

# The constructions of everyday ethics in Lithuanian family social work practices

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**Abstract.** The aim of this study was to shed light on family social work through analyzing the insights of Lithuanian social workers about the ethical questions that emerge during their daily practices. Social workers' ethical considerations are analyzed in the framework of "doing ethics." Ethics work also pays attention to the broader political and social contexts behind the processes that happen within families. Our qualitative research was carried out in three of the largest Lithuanian cities: Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 family social workers. The research findings showed that family social workers construct ethical questions through discursive themes, such as the dignity of the client and societal inequalities – especially poverty issues and social control and support. Ethical dilemmas arise in the settings where social workers do evaluations and make decisions, and where actions require professional knowledge.

**Keywords:** social work ethics, situated ethics, family social work practice

## Introduction

This paper is part of a larger body of research focused on family social work in Lithuania (Motieciene and Laitinen 2016; Motieciene, Laitinen and Skaffari 2018). As previous articles were focused on discourses on social services and the interpretative repertoires of the roles of family social workers in the context of Lithuania, this article focuses on ethical questions in the context of the daily practices of family social work. We have approached ethical questions in settings where the evaluations, decisions and actions of social workers require professional knowledge, and where individual and societal levels intertwine (Banks 2012).

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Nowadays, effective and measurable solutions are appreciated, and the accountability of social workers to politicians and decision-makers has increased (Banks 2004). Often, the results of social work are estimated based on how effective family social workers are as professionals or how effective the social services agency is, which causes ethical dilemmas for the practice of family social work. Calculating human suffering or social work interventions through euros or time spent with clients does not provide a base for ethically sound and effective family social work. This paper is among the studies in which the ethics of the professional practices of social work are analyzed (Banks and Williams 2005). Family social workers must deal with the many and sometimes contradictory interests of their clients as well as other experts and professionals working with the families. In this paper, the everyday ethics of family social workers are approached as *doing ethics* through the interdependent moral spheres in which family social workers' ethical considerations take place: the personal, professional and public or social spheres. Banks (2016) broadens ethics work to include emotion, identity, roles and responsibilities.

Our research question is as follows: what kind of ethical questions must family social workers consider when providing social services in clients' homes? This research partakes in the discussion of professional ethics in social work, particularly in a Lithuanian context. We hope to provide deeper insight into social norms and ethical dilemmas, specifically the ethical questions stirred by family social work practice (Banks 2004).

First, we illustrate the contradictory context of family social work based on international and national research findings. After that, we describe the theoretical principles of everyday ethics in family social work. Later, we report the data collection and analysis process. Our findings explore the insights shared by social workers about the the ethical dilemmas in their daily practices. We summarize the main arguments based on family social workers' ethical considerations.

## **The Contradictory Context of Family Social Work**

The literature on social work has shown an increasing interest in the discussion of ethical challenges and decision-making in the context of family social work during the last couple of decades (Clark 2000; Banks 2009; 2012). Social work is a part of broader public policy, and social workers have a central role within welfare systems, which aim to care for, support and empower but also control people (Dominelli 2004). This means that everyday ethics in family social work practice are very important for social workers both on the institutional and societal levels. On the one hand, social workers must understand political issues; on the other hand, their choices as practitioners are determined by legal actions – for example, the Law on Social Services (2006). The professional ethics of social work highlight family social workers' responsibilities to their clients and their environments (Clark 2000; Banks 2012). A social worker has to think about ways to promote human well-being, find new ways of living, motivate their client to make changes and support them as an agent and citizen in the community. Social workers' responsibilities also become visible through the social issues that are seen in family social work practices, like poverty, child abuse and neglect. Respon-

sibility is a central part of professional ethics, as is the capability to analyze families' issues as structural problems in a specific society (Clark 2000; Banks 2004; 2012). An analytical approach is needed because of the morality-laden nature of child and family social work. For example, claims and concerns of child abuse can arouse moral panic. Hence, it is important that social workers raise public awareness of and pay attention to how a community's reactions can affect their practices (Cree, Clapton and Smith 2016). Additionally, it is important that social workers are aware of how the ideologies of society and the consequent moral and strategic shifts in governing can cause clients and their problems to be interpreted through a lens of moral conservatism (Stanford 2008). Therefore, social workers need to question the neoliberal ideals of society by invoking the core principles of social work and the realities of children and their families (Stanford 2010).

Several studies have shown this contradictory character of family social work in the context of Lithuania. For example, Mazeikiene, Naujaniene and Ruskus (2014) wrote about how Lithuania's government assumes that the state must take responsibility for its citizens. However, individuals and families experience a lack of adequate services. This research opens up important considerations – for example, how could a social worker act on a professional level considering what can be offered to families that face poverty, housing issues and must sustain themselves on low salaries. This area opens up such ethical dilemmas as access to equitable resources in society.

De Long Hamilton and Bundy-Fazioly (2013) explored the experiences of child welfare workers and students in working with child neglect. They stated that when a family is defined as a multi-problem family, they usually receive fragmented services provided by different social services providers. But what of societies like Lithuania, where there is a lack of such services? The expectation is to safeguard child rights, but social workers are dealing with a lack of resources in order to respond to this expectation. The Lithuanian context can be analytically related to a study by Featherstone, Gupta, Morris and Warner (2016) concerning the British context, especially public discourses about the effect of poverty on individuals' failings rather than structural inequalities. They state that the dominant discourses about poverty should encompass multiple features from the social model – that is, when discussing inequalities on a societal level, economic, environmental and cultural contexts should be included.

Nygren, Naujaniene and Nygren (2018) did comparative research on the topic of family social legislation in Lithuania and Sweden. The notion of the family was analyzed on three levels: the constitution, the general family policy and the child welfare policy. The authors concluded that Lithuania is recognized as a *refamilialized welfare state*. According to Hantrais (2004), refamilialized welfare states have a common feature of moving from strong state involvement to a minimal level of state involvement. Meanwhile, in the child rights protection system, defamilization policies are viewed poorly because of the focus on strengthening child rights (Nygren, Naujaniene and Nygren 2018). This study confirmed previous research showing that Lithuania is strongly affected by neoliberal ideologies, placing more responsibility on families and individuals.

## Everyday Ethics in Family Social Work

Ethics are the core of family social work. They provide answers to many normative questions, such as how one should behave and live one's life (Banks and Williams 2005). Ethics relate to moral theory, which can be approached through deontology (duties, principles and rights), teleology (consequences) and virtues (focus on motivation and characteristics) (Bibus 2013). Moral-philosophical arguments are essential in forming social work practices. Such principles as ontological equality, respect, self-determination, freedom, communality and duty are derived from them. These values are linked with the fundamental notion that the client is a thinking, goal-setting being, an equal and an expert in their own case, who cannot be helped they decide not to accept help. Freedom is not restricted merely by prohibitions and limitations; one's actions can also be limited by a lack of resources. Action is required to fortify communality. People have obligations to consider and respect each other's goals. (Urponen 2003.)

In this research, these values – as well as the legislation where ethical methods and guidelines are incorporated into the principles of professional ethics – provided the framework for ethical family social work questions and considerations. In encounters at the homes of families, values are not made concrete nor are ethical guidelines applied in a straightforward manner; they are made, created and reinterpreted in varying circumstances (Banks 2004). We do not send family social workers to discuss the nature of moral issues with philosophers (Banks and Williams 2005); instead, we connect empirical analysis to contextual ethics (Banks 2004; 2016). We see that ethical principles and features of agency (Clark 2000), such as respect, knowledge, skill, legitimate and authorized social workers, relationships based on trust, collaborative, accountable, shared responsibility, clear communication, reputability and a credible agency are important in constructing everyday ethics in family social work. Human needs are the roots of values, and the function of norms is to protect these needs (Borrmann 2010). Clark (2000) noted that in the field of family social work practice, families' needs are not only physical care and safety but include housing, health, education, loving parenting and social relationships outside the family.

Banks (2016) has developed a framework for ethics work. This goes beyond the concentration on ethical issues, problems, dilemmas and individual decisions. Ethics work also highlights the practical accounts of the ethical dimensions in political and social contexts and looks at how they are co-constructed in those frames. The next stage of the ethics work speaks about role work, which was discussed in the previous part of this research (Motieciene, Laitinen and Skaffari 2018), wherein family social workers' roles are constructed through the lens of everyday practices while providing social services.

Banks (2016) also speaks about the emotional aspect of social work. Feelings of ambivalence are present in daily practices. On the one hand, family social workers must respect human rights, dignity and the right to self-determination, but on the other hand, professionals have to perform social control functions, especially regarding child protection. Clark (2006) states that a non-judgmental attitude is a good way to work with individuals, groups and communities. Ethical social work practice consists of three main elements – interests,

feelings and rights – with respect as a key principle of morality. It is important to understand that respect is not based on rationality; it is more interconnected with senses and emotions.

Banks (2016) highlights the importance of creating an identity as an ethically sound professional. Family social work is primarily done through speech, interaction and behavior to construct various personal and social identities. For example, on the organizational level, the previously mentioned identities could be constructed between the manager of the social agency and the individual social workers. This aspect of ethics work relates strongly to the ideas of Foucault (1997) about the care of the self. In addition, some features of virtue ethics are visible.

The next part of ethics work is, according to Banks (2016), reasoning work, which means performing and explaining moral judgements. Justice highlights the importance of responses to acts of injustice, seeking fundamental human rights (freedom of speech, privacy and a right to life), individual needs and equality, especially in the provision of basic goods. Family social work is constructed through dialogue. Those dialogues could happen between family social workers and their clients, between family social workers and their managers or between managers and politicians.

Finally, Banks (2016) talks about performance work. This means that the work done by family social workers should be visible to others. Alternatively, Clark (2002) would say that citizenship is the upper individual level and flows from the community. Family social workers are always situated between clients and the official bodies that are structured by legal implications and directly influence the lives of clients. For example, Meysen and Keely (2018) analyzed child protection systems across different countries to explore the practical and ethical dilemmas that occur when providing services in non-clinical settings for individual families. A major focus was on child physical abuse and neglect. The authors discussed the high expectations of the professionals, insufficient resources and widespread mistrust of the system in public discourses, which are the pitfalls commonly analyzed in the media.

Everyday ethics are not static phenomena; they constantly change and renew themselves. Steckley and Smith (2011) stated that social work practices can become strained very quickly when a culture of blame exists in society. It is important to see everyday ethics as a key part of professional life (Banks 2016). The Statement of Ethical Principles (IFSW, 2018) highlights that social workers should work in accordance with the highest possible standards, adhering to principles such as the recognition of the inherent dignity of humanity and the promotion of human rights and social justice in relation to society and their clients. Similar aims are included in the new version of the Lithuanian National Code of Ethics for Social Workers, which came into effect in 2017. The first statement of the Code is that social workers, by their practice alone, are saying that each human should have the right to live with dignity, that society should be democratic and civic, and that human rights and social justice are essential in social work. These codes can come true only through the daily actions of social workers.

## Methodology

In order to explore ethical considerations in the field of family social work, a qualitative study with a social constructionist approach (Burr 2015) was used. The data was collected in three of the biggest cities in Lithuania: Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. Twenty-five research participants from statutory social service agencies took part in the study. Participants were involved on a voluntary basis after being given permission by the administrations of their respective agencies. The heads of the social services agencies were introduced to the research aim and the key questions; later, an invitation to participate was sent directly to family social workers, while some of them were contacted by phone. All potential research participants were willing to participate in the research. The data was collected using semi-structured, dialogical interviews (Phillips and Jørgensen 2002).

The data was transcribed step-by-step, through listening, writing and checking. In total, over 500 pages were transcribed. Interviews were analyzed with careful attention to the details of the speech between the interviewer and interviewee, looking for ethical considerations in family social work practice. Ethical considerations relating to confidentiality and professional roles were analyzed in previous articles. In this part of the research, the data were first coded on the basis of the accounts given by social workers concerning ethical problems and their considerations in confronting a family's need of help. Each of the 25 social workers described several ethical considerations from their daily practices. In the second phase, three discursive themes were elaborated, which are related to ethical considerations regarding the dignity of the client and societal inequalities, especially issues of poverty and social control and support functions.

*Table 1. The summary of coded discursive themes*

<b>Features of ethical question represented in the data</b>	<b>Discursive Theme</b>	<b>Definition of Theme</b>	<b>Ethical question to be considered</b>
Sense of respect; following social work values in everyday practice.	Dignity of a client	Seeing each client first as a citizen and later as a client.	The value and role of clients in relation to the professionals' status and citizenship.
Seeking possibilities for supporting and compensating for poor living conditions; giving personal money and goods.	Poverty as an issue of societal inequality	Facing clients' poverty in the everyday work practice.	Confronting social problems, such as a lack of professional and structural resources to help clients.
Ambivalence; caring for a child's wellbeing; believing in positive changes and the positive power of a nuclear family.	Social control and support	Much consideration is needed when a child is taken from their family into statutory care. Seeking to respect the child's rights.	Confronting social problems, such as evaluation and decision-making in contradictory settings.

Source: compiled by the authors.

In the analysis, social workers' accounts are interpreted within the contexts (Phillips and Hardy 2002). Next, excerpts are provided to present the findings. In the quotations, the researcher is marked as R and the family social worker as SW with a number, such as SW8.

## Research Findings

The excerpt below shows the family social worker and the researcher talking about the dignity of the client. It illustrates how social workers evaluate citizenship as a component of ethical principles. This means that clients have their own rights as individuals but are also influenced by community obligations.

### *Excerpt 1.*

R: Researcher

SW8: Social Worker Number 8

1	R:	You mentioned social justice as a value in social work. This is also mentioned in the
2		National Code of Ethics for Lithuanian Social Workers. Could you please clarify this
3		from your point of view?
4	SW8:	If we are talking about the family... Uhm, all the time I am thinking, and I hope that
5		my colleagues are too, that it is necessary to feel respect for them. Whether or not
6		you love them, whatever their disadvantages, even if their principles are totally dif-
7		ferent from yours and so on – respect is first. Do not expect anything from them, be-
8		cause they have their own feelings, their own experiences, and for me, when a social
9		worker is acting from the role of a controller, it is not valuable. I consider that clients
		have the right not to agree or live as I would want to. They firstly are citizens [...].

This excerpt displays the view that the client should be seen first as a citizen. A family social worker treats the client with respect as a person. She portrays her client as a member of the society and highlights the ethical principle of respect as a must-share attitude among her colleagues. This family social worker discusses the client's rights to choose his or her lifestyle and points out that she is not expecting that the client will live as the family social worker wants. The National Code of Ethics for Lithuania Social Workers (2017) describe the provision of social justice and human rights as essential in social work practice. The respect for human rights in this excerpt shows that the family social worker understands her professional role and acts based on an empowering and supportive approach rather than a controlling and stereotyping one. This highlights the importance of how social workers analyze and define the family members as clients. Each of them is a citizen in a broader society and should be seen beyond their home setting. The values and roles of clients in relation to professionals' status and citizenship is not to be taken for granted, but should be regarded as an ethical question that has to be defined and redefined in every encounter.

**Excerpt 2.**

R: Researcher

SW1: Social Worker Number 1

The next two excerpts illustrate how family social workers operate in regard to some of the biggest social problems in Lithuania – poverty and social exclusion. The excerpts show situations where family social workers met their client families at their homes. The research data shows how family social workers are trying to help the families.

1	R:	Can you tell me how you work when you deal with poverty in a client’s home setting?
2		
3	SW1:	[...] I have such cases. For example, a man had been raising a child. I went to visit
4		him; I saw that the child was sick and had a fever and, somehow, he had eaten a little
5		food, but it was, like, flour and various grains. I asked him [the father] what he was
6		going to cook. And, as I remember, it was spring, wet weather and very cold. Mhm,
7		mhm. I didn’t know what to do, so I offered to cook pancakes for the child. He said
8		that he hasn’t any milk and no money at all now – he’d spent everything on medi- cines. I felt so much pity that I gave my personal money [...].

Situations where a family social worker uses own their resources in order to promote human rights are an ethical problem. Structural social problems like poverty should not require social workers to share their own money. Broadhurst (2012) argued that the domination of neoliberalism in politics influences public services such as social welfare. Eurostat data showing the poverty level make sense regarding the economic discourse in Lithuanian society, where there is a lack of money for the basic needs of families, which, in turn, generates new psychosocial, behavioural and child protection issues. Social workers meet the ethical problem where societal structures pose multiple problems on an individual level. Many cases of psychological problems, behavioral issues and child neglect appear in such circumstances.

The next excerpt illustrates the same ethical problem. The global social work statement of ethical principles (2018) declares that social work professionals are challenging unjust policies and practices, and that they are responsible for sharing those issues directly with the responsible persons. Shared responsibility is very important in social work practice. It means that if there are no adequate resources, resources must be shared between the employers, policymakers and politicians.

**Excerpt 3.**

R: Researcher

SW16: Social Worker Number 16

1	R:	Do you have a case to share when your inner values were in conflict with your professional values?
2	SW16	Yes, many of them. For example, I have one case... A six-person family, a mother
3		and five children, are living in a room the size of my office. That means about 10
4		or 12 square meters. Maybe 12, because one sofa is on one side, another on the



5		other side. The room has a porch, the family is living without running water, and
6		when I got this case, they did not have any electricity installed either. Thank God
		they have electricity now, but it is about seven hundred meters to the nearest well.
7	R:	How do they live in such conditions?
8	SW16	I don't know. Complicated.
9	R:	The family is receiving social services according to the poverty issues?
10	SW16	No. Due to a lack of social skills. Let me show you; I have a photo.
11	R:	(Family social worker is showing pictures). The house looks like a shack.
12	R:	But I notice that the children are dressed very nicely and neatly?
13	SW16	Yes, because I have taken things from my daughter to offer support to the moth-
14		er. For example, these shoes are my daughter's. A girl refused to go the school's
15		opening ceremony because she didn't have any shoes. When my daughter returned
16		from a time abroad and when she was leaving, I asked her to leave the shoes to that
17		girl. You can see (family social worker is showing a photo). Look how beautiful
18		she looks and how happy she is. She is smiling. [...] Pay attention to the rope and
19		how many washed clothes are on it. This family is a rare case, when water is seven
20		hundred meters from the home. In order to wash the clothes, you have to bring
21		it in summer and in winter time. The mother and the senior daughter are doing
		everything outside. The room is too small and overcrowded. I don't know if they
		can really live in these conditions.

This excerpt shows a family living under very poor conditions – without running water inside, with six people crowded in a small room. As a researcher, it is difficult even to analyze this case in the context of human rights. This case poses an essential ethical question regarding social workers' duties – how should they report this family's case? The family social worker did not open this case publicly; she found a solution by taking shoes and clothes from her daughter. A lack of attention to community resources is visible. The national code of ethics for Lithuania's social workers indicates that social workers should collaborate with each other, as well as with other specialists and organizations, in order to find adequate resources. This family social worker did not mention other actors – for example, charity organizations, non-governmental organizations or governmental organizations such as municipalities – that would be able to provide social assistance for families who are living in such poor conditions.

Although the accounts provided in excerpts two and three focus on individual family situations, it is apparent that family social workers' solutions, when working alone with their own resources, can only offer temporary solutions to families in need of help. These excerpts point out how important it is that ethics work includes performance work, which makes social work and its clients' needs visible to others (Banks 2016). Structural social problems need strong social reporting and structural responses – changes in the labor market, for example. Low incomes are a huge problem for families in Lithuania. According to the Eurostat data, in 2017, almost 30% of the population lived in poverty and experienced social exclusion in Lithuania, and 31.6% of children less than 18 years of age lived in such circumstances. According to Lithuanian scientists Lazutka, Žalimienė, Skučienė, Tamošiūnė and Šumskaitė (2008), the main reasons for child poverty are family members' working statuses, the households' compositions, benefits provided by the government and a lack of social services, especially in the childcare sector.

**Excerpt 4.**

R: Researcher

SW18: Social Worker Number 18

1	R:	Have you ever been faced with an ethical dilemma in direct practice?
2	SW:	Really, yes. Yes. Yes. You get such an inner struggle, you know? I understand that
3		you cannot act differently, because it is my work, but, for example, I would like it if
4		social workers weren't the ones who punish families.
5	R:	How can we avoid this?
6	SW18:	I don't know... I think we need some additional measures which will help us and
7		will bind parents to solve their problems in order that their child will be able to live
8		together with them. It now happens in a such way they know that they are being
9		observed, that a social worker is saying something, doing something, but nothing
10		happens. Later, they are living as they wish. Until the critical moment comes. I, as
11		a social worker, don't like such a mess; I invite child rights specialists to organize a
12		case review regarding foster care, and it depends on the social worker. Now that I am
13		talking with you, I am thinking that I don't want to behave in such a manner, because
14		I see that it also damages the child rights. A child has a right to have parents. [...]
15	R:	What would your suggestion be like?
16	SW18:	I don't know... Maybe an official order on a society level, which will influence the
17		parents' non-positive behaviour. Because now I am feeling that they collaborate
18		with us but do not pay attention to the actions they must take into account. You can
19		motivate and motivate until finally they realize that the social worker is acting cou-
20		rageously. I have such cases when you visit families after a weekend, and you are
21		informed that somebody has called the police [during that time]. And you see that
22		the parents – when I am working – behave correctly, they do not drink alcohol or use
23		drugs, but I have a feeling that they do this during the weekends. [...] I think that
24		there should be a tool to safeguard child rights. Children are traumatized, and parents
		go in deeper depression and the result is that the family is destroyed. And it is true
		that the family social worker is also traumatized. Everyone feels bad.

The fourth excerpt shows how confronting social problems, evaluating them and making decisions poses ethical dilemmas for the social worker. This family social worker is questioning whether her actions are wrong or right. She says that she does not want to act in a controller's role, but she is concerned about a child's care because of their parents' alcohol abuse. Such a situation can be defined as an ethical dilemma. According to Banks (2012), it occurs when a social worker faces a choice between two equally unwelcome alternatives – which may involve a conflict of ethical values – and it is not clear which choice is the right one. This family social worker is describing a situation where a child's well-being, their parents' alcohol abuse, the child's custody, the parents' rights to their child, the child's right to his or her parents, the parents' responsibilities to offer a safe environment for their child to grow up, and the social workers' statutory mandate to secure the child's wellbeing are all at odds with each other. This kind conflicting situation demands ethics work, where the social worker is able to perform moral reasoning despite her or his emotions (Banks 2016). This family social worker approaches the emotional part of the decision-making with a strong comparison. She says that the decision will *traumatize* all the sides in this case.

This case can be analyzed in terms of its cultural context. In the Lithuanian constitution, Article 38 (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992) says that a child should be cared for by their parents until majority, and that the state protects and cares for the family, motherhood, parenthood and childhood. In Lithuanian society, though, it was an enduring custom for people to not intervene or call the responsible institutions if, in their neighbor families, both parents abused alcohol in their domestic environments; consequently, the children would always be left to grow up under such circumstances. Often, the responsible institutions were called only after something dangerous would happen – for example, violent acts between the parents or against the children, unfamiliar persons visiting family or instances of drug abuse. After July 1, 2018, a new version of the Law on the Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child came into force. Also, case management became compulsory as a method for family social workers who are working with families experiencing social risk factors. However, social norms and attitudes seem to be changing slowly.

## Conclusion

The legitimacy of social work as a profession consists of three points: how social workers work within the law, the law itself, encompassing people and seeking to support human rights, and, finally, professional actions that must be guided by expertise so that the first two points can be effectively implemented into everyday practice (Clark 2000). Ethics work and moral reasoning are central components of social work expertise (Banks 2004; 2016). Our findings showed that Lithuanian family social workers face multiple ethical considerations. Based on our data, we conclude that:

1. Family social workers confront the difficulties of families that generate from structural inequalities and cumulate into diverse social problems. Although this analysis was focused on the ethical considerations of social workers, it revealed broader ethical dilemmas concerning Lithuanian family social work practices. However, the roots of social work are in voluntary help; current professional social work practices cannot lean on the idea that family social workers ought to use their personal resources to help families survive lives shadowed by poverty and a lack of basic necessities. The lack of social services and inter-agency collaboration between public and non-profit organizations forces social workers to solve structural societal problems, such as poverty, based on their own abilities.
2. Family social workers are keen on emotional intelligence in their work with families. They pay attention to the feelings, emotions and personal characteristics of children and parents. At the same time, they strongly argue for personal and professional values – especially respect for the client and decision-making in conflicting situations. Family social workers view clients as active citizens with their own life experiences who have the ability to make decisions, even if they do not match the values of the family social worker. As Urponen (2003) states, clients have the right to accept help and to be experts regarding their own lives. The ethical dilemma here is that family social workers construct the dignity of their clients in every practical situation, and this is not considered as intrinsically important.

3. Family social workers face ethical problems that have many connections to the broader social, political and cultural contexts. However, they make decisions according to individual ethical questions. None of the informants mentioned discussing ethically challenging cases with their colleagues. Joint collegial discussions could advance family social work practices toward a deeper ethical foundation, to justify the decisions and actions in different cases. Through sharing, challenging ideas and negotiating, social work can further develop its ethic codes (Laitinen and Väyrynen 2011).
4. It is important to research family social work practices under the new Law on the Fundamentals of the Protection of the Rights of the Child, which came into force July 1, 2018. Case management is now applied in social work practice. New ways of working in inter-disciplinary teams may raise new ethical questions about co-operation, evaluation, decision-making and the clients' positions in these multi-professional teams. These are topics for further research.

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