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Experiences of Social Inclusion among Children from Solo-Parent Families through Participation in Icehearts

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In my Bachelor's thesis, which was made in cooperation with Icehearts of Finland, I aimed to examine how children from solo-parent families have experienced social inclusion in Icehearts-participation. The experiences of mentors in Icehearts about strengthening social inclusion among solo-parent families' children were also investigated. Icehearts of Finland is an organization which provides comprehensive support for children who have been noted as being at need of special support.

This Bachelor's thesis is based on a qualitative research. The research material is collected by theme interviews that were made in Helsinki and Vantaa in November and December 2017. The theoretical framework is based on themes of social inclusion, prevention of social exclusion, social participation, and solo-parent family structure as a form of family background. These themes were surveyed in the environment of the Icehearts-operation model.

The results reveal that children from solo-parent families have experienced things in life through Icehearts that are specific to the experience of social inclusion, such as feeling of belonging to a community, and feeling of being noticed and heard. The children from solo-parent families felt that by participating in Icehearts they have faced good changes in life. Their experiences of social inclusion are affected by participation in Icehearts and interaction with the mentors in Icehearts who felt that the social inclusion of children from solo-parent families should be strengthened by providing them possibilities to join normal life-related things.

Keywords	social inclusion, social participation, prevention of social exclusion, solo-parent family, Icehearts

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Opinnäytetyössäni, jonka tein yhteistyössä Suomen Icehearts ry:n kanssa, pyrin tutkimaan yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöisten lasten sosiaalisen osallisuuden kokemuksia osallistuttuaan Icehearts-toimintaan. Työssäni tutkin myös Icehearts-kasvattajien kokemuksia yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöisten lasten sosiaalisen osallisuuden tukemisesta. Suomen Icehearts ry on järjestö, joka tarjoaa monipuolista tukea erityistukea tarvitseville lapsille.

Tämä opinnäytetyö perustuu laadulliseen tutkimukseen. Tutkimusmateriaali kerättiin teemahaastatteluin, jotka tehtiin Helsingissä ja Vantaalla Marras-Joulukuussa 2017. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen viitekehys on rakennettuna sosiaalisen osallisuuden, sosiaalisen syrjäytymisen ehkäisemisen, sosiaalisen osallistumisen, ja yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöisyyden pohjalle. Näitä teemoja tutkistellaan Icehearts-toimintamallin ympäristössä.

Tutkimuksen tuloksesta paljastuu, että yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöiset lapset ovat kokeneet elämässään sellaisia asioita Iceheartsiin osallistumisen kautta, jotka ovat erityisiä sosiaalisen osallisuuden kokemiseksi. Näitä ovat muun muassa yhteisöön kuulumisen tunne ja tunne huomatuksi ja kuulluksi tulemisesta. Yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöiset lapset kokivat, että Iceheartsiin osallistumalla he ovat kohdanneet hyviä muutoksia elämässä. Iceheartsiin osallistuminen ja vuorovaikutus Icehearts-kasvattajan kanssa ovat vaikuttaneet heidän sosiaalisen osallisuuden kokemuksiin. Icehearts-kasvattajat kokivat, että yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten osallisuutta tulee vahvistaa tarjoamalla heille mahdollisuuksia osallistua normaaleihin asioihin elämässä.

Avainsanat	sosiaalinen osallisuus, sosiaalinen osallistuminen, syrjäytymisen ehkäiseminen, yksinhuoltajaperhelähtöisyys, Icehearts

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Appendix 1. Theme Interview Questions

1   Introduction

In the social field I often see discussion about social exclusion among children and youth, and how it should be prevented. I wanted to take another perspective for my Bachelor's thesis, the perspective of strengthening social inclusion. My thesis is a research about how children from solo-parent families have experienced social inclusion in Icehearts, and how is social inclusion of children from solo-parent families strengthened in Icehearts. The initiative for the topic came from the representatives of Icehearts of Finland. Together with Icehearts I wanted to find out how children from solo-parent families benefit of Icehearts participation. We decided to target the topic in social inclusion. Icehearts works on third sector on child protection services, and they use team sports in their activities in preventing social exclusion of children and youth. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5.)

In my thesis I will introduce the organization Icehearts of Finland and their activity. In the theory part I will discuss themes of social inclusion, social exclusion, and participation. I will go through solo-parent family as a family structure and risk of social exclusion. The implementation of this Bachelor's thesis will be introduced and discussed, and I will introduce the methods of qualitative research and theme interviews. The results of the interviews will be exposed and discussed in theory context. In the end of this Bachelor's thesis I will gather my thoughts about this research and the whole process.

2   Icehearts

In this chapter I will introduce what Icehearts is, and what is the main purpose of their operation. The organizational structure of Icehearts will be introduced. Here I will tell about Icehearts operating model, what is its purpose, and how Icehearts teams are run by the mentors. I will present the typicality of Icehearts children and how the teams are formed.

2.1   Icehearts of Finland

Icehearts is an independent third sector actor in the field of child welfare. Icehearts works specifically through its Icehearts-operating model which aims to prevent social exclusion

of children and youth in ages of 6-18 years. Icehearts' focus is to work with children and youth whose development is threatened. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). According to Turkka and Turkka, children are not socially excluded, but without an adult, and without the feeling of social inclusion and acceptance they have a risk of social exclusion. (Turkka and Turkka 2008 p. 15). The mission of Icehearts of Finland is to promote social skills of disadvantaged children by providing them a possibility for steady team sports hobby and a safe adult's presence and support up to 12 years. Icehearts teams are run by local Icehearts-associations. The local association mainly focuses on preventing long-term child protection in their area. Icehearts of Finland as the head-organization is responsible for all administrative tasks. Therefore, the local associations may focus on the full education and leading of local Icehearts teams. The vision of Icehearts of Finland is that every child in Finland would get adequate support from an adult who is safe and reliable, and who would support the needs and development of the children. Therefore, they would have a better chance to become well-being young adults in the society. In the focus of the work of Icehearts are children and youth whose development is threatened. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 5-7.)

2.2 Icehearts-operating model

Behind all the work of Icehearts is Icehearts-operating model. It is a long-term support model for preventing social exclusion of children and youth. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). With Icehearts operating model children can be included to normal activity in the society. (Turkka and Turkka, 2008 p. 15). Through the action of Icehearts operating model the mentor in Icehearts supports and leads an Icehearts-team and the children for 12 years. The key principles of the model are long-term support, personal interaction between the child and the mentor, child-oriented and strength-oriented work, and flexible working methods. Icehearts operating model emphasizes sports in their activities with children. It aims to prevent social exclusion of children by building up a safe relationship between the child, family, and the mentor. As a long-term support model, it enables all parties to see results in the long run. Icehearts operating model uses sports and afterschool activity to maintain psycho social support for the children, although team-sports is not the aim on itself. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 5-10.)

Icehearts-team leaders are called mentors. The mentors in Icehearts are in the centre of Icehearts operating model. They engage themselves for the children, to the role, and for the position for 12 years as paid employees in Icehearts. The role of the mentor is to be

an adult friend, an authoritative support person, and a defender for the children. The effectiveness of the Icehearts operation model is based on the deep social bond between the mentor and the child. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 9-13). In their role, the mentors support the development of children together with parents and local authorities in daily living environments such as school and Icehearts afterschool activities. They will lead their team's sports practice, join to local sports tournaments with the team, lead the children to local child welfare services, and arrange support for the families in Icehearts. Mentors in Icehearts are often the first person for the family to contact when problems occur. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 5-11). Mentors may have previously completed studies in social field, such as degree in early childhood education, studies in faculty of education or pedagogy, and sports or physical education. (Turkka and Turkka, 2008 p. 42.)

2.3   Children in Icehearts

Children join to Icehearts in different ages and for different reasons. Some of the children join in preschool age, at the age of 6. Children who come to Icehearts might need support in learning, issues in dealing with emotions, or the family's financial situation might be weak, or they have other challenges. Many of the children in Icehearts have accumulated problems. According to the statistics by Icehearts, the need for support with 66% of the children was financial deprivation, lack of hobbies with 59% of the children, attendance of special education with 52% of the children, solo-parent family background with 47% of the children, a diagnose and/or need of psychiatric care with 37% of the children, an immigrant background with 27% of the children, and being in custody outside the home with 11% of the children. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 14-16.)

According to Vartiamäki, behavioural and emotional problems and hyperactivity in childhood anticipates latter usage of substances and criminality. Typical children in Icehearts groups have a need for extra support in education, they are shy or withdrawn, or they are clients of child protection. Greatest concern arises when many of these matters occurs with the same child. Accumulation of problems and weak socio-economic background rises the risk to criminality and social exclusion. These are the common problems amongst young boys, which is why boys are originally the target group for Icehearts operating model. (Vartiamäki, 2015.)

2.4 Forming of Icehearts team

The process of forming an Icehearts team is done in teamwork together with the team mentors, special childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, and local child protection professionals. The initiative for joining Icehearts may come from the family, local social worker, teacher, youth worker or from the children themselves. When the right children for the team are found, the Icehearts operating model will be introduced for the family, and the child is invited to the team. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 18-19). Icehearts core team includes 6-10 children. Those children usually have behavioural and emotional difficulties, and difficulty in learning and concentrating. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). Later, more children with less accumulated problems will be invited to the team. Children who come to the team on the later stage often have challenges such as solo-parent family background, large family, or poverty. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). The final team will be formed by approximately 20-30 children. The team will reach the maximum form approximately 4 years after the start. The team mentor will start coaching the team for a chosen team sport at this point. In the sport-training the main purpose is not to train the children for professional athletes but for the children to learn life-long social skills as a team member. (Vartiamäki and Niemelä, 2013 p. 36.)

Reason for joining the Icehearts team in early age is to provide support for the children at early stage in preventing social exclusion. Long-term support in Icehearts enables prevention of development of social exclusion. The long-term support model also allows a reliable relationship to be formed between the child, family, and mentor. A close relationship with the children allows the mentor to be a positive role model for the children. The mentor can help the children to solve challenges in their lives by being as a daily support in their lives. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 9-10). The longer the children get to be in the team, more likely their social exclusion can be prevented.

3 Social inclusion, social exclusion, and social participation

In this part I will go through social inclusion, what is it and how to promote that. Social exclusion is discussed here to see what is the bogey that we need to protect the children and youth from, and why promotion of social inclusion is so important. Participation is introduced here as the activity which allows the experiences of social inclusion.

Social inclusion, social exclusion, and social participation as concepts may have different meanings on different social levels. Social inclusion and social exclusion are often defined as the opposites of each other's. As the opposite of social exclusion, social inclusion generally means prevention of poverty and prevention of social exclusion. These concepts may be used when social inequalities and social participation are researched. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann 2015, pp. 1-3). In this chapter I will present some definitions of each and hope to clarify what are the definitions for these concepts as I talk about them later in this research.

3.1   Social inclusion

Social inclusion may be defined as a process where people with different socially relevant attributes interact to encourage the other for better access to social participation. (Silver, 2015 p. 3). According to Hämäläinen et al., the concept of social inclusion holds different viewpoints and approaches, which usually are social aspect on societal level, and experiential and emotional aspect on individual level. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 1). In this Bachelor's thesis I will research individual's experiences of social inclusion.

When social inclusion is viewed from individual's aspect, it is defined as an experience of an individual, as a feeling of belonging to a community and as subjective impression of influencing one's own life. Feeling of social inclusion can be fostered by another person, but the experiential feeling cannot be defined from the outside. The experience of inclusion can be strengthened by participation. Personal experience of social inclusion varies between individuals. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5.)

As stated by Hämäläinen et al., social inclusion is an individual's experience of a feeling of inclusion, which arises by actions of participation. Actions are divided into four different levels, which are defined as data-inclusion with the right for the information, planning-inclusion with the right of organizing in the living environment, decision-inclusion in decision making with the right for being part of decision making concerning one's own life, and action-inclusion in action making with the right to implement own activity among others. Social inclusion is interaction, and the experience of inclusion may arise when

the person realizes the benefits which the participation allows. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 6.)

Also Rouvinen-Wilenius et al. say that social inclusion is an experience which is arising from participation. According to them, social inclusion arises when the person becomes aware of own possibilities to influence on the changes in own life. They use the same division of levels on actions like Hämäläinen et al., but they call them as "forms of social inclusion". Data-inclusion, according to Rouvinen-Wilenius et al. is the easiest form to accomplish. It means that all information which applies for the individual is available for them. Planning-inclusion is defined as a preparation level where the state of inclusion is deeper. In this form of inclusion an individual participates the planning of actions which concerns him, and he shares own opinions. Action-inclusion holds own activity and participation in the living environment, the individual feels that he can participate, and the participation is meaningful. Decision-inclusion is more including, and individual can actually participate in decision making in things which concerns him. (Rouvinen-Wilenius et al. pp. 50-52.)

Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen define inclusion as including to something, such as belonging to something, participating in the community, and the feeling of being part of a community. By their definition, the community must prepare and offer the possibility to be included and to belong on a practical level. For the realization of inclusion, we need a community where the individual is seen, heard, and noticed as a remarkable person, and as a valuable part of the community. Inclusion involves an ethical ideal of a community where the participants feel that they are included to the community. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 pp. 10-11.)

3.2   Social exclusion

According to United Nations report, social exclusion was first used in 1974 by René Lenoir in describing the state of certain kind of people's lives in France, who were recognized vulnerable and outside of the systems of the welfare state. The report shows that in the case of multi problem households and single parents there is a risk of exclusion. However, anyone can be at the risk of social exclusion, and certain kinds of features increases the risk of exclusion. (UN, 2016 pp. 18-20.)

According to the National Audit Office of Finland, there is no clear definition of social exclusion, but it can be defined as weakness in the bonds connecting the individual to the society. (NAO, 2007 p. 18). By the definition by THL (THL, 2016), social exclusion is defined as exclusion from societal structures and its effects on welfare. It is a process of different causes which start to hold the abilities to hold on to life of an individual. It holds risks in areas such as low education and long-term unemployment. Social exclusion of youth holds certain parts of deprivation, and the overlapping of these must be considered well. This might include lack of social relationships, social and health problems, and exclusion from social participation. (THL, 2016). Mirka Smolej says in the Guide for Icehearts mentors that deprivation, and social exclusion which often follows that, are causing multiple human suffering which affects for the whole life span and are at the worst case intergenerational. (Smolej, 2017 p. 3.)

Because social exclusion is hard to define, it also challenges the evaluation of the amount of the socially excluded. According to THL, the estimated amount of socially excluded youth is from 14000 and 100000. The broad is so range because the statistics define different states of disadvantages, and from these statistics it is challenging to say who are socially excluded, but those can be defined who have several risks of social exclusion in life. (THL, 2016) When these risks cumulate, social exclusion is more probable.

The National Audit Office of Finland describes social exclusion as a five-stage process which gets deeper on each step. (NAO, 2007 p. 19). The stages of social exclusion are defined as:

1. difficulties in school, at home, in social environments,
2. suspension of school, or underachievement,
3. labour market stage, drifting into a bad labour market position,
4. total exclusion (avoiding work, criminalising, living dependent on social benefits, alcoholization, isolation or other marginalization) and
5. institutionalization or isolation from the society.

(NAO, 2007 p.19).

With preventing exclusion of children and youth is meant all the actions which aims to cut the development of social exclusion. (NAO, 2007 p. 19). This is when the behaviour of the children or youth have had certain features, which might lead into exclusion. Because social exclusion is seen as a process, the process can be turned into a positive direction. A central factor for preventing exclusion is to focus on ways of supporting the

children, youth, and their families by promoting their social inclusion, and therefore prevent the exclusion. Eiro and Keinänen mention that already simple meetings in daily life can prevent or change the process of social exclusion. (Eiro and Keinänen, 2017.)

Youth Barometer 2012 reveals that social bonds and social networks are vital for youth in helping them out from trouble and supporting them from exclusion. (Kortteinen and Elovainio, 2012 p. 155). From 44 to 52% of the respondents in Youth Barometer 2014 inquiry said that lack of friends, being in bad company, mental illnesses, lack of hobbies, discrimination, own negligence, unequal background (such as difficult childhood), lack of money, lack of education, and unhealthy lifestyle are at some level, or very effecting factors on exclusion. (Myllyniemi, 2014 p. 49). Addition to that, according to THL, young people say the lack of friends as one of the central reasons for social exclusion. (THL, 2016.)

The risk factors for social exclusion of children are often recognizable already in the early childhood. Social exclusion and accumulation of problems can be prevented with preventative support. (Lapsiasiainvaltuutettu, 2006 p. 8). Disadvantage in childhood is not automatically leading to social exclusion, if the child gets necessary and long-term support which prevents exclusion. (Smolej, 2017 p. 9.)

3.3   Promoting   social   inclusion   by   social   participation

Participation can be sociopedagogically defined as functional presence in human relationships. Promoting inclusion cannot only be the promotion of participation, but promotion of participation holds a key role in it. Social inclusion and participation can sometimes be used crosswise. Both of these have personal definitions, even though they both are used on defining social activity of a group or an individual. Participation in social activities supports the personal growth process of an individual. Activities where participation is possible may have an effect on an individual by providing experiences of inclusion, own dignity, and own performance. All of those develop the self-esteem and the sense of responsibility. Further on, it will affect the interest in the environment, and it prepares functional citizens. Participation can also give experiences of own performance for an individual. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen 2014, pp. 12-13.)

Social inequality leads to loneliness and it has a negative effect on the wellbeing of an individual, which leads to social exclusion. (Eiro and Keinänen, 2017). Junttila mentions few things as reducing facts for loneliness. These are finding a good hobby, joining different clubs and organizations, doing sports, and being with others. (Junttila, 2015 p. 157). Participation prevents from loneliness, which is a risk of social exclusion. In other words, when loneliness is prevented by participation, social inclusion is promoted.

Finnish social psychologist and a family therapist Saara Kinnunen notes that children who participate in after school clubs and activities more likely attend less in criminality and in the use of intoxicants. They also have less mental problems and depression. Also, their school performance and social skills are higher than those who don't have hobbies. According to Kinnunen, a hobby for children can be the base for group of friends where children can belong to. (Kinnunen, 2003 p. 130.)

4   Solo-Parent family background

This research focuses on the experiences of children from solo-parent families. In this chapter I will go through the risks of social exclusion that solo-parent family background holds.

4.1   Solo-parent family background as a risk influencer

Solo-parent family as a concept, also known as single-parent family, is used as a definition of family form where one parent is guardian for a number of children. (Sauvola, 2001 p. 17). This form might be a situation following a divorce, or death of a parent. According to Marjo Kuronen, solo-parent as a family form has been noted as a risk of poverty in a Finnish poverty research in 1990's. Families with only one parent own a greater risk of poverty than families with both parents. (Kuronen, 2003 p. 108). During the year 2005, 25,2% of solo-parent families were entitled for the social assistance benefit. (Heino, 2007 p. 37). Kuronen says that parenting after a divorce is clearly gendered, because more than 80 percent of children stay with their mothers after the divorce of their parents. (Kuronen, 2003 p. 108). She also states that poverty in solo-parent families is not gender-related, but family-form related; solo-parent related. (Kuronen, 2003, p. 109.)

Social exclusion is hard to predict in the childhood, but certain factors in life conditions during the childhood increases the risk of social exclusion. (Vilhula, 2007 p. 30). Parenting and environmental factors are said to have an influence on the risks of social exclusion on children. Weak socio-economic status in the family might have a negative influence on the cognitive development of the child, which might lead to health issues. It also influences on the employment negatively. (Vilhula, 2007 p. 30). Sauvola mentions that children from divorced families are likely to experience problems on mental health area. Children who grow up without a father have a high probability to face child-psychiatric disorders. (Sauvola, 2001 p. 23). Physical and psychological illnesses occur more with children from solo-parent families than with children from two-parent families. Child mortality is higher with children from solo-parent families than with other children. (Sauvola, 2001 pp. 25-26). Children from solo-parent families are more likely to have cognitive, social and emotional issues, lower income level, stressful situations and conditions more often, and more distant relationship to their parent(s) than other children. (Vilhula, 2007 p. 56). Children from solo-parent families ended up more often to criminal activities, and drunk-driving, and higher risk of suicides. (Vilhula, 2007 p. 95). Vilhula recalls in her report, that solo-parenting alone is not the only risk factor for these issues. Because solo-parenting is shown to be a risk, these families should be preventively supported. (Vilhula, 2007 p. 122.)

Belonging to a risk group does not directly mean that one will end up to social exclusion. Preventing social exclusion is vital for those in the risk group. Supporting education, providing guided hobbies, and encouraging to hobbies that interests can prevent from social exclusion. Trustworthy relationships are valuable in preventing social exclusion. (Vilhula, 2007 pp. 30-31). Heino refers in her report to a research of child protection customer relationships on 2005, which revealed that children from solo-parent families was estimated to need most support and control from the child welfare services. Heino hopes for more preventative child protection work from the future. (Heino, 2007 p. 51.)

For solo-parents, the presence of the Icehearts mentor can be a significant support in the upbringing of the children. According to the founders of Icehearts, the children of single-mothers can have a safe and long-lasting support from a male person for who is always present. (Turkka and Turkka, 2008 p. 24.)

5 Implementation of the Bachelor's thesis

5.1 Background of the research and research questions

In my Bachelor's thesis research I studied the experiences of social inclusion of children from solo-parent families in Icehearts. Experience is always personal. (Vilkka, 2005 p. 97). The topic of my Bachelor's thesis arises from the interest by Icehearts of Finland to see a review about how different aged children from solo-parent families have experienced social inclusion in Icehearts. My research has two main research questions. 1. How have children from solo-parent families experienced social inclusion in participating Icehearts? 2. How is social inclusion of children from solo-parent families strengthened in Icehearts?

With the first question I researched the experiences of the children from solo-parent families in Icehearts. The themes which I used in the research process for the first question were solo-parent family and life background, inclusion in Icehearts, and relation to the Icehearts mentor. The second question was for researching mentors' experiences on strengthening social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families in Icehearts. The themes in the process for researching the second question were social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families, solo-parent family and life background, and children's participation in Icehearts.

This Bachelor's thesis was done in cooperation together with Icehearts of Finland. With this research Icehearts of Finland gets information about how children from solo-parent families have experienced inclusion by participating in Icehearts. For this research I got to interview four boys from solo-parent families and two Icehearts-mentors. I interviewed the mentors in Icehearts about their experiences and thoughts about strengthening social inclusion among children from solo-parent families in Icehearts.

5.2 Target group of the research

The target group of this research were children who come from solo-parent families and are attending Icehearts or have graduated from Icehearts. In the interviews the children shared their experiences. At the first place I had an idea to interview six children from

Icehearts of different ages, and few more mentors, but the reality hit the face, and I understood that less is enough. I cannot make a generalization out of this research, but I can get vision about the theme.

All the child-interviewees come from solo-parent families. Three of them were living with their mother, one with the father. One had lost his father, but the parents had been divorced before. The other children were in weekly or monthly contact with their distant parent. The boys had been involved to Icehearts from one year to 6 years. Their life situations were different, and the experience of joining Icehearts was different with all the children. The children in Icehearts who were interviewed are between ages 9 and 20. Three boys between 9 and 14 are still attending in Icehearts, and the twenty-year old is already a graduate from Icehearts.

5.3   Research methods and analyses

I chose to make a qualitative research, because I wanted to research the experiences of the children who participate in Icehearts. With a research made by qualitative research methods it is possible to reach meaningful chains of events, such as the life course, and to study the social world. The aim in this kind of research is to get people's personal representation of their self-experienced reality. (Vilkka, 2005 p. 97). Out of my cordiality, I had a minimum target to get the children to see their own life course with Icehearts through the interviews, but I also wanted to get good answers for my research out from their experiences. All the experiences which were shared in this research are personal experiences by the interviewees. With this qualitative research I got to explore the experiences of social inclusion of the chosen target group, children from solo-parent families.

I chose to interview individuals from the target group by theme interviews. In theme interviews the aim is to give the interviewee a chance to answer all the themes of the research interview (Vilkka, 2005 p. 102). I decided to make the interviews face-to-face with the children and mentors in Icehearts, because I considered that it is more successful way than phone interviews. I got the research permit for the interviews orally already in the first meeting with the representatives of Icehearts of Finland. After this I got the contact information for the mentors in Icehearts of the teams in the capital area. I emailed the mentors that I would need few children for the interviews who come from solo-parent families and who are children from the core team. In addition to this I needed a couple

of mentors for the interviews to share their experiences about strengthening social inclusion of children from solo-parent families. After couple of weeks I had few meetings in my calendar, and the interviews were implemented during November and December in 2017. The children who I got for the interviews were not children from the core team, but I considered to go forward with the given shots, because they had the family background of the target which was the most important for this research.

All the interviews were made in Helsinki and Vantaa. The child-interviewees are not familiar to each other, but the Icehearts-mentors are colleagues. The anonymity of each of the interviewees was secured, and for instance the mentors' names in the children's answers were changed into "mentor" during the transcribing. Each of the interviews were 15-35 minutes long. The interviews were recorded on my smartphone's recorder and transcribed to my laptop. I transcribed all the recordings of the interviews soon after the interviews. In the recordings and transcripts, I called the interviewees by code-names Child1, Child2, Child3, Child4 and Mentor1 and Mentor2. After finishing the transcriptions, the recordings were deleted for good.

I had a list of ready-made questions for the interviews under the themes of the main question. I made the questions according to the themes, which were based on the areas which I needed to research to get an answer for the research problem. The themes in the interviews of the children were solo-parent family and life background, inclusion in Icehearts, and relation to the Icehearts-mentor. With the theme about their background I could get information from the experiences of the children about what they know and think about their solo-parent family background, and how it has affected their life. The theme about inclusion held questions about experiences and feelings about participating Icehearts. The theme about the relation with their mentor in Icehearts was to find out their experiences and feelings about their relationship with the mentor, and how they see that the mentor has affected their life.

For the mentors I had three research themes which were social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families, solo-parent family and life background, and the children's participation in Icehearts. These themes aimed to gain information about their experiences of strengthening social inclusion among children from solo-parent families in their teams, what do they think about belonging in Icehearts on children from solo-parent families, and how do they support participation among children from solo-parent families.

Even though I had a list of questions prepared for the interviews, I spontaneously formed some questions with each interviewee. The themes stayed the same even if the questions changed. I aimed to ask open ended questions to prevent me from leading the answers to a certain direction. It did not always work right. In the reality it was challenging to interview some of the children with the pre-prepared questions, because the perspective of life with a 9-year-old child is very different compared to a 11, 14, or a 20-year-old. I feel that I did not get enough material from the younger interviewees. After the interviews were done, I feel that I should have considered to use a different method with the 9-year-old.

To get further in my research, I started to analyse the research material by comparing the children's answers theme by theme. I did the same for the research material that were collected from the interviews with the mentors in Icehearts. I picked up answers that were vital for this research, and which answered directly to the research themes. The original transcripts were written in Finnish, because the interviews were made in Finnish. Next, I took a new file and I wrote the chosen answers in English on the new file theme by theme.

6   Research results

The results will be presented according to the themes the research themes. As a reminder, the themes in researching experiences of children from solo-parent families about social inclusion were solo-parent family and life background, inclusion in Icehearts, and relation to the Icehearts mentor. In examining the experiences of the mentors on strengthening social inclusion among children from solo-parent families, the themes were social inclusion of children from solo-parent families, solo-parent family and life background, and participation of children from solo-parent families in Icehearts.

I will share the experiences of social inclusion by children from solo-parent families who attend or attended in Icehearts activity. The investigation of social inclusion is shared in few different paragraphs, where experiences of social inclusion are explored from different viewpoints. These paragraphs will explain how social inclusion is revealed in life performance, school performance, and in sports-team participation. The last paragraph will introduce the experiences and thoughts of the relation between the child and the mentor.

In each of the paragraphs the experiences and thoughts from the mentors are also explored.

I have added passages of the talk which I had with the interviewees in this chapter, instead of posting only the answers from the interviewees, because from some of the answers the context could not be found without presenting the question.

6.1   Solo-parent family and life background

In this research I wished to find out what kind of experiences children from solo-parent families have on social inclusion and how is their inclusion strengthened by the mentors. In order to find this out, I wanted to know what kind of life background these kids have. According to Smolej, all the children who join Icehearts have professionally identified need for support. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). With this information it would be easier to understand their starting point when they came to Icehearts. These parts of the interviews reveal the answer for my questions about how aware the children are about the reason of why they have joined Icehearts at first place. From these answers I discovered that the children who had some idea about this in their lives, they saw that their wildness as a child had got them to come to Icehearts. Two of the youngest ones did not know or could not explain why they came to Icehearts. The experiences show that the boys had some understanding of their own life and the issues which needed some work and support. In the interviews each of the children said that they come from solo-parent family.

> Hannastiina: "Did you have something going on in your life, like any problems why you think that they wanted you to come to the Icehearts-team?"
> Child1: "I was probably too wild."
>
> Hannastiina: "Can you tell me for which reasons you were invited to the Icehearts-team?"
> Child4: "Well, I have always been kind of wild child, and I could not stay on my spot at school… but when my dad died. After that the school went very bad. I just could not cope with that, and I quit football and ice hockey, and all my hobbies ended there. So, the mentor invited me to come for the football training at Icehearts."
>
> Hannastiina: "At what point did you come to realize that this is not only about the sports   club?"
> Child4: "When I knocked one dude's nose to the cheek and… my mom did not know how to cope with that. Then the mentor dealt the case there…And also he helped in these normal life things and I started to think that this is not really a football team because he helped in so many things like at school and in any daily things."

Reasons for children from solo-parent families to join in Icehearts can be various. Each child has a unique life situation and a story behind. One of the mentors who I got to interview emphasized that no matter what kind of background the child has, joining to the group is important. Hämäläinen et al. say, that participation is the most common way for promoting experience of social inclusion. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5.)

> Mentor1: "It is important to get the child into the group. And whatever is the background, whether the child has solo-parent, or multicultural family background, or if the child has a diagnose, it is important that the child gets to join the group. It is important."

The mentors said that social inclusion of children from solo-parent families will be strengthened through the long-term support model in Icehearts together with the presence of the safe adult. When the child gets extra support and is away from home a while longer in the afternoons, the burden of the solo-parent at home will be lessen. Through this activity the child will get a chance to be part of a team, part of a community. Supporting the children in teaching the way of living and participating in normal things in life was also seen important.

> Hannastiina: "What kind of concerns are arising in the lives of children from solo-parent families, some concerns why those children are invited to the team?"
> Mentor1: "The concern might be that if a family with many, or actually it does not even have to be so many children, but if there is only on parent and three children, the daily living might be, not always, but might be challenging so, that for that reason you might be invited to us. And if you have a weak economic status, you will still get to come to a team or to a group. And if there are some substance abuse problems, that is also vital."

> Hannastiina: "How do you work for the strengthening of social inclusion with children from solo-parent families?"
> Mentor2: "In this long-term thing that we have, the presence at first place with all of the children."

> Mentor2: "To get the kids along with the sort of normality, that we go to a swimming hall, we go to the men's locker rooms. We go and eat out, and just very basic things. I think it is pretty essential to do the quite normal things, whatever it is what you do with the children. Go to a theatre, whatever it is."

6.2 Social inclusion in Icehearts

To find out the experiences of social inclusion on children from solo-parent families I focused on questions about fellowship and belonging to the community in Icehearts. Possibilities provided by the community are prerequisites for experiencing social inclu-

sion. Also, the individual must be aware belonging, aware of the possibilities to participate, and aware of his meaning as part of the community. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 p. 11). The children from solo-parent families felt that they belong to Icehearts. What has made them to feel that they belong seems to be that they have friends in Icehearts, they are invited, seen and heard, and that the mentor notices them. Participation in Icehearts gives joy in life for these boys and it makes their lives easier. It also has had a positive impact in their school performance. Some of the Icehearts-children used words like "we" and "our team", which refers to a feeling of inclusion, as they talk about "us", as an insider. Not about "them", as an outsider.

> Hannastiina: "What makes you feel that you are one of the boys in the Icehearts-team?"
> Child2: "That I am invited to the games, and I am invited to whatever we do. And I am being asked of "how are you". And all that, that I am not called by names, and so on."

> Hannastiina: "In life, in different things such as life at home, life at school, and life with friends… What does it have with those, that you participate in Icehearts?"
> Child2: "That when I come here, it brightens me up almost immediately. And then I can do my homework again. And sometimes when I don't come here I don't feel like doing anything."

> Hannastiina: "What does fellowship mean to you in Icehearts-team?"
> Child1: "That I belong to Icehearts."
> Hannastiina: "What does it mean to you, is it important that you have friends in Icehearts?"
> Child1: "Very important. That I can play with them and do other things."

> Hannastiina: "What does Icehearts mean to you today, when it has been two years since your Icehearts-team graduated?"
> Child4: "Well, I feel that this will never end. That our team still is, and I talk to the mentor still almost weekly. The Icehearts activity has probably ended, but Icehearts for us never ended. And the mentor himself, he has said that it will never end. And I agree."

6.3   Inclusion revealed in school performance

THL report reveals that the process of social exclusion holds risks in areas like low education and unemployment (THL, 2016). Like was said earlier in this research, participation is the way for social inclusion. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5). I wanted to know what kind of experiences the children have about participation in Icehearts as an influencer on their school performance, and does it give them a chance to experience social inclusion. The interviewees had clearly felt that Icehearts has impacted positively on their school performance, which is important for preventing exclusion. I dare to make a conclusion from this, that participating in Icehearts has had an impact on the school performance of the children from solo-parent families, because all the children mentioned

that their school-related matters have changed to better after coming to Icehearts. Icehearts has also made children's lives easier and more pleasant.

> Hannastiina: "Has Icehearts made your life harder or easier?"
> Child1: "A lot easier."
> Hannastiina: "In what kind of things?"
> Child1: "That my school things go well, and that I don't end up to bad friend circles anymore. Or to any stupid stuff."
> Hannastiina: "Yeah, can I ask what kind of stupid things you have done or what kind of bad friend circles did you have?"
> Child1: "We made a lot, stealing, and what not…"
>
> Hannastiina: "Have you learned anything for life at Icehearts?"
> Child1: "Yes, that I will have a better future, and that my school would go better, and that things at home would be better. And with friends."
>
> Hannastiina: "When you compare your life before and after coming to Icehearts, do you see there some kind of difference?"
> Child2: "Yes, in school now it goes little bit better now. Earlier I did not like to go to school, but now one friend from Icehearts goes to same school, it started to go better."
>
> Hannastiina: "Has Icehearts taught you something?"
> Child3: "I have to do the homework."
> Hannastiina: "Why do you have to do the homework?"
> Child3: "Because you would not pass in school otherwise."
> Hannastiina: "Why do you have to pass in school?"
> Child3: "So that you would know all the math calculations. For instance, if you want to become a clerk."
>
> Hannastiina: "In what kind of things in daily life did the mentor help you the most?"
> Child4: "School is definitely the most important, that is where he helped me the most. When he helped the guys around me, and I saw the other guys trying their best, it also helped me to try more too."

6.4 Inclusion revealed in life performance

Seemingly, participating in Icehearts and being in Icehearts-environment sets hopes up for life. These theme interviews show that participating in Icehearts was also seen as a facilitator for social inclusion. From the interviews I noticed that participating in Icehearts has been the key factor for hope in the boys lives, or the factor which turned their lives to a better direction. The change that they have experienced in their lives seems to be very important for them, and they seem to be even grateful for participating or that they participated in Icehearts.

> Hannastiina: "What kind of benefit you get for your life from participating in Icehearts?"
> Child1: "That my life goes on well. That my school goes well, and that I don't do any stupid things in school and like that…"

> Hannastiina: "Through Icehearts, how has your life changed…"
> Child2: "…to a better direction! Yes!"
> Hannastiina: "Do you want to share more about that!"
> Child2: "That there is no discrimination or bullying here, and that makes me feel much better, because sometimes at school I feel bad. So when I come here I feel much better than at school."
>
> Hannastiina:" Is there anything that you doubt that you would have not achieved if you never came to Icehearts?"
> Child4: "For sure there is. I have no idea where I would be now if I didn't join to Icehearts. The living started to go so wild at that point in the secondary school that I definitely have no-idea where I would be now."
>
> Hannastiina: "What do you think, that what has been the magic of Icehearts, which has helped a lively 7th grader boy who cuts the corners, to turn to another direction in life?"
> Child4: "It is definitely the mentor, and that I was able to play football, and the feeling of secure, and all the friends around me. That is absolutely it. It is hard to describe, but it is so big part of my life, and such an important thing to me. I cannot really put it into words."

The interview results show that Icehearts has also had an impact on the independency and self-help of an interviewee. According to this experience many things in life had turned into better direction with the support this boy got from Icehearts.

> Child4: "It helped me a lot when, you know I was 17 when I moved away from home. So it helped me big time back then. So I would have not, you know, because I did not have any studying place or anything like that, so I probably would have not even moved away from home. Now I have lived already 3 years on my own. So yeah, it helped me a lot."

The experiences by the mentors are on focus in exploring the strengthening of social inclusion among children from solo-parent families. When I asked from the mentors about the hopes for the future of the children from solo-parent families in their teams, the answers show that they saw a strong need for support in the lives of the children. The future of the children was seen literally fragile, and not only by the child's own life condition, but also because the solo-parent's condition might influence on the child's life and on his social inclusion.

> Mentor1: "Well, on some boys. How could I say, fragile maybe. That if, and as they are solo-parent's, and as the solo-parent is in a bad condition. So what do you do then, and at what stage something has to happen, if it seems like the daily life does not roll well, and the parent's resources to take care of their own wellbeing are not enough, not to mention the child's needs over there. If you don't have a network, it may show up very badly at someone's case."
>
> Mentor2: "Yeah, it absolutely demands that there is someone to push them further. The rope is pretty narrow which on the kids are walking, someone needs to help them stay on the rope. And hopefully at some point to widen the rope a little, so

that they would not fall from the smallest push. But at the moment we absolutely are at the point that every little disappointment and every little thing causes a huge crisis. So if it would be like that still when they are 15 that would be bad."

6.5   Inclusion revealed in Icehearts-sports team participation

Having a hobby can be the base for fellowship with friends. (Kinnunen, 2003 p. 130). Icehearts is also a hobby, and completely free of charge for the children who participate in Icehearts. The mentor coaches his own Icehearts-team in football, ice hockey, or floorball. The interviews reveal that the children were seemingly happy to participate in sports activities and sports-related opportunities in Icehearts. Team sports are social sports, and the experience show that playing with friends was important for the children in Icehearts. Football and floorball seemed to be something the children gladly join to play. Playing football with friends was even said to be the best thing in Icehearts.

> Hannastiina: "Can you choose what you do in Icehearts?"
> Child1: "Yeah sometimes. If we are for example in the gym I can choose what I do in the gym."
>
> Hannastiina: "What is the best thing in Icehearts?"
> Child1: "That I can play football with friends."
>
> Hannastiina: "What do you do with the other Icehearts-boys?"
> Child2: "I don't know, everything. That we for example play football."
> Hannastiina: "When you are at Icehearts after the school day, can you choose yourself what you will do?"
> Child2: "Well, sometimes it is put so that we have to play floorball, but if you don't want to, you can do anything else."
> Hannastiina: "If you are told to play floorball, will you play?"
> Child2: "Yes."
>
> Hannastiina: "Why is it nice to be in Icehearts?"
> Child1: "Because I get to play football and enjoy what I do."
>
> Hannastiina: "And attending to the games, back when you were still in the team, was it voluntary for you, or did the mentor have force you to go?"
> Child4: "No, no he didn't need to, it was voluntary. I was happy to attend."

The mentors told in their interviews about how they experience strengthening the participation of the children from solo-parent families in leisure time activities. One of them told that he might go the youth house visits with his boys. One mentor also saw that being in the team is more important than attending the sports events. The ways how to strengthen the social inclusion and participation of the children seems to be diverse.

> Mentor1: "Well, yeah I try to find them something to do, to go to the youth house, I try to be there with them if needed, now when they are in this age, that they can still be there and find some fellows."

> Mentor1: "Few are who don't come to, for example to the games. So I don't force them, but I do something else with that boy. That the boy would not think that if someone does not play football anymore, that his career in Icehearts would be over, it does not go like that. This playing is quite a small part of it, but the belonging to the group of course, then we do different things, to go on trips or something."

6.6   Relation to Icehearts mentor

I examined the research question "how social inclusion of children from solo-parent families is strengthened in Icehearts activity" by interviewing the mentors, but also the children. In order to find out answers to that, the theme about relation to the mentor in Icehearts from the child's point of view was examined. The mentor is in the core of Icehearts-operating model, which gives them a chance to strengthen the child's ego. The mentors in Icehearts are examples for the children, and they help the children in life to see their chances for the future. (Smolej, 2017 p. 13). This means that the mentor has a strong impact on the lives of the children. The fulfilment of social inclusion requires community where the individual has a chance to be seen, heard, and recognized as himself. (Rahikka, Ryynänen, 2014 p. 11). I wanted to know what kind of impact the mentor has on the children. The children were asked about how their mentor has helped them in life. The answers from the boys show that the support from the mentors revealed as help in issues at school, education, and even at work. They told that their mentors have come and have been present in the daily environment, for instance at school.

> Child1: "If my school has gone badly, he has helped me out with that."

> Child2: "Well, sometimes, he has come to my school, and sometimes he comes to the class where I am and helps me with some issues, for instance if I have not understood. He comes and helps me in those situations."

> Child4: "When my carpenter school thing sucked, for three months I just laid in the bed spitting in the ceilings, doing nothing. This is when the mentor said that now you will do, that let's go there, come work for us. So then, for six months I worked for Icehearts, after I had been doing nothing for three months."

The children also told that they are heard and noticed by their mentor. The boys told that they can contact their mentor anytime, and that they have spent free time with the mentor in quite normal ways. The experience show that the mentors and their help has been easily accessible.

> Child1: "I have been at Burger King with him, and we have been to sports store, and we have met on free time other ways too."

> Hannastiina: "Mentally, what has been the most important in being in Icehearts?"
> Child4: "Maybe that I always had the chance to call the mentor. So it probably has been the most important, that I have always known that there is this guy who I can call anytime, who helps me, or at least answers and helps if he can help. So maybe that is the most important to me."

The Icehearts-mentor shared in his experience that the children can trust in him, which is vital in the Icehearts framework for the bond between the child and the mentor.

> Mentor1: "They kind of tell me things, like that, that what they know that I probably would not rejoice so much about. But then if I know little bit so that I can help them put, and so, like tell me what has happened, they tell, and they dare to tell. And they dare to show their mind to me, sometimes to say straight on my face, not many times, but sometimes and that is also quite good."

7 Conclusions

My research aimed to answer to the questions how children from solo-parent families have experienced social inclusion in participating Icehearts, and how is their social inclusion strengthened in Icehearts activity. Hämäläinen et al. say that social inclusion is being, living, acting, and belonging in interaction with other people. As I look at the concept of participation according to Hämäläinen et al., participation is the strengthening matter for the experience of social inclusion. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5). When an individual feels that his participation is meaningful and that he can participate, his experience of inclusion can be defined as action-inclusion. (Rouvinen-Wilenius et.al. 2011, p. 52). In this research I found out that the children's experiences hold many feelings and thoughts where participating in Icehearts had influenced in those parts of their lives, which are vital for the experience of the feeling of social inclusion. These will be discussed in the next paragraphs of this chapter.

7.1 Solo-parent family and life background

My first research problem was to find out how children from solo-parent families have experienced social inclusion in Icehearts-participation. Icehearts-literature reveals that the work of Icehearts-operating model aims to prevent social exclusion of children and youth. (Smolej, 2017 pp. 5-7). Low threshold services are said to be the way to increase

social inclusion among the risk groups such as youth in the risk of exclusion. According to Hämäläinen et al., social exclusion is prevented through promotion of social inclusion. The experience of inclusion is said to be strengthened by participation. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann 2015, pp. 5-9). On page 9 of this Bachelor's thesis I wrote how there are many social risks with solo-parent family background. In my research I found out that children from solo-parent families have joined in Icehearts with a possible risk of social exclusion. Two of the children shared in the interviews that they were wild children when they joined in Icehearts, and there were also problems with coping with school performance. "Wild child" is an unspecified concept, but, to my understanding, this refers to incapability to control their own life. None of the children said their family background was reason for joining in Icehearts.

For exploring the second main problem of this research, which is "How is social inclusion of children from solo-parent families strengthened in Icehearts activities?", I interviewed two Icehearts-mentors. I received a response from the mentor-interviewees from their point of view it is important for children from solo-parent families to participate in Icehearts. They said that social inclusion of children from solo-parent families could be strengthened with the long-term support in Icehearts. Also, they saw that participation in Icehearts gives possibilities for normal life-related experiences in life for children from solo-parent families.

7.2   Social inclusion in Icehearts

Participation in social activities is said to provide experiences of inclusion (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 p. 13). Social inclusion is defined as a feeling of being part of the community, which requires action from both, the individual and the community. The experience of social inclusion needs a community where the individual is seen as a remarkable person as himself and as a valuable part of the community. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 pp. 10-11). As Child2 and Child1 stated in the interviews, their experiences of being in Icehearts have been positive. They felt themselves recognized and as a part of the community. One boy, whose Icehearts-team has already graduated, felt that their community, the team, still exists. When the boys talked about their teams, the boys talked about "we" and "us" which refers to the feeling of being part of the community. Having friends and fellowship in Icehearts was said to be important. The participation in Icehearts has increased the feeling of belonging among these children. Social inclusion is about the feeling of belonging to a community. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio,

Leemann, 2015 p. 5). As a short summary, the social inclusion of children from solo-parent families in Icehearts was experienced as belonging to the Icehearts-team.

7.3   Inclusion revealed in school performance, life performance, and in the hobby

The support of Icehearts-model touches everyday life of the children including school and the team sport hobby. (Smolej, 2017 p. 5). I researched the experiences of the children from solo-parent families on each of those areas in order to find out the answers to my research problems. As I wrote in the results-chapter, the children of my research received support from Icehearts for their school performance. Participating in Icehearts and the help from the mentor in Icehearts lead them more likely to do their homework, to try harder in school related matters, and even going to school has become nicer through participation in Icehearts. Also, the children saw that being in Icehearts gave them chances for a better future. The presence of the mentor and having a hobby has helped them to cope in their own life. Their experiences of feeling better in life after coming to Icehearts (Child2), and the vision of the impact which Icehearts has on their lives (Child1) show that they were aware of what kind of influence participation in Icehearts has had on their lives. I could say, that they were aware of their own performance and possibilities to influence on the changes in their own life, which, according to Rouvinen-Wilenius et al., is vital in experiencing social inclusion. (Rouvinen-Wilenius, 2011 p. 50.)

As I look at the experiences of the children from solo-parent families such as the positive experiences of football trainings and attending football games, it reveals same factors that the definition of action-inclusion has. Action-inclusion holds the feeling that the activity in the community from the individual's point of view is nice, it strengthens resources, causes good feelings, and encourages for continuous participation. (Rouvinen-Wilenius, 2011 p52). Playing in Icehearts with friends was said to be nice, as well as playing floorball. One boy said that he felt better with coming to Icehearts than going to school (Child2). These experiences seem to be nice, causing good feelings, and encouraging the children to come back to Icehearts again and again. This can refer to experiences of social inclusion.

For the questions about how the Icehearts-mentors see the future of the children from solo-parent families in their teams, the mentors answered that the future for some of the children from solo-parent families seems quite fragile, and it requires plenty of support to keep their lives on track. Social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families is

not strengthened only by participating the sports activities, but by participation in Icehearts in general. This gives more clarity to the research problem "How is social inclusion of children from solo-parent families strengthened in Icehearts activities?".

7.4   Relation to Icehearts-mentor

Social inclusion is an ethical ideal, where individuals in the community feel that they are remarkable parts of it, and that they can, and they want to function in the community and the world around it. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 p. 11). Social inclusion cannot be defined from the outside, but another person can be in a key role for another person experiencing social inclusion. Social inclusion arises in social interaction. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5). The mentors in Icehearts are very flexibly accessible, and often the first one who the child contacts when problems occur. (Smolej, 2017 p. 22). The mentors are in a key role for the children's lives in Icehearts, therefore also in the key role to promote the experiences of social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families.

The children felt that their Icehearts-mentor has helped them in life in various ways. School was mentioned by all the children when they were asked what their mentor has helped them with. Other education and career related things were also mentioned. Their mentors were said to be reliable persons, cool guys to hang out and talk with. Mentors were easily accessible. The mentors who were interviewed told that their boys in Icehearts trust in them. Promoting social inclusion is said to hold social participation in a key role. Small interactions in the immediate communities can be defined as participation. (Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen, 2014 p. 13). The children from solo-parent families told that their mentor comes to meet them in school, and in the class room, or they might meet at Burger King-restaurant. I believe that this kind of interaction is same kind of small interaction which Rahikka-Räsänen and Ryynänen talk about, and it can be defined as participation. Therefore, social inclusion seems to come true in Icehearts activity, because participation is said to be in a key role for promotion of social inclusion. In other words, when children from solo-parent families participate in Icehearts-activities, is it then the meetings with their mentor, or activities with the team, it strengthens their experience of social inclusion.

Based on the answers I found out that children from solo-parent families have experienced things in life through participating in Icehearts that are specific to the experience

of social inclusion, such as feeling of belonging to a community and feeling of being noticed and heard. The children from solo-parent families felt that by participating in Icehearts they have faced good changes in life. These experiences are affected by participation in Icehearts and interaction with the Icehearts-mentor. As a conclusion, the answer for the main questions is that the children from solo-parent families who participate in Icehearts have experienced fellowship in the community of Icehearts, and they felt that they are noticed and heard by other team members, and by the mentor. Their school performance has got better during and in Icehearts participation. The mentors in Icehearts saw that it is important to have children from solo-parent families in the teams to lessen the burden of the solo-parent at home, and to give extra support for the children. Everyday support will strengthen the experience of social inclusion of children from solo-parent families in Icehearts.

8 Discussion

In fact, I have partially controversial thoughts about my own research and the results what I came up with. Through this Bachelor's thesis I talk and share theory about social inclusion being a personal experience of an individual which cannot be defined from the outside. Still, at the same time I make conclusions of social inclusion what the children from solo-parent families might experience, which I conclude according to their experiences of participation. The way how I did this does not quite match with the theory that social inclusion cannot be defined from the outside. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5). What I could have done differently to this, is that already in the research interviews I would have asked different questions, always asking about their feelings of inclusion about each topic. Although, I don't know how that would have come out because social inclusion is probably not something a 9 or 14-year old boy dwells on. I still believe, that with the experiences that these boys had, the feelings of social inclusion in life are possible, because they have a good foundation for it now in Icehearts, or at least higher chances than without the support of Icehearts. According to the results, I believe that children from solo-parent families can experience feelings of social inclusion in Icehearts as a community, but also in life and in the society. Hämäläinen et al. talk how everyone feels the experience of social inclusion differently. When someone feels himself socially included, with the same "amount of participation" another might not feel socially included. (Hämäläinen, Kuusio, Leemann, 2015 p. 5.)

I believe that qualitative research was right method in this research, because that gave a chance to use the experiences from experience experts. I could have used a different method in the interviews, for instance something which would make young children to stay focused longer. I could have also used another way of setting up the questions for young children. I feel that the interviews with the mentors and the Child4 were easier, because they were able to share broad answers to the questions. I could have also thought the questions deeper in advance. Fortunately, the topics in the interviews were right for this research.

I believe that Icehearts of Finland will benefit of this research in the future, because they will get a basic theoretical review into the concept of social inclusion, and how it has been strengthened among children from solo parent families in their teams. They will also get an insight vision about how children from solo-parent families in their teams have experienced certain things which are vital for the experience of social inclusion. If they need, they can use this research in their international cooperation projects, because this is one of the rare researches about Icehearts which was made in English.

Despite the previously presented thoughts, I feel that my research gave me a broad understanding how social inclusion can be seen, and how the experience of social inclusion can be fostered. It also gave me a grass-root level sight of the experiences by children from solo-parent families about being in Icehearts. After the interviews and discussions with the children my only thinking was "Thank God for Icehearts". Children in solo-parent families can be in very vulnerable place in life, especially if they have other social risks in life than the family background, too. I came to the understanding that participating Icehearts can be a good thing for strengthening social inclusion of the children from solo-parent families.

This process of my Bachelor's Thesis has been a long journey as a whole. It has been a process with lot of ups and downs. I began this process more than a year before the return date of this paper. I could not begin with the process right away, due to my other studies. It took almost a year until I started with the actual work on this Bachelor's thesis. The process probably would have been more progressive, if I did not work full day and do other studies for my degree at the same time. But here I am, and I have learned a lot. No matter what, I am a winner to myself. I want to thank all the participants of this process, and who ever helped me with this Bachelor's Thesis. Also I want to thank Icehearts of Finland for all the important work that they do for the children and youth in Finland.

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Theme Interview Questions

Haastattelukysymyksiä

Poikien haastattelut:

1. Perhetaustaan ja elämään liittyvää
   - Kuinka vanha olet nyt?
   - Kuinka vanha olit silloin kun tulit Iceheartsiin?
   - Tapaatko etävanhempaasi koskaan, kuinka usein?
   - Miten yksinhuoltajaperhetausta vaikuttaa tulevaisuudenajatteluusi?
   - Onko sun isän tai äidin mielestä hyvä juttu että olet Iceheartsissa?
2. Osallisuus Iceheartsissa
   - Onko sinusta kivaa olla Iceheartsissa? Miksi, miksi ei?
   - Onko sinulla kavereita teidän jengissä?
   - Mitä teet muiden poikien kans Iceheartsissa?
   - Minkä verran saat itse päättää mitä teet Iceheartsissa?
   - Oletko kokenut tai koetko syrjintää tai ulkopuolisuuden tunnetta Iceheartsissa?
   - Onko Iceheartsiin osallistuminen sinulle myönteinen vai kielteinen kokemus?
   - Mikä on sinun mielestä parasta Iceheartsissa?
   - Mitä sinulle merkitsee se että olet Iceheartsissa?
   - Mitä hyötyä Iceheartsista on ollut sinulle elämässä?
   - Onko elämästäsi tullut helpompaa vai vaikeampaa Iceheartsin myötä? Perustele.
3. Kasvattajasuhde
   - Miten kuvailet sinun ja teidän jengin kasvattajan suhdetta?
   - Minkälaisissa asioissa sinun elämässä kasvattaja on auttanut sinua?
   - Millä tavoin joukkueen kasvattaja ohjaa ja opettaa sinua elämässä? Missä asioissa?

Kasvattajien haastattelut:

1. Yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten sosiaalinen osallisuus Iceheartsissa

   - Miten havainnoit sosiaalista osallisuutta yksinhuoltajaperheiden poikien koh-dalla työssäsi?
   - Minkälaisilla menettelytavoilla toimit yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten osallisuuden vahvistumiseksi?
   - Minkä verran sinulla on resursseja yksilötasoiseen osallisuuden vahvistamiseen yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten kohdalla?
   - Saako sinun joukkueen yksinhuoltajaperheiden lapset mielestäsi tarpeeksi tukea osallisuuden vahvistumiseen? Perustele.
   - Mitä muita ajatuksia sinulla nousee yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten kohdalla sosiaalisesta osallisuudesta ja sen vahvistamisesta?

2. Yksinhuoltajaperhetausta, ja elämä

   - Minkälaisista syistä olet kutsunut yksinhuoltajaperheiden lapsia joukkueeseen?
   - Minkälaisia huolia yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten kohdalla nousee?
   - Mikä on tärkeintä yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten huomioimisessa Icehearts kasvattajan näkökulmasta?
   - Poikkeaako yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten ongelmat ja syrjäytymisen riskit muihin lapsiin verrattuna? Jos, niin miten.
   - Poikkeaako roolisi kasvattajana yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten vs. muiden lasten välillä? Miten?
   - Minkälaisessa yhteistyössä toimit yksinhuoltajavanhempien kanssa? Mikä siinä yhteistyössä on tärkeintä?
   - Mistä osa-alueesta Icehearts-mallissa yksinhuoltajaperheiden lapset on eniten hyötynyt?

3. Yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten osallistuminen Iceheartsissa

- Millä tavoin lapset pääsevät osallistumaan itse esim. toiminnan suunnitteluun, tai toteutukseen?
- Miksi yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten on tärkeää osallistua Icehearts-toimintaan?
- Minkälaisen tulevaisuuden näet sinun joukkueen yksinhuoltajaperheiden pojilla?
- Miten tuet yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten Icehearts-identiteettiä?

- Minkälaisia havaintoja sinulla on yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten kohdalla oman arvon tuntemisesta, vastuun ottamisesta, ja osallisuudesta Icehearts-toimintaan osallistumisen myötä? Miten tuet näitä asioita yksinhuoltajaperheiden lasten kohdalla?