostic Ivanovic, 2014).

In a study by Agai, Petrov, Georgievska (2014), a study was conducted regarding adults with intellectual disabilities performing daily activities for an improved independent living. Asked if people with intellectual disabilities can know how to establish a family, can on

a daily bases go to work, can live independently with some support, can prepare a simple lunch, parents are sympathetic to their children and feel that they can go to work, while professionals have the opposite opinion thinking that these people cannot be trained for occupations and cannot be employed for a full time. If was determined that adults are able to perform simple work operations, they rarely live independently, without supervision and assistance from others, and due to slowed-down and often disharmonic cognitive development, these individuals have serious difficulties in acquiring hygiene, occupational and social skills and abilities, especially academic skills.

This study notes that individuals are self-sufficient in preparing and serving meals, as well as preparing daily lunch. The same users are independent when sorting products. For the purpose of involving all the users in these activities, some participate in setting the table for dining and adjusting the utensils, and others in clearing and wiping the crumbs.

According to Petrov's study, Stepanoska, Stanojkovska-Trajkovska, Misovska-Stojanovska (2014) it is found that staying in the community contributes to better communication with people with severe intellectual disability, and those who have been there for 2 years have average communication skills. Communication skills have increased at those with longer stays. It can be concluded that staying in an external

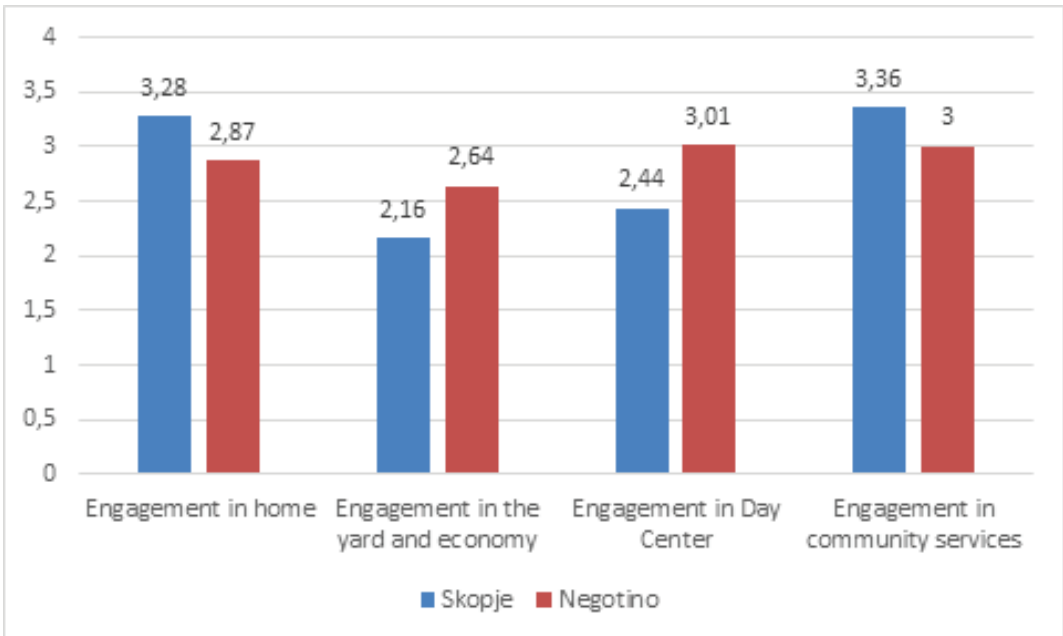


Chart 1. Summary of the work engagement of users from both cities

environment enables the development of communication skills and abilities. The same study shows that more than half of the respondents know very little or nothing about money. Even those who have been in the facility for more than 3 years have low ability to recognize the money.

Table 1 shows a statistically significant difference at the significance level of $p < 0.05$ and we can conclude that

people employed at home are more satisfied with their quality of life.

Table 2 shows no statistically significant difference and we can conclude that work engagement in yard does not play a role in satisfaction with our sample of respondents.

Despite our expectations, Table 3 does not show a statistically significant difference, and we can conclude that working in a day-care centre does not affect the quality of life of users of resi-

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Work engagement at home	Between the groups	1.012,465	4	253,116	2,434	<0.05
	Within the groups	10.081,135	85	118,602		
	Total	11.093,600	89			

Table 1. Significance of differences between groups regarding work engagement at home

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Work engagement in the backyard and in the household economy	Between the groups	1.012,465	4	253,116	1,134	>0.05
	Within the groups	10.081,135	85	118,602		
	Total	11.093,600	89			

Table 2. Significance of differences between groups with regard to work engagement in the backyard and in the household economy

dential units with support in Skopje and Negotino.

on the activities of the other three segments we evaluated, important for the

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Work engagement in day-care centre	Between the groups	1.012,465	4	273,116	2,134	>0.05
	Within the groups	10.081,135	85	138,602		
	Total	11.093,600	89			

Table 3. Significance of differences between groups regarding day-care centre engagement

Table 4 shows no statistically significant difference at significance level.

Starting with the fact that users of residential units with support are mostly involved in the activities in their home, we believe that it is necessary to focus

functioning of a supportive independent life, but above all social contacts and the realization of a sense of usefulness in the environment as well as in the community where people with intellectual disability live.

		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Work engagement in the community	Between the groups	1.042,455	4	251,116	1,934	>0.05
	Within the groups	10.031,135	85	115,602		
	Total	11.073,600	89			

Table 4. Significance of differences between groups in terms of work engagement in the community

In that direction, it is required to work on:

- Increasing of the number of Independent Living Services for a more successful deinstitutionalization process;
- Greater cooperation with the local government and involvement of the beneficiaries of the residential units for independent living in the activities of the local community;
- Raising public awareness and informing the local community about living together and accepting people with intellectual disabilities;
- Expanding the activity of the day centres in Negotino and Skopje and expanding the production, expanding them into companies that would provide income for the users.

Conclusion

By analysing Communities of Supported Living Services on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia, we want to identify the factual situation of users with intellectual disabilities,

their engagement in and out of the service facility, as well as to fully assess their quality of life. During the research we have identified a deficit of services intended for this category of persons with disabilities. Namely, there are only two available services in the Republic of North Macedonia provided for persons with intellectual impairments in the cities of Skopje and Negotino. Whereas the correlation between work engagement activities divided into four groups showed no statistically significant difference at the level of $p > 0,05$ in work engagement at home. Within this realm there is probably the most complete support from assistants and most of the activities are taking place in the home so that impacts on these activities to positively contribute to users' quality of life. Work engagement with the other three groups of activities (in the day-care centre, backyard, household economy and social community) did not show a positive correlation. This suggests that users should be more involved outside the home in work operations that will contribute to improving overall quality of life and social integration.

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