

Parenting as an Important Factor in the Optimal Development of the Child Enrolled in Early Childhood Education Institutions

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Abstract

The position and role of the child in the family have changed significantly over time, which causes a change in the responsibilities and tasks of parents (Maleš, 2003). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognises the status of the child as the holder or subject of rights and introduced the term parenthood in the best interests of the child. Parenthood in the best interests of the child is one that enables the realisation of all the child's rights and encourages the child's optimal cognitive, emotional and physical development in a safe environment. This study examines parents' perceptions of the frequency of parental behaviours that are in accordance with the theoretical settings of parenthood in the best interests of the child. The study included 514 parents of children aged 5 and 6 years enrolled in early childhood education institutions. The results show that parents demonstrate behaviours that contribute to parenting aimed at the best interests of the child more often than behaviours that do not support the child's optimal development. Parents are more likely to demonstrate non-supportive behaviours with boys than with girls whilst joint activities of parents and children are more often conducted with younger children.

Key words: *early childhood and preschool age children; early childhood education institutions, joint activities of parents and children; parental behaviours; parenthood in the best interests of the child.*

Introduction

The position and role of the child in the family have changed significantly over time, which has also resulted in a shift in the responsibilities and tasks of parents

(Maleš, 2003). Significant changes took place at the beginning of the 20th century, when the child began to be seen as the subject of his or her growing up. Based on this, the system of children's rights and responsibilities developed.¹ The first international document to mention children's rights is the *Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child* of 1924, which emphasises the need to ensure the child's optimal development, both material and spiritual. More than half a century later, the United Nations adopted a legally binding document, *the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), which recognised the status of the child as the holder or subject of a right. The document is primarily oriented to the obligations and responsibilities of adults in the context of meeting the child's needs and ensuring his or her optimal development. More specifically, the Convention assumes that all adults act in the *best interest of the child*, which implies "the overall, optimal status of the child in relation to himself or herself and other subjects" (Alinčić et al., 2007, p. 237). In parallel with the development of the legal image of the child as a subject, the pedagogical image of "good" parenting has changed throughout history. Following the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, parenting is increasingly being discussed in the field of education as one of the most responsible roles due to its unquestionable contribution to child development (Maleš, 1993), and parents are expected to support children in all segments of their development: physical, cognitive, social, emotional, moral, spiritual, cultural, and educational (Kušević, 2009).

The importance of parenthood for realising the rights of the child has been repeatedly recognised at the international, European, and national levels. At the international level, various United Nations (UN) documents take into account the issue of parenthood, primarily talking about the forms of support that the State can provide to families to fulfil their role in helping children exercise their rights. It is worth mentioning the UN report that emerged as a result of observations and preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, which highlights the need to tackle the subject of families at the national level. This implies conducting research on families so that States can first become familiar with the particularities of families and then, on that basis, form policies and programmes that respond to the needs of different families at the regional and local levels. At the European level, the Council of Europe and the European Union carry out a range of activities in the field of parenting and parental support. These institutions promote equal parenting and partnerships between both parents in the upbringing of the child as well as between parents and society. They place special emphasis on the issue of parental leave and in general on the importance of the State in tackling how parents can balance work and caring for young children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

¹ The term "children's rights" refers to a set of moral and legal principles that establish and protect the rights and freedoms of each individual child as a fundamental prerequisite for their physical survival and overall development, regardless of their racial, sexual, ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, social, and other origins (Spajić-Vrkaš et al., 2004).

encouraged national legislation to recognise the responsibility of parents to care for the needs of children. By ratifying the Convention, the Republic of Croatia, through the Constitution and consequently the Family Act, recognised parents as those who have the freedom to decide independently on the upbringing of children, but also who have the responsibility of exercising the rights of the child.

Parenting focused on the best interests of the child

After the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, due to the responsibility of parents to meet the needs of the child, the concept of parenthood changed and, accordingly, so did the expectations placed on parents. Parenthood is defined with regard to the rights of children and the rights and responsibilities of parents, and the primary goal of parenthood is to meet the principle of “the best interest of the child”. Scientists from various research fields, from pedagogy and psychology, through sociology to child healthcare, emphasise the importance of certain characteristics of parenting and give parenting approaches different names (Cleaver et al., 2011; Coleman, 1988; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Fuller, 2008; Grlonick, 2003; Pećnik & Starc, 2010; Council of Europe, 2006). Thus, the Council of Europe and its Recommendation 19 (2006) introduces the concept of *positive parenting*, which bases parental behaviour on the best interests of the child, which implies nurturing, non-violent, and empowering recognition and guidance of a child, and which involves setting boundaries to enable the full development of the child. Positive parenting presupposes the harmonisation of parental rights through the development of a positive parent-child relationship and the optimisation of the child’s developmental potential. The same term is used by many authors who conduct research on parenting and by those who develop support programmes to strengthen parenting competencies (Pastorelli et al., 2016; Rodrigo, 2010; Sanders, 2008, Sanders, 2019; Seay et al., 2014). The term *modern parenting* emphasises the importance of empowering the child, which refers to creating conditions for strengthening the child’s sense of competence, personal control, and the ability to influence other people, i.e., the world around them, in accordance with increasing age and level of maturity (Pećnik & Starc, 2010). The conceptualisation of optimal parental behaviour, according to the self-determination theory, is known as *supportive parenting*, a term coined by Ryan and Deci (2000). They list three basic psychological needs of each individual: the need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness that serve as the foundation for the development of three basic components of supportive parenting: parental involvement, providing structure, and supporting the child’s autonomy. In short, parents are expected to play an active role in children’s lives, to meet their child’s need for attachment, to give the child clear and consistent guidelines, expectations, and rules, which then provides the predictability of the consequences of children’s actions, and to actively support the child’s capacity for self-initiative and autonomy. Parenting in the modern age, with all the demands in respect of children, is inseparable from the daily stress caused by a hectic life. It is parental overload

that has triggered the development of *mindful parenting*, which advocates parental awareness in the current situation. This slows down parental stress-induced automatic reactions and emphasises the importance of calming the emotional response and, as a consequence, allows for the reasonable choice of a parental strategy that best suits the needs of the child (Bögels & Restifo, 2013). The spiritual approach to parenting is emphasised in the concepts of *holistic parenting* (Rahmawati, 2016; Wiese Sneyd, 2000), which advocates the integration of the psychological aspects of the child, child well-being, and practical parenting behaviours; *responsible parenting* (Begić & Dadić, 2017), which emphasises the theological perspective of responsible parenting and is based on human responsibility derived from Christian conscience; and *natural parenting* (Schön & Silvén, 2007), which emphasises an evolutionary, intuitive approach to parenting based on listening to and meeting children's needs and respecting the unique developmental pathway for each child. The functioning of parenting relative to the processes of tasks, roles, rules, communication, and interpersonal relationships that parents achieve in contact with their child (Klarin, 2006) leads to the concept of *practical parenting*. It includes the emotional and social dimension of the parent-child relationship through which the child meets basic life needs, feels emotional warmth and safety, and grows up in a supportive environment where boundaries are clearly set and where the child is enabled to learn and develop (Cleaver et al., 2011). It can be concluded that a key element of the parental role is to prepare the child to respond to the necessary demands of those around them without losing their personal integrity (Baumrind, 1967).

Regardless of research perspectives and the terms of parenting concepts, all parents who practise "parenting in the best interests of the child" have common characteristics of: respecting the child's needs and rights; applying *caring behaviour* that responds to the child's need for love, emotional warmth, security, belonging, connection, and acceptance; providing a *leadership structure*, which gives the child a sense of security and predictability and allows the development of competences; and ultimately *respecting the child as a person and recognising the child's individuality* (Pećnik & Starc, 2010). In this way, the parent responds to the need and right of the child to be seen, heard, and respected as a person with their own understandings, ideas, plans, preferences, and human dignity.

Taking into account current knowledge in the field of parenting, in this paper, parenting in the *best interest of the child* is considered as parenting that enables the realisation of all children's rights and encourages the child's optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical development in a safe environment. The emphasis is on the family environment that parents create through their own behaviours and activities that they carry out with their children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapted to the family environment, assumes that the values of mutual respect, dignity, authenticity, integrity, and responsibility become the basis for building a parent-child relationship (Daly, 2007). Specifically, *parenting in the best interests of the child* is parenting by which

parents through their behaviour enable the child to develop a sense of belonging to their own family (Klarin, 2006; Juul & Jensen, 2010; Pećnik & Starc, 2010), a sense of security and predictability (Cleaver et al., 2011; Pećnik & Starc, 2010), competences and problem-solving skills (Coleman, 1988; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Fuller, 2008), strengthen self-confidence and child autonomy (Baumrind, 1967; Grlonick, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Council of Europe, 2006), and one in which parents spend quality time with their children (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Pećnik & Starc, 2010; Peterson, 2011) in a non-violent environment (Richter, 2004; Council of Europe, 2006).

In doing so, parents should adjust their educational activities and behaviours depending on the age of the child. During the preschool period (3-6 years), good parenting is focused on developing the child's social skills, i.e., expressing friendship and cooperation, as well as the ability to be resourceful in the environment and motivated to achieve results. This is achieved with a high degree of support and oversight. Children of this age establish independence and initiative, and parents, by wise supervision and harmonisation of the child's demands and abilities, establish and set firm and clear boundaries of the child's behaviour, within a warm atmosphere of love and care (Čudina - Obradović & Obradović, 2003). In the preschool period, the role of parents is especially important in the child's acquisition of communication skills, in promoting the healthy and holistic development and behaviour of the child, and especially in raising awareness and boosting "family strengths" in coping with difficulties (Ljubetić & Tabain, 2009).

The contribution of parenting elements to the optimal development of early and preschool age children

Parenting focused on the best interests of the child includes parental behaviours that positively contribute to the child's optimal development. Various authors have conducted studies that indicate the contribution of specific parental behaviours to children's development (National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2007; Pećnik & Tokić, 2011), and some of them have offered theories and models of parenting and child development based on a number of previous studies (Belsky, 1984; Coleman, 1988; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). One of the most significant theories in this area is that of Coleman (1988) who described Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and concluded from it that the family directly contributes to the cognitive and emotional development of the preschool child. In more detail, according to this author, the family's contribution to the child's development exists in three basic elements: *cultural capital* (the parents' educational level, creating an environment for the child's cognitive development), *financial capital* (socioeconomic status, financial situation that allows greater or lesser family investment, for example buying learning and research material) and *social capital* (parent-child relationship, joint play and learning, relationships with others outside the family). The author points out that social capital is crucial, and the positive action of parents in this area can compensate for poor cultural

and financial conditions. Besides, the social capital of one generation through the relationship of parents to children affects the development of cultural capital of the next generation. Belsky (1984) discussed the *process model of parenting* and explained that the development of a preschool child is directly influenced by parenting, which is shaped by the individual characteristics of the parents, the individual characteristics of the child, parental employment, marital relations, and the social network in which the parenting takes place. Another theory of parenting is presented by Darling and Steinberg (1993). Under the notion of “the contextual model of parenting style”, the authors explain that the development of the child, in addition to the child’s individual characteristics, is directly influenced by parental behaviours and parenting style, which are both conditioned by parental goals and values.

Furthermore, some authors (Belsky 1984; Juul & Jensen, 2010; Paterson, 2011) have attempted to determine which individual characteristics of parents, which behaviours, and what environment positively influence the optimal development of a preschool child. A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Development (2007) on the development of preschool children states that a child’s cognitive development is positively affected by a higher parental educational level status, higher family income, two-parent families compared to single parents, and maternal adaptability and sensitivity. In addition, parents who are actively involved in society and have stronger social support around them contribute to the better development of the child (Belsky, 1984). However, the most important element for the quality development of the child is considered to be parental behaviours, in other words “*what parents do is much more important than who parents are*” (Paterson, 2011). The relationships that develop between a parent and a preschool child have a fundamental impact on what follows, and children can develop their natural potentials only by interacting with adults who respond appropriately to their needs (Richter, 2004). In doing so, it is important for parents to develop close family synergies with their children in which they discuss their thoughts and feelings and thus resolve potential conflicts (Juul & Jensen, 2010). It is very important to enable the child to develop independence and encourage them to solve problems on their own, and not to do things for them (Fuller, 2008). Respect for the child’s autonomy encourages the child from an early age to grow and strengthen, while parental management of the child’s behaviour leads to the child feeling that their successes and failures are in someone else’s hands (Grolnick, 2003). Quality leisure time between parents and children is especially important. In the development of speaking and pre-reading skills, as well as in the creation of emotional closeness in the relationship with the parent, reading picturebooks together is considered especially important (Pećnik & Starc, 2010). In conclusion, the importance of engaging in parenting and reflecting on parental behaviours and the environment they shape for their child’s growth is of unquestionable importance to contemporary upbringing and education. As concluded by Hosking and Walsh (2010, p. 11) based on an in-depth analysis of international literature and practices in the field of early interventions: *the quality of parental care for children* is the key to a successful society.

Research objectives

This research has four specific research objectives:

- 1 To determine the perception of parents about the frequency of parental behaviours that are consistent with parenting in the best interest of the child.
- 2 To determine whether, according to the parents' perception, there are differences in the occurrence of certain parental behaviours in the best interest of the child in relation to the child's sex and age.
- 3 To determine the parents' perception of the frequency of parents and children joint activities.
- 4 To determine whether, according to the parents' perception, there are differences in the frequency of joint activities with the child in relation to the child's sex and age.

Methodology

Sample and data collection

Participants in the study were parents of five- and six-year olds included in the institutional system of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC). A total of 514 parents participated in the research, of whom 86.3% were mothers and 11.7% were fathers. They assessed their own behaviour in relation to 50.4% boys and 49.6% girls, of whom 55.64% were 5 years old and 44.36% were 6 years old at the time of the research.

Data collection took place in December 2020. Data were collected within the pilot research project "Models of responding to the educational needs of children at risk of social exclusion in institutions of early and preschool education".² Ten ECEC institutions participated in the pilot study. Convenience sampling was used. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous, and parents who agreed to participate signed an informed consent, after which they received an encrypted questionnaire that they returned completed in a sealed envelope.

Method and instruments

For the purposes of this research, two scales from the survey questionnaire, developed specifically for the needs of the research, were employed: *Frequency of Certain Parental Behaviours* and *Frequency of Joint Activities of Parents and Children*.

The scale for examining the *Frequency of Certain Parental Behaviours* contained 15 items. With this instrument, parents assessed how often in an average week they practised specific behaviours in theoretically selected areas of *parenting in the best interest of the child* (in the sense of belonging to one's own family, security and predictability, development of competences and problem-solving skills, strengthening the child's self-confidence and autonomy, and development of a non-violent environment). The range

² The project is funded by the Croatian Science Foundation and aims to develop a scientific basis for planning programmes for the prevention of social exclusion of children. One of the steps that will contribute to achieving the objective is the collection of data on various aspects of the risk of social exclusion of children attending kindergartens in the Republic of Croatia.

of the scale included the following estimates: *never, once, several times a week, every day, several times a day*. The eight-item scale examined the behaviours of parents in the best interests of the child, i.e., those that indicate caring parenting, which is non-violent, provides the child with boundaries and security and allows their autonomy (hereinafter “supportive parental behaviours”). The remaining seven items referred to behaviours for which the term “non-supportive parental behaviours” will be used in the rest of the paper, in which parents apply methods that weaken the child’s optimal development of independence, autonomy, and integrity, i.e., those that hamper the practice of parenting in the best interest of the child. A factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the data collected by this scale, which yielded two factors (*supportive* and *non-supportive* behaviours of parents³), and which altogether explained 46% of the variance. Both factors indicated high reliability, i.e., Cronbach’s Alpha for the factor describing *supportive* behaviours of the parents was $\alpha = .822$, and for the factor that suggests *non-supportive* behaviours $\alpha = .779$. The factors showed high negative correlation ($r = -0.56$), which indicated that it was possible to look at the scale as a one-dimensional instrument that measures the construct of parenting, but it was also possible to distinguish two sub-dimensions of this phenomenon: *supportive* and *non-supportive* parental behaviours. Cronbach’s Alpha for the whole instrument was $\alpha = .829$, and it did not suggest any of the items be deleted.

Using the scale for testing *the Frequency of Joint Activities of Parents and Children*, parents assessed how often they practised certain activities with children. The range of the scale included the following estimates: *never, once, several times a week, every day, several times a day*. The instrument examined the following seven activities: playing board games, reading picturebooks or stories, playing games via ICT technology, watching animated films, going to the park or walking, listening to music, and singing, dancing or reciting.

Results

The results presented in Table 1 show that, according to the parents’ perception, parents more often behave in accordance with the elements of parenting aimed at the best interests of the child ($M_{\text{supportive}} = 3.56$, $SD = 0.57$) than with the elements of parenting that do not support the child’s optimal development ($M_{\text{non-supportive}} = 2.58$, $SD = 0.62$). Furthermore, parental behaviours that represent caring parenting that gives the child the necessary security and allows the development of autonomy occur more often in an average week (the arithmetic mean of each behaviour is greater than 3, leading to the conclusion that they occur on average up to several times a week) than behaviours that have a negative impact on the development of parenting in the best interests of the child.

³ Table 1 at the end of each statement indicates whether they belong to Factor 1, which describes “supportive” parental behaviours, or Factor 2, which describes “non-supportive” parental behaviours.

Table 1
Frequency of parental behaviours in relation to the child in an average week (% , M, SD)

	Never	Once	Several times a week	Every day	Several times a day	M	SD
Praising the child (F1)	0.2%	0.2%	14.4%	46.9%	38.3%	4.23	.71
Encouraging the child to solve a problem or task (F1)	0.2%	4.8%	33.1%	46.9%	14.9%	3.72	.78
Supporting the child's initiative (F1)	0.8%	5.8%	32.3%	47.8%	13.3%	3.67	.81
Explaining to the child the reasons for certain requests (F1)	1.4%	6.9%	35.8%	39.4%	16.5%	3.63	.89
Checking if the child understands well (F1)	2.5%	8.6%	31.7%	43.0%	14.2%	3.58	.92
Agreeing on the rules in cooperation with the child (F1)	2.5%	10.7%	38.7%	39.9%	8.2%	3.40	.88
Warning the child of the consequences of their behaviour (F2)	1.9%	17.2%	44.2%	30.4%	6.2%	3.22	.87
Preparing the child for challenging situations (F1)	5.7%	21.4%	32.9%	33.5%	6.5%	3.14	1.01
Teaching the child new skills (F1)	2.2%	22.3%	48.5%	22.1%	4.9%	3.05	.85
Insisting that the child meets a requirement (F2)	7.0%	22.1%	42.0%	24.2%	4.7%	2.97	.97
Planning ways to avoid unwanted child behaviour (F2)	20.6%	25.3%	29.4%	19.6%	5.1%	2.63	1.16

	Never	Once	Several times a week	Every day	Several times a day	M	SD
Forbidding the child from engaging in an activity (e.g. Stop it!) (F2)	17.5%	26.1%	39.8%	12.3%	4.3%	2.60	1.05
Doing something for the child, even though they are able to do it themselves (F2)	18.3%	33.3%	34.9%	10.9%	2.5%	2.46	.99
Showing nervousness in talking to the child (F2)	21.1%	46.4%	26.6%	5.3%	0.6%	2.18	.84
Punishing the child (F2)	31.6%	47.9%	18.3%	2.2%	0.0%	1.91	.76

Parents perceive that they mostly praise the child in an average week ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.71$), which half of the parents do every day, and more than a third do up to several times a day. Three-fifths of the surveyed parents encourage the child's autonomy once or more a day by encouraging the child to solve a problem or task ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.78$) and support their initiative ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.81$). More than half of the surveyed parents try to provide structure for their children by explaining the reasons for their requests ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.89$) and checking whether the child understands them well ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.92$). According to the perception of parents, of all the offered behaviours, they rarely resort to punishment ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.76$), and one third of the children never face punishment, while half of them are punished on average once a week. However, a quarter of parents state that they show nervousness in talking to their children several times a week ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 0.84$). Furthermore, a third of parents do something for the child that they can do themselves ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.99$) and forbid the child from engaging in an activity ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.05$) several times a week. It is important to note that approximately one-fifth of children never or only once a week encounter parental behaviours important to the child's development of autonomy and self-confidence such as preparing the child for challenging situations ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.01$) and teaching the child new skills ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.85$).

Differences in the age and sex of the child were examined by the t-test for independent samples in relation to the factors of *supportive* and *non-supportive* parental behaviour (Table 2). A statistically significant difference ($t(488) = 2.579$, $p < 0.05$) was found in relation to the sex of the child, where parents significantly more often applied *non-supportive* behaviours with boys ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.65$) than with girls ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.52$). Parents more often forbade boys ($M = 2.78$) to engage in an activity (t

(504) = 3.770; $p < 0.001$) than they forbade girls ($M_2 = 2.43$). They also punished (t (500) = 2.966; $p < 0.01$) boys ($M_1 = 2.01$) statistically significantly more often than girls ($M_2 = 1.81$). In relation to *supportive* behaviours, no statistically significant difference was found in relation to the sex of the child (t (478) = 0.952, $p > 0.05$; $M_{\text{boys}} = 3.54$, $M_{\text{girls}} = 3.59$).

No statistically significant differences were found in relation to the age of the child, either in relation to *supportive* or in relation to *non-supportive* parental behaviours (Table 2). In relation to the age of the child, parents encouraged younger children ($M_1 = 3.77$) to solve a problem or task on their own (t (508) = 2.010; $p < 0.05$) statistically significantly more often during an average week than they encouraged older children ($M_2 = 3.63$). According to their estimates, they showed nervousness statistically significantly more often in conversation (t (503) = 2.039; $p < 0.05$) with younger children ($M_1 = 2.25$) than with older children ($M_2 = 2.10$), but also calmly explained the reasons for their requests (t (501) = 2.658; $p < 0.01$) more to younger ($M_1 = 3.72$) than to older children ($M_2 = 3.50$).

Table 2

T-test results: differences in respect of age and gender in parental behaviours

Variables	Analysis performed	Results of the analysis	Arithmetic mean
Supportive parental behaviours and the sex of the child	T-test for independent samples	df = 478 Sig. (2-tailed) = .304 t = 1.029	$M_{\text{boys}} = 3.54$ $M_{\text{girls}} = 3.59$
Non-supportive parental behaviours and the sex of the child	T-test for independent samples	df = 488 Sig. (2-tailed) = .017 t = 2.384	$M_{\text{boys}} = 2.65$ $M_{\text{girls}} = 2.52$
Supportive parental behaviours and child age	T-test for independent samples	df = 480 Sig. (2-tailed) = .087 t = 1.713	$M_{\text{younger}} = 3.60$ $M_{\text{older}} = 3.51$
Non-supportive parental behaviours and child age	T-test for independent samples	df = 489 Sig. (2-tailed) = .089 t = 1.704	$M_{\text{younger}} = 2.63$ $M_{\text{older}} = 2.53$

An important element of parenting in the best interest of the child is spending quality free time with the child and practising activities that encourage the child's optimal development. Table 3 shows that more than half of parents go to the park or for a walk with their children every day, even up to several times a day ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.72$), they listen to music ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.91$) and dance, sing or recite ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.96$). About half of parents read picturebooks or stories with their children several times a week ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.85$), watch animated films ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 0.92$), and play board games ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.82$). About 5% of children remain deprived of any activities with their parents, while a little more than one tenth of them sing and dance (11.7%) with their parents or read picturebooks and stories (16.5%) only once a week.

Table 3

Frequency of practising certain activities between parents and children in an average week (% , M, SD)

	Never	Once	Several times a week	Every day	Several times a day	M	SD
Going to the park or walking	0.2%	3.7%	39.3%	47.3%	9.5%	3.62	.72
Listening to music	2.5%	8.1%	32.2%	43.4%	13.8%	3.58	.91
Singing, dancing, reciting	4.1%	11.7%	38.5%	34.8%	10.9%	3.37	.96
Reading a picturebook or a story	2.3%	16.5%	40.3%	37.0%	3.9%	3.24	.85
Watching an animated film	4.3%	21.5%	40.9%	29.1%	4.3%	3.08	.92
Playing games using ICT technology	32.5%	24.6%	30.9%	10.8%	1.2%	2.24	1.06
Playing a board game	4.1%	31.5%	48.7%	13.1%	2.5%	2.78	.82

Differences in the age and sex of the child were examined by the t-test for independent samples in relation to the examined joint activities. Parents read picturebooks or stories ($t(507) = 3.190$; $p < 0.01$; $M1 = 3.16$, $M2 = 3.36$) and dance, sing or recite ($t(505) = 4.638$; $p < 0.001$; $M1 = 3.18$, $M2 = 3.57$) statistically significantly more in an average week with girls, while with boys they play a game using ICT technologies ($t(499) = 4.560$; $p < 0.001$; $M1 = 2.45$, $M2 = 2.02$). There is no statistically significant difference between boys and girls in how often they play board games ($t(502) = 1.158$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 2.75$, $M2 = 2.83$), listen to music ($t(507) = 1.694$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 3.52$, $M2 = 3.65$), watch an animated film ($t(507) = 1.274$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 3.03$, $M2 = 3.13$) or go for a walk or to the park ($t(507) = 0.610$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 3.61$, $M2 = 3.64$) with their parents.

Furthermore, parents read picturebooks ($t(508) = 2.878$; $p < 0.01$; $M1 = 3.33$, $M2 = 3.22$) or stories, dance, sing or recite ($t(506) = 2.884$; $p < 0.01$; $M1 = 3.47$, $M2 = 3.23$) and go for walks or in the park ($t(502) = 2.257$; $p < 0.05$; $M1 = 3.68$, $M2 = 3.54$) statistically significantly more often in an average week with younger children, while they play games using ICT technologies with older children ($t(500) = 2.482$; $p < 0.05$; $M1 = 2.13$, $M2 = 2.37$). There is no statistically significant difference between younger and older

children in how often they play board games ($t(503) = 0.413$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 2.80$, $M2 = 2.77$), listen to music ($t(508) = 0.630$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 3.63$, $M2 = 3.50$) or watch an animated film ($t(508) = 0.594$; $p > 0.05$; $M1 = 3.11$, $M2 = 3.03$) with their parents.

Discussion

Parenting in the best interest of the child is considered parenting that enables the child to exercise their rights and encourages the child's optimal cognitive, emotional, and physical development in a safe environment. It is important that parents develop and boost in the child of preschool age a sense of belonging to their own family, a sense of security and predictability, competences, and self-confidence and autonomy (Juil & Jensen, 2010; Klarin, 2006; Matte-Gagné & Bernier 2011; Pećnik & Starc, 2010). Parents involved in this research report that they more often apply parental behaviours that are theoretically grounded as "positive", and more than half of the parents of preschool children praise the child every day or even several times a day, encourage them to solve a problem or task on their own, support their children's initiative, and explain to them the reasons for their own demands. Such results are very encouraging, especially when viewed in relation to the results of previous research that confirmed that exposure to positive parenting contributed to the development of self-regulation of emotions and behaviour and thus contributed to protecting children from developing behavioural problems (Kochanska et al., 2001). Although the results suggest that positive parenting is the dominant paradigm, i.e. that children are more exposed to positive parenting, and to a lesser extent to behaviours that do not contribute to the best interests of the child, it is important to point out that slightly more than a third of parents say they exhibit non-supportive behaviours every day or several times a week, that is, they insist that the child fulfils a request, forbid the child to engage in a certain activity, or do something for the child that he or she is capable of doing alone.

The results obtained by this research suggest that it is impossible to divide parental behaviours exclusively and unambiguously into those of "positive" and "negative" orientation. More specifically, the results of the factor analysis show a division into two factors, where the items of *supportive* and *non-supportive* parenting are theoretically grouped together, although there is a high correlation between the obtained two factors. To be precise, parenting is considered to be a series of influences, activities, and behaviours of parents that take place in a non-violent environment, some of which are considered supportive and others non-supportive for the child's development. To better understand the positive and negative direction of parental behaviours, research should be conducted to examine not only parental behaviours but also the context in which these behaviours occur. Thus, for example, it would become clearer whether forbidding a particular behaviour was done to protect the child from a negative consequence (e.g., falling from a height) or if it was used as a demonstration of unnecessary or heavy discipline.

In conclusion, parenting in the best interests of the child implies that parents respect all the child's rights, but they are also expected to adjust parental activities and behaviours according to the individual characteristics of the child, as well as to their own individual characteristics, which is in line with theories that describe the connection between parenting and child development (Belsky, 1984; Coleman, 1988; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

One of the important characteristics of parenting in the best interest of the child is parents and children spending quality time together. Parents and children doing joint activities is of immense importance because they create better family relationships that allow for optimal development, so they should be part of every family's everyday life (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). More than half of the parents included in this study state that they go to the park or for a walk, listen to music or sing, dance or recite with their children every day or even several times a day during an average week. Furthermore, more than a third of parents read picturebooks or stories to their children every day and watch animated films with them. However, it is important to note that about 2-5% of children are completely denied some of the surveyed activities with their parents. The results obtained are in line with those obtained by UNICEF's study *How Parents Care for Young Children* (Pećnik, 2013) in which the author also concludes that most children encounter such parental incentives in their daily lives. Conducting joint activities and playing with children facilitates the child's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Pećnik, 2013).

The results of the research indicate certain differences in parental behaviours in relation to the sex of the child. Thus, parents are statistically significantly more likely to apply *non-supportive* behaviours to boys; more specifically, boys are more likely to be denied something or get punished for something. At the same time, parents are statistically significantly more likely to carry out activities with girls that stimulate their cognitive and socio-emotional development, such as reading picturebooks or stories and singing, dancing, and reciting. Such results raise questions about the extent to which parental behaviours are conditioned by stereotypes about differences between girls and boys. Differences in parental behaviours in respect of preschool children obtained by this research support the stereotypes that are based on biological differences between sexes, according to which boys are more prone to destruction and aggression (Marović, 2009) and therefore parental behaviours towards boys are more focused on reducing these negative behaviours by prohibitions and punishment. On the other hand, girls are expected to be more music-, dance-, and story-oriented, and therefore parental behaviours with girls are more focused on storytelling, singing, and dancing (Vasta et al., 2005). It is interesting to note that parents more often prevent boys from engaging in an activity, which suggests their greater physical activity; however, when choosing joint activities to do with children, parents do not seem to take into account these observed differences. Specifically, it is with girls that they more often undertake activities that encourage calmer play (reading, singing), while they go to the park or

walk equally often with boys and girls, although these activities would allow boys to be more physically active.

Certain differences in parental behaviours were also found in respect of the age of children. Parents are statistically significantly more likely to calmly explain the reasons for their requests to younger children and encourage them to solve a problem or task on their own, but at the same time they are more likely to show nervousness in interacting with them. Furthermore, parents state that they sing, dance, recite, and read picture books or stories more often to younger children. Such data, which show that parental educational interventions occur more often with younger than with older children, are also seen in previous research (Pećnik, 2013). It can be assumed that older children are more independent in performing certain activities and therefore parents carry out certain activities with them to a lesser extent.

Conclusion

This research examined the perception of parents about the elements of their parenting that affect the optimal development of the child. It is evident that parents see their own parenting as a phenomenon that contains a number of behaviours that promote parenting in the best interests of the child, but also a series of behaviours that hinder the child's optimal development. The results show that parents make greater use of behaviours that strengthen their child's autonomy, boost their self-confidence, and develop a safe family environment, but still a large number of parents often resort to punishment and show nervousness in solving problems with children. Parents need to be presented with the results of such research which should be placed in the context of parenting in the best interests of the child, in order to further increase the frequency of *supportive* and decrease the frequency of *non-supportive* parental behaviours. Furthermore, there are visible differences in parental behaviours in relation to the child's sex and age. Awareness of potential stereotypes on which parents base differences in their behaviour is the first step towards achieving equal access to the rights of all children. Accordingly, it is necessary to open the topic of differences in the upbringing of boys and girls among parents and to try to reduce stereotypical behaviours that may contribute to additional gender inequality in society.

When interpreting the research results, it is necessary to keep in mind certain limitations. By focusing on the behavioural aspect of parents, an important part of parenting in the best interest of the child has been partially neglected, which presupposes caring parental behaviour, i.e., parental behaviour by which they respond to the child's need for love and emotional warmth. In further research, it would be useful to include this element as well in order to obtain a more comprehensive insight. Furthermore, given the existing theories of parenthood, future research should take into account the individual characteristics of parents (level of education, employment status) as well as elements of the environment in which the child grows up (financial situation of the family, whether the child grows up in an urban or non-urban area) and possible

differences in parental behaviours in relation to these characteristics. Research based on parental self-perception allows for an overview of a cross-section of parental behaviours, but this is not sufficient to fully understand the contexts in which these behaviours manifest themselves and to gain a comprehensive understanding of positive parenting. In further research, it would be useful to introduce the observation method to provide an objective insight into parental behaviours.

Acknowledgment

This paper was funded by the Croatian Science Foundation through Project IP-2019-04-2011.

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Roditeljstvo kao važan činitelj optimalnoga razvoja djece uključene u institucionalni sustav ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja

Sažetak

Položaj i uloga djeteta u obitelji značajno se mijenjaju kroz povijest, što uzrokuje i promjenu u odgovornostima i zadacima roditelja (Maleš, 2003). Konvencija UN-a o pravima djeteta (1989) u kojoj je djetetu priznat status nositelja ili subjekta prava, donosi pojam roditeljstva u najboljem interesu djeteta. Roditeljstvo u najboljem interesu djeteta jest ono koje omogućuje ostvarivanje svih djetetovih prava te potiče djetetov optimalan kognitivni, emocionalni i tjelesni razvoj u sigurnom okruženju. Ovim se istraživanjem ispitivala percepcija roditelja o učestalosti roditeljskih ponašanja koja su usklađena s teorijskim postavkama roditeljstva u najboljem interesu djeteta te percepcija roditelja o učestalosti provođenja zajedničkih aktivnosti između roditelja i djeteta. U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 514 roditelja djece u dobi od 5 i 6 godina uključenih u institucionalni sustav ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja. Prema percepciji roditelja, roditelji češće primjenjuju ponašanja koja pridonose roditeljstvu usmjerenom na najbolji interes djeteta nego ponašanja koja ne podržavaju djetetov optimalan razvoj. Roditelji češće primjenjuju određena nepodržavajuća ponašanja u odnosu s dječacima nego s djevojčicama, dok zajedničke aktivnosti provode češće s mlađom nego sa starijom djecom.

Ključne riječi: *djeca rane i predškolske dobi; roditeljska ponašanja; roditeljstvo u najboljem interesu djeteta; zajedničke aktivnosti roditelja i djece.*

Uvod

Položaj i uloga djeteta u obitelji značajno se mijenjaju kroz povijest, što uzrokuje i promjenu u odgovornostima i zadacima roditelja (Maleš, 2003). Značajnije promjene započinju početkom 20. stoljeća kada se na dijete počinje gledati kao na subjekta svojega odrastanja na temelju čega se razvija sustav djetetovih prava¹ i odgovornosti. Prvi

¹ Izraz „prava djece“ odnosi se na skup moralnih i pravnih načela kojima se utvrđuju i štite prava i slobode svakog pojedinog djeteta kao temeljne pretpostavke njegova fizičkog opstanka i cjelokupnog razvoja, bez obzira na njegovo rasno, spolno, etničko, nacionalno, vjersko, jezično, socijalno i drugo podrijetlo (Spajić-Vrkaš i sur., 2004).

međunarodni dokument koji spominje prava djece jest Ženevska deklaracija o pravima djeteta iz 1924. godine, u kojoj se ističe nužnost osiguravanja djetetova optimalnoga razvoja, kako materijalnoga, tako i duhovnoga. Nakon protoka više od pola stoljeća, Ujedinjeni narodi donose pravno obvezujući dokument, *Konvenciju UN-a o pravima djeteta* (1989) u kojoj je djetetu priznat status nositelja ili subjekta prava. Dokument je primarno orijentiran na obveze i odgovornosti odraslih u kontekstu ostvarivanja djetetovih potreba i osiguravanja njegova optimalnoga razvoja. Specifičnije, Konvencija pretpostavlja da svi odrasli djeluju u *najboljem djetetovu interesu* što podrazumijeva „sveukupni, optimalni status djeteta u odnosu na njega samoga i druge subjekte“ (Alinčić i sur., 2007, str. 237). Paralelno s razvojem pravne slike djeteta kao subjekta, kroz povijest se mijenjala i pedagoška slika „dobroga“ roditeljstva. Nakon donošenja Konvencije UN-a o pravima djeteta, u području odgoja i obrazovanja sve se više počinje govoriti o roditeljskoj funkciji kao jednoj od najodgovornijih uloga zbog njezina neupitnoga doprinosa razvoju djeteta (Maleš, 1993) te se od roditelja očekuje pružanje podrške djetetu u svim segmentima njegova razvoja: fizičkom, kognitivnom, socijalnom, emotivnom, moralnom, duhovnom, kulturnom i obrazovnom (Kušević, 2009).

Važnost roditeljstva za ostvarivanje prava djeteta višestruko je prepoznat na međunarodnoj, europskoj i nacionalnoj razini. Na međunarodnoj razini, različiti dokumenti Ujedinjenih naroda (UN) uzimaju u obzir pitanje roditeljstva, primarno govoreći o oblicima podrške koju država može pružiti obiteljima kako bi one ispunile svoju ulogu u ostvarivanju dječjih prava. Važno je spomenuti UN-ov izvještaj koji je nastao kao rezultat opservacije i priprema za desetu godišnjicu Međunarodne godine obitelji 2004. godine, koji ističe nužnost bavljenja obitelji na nacionalnoj razini, što podrazumijeva provedbu istraživanja obitelji kako bi se države upoznale s njihovim specifičnostima, a potom na toj bazi formirale politike i programe koji odgovaraju na potrebe različitih obitelji na regionalnoj i lokalnoj razini. Na europskoj razini, Vijeće Europe i Europska unija provode niz aktivnosti u području roditeljstva i roditeljske podrške. Ove institucije promoviraju rodno ravnopravno roditeljstvo te partnerstvo između oba roditelja u odgoju djeteta kao i između roditelja i društva. Poseban naglasak stavljaju na pitanje roditeljskih dopusta te općenito važnost bavljenja države roditeljevim odnosom između posla i brige za malu djecu. Konvencija UN-a o pravima djeteta (1989) potakla je nacionalna zakonodavstva na prepoznavanje odgovornosti roditelja za skrb o potrebama djece. Ratifikacijom Konvencije Republika Hrvatska je Ustavom te posljedično Obiteljskim zakonom, prepoznala roditelje kao one koji imaju slobodu samostalnoga odlučivanja o odgoju djece, ali uz istodobnu odgovornost za ostvarenje prava djeteta.

Roditeljstvo usmjereno na djetetov najbolji interes

Nakon donošenja Konvencije UN-a o pravima djeteta, zbog odgovornosti roditelja za zadovoljavanje djetetovih potreba, mijenja se pojam roditeljstva te se u skladu s tim mijenjaju i očekivanja koja se stavljaju pred roditelje. Roditeljstvo se definira s

obzirom na prava djece te prava i odgovornosti roditelja, a primarni cilj roditeljstva postaje zadovoljavanje načela „najboljega interesa djeteta“. Znanstvenici iz različitih istraživačkih područja od pedagogije i psihologije, preko sociologije sve do zaštite dječjega zdravlja naglašavaju važnost određenih karakteristika roditeljstva i roditeljskim pristupima daju različite nazive (Clever, Unell i Aldgate, 2011; Coleman, 1988; Darling i Steinberg, 1993; Fuller, 2008; Grlonick, 2003; Pećnik i Starc, 2010; Vijeće Europe, 2006). Tako Vijeće Europe Preporukom 19 (2006) uvodi pojam *pozitivnoga roditeljstva* kojim se roditeljsko ponašanje temelji na najboljem djetetovu interesu što podrazumijeva njegujuće, nenasilno i osnažujuće uvažavanje i usmjeravanje djeteta, uz postavljanje granica radi omogućavanja njegova potpunoga razvoja. Pozitivno roditeljstvo pretpostavlja usklađivanje prava roditelja kroz razvoj pozitivnoga odnosa roditelja i djeteta i optimiziranje djetetova razvojnoga potencijala. Istim terminom služe se i mnogobrojni autori koji istražuju roditeljstvo te oni koji razvijaju programe podrške za osnaživanje roditeljskih kompetencija (Pastorelli i sur., 2016; Rodrigo, 2010; Sanders, 2008, Sanders 2019; Seay i sur., 2014). Termin *suvremeno roditeljstvo* ističe važnost osnaživanja djeteta koje se odnosi na stvaranje uvjeta za jačanje djetetova osjećaja kompetentnosti, osobne kontrole i sposobnosti utjecaja na druge ljude, svijet oko sebe, u skladu s njegovom dobi i zrelosti (Pećnik i Starc, 2010). Konceptualizaciju optimalnoga roditeljskog ponašanja, prema teoriji samoodređenja, Ryan i Deci (2000) nazivaju *podržavajućim roditeljstvom*. Oni navode tri osnovne psihološke potrebe svakog pojedinca: potrebu za kompetencijom, autonomijom i povezanosti koje služe kao temelj za razvoj tri osnovne komponente podržavajućega roditeljstva: roditeljska uključenost, pružanje strukture i podržavanje djetetove autonomije. Ukratko, od roditelja se očekuje da imaju aktivnu ulogu u životu djece, da ispunjavaju djetetovu potrebu za privrženosti, da djetetu daju jasne i konzistentne smjernice, očekivanja i pravila što im daje predvidljivost posljedica dječjih akcija te da aktivno podržavaju djetetove kapacitete za samoinicijativu i autonomiju. Roditeljstvo u modernom dobu, uza sve zahtjeve usmjerene prema djeci, neodvojivo je od svakodnevnoga stresa izazvanoga užurbanim životom. Upravo je roditeljska preopterećenost potaknula razvoj *svjesnoga roditeljstva* (engl. *Minful parenting*) koje zagovara osviještenost roditelja u trenutačnoj situaciji što dovodi do usporavanja roditeljskih automatskih reakcija izazvanih stresom i naglašava važnost smirivanja emocionalne reakcije te posljedično omogućuje razuman odabir roditeljske strategije koja najbolje odgovara na djetetove potrebe (Bögels i Restifo, 2013). Duhovni pristup roditeljstvu naglašen je u konceptima *holističkoga roditeljstva* (Rahmawati, 2016; Wiese Sneyd, 2000) koje zagovara integraciju djetetovih psiholoških aspekata, dječje dobrobiti i praktičnih roditeljskih ponašanja, *odgovornoga roditeljstva* (Begić i Dadić, 2017) koje naglašava teološku perspektivu odgovornoga roditeljstva, a temelji se na ljudskoj odgovornosti proizašloj iz kršćanske savjesti te *prirodnoga roditeljstva* (Schön i Silvén, 2007) koje naglašava evolucijski, intuitivni pristup roditeljstvu temeljen na osluškivanju i ispunjavanju dječjih potreba i uvažavanju jedinstvenoga razvojnog puta za svako dijete. Operacionalizacija roditeljstva na procese zadataka, uloga, pravila,

komunikacije i međuljudskih odnosa koje roditelji ostvaruju u kontaktu sa svojim djetetom (Klarin, 2006) dovodi do koncepta *praktičnoga roditeljstva*. Ono uključuje i emocionalnu i socijalnu dimenziju odnosa između roditelja i djeteta putem kojeg dijete zadovoljava temeljne životne potrebe, osjeća emocionalnu toplinu i sigurnost te odrasta u poticajnom okruženju gdje su jasno postavljene granice i omogućeno mu je učenje i razvoj (Cleaver, Unell i Aldgate, 2011). Može se zaključiti kako je ključan element roditeljske uloge priprema djeteta da odgovori na nužne zahtjeve onih oko sebe, a pritom da ne izgubi svoj osobni integritet (Baumrind, 1967).

Neovisno o istraživačkim perspektivama i nazivima roditeljskih koncepata, svim roditeljima koji primjenjuju „roditeljstvo u najboljem interesu djeteta“ zajedničke su karakteristike uvažavanja djetetovih potreba i prava, primjena *brižnoga ponašanja* koje odgovara na djetetovu potrebu za ljubavlju, emocionalnom toplinom, sigurnošću, pripadanjem, povezanošću i prihvaćanjem, pružanje *strukture vođenja*, što djetetu daje osjećaj sigurnosti i predvidivosti te omogućuje razvoj kompetentnosti, te naposljetku *uvažavanje djeteta kao osobe i priznavanje djetetove individualnosti* (Pećnik i Starc, 2010). Na taj način roditelj odgovara na potrebu i pravo djeteta da ga se vidi, čuje i poštuje kao osobu s vlastitim shvaćanjima, idejama, planovima, preferencijama i ljudskim dostojanstvom.

Uvažavajući trenutačna saznanja u području roditeljstva, u okviru ovoga rada roditeljstvom u *najboljem djetetovu interesu* smatra se roditeljstvo koje omogućuje ostvarivanje svih djetetovih prava te potiče djetetov optimalan kognitivni, emocionalni i tjelesni razvoj u sigurnom okruženju. Naglasak je na obiteljskom okruženju koje roditelji kreiraju vlastitim ponašanjima i aktivnostima koje provode s djecom. Konvencija UN-a o pravima djeteta prilagođena obiteljskom okruženju pretpostavlja da vrijednosti uzajamnoga poštivanja, dostojanstva, autentičnosti, integriteta i odgovornosti postanu temelji za izgradnju odnosa između roditelja i djeteta (Daly, 2007). Specifično, *roditeljstvo u najboljem djetetovu interesu* jest roditeljstvo kojim roditelji svojim ponašanjem omogućuju djetetu razvoj osjećaja pripadnosti vlastitoj obitelji (Klarin, 2006; Juul i Jensen, 2010, Pećnik i Starc, 2010), osjećaj sigurnosti i predvidljivosti (Cleaver, Unell i Aldgate, 2011; Pećnik i Starc, 2010), razvoj kompetentnosti i sposobnosti rješavanja problema (Coleman, 1988; Darling i Steinberg, 1993; Fuller, 2008), jačanje samopouzdanja i djetetove autonomije (Baumrind, 1967; Grlonick, 2003; Ryan i Deci, 2000; Vijeće Europe, 2006) te ono u kojem roditelji provode kvalitetno vrijeme sa svojom djecom (Ryan i Deci, 2000; Pećnik i Starc, 2010; Peterson, 2011) u nenasilnom okruženju (Richter, 2004; Vijeće Europe, 2006).

Pritom, roditelj treba prilagoditi svoje odgojno-obrazovno djelovanje i ponašanja ovisno o tome o kojoj se djetetovoj dobi radi. Tijekom predškolskoga razdoblja (3 - 6 godina) dobro je roditeljstvo usmjereno na razvijanje djetetovih socijalnih vještina, tj. izražavanje prijateljstva i kooperativnosti, kao i sposobnosti da bude snalažljivo u okolini i motivirano za postizanje rezultata. To se postiže velikim stupnjem potpore i nadzora. Djeca te dobi uspostavljaju nezavisnost i inicijativu, a roditelji mudrim

nadzorom i usklađivanjem djetetovih zahtjeva s njegovim mogućnostima uspostavljaju i postavljaju čvrste i jasne granice njegova ponašanja, u okviru toploga ozračja ljubavi i brige (Čudina-Obradović i Obradović, 2003). U predškolskom razdoblju posebno je bitna uloga roditelja u djetetovu stjecanju vještina komuniciranja s okolinom, u poticanju zdravoga i cjelovitoga razvoja i ponašanja djeteta te posebice, u osvješćivanju i jačanju „obiteljskih snaga“ u suočavanju obitelji s teškoćama (Ljubetić i Tabain, 2009).

Doprinos elemenata roditeljstva optimalnom razvoju djeteta rane i predškolske dobi

Roditeljstvo usmjereno na najbolji djetetov interes uključuje roditeljska ponašanja koja pozitivno doprinose djetetovu optimalnom razvoju. Autori provode razna istraživanja koja ukazuju na doprinos specifičnih roditeljskih ponašanja na razvoj djece (Nacionalni institut za zdravlje i razvoj djeteta, 2007; Pećnik i Tokić, 2011), a neki od njih na temelju niza dosadašnjih istraživanja nude teorije i modele povezanosti roditeljstva i razvoja djece (Belsky, 1984; Coleman, 1988; Darling i Steinberg, 1993). Jedna od najznačajnijih teorija u ovom području jest Colemanova (1988) koji opisuje Bourdieuovu teoriju kulturnoga kapitala te prema njoj zaključuje kako obitelj izravno doprinosi kognitivnom i emocionalnom razvoju djeteta predškolske dobi. Detaljnije, prema ovom autoru obiteljski doprinos djetetovu razvoju postoji u tri temeljna elementa: *kulturni kapital* (obrazovna razina roditelja, kreiranje okruženja za djetetov kognitivni razvoj), *financijski kapital* (socioekonomski status, financijska situacija koja omogućava veću ili manju obiteljsku investiciju, npr. kupovina materijala za učenje i istraživanje) i *socijalni kapital* (odnos između roditelja i djeteta, zajednička igra i učenje, relacije s drugim osobama izvan obitelji). Autor ističe kako je socijalni kapital presudan te pozitivno djelovanje roditelja u tom području može nadomjestiti loše kulturne i financijske uvjete. Također, socijalni kapital jedne generacije kroz odnos roditelja prema djeci utječe na razvoj kulturnoga kapitala sljedeće generacije. Belsky (1984) govori o *procesnom modelu roditeljstva* kojim predstavlja da na razvoj djeteta predškolske dobi izravno utječe roditeljstvo koje je oblikovano individualnim karakteristikama roditelja, djetetovim individualnim karakteristikama, zaposlenjem roditelja, bračnim odnosima i društvenom mrežom u kojoj se roditeljstvo odvija. Još jednu teoriju roditeljstva predstavljaju Darling i Steinberg (1993). Pod nazivom „kontekstualni model roditeljskoga stila“ autorice predstavljaju da na djetetov razvoj, osim njegovih individualnih karakteristika, izravno utječu roditeljska ponašanja i roditeljski stil, koji su oboje uvjetovani roditeljskim ciljevima i vrijednostima.

Nadalje, neki autori (Belsky 1984; Juul i Jensen, 2010; Paterson, 2011) pokušavaju utvrditi koje individualne karakteristike roditelja, koja ponašanja i kakvo okruženje pozitivno utječe na optimalan razvoj djeteta predškolske dobi. U istraživanju Nacionalnoga instituta za zdravlje i razvoj djeteta (2007) o razvoju djece predškolske dobi navodi se kako na djetetov kognitivan razvoj pozitivno utječu viši status roditeljevog stupnja obrazovanja, veći obiteljski prihodi, dvoroditeljske obitelji u odnosu na jednoroditeljske

te majčinska prilagodljivost i osjećajnost. Također, roditelji koji su aktivno uključeni u društvo i imaju jaču socijalnu podršku oko sebe, doprinose boljem djetetovu razvoju (Belsky, 1984). Međutim, najvažnijim za djetetov kvalitetan razvoj smatraju se upravo roditeljska ponašanja, odnosno drugim riječima „ono što roditelji rade mnogo je važnije od toga tko roditelji jesu“ (Paterson, 2011). Odnosi koji se razvijaju između roditelja i djeteta predškolske dobi imaju temeljni utjecaj na ono što slijedi te djeca mogu razviti svoje prirodne potencijale samo u interakciji s odraslim osobama koji primjereno odgovaraju na njihove potrebe (Richter, 2004). Pritom je važno da roditelji razvijaju s djecom blisku obiteljsku sinergiju u kojoj razgovaraju o svojim mislima i osjećajima te na taj način rješavaju potencijalne sukobe (Juil i Jensen, 2010). Vrlo je važno djetetu omogućiti da razvija samostalnost te ga poticati da samostalno riješi probleme, a ne raditi stvari umjesto njega (Fuller, 2008). Poštivanje djetetove autonomije potiče dijete od najranije dobi da se izgrađuje i ojačava, dok roditeljevo upravljanje djetetovim ponašanjem dovodi do toga da se ono osjeća da su njegovi uspjesi i neuspjesi u tuđim rukama (Grolnick, 2003). Posebno je važno i kvalitetno provođenje slobodnoga vremena između roditelja i djece. U razvoju govornih sposobnosti i predčitalačkih vještina, kao i u stvaranju emocionalne bliskosti u odnosu s roditeljem, posebno se važnim smatra zajedničko čitanje slikovnica (Pećnik i Starc, 2010). Zaključno, važnost bavljenja roditeljstvom i promišljanje o roditeljskom ponašanju i okruženju koje oblikuju za odrastanje svojega djeteta od neupitne je važnosti za suvremeno područje odgoja i obrazovanja. Kao što su zaključili Hosking i Walsh (2010, p. 11) na temelju dubinske analize međunarodne literature i praksa u području ranih intervencija: *kvaliteta roditeljske skrbi za djecu ključ je uspješnoga društva.*

Ciljevi istraživanja

Ovo istraživanje ima četiri specifična istraživačka cilja:

1. Utvrditi percepciju roditelja o učestalosti roditeljskih ponašanja koja su usklađena s roditeljstvom u najboljem djetetovu interesu.
2. Utvrditi postoje li prema percepciji roditelja razlike u pojavnosti određenih roditeljskih ponašanja u najboljem djetetovu interesu u odnosu na djetetov spol i njegovu dob.
3. Utvrditi percepciju roditelja o učestalosti provođenja zajedničkih aktivnosti između roditelja i djeteta.
4. Utvrditi postoje li, prema percepciji roditelja, razlike u učestalosti provođenja zajedničkih aktivnosti s djetetom u odnosu na djetetov spol i njegovu dob.

Metodologija

Uzorak i prikupljanje podataka

Sudionici istraživanja bili su roditelji djece u dobi od 5 i 6 godina uključenih u institucionalni sustav ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja (RPOO). U istraživanju je sudjelovalo 514 roditelja, od čega 86,3 % majki i 11,7 % očeva. Oni su

procjenjivali vlastito ponašanje u odnosu na 50,4 % dječaka i 49,6 % djevojčica, od čega je njih 55,64 % u trenutku ispunjavanja imalo 5 godina, a njih 44,36 % 6 godina.

Prikupljanje podataka odvijalo se u prosincu 2020. godine. Podatci su prikupljeni u okviru pokusnoga istraživanja projekta „Modeli odgovora na odgojno-obrazovne potrebe djece izložene riziku socijalne isključenosti u ustanovama ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja“². U pokusnom istraživanju sudjelovalo je deset ustanova RPOO. Uzorak je bio prigodan. Sudjelovanje u istraživanju bilo je dobrovoljno i anonimno, a roditelji koji su pristali na sudjelovanje potpisali su informirani pristanak nakon čega su dobili šifrirani upitnik koji su popunjen vratili u zatvorenoj koverti.

Metoda i instrumenti

Za potrebe ovoga istraživanja korištene su dvije skale iz anketnoga upitnika izrađene za potrebe istraživanja: *Učestalost određenih roditeljskih ponašanja* i *Učestalost provođenja zajedničkih aktivnosti roditelja s djecom*.

Skala za ispitivanje Učestalosti određenih roditeljskih ponašanja sadrži 15 čestica. Ovim instrumentom roditelji procjenjuju koliko često u prosječnom tjednu prakticiraju specifična ponašanja u teorijski odabranim područjima *roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu* (osjećaj pripadnosti vlastitoj obitelji, osjećaj sigurnost i predvidljivosti, razvoj kompetentnosti i sposobnosti rješavanja problema, jačanje djetetova samopouzdanja i njegove autonomije te razvoj nenasilnoga okruženja). Raspon ljestvice uključuje sljedeće procjene: *ni jednom, jednom, nekoliko puta tjedno, svaki dan, nekoliko puta dnevno*. U skali se kroz osam čestica propituju ponašanja roditelja koja su u najboljem djetetovu interesu, odnosno ona koja ukazuju na brižno roditeljstvo, koje je nenasilno, pruža djetetu granice i sigurnost i omogućava njegovu autonomiju te će se u nastavku ovoga rada za navedena ponašanja koristiti termin „podržavajuća ponašanja roditelja“. Preostalih sedam čestica odnosi se na ponašanja za koja će se u nastavku rada koristiti termin „nepodržavajuća roditeljska ponašanja“ u kojemu roditelji primjenjuju metode koje oslabljuju mogućnost djetetova optimalnoga razvoja samostalnosti, autonomije i integriteta, odnosno ona koja otegotno utječu na prakticiranje roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu. Na podacima prikupljenim ovom skalom provedena je faktorska analiza s *varimax* rotacijom kojom su dobivena 2 faktora (*podržavajuća* i *nepodržavajuća* ponašanja roditelja³) koji ukupno objašnjavaju 46 % varijance. Oba faktora ukazuju na visoku pouzdanost, odnosno Cronbachov alfa za faktor koji opisuje *podržavajuća* ponašanja roditelja je $\alpha = ,822$, a za faktor koji sugerira *nepodržavajuća* ponašanja $\alpha = ,779$. Faktori pokazuju visoku negativnu međusobnu korelaciju ($r = - 0,56$) što indicira da je moguće gledati skalu kao jednodimenzionalan instrument koji mjeri

² Projekt financira Hrvatska zaklada za znanost, a njime se želi razviti znanstvena podloga za planiranje programa za prevenciju socijalne isključenosti djece. Jedan od koraka koji će doprinijeti ostvarenju cilja jest i prikupljanje podataka o različitim aspektima rizika socijalne isključenosti djece koja pohađaju dječje vrtiće u Republici Hrvatskoj.

³ U Tablici 1 kraj svake tvrdnje naznačeno je pripadaju li Faktoru 1 koji opisuje „podržavajuća“ ili Faktoru 2 koji opisuje „nepodržavajuća“ roditeljska ponašanja.

konstrukt roditeljstva, ali je moguće i razlučiti dvije poddimenzije toga fenomena: *podržavajuća* i *nepodržavajuća* ponašanja roditelja. Cronbachov alfa za čitav instrument iznosi $\alpha = ,829$ te isti ne sugerira izbacivanje ni jedne čestice.

Skalom za ispitivanje Učestalosti provođenja zajedničkih aktivnosti roditelja s djecom roditelji su procjenjivali koliko često prakticiraju određene aktivnosti s djecom. Raspon ljestvice uključuje sljedeće procjene: *ni jednom, jednom, nekoliko puta tjedno, svaki dan, nekoliko puta dnevno*. Instrumentom se ispitivalo sljedećih sedam aktivnosti: igranje društvenih igara, čitanje slikovnica ili priča, igranje igrica putem IK tehnologije, gledanje animiranih filmova, odlasci u park ili šetnju, slušanje glazbe te pjevanje, plesanje ili recitiranje.

Rezultati

Iz rezultata prikazanih u Tablici 1 vidljivo je da se, prema percepciji roditelja, roditelji češće ponašaju u skladu s elementima roditeljstva usmjerenoga na najbolji djetetov interes ($M_{\text{podržavajuća}} = 3,56$, $SD = 0,57$), nego s elementima roditeljstva koji ne podržavaju djetetov optimalan razvoj ($M_{\text{nepodržavajuća}} = 2,58$, $SD = 0,62$). Nadalje, ponašanja roditelja koja predstavljaju brižno roditeljstvo koje djetetu daje potrebnu sigurnost i omogućuje razvoj autonomije pojavljuju se češće u prosječnom tjednu (aritmetička sredina svakoga pojedinog ponašanja veća je od 3, što upućuje na zaključak da se ona pojavljuju prosječno i do nekoliko puta tjedno) nego ponašanja koja imaju negativan utjecaj na razvoj roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu.

Tablica 1.

Roditelji percipiraju da u najvećoj mjeri u prosječnom tjednu pohvaljuju dijete ($M = 4,23$, $SD = 0,71$), što polovica roditelja radi svaki dan, a više od trećine njih i do nekoliko puta dnevno. Tri petine ispitanih roditelja jednom ili više puta dnevno potiču djetetovu autonomiju tako da potiču dijete da samo riješi neki problem ili zadatak ($M = 3,72$, $SD = 0,78$) te podržavaju njegovu inicijativu ($M = 3,67$, $SD = 0,81$). Više od polovice ispitanih roditelja nastoji pružati strukturu kod djece tako da im objašnjavaju razloge svojih zahtjeva ($M = 3,63$, $SD = 0,89$) te provjeravaju je li ih dijete dobro razumjelo ($M = 3,58$, $SD = 0,92$). Prema percepciji roditelja, od svih ponuđenih ponašanja oni najrjeđe posežu za kaznom ($M = 1,92$, $SD = 0,76$) te se s njome nikada ne susreće trećina djece, dok je polovina njih kažnjena prosječno jednom tjedno. Ipak, četvrtina roditelja navodi kako nekoliko puta tjedno pokazuje nervozu u razgovoru s djetetom ($M = 2,18$, $SD = 0,84$). Nadalje, trećina roditelja nekoliko puta tjedno radi nešto umjesto djeteta što ono može učiniti samo ($M = 2,46$, $SD = 0,99$) te brani djetetu da se bavi nekom aktivnošću ($M = 2,60$, $SD = 1,05$). Važno je istaknuti kako se otprilike jedna petina djece nikada ili svega jednom tjedno susreće s roditeljskim ponašanjima važnim za razvoj djetetove autonomije i samopouzdanja kao što su pripremanje djeteta za izazovne situacije ($M = 3,14$, $SD = 1,01$) te poučavanje djeteta novim vještinama ($M = 3,05$, $SD = 0,85$).

Razlike u odnosu na dob i spol djeteta ispitane su t-testom za nezavisne uzorke u odnosu na faktore *podržavajućega* i *nepodržavajućega* ponašanja roditelja (Tablica 2). Statistički značajna razlika ($t(488) = 2,579$, $p < 0,05$) pronađena je u odnosu na djetetov spol, gdje roditelji značajno češće primjenjuju *nepodržavajuća* ponašanja s dječacima ($M = 2,65$, $SD = 0,65$) nego s djevojčicama ($M = 2,52$, $SD = 0,52$). Roditelji češće zabranjuju dječacima ($M_1 = 2,78$) da se bave nekom aktivnošću ($t(504) = 3,770$; $p < 0,001$), nego što to zabranjuju djevojčicama ($M_2 = 2,43$). Također, statistički su značajno češće kažnjavaju ($t(500) = 2,966$; $p < 0,01$) dječake ($M_1 = 2,01$) nego djevojčice ($M_2 = 1,81$). U odnosu na *podržavajuća* ponašanja, nije pronađena statistički značajna razlika u odnosu na djetetov spol ($t(478) = 0,952$, $p > 0,05$; $M_{\text{dječaci}} = 3,54$, $M_{\text{djevojčice}} = 3,59$).

U odnosu na djetetovu dob nisu pronađene statistički značajne razlike ni u odnosu na *podržavajuća* ni u odnosu na *nepodržavajuća* roditeljska ponašanja (Tablica 2). U odnosu na djetetovu dob roditelji su statistički značajno češće tijekom prosječnoga tjedna mlađu djecu ($M_1 = 3,77$) poticali da samostalno riješe neki problem ili zadatak ($t(508) = 2,010$; $p < 0,05$) nego stariju djecu ($M_2 = 3,63$). Također, prema njihovim procjenama statistički su značajno češće pokazivali nervozu u razgovoru ($t(503) = 2,039$; $p < 0,05$) s mlađom ($M_1 = 2,25$) nego starijom djecom ($M_2 = 2,10$), ali i smireno objašnjavali razloge svojih zahtjeva ($t(501) = 2,658$; $p < 0,01$) mlađoj ($M_1 = 3,72$) nego starijoj djeci ($M_2 = 3,50$).

Tablica 2.

Značajan elemenata roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu jest provođenje kvalitetnoga slobodnog vremena s djetetom te prakticiranje aktivnosti koje potiču djetetov optimalan razvoj. Iz Tablice 3 razvidno je kako više od polovice roditelja svakodnevno, pa i do nekoliko puta u danu odlazi s djecom u park ili šetnju ($M = 3,62$, $SD = 0,72$), sluša glazbu ($M = 3,58$, $SD = 0,91$) te pleše, pjeva ili recitira ($M = 3,36$, $SD = 0,96$). Oko polovine roditelja nekoliko puta tjedno čita s djecom slikovnice ili priče ($M = 3,24$, $SD = 0,85$), gleda animirane filmove ($M = 3,08$, $SD = 0,92$) i igra društvene igre ($M = 2,78$, $SD = 0,82$). Oko 5 % djece ostaje uskraćeno za provedbu bilo kakvih aktivnosti sa svojim roditeljima, dok njih malo više od jedne desetine svega jednom tjedno pjeva i pleše (11,7 %) sa svojim roditeljima ili čita slikovnice i priče (16,5 %).

Tablica 3.

Razlike u odnosu na dob i spol djeteta ispitane su t-testom za nezavisne uzorke u odnosu na ispitane zajedničke aktivnosti. Roditelji statistički značajno više u prosječnom tjednu djevojčicama čitaju slikovnice ($t(507) = 3,190$; $p < 0,01$; $M_1 = 3,16$, $M_2 = 3,36$) ili priče te plešu, pjevaju ili recitiraju ($t(505) = 4,638$; $p < 0,001$; $M_1 = 3,18$, $M_2 = 3,57$), a s dječacima igraju igricu na IK tehnologijama ($t(499) = 4,560$; $p < 0,001$; $M_1 = 2,45$, $M_2 = 2,02$). Ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u tome koliko često s djevojčicama, a koliko s dječacima igraju društvene igre ($t(502) = 1,158$; $p > 0,05$; $M_1 = 2,75$, $M_2 = 2,83$), slušaju glazbu ($t(507) = 1,694$; $p > 0,05$; $M_1 = 3,52$, $M_2 = 3,65$),

gledaju animirani film ($t(507) = 1,274$; $p > 0,05$; $M1 = 3,03$, $M2 = 3,13$) ili idu u šetnju ili u park ($t(507) = 0,610$; $p > 0,05$; $M1 = 3,61$, $M2 = 3,64$).

Nadalje, roditelji statistički značajno više u prosječnom tjednu mlađoj djeci čitaju slikovnice ($t(508) = 2,878$; $p < 0,01$; $M1 = 3,33$, $M2 = 3,22$) ili priče te plešu, pjevaju ili recitiraju ($t(506) = 2,884$; $p < 0,01$; $M1 = 3,47$, $M2 = 3,23$) te idu u šetnje ili park ($t(502) = 2,257$; $p < 0,05$; $M1 = 3,68$; $M2 = 3,54$), a sa starijima igraju igricu na IK tehnologijama ($t(500) = 2,482$; $p < 0,05$; $M1 = 2,13$, $M2 = 2,37$). Ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u tome koliko često s mlađom, a koliko sa starijom djecom igraju društvene igre ($t(503) = 0,413$; $p > 0,05$; $M1 = 2,80$, $M2 = 2,77$), slušaju glazbu ($t(508) = 0,630$; $p > 0,05$; $M1 = 3,63$, $M2 = 3,50$) i gledaju animirani film ($t(508) = 0,594$; $p > 0,05$; $M1 = 3,11$, $M2 = 3,03$).

Rasprava

Roditeljstvom se u najboljem djetetovu interesu smatra ono roditeljstvo koje omogućuje ostvarivanje svih djetetovih prava te potiče njegov optimalan kognitivni, emocionalni i tjelesni razvoj u sigurnom okruženju. Pritom je važno da roditelji kod djeteta predškolske dobi razvijaju osjećaj pripadnosti vlastitoj obitelji, osjećaj sigurnosti i predvidljivosti, razvoj kompetentnosti te da jačaju samopouzdanje i djetetovu autonomiju (Juul i Jensen, 2010; Klarin, 2006; Matte-Gagné i Bernier 2011; Pečnik i Starc, 2010). Roditelji uključeni u ovo istraživanje navode kako češće primjenjuju roditeljska ponašanja koja su teorijski utemeljena kao ona „pozitivna“, te više od polovine roditelja djece predškolske dobi svaki dan ili čak i više puta dnevno pohvaljuje dijete, potiče ga da samo riješi neki problem ili zadatak, podržava dječju inicijativu i objašnjava mu razloge vlastitih zahtjeva. Ovakvi su rezultati vrlo ohrabrujući, posebice kada se promotre u odnosu na rezultate dosadašnjih istraživanja koji potvrđuju da izloženost pozitivnom roditeljstvu doprinosi razvoju samoregulacije emocija i ponašanja i time doprinosi zaštiti djece od razvoja problema u ponašanju (Kochanska, Coy i Murray, 2001). Iako rezultati sugeriraju da je pozitivno roditeljstvo dominantna paradigma, odnosno da su djeca u većoj mjeri izložena pozitivnom roditeljstvu, a u manjoj mjeri ponašanjima koji ne doprinose najboljem djetetovu interesu, važno je istaknuti da nešto više od trećine roditelja navodi kako svakodnevno ili nekoliko puta tjedno iskazuju nepodržavajuća ponašanja, odnosno inzistiraju da dijete ispuni neki zahtjev, brane djetetu da se bavi određenom aktivnošću ili čine nešto umjesto djeteta što je ono sposobno učiniti samo.

Rezultati dobiveni ovim istraživanjem sugeriraju kako je roditeljska ponašanja nemoguće isključivo i jednoznačno podijeliti na ona „pozitivnoga“ i „negativnoga“ usmjerenja. Specifičnije, rezultati faktorske analize prikazuju podjelu na dva faktora, gdje se čestice *podržavajućega* i *nepodržavajućega* roditeljstva teorijski grupiraju zajedno, međutim, prisutna je visoka korelacija između dobivena dva faktora. Odnosno, roditeljstvom se smatra niz utjecaja, aktivnosti i ponašanja roditelja koji se odvijaju u nenasilnom okruženju, od kojih se neka smatraju podržavajuća, a druga nepodržavajuća za djetetov razvoj. Za bolje razumijevanje pozitivnoga i negativnoga usmjerenja

roditeljskih ponašanja, trebalo bi provesti istraživanje kojim bi se osim roditeljskih ponašanja ispitao i kontekst u kojem se ponašanje događa. Tako bi, primjerice, bilo jasnije je li zabrana određenoga ponašanja iznesena kako bi zaštitila dijete od negativne posljedice (npr. pada s visine) ili je bila korištena kao demonstracija nepotrebnoga ili gruboga discipliniranja.

Zaključno, razmišljajući o roditeljstvu u najboljem djetetovu interesu, ono podrazumijeva da roditelji uvažavaju sva djetetova prava, ali pritom se od njih očekuje da prilagode roditeljske aktivnosti i ponašanja sukladno djetetovim individualnim karakteristikama kao i vlastitim individualnim karakteristikama, što je u skladu s teorijama koje govore o povezanosti roditeljstva i djetetova razvoja (Belsky, 1984; Coleman, 1988; Darling i Steinberg, 1993).

Jedna od važnih karakteristika roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu jest provođenje kvalitetnoga vremena roditelja i djece. Prakticiranje zajedničkih aktivnosti roditelja s djecom od neizmjerne je važnosti jer se njima stvaraju kvalitetniji odnosi u obitelji koji omogućuju optimalan razvoj, stoga bi one trebale biti dio svake obiteljske svakodnevice (Zabriskie i McCormick, 2001). Više od polovine roditelja uključenih u ovo istraživanje izjavljuje kako svakodnevno ili čak nekoliko puta dnevno u prosječnom tjednu odlazi s djecom u park ili šetnju, sluša glazbu ili pjeva, pleše ili recitira. Nadalje, više od trećine roditelja svakodnevno djeci čita slikovnice ili priče te gleda s njima animirane filmove. Važno je istaknuti kako je oko 2 – 5 % djece u potpunosti uskraćeno za provođenje nekih od ispitanih aktivnosti s roditeljima. Dobiveni rezultati u skladu s onima dobivenim UNICEF-ovim istraživanjem *Kako roditelji brinu o djeci najmlađe dobi* (Pećnik, 2013) u kojem također autorica zaključuje kako se većina djece u svojem svakodnevnom životu susreće s ovakvim načinima roditeljskih poticaja. Provođenje zajedničkih aktivnosti i igra s djecom olakšava djetetov kognitivni i socioemocionalni razvoj (Pećnik, 2013).

Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na određene razlike u roditeljskim ponašanjima u odnosu na djetetov spol. Tako roditelji statistički značajno češće primjenjuju *nepodržavajuća* ponašanja s dječacima, specifičnije, dječacima češće neшто brane ili ih kažnjavaju. Istovremeno, roditelji statistički značajno češće s djevojčica provode aktivnosti koje potiču njihov kognitivni i socioemocionalni razvoj kao što su čitanje slikovnica ili priča te pjevanje, plesanje i recitiranje. Ovakvi rezultati otvaraju raspravu o tome u kojoj su mjeri roditeljska ponašanja uvjetovana stereotipima o razlikama između djevojčica i dječaka. Razlike u roditeljskim ponašanjima usmjerenim prema djeci predškolske dobi dobivene ovim istraživanjem potkrjepljuju stereotipe temeljene na biološkim razlikama između spolova, prema kojima su dječaci skloniji destrukciji i agresiji (Marović, 2009) te su stoga roditeljska ponašanja prema dječacima više usmjerena na smanjivanje tih negativnih ponašanja zabranama i kažnjavanjem. S druge strane, od djevojčica se očekuje da su više orijentirane na glazbu, ples i priče, stoga su i roditeljska ponašanja s djevojčicama više usmjerena na čitanje priča, pjevanje i plesanje (Vasta, Marshall i Miller, 2005). Zanimljivo je primijetiti kako roditelji dječacima češće brane da se bave

nekom aktivnošću, što sugerira njihovu veću fizičku aktivnost, međutim, pri odabiru zajedničkih aktivnosti koje rade s djecom ne uzimaju u obzir ove zamijećene razlike. Odnosno, upravo s djevojčicama češće rade aktivnosti koje potiču mirniju igru (čitanje, pjevanje), dok odlaze u park ili šetnju podjednako često s dječacima i djevojčicama, iako bi upravo ove aktivnosti omogućile dječacima da budu fizički aktivniji.

U ponašanjima roditelja pronađene su i određene razlike u odnosu na dob djece. Roditelji statistički značajno češće mlađoj djeci smireno objašnjavaju razloge svojih zahtjeva te ih potiču da samostalno riješe neki problem ili zadatak, ali istovremeno češće pokazuju nervozu u interakciji s njima. Nadalje, roditelji navode kako češće s mlađom djecom pjevaju, plešu i recitiraju te im češće čitaju slikovnice ili priče. Ovakvi podatci, koji pokazuju kako se roditeljske odgojno-obrazovne intervencije javljaju češće s mlađom nego sa starijom djecom, vidljivi su i u prethodnim istraživanjima (Pećnik, 2013). Može se pretpostaviti kako su djeca starije životne dobi samostalnija u obavljanju određenih aktivnosti, stoga roditelji u manjoj mjeri provode određene aktivnosti s njima.

Zaključak

Ovim istraživanjem ispitana je percepcija roditelja o elementima njihova roditeljstva koji utječu na optimalan djetetov razvoj. Vidljivo je kako roditelji vide vlastito roditeljstvo kao fenomen koji sadrži niz ponašanja koja pospješuju roditeljstvo u najboljem djetetovu interesu, ali i niz ponašanja koja otežavaju djetetov optimalan razvoj. Rezultati upućuju kako roditelji koriste u većoj mjeri ponašanja kojima osnažuju djetetovu autonomiju, potiču samopouzdanje i razvijaju kod njega sigurno obiteljsko okruženje, međutim i dalje veliki broj roditelja često poseže za kaznom i pokazuje nervozu prilikom rješavanja problema s djecom. Roditeljima je potrebno prikazati rezultate ovakvih istraživanja te ih staviti u kontekst roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu, kako bi se dodatno povećala učestalost poticajnih, a umanjila učestalost nepoticaajnih roditeljskih ponašanja. Nadalje, vidljive su i razlike u ponašanjima roditelja u odnosu na djetetov spol i njegovu dob. Osvještavanje potencijalnih stereotipa na kojima roditelji temelje razlike u svojim ponašanjima prvi je korak u ostvarivanju jednakoga pristupa pravima sve djece. U skladu s tim, nužno je otvoriti među roditeljima temu različitosti u odgoju dječaka i djevojčica i nastojati umanjiti stereotipna ponašanja koja mogu doprinijeti dodatnom neravnopravnom položajem spolova u društvu.

Prilikom tumačenja rezultata istraživanja nužno je imati na umu određena ograničenja. Usmjeravanjem na ponašajni aspekt roditelja istraživački je djelomično ostao zanemaren važan dio roditeljstva u najboljem djetetovu interesu koji pretpostavlja brižno ponašanje roditelja, odnosno ona ponašanja roditelja kojima oni odgovaraju na djetetovu potrebu za ljubavlju i emocionalnom toplinom. U daljnjim istraživanjima, bilo bi korisno uvrstiti i taj element kako bi se dobio sveobuhvatniji uvid. Nadalje, s obzirom na postojeće teorije roditeljstva, u budućim bi istraživanjima bilo potrebno uzeti u obzir individualne karakteristike roditelja (stupanj obrazovanja, radni status)

kao i elemente okoline u kojima dijete odrasta (financijska situacija obitelji, urbanost mjesta u kojem dijete odrasta) te utvrditi eventualne razlike u roditeljskim ponašanjima u odnosu na te karakteristike. Dodatno, istraživanje temeljeno na samopercepciji roditelja omogućuje sagledavanje presjeka roditeljskih ponašanja, ali ono nije dovoljno za potpuno razumijevanje konteksta u kojima se ta ponašanja manifestiraju i za sveobuhvatno razumijevanje pozitivnoga roditeljstva. U daljnjim istraživanjima bilo bi korisno uvesti metodu opservacije koja bi omogućila objektivni uvid u roditeljska ponašanja.

Napomena

Ovaj članak je financiran iz sredstava Hrvatske zaklade za znanost putem projekta IP-2019-04-2011