THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SIBLINGS IN FAMILIES WITH AN AUTISTIC CHILD

Milena Ilikj Peshikj

Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation – Skopje

Abstract

The Master’s thesis is presented on 129 pages. The paper contains the following sections: introduction, theoretical approach to the problem of the research, research methodology, analysis of the results, discussion, conclusions, proposed measures, literature and articles. The introduction emphasizes the relationship between siblings as one of the basic interpersonal relationships among humans. If a family has an autistic member, some implications on the family and its functioning might arise, as well as on the relationship between the siblings. The presence of a child with autism alters the traditional role of a brother / sister in the family. Negative effects that may occur in the quality of the relationship between siblings, caused by having a child with autism in the family are: increased level of conflict, bitterness, resentment, loneliness, guilt, fear and reduced potential for conflict with peers outside the home. Of course, positive effects may also arise in the relationship between siblings in the family, such as: increased tolerance for diversity of others,

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Основната цел на магистерската тесна е да се истражи квалитетот на односот помеѓу браќата и сестрите во семејствата во кои има дете со аутизам. Да се направи споредба помеѓу братско-сестринскиот однос во семејствата во кои има дете со аутизам и квалитетот на односот помеѓу браќата и сестрите од контролната група. Притоа, правејќи споредба меѓу двете групи, да се утврди нивото и карактерот на очекуваните и перцептираните карактеристики од страна на родителите во врска со квалитетот на односот помеѓу нивните деца.

Vo Теоретските основи се образложува понимот и дефиницијата за аутизамот, при што се дава акцент на превалентиците, причинителите, клиничките карактеристики и третманот. Значаен сегмент на теоретските основи се квалитетот на односот помеѓу браќата и сестрите во семејството, аутизмот и ефектот врз односот помеѓу браќата и сестрите, семејството и попреченоста, видувањата на родителите во врска со односот помеѓу нивните деца и социјалната поддршка.

Vo истражувањотот дел се претставени предметот на истражувањето, целта и карактерот, задачите, хипотезите и варијабилите на истражувањето, примерокот и временската рамка, методите, техниките и инструментите на истражувањето. Во истражувањето е опфатен примерок од 132 испитаници од кои 66 се членови на семејства во кои има дете со аутизам и 66 испитаници од контролната група, т.е. семејства во кои нема дете со аутизам. Податоците се прибран со помош на три прашалници, обработени со соодветна статистичка програма SPSS for Windows. За тестирање на хипотезите користени се Mann – Whitney U и Wilcoxon W за независни и колеидирани податоци соодветно, при што за статистички значајна разлика беше сметана разликата на ниво на значајност од \( p < 0.05 \).

Vo делот кој се однесува на анализата и интерпретацијата на резултатите, врз основа на истражувањето кое беше спроведено, заклучивме дека во однос на позитивните карактеристики на квалитетот на односот помеѓу браќата и децата, хипотезата за ефектот на аутизамот врз врска со односот помеѓу браќата и сестрите беше поставена на ниво на значајност на однос на 0.05.

The primary goal of the Master’s thesis is to explore the quality of the relationships between siblings in families that have an autistic child as well as to compare the quality of the brother – sister relationships in such families with the quality of the same relationship in a control group. By comparing the two groups, to determine the level and the character of the expected and perceived characteristics of the relationships between the children in families that have a child with autism (by their parents), and also to determine the level of empathy and maturity of the distributor, expectations and perceptions of parents about the relationship between their children and the social support.

The research part represents the subject of the research, the purpose and the nature of the research questions, the research hypotheses, the sample and the frame, the methods, the techniques and the instruments of the research. In the research, a sample of 132 respondents is provided, 66 of which are members of families that care for a child with autism, 66 are members of the control group families, i.e. families of neurotypical children. Data were gathered with the help of three questionnaires, processed by standard statistical software SPSS – 21 for Windows XP, by applying Mann – Whitney U and Wilcoxon W tests, for the independent and correlated samples, respectively. For the statistically significant difference we used the difference that has a significance level of \( p < 0.05 \).

In the section relating to the analysis and the interpretation of the results, based on the con-
duct ed research, the analysis has shown that in relation to the positive characteristics of the quality of the relationships between siblings, there is no statistically significant difference in the category of “empathy”, “affections” and “boundary maintenance”, apart from the category of “similar interests”, which is higher among the siblings from the control group (M = 27.72, SD = 7.68) and studied group (M = 19.15, SD = 4.48), (p < 0.01). While in relation to the negative characteristics of the relationships between siblings, there is a statistical significant difference only in the level of “coercion” in that relationships, which is lower in families that have children with autism (M = 10.10, SD = 1.58) and (M = 12.34, SD = 2.28), (p < 0.01) of the control group. In the level of “rivalry” and “hostility” between the control and studied group differences were not found. Furthermore, in relation to the expected and perceived negative characteristics by the parents we found that there is a statistically significant difference in the level of the “perceived rivalry” which is lower with the parents of children with autism with (M = 5.55, SD = 2.45) and (M = 7.15, SD = 2.12) of the control group, (p < 0.01). There is also a difference in the level of expected rivalry and expected and perceived hostility perceived by parents in both groups. Also, while exploring the expected and perceived positive characteristics by the parents, the level of “perceived closeness” in the relationships between siblings is higher in families from the control group (M = 48.45, SD = 5.93) and (M = 42.56, SD = 7.89) of the studied group, (p < 0.01). There is also a difference in the “expected closeness” that is higher in the control group with (M = 51.70, SD = 5.50) and (M = 46.33, SD = 8.49) of the studied group, (p < 0.01). There are certain differences in the quality of the relationships between siblings, depending on whether it is a matter of a family that has a child with autism, or a family from, conditionally speaking, the regular population. However, we believe that those differences are not necessarily carrying a negative connotation. An action for raising the public awareness in relation to autism is necessary, which will contribute to the decrease of the stigma that the families perceive.
Предлог мерки се:

- Формирање групи за поддршка на семејствата, првенствено на браката и сестрите на кои би им помогнале подобро да се справат со предизвиците кои ги носи имањето на брат или сестра со аутизам.
- Организирање на работилиници од страна на стручни лица кои имаат за цел да ја зголемат блискоста помеѓу браката и сестрите во семејството.
- Со помош на информатичката технологија, достапноста на интернетот во секој дом, формирање на форуми за родителите на деца со аутизам, менторирани од страна на стручно лице, което ќе помогне на цел да пружи размена на информации и једен вид социјална поддршка на родителот, а притоа давајќи му персонална важност на истот во тој процес.
- Организирање на групи за поддршка на семејствата во кои има дете со аутизам, кои имаат за цел да им помогнат на родителите во менаџирањето на секојдневните активности што од своја страна би им помогнало да ја зацврстат секојдневната рутина и да го зголемат чувството на контрола во животот.
- Вршење на обука на семејствата, вклучително и браката и сестрите за тоа како да се справат со карактеристичното и по-времено неадекватно однесување на детето кое има аутизам.
- Организирање на групи за поддршка од страна на училиштата во кои би се спроведувале работилиници за прифаќање на по-пречноста.

The proposed measures include:

- Establishing support groups for families, primarily for brothers and sisters which would get assistance to tackle better with the challenges of having a brother or sister with autism.
- Organizing workshops by experts whose aim is to increase the closeness between siblings in the family.
- With the help of the information technology, the availability of internet in almost every home, establishment of forums for parents of children with autism, mentored by a professional whose aim will be to provide an exchange of information and provide one kind of social support to the parent, emphasizing the parent’s personal importance in the process.
- Organizing support groups for families with autistic child, whose aim is to assist parents in managing the daily activities. That would help the families to strengthen the routine and to increase the sense of control in life.
- Organizing trainings for families, including the siblings, about how to deal with typical and occasionally inadequate behavior of the autistic child.
- Organizing support groups by schools that would implement workshops for acceptance of the disability.