SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

ANGELKA KESKINOVA[1], NATASHA CICEVSKA – JOVANOVA[2], GORAN AJDINSKI[2]

[1]Day care center for children with mental and physical disabilities, Skopje, R.Macedonia

[2] University "SS Cyril and Methodius" Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Special Education and Rehabilitation, Skopje, R. Macedonia

Corresponding Author: Angelka Keskinova, Day care center for children with mental and physical disabilities, Skopje, R.Macedonia; e-mail: angelka_v@yahoo.com

Abstract: Family is the first and most important factor for socialization of the child and for providing appropriate conditions for its normal development. Living with a child with intellectual disabilities brings significant financial, emotional, and general, life changes. In the last few decades treatment of those people is completely changed. From medical and institutional approach, the focus has moved towards integral rehabilitation, which includes the entire family and their needs.

The aim of the research is to determinate the socio-economic status of the families who have child with intellectual disabilities. In the survey we included 104 families of the children with intellectual disability in special primary schools and Daycare center.

From the available methods, we used descriptive, causal method and method of generalization.

During the analysis and interpretation of the results we made review of the educational level of the parents, their employment and financial condition, and the health of all family members. We found that the educational level of the member of those families is lower than the educational level in the general population; these families have a lower employment rate with lower monthly incomes compared with the average incomes, and finally, have generally good health with increased frequency of transient problems and chronic diseases.

The obtained results indicate that families have low socioeconomic status. Some of the results show us difficult economic, financial and social position, which can be interpreted as alarming and requiring immediate intervention for improving the socioeconomic status of these families. On the other hand, improvement of living conditions, raising the socio-economic level by itself provides higher quality of life for the children with intellectual disability and their families.

Key words: Socioeconomic status, families, children with intellectual disability

INTRODUCTION

In definition of intellectual disability, according to the American Association on Mental Retardation (2002) we can find that intellectual disability (ID) have unavoidable influence on the functioning of the person. In our research focus is moved to the entire family, actually during the research our aim was to determinate the influence of ID of the child to all family members and functioning of the family in general, i.e. what changes occur in the quality of life, and what kind of repercussions arise in social functioning of the family.

Institute of Statistics of Republic of Macedonia every quartile of the year examined the Socio-economic status (SES) in this country, but very few studies examined the SES of the families with children with ID. As indicators of SES of a family, we analyzed financial position, education and health of family members.

To be able to examine the socio-economic status of families with a child with ID, we consider it necessary to give a general overview of families in Republic of Macedonia. The analyzed data is from the last census, carried out in 2002, but some

required date is update monthly, allowing us to obtain relatively new information.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim of the research

The aim of the research is socio-economical status of families who have child with intellectual disabilities.

ID cause many changes in the functioning of the personality of child with ID, but also in functioning of the whole family. Changes occur in the dynamics and quality of life, which has its repercussions on the social functioning of the family and its members.

Research methods, techniques and instruments

Research methods

During the research we used:

- *Descriptive method* - which describes the socio-economical status of families of children with ID.
- *Causal methods* – that allow analysis of socio-economic status through comparing the causal connection between the set of variables.
- *Method of generalization*

Research techniques

- *Content analysis* – though analysis of existing documentation, we obtain significant data on families.

Research instruments

- *Individual file* of the children, made by the professional team at the institution where the child attends.
- *Questionnaire for parents of children with ID*, which help us to obtain very significant data on personal views, experiences and emotional ties of family members thought the child with ID. In the questionnaire we had two types of questions, open and closed questions. When we were developing the questionnaire we consulted other questionnaires used with the same or similar purpose.

Research sample

The sample contains 104 families, who have children with ID aged 7 to 18, and with different degrees of ID.

Therefore the institution visiting their child, we can give the following display:
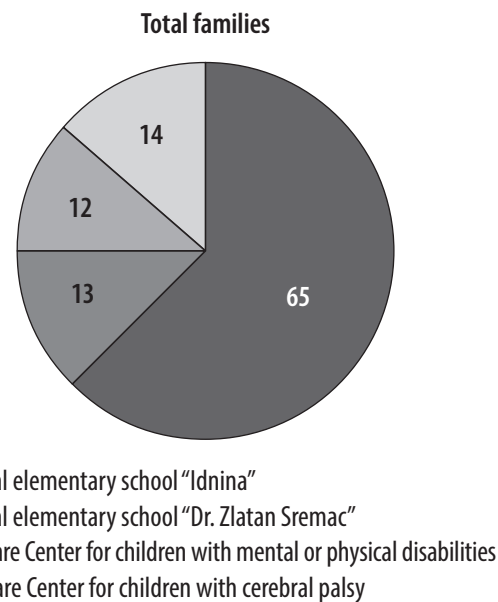
Total families

- ■ Special elementary school "Idnina"
- ■ Special elementary school "Dr. Zlatan Sremac"
- ■ Day Care Center for children with mental or physical disabilities
- ■ Day Care Center for children with cerebral palsy

Figure 1. *Overview of the number of families according to the institution a child with ID attends*

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

For examining the socio-economic status (SES) of the families, we analyzed 3 parameters: the degree of education of mother and father in family, whether they work for salary (analysis of financial condition), as well as health status of family members.

In the questionnaire we were looking information for bout parents in the family, mother and father. It is important to note that we have sample of 104 mothers and 100 fathers.

From this table we can see that most parents have completed secondary education, and least of the parents have completed higher professional education, just 4 of the fathers and 3 mothers. Surprisingly, we find big percentage of mothers who have not completed any educational level, or 22.12%.

We believe it is important to analyze the difference between levels of education of each parent.

In this figure we can notice intense difference between mothers and fathers without education. The percent of the uneducated mothers is 12.12% higher comparing with the percent of uneducated fathers. 11.12% more fathers have completed eight grade, also 2.59% more of the fathers have secondary education. Only in higher education we can observe that we have more mothers with higher education, comparing with the percent of the fathers with higher education, with 3.62% differences. Using χ^2 we found statistically significant difference (significance level of 0.05) between the level of education of mother and father.

To get a realistic picture of the educational level of parents with children with ID, it is necessary to compare the results with the trends that occur in the general population. For this purpose we used data from the Census of Population of the Republic of Macedonia in 2002 (State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, 2011).

Table 3. *Comparative analysis of the level of education in the general population and level of education of parents of children with ID.*

	General population	Sample
Educational level	%	%
No education	9.69	16.18
Eight grade	26.32	33.33
High education	47.4	39.71
Higher professional education	3.48	2.94
Higher education	12.14	7.84
Master	0.43	...
PhD	0.41	...
Educational process is in progress	0.13	...
Total	**100**	**100**

From the table we can see that, generally, parents of children with ID have a lower educational level compared with the general population. This can particularly be seen in great contrast of parents who are without education, we have 6.49% more parents without education in our sample, compared with the general population. Similar is the situation in the percentages of primary education, where 33.33% of the parent, on third of our sample, only completed primary education, versus 26.32%of the general population. In terms of secondary

Table 1. *Education level of the parents:*

	Father		Mother		Total	
Educational level	N	%	N	%	N	%
No education	10	10	23	22.12	**33**	**16.18**
Eight grade	39	39	29	27.88	**68**	**33.33**
High education	41	41	40	38.41	**81**	**39.71**
Higher professional education	4	4	2	1.92	**6**	**2.94**
Higher education	6	6	10	9.62	**16**	**7.84**
No data	4	/	/	/	**4**	/
Total	**104**	**100**	**104**	**99.95**	**208**	**100**

Table 2. *Differences in the level of education between mother and father in the family*

	Father		Mother		Total	
Level of educations	N	%	N	%	N	%
No education	10	10	23	22.12	**33**	**16.18**
Eight grade	39	39	29	27.88	**68**	**33.33**
High education	41	41	40	38.41	**81**	**39.71**
Professional education	4	4	2	1.92	**6**	**2.94**
Higher education	6	6	10	9.62	**16**	**7.84**
Total	**100**	**100**	**104**	**99.95**	**208**	**100**

$\chi^2=8.20$ df=4   p= 0.085

education the percentage is lower in our sample, or 7.69% more people in the general population have completes secondary education compared with our sample. We have similar situation with the number of parents who have completed higher professional and higher education.

Second, but not less important parameter for examining SES of families is the financial situation of those families, whether they work for salary and is that salary enough for everyday needs. For this purpose was examined the percent of employed parents, their salary, and other important parameters considered as relevant to SES, such as possession of arable land, their own house and vehicle. In the following table we can see the percent of employed parents.

Table 4. *Display of employment of parents in the family:*

	Yes		**No**		**Total**
Are they employed?	N	%	N	%	N
Father	51	51	49	49	100
Mother	24	23.08	80	76.92	104
Total	75	36.76	129	63.23	204

$\chi2=17.097$ df=1   p= 4.0E-5

Observed in total, we can say that the percentage of unemployment among these parents is very high and amount to 63.23%. From this table we can see that the percentage of unemployed mothers is much greater than the percentage of unemployed fathers, for 27.92%. More detailed analysis by x^2 show statistical significant difference between the employments of both parents, in favor of the father. We have statistical significance in the level of significance of 0.01.

To get a clear picture of the correspondence of this percentage to the percentage of the general population, we must compare them.

There is a substantial difference in the percentage of employment of the general population and families with a child with ID. Data from 2011 show that 68.8% of the working age populations are employed (State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, 2011), but even less than half, or 36.76% of the families of a child with ID established working relationship. However, it is
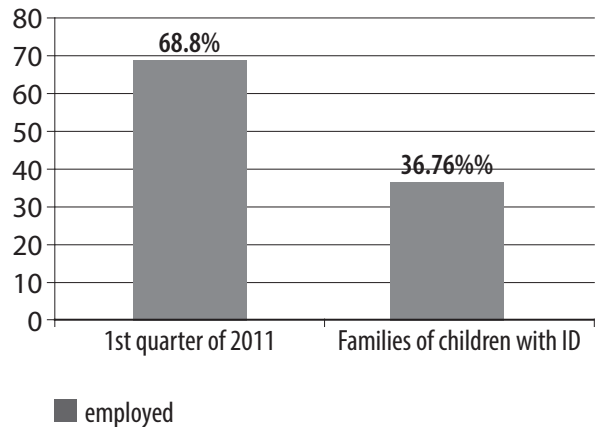

Figure 2. *Comparison between the employment rates of the general population and families with a child with ID*

very important to determine the number of employed members in one family, and to determine the monthly income of that family.
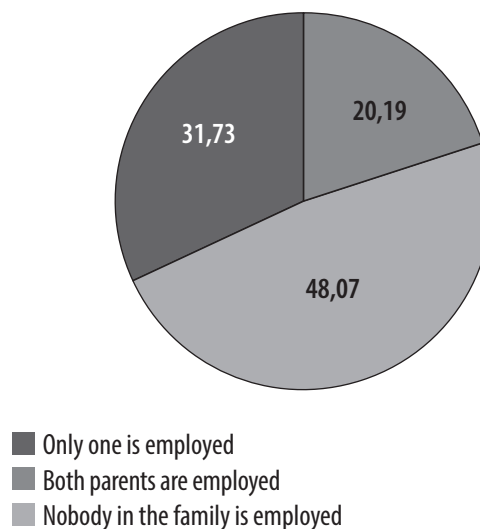

Figure 3. *Display of the number of employed members in one family*

From this figure we can analyze very relevant information about the SES of these families. We can observe that only in 20,19% of the families both parents are employed and in 31,73% there is just one employed parent. Significantly large percentage of families has no employed family

member, or 48.07%, which represent almost half of all families.

We compare the average salary of these families with average income of the general population and we get the following figure:
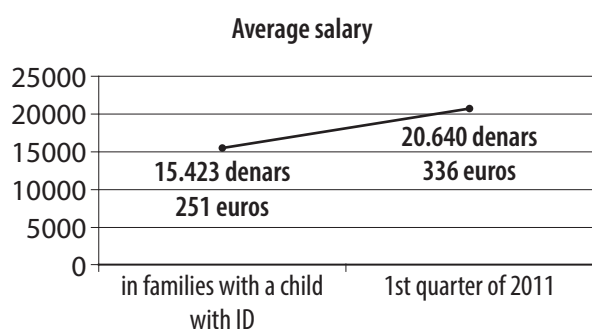
Average salary

Figure 4. *Display of comparison of the average salary in families with a child with ID and the general population*

In the last figure we can see that we have significant difference between the average monthly salary in the general population (State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia, 2011) and the average monthly salary in families with a child with ID. The salary in the average family is 5.216 denars (85 euros) higher than the salary in a family with a child with ID.

Furthermore, as an indicator of the financial situation of families we analyzed their monthly income and any other income from another source. We found that the average wage of the mother is 883 denars (14 euros) greater than the average salary of the father. In some families there are
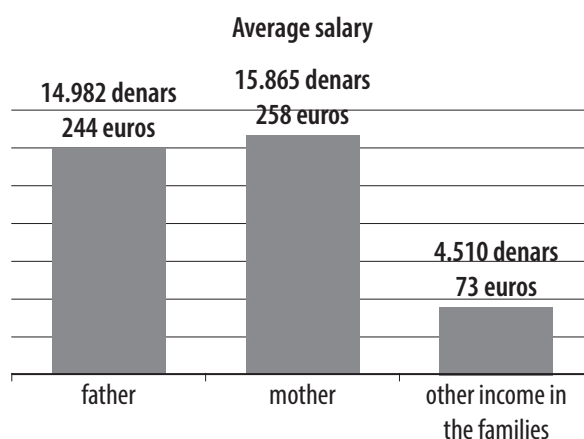
Average salary

Figure 5. *Average salary of working parents of children with ID*

additional outcomes, for average amount of 4.510 denars (73 euros) and in most cases it is a special benefit (amount that the country gave to some families with child with disabilities) or social welfare.

In the next figure we can analyze the salary of the family members.

As a final variable for determine the SES of the families we were examining the health of family members. In the next table we can see the results.

According to these results, fathers are in better health, or 69.32% of them are in good health compared with 67.74% of mothers. Many of the fathers have transient problems (25%), while the percentage of mothers with chronic diseases is 8.6%.

Children are in good health, average for all children we find that 89.82% of them doesn't have health problems.

Table 5. *Display of health of family members:*

Health	Good		Transient problems		Chronic illnesses		Other		Total	No answer
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	/	/
Mother	63	67.74	17	18.28	8	8.6	5	5.36	93	11
Father	61	69.32	22	25	4	4.54	1	1.14	88	16
1st child	66	83.54	9	11.39	0	/	4	5.06	79	12
2nd child	29	85.29	3	8.82	1	2.94	1	2.94	34	10
3rd child	19	90.48	1	4.76	0	/	1	4.76	21	6
4th child	9	100	0	/	0	/	0	/	9	3
Total	247	76.23	52	16.04	13	4.01	12	3.7	324	58

Generally, the result show high percentage of good health – 76.23%, which comes exclusively from the good health of children. While the percentage of having transient problems, chronic illnesses or other health problems are increasing because of the high frequency of their occurrence among parents.

DISCUSSION

During the analysis and interpretation of the results we made review of education level of parents, their employment, financial condition and health of all family members.

According to the results, the level of education of parents who have a child with ID is lower than the level of education of the general population, obtained by the census of 2002. The difference between the general population and our sample is intense, which lead as to the universal conclusion that the families of children with ID have lower levels of education than other families. Our analysis showed that this was particular pronounced among families with child with mild ID.

Radulović K. (1991) in her research discover that level of education of mother is lower than the level of education of the father, me made the same conclusion according to our results.

Our research found that 22.12% of mothers are without education, and 2.88% have only primary education. Similar results are obtained by Radulović K (1991), where 3.6% of mothers have no education, and the same percentage of mothers who completed primary education. As for the father, according to our results 9.69% of fathers have no education, compared to 19.8% from comparative research, while 26.32% have secondary education, compared to other 29.7%.

Generally, in family with a child with ID, parents have lower education level, but there are significant differences between the parents, father has more education than the mother. This tendency may be due to the traditional understanding of the role of parents. Mother is the one who must take care for their child, but when we are speaking about child with ID, this role will be significantly higher because of the needs and capabilities of the child.

She should take a dominant role in the process of his education and fulfilling his daily needs and interests. The role of the father is taken over as a role of parent who must provide financial security in the home, therefore he has greater flexibility in terms of progress in his education, i.e. career.

In terms of financial and material situation of families, again we can deduce a similar conclusion. Families of a child with ID have lower incomes, or lower material and financial status compare to other families. The analysis results showed that there is a substantial difference in the rate of employment and income of these families compared with the general population. In terms of employment rates, we have data that 68.8% of the working age population established working relationship, but almost half, or 36.76% of the families of a child with ID established working relationship. Average salary of those families is about 25% lower than the average salary in the general population.

Survey of Radulović shows similar results, where 47.6% of families have incomes lower than average, and 50.5% of them live in uncomfortable conditions.

The results we obtained in this part of the research can be used in forming an overall conclusion, i.e. families of children with ID have a lower standard than the general population. At this conclusion we can add the results that have showed that many families don't have agricultural land, which can be an additional source of existence. Also many of them don't have a car to facilitate the daily tasks.

Here, as well as the education level, using x^2 we found a statistically significant difference between the numbers of employed fathers compared with the number of employed mothers. Again, we have a higher percentage of employed fathers compared to the percentage of employment among mothers. According to our opinions, the reason for this tendency would be the same, i.e. traditionally divided roles of parents, but now appears another problem with the mother – the educational level and her qualifications are lower and it is very difficult to answer the needs of the labor market. The research showed that the largest percentages of unemployment persons are those who have no education.

Therefore, increasing the level of education, or improving the qualifications of parents can be one of the key things that would have a positively influence in the process of improving the SES of the family with a child with ID.

Unlike education and financial condition, we found that the health condition provide more positive and optimistic results. The majority of respondents, including parents and children, have good health. However, there is a high frequency of occurrence of transient problems and chronic diseases, especially in the health results for the mother.

The obtained results indicate that families have low socioeconomic status. Some of the results show us difficult economic, financial and social position, which can be interpreted as alarming and requiring immediate intervention for improving the socioeconomic status of these families. On the other hand, improvement of living conditions, raising the socio-economic level by itself provides higher quality of life for the children with intellectual disability and their families. We can ensure the child's treatment, care and progress within the limits of his abilities, but also we can provide the mental health of patents, their integrity, and maintain harmonious marital and family relations.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results and conclusions, we believe that these proposals will provide improved SES of families of child with ID:

- Educate parents as on their rights and obligations, which resources they can use and how they will affect their daily living (special allowance and part-time job);
- Improve the financial situation of families through increasing the funds to be awarded as paid special allowance;
- Forming associations of parents who would have a major role in educating parents and exchanging the experience between them;
- Encouragement of parents to raise their level of education and improve their qualifications, which will increase their chances for finding a job. This suggestion especially refers to mothers, because of their lower level of education and employment rate.
- Increasing the percentage of employed parents of children with ID. Creating a special policy that provides some benefits to employers that stimulate them to employ parents of children with ID. Highest priority should be given to the family with children with mild ID, who have the lowest socio economic status.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AAMR (2002): Mental retardation – Definition, classification, and system of support, Washington DC.

Radulović, K. (1991): Mentalna zaostalost. GIAP, Belgrad

State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia. (2011) Average monthly salary, Skopje, Retrieved 24 June 2011 from http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie.aspx?id=40&rbr=451

State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia. (2011) Marriages and divorces, Skopje, Retrieved 21 June 2011 from http://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziSoopstenie.aspx?rbrtxt=11

State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia. (2011) The unemployment rate, Skopje, Retrieved 23 June 2011 from http://www.stat.gov.mk/Default.aspx