NEED ASSESSMENT FOR DESIGNING TRAINING COURSE FOR PARENTS IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

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Abstract. *Lithuania prohibited by law any kind of violence against children, however, reported cases as well as previous and resent representative research show that the problem still exists. The state takes various measures to prevent violence against children, and parents' training is one of such possibilities, however, the parental training in Lithuania is not effective and one possible reason could be that various courses are not based on parents' needs. The goal of this article is to present data of need analysis which was done as a prerequisite for training course development. The article is based on qualitative study by interviewing parents about their knowledge, perceptions and need for training. Research participants have knowledge about violence against children, they name and discuss physical violence, corporal punishment, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, however, do not differentiate them strictly. They see the need of parental training in preventing violence against children. The most wanted topics are reasons of the violence, knowledge about child development as they understand that children in different development stages have different needs and parents' reactions to misbehaviour should be adequate to the development stage. Also, general topic of parenting – what does it mean, how to become a good mother/farther – is named during interviews.*
Keywords: *children's rights, corporal punishment, need for training, parental training, violence against children, violence prevention.*

Introduction

With the advent of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the child became the holder of rights. As stated by Brenan and Noggle (2007), the rights of children generate at least two distinct sorts of moral obligations. The first is the obligation we all have to refrain from violating those rights. The second are the duties that at least some people have to protect and promote those rights. Where the first sort of duties applies equally to all persons, the second

sort of duties may be less evenly distributed, generating stronger obligations, for example, for those in a direct custodial or stewardship role - parents, teachers, grandparents, community leaders, and so on (Brennan & Noggle, 2007). Article 5 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a special relationship between a child and his or her parents, giving parents the right of first refusal and the responsibility for raising and educating their children. These special obligations correspond to the specific needs of children, and are the basis of parents' authority and the right to exercise that authority in accordance with the dictates of their consciences except in cases of abuse and neglect (Moschella, 2014).

The protection of children from all forms of violence is a fundamental right enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and, despite the efforts of countries around the world, its enforcement is still relevant (Global status report on preventing violence against children, 2020). A 2017 UNICEF report indicates that globally, 3 in 4 children aged 2 to 4 worldwide experience violent discipline by their caregivers on a regular basis; around 6 in 10 are punished by physical means; based on data from 30 countries, 6 IN 10 children aged 12 to 23 months are subjected to violent disciplinary methods; among children this age, almost half experience physical punishment and a similar proportion are exposed to verbal abuse; slightly more than 1 in 4 caregivers say that physical punishment is necessary to properly raise or educate children (A familiar face: violence in the lives of children and adolescents, 2017).

In 2015, the United Nations adopted a new framework of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to pave the way for sustainable, inclusive and balanced growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all (Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015). The 2030 Agenda represents a commitment to eliminate violence against children as expressed in Target 16.2, "end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children", Target 5.2, "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation" and Target 16.1, "significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere" (Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015). The Seven Strategies to End Violence Against Children (INSPIRE) (INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children, 2016) contributed to the implementation of the SDGs Target 16.1 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which to obliges States Parties to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures to protect children from all forms of violence while in the care of parents, legal guardians, or any other person who has the care of the child. The INSPIRE package includes seven strategies that together provide an overarching framework for ending violence against children. One of INSPIRE's strategies

calls for laws banning violent punishment of children by parents, teachers or other caregivers. In order to implement the law preventing violence against children, the INSPIRE strategy – Parent and caregiver support, which aim helping parents and caregivers to understand the importance of positive, non-violent discipline in child development and of close, effective parent-child communication reduces harsh parenting practices, creates positive parent-child interactions and helps increase bonding between parents or other caregivers and children – all factors that help prevent violence against children (INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children, 2016).

Lithuania is one out of 65 world's countries which ban all forms of violence against children (Country Report for Lithuania, 2020) and embedded that in the law (Republic of Lithuania Law, 1996), however, reported cases as well as previous and resent representative research show that the problem still exists: 53% of Lithuanian parents use corporal punishment (Jusienė, 2006), 52% agree that moderate physical punishment is an appropriate educational tool (Navaitis, Kairienė, &

Gaidys, 2015), 25% support hard parenting style (Daraškevičienė, 2018), 68% tolerate spanning a child's hands to protect him/her from dangerous behaviour such as fire, 36% slapping a child's hands to punish bad behaviour, 23% picking up and shaking a misbehaving child in a shop (Lietuvos Respublikos vaiko teisių apsaugos ir įvaikinimo tarnyba, 2019). According to the data of the Department of Statistics of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2021, 5,801 crimes due to domestic violence were registered, including 768 child victims of domestic violence crimes, almost 87% of whom were victims of their parents or foster parents (Statistics Lithuania Department, 2022). It should be noted that violence in the home or in other environments has a particular impact on a child's health and well-being throughout his or her lifetime, regardless of whether he or she is directly abused or whether he or she witnesses domestic violence in a violent environment, and it is therefore imperative to provide the child himself or herself as well as the family members of the victims of domestic violence with the appropriate social, comprehensive and specialised services.

States took various measures to prevent violence against children, and parents' training is one of such possibilities. Parenting training aims to prevent and resolve children's social, emotional, and behavioural problems by enhancing parents' knowledge, skills, and confidence (Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen, Jamin, & Day, 2014). In Lithuania, positive parenting training can be organised in several ways: individual counselling, group sessions or individual training (Jonynienė 2010). However, the parental training in Lithuania is mostly focused on vulnerable families but not to general parents' population, there are plenty of positive parenting courses, but very few people attend them voluntary (most attendees should follow the course due to reported problems in the family), existing courses are not effective (Lietuvos Respublikos Vaiko…, 2022). One

possible explanation could be that the development of these courses was not based on the real needs of families.

The goal of this article is to present data of need analysis which was done as a prerequisite for training course development. The article is based on qualitative study by interviewing parents about their knowledge, perceptions and need for training.

Methodology

The research was a part of international project "Digitised Education of Parents for Children Protection Project - DEPCIP (Project no 2019-1-TR01-K204-077577) with the aim to explore, describe and understand the parents' knowledge, perceptions and beliefs regarding violence and punishment against children and their need for preventive education in Turkey, Italy, Greece, Lithuania and Spain. A qualitative study applying one-to-one semi-structured interviews with 12 parents in each country (n-60) was conducted. Using thematic analysis 7 thematic areas were formulated. This article presents national data of Lithuania, including 3 thematic areas which are relevant to the topic of the paper.

The purposive sampling applying heterogeneity principle was used for reaching research participants. The heterogeneity inclusion criteria were: age, gender, place of residence, education, number of children, age and gender of children, (non) or vulnerability of family (see Table 1).

Table 1 **Demographic characteristics of research participants** *(created by the authors)*

No	G	Age	Place of residence	Education	No. of children	Age and gender of children
1	F	55	Deprived urban	Upper secondary	4	16M, 12M, 11F, 8M
2	F	42	Affluent rural	Master	2	11F, 7M
3	F	48	Deprived rural	Upper secondary	3	27F, 22F, 6F
4	M	46	Affluent rural	Bachelor	2	16M, 13F
5	M	42	Affluent urban	Master	6	2M, 6F 10F, 13F, 15F, 17M
6	M	52	Affluent urban	Master	3	16 M, 23M, 24F
7	F	33	Affluent rural	Bachelor	1	7F
8	F	31	Affluent urban	Bachelor	2	4M, 4F
9	F	22	Affluent urban	Secondary	1	1,7M
10	F	49	Affluent urban	Master	2	7F 24F
11	F	39	Affluent urban	Bachelor	2	3M 16M
LT 12	F	46	Affluent urban	Master	2	18F 21F

Ethical principles of confidentiality and free will of participation were followed.

The main limitation of the study is language. The interviews were done in Lithuanian language and analysis in English languages. As the terms: violence, abuse, neglect and maltreatment are sensitive for translation, in Results part they are used as they were spoken by research participants in their answers, even if researchers have seen that these terms are used not properly. It should be also admitted that concepts "violence" and "abuse" have very slight difference in everyday spoken Lithuanian, and only experts differentiate their meanings.

Results

THEMATIC AREA - Knowledge about violence against children - consists of these categories: *Physical violence and corporal punishment, Neglect, Emotional abuse, Sexual abuse* (see Table 2).

*Table 2 **Knowledge about violence against children** (created by the authors)*

Category	Codes	Quotation
Physical violence and corporal punishment	Serious bodily injury	An average of 20 children are killed in Lithuania every year (6) completely injured and he becomes disabled (7)
	Physical violence and corporal punishment are the same	Physical punishment and physical violence I would say the same thing (5) When a child is beaten as a means of upbringing for misbehaviour. For me, this is violence. For those who beat, it is an educational tool (9)
	Circle of violence	That violence fuels a circle of violence (5) they bring such a family model in building their family. It's like a vicious circle (7)
	Physical and emotional violence go together	psychological violence also goes hand in hand (7) they are suppressed in such ways - physical punishment, beatings, psychological violence in the same way (8)
Neglect	Leaving minor alone	there are no parents, the door is not closed and there is no food at home (4) mother and father are absent, the child is left unattended (6)
	Not meeting physiological needs	complete neglect of the child, the child must sleep on the ground, next to the dog stumble, windows close, barely nailed (7) undressed, unfed or does not have any items there (8)
	Not meeting emotional needs	waiting for mom to come, she didn't call. This is horrible (1)

		Dissatisfaction with emotional needs when people do not respond to a child cuddle (8)
Emotional abuse	Recognizable, conscious as violence, punishment and/or educational tool	Can ignore, may not speak. May humiliate. May not allow something, demand (4) raised voice, aggressive tone, intimidation, threats, scare (6) banning something, it is training like a dog (10)
	Tacit (not recognizable, unconscious)	some people don't even realize how often they use that psychological violence against their children (8) physical it is somehow easier for you to see, you may help one way or another, and emotional is not, because it is a long process and the consequences are not immediately apparent (12)
Sexual abuse	In contact	rape (8) coercion (8)
	Contactless	jeering, bullying on those topics, all sorts of drollery, jokes (4) demonstration of any kind of images of a sexual, erotic nature - movies, photos, posters or something else for children (8)

Participated parents describe *Physical violence and corporal punishment* as serious bodily injury, say that physical violence and corporal punishment is the same, physical and emotional violence go together, they know circle of violence. *Neglect* for research participants is leaving minor alone, not meeting physiological, emotional and social needs. *Emotional abuse* could be recognizable, e. g. conscious as violence, punishment and/or educational tool or tacit, e. g. not recognizable, unconscious. *Sexual abuse* was not dominant category, parents differentiate among in contact and contactless sexual abuse.

THEMATIC AREA - Perceptions and beliefs about punishment - consists of these categories: *Opinion about punishment, Effectiveness of a punishment, Reasons for using punishment, Reaction to public punishment/violence, How people s/he knows punish a child* (see Table 3).

*Table 3 **Perceptions and beliefs about punishment** (created by the authors)*

Category	Codes	Quotation
Opinion about punishment	Categorically negative about physical punishment	For me, it has to do with humiliation. You humiliate that human, break into his space and it's wrong, injustice of some kind (5) This is unacceptable and incomprehensible to me; I am very much against any physical cause of pain (9) Negative, absolutely negative (12)
	Opinion about non-physical	individual thing, situational thing, that if you don't do something, then we don't do something too, we can't

	punishment varies depending on situation	do it (5) The rule that should be clear to the child in advance - what to do, what will happen next (8)
	Punishment with condition	It seems to me that children need punishment, it can't be that they don't have them, that I'm just beautiful and good. There must be some consequences, as there are consequences in life. At first you have to talk so that they understand, but if they don't understand, then what do I know (2) If they don't manage - don't drive them, there would be punishment and it would be a lesson for the next time (5) penalties are non-degrading, logical, beneficial and not fearful for children (7)
Effectiveness of a punishment	Effective if it is as an agreement or rule (agreed in advance – everyday duties, when it relates with safety, intervene other's people rights)	I think the best punishment is to sit down with the whole family, and discuss with the whole family to get that child to think they did the wrong thing (1) we have certain arrangements already, such as that we go to the store and buy only one item (8)
	Not effective if it associated with violence (what is difference between violence and punishment – hypothetical questions with no answers in participants stories)	to take away a child's phone - is it punishment here or is violence here any? Snoop, I do not know. Where is the line between punishment and violence? In general, I would punish you as if I were God and I will punish you here. I don't even know where that limit is, it's probably very fragile (8) This is such a very slippery question. And I think [sometimes] we're punishing, not even thinking we're punishing (12)
Reasons for using punishment	Experience of violence in childhood	applying the same methods that were applied to them (5) It's just their family model that they got in their family when they were kids (7) himself was beaten, just passing from generation to generation (9)
	Challenges in reconciliation of work and family	stress, long working hours, parents' employment, non-provision of kindergarten places, coercion of certain educational burdens on parents (6) time management (11) Fatigue, a stay tired (12)
	Nonproper expression of emotions (helplessness/stress /uncontrollability)	If you do not knock on the child. If you can not somehow otherwise. Very often, those punishments are used not because the child has committed a crime, but because their [parents] selfishness is lingering. Because it's so comfortable for him, and no matter how better for the child (3)

		parents are tired, overwhelmed, feel inadequate, stressful to them (6) they lose self-control, unable to control themselves (8)
	Not knowing how to behave in a specific situation/ not knowing, lack of alternatives	Parents who do so are very upset and apparently unprepared for parenthood (6) it seems to them this is the only way of upbringing (7) we do not have this knowledge and we do not have these skills (10)
Reaction to public punishment/ violence	Intervenes personally or calls to institutions if perceives action as a violence	I would intervene. I don't know, probably automatically, I wouldn't even think if its necessary. There are all sorts of ways, not necessarily moralizing (3) it is necessary to intervene, if it is necessary to save the life and health of a child, it is necessary to intervene in the same way (6) if [a child] is beaten, yes (12)
	Notifies the responsible authorities	unless there is a very sharp case where you see it, then call [for help] (5) I would jump and defend and stand in the middle and not let and call the police (8) I'll just let certain authorities know that you don't really care for children (11)
	Intervenes personally if action is not so dangerous	Depends probably on the situation. In one case, I would probably somehow try to say, react, that this is not right (5) assess the situation, think, to get closer to a person and talk (7)
	Doesn't know how would react	Depends probably on the situation (5) I would say yes, but I don't know (2)
How people s/he knows punish a child	Violence as a punishment	We saw for ourselves how they once hitted their youngest daughter in front of us (5) he was punished in such a way that he was left alone (6) struck through the ear, she even deafened (10)
	Punishments with no violence	it can be said that you will clean up the house alone and no one will help you (1) negotiates, restricts the computer, does not allow to go somewhere or does not take from somewhere (5)

Research participants' *opinion about punishment* is categorically negative when it comes to physical punishment, opinion about non-physical punishment varies depending on situation, they also talk about punishment with condition. *Effectiveness of a punishment* could be effective if it is as an agreement or rule (agreed in advance – everyday duties, when it relates with safety, intervene other's people rights) or not effective if it associated with violence (what is difference between violence and punishment – hypothetical questions with no answers in participants stories). *Reasons for using punishment* are: experience of

violence in childhood, challenges in reconciliation of work and family, nonproper expression of emotions (helplessness/stress/uncontrollability), not knowing how to behave in a specific situation/ not knowing, lack of alternatives, differences in parenting and inconsistency.

Reaction to public punishment/violence vary: research participants intervene personally or calls to institutions if perceives action as a violence, intervene personally if action is not so dangerous. Others don't know how would react and explains that it would depend on situation.

In describing *how people s/he knows punish a child,* answers are that they exercise violence (physical, sexual, neglect), use violence as a punishment (corporal punishment, leaving a child alone) or punish without violence (use rules).

THEMATIC AREA - Needs for training - consists of two categories: *Content, Methods* (see Table 4).

*Table 4 **Needs for training** (created by the authors)*

Category	Codes	Quotation
Content	Knowledge about violence (reasons)	when that person experiences violence, what are the consequences (5) topics include violence against children and sexual violence (6)
	Knowledge about child development (various needs in different development stages)	what exactly are children of that age; as they understand; as they see everything (7) go through that child's development, explain how one should react in one situation or another (9) what to do with teens (10)
	Parenting	yoga training should be something for everyone so as not to get out of that patience and not overwhelm (2) Really all violent punishments - to train parents in such a way that they pursue such a family model that the child is seen as an equal personality (6) what it means to be a parent (11)
Methods	Consulting on parenting in searching effective ways of a child education	What are the other ways of upbringing and how are they effective (7) other solutions to deal with those situations (9)
	Psychological support	Need knowledge of self-control. That would be the main topic (4) how parents may deal with their own emotional state at that moment (7) how to control yourself (10)

		to know yourself well and when you know yourself better, it is easier for you to react to those children as well (11)
	Sharing of parenting experience	Maybe not learn, but talk and understand. The same should talk to each other. Such groups for experienced [parents] but not trainings (4) parental conversations, sharing experiences (12)
	Lecturing by competent experts	experts may also be present (6) must be a solid professional and the methodology he uses himself (10)

Discussing about the *content* of the training research participants list these topics: knowledge about violence (its reasons), knowledge about child development (various needs in different development stages) and parenting. For *methods* they suggest lecturing by competent experts, consulting on parenting in searching effective ways of a child education, psychological support, sharing of parenting experience, practicing/exercising.

Conclusions

Research participants have knowledge about violence against children, they name and discuss physical violence, corporal punishment, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, however, do not differentiate them strictly, for example, they use terms physical violence and corporal punishment, psychological and emotional abuse, neglect and maltreatment synonymously. Parents in their stories provided personal experience as well as observations of others' parents behaviours and opinions. Usually, they talk about others' as negative examples, they do not notice positive behaviour or talks of other parents.

Research participants see the need of parental training in preventing violence against children. The most wanted topics are reasons of the violence, knowledge about child development as they understand that children in different development stages have different needs and parents' reactions to misbehaviour should be adequate to the development stage and restraint techniques or deal with emotional state. Also, general topic of parenting – what does it mean, how to become a good mother/farther – is named during interviews.

Putting national data in international data context it should be admitted that Lithuanian parents named less possible training topics then general sample of five countries. The list consisted of following topics: what is violence against children, what falls within the sphere of violence against children, reasons leading to violence, effects of violence on children, how to deal with conflicts between siblings, how to control and manage children' anger, strategies for dealing with difficult parenting situations, listening and communication skills, children development stages, management of feelings and negative moments,

emotional intelligence, how to build positive relation with children, bullying, cyberbullying, sexuality, children's rights, bullying problems, prevention measures and tools (based on unpublished Report).

Based on this research data the project Consortium developed training course for parents in English (Digitised Education of Parents for Children Protection (depcip.com)), also each country adjusted the content and methods to national context and are planning training in national language.

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