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# Kinship care of the children who are left in Lithuania because their parents emigrated

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## Some facts about emigration from Lithuania

- Started in 1990 and permanently grows : from 1990 to 2010 more than 500 thous. emigrated.
- the biggest waves: 2004-2005 (30736), and 2009-2010 (7 month) – 47 thous.
- Net migration per 1000 - -4,7 in 2009



## Some facts about emigration from Lithuania

- Reasons:
  - Economical
  - Unsecure environment
  - Family problems
  - education
- Countries:
  - Ireland, Spain, UK, Iceland, USA, Denmark, Norway, Sweden....



## New form of a family

- Distance family
- The greatest part of emigrants are between 25 – 34 years old.



## Children are left aged:

- Majority (58%) between – 10-15 year
  - 16% to 9 year;
- 
- ~ period for 2 year;



## Child care, when parents emigrated Source: State Child rights protection and adoption service, report for 2009

Child care related to emigration	2006 all	31. 12. 2006	2007 all	31. 12. 2007	2008 all	31. 12. 2008	2009 all	31. 12. 2009
All	<b>352</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>990</b>	<b>916</b>	<b>1874</b>	<b>1952</b>	<b>1432</b>	<b>2019</b>
According age: 0-3	37	37	114	99	185	131	196	148
4-6 y.	52	50	182	171	272	275	253	287
7-9 y.	81	82	160	164	340	354	265	373
10-14 y	127	122	323	295	618	674	435	694
15-17 y	55	52	211	187	459	518	283	317



## Children are left with:

- One of the parents – 61%;
- Other relatives – 19,6%
- Other people – 16,1%
- Neighbors – 1,2%
- Alone – 1 %

Child Ombucmen Office research, 2007





## State reaction to the children situation left without parents care

- Started in 2005,
- 2006 LR Law of Allowances for children" 8 para.
- 28<sup>th</sup> of May in 2007 the law about child substitute care "Child provisional care regulation" was supplemented with "*child provisional care according parents request*";



## Regulations:

- 30 days before parents leave the country, have to apply to the Child Rights Protection Agency with request and other required documents and information about the substitute caregiver with whom the child is going to be left.
- After evaluation the substitute care is approved by Director of administration of the Municipality.
- For the left child any child allowance is not given.
- Parents are responsible to keep the child.
- but the state is responsible for monitoring and supporting caregiver



## Consequences for the children:

- Physical – better
- Emotional, psychological problems, feels great sorrow, anger, fear, guilty, vulnerability and etc.
- Behavior and medical problems

*Vaikų, kurių tėvai išvyko iš Lietuvos, psichologinių ir socialinių gerovės veiksnių tyrimas , 2008, Vilnius*



## Research question

- HOW CHILD AND CAREGIVERS COMMUNICATE INSIDE AND OUT OF THE FAMILY?
- WHAT INFLUENCE DIFFERENT FORMS OF RELATIONS?



## Research methodology

- Qualitative descriptive design;
- Semi structural interviews with 9 caregiver families;
- Observation of nonverbal communication and family environment;
- Kaunas municipality, 2008
- Deductive content analysis;



## Description of participants

- 50 -60 year – 3 participants, women;
- 61 – 71 – 4 participants, women;
- 30 - 40 - 2 participants, men.
- 2 unmarried;
- 4 pensioner;
- 8 have their 2 children, but their age is from 3 to seven in a young families and from 28 to 42 in other families



## Children in the kinship care:

- Age – from 4 to 18.
- Go to the school or kindergarten.
- All children in kinship care keep relations with mother. 6 of 9 do not know their father, and fathers do not help to keep the child.
- Live without parents from 3 months to 5 years.



## Quality of relations and communication is related with:

- Form of kinship relations;
- Caregivers family structure;
- Relations before parents' emigration;
- Quality of caregiver's relations with child parents;
- Parents' material support to the child during emigration;
- Communication between caregiver and school, or kindergarten;
- Style of parenting in the caregiver's family;
- Parenting styles to foster child;
- Parents and child relations and communication;





## Form of kinship relations

- Grandparents (grandmothers)
- Aunt;
- Uncle;



## Caregivers family structure;

- **Children grown up:**

*“Son’s family loves Lukas very much cosset him, because he is a smallest from us” (Aldona, 67)*

- **Small children:**

*“Osvaldas is very closed. He sits at the computer all the days. What I will talk with him? What’s with me? I have my own family” (Algis, 30)*



## Relations before parents' emigration

- All children new their caregivers before mothers emigrated. *"Skaistė lives with me from 4 years old (Ilona), Yes, Lukas used to be here" (Aldona);*
- Grandparents had better relations with their grandchildren;
- Brothers and sisters (aunts and uncles) of emigrated mothers not always had good relations, but sometimes children are blamed of mother's emigration:  
*"Oh, you know, how it is possible to do after divorce and to go to live with the father. Mother's heart forgives everything, but I sometimes think, I could not forgive her so easy. ....After divorce Irena felt big shortage of money" (Vida 42)*



## Parents' material support to the child during emigration;

- 2/3 of the families reported, about economical support;

*"Certainly, mother sends money, but we do not use it, we keep her on our own finances" (Aldona);*

*"We do not keep him, but his mother do not send as well. Do not support anyhow. Grandmother and his brother gives to us" (Algis, 30)*

- The relations with the child are better where mother sends money as well.



# Communication between caregiver and school, or kindergarten

- Some caregivers are not very much interested to the child relations with outside:

*"I have never been in her school.. How I can go to it.. I have to go to the job" (Vilma 53)*

*"I never go to the child's school. I do not have any call from them, maybe it means everything OK" (Kostas, 42)*

*" I go to Lukas kindergarten, all educators know me very well and tell me about child" (Marija, 63)*



## Mother's communication with the child;

- Call 1 time a week;
- Visits one or two time a year;
- Stays with a child from one a week to one month;
- Communicate through the internet each other day;



## Relations with fathers

- Do not know the father, but is very interested to know:

*"She asks my daughter about her father. But daughter do not tell her anything. Skaistė would like to know, to see eyes of him, she is strong enough." (Ilona)*

- Knows father, but is very dissapointed:

*"After divorce Aušra was sitting in her room, she feels depressed. Father used her and left, just for possibility do not pay any alimony" (Vida)*



## Parenting styles:

- Unconcerned: *“he invited his friends, that means – celebrated (about birthday)” (Algis, 30)*
- Authoritarian: *“ I am more strict, I think it is for better of the child. Sometimes I put the belt on the back, but we have to be afoul very much” ( Aldona)*
- Democratic: *We using concensus principle and ascertain everything (Ilona)*
- Indulgent: *“Grandfather lets to her everything” (Kristina)*



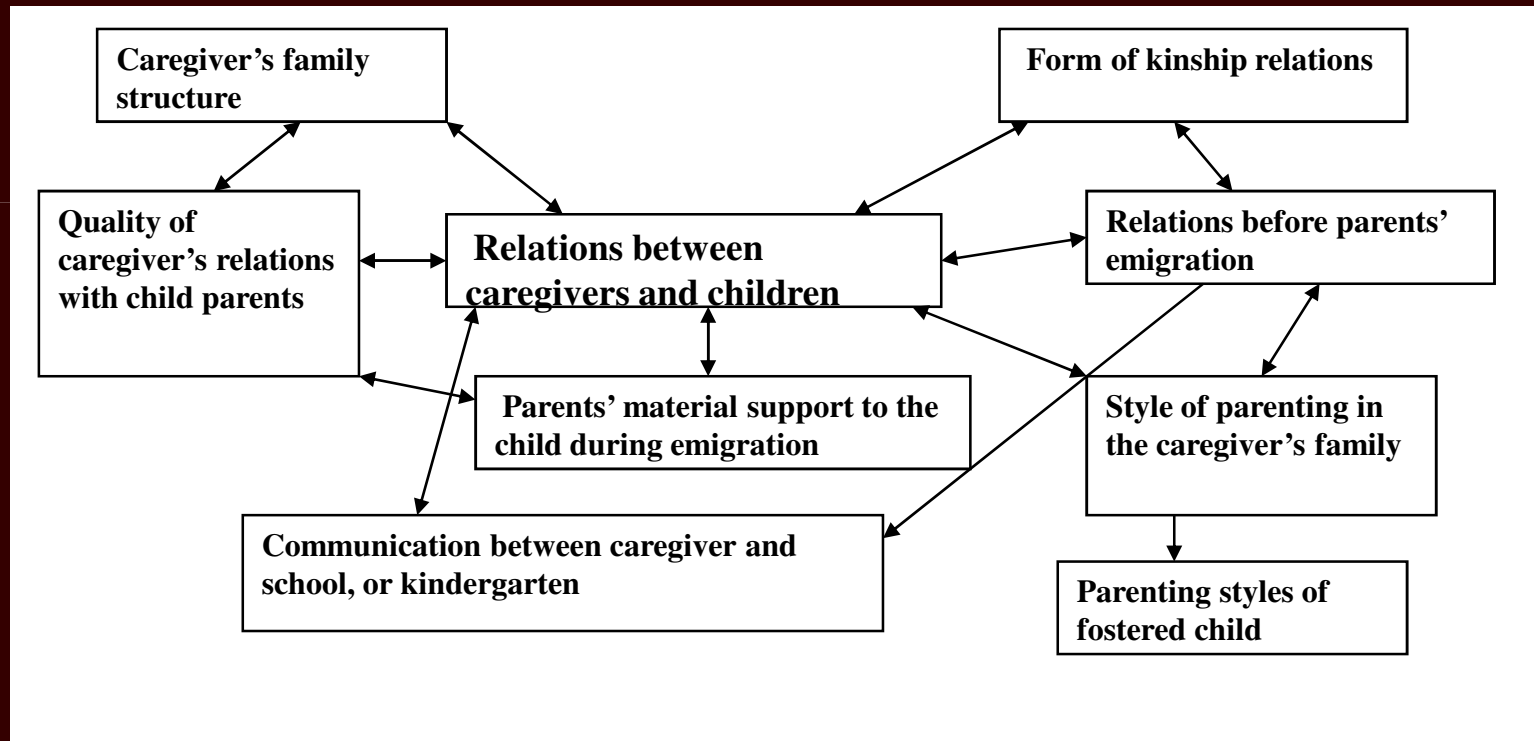


## Future plans

- All of mothers do not plan to come back to the country;
- Some mothers plan to take the children together to the country of residence:
  - “ *She intend to take him next August. Plan to send him to the kindergarten there.*” (Aldona)
- Some do not plan to come and do not plan to take a child to live together.



# Relations among the important concepts:





## Some insights:

- This form of kinship care needs better understanding of child needs and family in distance dynamics;
- The formalization of such kinship care require better evaluation of the environment for the child;
- Services for the children in such kinship care and caregivers sometimes needs support and consulatation.