

## Organization of the Practices for Family Social Services Offered by Non-Profit Organizations in the Northern Regions of Albania



### Psychology

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### Abstract

Family is evaluated as a principal source of human capital. Family support with social services is an obligation for local government structures and the non-profit organizations. In this context it is important to analyze the organization of family social services provided locally by the NGOs. The paper aims to explore and evaluate the practices of family social services provided by the non-profit organizations in the northern regions of Albania. Furthermore, it is an objective of this study to analyze the elements related to the organization of these services and to identify problems addressed by the NGOs that operate in the area study. A quantitative research method has been used. The field study was done in the northern region of Albania, including her four Districts, in its main cities: Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës and Peshkopi. In the study participated 19 NGOs. The conclusions of this paper present the analysis of the practices of social services for family. A main place in the organization of these services occupy children, fundamental human rights, organization of services for individual and family needs, as well as the collaboration with local governments and other civil society organizations.

### 1. Introduction

“The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.” Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16 (3). Caring for the family is a proof, which is based on the best practices (Cooley, E.C. & McAllister, J.E. (1999). Thomas (2000) argues that the empowerment of a family throughout social services is not a simple issue. The support of families and individuals with social services is a process which needs collaboration of all actors. That is why, in national documents and more specifically in standard number 7 of the Standards for Social Services in Albania (October 2005), it is emphasized that the collaboration with other actors in order to fulfill better beneficiaries needs is of a special importance for service suppliers. It is clearly determined that non-profit organizations must have the opportunity to participate during conclusion of social services.

Also, in international documents as Social Platform (2008), a platform of NGOs working in the social field at the EU level (European Federation of National Organizations. Annual Theme 2011), in order to guarantee quality in social services, it is importantly emphasized the principle of collaboration through community and other actors. In our society, non-profit organizations contribute only on social protection of vulnerable families, sustaining them with different dimensions of social services.

Based on this contest, takes place the aim of this study, tending to analys of the practices of social services for family, focusing on the key elements of the organization of these services , the way they are organized and the problems related and treated from the non-profit organizations that operate in th northern regions of Albania. The data of this study are part of my research dissertation related to the evaluation process of family social services in the north area of Albania, which are offered from non-profit organizations and local government.

The family is considered as an important place of the welfare state intervention with policies and services which require combating the social exclusion (Hughes, N., 2010). Heintz (2006) in his study emphasizes that increasingly, the existence of non-profit organizations is proved to be a necessary and not a luxury for societies in the whole modern world. He points that non-profit organizations play an important role in the development of the society, enabling citizens to work together in order to voluntarily promote social values and civil purposes. When working with practical models given importance to the family, evaluation of these services is a process and a product at the same time. Mortello (2008) expresses that evaluation is a specific analysis, which fits with the context, and aims the understanding of mechanisms which facilitates the success or failure of programs, projects and services.

## 2. Methodology

The paper aims to explore and evaluate the practices of family social services provided by the non-profit organizations in the northern regions of Albania. Furthermore, it is an objective of this study to analyze the elements related to the organization of these services, identify problems addressed by the NGOs that operate in the area study. The study is conducted in the northern region of Albania, including her four Districts, in its main cities: Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës and Peshkopi. Specifically, in this study participated 19 NGOs operating in the study area.

This study was based on a quantitative research method. The instrument used for data gathering is the questionnaire. In order to achieve the goal, the study is focused on two research question, which are:

1. Which are the social services for families offered by the non-profit organizations in the northern regions of Albania?
2. How are organized these social services for families and which are the problems treated from the NGOs?

**3.1. Sampling.** In the study participated the non-profit organizations which operate in the northern regions of Albania. They offer also social services related with families. Specifically, participated the NGOs that operate in these districts: Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës and Peshkopi. A total of nineteen questionnaires were completed.

**3.2. General data for the participating organizations.** In these study participated 19 organizations. The information about the selection of the organizations was provided by the local public social services entities which have all the contacts of the non-profit organizations that operate in the field of family services and also was realized the consultation with "The Map of Social Services in Albania". All the participating organizations operate within our field of study including 2007 until now, and offer professional services by multidisciplinary staff including: social work, psychologist, teacher, doctor, nurse, educator, lawyer, etc. 10 NGOs operate in the city of Shkodër, 3 organization operate in Lezha city, 2 non-profit organizations operate in the city of Kukës and 4 organizations operate in the city of Peshkopi. These non-profit organizations have started their activities in different years.

These organizations have started their activities from 1991 to 2006. Specifically, 6 of NGOs have started their activities in respective districts in the interval 1991-1999 and 13 of them from 2000 to 2006. These organizations exert their activity not only in the respective municipalities, but also in other districts of Albania.

Results that only 9 NGOs provide services only in the city, the rest of the NGOs operating in a village or rural area, and in the suburbs. Related to the mission and goals of NGOs, the organizations are characterized by their efforts to support families in need, protecting and ensuring children's rights and protection of the women from violence and strengthen their position in the family and community.

Projects related to families take a very important place in their job. Referred on participating organizations in this study it results that 36 from 102 projects in total are related to families with social services benefiting directly and indirectly.

The data indicate that donors associated with these projects, mainly are foreign organizations (22 projects), in 5 cases the projects are co-financed, three projects have local donors and 3 projects are charitable organizations. Results that three projects are self-financed. Is noted that there is no project that is funded by the central government.

**3.3. Instrument.** Data collection was achieved through the questionnaire. It has a descriptive nature. The questionnaire helped to create the panorama of organization of the social services for families provided by NGOs. The questionnaire contains 36 questions grouped into seven major sections. It has structured questions. Also, in some questions, the subjects had the opportunity to offer an alternative that they find related to their activities. In this article, are addressed the issues related to some elements of organization of the social services for families, based on the types of services and the problems addressed by the NGOs that operate in the area study.

**3.4. Procedure.** The data were gathered through the email addresses. The researcher respected the ethical criteria related the scientific research. Specifically, the researcher informed the participants about the nature of the research, the purpose, objectives and importance of the study. The participants were presented with the confidentiality policy and anonymity was insured not using their real names and presenting the data in an aggregate form (there are used codes). The questionnaires have been filled out by the NGO representatives and they were sent via email (the participants felt more comfortable in this way and manage the time of completion of the instrument according to their agenda), in order to respect their agenda and necessary time to complete them. All the participants in the end signed the questionnaire.

**3.5. Method of analysis.** The data collected from the questionnaires was analyzed by Microsoft Excel program (version 2003-2007). The analysis was focused on the frequency (absolute numbers) based on the fact that in the composition of the questionnaire were used mainly nominal and ordinal variables and data had generally descriptive natyre.

## **4. Findings of the study**

### **4.1. Types of social services for families offered by the non-profit organizations in the northern regions of Albania**

The list of the types of social services for families was composed of 31 elements (different kinds of social services for family). NGOs provide a large number of family social services. Results that the number of social services with the highest frequency is 14 (45.1%), nearly half of the listed services (list of services with the highest frequency is selected based on the services provided by more than half of of the NGOs).

Results that in the practice of the activities of NGOs the services with higher frequency are: information and referral services to NGOs and relevant institutions (18 cases); support parents in the education of children and family counseling for problems related to domestic violence (16 cases); advocacy and family counseling for the education problems of children (15 cases); health services and material support for families in economic difficulties (12 cases), family planning, family counseling for problems of children in adolescence, services for families with a parent, support services for children who drop out of school and vocational training to empower parents with the aim of increasing the ability to compete in the labor market (11 cases), as well as individual counseling and social services to strengthen the family from the perspective of the strengths (10 cases).

A considerable number of other organizations provide social services such as: parental employment mediation (9 NGO), Association of victims of violence in local institutions and support for parents in resolving conflicts with children (8 NGO), psychosocial support social for families with persons with disabilities (7 NGO), individual therapy (6 NGO). While other services listed have a lower frequency.

Specifically, financial support, psycho-social support to families who have members who abuse substances, intensive services to the maintenance of family with many children who are at risk of delivering a child in residential institutions, as well as, group therapy offered by five organizations. Regarding other services specified by the subjects, results that five organizations provide services to support families and individuals in need such as: social and cultural services, summer school for children in need, health sensitization related to the care of children from 0-3 years, sensitization to health care related to various infectious diseases.

### **4.2. The elements of organization of the social services for families and problems treated from the NGOs**

In order to determine the organization of social services was ranked 18 elements. Using ordinal scale of measurement, with a scale of 1 - 6 does not apply to value - almost always, representatives of NGOs were asked to define the elements that were applied the most for the service organization. Regarding to the organization of social services by NGOs results that most of the elements are applied often- almost always by the organizations.

It is worth to notice that, respecting the dignity and fundamental human rights, as well as, provision of services by skilled professionals and qualified, apply often-almost always by 19 organizations (the element 9 "respect for human dignity and fundamental human rights" and the element 13 "services are provided by skilled and qualified professionals according to the relevant field"). Adapting services to the needs of the individual and the family, also the management of services in a transparent, almost always are applied-often by 18 organizations (the elements 11 and 14). The elements that are less applied for the the organization of the services by NGOs are the element 4 "ensure of frequent interactions between parent and child when children must leave their families" (in five cases does not apply and also in five cases is applied "sometimes -rarely"). This element is provided in the standards of the social services of our country.

The data indicate that a large number of of NGOs (17 cases) address the problems related to domestic violence. Other problems treated with a high frequency are also the abuse and negligence of children, discrimination (14 cases), difficulties in social integration of families in the community (13 cases); poverty and problems related to child psychosocial development (12 cases); unemployment and antisocial behavior of children and adolescents (11 cases); difficulties of parents in the education of children, as well as school dropout and emotional concerns (10 cases). The problems addressed by a smaller number of of NGOs are: divorce (psycho-social consequences to families with divorced parents) and teenage pregnancy (8 cases), family and personal problems that bring substance abuse (7 cases) also, marital conflicts and revenue management in five cases.

In general, the non-profit organizations apply with a high frequency the elements of the assessment to the family, in the initial phase of the services design. Almost all NGOs assess the economic situation of the family and employment (18 cases). NGOs with a high frequency (17 cases) evaluate the problem background, education, and physical and social environment of the family. In a general view NGOs go beyond assessing internal family dynamics by assessing the relationship of the members with the social environment (14 cases).

The elements of evaluation that have less frequency are: self-evaluation of family members, the cultural dimension (8 cases for each element), and the management of family conflict (6 cases).

In order to know with the techniques that are applied for the collection of data related to the families is used the rate of nominal measurement. There are included a total of 12 elements and is given the opportunity to determine any alternative by representatives of NGOs. Results that the technique used with higher frequency by NGOs are the face to face interviews (14 cases). Other techniques are applied with lower frequency.

The non-profit organizations included in this study apply with a high frequency (7 elements) almost all of the elements related to the methods for making public social services for the families. Using of the leaflet is the method that has the highest frequency (18 cases).

The NGOs apply with a higher frequency the publication of the services in the website, in the informational brochures, posters, also, in the community meetings (16 cases) and reports / programs in local media and networking with other civil society organizations distributing the information in the network (15 cases). The NGOs (6 cases) define other methods for the visibility of services, such as participation in programs, TV documentaries, common activities with the local structures, announcements in public places, annual reports, social network (facebook). The elements with the lower frequency (5 cases) is the use of a telephone line.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings of this study highlight that the families in the study area benefit diverse services from the non-profit organizations. Projects and activities related to families take a very important place in the practices of the social services for families provided by the NGOs in the northern region of Albania. A main place in the organization of these services take services with the focused on children, fundamental human rights, organization of services to individual and family needs, as well as cooperation with local governments and other organizations of civil society.

Families in four districts of the northern region of Albania receive diverse services for family from the non-profit organizations. Advocacy, support of parents in children's education, family counseling for children's education problems and problems related to domestic violence, health services and material support for the families in economic difficulties, are the services which are offered the most by NGOs. The quantitative data of the study indicate that the organization of social services for families has a good theoretical base for some elements related to the organization of social services for families.

The problems addressed with a higher frequency by the NGOs are: domestic violence, abuse and neglect of children, difficulties in social integration of families in the community, poverty and the problems associated with psycho-social development of children, unemployment and antisocial behavior of children and adolescents, the difficulties of parents in the education of children, as well as dropout and emotional concerns.

Based on the empirical findings and on conclusions derived, it is necessary to consider certain recommendations related to the field of social services for families. The following would be necessary:

- Offer social services related to other different socio-economic and psychological problems, not taken that much in consideration from the organizations, such as problems related to relationship dynamics between family members, treating the family as a system.
- Increase the promotion and implementation of initiatives and activities related to the family social inclusion by non-profit organizations.

Despite of the fact that NGOs provide diverse services for families it is necessary to provide services focusing more on psychological support for family members in order to improve the relations between them. It is necessary, also, that services are organized from the perspective of family strengths which evaluates as important the capacity and needs of each family member.

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