



EMPOWERMENT THE KEY FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Ana Lencastre, Carina Dias & Cátia Choupina Alves

rita_costa09@sapo.pt, carinadias.create@gmail.com & catia.almeida.choupina@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

How we shape children's lives shapes the whole world. What we do now to foster their brain development and potential will determine their future - and our own (UNICEF, 2017; Clark et al., 2020).

By ensuring that all children reach their full potential, we foster a peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous future (CDCHU, 2007).

Empowerment is a complex, multidimensional construct that has been described as both a process and an outcome (Zimmerman, 1995; Dempsey & Dunst, 2004).

Family Empowerment is the ability of the family to efficiently manage the events of their lives and take control of different family matters (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988).

Fostering a higher level of family empowerment, improves the quality of their lives and promotes optimal child development (Pierce et al., 2021).

PURPOSE

Based on the principle that parents are the primary caregivers of early childhood experiences and the experts on their children's unique characteristics and learning abilities, this paper aims to highlight the importance of empowering families in creating optimal outcomes for all children and families to promote a brighter future.

METHODS

A literature search on family empowerment was conducted on the PubMed and Web of Science databases.

FINDINGS

- Family Empowerment can be defined as families' perception of their skills, self-confidence, and knowledge about the care and development of their child with special needs, to achieve satisfactory family functioning (Fernández-Valero et al., 2020).
- Family Empowerment is reflected in families' outcomes (Dempsey & Keen, 2008).
- The concept of empowerment implies that many skills are already present in the family or can be learned and the poor functioning of their skills is the result of a failure of social structures (Rappaport, 1981).
- Families who receive family centered services in early intervention experience positive impacts on empowerment. Similarly, families in general show high levels of empowerment as a result of participating in services with family centered practices (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- One of the key factors is the use of formal and informal support networks (Dunst, 2000).
- The level of empowerment, and the size and strength of family support networks are indicators of intervention success (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- Early childhood professionals should consider the positive relationship between empowerment and family support networks (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- A collaborative relationship with the family is a mediating factor between the support provided and the family's perception of quality of life (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- There is a significant relationship between helping practices and Family Empowerment, and both relational and participatory components, are critical to promoting empowerment (Dempsey & Dunst, 2004).

CONCLUSION

- Empowering families is critical to fostering a brighter future for humanity. Strong families provide a solid foundation for individuals, promote holistic well-being, break the cycle of intergenerational challenges, build social cohesion, and contribute to sustainable development. Intervention and early childhood care impact a child's life and society as a whole (Clark et al., 2020).
- Fostering a higher level of Family Empowerment, develops skills that improve family life, namely, the development of effective communication, problem solving, collaborative decision-making and access to information and resources to support family needs and to promote optimal child development (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- Evidence points out that family-centered practices favor family empowerment (Trivette, Dunst, Hamby, 2010; Dempsey & Keen, 2008) and that relational and participatory practices in early intervention mark the success of the intervention (Dunst, Trivette & Hamby, 2007).
- Professionals should understand the benefits of family support and promote empowerment in their practice (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).
- The literature shows the need to examine factors related to Family Empowerment, particularly the role of formal and informal support networks, with the aim of promoting effective intervention strategies. A greater support network promotes positive outcomes for both the child and family (Martínez-Rico et al., 2022).

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Figura 1. Realizada pelas autoras pelas autoras.

