MYKOLAS ROMERIS UNIVERSITY

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EUROPEAN JOINT MASTER IN

SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

MEASURES OF SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR COPING WITH FAMILIES' POVERTY: THE CASE OF LITHUANIA

Master's Thesis

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Vilnius, 2021

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MAIN CONCEPTS

Poverty – Poverty is divided into two parts – monetary and non-monetary poverty. Monetary poverty is based on the quantitative characteristics, which are the assessment of the economic resources and their adequacy to the population. Meanwhile, the non-monetary poverty has broader aspects, which includes social, demographical, intellectual, emotional aspects (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009).

Social work – Social work is a professional activity designed to help people, families, communities, and society deal with social problems, to cope with difficulties in their relationship with the society. Strengthening the individual's or family's resistance to challenges, developing independence and responsibility are especially important in social work (Kovos su nedarbu ir skurdo mažinimo strategijų tyrimas, 2014).

Culture of poverty – Habits of daily life formed among people living in poverty. The characteristics of a culture of poverty are both passivity, frustration, and belief in a predetermined destiny, which means that people simply no longer plan for their future and adapt to existing conditions. People in a culture of poverty are characterized by the constant accusation of the rich and the authorities about their own poverty (Lewis, 1966).

Social services – Support provided for individuals in different non-monetary forms or financial allowance aiming to reinstate the ability to take care of themselves and integrate into society (Žalimienė, 2003, p. 180).

Relative poverty – Relative poverty is based on the measurement of the standard of living of individuals, defined in relation to the level of economic resources of the population, or in other words, the average standard of living in a country. In this case, the poor are considered to be those whose resources (income or expenditure) are significantly lower than the national average (Alcock, 2006; Zabarauskaitė, 2008).

Absolute poverty – The concept of absolute poverty links poverty to a minimum level of satisfaction of personal needs. According to this concept, people who do not have enough income to meet personal needs are called poor (Alcock, 2006; Zabarauskaitė, 2008).

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic. It has been known for hundreds of years that no epidemiological risk factor is as strong as poverty, which is the main cause of health problems, unemployment, poor education, and other risk factors. It is noticed that families facing the poverty are not able to consciously understand and analyse their lifestyle habits, take responsibilities and use their resources for their well-being. Poverty is a complex issue which has impact on people's health, wellbeing as well as social and economic situation (EAPN, 2017). Until the 18th century, poverty was understood as insufficient income to purchase necessities (food, clothing, etc.) in order to maintain a person's physical capacity (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2006). Only later, in the seventies of the twentieth century it was realized that poverty is not only about physical needs, but also about the spiritual (intellectual) and social needs of people (Townsend, 1985).

Poverty can be divided in two groups: monetary poverty and non-monetary. Monetary (or economic) poverty is measured by the quantitative characteristics, meanwhile non-monetary poverty covers a variety of factors: social, demographical, intellectual, emotional (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009). A general measurement of poverty is usually based on the monetary income of a household or on their consumption. The person is defined as living in a poverty when his income is below a poverty threshold. The poverty threshold is defined at a nationally level based on a consumption basket or as a percentage of the mean or median overall income distribution (Alkire and Sarwar, 2009).

The relevance and importance of the problem of poverty is reflected in the Europe strategy 2020 priorities: promoting social inclusion through poverty reduction. The goal was to help at least 20 million people to overcome poverty and social exclusion. This number was chosen depending on the amount of people at the poverty threshold in Europe. The strategy also highlighted the problem of unemployment among people of working age, which has been growing in recent years due to incorrectly distributed state support (Pažangaus, tvaraus ir integracinio augimo strategija, 2010). Today, when looking to the actions Lithuania has taken, it can be seen the increase in universal child benefit also additional increase in pensions. However, no measures were adopted to solve the problem of income inequality. The number of people at risk of poverty, during the implementation of Europe 2020 strategy, has decreased, however it wasn't enough to achieve the national target (Country Report Lithuania 2020).

Novelty of the topic. The problematic question of poverty reduction and social workers' impact to reduce the poverty are being discussed in various scientific resources. It is noticed that in Lithuanian literature this problem is more discussed in an economic attitude, the social aspects are analysed more in foreign scientific literature. Economical aspects of poverty are being discussed by J. Navickė, R. Lazutka, A. Šileika, R. Zabarauskaitė, L. Žalimienė. Meanwhile, social aspects discussed by G. Kasparavičienė, A. Vosiliūtė, K. Payne, J. Weerahewa, L. Wilber.

When looking back at the time when Lithuania got independent in 1990, significant changes are visible now. Lithuania performed perfectly in approaching Western living standards. The economy started growing really fast meanwhile the income inequality increased (Juraitė, Mačiulskytė, Mikutavičienė, 2007). European Anti-Poverty Network Lithuania states that there is no strategy, no concrete measures, long-term or short-term strategies to deal with growing poverty, also there is a lack of complex approach related to poverty (EAPN, 2018). The latest available data show that Lithuania's poverty risk indicators have been among the highest in the European Union for many years. In order to achieve better results it is recommended that the government's program must include an action plan to reduce poverty, social exclusion and income inequality. The plan needs to set out clear and comprehensive steps to strengthen social protection. Meanwhile, municipalities must also set themselves the goal of reducing poverty and social exclusion, by providing social services, coordinating social financial support and implementing social policy (Poverty reduction organizational network, 2020). Social policies depend on the understanding of poverty causes. In most cases poverty is still assumed as a lack of income, luckily the availability of social services is starting to be maintained as an important aspect of the well-being (Keršienė, 2011).

Value of the thesis. The EAPN (2018) reveals the core areas which are the most problematic for people facing the poverty: inadequate amount of the minimum income and the lack of enabling, debts, which are the poverty trap, education, energy of poverty, in-work poverty.

This work is focussed to find out how families cooperate with social workers providing help for poverty reduction. The research also examines how social workers define the problems, and what similarities can be highlighted when comparing families' and social workers' perspectives.

Research problem and the research question. The poverty rates in Lithuania is still remarkably high (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2020). So, questions

aren't answered like what measures of support for families living in a poverty the state and, more precisely, social workers can offer? How families' perspective towards poverty corresponds with social workers efforts to reduce poverty?

In this Master's thesis, the main research question is the following: What impact social workers make in supporting families experiencing poverty, and how families cooperate with social workers?

Research object: social workers' impact to reduce poverty in families.

Research goal is to analyse theoretically and empirically contribution of social workers to families' poverty reduction.

Research objectives

1) Reveal a theoretical discourse of poverty and measurements to detect poverty.
2) To explore social policy measures, and more precisely, social work in families' poverty reduction.
3) To detect social workers contribution to reduction of families' poverty by conduction of an empirical study in Lithuania.

The research methods: Analysis of scientific literature, documents, and other sources was employed for the theoretical preparation of research. Qualitative social research method – semi-structured interview was used for empirical data collection. Content analysis method was applied for the analysis of collected empirical data.

The structure of this Master's thesis. This Master's Thesis includes: introduction, three chapters, conclusions, recommendations, summary in both Lithuanian and English languages, references and annexes. The research data is illustrated by 9 tables. The annexes include guidelines for interview with social workers and guidelines for interview with families.

1. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF POVERTY

1.1. The conception of poverty

Poverty is one of the most significant issue that not only Lithuania, but also other developed countries face (Dapkūnaitė, 2014). In the scientific literature poverty is divided into two parts – monetary and non-monetary poverty. The monetary or economical poverty is based on the quantitative characteristics, which are the assessment of the economic resources and their adequacy to the population. Meanwhile, the non-monetary poverty covers broader aspects, including social, demographical, intellectual, emotional aspects (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009). This chapter will focus on the development of poverty conception over decades and contribute to formulation of the most adequate meaning of poverty for this Master thesis by analysing different authors' perspectives.

The conception of poverty has been changing over decades. In the second half of the eighteen-century poverty has been described as people' inadequate income in order to get basic things, such as food and clothes (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2006). Smith (1776) in his book called "Wealth of the Nations" stated that economic poverty is defined by the inability to realise the basic capabilities, which are needed for human survival, consistent with the society in which they live. Until the 20th century conception of poverty did not include the importance of social and intellectual needs. Townsend (1985) was the first who brought attention to new components of poverty. He emphasized that poverty is not only the lack of income to purchase goods, but it is the incapability to take part in the society. He argued that those who face poverty are eliminated from the social life, which means that people experience not only economical but also social poverty. Finally, the conception of poverty became permanent, and it reflects equal opportunities, living standards which ensures person's dignity and freedom (Townsend, 1985; Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2006).

In the book called "Poverty: a new perspective" Wilber (2015) states that viewing poverty only as a lack of income is wholly oversimplified and unrealistic. Poverty can not be measured by itself, since it is a system, but whoever it has multiple properties that are capable to be estimated. Wilber (2015) distinguished five main poverty properties which determines person's ability to have a relative prosperity.

1) First of it is a poverty of health which depends on person's condition at birth and on later points in life. It is interconnected with the nature and condition of physical and

mental handicaps, which refers not only to permanent or temporary disabilities. The ability to have access to health services and personal hygiene habits can reduce or prevent the obstacles of the individual. Despite the amount of income, individual can still experience poverty of health.

2) The second resource is person's capability, which is partly determined by heredity and partly is socially gained. The main issue is the ability to have a proper place to develop initial capabilities. Few poverty properties may be faced from underdeveloped abilities and skills. Shortage of developed skills can conduct a person to unemployment. What is more, the inability to have income in this situation draws the main part of mobilization ability.

3) The third poverty resource is motivational poverty. It describes person's inner drives and forces which are important in order to achieve goals. However, there are elements that are beyond his control and can prevent him from reaching the aims. If the individual is unable to fulfil his goals, he will experience motivational poverty (Wilber, 2015). What is more, it is necessary to understand that strong subjective feeling about what people want is not a reliable decision when talking about human needs. Dieterlen (2005) pointed that individuals often desire things that can be harmful and due to our ignorance people tend to want things that won't help them to avoid harm.

4) The next poverty component is called personality poverty and it definitely lies between generally approved norms and those approved by an individual. Personality poverty can bring such properties as unsocialized, antisocial and social isolation. These properties can be experienced when the individuals are unable to accept general norms, socialize or participate in activities.

5) The last poverty property is defined by socioeconomic status. Low social status is one of the most frequent features to describe poverty. The most common is that the individual acquires his status from his parents, and it has a major influence on his later status. Status achievement on inability to achieve and the inability to change status over time are the indicators of poverty.

These listed properties of poverty are related to the life cycle and it is more likely that some properties will manifest at a certain stages of life cycle (Wilber, 2015).

Payne (2005) distinguished eight resources whose presence or absence determine the impact of poverty for an individual. These are the resources:

1) financial (money to purchase basic goods);

2) emotional (the ability to choose and control emotional responses, especially the negative);

3) mental (the basic intellectual skills to manage in everyday situations);

4) spiritual (beliefs in divine purpose);

5) physical (well-being, mobility);

6) support systems (external resources that can rely on);

7) role models (relationship with adults who are appropriate and nurturing);

8) knowledge of hidden rules (understanding of unspoken cues).

It is recognized that if a person has a limited economical resource but still are getting enough emotional, physical, and spiritual support it is going to be easier to overcome poverty. These listed resources once again highlight that poverty includes more than just an income issue.

In Lithuania, the conception of poverty is described in the official document called "Strategy of poverty reduction in Lithuania" (2000). According to it, poverty is a hunger and the inability to have a shelter. Poverty is also when medical help is not provided in time. It is the inability to attend school, to read, to speak properly. Poverty is a fear of the future. Poverty limits human's abilities to live in decent conditions, to feel freedom, be healthy and dignified (Strategy of poverty reduction in Lithuania, 2000). Despite the fact, that this definition is more poetic than scientific, it reveals that poverty has been a complex issue consisting of cultural, social, and economic aspects. The association "National poverty reduction organizational network" describes that poverty in Lithuania is related not only with the lack of income, but also with the barriers to use social services and other opportunities, which prevent from full participation in daily life. This definition is closely attached with income inequality and social exclusion (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2018). Both conceptions emphasize the importance of social inclusion. Individuals need to have a possibility to participate in social life, to have access to social services and to fulfil basic needs. Those whose incomes and other resources (economic, cultural, and social) are inadequate to ensure basic living standards are facing the poverty. These people due to the low income and other resources are unable to participate in the social activities, which are considered to be usual for other households (Strategy of poverty reduction in Lithuania, 2000). This definition shows that people tend to compare living standards, it reflects the importance of individual dignity and attachment to society feeling.

While analysing different author ideas about poverty the most important is to take into account that poverty is a multidimensional concept and it consists of three main aspects: cultural, social and economic. These concepts have sub-concepts. Culture consists of different kind of capabilities. Capability to read, to have place to develop skills, ability to get employed. Social aspect defines the importance to provide health service, social status, and ability to be a part of a social life. The economic aspect reflects such things as the ability to have a shelter, fear for the future and income.

1.2. Poverty measurement

In order to measure poverty, you can't take only one component, because the poverty consists of many components, and this reflects the complex phenomenon of poverty. There are numerous methods how the poverty can be measured and conceptualized. When talking about poverty measures, it is often said the expression – multidimensionality of poverty. This concept disclose that poverty can't be limited only by one dimension, for example be it income, property, education, health, capacities. Nowadays with an accessibility of data and understanding of statistical analysis the big step is taken towards developing multi-dimensional poverty measures (Navickė, 2015).

These days the most common conceptions to understand problems of poverty and to interpret human needs by measuring the living standards are relative and absolute poverty. These two definitions interpret individual needs based on quality of living (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009). Relative poverty links to the standard of living in relation to the economic resources of other households, also it can be defined as a proportion of mean or median income. Poor people are those who's economic resources (incomes and expands) are significantly lower than the average of the country. This conception of poverty is more often used in developed countries, in which incomes are rather high. It means that if the person has enough money to meet his living needs, he can still suffer from the poverty because his incomes are lower than the average income in the country. This conception of poverty emphasizes the phenomenon of economic inequality (Foster, 1998). What is more, it is stated that when the poverty threshold is drawn depending on the income average, statistically countries will always have poor people. Dieterlen (2005) gave an example, that while comparing the poverty threshold in the United States and India it is seen the incredible difference. People under the poverty threshold in the

United States have about 50 times more than the average of income in India. The latter conception called absolute poverty is defined by the inability of a person or a family to meet the basic needs, including food, shelter, education etc. The absolute poverty is more referred to underdeveloped countries (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2013). Those people, whose incomes are lower than the stated poverty threshold, are called facing the poverty (Bellù and Liberati, 2005). Nevertheless, it is important to take into account that the concept of basic needs can vary in different societies, the meaning of "adequate" has variations depending on society (Dieterlen, 2005).

There is one more – subjective conception of poverty that is analysed in the scientific literature. This conception reflects residents' opinion and their subjective evaluation of their living quality. Based on this conception humans on their own determine the needed minimal resources for the living. However, this subjective conception of poverty is not often exploited in order to measure the poverty rate (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009).

In the scientific literature, two main poverty measures are described (OECD, 2014):

1) poverty rate;
2) poverty gap.

The first one measures the amount of people whose incomes and consumptions are lower than the set poverty threshold. The latter one measures the volume to which residents fall below the poverty threshold. To be more precise, it indicates the difference between the average of the income and the poverty threshold (OECD, 2014).

In order to understand the measures of the poverty it is essential to know what a poverty threshold is and how it is indicated. Both, the absolute and the relative poverty rate is determined by the poverty threshold. The poverty threshold depicts the number needed for the minimal living standards to reach (Roser and Ortiz-Ospina, 2013). Individuals who are below the stated poverty threshold are called at risk of living. Currently in Lithuania poverty threshold is based on the proportion of individuals living in households with equivalised disposable incomes below 60% of the national median (United Nations, 2018). Residents' incomes after taxes are arranged in the ascending order, then the median is founded and 60% of that value is being stated as the poverty threshold. Finally, the household incomes are compared with the poverty threshold and those whose incomes are lower than the set threshold are assigned at risk of poverty.

The relative poverty method is used to measure poverty in Lithuania from 2004 the day Lithuania joined European Union (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2018). There are many authors who affirm that this method does not present the real data of poverty in Lithuania. It is stated that in order to reduce the poverty this method is not the most appropriate. Relative poverty measure is more useful in the countries which personal incomes are quite higher than the standard minimal consumption needs, and the main goal is to satisfy not only the financial, but also intellectual and social needs.

If talking about Lithuania, it can be seen that there are people who still can't satisfy their basic needs (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2009). Measures of relative poverty are more attached to social equality problems than to physical and financial (Šileika, Zabarauskaitė, 2006).

In 2018, Lithuania updated and again started using absolute poverty line. Absolute poverty rate is calculated in the similar way as the relative poverty, except the poverty threshold is set differently. There is a set amount needed to satisfy basic needs, this is an absolute poverty line, those whose incomes are lower are distinguished living in absolute poverty. For example, in 2019, the minimum consumption basket in Lithuania was estimated as equal to 251 euros for one person. Considering that consumer basket constitute 65% of all poverty threshold. This way, the poverty line was 379 euros for a person and 797 euros for a family with two adults and two children until 14 years old. Based on this poverty threshold, in 2019 in Lithuania, there were 20,6% of people who lived below the poverty threshold. At the same time, it is important to consider that the data about 2019 poverty line is calculated using the incomes of 2018s (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2020).

Monetary measures are the most common between economists because their main concern is the economic well-being. However, the well-being is not only determined by the monetary concepts, but also by the non-monetary aspects which recognition of importance is increasing. The sufficient life of people is determined by many factors – suitable place to live, food, feel of secure, community (Lindenberg, 2002). The importance of non-monetary poverty is due to the fact that monetary poverty measures can only partially evaluate the status of poverty. It leaves aside personal heterogeneities, environmental aspects, differences in rational perspective, household inequality and variation in social aspects. Such measures as capability, social exclusion and participation can capture many of non-monetary aspects. There is no universal method how to measure non-monetary poverty, however it is significant to understand that not only the monetary poverty but also non-monetary makes a huge difference on the people' wellbeing (Weerahewa and Wickramasinghe, 2005).

In summarising the subchapter, the main differences between two types of poverty measures were described. It can be stated that the monetary measures are quantitative, and they are perfectly suitable for poverty measurement at a national level, using expenditure and income data. Meanwhile, non-monetary poverty measures are qualitative, they can help to evaluate and understand the perceptions of individuals, this measure is suitable to measure small region or community (Weerahewa and Wickramasinghe, 2005).

1.3. Culture of poverty

In today's society the concept of culture has a broad meaning. It does not only include the most popular concepts, such as art, music, literature, but it is also about the lifestyle, traditions, relationship, leisure time and religion (Giddens, 2001). Usually, the stress is put on the positive aspects of culture. It is used to analyse how culture helps us to express ourselves, gives a guidance to our values, revels the knowledge about our nation, traditions and limits the acts of crimes or rude behaviour (Dapkūnaitė, 2014). However, the culture is not always the highest value or something that can liberate individuals, it can limit our choices and disturb people to solve problems that they suffer from. The culture of poverty defines the negative side of the culture. It explains the reasons why sometimes people make strange votes and choices, act or think unusual, tend to spend more money than they can and don't believe that their lives can change (Pileckaitė, 2011).

While analysing reasons of poverty scholars have given significant part to understanding the concept of culture of poverty. The understanding of this concept gives scholars the answers to these questions: why people react to poverty the way they do, how they deal with poverty and how they avoid it (Small et al., 2010). Oscar Lewis was the first who started using this concept and made research based on culture of poverty. He found out about the relation between culture and poverty and established the frame that was perceived by the population. However, his thoughts and theoretical knowledge about this concept were illustrated rather vaguely. Culture of poverty was defined as a package of values, approaches and behaviours that are different in the middle and lower-middle class. The differences are adopted due to the circumstances that prevent poor people to be integrated into society (Lewis, 1966). What is more, each society has different model of behaviour that is determined by the external circumstances that affect the culture of poverty. This theory tries to explain that when

the person has insufficient support from his surrounding, has low income and has no stable family he is used to develop his culture, which has opposite features than the middle-class culture. Later, this developed culture reflects the poverty and deprivation (Frerer and Vu, 2007). This explanation of the culture of poverty puts a stress on each individual. However, it is important to take into account the previous definition and to conclude that the culture of poverty usually characterizes the group of people to which the culture of poverty represents their lifestyle and habits (Pileckaitė, 2011). The features that are characteristics of culture of poverty are constant government accusation due to their poverty, unsecure feeling, mistrust of institutional organisations. Helplessness and attachment are the dominant approaches that limits people. Individuals are disappointed by their living conditions they don't have any expectations and don't believe that they can change their lives. Researchers examined that this type of living is passed to other generations, children perceive their parents' attitudes and behaviour. The adaptation and unwillingness to change their lives transforms to perennial lifestyle to their children (Dapkūnaitė, 2014). However, after the Lewis (1996) introduced his idea of culture of poverty wide ranging discussion and criticism started. Some critics said that this concept is largely negative aspect and itself it has negative attitudes towards poor people (Gajdosikiene, 2004). Despite this critique, Lewis (1996) said that he was trying to stress the importance and dignity of people who suffer poverty. What is more, there were no standard measures left to evaluate features typical to the culture of poverty. The methodology, writing style and data Lewis collected was insufficient to approve all his findings. He didn't do any longitudinal studies to prove his ideas, he relied on interviews (Varenne and Scroggins, 2015). Gajdosikiene (2004) highlighted that some of the critics understood the conception of culture of poverty different that the Lewis did, and this misconception could be one of the reasons why this concept is still on pedestal and receives different attitudes.

It is hard to make clear conclusions why did the culture of poverty became prevalent. However, usually the culture of poverty is firstly attached with financial problems. Individuals with lower incomes are more vulnerable and because of this they create distance with the social life in order to protect themselves (Pileckaitė, 2011). The understanding of culture of poverty leads to the reasons of poverty. Poverty can manifest in many forms, it is not only the material deprivation, but also the incapability to participate in a social life. The isolation from the social life is one of the most significant features of culture of poverty.

There are two groups of features that describes the reasons of poverty (Lazutka, 2001). Pathological actions, which enforces the manifestation of culture of poverty and structural

poverty, which highlights the role of the government and reduces the importance of values of individuals (Pileckaitė, 2011; Leonavičius, 2004). Pathological actions stress a fault of a human, they don't judge the government due to the increased poverty. According to this explanation, it can be stated that an individual firstly experiences material deprivation and later on it leads him to the culture of poverty, because only his actions and lifestyle led him to this situation. The person can choose either to participate in a labour market or to live under the material assistance. However, the money got from the state only partially facilitates the living, it creates an ability to buy the necessities, but it won't prevent poverty. The state also needs to help people to participate in a societal life, encourage individuals to contribute to the well-being of the country (Pileckaitė, 2011). Young (2004) made a comparison that pathological actions are like frames that people use to understand how the world works. Through this frame they observe and interpret their social life. Each person evaluates and understands same situations differently, because they use different frames, have different experiences. Pathological actions are related to three aspects. Firstly, individualistic perspective states that a person has made a wrong decision that was important to his future life, and it determined his current situation. The second aspect is about the relationship with the family. Poverty is understood as a heritage which goes from generation to generation. The children get used to the lifestyle their parent live and they continue it, also the important part is given to parenting style. This habit creates a culture of poverty. The last aspect states that people who suffer poverty learn how to adapt to their surrounding and it appears to be their lifestyle. It can be said that material-economical poverty is one of the most important factors that affects manifestation of culture of poverty. There are many explanations why poverty appears in our lives, and it is usually attached with the features of culture of poverty, such as habits, political decisions, relationship, participation, integration (Pileckaitė, 2011).

To conclude it need to be stressed some features of culture of poverty. This culture is passed down from generation to generation with its beliefs, skills, values, community feelings, which were developed in order to survive in that society. However, it should be taken in mind that not only the individual decisions, but also the political and government decisions impact the manifestation and grow of culture of poverty.

2. SOCIAL-POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF COMBATING POVERTY

2.1. Social-political measures to combat poverty

European countries and among them Lithuania, has already acquired the experience how to solve poverty problems. However, as the time is changing, each historical period has unique factors and circumstances that each country has to adapt to them and change their actions towards poverty reduction. This shows why it is important to analyse, compare and evaluate the previous experiences with nowadays situation (Kovos su nedarbu ir skurdo mažinimo strategijų tyrimas, 2014). When the current situation is examined, it can be outlined that there is no dominant poverty reduction strategy that includes both economics, sociology and other social sciences. Nevertheless, it is hard to say that nothing is done, or nothing is happening. This chapter will try to summarize the main social policies and academic debates about poverty reduction. The accent is on the situation since Lithuanian declared her independence in 1990.

The period in Lithuania from 1990 is characterized by the social exclusion reduction based on the unity and expansion of human rights (Dobryninas et al., 2000). What is more, individualization had an important role in social policies, the individual responsibility was rather more visible in global politics than collective responsibility (Skučienė, 2006). During this period the UN and EU initiatives had a significant impact towards social policies. First steps to reduce poverty and social exclusion were taken in 1995 when signing Copenhagen declaration and social development plan. Together with other countries Lithuania agreed on the fact that poverty is rather not only the economic phenomenon. Meeting in Copenhagen declared the importance of social policies in order to maintain democracy and stated that poverty in general limits the economic growth. Lithuania committed to start first series of poverty research and make a poverty reduction a strategic goal (Juraitė, Mačiulskytė, Mikutavičienė, 2007).

European council in 2000 during the Lisbon meeting agreed to become the most competitive and dynamic economy, which maintains stable economic growth, provide many qualified jobs. The most important aspect in this agreement was to reduce the poverty and social exclusion (National action plan against poverty and social exclusion in 2004-2006). The valid step when Lithuania started reaching the goal was the preparation of a poverty strategy in 2000. This strategy formulated the conception of poverty that characterised the society, also it described the prevalence of poverty in Lithuania and described groups of people experiencing poverty. Based on this information two targets to reduce poverty were announced – support to

the most vulnerable people groups and poverty level reduction (Poverty reduction strategy in Lithuania, 2000). However, even though poverty strategy has been written it has never been fully implemented. Each government in their program provides the measures for poverty reduction, but what Lithuania needs the most is a long period, united, clear strategy on how to deal with poverty reduction (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2019).

In 2003 Lithuania signed Joint Inclusion Memorandum in which she committed to write a national action plan against poverty and social exclusion. The difficulties to eliminate or reduce poverty have been designated to political will. Lithuania did not promise to eliminate all problems in a short term, the result was expected to be visible after 10-12 years in a collaboration with public and non-governmental organizations, social services and vulnerable groups (National action plan against poverty and social exclusion in 2004-2006). During the same year the quality-of-life index survey showed that Lithuania is among five the most poorest countries in Europe in which every third person has financial difficulties (Juraitė, Mačiulskytė, Mikutavičienė, 2007).

Social exclusion and poverty are complex phenomenon which includes the inability to participate in a social, political, economic life. Also, it is an insufficient access to employment, adequate income, learning opportunities and social network. The political actions that try to reduce poverty must be evaluated through these aspects in order to find qualitative and quantitative indicators. Modern social policy focuses on the transformation of identities, interests, capacities, rights and responsibilities in such a way that citizens become active, making their activation the dominant goal of social protection (Lazutka, 2001)

The effectiveness of measures to reduce social exclusion and poverty should be assessed in terms of their contribution to social inclusion. The implementation of a policy to reduce social exclusion and poverty can be seen as ensuring individual, group or community empowerment and institutional (structural) accessibility. Figure 1 shows the scheme of the implementation of the policy of reducing social exclusion and poverty (Kovos su nedarbu ir skurdo mažinimo strategijų tyrimas, 2014). It can be seen that the empowerment and accessibility in our modern society takes the important place in order to reduce poverty. Families with one parent, disabled and older people, unqualified individuals the empowerment of these groups of people is a one step towards poverty reduction.
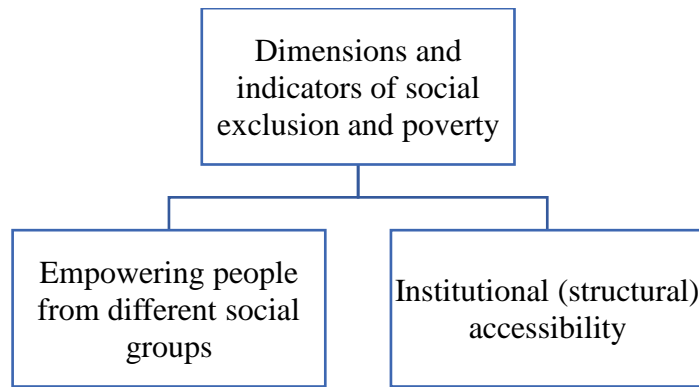
Figure 1. Implementation of poverty and social exclusion reduction.

Source: Kovos su nedarbu ir skurdo mažinimo strategijų tyrimas, 2014

In Lithuanian social protection and social inclusion strategy 2006-2008 four main aspects were chosen in order to effectively reduce poverty. First aspect is to increase participation in labour market. Analysis in Lithuania showed that the main reason of poverty and social exclusion is lack of labour income. Especially the participation in a labour market of youth, pre-retirement age people and older women expected to be more active. Next aspect is to improve the availability of high-quality services. Not all the problems can be solved by social benefits, it is necessary to develop availability of services to each person. Services of qualified support for families that are in difficult situations, opportunities for unemployed people to acquire new skills. The availability of social services can assist to overcome social exclusion problems. Third aspect is to eliminate children poverty and strengthen support for families raising children. It is indispensable to prevent children from living in a poverty because the consequences can be long lasting and affect the whole society. Children need to get the opportunity to overcome poverty. The last aspects that Lithuania stated to achieve is the high-quality education. Lithuania does not have many natural resources, due to this it is more orientated to high-quality education which can prepare qualified professionals (Lithuanian report on social protection and social inclusion 2006-2008).

In social inclusion action plan 2014-2020 it is seen that the aspect of accessibility is given a valid role. Lithuania declared to reduce the differences in the availability of social services in different municipalities, to improve the quality of social services, to introduce new social services. The other aspects what the action plan tries to reach is to create more social services for the development of social skills, motivation, psychological difficulties. This expansion of social services will let the most vulnerable people to have easier integration into society and labour market. The statistical data shows that there is a necessity of services for

children and families. There is a great lack of day care services for children living in rural area, lack of services to strengthening positive parenting skills and other social services for families. Failure to provide assistance on time creates greater problems – poverty is passed down from generation to generation. It can be seen that the social inclusion action plan 2014-2020 already includes all spheres of persons development in order to reduce poverty: social, emotional, economic. It states the importance of accessibility, empowerment and complex phenomenon of poverty (Social inclusion action plan 2014-2020).

The main changes in 2020 to reduce poverty were related to children money, pensions, minimum wage growth and support for the most deprived. Children money was increased from 50 to 60 euros. Additional benefit given to children from low-income, large families or for children with disabilities. Minimal wage had increased form 555 euros to 607 euros. Many changes have been made due to quarantine. The support during quarantine period were intended to help people for a short period. The government provided incapacity benefit for parents caring for young children, subsidies for wages during downtime and 257 euros benefits for the self-employed. Long-term changes were introduced in the system of social monetary support for the poor. The benefits have been increased. What is more, an allowance of 200 euros was granted to the people with disabilities, widows, elderly people and orphans. One-off benefits were also provided for children. One-off benefits draw a significant part during quarantine for the reduction of economic difficulties. However, there is an opinion that this amount of money had to be spend more wisely. National poverty reduction centre states that this amount had to be dedicated to the growth of the minimum pensions, to ensure the continuity and accessibility of services (National poverty reduction organizational network, 2020).

In summary, while analysing different documents about poverty reduction and social exclusion from 1990 to 2020 it is visible that changes have been made. The concept of poverty is already understood as a complex phenomenon and the strategies to reduce poverty also tries to cover all kind of spheres, not only economical. However, Lithuania still doesn't have a national poverty reduction strategy that would draw guidelines for the government, social services, municipalities, and other institutions on how to change the poverty situation in Lithuania.

2.2. The general characteristics and structure of social services in combating poverty

The countries of the European Union have gone through various stages of transformation by applying different models of organization and financing of social services, establishing relations between service providers. The accumulated experience, its positive and negative aspects have formed the current direction of development of social services, focused on the creation of a mixed market of social services. The creation of this market means the search for alternatives, innovations, how to integrate non-profit and for-profit service providers into a common service system, how to create a social services market that allows customers to choose and receive the best quality services at the lowest cost to the state (Žalimienė, 2006).

The topic of social services provision and organization became relevant after Lithuania's independence and has remained important to this day. Social services are an integral part of the welfare of the state, helping the society to solve emerging social problems. The rapidly changing social and economic environment, globalization, economic changes forces to search for effective and optimal way of administration of social services (Bitinas et al., 2010). What is more, the importance of the social services towards the poverty reduction is visible when the look is on the labour market. It is stated that accessible and high-quality public and social services can direct the person towards the labour market and the person who is unable to work towards social integration (Frazer, Marlier, and Nicaise, 2010).

Social services are an integral part of the social security system. Social security consists of social insurance and social assistance: cash benefits and social services (Bitinas et al., 2011). Social services are distinguished from the social security system on the basis of four criteria (Žalimienė, 2003):

1) Form – support is provided in non-monetary form.
2) Aim – help socially vulnerable members of society and ensure their integration into society.
3) Financing methods – the right to services is usually not based on the payment of the client's contributions.
4) The method of reimbursement – state-subsidized services, the customer pays for them at non-market prices or does not pay at all.

Social services are services that aid to a person (family) who, due to age, disability, social problems, has not acquired or has lost the ability or opportunity to take care of personal (family) life independently and participate in public life (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2020). It should be noted that social services in a widespread perception are understood as social security, education, leisure, sports, health care, culture and other services, and in the narrow sense as a part of the social security system aimed to support people's equality, reducing social exclusion. Social services are targeted at the most vulnerable social groups: disabled, lonely elderly, unemployed, homeless, families with social problems, children deprived of parental care, persons returning from prisons (Žalimienė, 2003, p. 180). The aim of social services is to create opportunities for a person (family) to develop or strengthen the ability and possibilities to solve social problems, preserve social relations with the society and help to overcome social exclusion (Ministry of Social Security and Labour, 2020).

Types of social services are divided into two groups: general services and special services (Figure 2). In some individual cases, determined by the municipality, when it is more efficient to organize general social services and social care for a person (family) in cash, these services may be converted into a cash benefit - assistance money. The main difference between social support and social care is the specialist supervision. Social support does not require constant specialist supervision and social care requires (Lietuvos Respublikos socialinių paslaugų įstatymas, 2006).
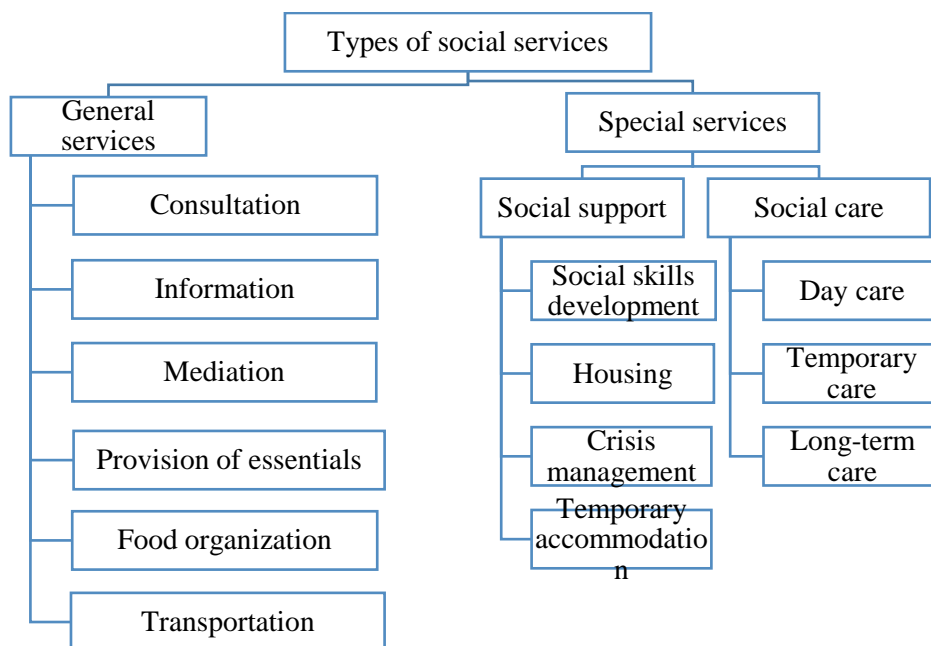

Figure 2. Types of social services.

Source: Lietuvos Respublikos socialinių paslaugų įstatymas, 2006.

Social services can be provided at social service institutions, such as social care centres, shelters, community institutions, temporary shelters and at client's home. When talking about organization and distribution of social services municipalities are the main institutions (Ministry of social security and labour, 2020). Until 2010, counties were also among the organizers. After 2010, when county reform happened and counties were eliminated, 25 childcare homes and 4 centre for elderly were transferred to municipalities. Until now municipalities and Ministry of Social Security and Labour are the main organizers of social services (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos socialinis pranešimas, 2010-2011). The main social service management institutions are these (Lietuvos Respublikos socialinių paslaugų įstatymas, 2006):

1) The Ministry of Social Security and Labour – implements the state social services policy by submitting proposals to the Government regarding the state social service system and social work directions development by preparing legal acts for personal (family) identification of the need for social services, financing, payment of social services. It also analyses and evaluates the quality of social services in the country. Submits proposals to municipalities regarding the planning and organization of social services, analyses the needs of social workers and social workers' assistants to raise their professional qualifications

2) Municipalities – responsible for the provision of social services in their territory by planning and organizing social services and the quality of social care. They evaluate and analyse citizens needs of social services and regarding the demand organize and determine the extent of social services provision. Municipalities assess and determine the needs for financing social services, draw up and approve annually social services plan

3) Department of Social Services Supervision under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour – provides methodological assistance on application of social care norms, general social services and social care quality control. Issues licenses to provide social care, suspends and revokes them, supervises and controls how the requirement of the licensed activity are implemented (Lietuvos Respublikos socialinių paslaugų įstatymas, 2006).

Recently, in many European countries social services started using the principle of decentralization. The aim of this principle is by organizing social services transfer the functions to the local authority, thus bringing the services as close as possible to the recipient living place. Decentralization offers the ability to share the functions of service organization, to ensure the

network of services and the efficiency of services, also to guarantee the satisfaction of customer needs in accordance with the established standards. Based on the principle of decentralization, state-level institutions (ministries, county administrations) substantiate and create the country's service development strategy and service standards (Marcinkevičiūtė, Petrauskienė, 2007). Municipalities while organizing social services are collaborating with different kind of institutions which later provides social services for individuals or families. Non-governmental organizations play an important role in the organization of social services. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour states that in order to establish the long-term sector and increase the quality of its activities, it is necessary to create favourable conditions for the participation of non-governmental organizations and communities in the provision of social services. An important task of municipal policy is to see not only municipal institutions themselves, but also non-governmental organizations and communities that can provide the necessary services to the members of their communities (Figure 3) (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos socialinis pranešimas, 2010-2011).

Figure 3. The process of social service provision.

Source: Bitinas et al., 2010.

Social service provision is granted when the situation and the needs of individuals, families are evaluated. The correctly assigned social services can help families to overcome poverty. Ability to receive temporary accommodation, provision of essentials, food

organization and social skills development are the key elements for the poverty reduction (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos socialinis pranešimas, 2010-2011).

Overall, the main purpose of social services is to return the person the ability to take care of oneself, solve one's social problems, integrate into society as well to help overcome social exclusion. It is stated that municipalities and Ministry of Social Security and Labour are the main organizers of social services, however the quality of the process of organizing the provision of social services highly depends on social workers, his or her qualifications and activities.

2.3. The role of social worker providing support for families experiencing poverty

Social work, as a professional activity, is widespread throughout the world. In Lithuania, social work is also no longer a new phenomenon, however it is one of the newest professions in our society. In the world, social work has various forms. The nature of professional social work activities in each country is based on the country's historical and cultural context and is conveyed through its political, economic and social system. For this reason, it is difficult to present a global concept of social work, and efforts to identify the universal essence of social work are a problematic endeavour (Kavaliauskienė, 2005). Nevertheless, the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) has provided and uses the following international definition of social work: based on the theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work seeks the coherence of the interaction between people and the environment. The principles of human rights and social justice are the most important principles of social work (IFSW, 2014).

The social work is inseparable from provision of social services. The Law on Social Services of the Republic of Lithuania (2006) defines social work as activities that help a person or family to solve their social problems according to their abilities and participation, without violating human dignity and increasing their responsibility based on personal, family and public cooperation. The purpose of social work and social services is similar, they try to restore, help, and maintain the person's relation with the society, when he is unable to do so. The object of assistance is also the same – the individual, family, community.

According to Prakapas (2007), social work is understood as qualified employee activities aimed at improving communication between individuals and their environment in order to strengthen their opportunities for adaptation and integration into society. Communication gives the opportunity for people that are facing some difficulties to participate in solving their social problems.

According to Žalimienė (2003) the core of the social work is the ability to solve social problems. The problems of the society changes during the time, so the methods and the field of social work also experiences changes. The staff of social service institutions consists of a team of managers, specialists, employees, and employees who work directly with clients and perform joint service work. When it comes to the provision of social services, social workers are usually distinguished as the main providers of social services. Social worker is perceived as a professional who helps members of society to meet their social needs. They promote, activates people's own ability to solve their problems, seeks to increase the responsibility of social organizations for the human being (Prakapas, 2007).

According to Žalimienė (2003) the professional role of a social worker in providing social services can be described as methodological mediation between the client and social institutions for solving the problems. This methodological mediation is performed by all social workers working in different types of institutions with different groups of clients. The content of the problems can be different according to institution, but however the function stays the same – mediation.

The work of a social worker is related to intervention to the client system, focused not only on the disclosure and investigation of the causes of the client 's problem, but also to the search for a solution, strengthening the client's internal resources, personality development (Dirgėlienė, Kiaunytė, 2005). Gvaldaitė (2004) stressed that when starting an intervention, social workers need to establish a strong relationship with customers. The social worker works systematically with different clients' groups, has individual consultations with clients who needs it, cooperate with the state institutions, municipalities, non–governmental organizations, religious communities and physical and legal entities providing social services.

The social worker plays certain roles:
1) Customer identifier – defines the environmental conditions which determines the client's problems.
2) Mediator – helps people to resolve conflicts in order to work productively together.

3) Evaluator – collects, analyzes information, evaluates problems.

4) Mobilizer – forces action, encourages, organizes people's actions to solve problems.

5) Teacher – conveys information, knowledge, helps people to improve personal capabilities.

6) Consultant – works with other specialists, employees, solves people's problems by helping them to improve their skills (Kozlovas et. al., 2007).

According to Rupšienė (2001), the number of multi-problem families is growing rapidly in Lithuania. These are usually those families who have several problems that hinder the normal socialization of family members. Social risk is a variety of circumstances in public life that causes the emergency of a person's exclusion (Pėžaitė, Brazienė, 2004). Social risk family is the one whose social functioning is disturbed due to objective or subjective reasons. These families are often refugee families, large children raising disabled children, single-parent families. Potential social risks may arise from unfavorable economic and psychological conditions, difficulties in raising children, conflicts between family members, alcohol consumption, drug addiction, domestic abuse, especially against children (Leliūgienė, 2003). When working with families at social risk, it is important to know the type of this family, because each family has different educational mistakes and unfavorable development conditions. Under these conditions, different personality traits and different directional behaviors can form. Unemployment and poverty are the most common and painful problems for families. The problems of poverty are mainly found in the families with insufficient income and resources to ensure life.

Social worker when starting to work with families facing the poverty use the diagnostic function. A social worker in order to understand the problem itself and find out its reasons, to foresee a guidance for preventive and rehabilitative work, may in the first place follow these research methods: observation, survey, interview, tests, document analysis, experiments, collected information about the development of each family member, socialization of the family and integration into the social and cultural environment. Based on collected information, further activities and their methods are planned. A specialist can help anticipate a problem and take preventative measures to change the situation. The other function is informative educational which is realized through conversations, discussions, seminars, group training. Educational activities of a social worker can be implemented in the following directions: developing parental responsibility and the ability to make rational decisions, parental responsibility for promoting the decisions made and the need to solve their own

problems, acquainting families with legal, social, and other useful information, introduction of democratic communication, parenting style and conflict resolution tactics. Parents and children need to be aware of the harm of misconduct and its consequences (Konikovaitė, 2015).

In the book "Social Work Methods" by Gvaldaite and Švedaite (2005) is stated that in the broadest sense, the social work method is a planned and valuable action of a social worker in order to achieve sustainable change in an individual's life. It is important to note that the goal of methodological action is not only to change the individual's current situation, solve his current problems, but also to empower the person for independent and successful life practice. Consequently, social work is methodically aimed at the inner change – a change in concepts, self-perception, behavior, activities, relations with others. Only then it can be expected that the person will feel ready to independently seek the well-being of themselves and those around them.

In most cases, families themselves do not recognize that the poverty itself is a problem, families do not want to actively pursue change – want others to help them, do it for them, this situation especially impacts children (Bandzienė, 2008). In Lithuania, individual and group work methods are applied when working in social work with families at social risk. These methods aim to meet the needs of children from families at social risk, their quality of life and their social functioning (Dėl darbo su socialinės rizikos šeimomis metodinių rekomendacijų patvirtinimo, 2003):

1) Individual work method. When applying this method social worker has an ability to strengthen the relation with a family, it lets the worker to know the client better (Rekertienė, 2001). This method is applied in practice in aiding a child from a poor family. It is often named as counseling, conversations, reaction to new events, problems interpretation. However, the emphasis is not always on the child's own involvement, cooperation, process planning or working with the child environment. Some social workers say that they use individual work method due to the lack of time and employees, others say it helps to evaluate the situation and make the action plan and it is often used with the children who have behavioral problems (Dėl darbo su socialinės rizikos šeimomis metodinių rekomendacijų patvirtinimo, 2003).

2) Group work method. Children need to their share experiences with others, learn from other experiences and understand the environment. Group activities help the child to socialize in the environment, solve problems, have a preventive effect in

developing child's potential, develops skills. What is more, when the child interacts with others, it reveals the information about child's problems, those can be discussed later during individual consultation. Group work method arises difficulties of a family such as: lack of motivation, shame, avoidance of publicity. The level of involvement of the social worker in group work is an important role. It is often that the child or family reveals more during the group work than the individual consultation. The child feels safe when he is around like-minded people, also they like to act or retell the stories (Pivorienė, Abeciūnaitė, 2010).

3) The community method in social work is not the main approach of helping a child from a poor family. It's a way to spend free time, organize cultural events, teach a child a community feeling (Bandzienė, 2008).

When working with families living in poverty, the change is seen as separate and minor change in person's behavior or attitude. These changes serve as a means to achieve larger, essential goals. Families living in poverty are often unmotivated to help themselves, so all achievements are very important: changes in building a good relationship, family involvement, communication. It is important that the customers themselves notice the change – believe in their own strengths. Often the changes achieved in the family also lead to changes in the child. The change is usually detected by the social worker through observation, communication with the family and the child (Bandzienė, 2008).

In summary, social work aims to rebuild the functioning of families at social risk. Social services are provided to the families in order to ensure a positive family functioning and adaptation to the society. In this job, the social worker often faces the denial of problems, resistance to aid. Therefore, the social worker must use his or her competence to overcome resistance and help the social risk family to find problem-solving options. Social workers job is a complex process, they have to perform a variety of roles in order to change the situations in families.

3. SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF FAMILIES FACING THE RISK: THE CASE OF LITHUANIA

First two chapters were dedicated for two general aspects of poverty. It described the theoretical analysis of poverty and social-political dimensions to combat poverty. The third part of this Master's Thesis describes in detail carried research, and consists of two chapters, research methodology and results of analysis of the empirical data.

3.1. Research methodology

Qualitative research is carried out in this Master Thesis in order to find out how social workers support families experiencing poverty, and how families cooperate with social workers. Qualitative research and phenomenology method helps to find out more about people experiences, perspectives from the standpoint of the participant. Qualitative research was chosen in order to understand different approaches between categories of people and for revealing the factors that influence decisions making of individuals (Hammarberg et. al., 2016). What is more, phenomenological method study everyday life situations from the viewpoint of participant (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). According to Kajokienė (2013), in qualitative research researcher focuses on two aspects – respondent's wide experience and situations that best suit to the content of the research. The researcher demonstrates the ability to act as a co-respondent, by stimulating memories of previous experiences and encouraging to reveal oneself on current issues.

Research method – semi-structured interview for data collection. Interview is a perfect method when the importance is on people's opinions, thoughts, and feelings, what is more, this master thesis topic requires in-depth people experiences, complex and detail questioning (Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush, 2006). Semi-structured interviews suit best for gaining in-depth understanding on a particular phenomenon, also taking the cultural context into account. This type of interview gives a chance to understand the phenomenon of interest from different perspectives (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

The content analysis was used for data analysis method. This type was chosen because it focuses on categorizing and coding, also it helps to find out the main concepts, patterns of

textual information (Vaismoradi, Turunen, and Bondas, 2013). Explicit description of the data collection, reflexivity and analysis methods were used in application of this data analysis methods. This research is looking to find out common methods of social workers in order to reduce poverty.

What is more, Tidikis (2003) distinguishes that a person in qualitative studies has been seen not as a subject which actions and purposes are determined by outside social norms and traditions, but as a unique individual with its own concept of the social reality and ability to express through reasoning and behaviour.

Sample of the research. Non-probability sampling, specifically, quota sampling type have been used in this survey. This type of sampling refers to a non-random sampling technique, where the researcher chooses participants based on some characteristics (Etikan, 2017). Participants for this research have been categorized in two groups. First group includes social workers, which work with families experiencing poverty. The second group is families which suffer from deprivation. The number of the interviews wasn't determined before the research, it was decided that the interviews are going to be collected until the information starts to repeat.

In total 6 sampling process steps (Taherdoost, 2016) were applied in sampling formation. First one is to define target population, my target population is social workers and families. Next step requires to select sampling frame which defines the actual cases that the research will be taken. Third step is to choose a sampling technique. Fourth step is to determine sample size. In quota sampling the importance is not on a number that will match the proportions of the population. The emphasize is to have a sufficient number of people which will guarantee that the researcher will be able to discuss about a small group of people in the population (Etikan, 2017). The next step is to collect data, and the last one is to assess response rate. The last step is important because each negative response is liable to ensure objective sample.

For this survey, 10 interviews were caried out. Six interviews were taken with social workers, all of them were females, especially because most of the employees is social work are women. Four interviews were carried out with families, that experience poverty. All interviewed families live in Vilnius and have helped by social workers. One person from the family participated in the survey, in these four interviews women represented the whole family.

Social workers that participated in this research work in different kind of social organisations that are held in Vilnius. Two interviews with social workers were carried out

during the internship period. Other interviews with social workers were taken later, after the internship period. Two families that participated in the research were also from the internship organisation and the interviews were taken at that time. The other participants that took part in the survey were from different organisation.

Research instrument. Before starting the semi-structured interview, it was necessary to determine main interview topics. Semi-structured interview does not use predefined questions however it doesn't mean that they can be random and non-directive. For this type of interview, it is important to start with detailed knowledge about the topic and always keep in mind the purpose of the interview (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). In order to have a successful interview three main topics were distinguished for social workers and two topics for families (Annex 1).

Survey process. The interviews were carried out in 2021 from May until October. All the interviews were held in Lithuanian language, since the levels of English language vary, and their mother tongue is Lithuanian. It helped the respondents to feel safer, more relaxed and express their attitude better. The interview transcripts were made in Lithuanian language, but for the data analysis citations were translated into English.

Organisations were contacted by the email, four organisations were contacted. Organisations gave the contacts of social workers and families that agreed to participate. In total, in this research participants were from three different organisations because not all the organisations agreed to participate. All the interviews were recorded with a phone and the survey participants were aware that their interviews data will be used for the Master's thesis research and that anonymity will be maintained. All these details were discussed before starting the interview questions, participants' consents were recorded. The time of the interview with social workers varies from about 14 min. length to about 30 min (Table 1).

Table 1. Duration of the social workers' interviews.

Participant (social workers)	Duration of the interview (min/sec)
S-1	20,57
S-2	19,43
S-3	17,51
S-4	14,05

S-5	30,15
S-6	13,08

Source: Interviews with social workers, 2021.

Interviews with families varies from about 10 min. length to about 18 min (Table 2).

The interviews were taken in two different forms. Three interviews were conducted online, and seven interviews were face to face. Some of them took place in the organisation of the social worker, while others at the participants living place. To make the analysis more efficient codes were used. Interview respondents had different codes, while analysing interview results social workers were name S-1, S-2, etc. Families had different codes F-1, F-2, etc. This type of marking helps to distinguish and compare respondents' answers, as well to guarantee anonymity of the survey participants.

Table 2. Duration of the families' interview.

Participants (families)	Duration of the interview (min/sec)
F-1	16,08
F-2	16,37
F-3	18,18
F-4	10,40

Source: Interviews with families experiencing poverty, 2021.

To be able to analyse the data it was important to have interviews transcriptions. Transcriptions were made carefully listening to the audio records and manually writing the data from the interviews. Later, the data was analysed using the method of content analysis. Main topics that emerged from the interviews were found. After that, the topics and ideas from the interviews were divided into categories and then to sub-categories. All the categories were formed manually, without any programs. While analysing research data it was searched for common things that participants shared and these things were used to form sub-categories.

Ethical issues. The right to the privacy is important to each person, it means that the research subject has a right to choose if he or she wants that his or her information, opinion, attitudes will be recognized by others and available for everyone. In this research, confidentiality is guaranteed using codes for individuals, to protect their identities. Ensuring

confidentiality means that the research data will be analysed and presented without any information about the source (Behi and Nolan, 1995). Furthermore, while making data analysis and interpretation it is important to provide accurate information. In order to succeed it different kind of strategies have been used to provide reliable interpretation. What is more, the respondents have been explained principles of confidentiality. They knew the aim of the research and they were guaranteed anonymity. The researcher communicated with the survey participants personally.

Research limitations. Even though this study describes how social workers collaborate with families to reduce the poverty the results can't be generalized to the whole population. It has to be taken into account that social workers and families were from three different organisations that are held in Vilnius.

What is more, in total five organisations were asked for a possibility to conduct an interview with the social workers and / or families from their organisation. Only three organisations out of five agreed.

3.2. Research results

3.2.1. Analysis of the social workers interviews

After completing the interviews with the social workers and transcription of the records, the material was analysed applying the method of content analysis. The participants' answers were divided into categories and later the categories have been separated into sub-categories. In total 3 categories were distinguished from the interviews with social workers: "Reasons of having financial difficulties in families", "Ways to help families", and "Difficulties while providing help".

The first distinguished category describes reasons of having financial difficulties in families (Table 3). Social workers during the interview distinguished the main reasons why families experience poverty. The answers of social workers were divided into 9 sub-categories, and each sub-category will be analysed in detail.

Table 3. Reasons of having financial difficulties in families.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Reasons of having financial difficulties in families	Large families	"M*ulti child families automatically have bigger chances to suffer from poverty <…> because the parents can't find jobs, usually one of the parents or neither of them works*" S-3.
	Lack of social skills	"*They don't have any knowledge about financial literacy and uses money inappropriately, it is important to learn to distribute them*" S-2.
	Exposed to violence and alcoholism within family	"*Violence creates a tension in the family, people then are more likely to be angry, especially when they have to pay bills, they feel more tension, are more scared and their reactions can be unpredictable*" S-5.
	Passed poverty experience / culture through generations	"*It is passed from the childhood to other generations, children were growing in poverty, and no one pay attention to it, now it repeats, and they usually give early births*" S-2.
	Health problems	"*I have a person which has a severe depression, for him it is really hard to go into the labour market <…> he is in a poverty and the state gives him very little money, there are many similar stories*" S-1.
	Unemployed adult family members	"*We have long-term unemployed people, which are not motivated to work, because of the support they get from the state*" S-2.

Source: Interviews with social workers, 2021.

First sub-category defines large families with many children as a reason of having financial difficulties. Social worker mentioned ("*Usually the families which faces financial difficulties are multi-child families*" S-1; "*<...> mum had difficulties with three kids*" S-2). This sub-category describes the kind of difficulties large families can have. Other social worker mentioned that for large families it is automatically harder to find a job, and it is often that only one parent can have a full-time job ("*Multi child families automatically have bigger chances to suffer from poverty <…> because the parents can't find jobs, usually one of the parents or neither one of them work*" S-3). Especially the mothers' of large families face with difficulties to find a job, due to the fact that for them it is harder to manage and plan the time, the schedules have to be adapted to the children needs, so the job offers are very limited with these kind of

advantages ("*It is often that multi child mothers' have complications to find a job which would fit while raising kids, the number of job offers decreases for these kind of situations*" S-6).

Social workers distinguished that lack of skills usually is the feature of families experiencing poverty ("*My experience with the family is that it had a huge lack of skills, it involves hygiene skills*" S-1) Daily routine habits, hygiene skills, knowledge how to tidy up these all things can reflect the situation of a family. Social skills help people to find jobs and to get in touch with more individuals, however the language barrier sometimes is big issue in order to find a job or a necessary information ("*Sometimes it is a language barrier, they speak only Russian language and have complex to speak, they say that they will go only if I go with them*" S-2). The other social worker mentioned that families have a lack of social skills, and this is a sign of the beginning of the poverty ("*<…> it is often that families have a lack of social skills, later on, it develops to a kind of difficulty, because it is harder for them to find a job, they get used to survive only from allowances and poverty seems as a natural thing which continues for ages*" S-3). This situation shows why it is important to notice the signs of poverty and it reflects the reality that many families live in. What is more, lack of literacy skills often occurs as a difficulty in order to find a proper job or apply for financial aids ("*They don't have any knowledge about financial literacy and uses money inappropriately, it is important to learn to distribute them*" S-2 "*I notice that those who didn't have a proper education face with difficulties to read documents, find what steps they need to take, it is illiteracy*" S-5). There is a lot of bureaucracy that families must overcome in order to get financial assistance, this is why they ask for help with documentation. This sub-category highlights that social worker and all the other organization have to pay attention to the development of different skills: literacy, social skills, hygiene skills. When the person is missing these skills, it is going to be harder to find a decent job, raise kids, finish education, find a proper apartment and many more aspects. The absence of these skills encourages families to live on the state benefits and increases chances of living in a poverty.

The next sub-category concerns violence and alcoholism. While analysing alcoholism and violence as a reasons of poverty it is important to take into account that it can be vice versa. Poverty can be a cause of alcohol consumption or violence in the family. Social worker mentioned that alcoholism and violence are the most common reasons why they start working with a family and providing service to them. Not all the families who faces with these problems can suffer from deprivation, however this happens not that often. Usually, social workers find out that the same family that is consuming alcohol has many other difficulties. For example,

insufficient living conditions, children lack many necessary items ("*We get information from children' school that they noticed alcohol consumption and violence, however, only when we visit the families' living place, we can see the full picture. We notice such things: children don't have proper clothes, they feel a lack of necessary items, the living conditions are bad, children don't have a bed, or they sleep in one bed. We see all these things only when we meet with the family*" S-2). This situation highlights that social worker needs to analyse the family's situation in depth and find the root causes of their difficulties. Alcohol addiction forces families to spend more money. Instead of buying some food or necessary items for their family they choose to spend money on alcohol. This situation directly influences the higher chances of experiencing poverty ("*When the situation is about alcoholism or other addictions, people are more linked to poverty. They spend money not where they really need, and alcoholism is a disease*" S-3). Violence in the family brings a lot of tension and emotional disorders. Social worker noticed that people who uses violence tend to overreact and become very angry ("*Violence creates a tension in the family, people then are more likely to be angry, especially when they have to pay bills, they feel more tension, are more scared and their reactions can be unpredictable*" S-5). This situation illustrates how violence can affect poverty. The behaviour of people changes, they can feel desperate and take the actions that are inappropriate and lead to poverty. As it was mentioned before alcoholism is stated as a disease, however most of the clients who faces with this problem denies it. Social worker said that families rarely ask help due to alcoholism, they mention other reasons, such as children behaviour, conflicts, poverty, violence, but they never acknowledge that these problems occurred due to alcoholism ("*Alcoholism is the disease that people tend to deny having it, they often say that there are problems of children misbehaviour, they don't attend school or the husband is using violence, they don't mention the alcohol consumption*" S-5). Social workers gave many examples how alcoholism and violence effects the emergency of poverty in families and that these problems are the most common that people are tend to deny having.

The third sub-category is called "passed experience to next generations". Social workers during the interview mentioned that poverty is often passed to children, they have clients who experienced poverty when they were kids and now they live the same way as they saw in their childhood ("*They have painful childhood experiences from their families and later it repeats to their own families*"S-1; "*It is passed from the childhood to other generations, children were growing in poverty, and no one pay attention to it, now it repeats and they usually give early births*" S-2). Social worker mentioned painful childhood experience that repeats later,

the lack of attention and support and early births. These are all the factors that influence the living conditions and emergency of poverty. The other social worker mentioned that cultural aspects influence that poverty is passed to other generations. In Romani culture it is typical that girls and boys have different rights and opportunities. Girls in this culture are less encouraged to reach for education and are directed more to housework, cooking. Boys are more motivated to do physical or illegal work ("*Poverty can be passed to other generations. In Romani culture it is a tendency that girls are more focused on housework and cooking and the education isn't that important. Boys are unmotivated to attend school, because when they grow older, they start physical work or do criminal offences, such as drug sales. These all things are typical to this culture and is passed to others*" S-3). This example highlights the importance of a culture as a big issue in order to solve poverty problems and raise the level of education and living conditions for kids. It is not always that due to the culture people pass the poverty. In our society the culture and the values change quite fast, however the habits of people tend to need more time to change ("*Poverty goes from generation to generation. Mostly all client's parents, grandparents had the same problems as they do now. Those problems are passed to others, and we already can see that their children will have the same problems, because they do not attend schools, uses drugs*" S-4). In this situation it can be seen that children already show the signs of poverty, their behaviour reflects the difficulties at the family and determines their future.

Health problems are also a reason of poverty, and it is a fifth sub-category. Social worker talked about the situation when due to health problems it is hard to find a job ("*I have a person which has a severe depression, for him it is really hard to go into the labour market <…> he is in a poverty and the state gives him very little money, there are many similar stories*" S-1). In this situation the health problem is depression, this condition creates less possibilities to find a job and the inability to have a proper work leads to poverty. The other social worker mentioned the client with the mental disorders, she is able to find a job, but the difficulty for her is to keep it for a longer period ("*The reason of poverty can be mental disorders. I have a woman which can't stay in one job, she can change 7 workplaces during one month. She said that she wasn't in a good mood, so she couldn't work*" S-4). People who experience health problems have higher risk for unemployment and financial difficulties. Some health problems can be solved by social workers, by navigating and suggesting needed services. It is not often that people go to social centres and ask for help, however, social worker mentioned that she had client with mental disability who came to the social centre without any intervention of other organization. That client had financial difficulties due to his health problem, they asked social

workers to help them with documentation in order to receive financial allowances ("*At one organization I worker with a family with a mental disability. Mental disability is a common reason why families go to social centres by themselves and search for certain help. I helped that family to mediate between social support department and I informed them what kind of state support they are obliged to get due to their health problems*" S-3). This situation reflects the importance of social worker role when dealing with health problems and poverty. They are the people who are obliged to support families and provide the information they need.

The last sub-category concerns unemployment. Unemployment is very closely related to poverty. As it was mentioned before that families who experience alcoholism, violence or multi child families doesn't necessary mean that will suffer from poverty. However, when talking about unemployment, especially long-period, in significantly effects the financial situation and drastically increases chances of living in a poverty. Unemployment is often attached with another difficulty that family experiences. For example, social worker mentioned the situation where the person wanted to work, but she had to take care of her child with special needs (<…> *the child is disabled so the mom can't work, only the husband maintains the family*" S-1). This situation illustrates a person who is motivated to find a job, however due to health problems he could find it. As it was mentioned, unemployment strongly depends on the persons' abilities and conditions, here the child's situation determined mom's abilities. Unemployment can increase chances of alcoholism. When the family has financial difficulties and around them there is no one who can support them, families start to experience more tension, emotional climate changes, it is getting harder to pay the bills. All these things can encourage people to start drinking or using other things who will make them feel relaxed or gives the ability to forget all the problems, however for a short time. Social worker mentioned the situation when due to unemployment alcoholism emerged ("*I think that Covid now changed many things, when I started working in another organization, I noticed that more clients emerged due to unemployment, they were fired or left their jobs. This situation brings many difficulties to families, it is harder to maintain financial stability and I guess this can be a reason why families start using alcohol*" S-3). The unemployment was affected by the Covid situation, later on it led to alcohol consumption and inability to have a financial stability, these things mean a higher risk of living in a poverty. On the other hand, unemployment is always a choice that families accept. Social worker told a quite opposite story when the family wasn't motivated to work. Family had all abilities and chances to find a proper work, however they made a decision that it is better to live on a state allowance ("*We have long-term unemployed*

people, which are not motivated to work, because of the support they get from the state" S-2). Other social workers mentioned similar situations ("*Romani people are accustomed not to work, they always go to the employment service, and they stay there for many years in order to get financial allowances. It is hard to believe that employment service can keep them for such a long period, however I heard that Romani people give money in order to stay in the employment service list for financial benefits.*" S-5). These two situations reflect the problems of motivation, cultural aspects, bureaucracy mistakes.

All six categories described the reasons why families experience poverty. Multi child families, alcoholism, violence, lack of skills, health problems and passed experience these all aspects can lead to unemployment, while the unemployment drastically increases chances of emergency of poverty.

The next category distinguishes the ways how social worker's help families (Table 4). Social workers can support families in many ways, sometimes they just redirect families to other specialist, but sometimes they give a direct help. Five sub-categories were distinguished that explains the ways to support families.

Table 4. Social worker's help for families facing poverty.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Ways to help families	Basic items	"*For example, there is a project "Gėrio trupinėlis" it is our partner, there were many cases when he helped families with washing machines, bought double floor beds*" S-5.
	Documentation	"*There are people who have jobs, but they do not know how to get benefits, so the help form aside really helps. <…> they can get compensation for the cost of heating*" S-6.
	Help to find a job	"*<…> you help with CV writing, send it to the employer, show the websites, enable them to search for a job and they successfully find the job and do not live-in poverty anymore*" S-1.
	Distribution of service	"*<…> psychologist consultations, parenting skills, social skills improvement*" S-1,
	Consultation	"*Social worker expands the knowledge and abilities of the person <…>. We try to find a job for them, encourage them to find new opportunities, change the thinking*" S-2.

Source: Interviews with social workers, 2021.

First sub-category is about support with basic items. Social worker shared about their project which aim is to help families with necessary things (“*Before the new year we do a campaign, where we make a list of needed goods and share it with other people. We ask them if they want to choose one thing and to make it as a present for those who need it*” S-1). Social workers mentioned different kind of projects which helps families with a furniture, clothes or other items (“*For example there is a project “Gėrio trupinėlis” it is our partner, there were many cases when he helped families with washing machines, bought double floor beds*” S-5). The other project helped a family to do an apartment repair (“*There was a project who search for a family who had alcohol problems and overcome it, so I suggested my family as a good example how to overcome these problems. They did a full apartment repair*” S-5). These examples show that each social centre tries to find different kind of projects which can help families by providing needed items. The help that clients get sometimes depends on social worker efforts, sometimes social worker searches for help by asking friends, relatives, other companies or writes a post on Facebook wall (“*There are cases when people donate money or buy some things for families, also, there are business companies that can support. Sometimes I ask my friends or write it on my Facebook wall for everyone to see. <…> One organization that I found had many pencil cases left so they decided to give them away before school year to the kids. Social worker has to repeat and repeat their demand for basic items*” S-4. In this situation it is visible that social worker tried many ways how to provide support for her client and she succeeded it, however it is obvious that a lot of effort has to be used. Social worker also can provide families with a food supply. All social workers that participated in interview mentioned “Food bank” project (“*We collaborate with “Food bank” projects, which regularly provides food packages, also our partner Samariečiai every week gives food which is expiring, but still can be eaten*” S-6). Other social worker mentioned that if there are people who do not come to take their package, social workers give more food supplies to those who suffer from poverty (“*We have a food bank project and if there is food left after it we give more to families experiencing poverty*” S-4). The other aspect about “Food bank” is that through this process social workers try to enable people to participate, to motivate them to come to the organisation to pick up their packages (“*Our idea is to enable people, we do not bring those packages to families directly, we encourage them to come to municipalities for their food supply*” S-4). Also, it was mentioned that social centre provides transport tickets, clients need them to come to organisation and different kind of consultations (“*We also give transport tickets, because they often go without them and later their have so many fines that it goes to bailiffs. We give tickets to those who have to go to psychologists, addiction consultants or positive parenting course*”

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S-5). What is more, social workers sometimes help families to choose furniture or other things because families do not feel confident or lack of knowledge ("*Sometimes we need to help them to choose some specific things, stove, washing machine, beds, because they have not enough knowledge*" S-3).

Documentation is the other important issue which is necessary for families to receive financial or other benefits. Social worker helps families to fill documents for different kind of state benefits. For example, families might need a target allowance in order to buy some specific things ("*One family needed many things, so we wrote documents for target allowance*"; "*We can inform families about opportunities to take target allowances. At one family's apartment I felt bad smell, because mom didn't manage to wash all the clothes with her hands, they needed a washing machine. I directed them to take target allowance for a washing machine.*" S-2). These kinds of examples reflect that for social workers it is important to understand the real needs of families, to visit their living place and to communicate with a family. There are cases when social worker only needs to inform families about their opportunities and what kind of documentation they need, however sometimes it is needed to go together with family members to organisations and help them to fill the forms, sometimes it is due to the language barrier ("*We inform families about target allowances. If the person is able to fill the forms by himself, we only inform what thing he needs to do, however if he is unable, we go together to municipalities to fill the forms. Often clients come to us, and we together fill the forms and send them, quite often it happened because clients don't speak Lithuanian language*" S-3). Sometimes people have jobs, but they still can get some benefits from the state, social worker gave an example when she helped a family to receive a compensation of heating ("*There are people who have jobs, but they do not know how to get benefits, so the help form aside really helps. <…> they can get compensation for the cost of heating*" S-6). What is more, social workers help with the documentation of a public housing. They help to apply for the public housing or for house rent compensation. What is more they communicate with the owners of the apartment, they explain the situation and the need of the apartment ("*We offer help with public housing and apartment rent compensation. Later, we communicate with the apartment owners in order to rent the apartment for our family and we agree that municipalities can directly transfer money to the owners*" S-4).

The next sub-category is helping to find a job. During the interview two different thoughts were distinguished. Some of the social workers mentioned that they directly help families to find a job. Social worker said that she helps families to write CV and shows websites

where to search for a job ("*<…> you help with CV writing, send it to the employer, show the websites, enable them to search for a job and they successfully find the job and do not live-in poverty anymore*" S-1). This situation highlights that it is necessary to enable families and to give them the knowledge which they can use later individually. What is more, social workers with other specialists create actions plan in order to help family, if family has problems with finding a job, the actions plan will involve this issue ("*The group of specialists create an action plan when evaluated family's situation. <…> if the family is unemployed and have difficulties to find a job, we will help to find it.*" S-3). The action plan involves strategies how to solve family's problems, such as unemployment. Social centres have projects which helps people to find a job, to develop their skills, to learn new skills ("*We help with job advertisements, we ask our partners, now we have a project which aim is to help people to find a job, to teach them how to write a CV also they offer language course, we as social worker inform families about this opportunity*" S-6). This example reflects the other opinion, social workers not always work directly with the unemployment issues, they can direct families to the projects and inform about their opportunities.

Fourth sub-category – distribution of service. One of the main responsibilities of the social worker is a distribution of service and successful implementation of the certain plan. ("*<…> psychologist consultations, parenting skills, social skills improvement*" S-1, "*<…> addiction consultant, children psychologist, day care centre they are all designated by the social worker during the meeting and the person is informed where he needs to go*" S-2, "*We provide social services <…> basic services are positive parenting courses, emotional help, psychologists and different kind of projects that helps with poverty, addictions and alcoholism*" S-6). These social workers mentioned quite similar services that social centres can provide. All these services provide emotional support and helps families to understand their difficulties, to accept and acknowledge their situation and condition. What is also important for social worker, while distributing social services to understand what kind of help family needs. Social worker mentioned that from 2018 the case management was investigated, and the main areas of evaluation have been created. The evaluation is based on child's needs, they evaluate the risks and then create plan which will help workers to reach the goals for the family ("*From 2018 Lithuania investigated case management in social works, the areas of evaluation were registered. Those areas are based on children' needs, how parent ensure the health of a child, meets the need, what kind of living condition child has. We put plusses and minuses, we check the risk factors, weak and strong aspects of family and then during the meeting with the family*

and other workers we create a plan" S-5; "*We make an assistance plan for family, it is our main tool when we work with families*" S-2). In this situation it can be seen that social workers have guidelines on how to reach the goals and help family, the plan that they create in collaboration with other workers is the main tool when discussing the outcomes and results. Other social worker mentioned that they visit families regularly in order to get to know family, to observe their situation, what difficulties they have, how are they trying to overcome them ("*Social workers always visit families, we have to ensure that their living place is safe, we watch what happened that day, how we can help*" S-4). What is also very important, is an individual conversation with family, in order to understand their needs and wants, their opportunities, to understand what kind of things they are willing to change in their lives and see how many responsibilities they are capable to take ("*The first conversation is happening between family and social worker, during it we discuss what kind of things family expects from us, what service they need*" S-3). Furthermore, social workers can provide assistance service. The assistant helps family to improve their routine skills, to learn how to take care of their homes, improve living conditions of a child. They can also look after the kids while the parents are busy, develop their skills, help with school ("*Families who experience poverty usually live in a poor environment, their living place is untidy, usually they lack many things, the smell can be bad <…> we designate assistance service in order to educate and develop skills, to teach them to clean their homes, prepare food*" S-3; "*Assistants can look after the kids while parents have to go somewhere or have consultations, they can also teach basic hygienic skills*" S-4).

Fifth sub-category is consultation, it illustrates how social workers communicate with families, do they give only the basic and required information, or maybe they try to find a connection and help the families with all the questions. One social worker explained that she always needs to encourage clients, to motivate them, to show their opportunities ("*Social worker expands the knowledge and abilities of the person <…>. We try to find a job for them, encourage them to find new opportunities, change the thinking*" S-2). Families who are experiencing poverty already have difficulties with responsibilities and are afraid to accept or search for new opportunities, social worker is the one who can encourage them and reveal their strengths. The other social worker mentioned that she had course about communication with the clients, what she took as the most important part, was strong relationship between social worker and client. Social workers has to create warm and trustful relationship, due to this she tries to talk not only about services, but also about family's personal life, what's happening in their life, how do they feel ("*We have to find a connection with a client, during the courses I*

learned that the most important is to make a strong relationship, because if they don't trust me they won't accept my help. I talk not only about services, but also about the life, what's happening in their lives. We have such service as consultation we go to clients living place to talk what's confusing them. We have to listen them and show how they can change the situation, we can't say that everything is wrong, motivation is important" S-6). This situation highlights the importance of relationship and motivation. Positivism, opportunities, positive attitude towards family creates a strong and trustful connection with the client and social worker. However, not always is that easy to motivate families to visit different kind of specialists. During the interview it was mentioned that social workers can't force clients, the service that is recommended for the family is not obligatory. Force to go somewhere seems to be the worst tool to encourage families to see specialist, in this kind of situation social worker motivates and tries to search for different methods to encourage family ("*All services are only recommended for families, we can't force them to do something <…> if client goes there by force, he won't learn anything. Our job is to motivate, find a way to connect with them and search for new methods*" S-3). One more social worker mentioned that her duty is to show the client the reasons and consequences of his or her actions ("*They will never ask to solve the fundamental problems, the task of social worker is to reveal that problems and to show the reasons and consequences of the actions. It often takes a lot of time to find the way how to communicate it to clients*" S-4). Consultation means listening to client's needs, creating a relation with a client, motivating families to take new actions, encourage for changes, show them their opportunities and abilities and spread the positive attitude.

Third category concerns difficulties working with clients (Table 5). This category explains the obstacles that social workers experience while providing help. It describes the situations where social workers feel helpless to support families, they face with the difficult situations which prevent them to provide quality service. The category is divided into 5 sub-categories that will reveal the difficulties in detail.

Table 5. Difficulties working with clients.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Difficulties while providing help	Unmotivated	"*The main problem is that people don't have any motivation, they don't want to go into contact*" S-1.

	State benefits	"*My Romani families never had a job, they stay in employment service form many years, I think sometimes they pay for the workers, to keep them, because they need state benefits*" S-5.
	System obstacles	"*There are problems in our system, bureaucracy is too complicated, there isn't one place where our clients can go to receive services. They have to put a lot of efforts and sometimes it is useless. Services and support has to be closer to the people needs, those who live in poverty they don't have money for the transport ticket.*" S-4.
	Lack of resources	"*We face with a lack of social services, not only when we talk about those who experience poverty, it is for everyone, clients have to wait in a waiting list for a long time to receive the service*" S-3.
	Relationship	"*I need more quality time with my clients, the load is too big, too many families, one social worker has many families and the visit to those families and really short, we introduce, collect the signatures, maximum – minutes and then we go to another family. S-2.*

Source: Interviews with social workers, 2021.

First sub-category is about motivation and desire to change. Social workers quite often face with the clients who are unmotivated to change, they don't want to go into contact and tries to avoid social workers ("*The main problem is that people don't have any motivation, they don't want to go into contact*" S-1; "*Poverty is often associated with the lack of skills and repulsive behaviour*" S-2). These examples illustrate the types of families and that problems that families experience are not associated with the quality of social worker's job. It can be stated that clients can choose how they react to the support that is offered to them, repulsive behaviour creates a negative effect. The other social worker describes clients' behaviour during the "food bank" project. Families are happy to receive food, however they are not willing to do something, they want social workers to bring the food to their living place ("*Regarding "food bank" families are not very satisfied with the food provision, they want the food to be delivered to their place. I start wondering do they really need support form us, when they are not ready to do anything for themselves*" S-4). Families are unmotivated to change something, they are used to their living conditions ("*Sometimes I think that it is convenient for them to live that way, they don't want to change their lives <…>. There are situations when we see the changes, but in most cases, families get used to their terrific living conditions and they don't do anything*"

S-3). Social workers can help families with documentation in order to get allowances, however there are cases when clients are unmotivated, they won't take any steps to receive it (*<…> they can't be in poverty, because the state ensures that for each child they get money and also different kinds of social benefits or target benefits <…> they can live a comfortable life if they manage to fill in for state benefits, we can't make everything for them if they are not cooperating*" S-1). As it was mentioned before, that in social worker's job it is important to learn how to motivate families and never give up searching for methods, however, it is super hard to motivate families to take steps to overcome poverty when they don't show any signs of collaboration. The successful stories how families get over the poverty happens only when two sides communicate.

The other difficulty that both social workers mentioned does not depend on them, it is a state level problem. This sub-category is called – state benefits. Social workers face with this issue quite often ("*People do not see the point to find a job, because they will lose state benefits, because of this they are attached to the money they receive.*" S-2, "*<…> there is a need to change a system in a way that people would see the importance to find a job. They postpone job search and wait until they won't get any money*" S-2). This situation illustrates how people take advantage of the state benefits and decides not to worry about job search. Another social worker mentioned that Romani families stay registered in employment service for many years in order to get state benefits ("*My Romani families never had a job, they stay in employment service form many years, I think sometimes they pay for the workers, to keep them, because they need state benefits*" S-5). Here it is noticed that it is also connected to cultural aspects, however they still find ways how to bypass our system. What is more, due to Covid situation government paid state benefits to families and here families again were trapped in a difficult situation. If they try to find a job, they are going to lose the benefits and the price of the kindergarten will increase, so the families choose to live on the allowances ("*During the covid period state benefits were about 200 euros, if families start working they lose the benefit. Kindergarten is really cheap if you are getting the state allowance, however price increases if the incomes increase*" S-4). Social workers can help families with documentation in order to get allowances, however there are cases when clients are unmotivated, they won't take any steps to receive it ("*<…> they can't be in poverty, because the state ensures that for each child they get money and also different kinds of social benefits or target benefits <…> they can live a comfortable life if they manage to fill in for state benefits, we can't make everything for them if they are not cooperating*" S-1).

The third sub-category is about difficulties in our bureaucracy system. Social worker mentioned that in order to receive services or provide services for families they have to take too many actions that are worthful and usually it demotivates clients to put efforts. Client needs to go to many different organizations, there isn't one place that would help with most of the issues. Services have to be closer to the people needs ("*The are problems in our system, bureaucracy is too complicated, there isn't one place where our clients can go to receive services. They have to put a lot of efforts and sometimes it is useless. Services and support has to be closer to the people needs, those who live in poverty they don't have money for the transport ticket.*" S-4). This situation reflects the problems of decentralisation, also highlights why it is necessary to families. Families who experience poverty already are more vulnerable, they or social workers put a lot of effort to motivate themselves for changes, however if it is too complicated for them, they might choose the easiest way, to continue their old habits. The other social worker stated the facts that there are too many reasons and ways how to refuse working and live of state benefits. ("*It seems that in Lithuania if you have a child, it is a justifiable reason to refuse working. I think that if you have a child, you are responsible for him and you must earn money, but here I face with a problem that people always refuse working opportunities because it is difficult to reconcile with a child. I have a client which lives with his mom, and she always helps him with his child, however he still claims that he doesn't have the opportunities to work. The employees don't pay much attention to this kind of situations*" S-5). Here facing with a problem: system doesn't motivate these families to start working. If a person finds an opportunity to work less or to overcome things that he doesn't like, he will do it, our employees and system has to work in order to show them that actions always have consequences. The other issue is that the support isn't provided at a right time. During the interview it was mentioned that the support is provided only when the situation is in a critical condition. Prevention is a thing that needs to be done in order to reduce the numbers of poverty, numbers of depression, difficulties in youth development ("*We wait until the youth reaches the hardest point at his life and then we provide help. When I worked at foster care, I saw how hard is to help youth, to help with childhood traumas, they are really traumatized, we have to provide help earlier, at the time when we notice that he is starting to experience difficulties. If we take child earlier from the family, we can help him easier to overcome difficulties and give a time for parents, to deal with the problems. Child has to be in a safe environment, without violence, alcoholism and fear, if the child is surrounded with this kind of environment he can't focus on education.*" S-3). This situation illustrates that if a support is given too late, the youth is put at risk and increase the chances of youth living in a street and starting addictions.

The fourth sub-category is called "lack of resources". This problem determines the chances of families to overcome poverty or other difficulties. Social workers mentioned that clients experience the lack of social services. The financing for the social services provision isn't enough, people have to wait too long for their turn to receive the service. Social worker also faces with a problem that they have to spend a lot of time searching where the client can get immediate help, call to different organizations ("*We face with a lack of social services, not only when we talk about those who experience poverty, it is for everyone, clients have to wait in a waiting list for a long time to receive the service*" S-3; "*We work according to the projects, so there is a lack of services, financing isn't enough, if you want to get something else that a psychologist you have to call other organizations and ask if they have those specialist. For example, there is a lack of lawyers, legal consultation, these factors prevent us for changes, when we lack resources, we are in an impasse to help children.*" S-6). It can be stated that the lack of recourses affects such things: child's development, opportunities to improve families' situation, social worker's and client's motivation and poverty.

The last sub-category is about relationship. Social worker mentioned that she faces with another problem a lack of time to provide consultations and visit families. This problem leads to difficulties to maintain a strong relationship. It was mentioned that social workers have too many families and they always have to be on a run, they don't have a quality time ("*I need more quality time with my clients, the load is too big, too many families, one social worker has many families and the visit to those families and really short, we introduce, collect the signatures, maximum – minutes and then we go to another family. I feel a lack of time for a relationship, for the opportunity to accept the invitation for a cup of tea and also the bureaucracy takes a lot of our time. I want to show that I respect my client and that I am not higher that he or she is, but I have to refuse to drink a tea.*" S-2). The quality time with a family is a necessary in order to create a strong relationship which creates more opportunities to motivate family for a change, to encourage them to receive opportunities and to show that social worker is a person who honestly wants the best for his client. What is more, during the interview relationship between employees were also distinguishes as a difficulty. It was mentioned that if a social worker and a case manager can't cooperate properly, the results and the support for family won't give the wanted results ("*The main difficulty for me is the communication in a team, if the social worker and a case manager has conflicts it is hard to work. As a social worker I am closer to the family than a case manager, so I can see the situation better, to understand families' problems, what they do and what things they don't do. I had a situation*

when case manager saw the situation differently, so it was hard to provide the services that family really needed, we starter to conflict with each other and the service provision quality became worst" S-3). It is important to learn how to work in a team, how to communicate and understand each other. The conflicts between employees make the situation harder for clients, they can be confused and start to lose the trust of the organization. What is more, the atmosphere in the organization means a lot for the social workers, if they want to support families, they can't feel the tension with those whom they collaborate.

3.2.2. Analysis of the interviews with families

For the second part of the empirical research, four interviews were taken with families that experience poverty in order to collect the information. The collected empirical data were analysed by applying content analysis method. Four categories were distinguished to analyse the information: "Reasons to have social worker's supervision", "Help from social worker", "Attitudes towards social workers'", and "Things that can be improved". Each category was divided into sub-categories.

First category explains the reasons why families have social worker's supervision (Table 6). This category has 3 sub-categories that will provide the families experiences and in detail explains reasons of collaborating with the social worker.

Table 6. Reasons to have social worker's supervision.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Reasons to have social worker's supervision	Alcoholism	"*I managed to call from the fourth time, I thought that it is better just to leave my husband, but the other said that I need to help him to overcome alcohol addiction*" F-2.
	Divorce	"*The day care centre suggested me to find a social worker, because at that time I experienced a divorce. It was a help form me to communicate with my husband during the whole process. F-4.*
	Living conditions	"*We are here due to my friend's mother, our house was wooden, not in a good condition, back then I had two children.*

		Our living condition were not suitable for kids, so we started collaborating with social workers" F-3

Source: Interviews with families experiencing poverty, 2021.

First sub-category is alcoholism. Two families had the support from the social workers due to the alcoholism in their families. In the first case the woman was forced to leave her living place and the social worker's supervision was assigned ("*My husband was drinking a lot, he forced me and our child to leave our home and we went to a shelter. When we left that place, we were already registered in social centre*" F-1). The situation of another family was a bit different. The main reason was alcoholism, however the women called policy by herself, she wanted to ask for a help and receive the support from the social centre ("*I managed to call from the fourth time, I thought that it is better just to leave my husband, but the other said that I need to help him to overcome alcohol addiction*" F-2). These cases are not directly connected with the poverty, however both experience difficulties with money. In the first family the man had a job, the woman was unemployed. This woman experienced a hard time, because later she lost her husband and had to take care of a child on her own ("*When the husband died, I was still getting social benefits and target benefits*" F-1). Second family had quite a similar situation regarding the work. The woman was looking for a job and only the husband was working. It is possible to make assumptions that these families experienced poverty because of alcoholism and unemployment.

The next sub-category is divorce. Nowadays social worker quite often faces with the conflicts in the family. They must help family to deal with divorce issues, such as documentation, communication, and child rights. One respondent called to the social centre to receive support during the divorce. The day care centre suggested to contact social centre. She needed a person who can communicate with her husband ("*The day care centre suggested me to find a social worker, because at that time I experienced a divorce. It was a help form me to communicate with my husband during the whole process. I also thought that maybe it could really make all the process smoother*" F-4). In this situation the women asked for help, no one forced her, or no one called to the child service, she was advised to ask for a social worker in order to deal with the difficulties.

The third sub-category is about living condition. This family needed help due to the bad living conditions. The friend's mother called to the social centre and talked about their

situation ("*We are here due to my friend's mother, our house was wooden, not in a good condition, back then I had two children. Our living condition were not suitable for kids, so we started collaborating with social workers*" F-3; "*Now we have fourth or fifth social worker, because we changed our living place many times*" F-3). This family is already for a long time under the social worker's supervision and still needs this support. Living conditions are important for children's development, they must live in a safe environment and have all the necessary items for hygiene. Poor living conditions are directly attached to poverty.

None of families mentioned that they got social worker's supervision due to the poverty. Poverty wasn't the reason why families happened to be at the social centre. All four families faced with different kind of problems that reflect the lack of various skills, which shows the existence of poverty.

Second category is called "assistance from social workers" (Table 7). This category describes what kind of support families received from social workers. Families can receive different kind of support it depends on the families' situation. Each family is evaluated, and the working plan is made for each family to reach the goals. Social worker and other employees observe families' situation and ask them what kind of support they need ("*During the meeting social workers and other specialists make a half-year plan, they raise goals and anticipate what is needed*" F-3).

Table 7. Assistance from social workers.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Help from social worker	Motivation	*The communication was really polite and honest. I am always glad to see her with a smile and positivism*" F-1.
	Service distribution	"*Parental courses were recommended to my family, for kids social workers suggested to meet with a psychologist to express themselves*" F-4.
	Consultation	"*She always listened and gave me suggestions <…> I could call her and write messages when I need, I also have her personal phone number*" F-2.
	Support with necessary items	"*We got help with diapers provision and food, they can provide the things we ask*" F-3.

Source: Interviews with families experiencing poverty, 2021.

First sub-category is about motivation from social workers. One woman mentioned that the positive attitude of social worker motivates her ("*The communication was really polite and honest. I am always glad to see her with a smile and positivism.*" F-1). This example shows that good emotions form social worker helps family to brighten their daily life and be more motivated. What is more, social worker when supporting clients and showing the constant care can motivate them for a change ("*Social worker called my children's father quite often, she visited him, checked how he is living, encourage him to find a job in an official organisation in order to receive insurance*" F-4). The other participant said that social motivated both children and family ("*She comes to our place, observes what things do we lack <…> askes the kids about the school, encourages them to learn and motivates us*" F3). The constant care of the client doesn't give him much to time go deeper in the poverty, to start different kind of addictions, he feels that there is a person who can provide help. The secure feeling is important to contribute with social workers and overcome poverty.

The other important aspect that all families mentioned is service distribution. It is really important to understand what kind of support they need and to provide it ("*I am very glad that we entered this social centre, because then my husband's situation started to change, he went to addictions consultant and we went together to courses for parents*" F-1; "*I wanted to get psychologist for my husband, because he was really closed and he needed to talk with someone. <…> he was registered to addiction consultant also I am happy that my kid got psychologist consultations*" F-2). These situations show that the service which they got satisfied their needs. First family mentioned that after some time she asked for help for herself ("*After the death of my husband I asked for psychologist help*" F-1). The other family mentioned the courses that were recommended to them. Specialists, such as psychologists or parental courses were only recommended so, they had a choice to decide if they want to attend the courses ("*Parental courses were recommended to my family, for kids social workers suggested to meet with a psychologist to express themselves*" F-4, "*Social centre helped a lot, it encouraged my husband to enrol skills developmental courses, half of it was online, the other half face to face. I was happy*" F-3). These all situations highlight the social services that social centres can provide: addiction consultants, psychologists, parental courses, skills developmental courses. What is more, social worker can designate help of assistant for a family. Two participants mentioned that they needed help from an assistant ("*I needed help during the summer. The kids are at home, because the school is closes, so I needed a person who can help me with their*

coordination. I was alone, I did not need a person that would take care of my children, I needed help to take the kids to the specialist, psychologists, to drive them where they need, summer camps" F-4). The assistant helped a woman to coordinate children, to bring them to the specialist or find any other activities for them. However, not always the families are happy and can find a connection with an assistant ("*Social workers sometimes appoint an assistant, we had this when we lived in Grigiškės, however I had difficulties to communicate with her, I didn't like her*" F-3). This situation illustrates that families also faces with the communication difficulties and are not always willing to receive the help ("*I said that I didn't like the assistant, I asked for another person, but they couldn't provide it. I was told that she will be coming once a week, but she was coming twice a week, I didn't like it*" F-3). It is important to provide the help that family receives positively and are willing to accept it. What is more, the other participant needed help in order to find a job. Social worker helped her to create CV, show the information where to search for a job ("*I needed help with a job search. Social worker helped me to create CV, we searched where I can send my application, in which job interviews I can go. It was a fast process, and I found a job*" F-4). The other family also received help with job search ("*I got social benefits and help to enter to labour exchange system*" F-2). It is often that those who experience poverty has a lack of technological skills, so the social worker can consult them on these issues. Furthermore, the other participant mentioned the service of day care centre, she was surprised with the opportunities for children at the day care centre ("*I asked about day care centre, they told me that children can get free meals, they do their homework, have many activities outside, play board games with other kids, the groups aren't too big and there are many employees*" F-4). Day care centres can be suggested by the social worker, or each individual can ask to go there or bring their kids. In this situation the family was really happy, and the day care centre helped her a lot to manage with the kids during the divorce time. Service provision and distribution are one of the main aspects of social worker's role in order to reduce the poverty. They have to observe the family, designate the right support that the family needs and encourage them to use all the resources that are suggested.

Third sub-category is about social worker's consultation. It is important for a social worker to provide constant support and do it honestly. The family mentioned that social worker was really sincere with her family, she gave many suggestions and was always available in a case of emergency ("*She always listened and gave me suggestions <…> I could call her and write messages when I need, I also have her personal phone number*" F-2). This example shows that social worker trusted the woman and was really supporting the family, the woman had a

strong connection with the social worker. What is more, social worker with her constant help can encourage families and show them the importance of the provided services ("*The husband did not feel the pressure, but the social worker encouraged him a lot to register to addiction consultant, with her help he went to the courses and was satisfied*" F-2). This situation illustrates that families can change the opinion and attitude towards social services. The other woman shared more about how social worker helped her family. She mentioned that social worker showed how to fill the documents, she visited the family regularly and the client had the opportunity to call the social worker when it's needed ("*She helped me with the documentation and social benefits <…> social worker was coming quite often to my place. I also call her if I need some information or help*" F-2). One more family mentioned that social worker consulted her with the documentation questions and also always asked whether they have everything for children ("*She helped me to fill the papers for social benefits and target benefits, looked after my children, asked if we have enough food or clothes*" F-1). What is more, social workers can give daily advices from their own experiences. The woman mentioned that her social worker gave many examples how to plan the time, how to communicate with children and draw the limits ("*My social worker was coming to my home, she gave me advices, how to draw limits, what rules children need to have, sometimes she brings some written information, explains how to communicate with children. She gave me consultations.*" F-4). This situation explains that social worker isn't only the service distributor, it also consults, observes, and communicates about the family issues. The other family also mentioned that social worker quite often suggests what could be done better, gives advice from her viewpoint ("*If I need something she can consult me. She suggests what do to, gives advice from her point of view. Sometimes I ask how to act in different situations, what should I do with my sun behaviour. She gives advice and suggests psychologist consultations.*" F-3). Consult, suggest, show the opportunities, listen, observe, provide the information these are all the duties that help the families' wellbeing and encourages them to change the old habits. These families' situations revealed that constant supervision, support and consultations are the things that help feeling more secure and motivated.

Fourth sub-category – support with necessary items. Poverty is usually connected with the lack of things needed to live a proper life or to provide suitable living conditions for kids. During the interview families mentioned that they receive help with items depending on their needs. One family that had four kids asked for a help with diapers ("*We got help with diapers provision and food, they can provide the things we ask*" F-3; "*She took care if we have enough*

food, clothes, furniture <…> bed for a baby" F-2; "*The social centre bought a bed and table for my children*" F-4). In these two situation social workers helped family with a food and material items, such as diapers, clothes, furniture. What is more, social worker can find an organisation that can help family with the things that she needs. Not all the needed things social centre can provide due to financial issues, however, collaborating with different kind of organisations can help in provision. The organisation "Colourful life" made a cosmetic repair of the child's room. The family was recommended by the social worker for this project ("*Now there is an organisation "Colourful life", social worker recommended my family for this organisation. They searched for a family which had a private apartment and experienced violence. We fitted to all conditions, so they started collaborating with us, they came to look to our apartment's condition, calculated all the costs and hired a company which made the cosmetic repair.*" F-4). The other family mentioned the event before Christmas that fulfils children wishes ("*I remember that before Christmas they try to make children dreams to come true*" F-3). Social centre organises this campaign, searches for organisations or individual people who can contribute to the fulfilment of children wishes. These all situations demonstrates that support with items can be given directly form the social centres or while collaborating with other organizations or through campaigns. This kind of support is necessary for family who seeks for better future, the things that they get are needed to satisfy the basic living needs.

Families have different attitudes and relation with social workers. Sometimes family's attitude can be determined by other people stories, however there are different social centres and social workers, each has different techniques and values, so it is important not to have a negative attitude towards social workers before getting to know them. The category – attitudes towards social workers (Table 8) describes the relation families have with social workers and what kind of preconceptions they had. Attitude and the relationship with the social worker are important aspects in order to understand how social worker collaborate with families. Two sub-categories were distinguished that explains the relationship between the social worker and the family.

Table 8. Attitude towards social workers.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Attitudes towards social workers'	Positive relation	"*I am really happy that we entered social centre, my husband's situation started to change, he went to parenting courses,*

		<...> we had different situations, but I liked that social worker visited us quite often." F-2.
	Unsatisfied relation	"I heard many feedbacks from my friends they encouraged me not to contact them, said that they will torture me and will never release from their organisation. However, I said that I have to try, maybe it will help me to find ways how to communicate with my husband" F-4.

Source: Interviews with families experiencing poverty, 2021.

First sub-category gives examples of a positive attitude towards social workers. Family mentioned that they were happy for receiving social worker's support because it helped the husband to overcome alcoholism difficulties. It was mentioned that social worker's visits were really important, it encourages and improves the situation ("*I am really happy that we entered social centre, my husband's situation started to change, he went to parenting courses, <...> we had different situations, but I liked that social worker visited us quite often.*" F-2). This situation illustrates that family and social worker had good relationship, clients were not afraid of social worker, they felt motivated, and they liked social workers visits. The other client mentioned that to her social worker was like a close friend, she was able to call her, to ask for a support ("*She was coming often to my place. If I needed help, I could ask her. I also call her if I need some help, I communicate with her as she is my friend, I enjoy this kind of communication. Our relationship with a social centre once were finished, but later I asked again for a support, because after my husband died I needed a psychologist consultation.*" F-1). This woman felt comfortable with this social centre and trusted social worker that's why she asked again for their services. She wasn't afraid, because her previous experience showed that the support and service that the family received were valuable and helped her to overcome difficulties. What is more, the empathy of the social worker is an important factor to make families feel less stress and more relaxed during the whole process. The woman mentioned that during the meeting social worker help her to calm down, because she was afraid that they can take her children away ("*They helped me a lot, during the meeting told me to calm down and that my situation isn't that critical that someone can take my children. My girls were supervised, so social centre ensured that no one would take them in this situation. Also, they asked about the kindergarten, I saw that they honestly tried to understand my situation. <...> during the meeting I saw that my social worker is a kind person, that I can trust her, there won't without any judgements from her side*" F-1). The empathy is a strength of the social worker. Families

want to be received without any preconceptions, with a social worker that they could trust and feel comfortable. The other client mentioned that at the beginning she felt a bit nervous before social workers' visits. She felt that she has to clean the apartment, to tidy children's toys, to make the best impression during the visit, later on she understood that these things aren't the most important. She started feeling more relaxed and wasn't pretending to social workers that she is able to do everything on her own ("*I had close and warm relation. At the beginning I thought that social worker will come to check me, to see if the floor is clean, if nothing wrong is happening at home, whether the toys are tidy, but later we started to create a good relationship, I felt more relaxed, maybe not always my apartment was clean enough, but the most important was that we had space where to sit and discus my issues*" F-4). It always takes time to get to know a person, to understand his intensions and feel comfortable with him. These situations of families explains that positive relationship is important in order to make changes. Families mentioned that trustful relation, empathy, clear communication are the things that create a positive attitude towards social worker.

Next sub-category is unsatisfied relation. Not all the families are satisfied and can trust their social workers. One family mentioned the story about another social worker. It is not their experience, but they have heard that social workers are often rude, unhappy, they are trying to find the negative aspects, but not looking to the positive side ("*My neighbour said that her social worker is often rude, unhappy, everything seems wrong to her, she irritates a lot because nothing fits her, however our social worker was a positive and polite*" F-2). This experience shows that preconceptions can be wrong, however some families are unhappy with the social worker's job. The other family moved to many different places and worker with various organisations. This woman said that each social worker is different and that it depends on social centres ("*Somewhere I had better social workers, somewhere social workers were unpolite, we didn't have any communication <…>. I know that social worker's job is not the easiest, but each client is different, and no one sees social worker when he or she goes to client's place, no one observes them. Sometimes social workers want to know too many details, they ask to many questions and visits without warning, I don't like it.*" F-3). Here it is seen that the family feels that social worker is more as a detective, not as a helper. They don't feel trust, they don't want to share the details. The visits to client's apartment without a warning makes the family feel that social workers do not respect them. What is more, this family emphasized that character of a social worker is an important aspect for them ("*Later we had a social worker with which our characters didn't match, we had a fight. I always thought of many excuses why she can't visit*

us. I was saying that we aren't at home when it was time for her to come. She demanded so many things from me and she didn't care if I say that I don't have a time because of children. She still said that I must do everything, there is no empathy. If I don't like the social worker, I won't accept her to my family" F-3). This situation illustrates the consequences when the family doesn't go along with the social worker. It effects the quality of service and the communication. Family isn't willing to receive the support from the person that they don't trust, don't feel the connection or empathy. The other family mentioned that they also heard negative things about social workers. Their friends said that social workers won't support them and said that it's not worth to contact them, however this family still though that they have to experience it by themselves, not only listen to other people opinions ("*I heard many feedbacks from my friends they encouraged me not to contact them, said that they will torture me and will never release from their organisation. However, I said that I have to try, maybe it will help me to find ways how to communicate with my husband*" F-4). These stories illustrate that families had different attitudes and experiences towards social workers. The most important thing that emerged here is that family have to trust their own feeling and do not believe other opinions until they didn't experience it by themselves. Preconceptions towards social workers can prevent families' chances to overcome poverty and other difficulties.

The last category that was distinguished while analysing families' interviews is about the things that can be improved according to families' opinion (Table 9). Families described things that cause obstacles to receive service.

Table 9. Things that can be improved.

Category	Sub-category	Supporting quotations
Things that can be improved	Better access to information	"*I did not know how to ask for help. I didn't know where to call, what will happen if I call police, I have a small child, where they will take him*" F-1.
	Better time management	"*Psychologist consultation were happening during the time when children are at the kindergarten or school. It would be better for children to spend half of day or at least sleep at the kindergarten and after it go to the consultation.*" F-4.
	More resources	"*Social workers sometimes provide an assistant, when we lived in Grigiškės, I couldn't find a way how to communicate with*

		the assistant, I didn't like her. I asked for another one, but social worker said that there isn't anymore" F-3.

Source: Interviews with families experiencing poverty, 2021.

First sub-category – better access to information. Often families which experience poverty have fewer literacy skills. They face with the difficulties to find information, to read information or critically analyse it. The participant mentioned that she did not know where to find help, she wasn't aware what things social worker do ant that they can help her to solve the problems ("*I did not know how to ask for help. I didn't know where to call, what will happen if I call police, I have a small child, where they will take him. <…> I did not imagine that social worker can help me with my problems*" F-1). This situation reveals that family was afraid to lose the child, woman didn't know the duties of social centre. Due to the lack of information families can live in really bad conditions, the information about social centres and the support they offer must be spread wider, people need to understand that nor the police nor the social centre tries do the harm, they protect and provide help.

The second sub-category – better time management. For families that have more than two kids it is necessary to plan time in order to give enough attention to children and also enough time to rest for the parents. The woman mentioned that she had difficulties to reconcile time when children need to go to psychologist consultation and kindergarten ("*Psychologist consultation were happening during the time when children are at the kindergarten or school. It would be better for children to spend half of day or at least sleep at the kindergarten and after it go to the consultation. Because if the children go to the consultation in the morning after the consultation they can't go back to the kindergarten, they stay at home. I don't manage to tidy up the apartment, to make food and to take care of my child. It would be better to organise the consultations for kids in the afternoon*" F-4). This issue has to be discussed with the social centre and social workers. Suitable time is one of the factors that motivates clients to attend courses and reach for a change.

Third sub-category is called more resources. Families mentioned that sometimes they experience the lack of services. Social centre offers assistant help, however during the interview it was mentioned that parent can't participate in some courses because they don't have where to leave the children. The participant said that she had courses that were happening in the evening and there were no one in the social centre that could look after the kids ("*When the*

courses are in the evening, I need to leave my children alone. I don't have where to leave them it would be nice if there would be a volunteer or an employee which could look after the kids while parents are in the courses. Day care centre works until 6pm, but my courses are usually at 6pm or 7pm" F-4). In this situation family needs help to look after the kids, an assistant or a volunteer. Family wants to attend the courses that are designated by the social worker, however not always they have the conditions to participate. The other family mentioned that they don't get along with the provided assistant, however the social centre can't change the assistant ("*Social workers sometimes provide an assistant, when we lived in Grigiškės I couldn't find a way how to communicate with the assistant, I didn't like her. I asked for another one, but social worker said that there isn't anymore*" F-3). It is hard to understand what kind of problems were, that family didn't get along with the assistant, however due to the lack of finances social centre didn't have the opportunity to offer another assistant.

Poverty wasn't the main reason why the families that participated in the interview had social workers' supervision. These families had different reasons that led them to the social centre, however they all experienced poverty in many ways. Interviews revealed that in all families the woman was unemployed or in a search for a job, the families were trying to get state benefits and support with necessary items, these facts prove that all families had financial difficulties. Also, the families told the situations where they needed a person with whom to talk or ask for advice, they asked for psychologist or other consultants. Distribution of service emerged during the interview as an important aspect of support for a family to overcome poverty. These all situations illustrate that these families experience not only the financial poverty, but also motivational and personality poverty. George L. Wilber (2015) distinguished five poverty properties, motivational and personality poverty were among them. The perspective towards poverty while doing interview was more negative than positive, it seemed that they were afraid or ashamed to agree that they experience poverty or a lack of support. Only one family directly contacted social centre and explained what kind of support she needs. Perspective towards social workers was mostly positive among the participants. Social workers were praised a lot, families stressed that they felt good emotions while working with social worker and they trusted them. However, one family had quite opposite attitude towards social workers. She experienced that not all the social workers were polite or expressed the empathy for her family. What is more, the families had negative preconceptions before meeting the social worker, luckily the preconceptions were denied when they met social workers.

3.3. Discussion

The data that was collected in this research gave a chance to see the personal experience of families and social workers and a glance to see what kind of similarities and differences can be found while comparing attitudes of different people. Poverty in this research had a wide perspective that includes not only the financial perspective but also the emotional, physical, mental poverty. Payne (2005) described eight resources whose absence determines the impact of poverty for families. Eight resources were these: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, role models and knowledge for hidden rules. During the interview analyse poverty was taken into account including these all measures. Social workers and families mentioned poverty properties and ways how to overcome poverty. To understand how social workers and families collaborate with each other and how the concept of poverty is perceived in different people groups the interviews were analysed separately. Discussion part will try to find common aspects of both groups and distinguish the main aspects that emerged while analysing social workers and families.

To understand the reasons why families experience poverty is an important aspect in order to prevent future families to face the same issue. Four social workers mentioned that alcoholism can be the reason why families experience poverty. Alcoholism as a reason to have social worker's supervision was mentioned twice. Two families described that the problems of alcohol addiction put them at the risk. This information highlights that alcoholism is an important obstacle that needs more attention from social centres or other organisations. Both families and social workers mentioned it as a reason why families start to experience poverty. What is more, unemployment emerged four times during the social workers interviews. Unemployment means that family doesn't receive stable incomes and have a higher risk to experience difficulties, such as emotional or financial poverty. All families that participated in the interview faced with the same issue – one family member was unemployed. In these families all women were unemployed or in a search of job. This comparison once again brings out that unemployment was mentioned both by social workers and families, it is possible to admit that unemployment can be a common reason of emergency of poverty.

The other aspect that was important to find out is how social workers contribute to the wellbeing and reduction of poverty in families. Five sub-categories were distinguished that described how social worker provide support for their families that live in poverty. Service

distribution, consultation, help with documentation, basic items and with job search. These were the ways to support families mentioned by the social workers. Service distribution was mentioned by all social workers, and it is the most common way to support families. Social service for the family is provided when the situation and the needs of families are evaluated and the plan in prepared in order to make the changes (Bitinas et al., 2010). Interview revealed that social workers suggest these social services: psychologist consultation, addiction consultant, children consultant, parental courses, assistant help, day care centres, skills developmental courses. Families also mentioned that they receive help by providing social services. Each family needed different social service depending on their situation. Few families received the help of psychologist, other families needed help with job search, to create CV or learn how to search for a job, what is more, few families had the help from assistant, to coordinate children or help with housework. Consultation as way to support families was mentioned by four social workers and four families. Consultation includes things as support, motivation, communication, consultation about documents, children behaviour, time management. The most important aspect that emerged from this sub-category is the encouragement and motivation of the client. Social workers stressed that they put a lot of effort to motivate clients to attend courses, to communicate, to change their unhealthy habits. Bandzienė (2008) stated that families which experience poverty are often unmotivated and need a lot of encouragement from the social worker. Good relationship, family involvement, communication are the important actions. Families need to believe that they can make a change, understand what kind of strengths they have. These changes in family's behaviour can be noticed through observation and communication. The interviews revealed that social workers visit families, give consultations, communicate and create relationship with families, these methods give the chance to observe each family's situation. Support with basic items was highlighted in both groups. Families mentioned that they received help with furniture, food and clothes. Social workers mentioned that the social centres participate or organise different projects which tries to provide needed things for families. Support with necessary things emerged as an important and valuable help from families. Not all the families had great connections with social workers, however they still were positive about the items that social centre provides.

To better understand how to improve the process of support for families to overcome difficulties is necessary to analyse the information by looking to the difficulties that social workers and families experience. The social worker fucuses not only on the investigation of the causes of the client's problems, he has to pay attention to the solution of the problem and the

best method to find it is through relationship, strengthening client's internal sources and personality development (Dirgėlienė, Kiaunytė, 2005). These interviews revealed that relationship is an important thing for both groups. Families mentioned that the trust and empathy from social worker are the most important characteristics. One family had trouble in order to find a connection with a social worker, the inability to communicate worsen the family's situation. Social workers mentioned that when creating a relationship with families they encounter with unmotivated families and can't help them if they aren't willing to cooperate. The literature says that families do not recognise the poverty as a problem itself, they don't seek for a change until someone offers to do it for them (Bandzienė, 2008). Social workers also face with the same issue, they highlighted some situations that revealed the laziness of families or unmotivated clients to do something. What is more, it was mentioned that in order to create a strong relationship and motivated families, social workers lack of time to communicate with clients without a rush. The other difficulty that was mentioned by social workers and families is about the lack of resources. The Ministry of Social Security and Labour states that in order to increase the quality of service it is important to create favourable conditions for non-governmental organisation and communities to provide social services (Socialinės apsaugos ir darbo ministerijos socialinis pranešimas, 2010-2011). However, the interviews revealed that clients have to wait to receive the social services for a long time, which means that not always they receive the needed service. Families also experienced lack of employees at social centres, they don't offer enough choices for families or not enough services. What is more, there are some difficulties in the bureaucracy that makes it harder to receive support. The scientific literature describes that in the process of social service provision decentralisation, which ensures that social service is closer to the people, takes the important place (Bitinas et al., 2010). However, during the interview social worker mentioned that nowadays it is getting harder for families to receive services, because they have to take to many steps, the services have to be closer to the people's living places. This situation illustrates that not everything that is written in the documents perfectly works.

Social centres offer different social services. These services can be distinguished by four criteria: support is provided in non-monetary form, the goal is to ensure the integration to the society, the right to services doesn't depend on client's financial contribution, services are usually subsidized by state (Žalimienė, 2003). The same aspects of social services are noticed in the interviews. The importance of a relationship with families state that social workers try to integrate families into society, they spend time to encourage, to communicate and to share their

knowledge with the family. However, they encounter with the time issues, not enough time for a proper and quality conversation. The positive relation with social workers encouraged families to participate in the courses, to start solving family problems and showed that there are people who can support and provide solutions.

As it was mentioned before poverty consist of many aspects and can be expressed differently in each family. Social workers mentioned that poverty is always connected with many more difficulties in the family. Poverty doesn't appear without a reason, there are situations that led families to experience poverty. It was mentioned that it is important to understand the reason why family experiences poverty and show it to the clients. It takes time for a client to accept that he has more problems and to understand how to change the situation. The families that participated in the interview did not mention that they suffer from deprivation and the attitude towards poverty was more negative than positive. However, such things as unemployment, lack of skills, need of basic items, need of consultation are the prosperities of poverty.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The description of poverty changed over times. Firstly, it was stated that poverty refers only to the incapacity to buy basic things to survive, later on it emerged that integration into society is also a significant aspect. Nowadays poverty is divided into two parts – non-monetary and monetary poverty. Monetary poverty is based on the economic aspects, meanwhile non-monetary covers social, intellectual, demographical emotional aspects. Two most common measurements to interpret human needs are relative and absolute poverty. Relative poverty can be defined as a proportion of mean or median income of population. Absolute poverty is about the inability to meet the basic needs, such as food, shelter, education. Relative and absolute poverty are determined by the poverty threshold, and both are used to measure poverty in Lithuania.

2. Lithuanian social security and social inclusion plan 2006-2008 listed four elements that have a high importance to reduce the poverty. Reduce the numbers of unemployment, improve the accessibility of high-quality service, eliminate children poverty by supporting families and provide high-quality education. To reach all these things social services draw an important role. Social services motivate families to take care of oneself, integrate into society as well to help overcome social exclusion. The quality of the process of provision of social services highly depends on social workers, his or her qualifications and activities. Social workers are distinguished as the main providers of social services, they aim to rebuild the functioning of families.

3. Empirical study detected social workers contribution to the poverty reduction by service distribution, motivation, consultation and help with basic items. These all aspects were mentioned by both, families, and social workers. Motivation emerged as a method to encourage families to take care of themselves, to strengthen their inner resources to overcome poverty. Consultation is important aspect for families, because they need a person with which they can consult and trust. Feeling of secure with social worker leads to a better communication which increases families' chances to change. Help with basic items is an important aspect to satisfy the basic living needs, however this alone won't help to overcome the poverty. Support with basic items always needs to go together with social services, consultation, and motivation. The aspect that emerged as a significant importance to help families is a relationship. Positive and reliable relation creates a space for a collaboration within social worker and family to overcome the poverty.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the existing and analysed research data, following recommendations are provided to these stakeholders:

1) **To Ministry of Social Security and Labour of Lithuania:**

This research revealed that families and social workers still experience that it is hard to receive or provide social services due to the complicated bureaucracy and unsuitable location for families. Social services have to be closer to the client, it shouldn't be hard for them to reach the provider. The process of decentralisation must be more efficient.

2) **To social workers:**

This research showed that for families that experience poverty it is important to create a good relationship with a social worker. Families feel more secure, they are encouraged to achieve better results and they know that there is a person who will always support them. In order to reach it social workers should spend more time with families, they can't rush or avoid communicating with a family.

3) **To future researchers:**

This research results were conducted by the qualitative studies. It is important to analyse the same aspects with the quantitative studies. It would help to see the bigger picture. The result could reflect not only about organisations and families from Vilnius, but also from other cities, that have different opportunities and social services.

SUMMARY

Poverty can affect our emotional and physical health, education, ability to work, relationship with the society, economic situation, intellectual needs. This Master Thesis discusses problematic question of poverty reduction and social workers' impact and contribution to reduce the poverty. It has been known for many years what consequences the poverty can bring. This research is focussed to find out how families cooperate with social workers providing help for poverty reduction. The research also examines how social workers define the problems, and what similarities can be highlighted when comparing families' and social workers' perspectives.

Research object – social workers' impact to reduce poverty in families.

Research goal is to analyse theoretically and empirically contribution of social workers to families' poverty reduction.

Research objectives

1) Reveal a theoretical discourse of poverty and measurements to detect poverty.

2) To explore social policy measures, and more precisely, social work in families' poverty reduction.

3) To detect social workers contribution to reduction of families' poverty by conduction of an empirical study in Lithuania.

The research methods: Analysis of scientific literature, documents, and other sources was employed for the theoretical preparation of research. Qualitative social research method – semi-structured interview was used for empirical data collection. Content analysis method was applied for the analysis of collected empirical data.

Research took place in 2021 from June until October. In total 6 social workers and 4 families participated in the research.

Results:

1) Poverty firstly referred only to the incapacity to buy basic things to survive, later on it emerged that integration into society is also a significant aspect. Nowadays poverty is divided into two parts – non-monetary and monetary poverty. Two most common measurements to interpret human needs are relative and absolute poverty.

2) Lithuanian social security and social inclusion plan 2006-2008 listed four elements that have a high importance to reduce the poverty. Reduce the numbers of unemployment, improve the accessibility of high-quality service, eliminate children

poverty by supporting families and provide high-quality education. To reach all these things social services draw an important role.

3) Empirical study detected social workers contribution to the poverty reduction by service distribution, motivation, consultation and help with basic items. The aspect that emerged as a significant importance to help families is a relationship between social workers and families. Positive and reliable relation creates a space for a collaboration within social worker and family to overcome the poverty.

SANTRAUKA

Daug metų jau yra žinoma, kokias pasekmes skurdas gali sukelti visuomenei. Gali būti paveikta žmonių emocinė ir fizinė sveikata, švietimas, galimybė dirbti, socializacija, ekonominė situacija, intelektiniai poreikiai. Šiame magistro baigiamajame darbe pagrindinis probleminis klausimas – skurdo mažinimas ir socialinio darbuotojo veiklos veiksmingumas, mažinant skurdą šeimose. Ieškoma atsakymų į klausimus: kaip šeimos bendradarbiauja su socialiniais darbuotojais mažinant skurdą? Su kokiais sunkumais susiduria socialiniai darbuotojai? Kuo panašūs ir kuo skiriasi socialinių darbuotojų ir šeimų požiūriai į skurdo mažinimą?

Tyrimo objektas – Socialinio darbuotojo įtaka skurdo mažinimui šeimose.

Tyrimo tikslas yra teoriškai ir empiriškai išanalizuoti socialinių darbuotojų prisidėjimą prie šeimų skurdo mažinimo.

Tyrimo uždaviniai:

1) Atskleisti skurdo sąvokos reikšmę ir skurdo matavimo priemones.

2) Išnagrinėti socialinės politikos priemones ir detaliau suprasti socialinio darbuotojo vaidmenį skurdo mažinime.

3) Išanalizuoti socialinio darbuotojo prisidėjimą prie šeimų skurdo mažinimo atliekant empirinį tyrimą Lietuvoje.

Tyrimo metodai: Teorinės dalies rengimui buvo naudota mokslinės literatūros, dokumentų ir kitų šaltinių analizė. Empiriniam duomenų rinkimui taikytas kokybinio socialinio tyrimo metodas – pusiau struktūruotas interviu. Surinktų empirinių duomenų analizei taikytas turinio analizės metodas.

Tyrimas vyko 2021 m. nuo birželio iki spalio mėn. Iš viso tyrime dalyvavo 6 socialiniai darbuotojai ir 4 šeimos.

Tyrimo rezultatai:

1) Skurdas visų pirma buvo suvokiamas tik kaip nesugebėjimas nusipirkti būtiniausių dalykų išgyvenimui, vėliau paaiškėjo, kad integracija į visuomenę taip pat yra reikšmingas aspektas skurdo sąvokoje. Šiais laikais skurdas skirstomas į dvi dalis – nepiniginį ir piniginį skurdą. Du dažniausiai naudojami žmogaus poreikių matavimo būdai yra santykinis ir absoliutus skurdas.

2) Lietuvos 2006-2008 m. socialinės apsaugos ir socialinės aprėpties plane išvardinti keturi elementai, kurie turi didelę reikšmę mažinant skurdą. Mažinti nedarbo skaičių,

gerinti kokybiškų paslaugų prieinamumą, šalinti vaikų skurdą remiant šeimas ir teikti kokybišką išsilavinimą. Norint pasiekti visus šiuos dalykus, svarbus vaidmuo tenka socialinėms paslaugoms.

3) Empirinis tyrimas atskleidė, jog socialiniai darbuotojai prisideda prie skurdo mažinimo šiais veiksliais: paslaugų paskirstymu, motyvavimu, konsultacijomis ir pagalba būtinais daiktais. Taip pat, socialinių darbuotojų ir šeimų santykiai yra svarbus faktorius padedant įveikti skurdą. Teigiami ir patikimi santykiai sukuria erdvę socialinio darbuotojo ir šeimos bendradarbiavimui siekiant įveikti skurdą.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1.

Guidelines for interview with social worker

Pagrindinės interviu gairės	Detalizuojantys klausimai
I. Šeimos, kurioms reikalinga pagalba	1) Kokioms šeimos dažniausiai reikalinga pagalbos? 2) Kodėl šeimos kreipiasi pagalbos? 3) Kodėl vienos šeimos kreipiasi pagalbos, o kitos šeimos pačios nesikreipia?
II. Skurstančioms šeimoms socialinių darbuotojų teikiama pagalba	1) Kokios pagalbos šeimoms reikia labiausiai? 2) Kaip įvertinate šeimos situaciją? 3) Kaip nusprendžiate, kokios pagalbos šeimai reikia? 4) Į kokius rodiklius daugiausiai atsižvelgiate, vertindami šeimos situaciją ir priimdami sprendimą dėl pagalbos? 5) Kaip vyksta paslaugų decentralizacija?
III. Pagalbos skurdą patiriančioms šeimoms teikimo tobulinimo poreikis ir galimybės	1) Kaip apibūdintumėte problemas, kurios iškyla bendradarbiaujant su šeima? 2) Papasakokite, kokios prieigos ar priemonių trūkumas jaučiamas?

Annex 2.

Guidelines for interview with members of the families in poverty

Pagrindinės interviu gairės	Detalizuojantys klausimai
I. Pagalbos iš socialinės paramos centro gavimo procesas	1) Kaip susidūrėte su socialiniu centru ? 2) Apibūdinkite procesą nuo pagalbos paskyrimo iki gavimo. 3) Kaip jums yra teikiama pagalba? 4) Kas yra sunkiausia norint gauti socialinio darbuotojo pagalbą?
II. Gaunama pagalba iš socialinių darbuotojų	1) Apibūdintumėte pagalbą, kurios reikia jūsų šeimai. 2) Papasakokite, kokios pagalbos sulaukiate iš socialinių darbuotojų. 3) Kaip reikėtų tobulinti pagalbos suteikimą tokioms kaip jūsų šeimoms?