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## THE EDUCATIONAL AND FREE TIME ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRES IN LEVOČA

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### **Abstract:-**

*The aim of the article is to find out, which educational and free time activities are proceeded in community centres for studying clients of socially disadvantaged environment in Levoča. By research we have found out, for which educational and free time activities the clients interest themselves. In conclusion we have suggested activities of such content, which could motivate the clients not only to spend their free time actively, but also could be very helpful in the educational process and the regular life.*

**Key words:-***Community centre, social worker, client, educational activities, free time activities.*

## INTRODUCTION

Problems that are associated with living in Roma settlements in eastern Slovakia affect many areas at the same time: poverty, education, employment, housing, health, relations with the majority. Long-term life in social exclusion, without employment, in absolutely inadequate housing and hygienic conditions, in constant rejection by the surrounding society, leads to a passive subsistence in poverty and not seeing how to get rid of it. [2]

In such a home environment, Roma children do not have the conditions to prepare for teaching, no one can explain them, and some have no homework or textbooks to learn from. Also their leisure and leisure activities are rather spontaneous, random, passive, and often socially undesirable, more demanding activities are rejected. [3] – [4].

Parents themselves are not interested in where, with whom and how they spend their free time, do not have the rules of homecoming. Activities or approaches aimed at solving one problem or targeting only one target group do not have the chance to contribute to a longer-term change in the population situation in the settlements.

And just to alleviate the difficulties that are the result of social neglect, community centers are set up in some towns, villages or settlements. They provide a wide range of services and help their clients of different age groups to help them integrate into the society – counseling and legal assistance, retraining courses, job search assistance and various leisure and educational activities for children and youth. [5].

Is there a community center established in every Roma community? Does it work with children and youth or adults? Does the community center also provide educational and leisure activities? Do clients have an interest in these activities? These are just a few questions that we have been looking for in our research that we have done in community centers in the Levoča district. Identifying the interest of the clients in different types of activities will help other community centers in the future, learning activities will help clients improve learning, leisure activities will increase their interest in new activities, improve their skills and skills, and many can also help when choosing a future profession. [1].

### Objectives of the work

The aim of our work is to find out what educational and leisure activities are being implemented in community centers in the Levoča district for clients from a socially disadvantaged environment and how it affects them – positive, motivating, assisting them in personal development, integration into society, expressing interest in further education and the subsequent choice of the profession with the possibility to apply to the labor market, or negative, non-pleasurable from the company of the clients who spend free time, at the same time non-motivating, manifesting itself in the absence of self-development, further education and counseling of the meaning of life.

Achieving this goal is helped by research that consists of the following tasks:

- identify what educational activities are offered by community centers,
- to map out what leisure activities are offered by community centers,
- To determine whether attendance in educational activities has improved the benefit of clients at school.

Based on the above mentioned research tasks, we have outlined hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: We expect that more than 50% of community centers clients are more likely to attend leisure activities than educational ones.

Hypothesis 2: We expect that more than 50% of community centers clients who are attending educational activities have improved school benefits.

### Selection file

Research was carried out in community centers in the district of Levoča. Of all municipalities and municipalities registered in this district (32), 6 municipalities have established a community center, only 5 community centers are provided with educational and leisure activities for school-based clients. Our research sample consisted of 204 clients aged 7-16, of which 123 boys and 81 girls.

### Methodology

Among the most commonly used methods, we chose a questionnaire and a managed interview to conduct our research. The questionnaire contained a total of 10 closed, open, polytomic and dichotomic questions, aimed at identifying the type and focus of educational and leisure activities, interest in individual activities, and assessment of improvement of benefit at school by the clients themselves. We sent part of the questionnaires by post, where we asked for help in filling out a questionnaire for community workers of these clients, some of which we filled in with our clients personally, directly in community centers.

The results were then recorded in tables and graphs that correlated with the objectives, the roles and hypotheses of our research, using the methods of comparison and mathematical and statistical processing of results. The interpretation of the results required, on the one hand, the understanding of the data obtained from the mathematical and statistical methods and, on the other hand, a large overview and sufficient orientation in the given issue. The required amount of data had to be supplemented by our own knowledge and experience and organized into meaningful entities in order to meet the expected requirements for the goal of the work, so we used the methods of logic – analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, comparison (counseling procedure), and analogy.

## Results and interpretation

The daily program of these community centers usually consists of educational, artistic and sporting activities, games, diverse interest groups, interests of skill, sports interests.

Community centers work under specific conditions and according to their own rules, which correspond to their mission, eg. Free entrance and stay in the facility, protection against undesirable street influences, permissible passivity, and regular attendance is not a prerequisite, low-threshold staffing, guaranteed anonymity, participation of clients in the program and activities of the center.

In the first place, we found out how many clients selected individual activities – educational or leisure time, or they like to participate in both. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1. Interest of clients on educational and leisure activities**

	educational activities	[%]	leisure activities	[%]	educational and leisure activities	[%]
<b>boys</b>	13	10 %	83	68 %	27	22 %
<b>girls</b>	15	19 %	48	59 %	18	22 %
<b>total</b>	28	14 %	131	64 %	45	22 %

The table shows that clients prefer leisure activities rather than education. This is also due to the negative attitudes of clients to learning and learning at all. In leisure activities they can be fully demonstrated, their performance is not determined by the intellectual abilities and knowledge they have to prove because the clients are pupils from both regular and special primary schools. The interest of some clients in both educational and leisure activities is pleasing.

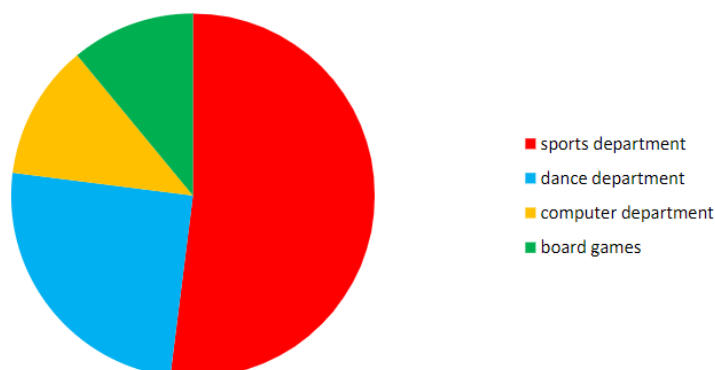
What are the most frequent educational activities realized in the community centers shows the graph in Fig. no. 1:



**Fig.1: Educational activities in the community center**

Clients make contests among themselves and run through read and counting speeds. At home, clients do not have the conditions for regular preparation for classes, so they do their homework at community centers. Therefore, we can only believe that community centers staff have at least basic pedagogical training and can adapt the tutoring of pupils in their community centers to their abilities and the knowledge gained according to the content of the curriculum in each year of different types of schools. From this point of view, we highly appreciate the work of community centers staff.

We were wondering what kind of leisure activities our clients are interested in. The results are shown in the graph in Fig. no. 2



**Fig. 2 Free time activities in the community center**

The range of activities in the community centers is determined by the material and spatial conditions, the quality of the staff, and the ability to attract their stakeholders so that they continue to come to community centers.

Sports activities are geared to weather conditions and individual seasons, which means that during spring, summer and autumn in good weather, pupils prefer collective games in playgrounds, especially football, bouncing, bicycling, skating on roller skates, winter clients prefer sledding, skating, diving on plastic blades.

Community centers pupils also play games. They learn the rules of simple social games, training their memory, attention, developing hearing and visual perceptions. In competitions they learn to enjoy success but also to accept a loss.

In the dance department, pupils have the opportunity to learn how to dance different kinds of dances. It is primarily about having fun and practicing dance skills along with other pupils, learning with new moves and steps that will later be demonstrated at school and on shows organized by the community centers.

The computer department is also very popular because many of the clients do not have a computer at home. They have the ability to create addresses, send photos, download songs, games, movies, watch videos, listen to music, especially roma songs, communicate on social networks with their friends, but rather play computer games of a different character.

The last important question of our research was to find out whether by participating in educational activities, the benefits to the clients improved in the school. We only received responses from clients who are taking part in educational activities in the community centers. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Improving the Benefit of Clients at School**

	yes	[%]	no	[%]	can not judge	[%]
<b>boys</b>	27	67, 50 %	4	10 %	9	22, 50 %
<b>girls</b>	25	75, 75 %	5	15, 15 %	3	9, 10 %
<b>total</b>	52	71, 20 %	9	12, 30 %	12	16, 50 %

A number of important actors participate in the school success of pupils. First of all, it is a good quality incentive environment that develops the personality of a pupil already in preschool age in each and every area.

Appropriate motivation from the pupils' parents gets a positive view of the field of education and comes to school by learning something new, acquiring an important ability to learn, write and count for life, to master the skills and habits necessary in addition to this basic need he will need his or her life and are not afraid to overcome the obstacles that will be placed upon him during his education.

If pupils fail at first attempts to handle these tasks, they quickly give up. If they do not have family support, they do not trust the teacher, they do not understand what is expected of them, they get a negative attitude to learning and to the school at all. Clients' attitudes are being helped by community centers' educational activities.

When a student fails to attend school but a teacher or social worker in the community centers nevertheless supports and helps him, the pupil's approach to learning is also positive, and he attends school regularly and likes. It is clear to us that if the pupil is visibly improving, he is still praised, receives only good marks, is awarded to his colleagues for his achievements, his attitude to school and education changes altogether.

### Assessment of hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 has been confirmed to us because more than 50% of clients are more likely to visit leisure activities than community centers' educational activities.

Hypothesis 2 has also been confirmed, as more than 50% of clients attending educational activities have improved their benefits at school.

### Discussion

As we have found, all clients are very much in the interest of the interest groups that the community center makes after learning. It is an opportunity for them to spend active time and community center daily. They are in the company of their friends, they have a varied and interesting program, and they can learn something new and try their skills and skills as well. They like to participate in educational and leisure activities.

As a result of these activities, in many cases, improvements in school benefits, change in attitudes towards education and learning, increased interest in work and employment in the future, and last but not least, the actively trained leisure time reduces the incidence of sociopathological phenomena and other undesirable 9ounselli of Roma children and youth.

### Suggestions and recommendations for practice:

- First of all, parents need to be captured so that they are more interested in their children, watching how they spend their free time, and that they take out the consequences of inappropriate 9ounselli. It would be appropriate for parents to spend their free time together with their children – whether they are playing football, hockey, computer or cooking, shopping or other homework. Children need to see a positive pattern and the parent is always the one to be a model for their children.

- There is another ladder of values in the Roma families, attitudes towards education, active work. From our long-standing experience, we have experience with parents' attitudes towards education as well as with the general preparation of children for teaching. Parents do not understand that children need to talk and learn with them. To change the minds of parents of children from a socially disadvantaged environment, activists from the ranks of Roma intelligentsia and social workers who have rich experience of working in the Roma community.
- To implement this activity, it would be advisable to set up a community center with social outreach staff in each settlement and Romani district, which would particularly focus on children to develop their abilities and skills. Various creative activities would fill their free time, thus eliminating the inappropriate spending of leisure time. Of course, these centers would provide counselling services and various courses and trainings for parents and adults who would also gain a lot of practical experience to use them in their jobs or at home.
- It is important to start with pre-school age education and leisure time. If a child has a constantly creative job and activity, always encouraged to think and act, he develops all his / her cognitive skills, especially speech, thinking and manual skills, then he / she is supposed to develop his / her acquired skills. Individual leisure activities and activities develop the skills and talents of the pupils, create the right working skills habits, strengthen the relationship with sport, nature, art, and help to choose the future profession. It also strengthens human relationships, empathy, help one another, and develops the individual personality.
- It is essential to promote the achievements of Roma children and youth, to show them in the positive light to change the majority opinion towards the minority. In the media, we often learn only about the evil deeds of the Roma, about committing crimes, but no one is presenting successes in sports – in football, in singing – The Romany Superstar, the achievements of the “Shack Theater”, the exhibition of photographs by Romany amateur photographers, the performance of dance ensembles. Not to mention good changes in housing, health care, or employment of Roma living in settlements, which also contributed to a small extent by community center staff.

### Conclusion

Working with Roma children is very demanding. They are distrustful of unknown people and difficult to adapt to new conditions and changes in their lives. Their start to life is influenced by the environment in which they live and are very difficult to promote in the society of the majority population.

It is precisely community centers and their educational and leisure activities that help not only children, but also adults to integrate into society, thus alleviating their social exclusion. Educational activities are focused on preparing for teaching and reading, writing and counting, and leisure activities focus on the interests of Roma children and youth, especially sports, dance and computer work, not to mention even simple social games.

Participation in these activities has in many cases improved the benefit of the clients at school. Thus, we can say that the work and activities of community centers are very beneficial and important for clients.

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