

CHILDREN'S OPINION ON CONDITIONS IN DAY CARE CENTERS

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Abstract: *Day care centers for children are alternative ways to protect children and help parents with community-based problems. Articles from the literature are reviewed, signaling the positive and negative aspects of day centers on children's development. The main objective of the research was to highlight the children's opinion regarding the atmosphere and the activities in the day center. For this, the study included a group of 30 children (9 boys and 21 girls) aged between 7 and 14-15 years who attend the day center for a period between 1 year and 12 years. An interview guide was constructed covering four areas: personal data, relationships with colleagues and day center staff, family relationships, school performance and help provided by the center. The children's responses were anonymous and were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The conclusions show that day centers are a real help to children in doing homework and explaining aspects that were not understood at school. In addition, they offer ways to spend free time that children would like to diversify. The regular presentation of these opinions to the management of the day center and to the community could help to improve the atmosphere and relations in the center, as well as to improve and diversify the activities carried out.*

Key words: *day care centers; children; activities; interpersonal relationships; children's opinion; motivating opinions.*

1. Theoretical frame

Day care centers for children are alternative protection services, based on the involvement of the community, whose main purpose is to avoid situations that threaten the safety and well-being of the child, without being separated from his family.

Given this definition, it is understandable why the quality of these centers is so important for the child's development and why many studies in the literature analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this type of service.

Quality child care involves many integrative elements such as: respect for the child, collaborative partnership with families; a well-established learning program; environments suitable for learning and physical activities; good infrastructure and sufficient staff; community funds; sustained research on the development of children in the day care system (Canadian Pediatric Society, 2008).

In the analysis of the quality of care in day centers, the studies focused on two areas of interest: structure and process. Structural variables include those conditions of the child care environment that are more susceptible to regulation, such as the caregiver-child ratio, group size, noise level, and caregiver education. Process variables include dimensions of caregiver-child interaction, such as caregiver sensitivity, responsiveness, and heat, which are less sensitive to regulation (Goldschmied & Jackson, 2003).

Research has consistently documented the links between the structural features and quality of the childcare process and the improved outcomes of child development, and some of these benefits appear to be maintained in childhood and adolescence. In general, children in formal center-based programs receive higher quality care than those in informal home care. (Shpancer, 2016).

Despite almost half a century of research on the effects of day care on children, no conclusive answer has yet been given to the fundamental question of whether day care without parents affects young children. Sphancer's article (2006) highlighted the conceptual and methodological difficulties associated with day center research and how the unique socio-historical place in childcare interacts with difficulties inherent in the scientific-political relationship to make a conclusive answer.

Many studies address the need for special training for day caregivers. Arnett has been analyzing caregivers' training and their relationship to their relationship with children and their behavior toward children since 1989. They find that carers who have more advanced education show a less authoritarian attitude towards children, are more positive in their interactions with children and have less tendency to punish children.

Bernal, Attanasio, Pena et al. (2019) also mentions the need to improve the quality of childcare services provided to vulnerable children from a socio-economic point of view. They say it has a positive effect on children's cognitive development and nutrition.

NICHHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) (2002) states that research on 1,000 children shows that high quality child care and the continuous improvement of these qualities can be a good predictor of pre-academic and high-performance skills, better linguistic. The obtained results indicated the importance and relative independence of the quantity and quality of the type of care of the children for their development even before starting the actual school.

Due to the schedule of their services, the lack of a relative to take care of the children, or special family problems, parents are often faced with the situation of choosing a care center that is best for their child better how parents evaluate centers when they have to consider all the characteristics of the center simultaneously, as is done in real life, Leslie, Etteson and Cumsille (2000) surveyed a number of 235 parents who made this choice. The results obtained by them indicated that the characteristics of the child care centers that most affect the decision-making process of the parents vary depending on

the demographic characteristics of the parents. Single mothers take the strongest cost into account when making decisions, while married mothers take into account the child / personal relationship, and married fathers pay relatively equal attention to four factors; cost, convenience, child / staff ratio and operating hours. The authors also found differences in parents' decision-making strategies based on parental education and family income. These findings were discussed in light of the importance of developing child care programs that meet the needs of parents as well as children.

Ruzek, Burchinal, Farkas et al. (2014) also analyze how parents' income affects the choice of a day care center or their attendance. Children in low-income families were more likely than high-income children to be cared for by their parents, and when they were in care, they were more often in lower-quality care.

Varmuza, Perlman & White (2019) emphasize the role that the income level and the level of education of the parents determine the choice of the day care center on which the child will attend or variants of child care outside the family.

Mc Clure (2019) highlights the positive and negative aspects that can influence parents' decision in choosing a day care center. He claims that the pro arguments would be the fact that the day center prepares the child for elementary school; children learn structures and routines; children acquire social skills. Among the arguments against are mentioned: the fact that they get more colds and diseases; can learn bad habits from other children; for some children, the absence of their parents can be stressful.

Miller (2018) addresses the psychological effects of sending children to day care centers. The author analyzed several studies and came to the following conclusions: studies state that children who spend more time in day care centers may be more aggressive than children who do not spend time. According to the analysis, the number of hours spent by the child in day care also affects his levels of aggression; the more hours there are, the more aggressive he behaves. Children who spend time in day care centers may be more socially conscious than children who do not spend time in day care because of the support, interaction, and cognitive stimulation received in the centers. Children who participated in high-quality day care before kindergarten had a richer vocabulary than children who attended lower-quality day care centers. Improved competence in areas such as vocabulary can increase a child's educational self-esteem and increase his or her chances of success in the future. Finally, one last finding of the author is that young children who spend time in day care centers may be less attached to their mothers than children who stay at home with their mothers.

Research suggests that parents who send their children to day care centers should focus on finding high-quality day care, rather than taking into account material and relational issues that are less significant to the child's well-being.

Magher (2018) makes an analysis of many articles on the negative effects of day care on children. Children who are in day care for a year or more have proven to be more turbulent in the classroom when they arrive at school. Some articles say that children who spend more hours in day care centers are more likely to have problematic social adjustments. These children may have less social competence, be less inclined to cooperate in the group, have negative dispositions and be more prone to conflict.

It has also been found that children who spend more time in day care centers have weaker parental attachment, which is unsafe and which can result in an increased risk of depression, anxiety and other mood disorders.

Other studies focus on other aspects of the influence of day care centers on children. Thus Hinkley, Salmon, Crawford, et al. (2016) identified that children in day care centers are significantly less active during care hours. Also related to physical activity and its relationship with obesity should be mentioned the study of Alkon, Crowley, Neelon, et al. (2014) which emphasizes that the intervention provided by child health professionals increases the knowledge of staff in the centers, improves the policies of the center and leads to weight loss for children in child care centers. Several health professionals specially trained for nutrition intervention and physical activity in child care are needed to help stop the phenomenon of obesity among children.

On the other hand, Tahoun, Hasab, & El-Nimr (2019) show that children attending day care centers have a high risk of contracting infectious diseases due to several factors, including lack of knowledge among caregivers about practices. infection prevention and control.

Gordon, Colaner, Usdansky et al. (2013) made a comparative analysis between the performance of children cared for in day care centers and those cared for at home. They conclude that preschoolers score higher on reading and math assessments, on average, when they participate in care centers, alone or in combination with childcare at home, than when they are cared for only at home, either by parents or by others. The average socio-emotional outcomes of preschoolers generally do not differ between the two types of care.

The cognitive and social skills of children in day care centers are also studied by Loeba, Bridgesb, Bassoka et al. (2007) taking into account the time the children attended the care center. The duration of center-based care matters: the greatest academic benefit is found for those children who start at ages 2 to 3 and not at younger or older ages; the negative behavioral effects are greater the younger the age of onset. The intensity of center-based care also matters: more hours a day lead to greater academic benefits, but also to increased behavioral consequences.

Bradley and Vandell (2007) state that children who entered day care centers early in life and were cared for 30 or more hours per week have an increased risk for stress-related behavior problems. The increased risk was more likely if they had difficulty interacting with peers or if they had insensitive parents. Children in day centers achieved higher language scores and early school performance, especially if they came from disadvantaged

backgrounds and the centers provided high quality care. Participating in activities with several children increased the likelihood of communicable diseases and ear infections, although those diseases did not have long-term adverse consequences.

Child care is a multidimensional phenomenon. No standard guidance can be given on when a child should be placed in care centers, nor what kind of care should be used due to the multiplicity of sometimes compensatory effects on children. Child care experiences interact with experiences at home and with the characteristics of one's own child, and research indicates that regardless of the chosen model, the quality of child care is what matters most.

2. Objectives

The research was consistent in capturing children's opinions about the activities and atmosphere in the day care centers. It was thought that finding out the children's opinions could lead to an improvement and improvement of the activities in the care centers.

3. Methodology

A group of 30 children attending day care centers in Arad was studied. An interview guide was built that mainly focused on four areas of information: personal data, relationships with colleagues and center staff, family relationships, activities and activities desired by children. The characteristics of the batch are presented in table 1.

Table no. 1 : Characteristics of the studied group (N=30)

Characteristics	Number
Sex	
- male	9
- female	21
Age	
- 7 years	1
- 8-9 years	3
- 10-11 years	8
- 12-13 years	9
- 14-15 years	9
duration of attendance center	
- <1 year	2
- 1-2 years	7
- 3-4 years	4
- 5-6 years	6
- 7-8 years	6
- 9-10 years	2
- 11-12 years	3

recommended by	
- parents	16
- schoolmates	5
- neighbors	5
- I found out alone	2
- I grew up here	2

The group consisted of 9 boys and 21 girls. Most children were between 10 and 15 years old, with only one case aged 7 years. The length of time children attend the day care center varies greatly: from less than 1 year to 11-12 years for those who say they grew up there. In the vast majority of cases (16) the day care center was recommended to the children by the parents. But also, schoolmates and neighbors made such recommendations (5 recommendations for each). Two of the children found out about the center on their own and asked their parents to let them attend the institution, and 2 children say that they grew up in the day center (they are among those who attended the center for 12 years). The data was collected based on the interview guide, informing the children that the answers were anonymous. For some answers, their motivation was also required; many offered one or two answers, so in some tables there will be a greater number of answers than the number of subjects.

4. Results and discussions

Children, after finishing school, go to the day center and eat, and then participate in various activities. The main activity submitted by children and staff is to do the homework that the children receive at school. Table 2 provides an image of the activities carried out, as mentioned by the children. The children also mentioned 2-3 activities.

Table no. 2. The type of activities carried out in the center

Activities	Number
homework	20
games	17
drawing courses	10
lunch	4
walks	5
dance	6
museums	4
trips	2

Most children (20 subjects) say that their main activity is doing homework. We found it interesting that only a number of 4 children mention lunch as an activity in the center, although this is a daily activity. It was appreciated that the children consider having lunch as something common that should not be mentioned as a separate activity.

On the second place after teaching activities are games. The children spend a lot of time spent in the center playing with each other or with staff. The games they mentioned are group games, which involve the participation of several children during the same game. Drawing activities are also the order of the day, either consisting of drawing classes, or simply activities to color images or draw plants, animals, landscapes.

There are mentioned, but by a smaller number of children, museum visits, walks and excursions. In fact, this hierarchy can also be seen in the answers that children give to the motivation of the question how the day center helps them (see table 3).

Table no. 3. Motivation of the help offered by the day center

Motivation	Number
helps us with homework	19
explain so we can understand	8
take care of us	2
no answer	1

Children appreciate that the day center helps them very much (17 children), much (10 children) and medium (2 children). When they have to provide motivation for this help, most (19) say that they are helped to solve the homework. A number of 8 children point out that the center staff explains to them where they do not understand. The explanations are given in such a way that the child comes to understand what is required in the topic, or often what is in a text in the book. Two children make a general assessment like: they take care of us, and one child does not offer any motivation to appreciate the help received.

Asked if they would change any of the activities of the center and what exactly 7 children would not change anything and are satisfied with what they are doing now in the center. Eight of the children did not answer and the remaining 15 children would like a diversification of activities, each according to his inclinations and preferences: 3 would like to do performance sports, 5 would like more trips, 4 and- would like to participate in several shows. We believe that knowing the things and activities that children would like could contribute to the diversification of activities in the day center. In addition, if the community knew what these children wanted, they could mobilize and offer them some of their wishes (for example, a week-long vacation trip for them to see the sea).

The relationships that the children establish with colleagues from the center and with the staff will be further analyzed.

Relationships with other colleagues are considered to be very good for 19 children, good for 10 children and average for 1 child. The latter, a girl, states that she gets along better with girls than with boys with whom she has difficulty relating. The motivation of the quality of relations with colleagues is presented in table 4.

Table no. 4. Motivating quality relationships with colleagues

Motivation	Number
I have friends here	13
I knew them very well	5
We are together from many years	2
They offer me support	6
No answer	4

Generally, children in the center go to the same school, are neighbors of the neighborhood and know each other from an early age. That is why the relations between them are long lasting and are based on a good mutual knowledge. Children offer support to each other and consider themselves friends and consequently the relations between them are harmonious, without being disturbed by conflicts or misunderstandings.

Children's relations with the center's staff are considered by two thirds of them (21 children) to be very good, and one third (9 children) consider them to be good. The motivation of this assessment appears in table 4.

Table no. 5. Motivation for the relationships with the staff

Motivation	Number
Help me with homework	7
Help me to solve my problems	8
behave beautifully	7
Understand our problems	12
We can communicate together	1

It is observed that in general children appreciate the fact that they are helped and understood. For them, at this age it is very important to have someone to talk to about their problems and to realize that they are understood and that the requested help is being given to them. Not only the help for homework is important, but also the help for the soul, for solving the problems that each of them has in search of their own identity and the formation of their self-image. The beautiful behavior of the staff towards them

is appreciated by the children. Many times, at home, due to too little time or other household problems, parents do not have time to talk to them, listen to their problems and that is why in the center they feel that they have found the understanding they need.

Relationships with the family are also considered very good by 20 children and good by 10 children. They say there are no family conflicts, that parents try to give them advice, talk to them, and that relationships are based on mutual respect and love. Many of them have brothers (between one and 5) with whom they get along very well and with whom they interact positively, even if they attend the day center, and the brothers do not. In fact, children do not come to the center because they are part of dysfunctional families, but due to the fact that the material resources of the family are low or that the parents, due to the service they have, do not have the necessary time to take care of them.

Finally, the last aspect that will be analyzed will be related to the children's school performance. Four of the children say that they have very good results at school, 15 have good results and 11 average results. Interesting is the motivation of these results, which is presented in table 6.

Table no. 6. Motivation of school results

Motivation	Number
I don't like math	6
I don't like school	2
I don't understand all	2
I like to learn	8
I like to read	3
I do everything I can	5
No answer	4

Many of them do not really understand everything that is done at school, especially in mathematics. That's why they need someone to explain to them at their level and on their understanding all the new things taught. That's why children appreciate the help of the staff at the center, who help them understand the misunderstood aspects of math. Only two of the children categorically stated that they did not like school. But there are 11 children who have good and very good school results and who like school, they like to learn because they always know new things and they like to read. These children consider themselves hardworking and are very proud of their school results. A number of 5 children claim that they do their best and do everything they can to satisfy the school requirements, but they only obtain average level performances.

It can be easily seen from all the analysis that there is a beneficial cooperation for children both among themselves and with the staff. The center offers them the opportunity to meet school requirements and to spend their free time in a pleasant way.

5. Conclusions

Day care centers are considered to be alternative options that support parents and children with the help of the community. It is important to know the children's opinions regarding the atmosphere in the day centers and the quality of the relationships that are established with the other colleagues and with the staff.

Children receive real help in solving homework and explaining things that were not understood in school. This helps them achieve good school performance and keep up with other children who are educated in the family.

We appreciate that regular surveys regarding the children's opinions can lead to the improvement and improvement of the atmosphere of the day center and of the activities carried out in the center. Also, regular information to the community on the wishes of children could contribute to a greater involvement of the community in the allocation of resources and resources in order to ensure their fulfillment, as far as possible.

It would be desirable for such studies to be carried out on a larger scale in order to achieve a uniform change in the conditions and activities of day care centers for children.

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