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Kinder. Armut. Familie.

Alltagsbewältigung und Wege zu
wirksamer Unterstützung

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Abstract

This study explores if public support measures in Germany reach socially disadvantaged families in the intended way. It particularly focuses on the conditions of success and failure that become evident in interaction processes between deprived families and professionals.

Since child poverty is an alarming phenomenon in Germany, deprived children and their families need appropriate public support measures on site that meet their demands. However, support measures (e.g., of the Youth Welfare Offices, Family Centres and Employment Agencies) often do not arrive where they are needed mostly or fail because they don't achieve the intended impact. This is tragic not only because of the waste of financial and personal resources at the communal level, but majorly because of the lack of opportunities to participation and education for deprived children.

To understand why support measures fail, the authors conducted qualitative interviews with professionals and deprived families. Their experiences and perceptions are so far hardly taken into account in political debates and practical recommendations, even though they are the only actual experts for their situation. In this study, these families impressively picture their life in poverty and feelings of shame for the own needs. They outline their struggles with bureaucratic obstacles, constantly changing contact persons and the barely penetrable jungle of information on the public support system. The results of this study sensitize to the bunch of problems that deprived families often have to deal with at the same time: When sickness, unemployment, lack of appreciation and constant repetition of telling one's life story cross paths, families feel tired and powerless. Professionals, on the other hand, often feel overcharged with the complex needs of deprived families. Due to their fix scope of responsibility, they are used to address single but not a bundle of mingling problems. Moreover, the results show that support measures can fail due to a lack of resources at a structural level: When professionals lack sufficient time for a single case and comprehensive information tailored to the target group, consulting families according to their needs turns to be very challenging.

Abstract

This study is unique due to its holistic approach investigating structural and individual conditions at the interface between public support and deprived families. Moreover, recommendations for politicians and practitioners are derived that aim at setting up support measures tailored to the needs of deprived children and their families.