



Fund “Nauka” Project № 19021 Resume – Competition-Based Session 2019:

“Early childhood development – a determinant of health and quality of life in the modern society”

Project leader: Assoc. prof. Desislava Ivanova Vankova, MD, PhD, DSc

The research project focuses on the importance of early childhood development (ECD) as a determinant of health and quality of life (QoL) in the modern society.

For the first time in Bulgaria, the reported study simultaneously examines and analyzes the experts’ knowledge and experience, the community resources, the parental literacy and the ability of all the study participants to identify in a timely manner the risks of ECD in relation to QoL.

The project is conducted at a health promotion level and the expected results will be a significant public health contribution. Further, the outcomes will provide an opportunity to build an adequate model for successful communication “parents - children – specialists”, which is relevant to the demands of the contemporary generations of parents. As a result, a standardized instrument will be created, based on the quantitative and qualitative research.

It is assumed that this model will influence the public attitudes and competencies on the axis “parent - child – specialist”, and will help to synchronize and channel the diverse information about the importance of ECD as a determinant of health and QoL in the modern society.

The successful application of the instrument in real-life circumstances enables the creation of a unified preventive environment during the ECD, which is the ultimate research goal.

The PhD student in the project is Assist. Prof. Dr. Ekaterina Valtcheva and the expected results will be a part of her PhD-project. The rest of the team are Prof. Dr. Teodora Dimitrova who is the supervisor of the PhD-thesis. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Desislava Vankova is the leader of this project with her expertise in health-related quality of life and public health. Assist. Prof. Nikolay Mihaylov, PhD is an international expert in community psychology and program evaluation. They are from the Faculty of Public Health. An important part of the team are also the students Gabriela Panayotova and Silviya Kuneva from the Faculty of Medicine, Medical University of Varna.

Achieved results:

The research focuses on the fundamental importance of early childhood development (ECD) as a determinant of health and quality of life (QoL) in modern society. For the first time in Bulgaria, through the specific study, expert knowledge and experience, community resources, parental competence and the ability of the subjects to timely identify the risks for ECD in relation to QoL are simultaneously investigated and analyzed. Quantitative and qualitative sociological methods are used.

An author's "Questionnaire for measuring the significance of ECD in the parental community" was created, fully in line with the modern scientific approach on the subject – international and Bulgarian, specific, containing the following topics with possible use as independent instruments:

1. Parental competences for ECD up to 3 years and 11 months;
2. Literacy for ECD;
3. Seeking help from a specialist – experience and attitudes;
4. QoL of the child.

A dissertation was defended, a collective monograph with selected highlights from the scientific research was published. The research gives voice to a previously unstudied community – the parent community – to express its vision and perspective on the parent-child-specialist relationship. Recommendations to the ECD specialists are formulated on the basis of the results obtained from the parent respondents, and a conceptual framework for the specialist, corresponding to the parental attitudes and competencies in modern society are created.

Recommendations for health promotion and prevention in the period of ECD and for increasing parental competence are formulated, in line with current processes and changes in Bulgarian society. The results obtained from the research are in the field of public health and health promotion and the current priority scientific directions of the MU – Varna. The data collected and analyzed through all stages and sub-stages of the study are the basis for the development of a methodology for identifying, assessing and preventing risk factors for ECD and well-being across the lifespan, which is to be published. The goal is to encourage parents and specialists in the search for the most correct solutions for the child's health and to create and build a uniform prophylactic environment in the period of ECD in Bulgarian society.