The Impact of Psychological Practice in Albanian Daycares: 
Reflections of Parents and Caregivers

Oriola Hamzallari

Doctoral student at Tirana University, Faculty of Social Sciences
Lecturer at “Aleksandër Moisiu” University, Durrës
Email: oriolahamzallari@uamd.edu.al

Abstract: This qualitative study analyzes reflections of parents and caregivers on the impact of psychological practice in daycares. There have been taken 39 semi-structured interviews with parents who bring their children in daycares and 26 semi-structured interviews with caregivers working in five daycares in Tirana. The results taken by parents’ semi-structured interviews suggested that psychological practice in daycares need to focus more on parents as well. Even though there are a few contacts between parents and psychologists in daycares, parents demonstrated interest in having consultation with psychologists regarding the child development. On the other hand, the results taken by caregivers working in daycares suggested that psychological practice has had a great impact in their work with children. According to them psychological practice has been supportive especially in caring for children with autism and other pervasive developmental disorders, in training them with current information in child development and in implementing the curriculum in daycares. However, some caregivers expressed the idea that psychological practice would be more helpful especially if they could model from psychologists the age-appropriate behaviours that need to be carried out during the interactions with children. On conclusion, there is an immediate need for further intervention targeting parents who bring their children in daycares so as to support them in their parenting role. Also there is a need to collaborate with caregivers in a way that provides models of behaviours that come from everyday interactions with children.

Keywords: psychological practice, Albanian daycares, intervention, parents, caregivers

1. Introduction

The psychological practice in Albanian daycares has been developed the last 8 years. During these years especially in Tirana daycares, psychological practice has changed significantly the work of daycares’ caregivers. Even though providing psychological services to infants and toddlers is challenging, psychologists in Tirana daycares have progressed in several main aspects of their work that are related with the curriculum in daycares, providing trainings for caregivers and early intervention.

The last two years psychological services in daycares are applied even in another city of Albania which is Durrës (Hamzallari, 2011). Meanwhile psychological service in daycares lacks in other cities.

On the other hand, psychologists work in at least four daycares and sometimes these working conditions might slow down the collaboration with parents who bring their children in daycares. One of the elements of psychological practice in daycares is related with increasing parenting skills and enhancing the relationship between infants, toddlers and their parents (Mowder, Rubinson, & Yasik, 2009).

The main aim of this qualitative study is to provide a frame of the parents’ and caregivers’ reflection on the impact that psychological practice has had on them. Thus we can analyze the aspects of psychological practice in daycares’ that have been successful and those aspects of the work of psychologists that need to be strengthened. On the other hand by analyzing the important impact of psychological practice in daycares, it is attempted to put psychological practice into service in every daycares in Albania. Recently it is highlighted the importance of psychological service in infants, toddlers and young children (Knitzer, 2007). In addition some important functions of the psychologists’ work with caregivers, parents and children in daycares have been emphasized (Ohtake, 2005).

In conclusion, enhancing positive interaction and providing age-appropriate experiences for infants, toddlers and young children with parents and daycares’ caregivers is a step toward a better trajectory of development.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

There were 39 parents and 26 caregivers that participated in this study. Parents and caregivers were randomly chosen to
be interviewed. Parents who took the interview had their children in daycares. There were semi-structured interviews 6 fathers and 33 mothers.

2.2 Instruments

The instrument used to measure the parents and caregivers reflections regarding the impact of psychological practice in daycares was a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interviews of parents had different questions regarding their parenting role, their parenting dilemmas and the psychological service in daycares. The caregiver’s semi-structured interviews had questions regarding their education, working condition, and the impact the psychological service had on their work. In this study will be discussed only that question related to the impact the psychological practice has had on parents and caregivers.

2.3 Design

This is a qualitative study and the main aim of the study is to measure how psychological practice during these last 8 years in Tirana daycares has influenced the work of caregivers and also how it as influenced parents in their parenting role and the development of children who stay for nearly 8 hours in daycares.

2.4 Procedure

The semi-structured interviews have taken place in five daycares in Tirana. One of the daycares was located in the suburb of Tirana while the other four were located near to the city centre. Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, the informed consent was taken from the director, caregivers and parents. The semi-structured interviews took place in a quiet and comfortable room in each of daycares. Each interview was recorded so as not to lose any information during the interview. Parents’ semi-structured interviews lasted 10 minutes on average and caregivers’ semi-structured interviews lasted 20 minutes on average.

3. Results

3.1 Parents reflections

The results taken from the parents’ interviews are divided in two categories: parents that had consultation with the daycares’ psychologists; parents that have had no contact with the daycares’ psychologists.

Parents that have had consultations with the daycares’ psychologists

Only 4 parents out of the 39 parents interviewed have had at least one consultation with the daycares’ psychologists. These parents put great emphasis on their children development and one of the reasons why they met with the psychologist in the daycares was to discuss about their children development. One parent states: “The psychologist told me that my child has normal development. Mostly they contacted parents whose children development was not within the normal range.” Another parent states: “I have taken some brochures in daycares related to child development. I have had only one conversation with the psychologist. The psychologist informed me about some developmental disorders which show some symptoms I need to be careful and gave me some brochures related to these disorders.”

Parents that have not met with the daycares’ psychologists

From the 39 semi-structured interviews with parents, 35 parents have not met the daycares’ psychologists. Nearly 19 parents expressed interest in meeting the psychologists. However parents listed some reasons why they have not contacted the psychologists so far. One of the most mentioned reasons was not having time. One parent said: “I have not met the psychologist yet but I would like to if the psychologist is here when I take my child. But I guess it is too late at that time...” Another reason why some parents have not contacted the psychologists was that they did not have the information that the daycares provided psychological service. One parent said: “I don’t know if a psychologist works in daycares...If there is a psychologist working in daycares, I would like to contact him or her because I would like to discuss
about my child reaction." Mostly parents who did not have information about the psychological service in daycares have been bringing their children in the later months. On the other hand there were some other parents who stated that they would like to have consultation with the daycares’ psychologist but they did not know their timetables at daycares. Here is what a parent said: “I would like to contact the daycares’ psychologist but I don’t know when the right time is.”

From 39 parents, 16 parents declared that there was no need to have consultation with the psychologist in daycares when children do not have developmental disorders. One parent stated: “I think I am kind of psychologist myself.” Another parent declared: “I don’t feel like it is necessary to contact the daycares’ psychologist. I don’t have any doubts about my child normal development but if I would have one of course I would contact him or her.” There is another parent that stated: “Why should I contact the psychologist? My child does not have developmental problems until now.” These statements taken by parents generalize most of the parents’ answers to the question “What kind of impact has had on you as a parent the psychological practice in daycares?”

3.2 Caregivers’ reflections

The results taken by the caregivers’ interviews are divided in three categories: the impact of psychological practice in implementing the curriculum; the impact of psychological practice in training caregivers and the impact of early intervention in daycares.

The impact of psychological practice in implementing the curriculum

All the caregivers that were interviewed expressed that daycares’ psychologists have had a great impact in their work with children. Psychological practice has helped significantly the implementation of the daycares’ curriculum. One caregiver declared: “We have changed professionally since daycares’ psychologists have started their work in daycares. Before we just had the same routines of feeding, changing the children’s diapers but now it is completely different. The implementation of curriculum has enhanced the child activities during the hours he or she stays in daycares.” However, 6 caregivers during the interviews claimed that they needed more help especially during the working hours. One caregiver said: “Mostly, during everyday activities with children we are alone and it might be of help if we could model from them especially during the time of play activities.”

The impact of psychological practice in training caregivers

All the interviewed caregivers stated that they have carried out many trainings conducted by daycares’ psychologists. According to them the trainings have been of vast importance especially in three aspects: current information on child development; identifying children with developmental disorders and information regarding how to communicate with infants and toddlers. One caregiver said: “We have been in much training. During these training I have learned how to play with kids, how to behave with them.”

Another caregiver said: “We have learned a lot from trainings especially information related to psychomotor development and by observing during play I can indentify children that might show delays in psychomotor development.” Other caregivers stated that training have helped them even by softening the tone of their voices when communicating with children.

The impact of early intervention in daycares

Psychological practice has been essential even in early intervention. Most of the interviewed caregivers stated that daycares’ psychologists intervened when children showed: a) developmental disorders; b) behavioural and socio-emotional problems. One caregiver stated: “In my group we have had several times autistic children. We have had consultation with psychologists; they have diagnosed the autistic children and have monitored us during intervention. We have observed a lot of progress with the time.” Another caregiver said: “When we have difficulty in managing the child’s behaviour we turn to the psychologist for help. I remember a child who had a very difficult time socializing with other children the first months in daycares. He was always crying and did not involve himself in play activities. The psychologist contacted the parents and then oriented us toward the whole process of the child’s adaptation with the new environment. At first the child stayed only with me and then step by step with one child, and then another child until he got used to play with children and did not cry when seeing his parents going away from the daycares.”
4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to form a framework of the psychological practice in daycares. Also this study aimed at emphasis aspects of the psychologists' work that need to be enhanced. From the semi-structured interviews with parents it has been noticed that only a few parents have had a few contacts with the psychologists. Furthermore, we see that nearly 16 parents have a narrow attitude related to the psychologists' work in daycares. These parents analyzed that psychological practice is of help only to those parents whose children face developmental disorders. However, there is another group of parents who show interest to have consultation with psychologists so as to know more about their children development, to discuss about their parenting dilemmas when behaving with their children. For several reasons, even this group of parents have not met with daycares' psychologists. Thus, psychologists need to inform parents about their role in daycares and to organize group consultation or individual consultation with parents so as to help parents solve their everyday dilemmas with children hence enhancing their parenting skills.

On the other hand, psychological practice has had a great impact in the caregivers’ work with children. From the results we can conclude that caregivers have enriched children experiences in daycares by implementing the activities of the curriculum. As well caregivers' knowledge about child development has been expanded due to trainings with daycares' psychologists. As a consequence caregivers have become more aware of the children’s developmental needs and more skilled in identifying children with socio-emotional and developmental problems. On the other hand psychologists have supported caregivers by monitoring the progress of children that have faced different socio-emotional or developmental problems. However, some of the caregivers expressed the need to learn the age-appropriate models of behaviours by having the opportunity to observe psychologists' interaction with children.

In conclusion, there is an immediate need to inform parents how psychological practice in daycares might be of help to parents in general so as to manage as better as possible the everyday interactions with their children. Also there is a need to expand psychological practice even by working with families.

Meanwhile, psychologists need to spend more time with caregivers not only by training them theoretically but as well by transmitting the models of age-appropriate behaviours with children during the daily practice.

Reference