

SOCIAL SERVICES DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS DESIGNING DOMESTIC HELP FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE

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Abstract

Considering the deficiencies of social services for the elderly in governmental institutions and growing demand of ensuring services in rural areas, the paper aims to assess the needs of elderly people for social services in the selected rural areas and to propose the social services' development opportunities in terms of domestic help for the elderly. The social services facilitate support to elderly dependents in their homes, without interrupting their relationships with the family and the community, and improving their quality of life. The survey has shown that the municipality usually satisfies only basic biological needs of old people in rural areas. In order to ensure the well-being of elderly people, a complete cooperation among governmental and non-governmental institutions is required. Development of the services should be focused on the provision of the domestic help services for elderly people who do not receive them, and the diversity of the services for those residents who receive services from the municipality. The implementation of the development project of the domestic help services would enable the elderly residents of the rural municipality to have access to the most necessary services at the required frequency and intensity, considering the recipients' needs, thus improving the quality of life of the elderly people of local community and ensuring their dignified ageing.

Key words: social services, rural areas, domestic help, elderly people.

Introduction

Profound demographic changes are undergoing all over the world; increased life expectancy results in growing number of older people, as well as health, social and economic problems caused by this phenomenon (Šurkienė *et al.*, 2012). Eurostat states that in 2060 37 percent of Lithuanian population will be elderly people (The National Programme of 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations of Europe, 2012). The World Health Organization recommends the retirement threshold for people aged 65 and older (Kanopienė & Mikulionienė, 2006); however, from the socio-economic point of view this is a heterogeneous group: younger elderly people are still quite active, while the older ones are more often or continuously dependent on external assistance (Kanopienė & Dromantienė, 2004). Due to emergence of physiological changes of an old person, there is a need for nursing and care; in the face of psychological changes, there is a need of more attention for an old person, including communication problems; the changes in the socio-economic situation of an old person's life, when his/her needs no longer meet the possibilities, result in numerous other problems (Borisova, 2008).

A large proportion of them live in remote rural areas; therefore, based on the data of the Lithuanian Department of Statistics (2014), the number of elderly people using domestic social services in Lithuania is increasing every year, and the proportion of such people is higher in comparison with the recipients of the stationary care services. The demand for these services is increasing not only because of accelerated ageing process, but also due to the changes in the family structure. For most of the nation's history,

caring for the elderly was a family affair carried out largely by women in the home. In the XXI century, elder care is an increasingly complex enterprise, with much personal care 'outsourced' to paid non-family caregivers (Bookman & Kimbrel, 2011).

However, stationary care services are amongst the most expensive ones, therefore in the context of elder care there is a need for alternative social services, such as, for example, domestic care for the elderly. Considering the growing demand for social services for the elderly and lack of institutions that provide these services in rural areas, there is an urgent problem of ensuring the service development opportunities in rural areas, and designing provision thereof. Therefore, first of all, the paper aims to assess whether there is a need for development of social services for elderly people in the selected rural areas; and upon confirmation of the need for domestic social services, nursing homes or newly established public institutions, as social entrepreneurs, could implement the social service development opportunity in terms of domestic help for the elderly.

The subject of the paper – social domestic help services for the elderly in the rural municipality; the goal of the study - upon examination of the need for social domestic help services for the elderly in the rural municipality, to propose the design options of the domestic help services, ensuring development of the social services system. The objectives of the paper: 1) to analyse the concept and accessibility of the social domestic help services for the elderly in the rural municipality; 2) to examine the need for domestic help services for the elderly in the rural municipality; 3) to propose the design options for development of domestic help services in the rural municipality.

Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, analysis of the documents governing the domestic help services, and survey in writing of the elderly population in the selected rural municipality.

Materials and Methods

Social services are an integral part of the state welfare, helping people of all ages and different social groups (the elderly, the disabled, the disadvantaged, etc.) to ensure the ability to take care of themselves and integrate into society (Bitinas *et al.*, 2010). These services are ever more focused on a person's needs (Johnson, 2003). Katz *et al.* (2011) reveals the personal welfare areas that are closely interrelated: social, psychological and physical. In developing social assistance programs and welfare concepts for the elderly, attention should be paid to ensuring dignity and freedoms of these people (Human Development Report, 2000). Dignity, according to Knechtl (2008), is each person's existential value, independent of his/her status and age, and its maintenance, according to Lohne *et al.* (2010), is still not enough analysed as the configuration of meanings created by groups and individuals.

In foreign countries, a lively debate is held on how to ensure an active, healthy and dignified ageing, making a growing emphasis on an increase of the coverage and quality of social services, particularly improvement of domestic help services (Rosenberger - Spitz, 2013). The main objectives of social services for this age group are to increase the independence and social integration of elderly people. In the modern world, where power is the dominant factor, where the gap between having and not having increases, empowerment is a strategy that helps to support the customer (Johnson, 2003). Studies show that older people are not willing to change the living environment and obtain social services at residential institutions; families and other informal caregivers also prefer domestic care of family members (Lesauskaitė, Macijauskienė, & Širvinskienė, 2009). According to Kybartaitė (2011), it is very important for the elderly to be safe, to feel a caring attitude and respect. They do not need self-sacrifice of neighbours and family, they wish to have a valuable existence that can be ensured by professional staff only. A person feels safe in the home environment and is able to control most of his/her life (Jurkuvienė, Danusevičienė, & Mickevičiūtė, 2007). Studies have shown that an elderly person receiving domestic help services remains more independent for a longer period of time (Žalimienė, 2003), thus reducing social exclusion and stigmatization of the elderly (Stepukonis & Svensson, 2006), improving the quality of life and saving public funds for stationary care (Kudukytė – Gasperė, Jankauskienė, & Štaras, 2012).

European Commission (2008) states that implementation of the main goal of social services – ensuring the opportunities for people to take care of their independence – is related to organization of long-term care services. Today elder care is a multi-sector undertaking with six key stakeholder groups—health care providers, non-governmental community-based service agencies, employers, government, families, and elders themselves (Bookman & Kimbrel, 2011). Nevertheless, provision of public services is a growing challenge in rural areas not only in Lithuania but also in Europe (Kuliešis & Pareigienė, 2015). Public services are one of the aspects of rural vitality, which is widely debated by both scientists and politicians. Especially rural municipalities fail to adapt to the needs of the ageing population; social services in rural areas do not meet the needs of elderly citizens in terms of either quantity or quality (Social Report, 2004). It is noted that in rural areas the greater part of the social services is focused on district centres, so not all residents can benefit from the necessary assistance due to the distance to the service providing institutions, their deficiency, and lack of employees. Social service providers in rural locations, especially those in remote areas, will often find themselves the subject of policy and resource decision-making processes (Turbett, 2009). Demand aspects are debated, new, innovative ways of provision of public services discussed, new service models combining private, public sectors and community resources are sought (Kuliešis & Pareigienė, 2015). Additionally, the development of social services project requires an engagement with multiple levels of practice including individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities (Bisman, Butler, & Kaye, 2003). Provision of effective practice with the rural elderly requires assessments and case studies that reflect sound, knowledgeable, yet creative decision-making (Bisman, Butler, & Kaye, 2003).

In order to identify the need for social domestic help services, the municipality was selected for the case study, which is situated in the rural area, at a significant distance from the metropolitan area; where there are 281 (26 percent) elderly residents and only 4 of them are currently receiving domestic services. There are not full-time employees in the municipality, and social benefit recipients provide domestic help (public work). There is also a small Caritas group working in the area, which provides help to the elderly upon demand; the local primary school organizes public events (e.g., 'Visit a lonely person').

The quantitative method was chosen to determine the residents' opinion in this rural municipality, using the survey method for the collection of quantitative data. The research tool created for the study consisted of two parts: demographic characteristics of the study

Table 1

Distribution of domestic help services by necessity

	Needed and received	Needed, but not received	Not needed
Managing the home environment	8.8	68.4	22.1
Provision of information	11.8	44.9	42.6
Communication	44.1	35.3	20.6
Buying food products	18.4	34.6	47.1
Counselling	16.9	34.6	48.5
Making fire in furnace/carrying firewood	32.4	32.4	35.3
Carrying water	32.4	31.6	36.0
Housework	40.4	31.6	25.7
Looking after oneself	42.6	28.7	28.7
Delivery of hot food/products	33.1	26.5	40.4
Cooking	54.4	20.6	25.0
Managing documents/paying bills	11.0	19.1	69.9
Going to institutions	3.7	17.6	78.7
Buying household goods	11.8	14.0	74.3
Mediation/representation	39.0	14.0	47.1

participants and the questions to identify the need for domestic help services for elderly people (necessity of domestic help services, service providers, service procedures and quality, and the financial ability to pay for domestic services).

The concept of ethics in this study is concerned with the respondents' voluntary consent to participate in the study, upon providing detailed information to them in the language they can understand. The study did not infringe the principles of the research ethics, i.e., the respondents' rights to self-determination and their confidentiality.

The SPSS 17.0 software package was employed for processing of the research statistical data. The data were divided into frequency tables, creating the cross (2x2) interfaces tables to check the correlation between variables, and using chi-square criterion and Spearman correlation coefficient. To assess the reliability of the correlation between variables the significance level $\alpha = 0.05$ was selected.

The survey sample was targeted, i.e., X elderly residents of the rural municipality were questioned, who had been introduced to the researcher by the chief specialist of the X municipality. To establish the study sample size, the formula of Paniott was used, where: n - sample size; Δ - sample error rate = 0.05 (reliability of 95 percent); N - general population size (in this study case – 281). It was estimated that the opinion on the necessity and importance of the domestic help services for the elderly residents of the X rural municipality would be represented by 165 study participants; 166 respondents were questioned (32 percent men and

68 percent women; people aged 67-70 amounted to 26 percent of all the respondents, people aged 71-75 - 23 percent, people aged 76-80 - 20 percent, people aged 81-85 - 19 percent, and people aged 86 and older - 13 percent). Most respondents were people who live alone; they amounted to 57 percent of all the questioned elderly people, while the rest 43 percent of the respondents indicated that they were living with a family member(s).

Results and Discussion

It was revealed that 82 percent of the questioned elderly people needed domestic help services at the time of the survey. Most of the survey participants (46.3 percent) obtained domestic help from neighbours, acquaintances or relatives. A large part (36.8 percent) of the respondents indicated that they got assistance from cohabiting family members. Respectively, 10.3 and 6.6 percent of the respondents used the domestic help services provided by the municipality and non-governmental organizations. It turned out that the respondents living with family members received domestic help mainly from the family members (as reported by 83.3 percent of the respondents) and acquaintances / neighbours (16.7 percent); while single respondents were usually supported by acquaintances / neighbours (65.9 percent); in addition, they also used the domestic help services provided by the municipality (17.1 percent), and received support from the local non-governmental organizations (11.0 percent). The statistical analysis of correlation showed a weak negative (-0.439) statistically significant ($p=0.0001$)

Table 2

Distribution of the necessary domestic help services by the age groups

Age	67-80	81 and >
Going to institutions	17.6	17.6
Carrying water	30.6	33.3
Making fire in furnace/carrying firewood	31.8	33.3
Buying household goods	11.8	17.6
Managing documents/paying bills	16.5	23.5
Looking after oneself	23.5	37.3
Managing the home environment	78.8	51.0
Housework	28.2	37.3

Age	67-80	81 and >
Cooking	15.3	29.4
Buying food products	32.9	37.3
Delivery of hot food/products	25.9	27.5
Mediation/representation	11.8	17.6
Counselling	35.3	33.3
Provision of information	34.1	62.7
Communication	25.5	51.0

correlation between the family composition and the domestic help providers. This means that the lonelier an elderly person, the greater his/her need for the domestic help services provided by the municipality and non-governmental organizations, and vice versa.

During the analysis of variety of the domestic help services provided by the municipality, the services were evaluated as follows: those necessary for the respondents and they received them; those which were necessary, but they did not receive them; and the ones currently not necessary for the respondents (Table 1):

The necessary and received services were defined as assistance in travelling to other institutions (indicated by 78.8 percent of the respondents); assistance in buying household items (74.3 percent); assistance in handling documents and paying taxes (69.9 percent); counselling (48.5 percent); mediation / representation (47.1 percent); assistance in buying food products (47.1 percent).

The respondents needed most help in managing the home environment (digging snow in winter), however they did not get these services (68.4 percent). Based on the answers of the major part of the respondents, the necessary, but not obtained domestic help services included provision of information (44.9 percent), communication (35.3 percent), counselling (34.6 percent), assistance in buying food products (34.6 percent), assistance in making fire in the furnace and carrying firewood (32.4 percent), assistance in carrying water (31.6 percent), assistance in housework (31.6 percent).

The group of people aged 67-80 expressed a need in managing the home environment (78.8 percent). This group of the respondents also indicated provision of information (34.1 percent), counselling (35.3 percent), assistance in making fire in the furnace and/or carrying firewood (31.8 percent), and assistance in carrying water (30.6 percent) as relevant enough. In the meantime, people aged 81 and older highlighted the provision of information (62.7

percent), communication (51 percent), and assistance in managing the home environment (51 percent) as particularly relevant. The respondents of this age group also indicated assistance in looking after themselves, assistance in housework, and assistance in buying food products as quite important (37.3 percent per service). The respondents who did not have centralized water supply and heating indicated assistance in making fire in the furnace and carrying firewood and water as very important as well (33.3 percent per service) (Table 2).

There is a statistically significant correlation between age and the following services: communication (p=0.001); mediation and representation in solving important issues (p=0.0001); assistance in cooking (p=0.0001); assistance in housework (p=0.0001); assistance in looking after oneself (p=0.004); assistance in making fire in the furnace and carrying firewood (p=0.007); assistance in carrying water (p=0.009). The study results show that the need for domestic help differs in various age groups; therefore, it is important to consider the age of the service recipient while planning the domestic help services.

In assessing the amount of the domestic help services provided to the respondents, the study results showed that the services were not sufficient for the majority of the respondents (64.7 percent) or were only partially sufficient (20.6 percent). Merely a small percentage (14.7 percent) of the respondents indicated that the obtained domestic help services were sufficient. After checking the correlation between the family composition and sufficiency of domestic help, no statistically significant difference (p=0.768) was observed. These results show that domestic help services are insufficient both for the respondents living alone and for the ones living with a family member(s).

The analysis of organization of the provided domestic help services aimed at assessing frequency, convenience, duration and quality of service provision. The results showed that the respondents most often

Table 3

Distribution between the family composition and frequency of provision of domestic help

	every day	once per week	once per month
Lives alone	18.03	28.00	15.90
Lives in a family	59.00	5.60	1.90

Table 4

Correlation between family composition and satisfaction with service provision

Satisfaction with provided help	Family composition	
	r	p
Satisfaction with the method of provided help	-0.406	0.0001
Satisfaction with the duration of provided help	-0.406	0.0001
Satisfaction with the quality of provided help	-0.326	0.0001

received domestic help services upon demand (as pointed out by 35.3 percent of the respondents). A large part (34.6 percent) of the respondents received domestic help services on a daily basis. The remaining respondents pointed out that domestic help was provided to them once per week (19.1 percent) or once per month (10.3 percent).

The frequency of provision of domestic help largely depends on the availability of the support sources, therefore it is likely that the respondents who live with family members receive assistance more often than the single ones (Table 3):

The statistical analysis showed that the respondents who live with family members received domestic help on a daily basis (indicated by 59.0 percent of the respondents) or upon demand (32.0 percent). In the meantime, only 18.3 percent of the respondents who live alone indicated that they received domestic help services on a daily basis. The respondents of this group most often received domestic help services upon demand (as pointed out by 37.8 percent of the respondents) or once per week (28.0 percent). Recalculated correlation coefficient showed a very weak negative (-0.289), however, a statistically significant ($p=0.001$) correlation between the family composition and frequency of provision of domestic help. The obtained results show that the lonelier an elderly person is, the less frequently he/she receives domestic help services, i.e., availability of the support sources in the environment of an elderly person ensures more frequent delivery of the necessary assistance.

The study aimed to determine how the respondents evaluated the method, duration and quality of the provided domestic help, as these indicators are very important in planning the procedure on provision of domestic help and its development. The results showed that the respondents were partially satisfied

with the quality (as reported by 44.1 percent of the respondents) and the method (37.5 percent) of provision of domestic help, while the duration thereof was not satisfactory (39.7 percent).

The correlation analysis of variables showed a statistically significant correlation between the indicators of family composition and satisfaction with domestic help (Table 4).

The results suggest that the less relatives are available for an elderly person, the more he/she is dissatisfied with the method, duration and quality of domestic help. This could be explained by the fact that the assistance of family members and relatives is more in line with the expectations of the elderly, and is considered better than the help provided by employees of the institutions.

Since the main objective of the domestic help services is to create conditions for the elderly to remain independent as long as possible, to reduce social exclusion and to improve the quality of life, this study has been aimed to determine whether domestic help meets the essential needs of elderly people and improves their quality of life. The results showed that the domestic help services partially satisfied the essential needs of the respondents, based on the opinion of the majority of them (52.9 percent). A significant number of the respondents (28.7 percent) stated that the provided domestic help had not satisfied their needs at all; and only a small percentage of respondents (17.6 percent) indicated that their basic needs were met in full. A higher proportion of the respondents confirmed that the provided domestic help services had greatly improved their quality of life (60.3 percent), or improved it in part (33.1 percent); and only a small percentage of the respondents (6.6 percent) stated that their quality of life were not improving due to domestic help. The

correlation analysis of the indicators of satisfaction and improved quality of life revealed a weak positive ($r = 0.36$), but not statistically significant ($p=0.0001$) correlation between these indicators. This means that the more satisfied are the basic needs of elderly people, the greater the improvement in their quality of life.

Since the organization procedure and the quality of the domestic help services provided by the municipality do not guarantee the satisfaction of the basic needs of the respondents, a higher proportion of the respondents (55.1 percent) would choose another provider of the domestic services, if that were possible. The majority of the respondents (52.9 percent) would also agree to pay a certain fee for domestic help of high quality that meets their essential needs: 44.9 percent of the respondents are willing to pay up to 3 € per service hour; 7.4 percent - from 3 to 6 €; 8.1 percent - 6 € and more.

Respondents' dissatisfaction with the organization and quality of the domestic help services results in intention to use the services of other providers, even if such services were paid ones. The study results confirm other authors' insights that services meeting users' expectations are valued and viewed with satisfaction, and vice versa (Indrašienė & Katkonienė, 2011). The relevance of the social services recipients' opinion has also been proven in other studies; because only the users can evaluate the final result, revealing whether the services are appropriate for them, satisfy their needs or not (Bitinas *et al.*, 2010).

The study findings suggest that the domestic help services include a relatively narrow circle of users, whose income does not exceed the amount established by the Government. These findings can be explained by M. Kautto's (2001; quot. acc. to Lithuanian Association of Local Municipalities, 2010) two-pronged approach, implying that a person should always be given assistance according to his/her needs, and, on the other hand, applying a realistic approach, based on the available human and material resources. The analysis of the domestic help services rendered by the municipality for elderly people revealed that the municipality had included all the services provided for in The Description of Nursing Services... (2014) into the services list. According to Lithuanian legislation, each municipality is granted the right to develop such a system of social services that best meets the local residents' needs and the capabilities of the municipality, which distinguishes the regional differences of the social services development (Lithuanian Association of Local Authorities, 2010), especially in remote rural areas. Therefore, it is becoming more and more relevant to assess, design and develop availability and quality of social services in rural municipalities. However, the survey results

confirmed that not all elderly persons wishing to receive domestic help were actually receiving it in the rural area under research. The results supported other authors' insights that the largest share of domestic help is provided by the informal sector: family, friends, neighbours, community members (Dunajevs, 2009), while the services rendered by municipalities and NGOs are most frequently used by single people who do not have close family members.

Given the fact that there are no other providers of the domestic help services active in the municipality, there is a need for the establishment of such institutions and development of social domestic services. There are several possible solutions of the problem. The first one - the municipality establishes a branch / subdivision of the social service centre in the rural municipality, which employs professional social workers and caregivers providing domestic help services upon demand of the local population, though in view of the available municipal resources this solution to the problem is likely to be postponed. Then, Caritas group active in the rural municipality is also expanding its activities in attracting volunteers. However, the number of young people is decreasing in the municipality, and in this case, non-professional personnel would provide the services. Finally, the NGO active in the rural municipality is engaged in old people's stationary care development, introducing a new type of services – domestic help for elderly persons, and so far being flexible in funding the development of activities; in addition, the organization employs a number of professional staff who are experienced in working with elderly persons. Therefore, it is this development project of the social domestic help services that should be considered as the optimal solution. On the other hand, the cooperation of various assistance providers (municipalities, non-governmental organizations, family members, neighbours) can ensure a better quality of life for the elderly, enabling them to grow old with dignity.

Conclusions

Various demographic changes (declining birth rates and rising life expectancy) influence the changes in population structure, which results in a more rapid increase of the number of older people. These trends become apparent especially in rural municipalities, where the number of young people is quickly decreasing not only because of the falling birth rate, but also due to the high emigration flows. There is a tendency of declining number of people of different generations living in one family, which results in a lack of assistance required by the elderly family members. This situation increases the need of institutional services, particularly in terms of domestic help.

The domestic help services are considered a priority type of social services, since they facilitate support of elderly dependents in their homes, without interrupting their relationships with the family and the community, and improving their quality of life. However, public institutions providing social services for the elderly in rural municipalities are faced with the lack of financial and human resources; therefore, the residents of districts situated far away from the centres rendering the domestic help services have limited access to the necessary assistance, or such assistance cannot be provided at the full extent.

The survey of elderly people has shown that although the elderly in the rural municipality need social domestic help, the municipality usually provides the domestic help services that mainly meet the basic biological needs of old people. However, the essential objective of assistance for the elderly should be ensuring their well-being, thus it is necessary to pay sufficient attention to the psychological, social and spiritual components thereof. The elderly residents of rural municipality still lack communication, social networking, or just more frequent visits of caregivers.

The survey results of the population of the rural municipality reaffirms that in order to ensure the well-being of elderly people, a complete cooperation between the various service providers is required. In this case, it is very important that public institutions get support from non-governmental organizations, whose activities are generally more flexible, more efficient, and they can obtain additional funds from a wider range of sources. The local care organization has also the opportunity to expand its activities, including provision of the domestic help services.

Development of the services should be focused on the provision of the domestic help services for elderly people who do not receive them, and the diversity of the services for those residents who receive services from the municipality. The implementation of the development project of the domestic help services would enable the elderly residents of the rural municipality to have access to the most necessary services at the required frequency and intensity, considering the recipients' needs, thus improving the quality of life of the elderly people of local community and ensuring their dignified ageing.

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