Systematic Review

Professional Skills in Family Support: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Family support encompasses a wide variety of professionals, sectors, and intervention paradigms that make it difficult to systematize and standardize the skills needed by the family support workforce. The present study aimed to describe the relevant skills of professionals, organize the main skills into different categories, and contribute to the development of intervention standardization guidelines in the field of family support. So, a systematic literature review was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines. The search was carried out in five databases and included the analysis of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods studies, and all studies were qualitatively assessed. Of the initial 3334 articles identified, 59 studies were included, and four categories were identified: professionals' qualities, essential skills common to all professions and contexts, specific knowledge, and theoretical approaches necessary for family support. Most of the studies were from the United Kingdom, qualitative, published in the last 10 years, used small samples, and included a specific group of professionals. The included studies did not specify whether some skills or characteristics were considered more effective in practice, and they had bias issues related to social desirability. The implications for family support practice are discussed, as well as the gaps to be covered in future studies.

Keywords: professional skills; family support; systematic review; PRISMA

1. Introduction

The well-being and proper development of individuals hinge significantly on the family unit, underlining the importance of family support services to safeguard their rights, foster social inclusion, and facilitate progress (Devaney et al. 2022). Family support, defined as a formal practice in services working with and for children, adolescents, and families, needs to be considered in a holistic, ecological, and comprehensive way(Herrera-Pastor et al. 2020). Grounded in the needs and strengths of both the child and family, the approach to family support should emphasize the importance of relationships, support networks, and community contexts in the understanding of family dynamics (Daly et al. 2015; Dolan et al. 2020; Herrera-Pastor et al. 2020).

The field of family support involves a set of activities and access to practices that promote the creation of informal social networks through programs that combine statutory, voluntary, and private services and agencies (Dolan et al. 2020). Family counselling, parental education, family mediation, service coordination, and family skill development are some examples of activities carried out in family support practice. These activities aim to strengthen and preserve families, prevent separation, and ensure early intervention in families potentially at risk (Dolan et al. 2020; Herrera-Pastor et al. 2020).

Family support is sustained by a combination of social science theories, making it a promising and comprehensive field of interdisciplinary knowledge (Herrera-Pastor et al.

2020; Jiménez et al. 2019). Also, there has been a growing focus on the development of family-oriented policies, at both the European and global levels (Dolan et al. 2020). These family-oriented policies refer to government actions designed to support families, improve the well-being of their members, and strengthen family relationships. Yet, high levels of child poverty result from insufficient or ineffective family policies, and have significant medium- and long-term social costs (Ayala-Nunes 2019).

Since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) in 1989, a consensus has grown among policymakers, academics, and professionals around the need to support families in fulfilling their parental roles. Parenting is understood as a valuable resource that should be supported and protected due to the crucial role it plays in the development and well-being of new generations (Jiménez et al. 2019; Rodrigo et al. 2015b).

Family support services should have a set of characteristics such as accessibility to families in communities, voluntary participation in activities, a focus on prevention, and the provision of a wide range of services (Balenzano 2021). However, there is a lack of mechanisms and resources to guarantee adequate family support for the well-being of children and whole families at the international and European levels (Dolan et al. 2020).

The Theoretical Foundation concerning Family Support Skills

Developed nations integrate family life into welfare policies, yet variations exist in child and family support services, influenced by diverse factors such as life conditions, national structures, and political trends. The way the state values children and perceives their well-being as a public responsibility influences the approach to family support. The differences in this level of responsibility can lead to disparities even within the same country (Ayala-Nunes 2019; Devaney et al. 2023; Dolan et al. 2020; Jiménez et al. 2019; Molinuevo 2013; Rodrigo et al. 2015a).

Family support practice involves working in a collaborative way and supporting different aspects of family functioning, since assisted families can have multiple problems (Zegarac et al. 2021). However, Devaney et al. (2022) identified some challenges that can negatively affect the provided services in the family support field, such as the need to balance the privacy of family life with human rights; institutional family norms that can create stigmas and barriers for certain families; traditional roles that may limit support to all family members; policies influenced by political agendas that may not translate into effective policies; gaps in policy implementation and provisions; and knowledge gaps that hinder the understanding of the real family needs and assessments of existing policies and services. Therefore, the lack of a systemic approach in policy and provision development can lead to fragmented systems that do not adequately address family well-being.

Family support practice requires a high level of skills, knowledge, expertise, and continuous professional development to respond appropriately and effectively to related challenges (Devaney et al. 2022). Thus, the family support workforce must include a variety of professionals and disciplines (e.g., social work, psychology, pedagogy, medicine, and law) (Jiménez et al. 2019).

The research on family support has used different conceptual approaches and professional practices (Jiménez et al. 2019). Child and family support services should adopt a multidimensional perspective, particularly pertaining to access to quality services and appropriate professional skills for supporting families and children throughout the childhood of the children (Dolan et al. 2020; Zegarac et al. 2021).

The skills of professionals in family support services are implemented in various contexts and structures around the world, often resulting in the use of different names for the same skill. Conversely, the same name is also applied to different skills (Zegarac et al. 2021). Therefore, first, it is crucial to define the skill construct as a complex term that refers to the ability to respond to complex situations in professional and personal contexts, through the conscious mobilization of practical actions, resources, knowledge, attitudes, and personal attributes. The purpose is to respond objectively, effectively, and tailored

to each situation in different areas of knowledge (Oliveira and Rodrigues 2020). Skills go beyond functional aspects or inter-personal qualities. They comprise the use of cognitive aspects and ethical values (Zegarac et al. 2021).

On the one hand, scientific evidence has shown that the use of skills by professionals within intervention contexts positively influences clients' and families' engagement, client satisfaction with the services, and the effectiveness of the intervention in regard to empowering and improving parental skills, and the positive development of minors (Cameron et al. 2013; Connolly and Devaney 2016; Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Gallagher et al. 2012; Gladstone et al. 2014; Hedberg et al. 2018; Muurinen 2019; Slettebø 2013; Trotter 2002). Conversely, the use of these skills is influenced by the professionals' engagement and perception of themselves as caring and helping people, the professionals' experience, and the significant challenges they face at work (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Kemp et al. 2014). The consensus among researchers is that using professional skills is important in family support practice.

Recently, the European Family Support Network (EFSN) proposed an integrative and inclusive model for understanding family support that combines three dimensions: practice, research, and policy (EFSN 2020). The main objective was to enhance professional practice and introduce new approaches to improve parental roles in these families (Herrera-Pastor et al. 2020). Thus, one of the main focuses of the current literature on family support is to analyze the actions carried out by professionals who provide parenting support, describe their practices, and consequently establish guidelines for improving this field of intervention (Dolan et al. 2020; Herrera-Pastor et al. 2020; Jiménez et al. 2019).

Identifying the necessary skills is essential to reflect on what represents and adds value for children and families concerning the family support services provided and the development of instruments to measure these skills (Forrester et al. 2020). It will also enable the standardization of these skills and a European understanding of the skills and qualifications of the family support workforce (Jiménez et al. 2019; Zegarac et al. 2021). This will ensure quality and objectivity in the provided services (Jiménez et al. 2019).

A systematic literature review (SLR) of the skills of professionals providing parental support could contribute to the development of guidelines that promote the standardization of these skills. It could also be beneficial to create a map outlining the key skills mentioned in the scientific literature that positively influence family support interventions.

In a systematic review of 40 studies by Zegarac et al. (2021), skills were categorized into three categories: personal qualities, technical skills, and specific knowledge. These categories highlight the importance of balancing technical expertise with learning from everyday experiences. However, the limitations included a focus on English studies and a lack of a quality assessment.

Organizations such as the Cochrane Collaboration provide clear guidelines and recommendations on the appropriate frequency for updating SLRs to ensure their relevance. Typically, an approximate period of 2 years is suggested (Higgins et al. 2022). Therefore, the limitations identified in the SLR of Zegarac et al. (2021) and the inclusion of studies limited to February 2020 justify an updated SLR. Three years have passed since the last review was conducted, fulfilling the recommended timeframe for its repetition.

Thus, the aims of this study were to (1) understand and describe the relevant skills of professionals providing parenting support; (2) organize the key skills into different categories, and (3) contribute to the development of guidelines that promote the standardization of interventions in the field of family support.

2. Methods

2.1. Type of Study

An SLR generates various types of knowledge. They are used to provide overviews of the state of the art in a specific field of knowledge and identify future research priorities; address research questions that could not be answered by individual studies to identify gaps in the primary research that should be revised in future studies; and generate or assess theories on how or why phenomena occur (Page et al. 2021). By summarizing all the

studies conducted on a particular topic, an SLR confers greater visibility by not limiting the conclusions to the reading of only a few articles (Vilelas 2022).

SLRs are a widely used method in literature review because they involve a rigorous structure of procedures using explicit methods to enhance a comprehensive analysis and assess individual studies. It is, therefore, a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable methodology (Harris et al. 2014; Page et al. 2021; Vilelas 2022). Also, it is a less costly scientific investigation that employs pre-defined systematic methods to identify all relevant documents for a research question, assess the quality of these studies, extract the data, and synthesize the main findings (Vilelas 2022).

Currently, there is a strong consensus on the rigorous methodology and the stages of the SLR process that must be followed: (1) formulate research questions; (2) produce a research protocol and register it; (3) define eligibility criteria; (4) develop a search strategy and define information sources; (5) select studies; (6) qualitatively assess the included studies; (7) extract the data; (8) synthesize the literature and interpret the results; and (9) disseminate the results (Camilo and Garrido 2019; Donato and Donato 2019; Page et al. 2021; Wright et al. 2007; Vilelas 2022).

The present study aimed to provide a synthesis of the published research in the field of family support, specifically related to the skills of professionals working in parenting support. Considering the methodological characteristics of SLRs and their advantages, this study seeks to contribute to the standardization of the skills of the family support workforce, which can have an empirical, practical, and political impact.

2.2. Procedures

The present SLR was conducted according to the PRISMA criteria (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; Page et al. 2021).

2.2.1. Research Questions

Two research questions were formulated: (1) What are the main skills used in the practice of family support? (2) How can these skills be organized into different categories to provide guidelines for intervention in family support?

2.2.2. Research Protocol and Registration

The research protocol was defined a priori to reduce potential errors and to ensure the objective conduct of the study. Subsequently, it was registered on PROSPERO, an international database of systematic reviews in health and social work, on 31 December 2022 (ID: CRD42022385283). The registration of the protocol enhances the overall transparency of the review, increases its visibility, and prevents duplication of the work (Vilelas 2022).

2.2.3. Eligibility Criteria

The following inclusion criteria were used: (1) studies about families whose children lived in a family environment and used family support services; (2) studies where an intervention was directed towards families; (3) quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method studies; (4) studies published between January 2000 and February 2023; (5) publications in scientific and peer-reviewed journals; and (6) sources written in Portuguese, English, Spanish, or French.

The results from the databases search with the following criteria were not included: (a) books, literature reviews, or academic works; (b) studies involving children or parents of institutionalized children; (c) studies related to family support for the elderly; (d) studies where the intervention was exclusively focused on the child; (e) ineligible studies for qualitative assessment using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT, Hong et al. 2018); and (f) low-quality studies (i.e., those with an MMAT score below 50%).

2.2.4. Information Sources and Search Strategy

The search in this SLR was conducted in March 2023 and carried out in the following international scientific databases: MEDLINE, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collec-

tion, ERIC, Web of Science, and PsycInfo. The following search strategy was employed: "family* support" OR "family* training" OR "support* families" OR "assist* families" OR "skill*" OR "standard*" OR "good practice*" OR "ability" (topic) AND "workforce" OR "professionals" OR "casa worker" OR "supporter" OR "social worker" OR "psychologist" (topic) AND "child*" OR "adolesc*" OR "youth" (topic). The strategy was adapted to the different databases when necessary.

2.2.5. Study Selection

Initially, the research results were exported to an Excel spreadsheet and duplicates were removed. The relevance of the studies was determined first by screening the titles and subsequently by screening the abstracts of the obtained studies in the previous step.

During the title and abstract screening and selection stages, a support tool was used, the Rayyan QCRI. This tool is a free online application that helps researchers in SLR and meta-analysis processes (Johnson and Phillips 2018). It aims to provide a comprehensive control panel for researchers and streamline the initial screening of titles and abstracts through a semi-automated process (Johnson and Phillips 2018; Ouzzani et al. 2016). It relies on the researcher's selection pattern to analyze probabilities for inclusion and make suggestions (Couban 2016; Ouzzani et al. 2016). However, this application requires planning before performing the SLR. It is important to use citation management software or a spreadsheet to collect the data and plan the next steps (Johnson and Phillips 2018). In this study, this was ensured by using an Excel spreadsheet.

After the title and abstract screening and selection stages, potentially relevant studies (i.e., they met our eligibility criteria) were submitted for a full-text review. Studies were excluded when the eligibility criteria were not verified. At least two authors were involved in all stages of the studies' review, and the selection was conducted independently and blindly. In the case of a disagreement, the opinion of a third author was considered.

2.2.6. Qualitative Assessments of the Studies

Critical assessment tools enable one to formalize the study quality assessment process and guarantee that the process is systematic, transparent, and replicable. The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed and documented using criteria from the MMAT (Hong et al. 2018). This instrument enables the assessment of systematic reviews that include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method studies (Hong et al. 2018).

To use the instrument, the researcher responds to two screening questions ("Are there clear research questions?" and "Do the collected data allow to address the research questions?"). If the researcher responds "No" or "Can't tell", it can indicate that it is not an empirical study and cannot be assessed via the MMAT criteria. For each included study, the suitable category is chosen and the description of the used methods is analyzed (Hong et al. 2018). For each type of study, five criteria are evaluated and graded as "Yes" (corresponding to 1 point) or "No" or "Can't tell" (graded with 0 points). The assessment ranges from 0 to 5 points, where the score can be presented as a percentage: 0 = 0%, 1 = 20%, 2 = 40%, 3 = 60%, 4 = 80%, and 5 = 100%. However, for mixed-method studies, fifteen criteria are assessed (five for quantitative methods, five for qualitative methods, and five for mixed methods), and the overall quality cannot exceed the quality of its weakest component (Hong et al. 2018).

Since the instrument does not define cut-off values, the categories for characterizing the studies are arbitrary and defined by the researchers. In the present study, the adopted categorization included three types: (1) studies of low quality, with a score below 50%; (2) studies of medium quality, with a score between 50% and 80%; and (3) high-quality studies with a score equal to or higher than 80%. Lower-quality studies were excluded from the sample.

2.2.7. Data Extraction

During the analysis of the selected studies, information was extracted regarding author(s), publication date, title, aim(s), country, type of study, study design/methodology, data analysis, type and sample size, main findings, and study limitations.

2.2.8. Presentation of Results

A summary descriptive table was created with information from each study. The results provide a narrative synthesis of the main findings of the included studies, structured according to the organization and hierarchy of skills presented in the studies.

2.2.9. Ethics and Dissemination

The present research was a secondary study, and ethical approval was not required since no primary data collection was conducted. The results of this study aimed to contribute to research development in the field of family support and were specifically geared towards standardizing the core of professional skills in parenting support practices.

3. Results

The search in databases yielded a total of 3334 results, but 34 were duplicates, resulting in 3300 that were further screened based on their title and abstract. After analyzing the titles, 383 articles were selected for the abstract analysis stage. From these, 93 were selected for the full-text review. However, two articles were excluded as their full text were unavailable. Consequently, 91 articles were submitted for the full-text review (Figure 1).

Of the 91 analyzed articles, 41 were excluded because they (a) did not address professional skills ($n = 29$); (b) were literature reviews ($n = 7$); (c) used samples exclusively composed of institutionalized children, parents of children in foster care, or social work master's students ($n = 4$); or (d) did not meet the requirements for applying the MMAT (Hong et al. 2018) and, consequently, for conducting a qualitative assessment ($n = 1$). From this review, 50 articles were selected for the final sample. Subsequently, the reference lists of the 50 selected studies were analyzed to identify other possible studies that might qualify, which led to 12 additional publications. Of the these, only nine were included, as the qualitative assessment score for three studies was below 50%. Thus, the corpus of analysis for this systematic review included 59 studies (Figure 1).

The 59 studies included in this study were published between 2000 and 2023 (Figure 2): from 2000 to 2004, 4 studies were published; from 2005 to 2009, 7 studies; from 2010 to 2014, 12 studies; from 2015 to 2019, 21 studies; and from 2020 to 2023, 15 studies. Most of the studies (71.19%) were published in the last 10 years, between 2013 and 2023.

The included studies were conducted around the world, including in Europe (EU) ($n = 32$), the United States of America (USA) ($n = 12$), Australia ($n = 8$), Canada ($n = 6$), and Costa Rica ($n = 1$). Regarding European countries, the studies were carried out in the UK ($n=20$), Italy ($n = 2$), Spain ($n= 2$), Germany ($n = 1$), Belgium ($n = 1$), Norway ($n = 1$), Romania ($n = 1$), Sweden ($n = 1$), Scotland ($n = 1$), and Estonia ($n = 1$). Two studies conducted in more than one European country were also included. Regarding the type of study, 37 were qualitative, 13 were mixed-method, and 9 were quantitative (Table 1).

The study samples were analyzed according to their size and composition. Regarding size, a sample was considered large with more than 500 participants, a medium sample had 100 to 500 participants, and a small sample had less than 100 participants. Thus, 5 studies had a large sample, 14 had a medium sample, and 40 had a small sample. Concerning composition, 34 studies consisted exclusively of professionals, 14 included both professionals and families, and in the remaining 11 studies, the samples were exclusively composed of families (Table 1).

Studies that included families were organized into five categories: (a) families at psychosocial risk; (b) families with children with disabilities and/or neurodevelopmental disorders; (c) families from the general population supported by early childhood services; (d) families with children facing serious health conditions; and (e) families from the general population with school-aged children (see Appendix A).

Regarding professionals, three groups stood out: social workers ($n= 26$), child protection professionals ($n = 11$), and nurses ($n = 7$). However, the studies also included other professionals such as psychologists, preschool educators, pediatricians, teachers, special education teachers, occupational therapists, speech therapists, lawyers, police officers, and doctors ($n = 27$) (see Appendix A).
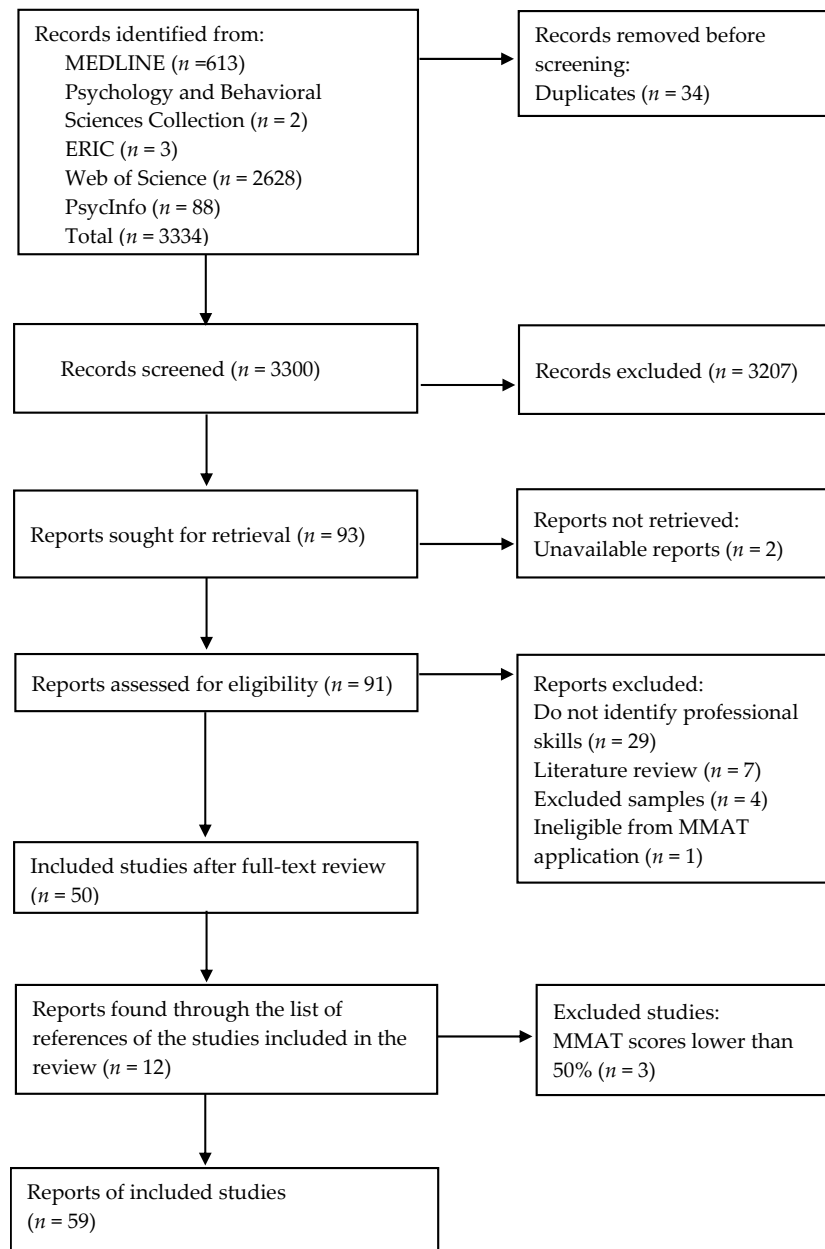
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Records identified from:        │───────▶│ Records removed before          │
│   MEDLINE (n =613)              │        │ screening:                      │
│   Psychology and Behavioral     │        │ Duplicates (n = 34)             │
│   Sciences Collection (n = 2)   │        └─────────────────────────────────┘
│   ERIC (n = 3)                  │
│   Web of Science (n = 2628)     │
│   PsycInfo (n = 88)             │
│   Total (n = 3334)              │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
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│ Records screened (n = 3300)     │───────▶│ Records excluded (n = 3207)     │
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│ Reports sought for retrieval    │───────▶│ Reports not retrieved:          │
│ (n = 93)                        │        │ Unavailable reports (n = 2)     │
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┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Reports assessed for            │───────▶│ Reports excluded:               │
│ eligibility (n = 91)            │        │ Do not identify professional    │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        │ skills (n = 29)                 │
                │                            │ Literature review (n = 7)       │
                │                            │ Excluded samples (n = 4)        │
                │                            │ Ineligible from MMAT            │
                │                            │ application (n = 1)             │
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│ Included studies after          │
│ full-text review (n = 50)       │
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│ Reports found through the list  │───────▶│ Excluded studies:               │
│ of references of the studies    │        │ MMAT scores lower than          │
│ included in the review (n = 12) │        │ 50% (n = 3)                     │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────────────┘
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│ Reports of included studies     │
│ (n = 59)                        │
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Figure 1. Flowchart of the SLR research and selection process. Note: Adapted from Page et al. (2021, p. 5).
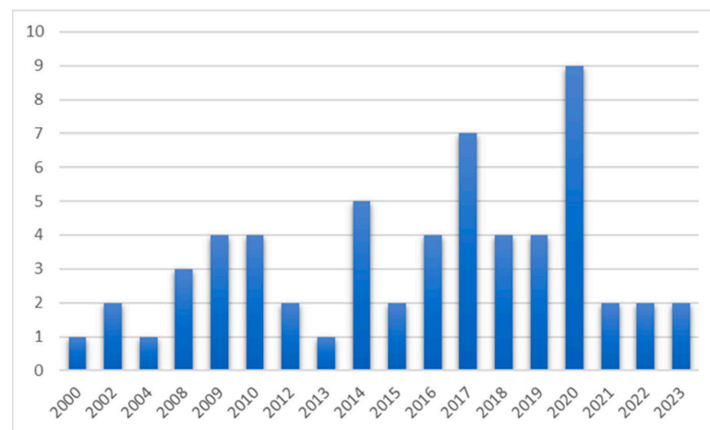

Figure 2. Included studies by year of publication.

Table 1. Characterization of included studies (*n* = 59).

Authors/Year	Country	Type of Study			Sample Size			Sample Composition		Data Analyses		Topics			
		Qua	Quan	Mix	Sm	Med	Large	Professionals	Families	Them Analysis	Descr./Induct Est	Qualities	Skills	Know	Appr
Littell and Tajima (2000)	USA		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Sheppard (2002)	UK			✓		✓		✓			✓	✓			✓
Trotter (2002)	AU	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Blue-Banning et al. (2004)	USA	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Platt (2008)	UK	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Devaney (2008)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
Whitton et al. (2008)	UK			✓	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	
Woodcock and Tregaskis (2008)	UK	✓			✓					✓	✓			✓	
Lawrence and Smith (2009)	AU	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
Winter (2009)	UK	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Lietz (2009)	USA			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	
Darlington and Feeney (2009)	AU			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Leake et al. (2010)	USA			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Tregeagle (2010)	AU	✓			✓				✓	✓				✓	
Nunes and Ayala (2010)	ES			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	
Gladstone et al. (2012)	CAN			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Fordham et al. (2012)	AU		✓			✓		✓			✓			✓	
Reimer (2013)	AU	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓				✓	
Gladstone et al. (2014)	CAN			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
Kemp et al. (2014)	USA		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Lindsay et al. (2014)	CAN	✓			✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	
Wolfe (2014)	UK	✓			✓				✓	✓				✓	
Biebel et al. (2014)	USA	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
van Houte et al. (2015)	BE	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
Torres and López (2015)	ES	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	
Oliver and Charles (2016)	CAN			✓		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Migliorini et al. (2016)	IT	✓				✓		✓		✓				✓	
Weiber et al. (2016)	SE	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	
Schaefer (2016)	USA	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Whittaker et al. (2017)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	✓
Brassart et al. (2017)	CAN	✓			✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	
Damiani-Taraba et al. (2017)	CAN			✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	
Westlake and Jones (2017)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	
Helm (2017)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓		✓	
Matei and Ghenţa (2018)	ROU			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Cort and Cline (2017)	UK	✓			✓				✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Dolan et al. (2018)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	✓
Mallette et al. (2018)	USA		✓				✓	✓			✓			✓	
Meysen and Kelly (2018)	DE, UK, PT, SI	✓			✓			✓		✓				✓	✓

Table 1. *Cont.*

Authors/Year	Country	Type of Study			Sample Size			Sample Composition		Data Analyses		Topics			
		Qua	Quan	Mix	Sm	Med	Large	Professionals	Families	Them Analysis	Descr./Induct Est	Qualities	Skills	Know	Appr
Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (2018)	UK	✓			✓					✓	✓				✓
Rawlings and Blackmer (2019)	USA		✓		✓			✓			✓			✓	✓
Jiménez et al. (2019)	23 EU countries			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓
Bernard and Greenwood (2019)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓			✓	✓	
Schultz et al. (2019)	USA			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓				✓
Stanford et al. (2020)	UK	✓			✓				✓	✓				✓	✓
Bosk et al. (2020)	USA		✓			✓		✓			✓	✓			✓
Villarreal-Montoya et al. (2020)	CR	✓			✓			✓		✓					✓
Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2020)	UK	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Saia et al. (2020)	EE	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Stabler et al. (2020)	UK	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	
Sletten and Ellingsen (2020)	NO	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Rollins (2020)	AU	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		
Forrester et al. (2020)	UK	✓				✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		
Corradini and Panciroli (2021)	IT	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓	✓		
Grant et al. (2021)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		
O'Connor (2022)	UK	✓			✓			✓		✓					✓
Georg et al. (2022)	DE			✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	
Alexander et al. (2023)	AU		✓				✓	✓			✓			✓	
Trawver and Brocious (2023)	USA		✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Total		37	9	13	40	14	5	48	25	47	23	24	44	19	11

Note: Qua = qualitative; Quan = quantitative; Mix = mixed methods; Sm = small; Med = medium; Them Analysis = thematic analysis; Descr./Induct Est = descriptive and/or inductive statistics; Know = knowledge; App = approach; USA = United States of America; UK = United Kingdom; AU = Australia; ES = Spain; CAN = Canada; BE = Belgium; IT = Italy; SE = Sweden; ROU = Romania; DE = Germany; PT = Portugal; SI = Slovenia; EU = Europe; CR = Costa Rica; NO = Norway; EE = Estonia.

Regarding qualitative assessments, 31 studies obtained a score of 100%, 22 obtained 80%, and six obtained 60% (Appendix B).

The identified professional skills were organized into four categories, according to the systematization proposed by Mešl et al. (2023): (1) qualities of the professionals; (2) essential skills for the family support workforce common to all professionals and contexts; (3) specific knowledge required for performing essential family support skills; and (4) necessary theoretical approaches for the performance of essential family support skills (Table 2).

Table 2. Organization of included studies by skill group.

Qualities of professionals		Littell and Tajima (2000); Sheppard (2002); Blue-Banning et al. (2004); Platt (2008); Whitton et al. (2008); Winter (2009); Torres and López (2015); Schaefer (2016); Oliver and Charles (2016); Whittaker et al. (2017); Damiani-Taraba et al. (2017); Helm (2017); Bernard and Greenwood (2019); Rawlings and Blackmer (2019); Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2020); Saia et al. (2020); Rollins (2020); Forrester et al. (2020); Bosk et al. (2020); Sletten and Ellingsen (2020); Corradini and Panciroli (2021); Grant et al. (2021); Georg et al. (2022); Trawver and Brocious (2023)
Essential skills	Partnership and collaboration	Trotter (2002); Blue-Banning et al. (2004); Whitton et al. (2008); Devaney (2008); Darlington and Feeney (2009); Tregeagle (2010); Reimer (2013); Gladstone et al. (2014); Wolfe (2014); Migliorini et al. (2016); Oliver and Charles (2016); Weiber et al. (2016); Whittaker et al. (2017); Matei and Ghenţa (2018); Mallette et al. (2018); Rawlings and Blackmer (2019); Rollins (2020); Stanford et al. (2020); Bernard and Greenwood (2019); Forrester et al. (2020); Corradini and Panciroli (2021); Grant et al. (2021); Trawver and Brocious (2023)
	Advocacy and empowerment	Trotter (2002); Leake et al. (2010); Tregeagle (2010); Fordham et al. (2012); Gladstone et al. (2012, 2014); Kemp et al. (2014); Wolfe (2014); van Houte et al. (2015); Oliver and Charles (2016); Cort and Cline (2017); Saia et al. (2020); Forrester et al. (2020); Corradini and Panciroli (2021)
	Good listening	Platt (2008); Wolfe (2014)
	Problem-solving	Littell and Tajima (2000); Trotter (2002); Lietz (2009); Migliorini et al. (2016); Oliver and Charles (2016); Schaefer (2016); Helm (2017); Rawlings and Blackmer (2019); Bernard and Greenwood (2019); Rollins (2020); Sletten and Ellingsen (2020)
	Building trust and confidence	Trotter (2002); Gladstone et al. (2012, 2014); Reimer (2013); Lindsay et al. (2014); Damiani-Taraba et al. (2017); Mallette et al. (2018); Stanford et al. (2020); Grant et al. (2021)
	Communication	Blue-Banning et al. (2004); Woodcock and Tregaskis (2008); Devaney (2008); Nunes and Ayala (2010); Wolfe (2014); Torres and López (2015); Westlake and Jones (2017); Corradini and Panciroli (2021); Grant et al. (2021)
	Information and referral	Platt (2008); Whitton et al. (2008); Darlington and Feeney (2009); Fordham et al. (2012); Biebel et al. (2014); Torres and López (2015); van Houte et al. (2015); Whittaker et al. (2017); Brassart et al. (2017); Rawlings and Blackmer (2019)
Specific knowledge		Sheppard (2002); Trotter (2002); Platt (2008); Lawrence and Smith (2009); Leake et al. (2010); Lindsay et al. (2014); Cort and Cline (2017); Dolan et al. (2018); Bosk et al. (2020); Gladstone et al. (2014); Brassart et al. (2017); Schultz et al. (2019); Rawlings and Blackmer (2019); Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2020); Sletten and Ellingsen (2020); Stabler et al. (2020); Stanford et al. (2020); Trawver and Brocious (2023); Alexander et al. (2023)
Practical approaches		Darlington and Feeney (2009); Kemp et al. (2014); Schaefer (2016); Cort and Cline (2017); Whittaker et al. (2017); Dolan et al. (2018); Mallette et al. (2018); Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (2018); Jiménez et al. (2019); Villarreal-Montoya (2020); O'Connor (2022)

3.1. Qualities of the Professionals

Several studies emphasized the importance of professionals' personal qualities or attributes in their relationship with clients (e.g., Winter 2009) because these qualities influence clients' satisfaction with the professionals and services provided (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Forrester et al. 2020; Rollins 2020; Stabler et al. 2020), as well as their engagement (Littell and Tajima 2000). In this SLR, 24 studies addressed the qualities of the professionals.

The studies identified a set of personal characteristics of the professionals that contribute to providing adequate and high-quality family support, including:

- Sensitivity (Platt 2008; Sheppard 2002);
- Respect (Blue-Banning et al. 2004; Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2020; Torres and López 2015; Trawver and Brocious 2023; Whitton et al. 2008);
- Trust (Bernard and Greenwood 2019; Blue-Banning et al. 2004; Saia et al. 2020; Torres and López 2015);
- Commitment (Blue-Banning et al. 2004; Torres and López 2015);
- Honesty (Platt 2008; Torres and López 2015);
- Transparency (Corradini and Panciroli 2021; Howarth et al. 2021; Oliver and Charles 2016);
- Empathy (Forrester et al. 2020; Georg et al. 2022; Grant et al. 2021; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019; Rollins 2020; Schaefer 2016; Winter 2009);
- Self-awareness (Bernard and Greenwood 2019; Schaefer 2016);
- Continuous learning attitude (Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2020; Schaefer 2016);
- Autonomy (Whittaker et al. 2017);
- Kindness (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017);
- Dedication (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Trawver and Brocious 2023);
- Curiosity (Helm 2017);
- Authenticity (Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2020);
- Patience (Rollins 2020).

The identified qualities can be developed and improved through learning experiences (Mešl et al. 2023).

3.2. Essential Skills for the Family Support Workforce Common to All Professionals and Contexts

The family support field covers a wide range of professions and it is, therefore, necessary to identify the common and essential skills for different professionals and contexts to ensure effective support for families. Several studies found that the use of adequate skills by professionals promotes positive outcomes for their clients (Fordham et al. 2012; Georg et al. 2022; Matei and Ghenţa 2018; Platt 2008; Trotter 2002).

Of the included studies, 44 identified the essential skills for the parenting support workforce. For greater systematization, the identified skills in different studies were organized into subcategories (cf. Mešl et al. 2023): (a) partnership and collaboration; (b) advocacy and empowerment; (c) good listening; (d) problem solving; (e) building trust and confidence; (f) communication; and (g) information and referral.

3.2.1. Partnership and Collaboration

To ensure that effective relationships are established with families, it is crucial to build collaborative relationships between clients and professionals, and this relationship must balance the construction of collaborative relationships with appropriate authority (Bernard and Greenwood 2019; Forrester et al. 2020; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019).

Collaboration between professionals is also fundamental to ensuring effective coordination between services and within intervention teams themselves (Darlington and Feeney 2009; Devaney 2008; Matei and Ghenţa 2018; Trawver and Brocious 2023; Weiber et al. 2016; Whittaker et al. 2017; Whitton et al. 2008). Overall, social skills are important for building relationships between individuals (Migliorini et al. 2016).

3.2.2. Advocacy and Empowerment

Professionals should have the ability to promote a positive change in the family, through the engagement and empowerment of its members (Cort and Cline 2017; Fordham et al. 2012; Gladstone et al. 2012; Kemp et al. 2014; Leake et al. 2010; Oliver and Charles 2016; Wolfe 2014). So, including clients in interventions and negotiating clear and mutually agreed-upon objectives are empowerment skills that foster active family engagement with services (Corradini and Panciroli 2021; Saia et al. 2020; Tregeagle 2010; Wolfe 2014). Additionally, reinforcing clients' pro-social actions (Trotter 2002), promoting behavior changes (Forrester et al. 2020), and using motivational skills (van Houte et al. 2015) can also induce positive change.

3.2.3. Good Listening

Two studies emphasized the importance of active listening by professionals, referring to the ability to accurately and empathically listen and understand both verbal and non-verbal behaviors of the family members (Platt 2008; Wolfe 2014).

3.2.4. Problem Solving

Some studies identified problem-solving skills (Bernard and Greenwood 2019; Trotter 2002) as essential for professionals to use in family support. These comprise critical and impartial thinking (Helm 2017; Lietz 2009; Oliver and Charles 2016), reflective practice (Helm 2017; Rollins 2020; Schaefer 2016; Sletten and Ellingsen 2020), decision-making skills (Lietz 2009), planning skills (Littell and Tajima 2000; Migliorini et al. 2016), effective resistance management skills (Rawlings and Blackmer 2019), and conflict management skills (Bernard and Greenwood 2019).

3.2.5. Building Trust and Confidence

Some studies pointed to the importance of building trust in the professional's relationship with the family for the success of the intervention (Grant et al. 2021; Lindsay et al. 2014; Reimer 2013). The establishment of a secure relationship between the professional and family is facilitated if the family understands how the professional can support them, which increases the commitment of both parties to the intervention; the professional's ability to engage (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Gladstone et al. 2012, 2014; Mallette et al. 2018; Stanford et al. 2020) also facilitates the building of trust and confidence.

3.2.6. Communication

Several studies concluded that effective communication among professionals, and between professionals and families is essential for efficient practice (Blue-Banning et al. 2004; Corradini and Panciroli 2021; Devaney 2008; Nunes and Ayala 2010; Torres and López 2015; Westlake and Jones 2017; Wolfe 2014; Woodcock and Tregaskis 2008). Therefore, adapting speech to the client, conveying information, engaging the client in bidirectional communication, and ensuring that the client has correctly understood the provided information are communication skills that professionals should employ in practice (Nunes and Ayala 2010; Torres and López 2015; Westlake and Jones 2017). It is also important to adopt a non-judgmental and welcoming attitude towards the family (Grant et al. 2021).

3.2.7. Information and Referral

Seven studies emphasized the relevance of providing appropriate information to families regarding their situation, the available family support services, and how professionals can support their positive development (Brassart et al. 2017; Fordham et al. 2012; Platt 2008; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019; Torres and López 2015; van Houte et al. 2015; Whitton et al. 2008). The identification of a family's needs enables an understanding of the areas that require intervention and whether referral to other professionals and/or services is necessary (Biebel et al. 2014; Darlington and Feeney 2009; Whittaker et al. 2017).

3.3. Specific Knowledge Required for Performing Essential Family Support Skills

According to the intervention context, professionals need specific knowledge regarding essential skills that can contribute to improved performance and, consequently, effective practice. In this SLR, 19 studies identified domains of specific knowledge in the family support field.

Eight studies emphasized technical skills, including confrontation skills (Trotter 2002); motivational communication techniques (Schultz et al. 2019; Stabler et al. 2020); intervention techniques that take into account cultural diversity (Leake et al. 2010; Lindsay et al. 2014); intervention techniques for domestic family violence (Cort and Cline 2017; Dolan et al. 2018), and trauma intervention techniques (Bosk et al. 2020). Nine studies reflected on specific knowledge at the intervention level, such as understanding the family context (Brassart et al. 2017; Gladstone et al. 2014; Hafford-Letchfield et al. 2020; Platt 2008; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019), personalization and adaptation of the intervention to the family needs (Stanford et al. 2020), psychosocial risk assessments (Alexander et al. 2023; Trawver and Brocious 2023), and the use of specific assessment instruments (Rawlings and Blackmer 2019; Sletten and Ellingsen 2020).

One study highlighted the need for specific knowledge about the country's legal and ethical framework regarding child protection (Rawlings and Blackmer 2019), and another reported that parents value professional's specific knowledge, such as specialized knowledge related to the child's autism-specific needs (Stanford et al. 2020).

3.4. Necessary Practical Approaches for the Performance of Essential Family Support Skills

Professionals base their interventions on theoretical–practical approaches that impact the use of essential family support skills. The most cited approach in the selected studies was the family strengths-based approach (Cort and Cline 2017; Dolan et al. 2018; Kemp et al. 2014; Schaefer 2016; Villarreal-Montoya et al. 2020). Other relevant approaches were identified, such as holistic and family-centered (Darlington and Feeney 2009; Mallette et al. 2018; Percy-Smith and Dalrymple 2018), person-centered (Percy-Smith and Dalrymple 2018; Whittaker et al. 2017), evidence-based (Jiménez et al. 2019), and relational approaches (O'Connor 2022).

In Appendix B, the objectives, main conclusions, limitations and/or strengths, and qualitative assessments of the analyzed studies are summarized.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to be an review and to surpass the limitations of the SLR conducted by Zegarac et al. (2021), and to identify the essential skills of the family support workforce and organize them into different categories, following the previous study.

The search in the selected databases identified 3334 studies, of which, 59 met our eligibility criteria and were included. We note that, despite the high number of results regarding family support in the conducted research, the number of studies specifically focused on professional skills was significantly low, consistent with Zegarac et al. (2021).

The present study included a larger number of studies ($N = 59$) than the previous review of Zegarac et al. (2021) ($N = 40$) and encompassed a greater number of countries, namely, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Scotland, Estonia, and Costa Rica. Additionally, we synthesized the selected studies in a new format, proposed by Mešl et al. (2023), which offered a more suitable and comprehensive categorization.

Regarding the analyzed studies, most of the research was published in the last 10 years (71.19%, from 2013 onwards), and at least one study per year was included, which was not observed in the previous period from 2000 to 2013. The largest number of publications also occurred in two periods, between 2015 and 2019 ($n = 21$), and between 2020 and 2023 ($n = 15$). These data evidence the recent interest of the scientific research community in professionals' skills, making it a developing topic in family support research, and thus justifying the relevance of the present study.

The included studies were essentially conducted in four countries: the UK (*n* = 20), USA (*n* = 12), Australia (*n* = 8), and Canada (*n* = 6). In Europe, three countries stood out: the UK (*n* = 20), Spain (*n* = 2), and Italy (*n* = 2). However, most of the published European studies were conducted in the UK, highlighting it as the European country that produced the most research in this field. Also, only two studies (Jiménez et al. 2019; Meysen and Kelly 2018) covered multiple European countries and concluded that despite a shared commitment to child protection, significant cultural variations in the interventions and policy approaches exist among countries (Jiménez et al. 2019; Meysen and Kelly 2018).

Regarding the type of studies, there was a clear preference for qualitative methods (*n* = 37) that allow for the interpretation of the meaning of subjective reality for subjects (Vilelas 2022). A possible justification for the preferential use of these methods may be the need to understand and systematize the skills identified by professionals and families from their direct experience. This understanding is crucial for subsequent standardization and measurements.

In the analyzed studies, most of the samples were considered small (*n* = 40). This represents a limitation, and it indicates limited sample representativeness which also hinders generalization.

Concerning their composition, the studies' samples consisted of parenting support professionals and/or families supported by services. A considerable diversity of samples is crucial because it allows us to understand and integrate both the perspectives of professionals and families, enriching the results. As professionals, social workers were the most common group in the studies (*n* = 26), consistent with Zegarac et al. (2021). Eleven studies mentioned samples that involved child protection professionals (e.g., Kemp et al. 2014; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019; Trawver and Brocious 2023; Trotter 2002) without specifying concrete professions, which represents a limitation of the studies. Future studies should characterize their samples in a more detailed way, which would facilitate greater generalization of results and, consequently, the possibility of standardization.

In the qualitative assessment of the studies, low-quality studies were excluded. The included studies were of average quality (*n* = 6) and high quality (*n* = 53). By ensuring the quality of the included studies, the results are likely to be more reliable.

Regarding the organization of professional skills, the results of this study seem to align with the categorization proposed by Mešl et al. (2023), and four categories were identified. These refer to skills expected in the context of family support, and their description allowed us to better understand which topics were more valued in the included research.

The intra- and inter-personal attributes of the professionals are important in their relationship with clients (Winter 2009) since they can impact clients' participation in services (Littell and Tajima 2000). Some studies also emphasized the influence that some characteristics of professionals, such as accuracy, empathy, kindness, and authenticity, impact clients' satisfaction with services (Damiani-Taraba et al. 2017; Forrester et al. 2020; Rollins 2020; Sletten and Ellingsen 2020).

Essential skills for parenting support, common to all professionals and contexts, were identified in 44 of the 59 included studies, making them the most referenced category in the studies, which suggested that the appropriate use of skills by professionals promotes positive outcomes (Fordham et al. 2012; Georg et al. 2022; Matei and Ghenţa 2018; Platt 2008; Trotter 2002) and higher levels of satisfaction in clients (Trotter 2002). The diversity of skills found in the studies highlighted the need to organize them into subcategories: partnership and collaboration, advocacy and empowerment, good listening skills, problem solving, building trust and confidence, user-friendly communication, and informing and referral. Within these defined subcategories, partnership and collaboration skills were the most cited, emphasizing the importance of collaborative relationships in intervention effectiveness (Rollins 2020). Collaboration is a key element in professional–client relationships (e.g., Blue-Banning et al. 2004; Grant et al. 2021; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019; Whittaker et al. 2017) and among professionals (e.g., Matei and Ghenţa 2018; Trawver and Brocious 2023; Whitton et al. 2008) to ensure effective and high-quality services.

Specific knowledge, another identified category, was related to the use of some types of technical skills (e.g., Bosk et al. 2020; Lindsay et al. 2014; Schultz et al. 2019), specific knowledge inherent to an intervention (e.g., Brassart et al. 2017; Gladstone et al. 2014; Rawlings and Blackmer 2019), and other fields of knowledge inherent to specific professional activities (Stanford et al. 2020). Regarding the specific approaches on which professionals base their interventions, the most referenced was the family strengths-based approach (e.g., Dolan et al. 2018; Schaefer 2016; Villarreal-Montoya et al. 2020), which appears to specify it as one of the key approaches in the family support field.

In this field, the professionals' qualities and essential skills seem to transverse across all professional areas. However, the technical knowledge and approaches adopted by professionals differed according to their expertise area. Nevertheless, specific knowledge and approaches upon which their interventions are based have an impact on the performance of the professionals' core skills (Mešl et al. 2023).

The included studies predominantly identified topics related to the qualities of professionals ($n = 24$) and the essential skills common to various professions and contexts in family support ($n = 44$). Thus, our results appear to reflect a greater recognition of general characteristics and skills applicable to all professional groups, regardless of the context in which they work. This allows us to standardize them in a comprehensive model for all professionals working in the family support field. It also highlights the importance of developing training or education for professionals that addresses personal attributes and essential skills, since both can be developed and improved through learning experiences.

5. Conclusions

The present study contributes to the development of the family support field by sharing an update and supplementation to the SLR conducted by Zegarac et al. (2021) and a systematization of the results according to the organization proposed by Mešl et al. (2023), which also revealed a synchronization among these different studies.

The organization of the identified skills included in this SLR allows for their standardization and generalization to professionals in family support, which hopefully contributes to the construction of a model of professional skills in this field. The present study also emphasizes the centrality of the qualities of professional and essential skills common to all professionals and contexts, which can be key variables to consider in future research.

The organization of skills into categories and the analysis of each study according to each category enabled the identification of two areas of potential intervention for professionals. The results highlight the need to focus the training and development of professionals on the qualities and the essential skills common to all professionals. In this regard, it is crucial, first, to understand and describe the existing training programs in the field of family support in European countries and the specific aspects they target in their interventions. Subsequently, a training program could be developed for professionals to directly develop or enhance their personal attributes and general skills relevant to the family support area.

This study aimed, in general, to contribute to the standardization of skills for the family support workforce. By organizing the results of various studies into skill categories and emphasizing those that appeared to be more valuable, based on the direct experience of families and professionals, the present study represents a clear scientific advancement in this research field, despite there still being a long way to go. The family support field is a current focus of researchers from various social sciences, and it is expected that more studies will emerge, particularly regarding the skills of professionals.

These findings are relevant and have potential implications for professionals and services. The topics of identified skills may provide valuable insights for developing what is likely to be helpful for children and families in practice.

The identification of professional skills for family support field is crucial to ensuring the quality of services provided, promoting professional development, standardizing services, evaluating performance, informing human resources policies, and strengthening advocacy and funding for family support programs.

6. Limitations

Some limitations were identified in the analyzed studies that should be considered. First, the professionals involved in the selected studies were predominantly social workers, which limits the generalization of results to professionals from other groups. It would be important to expand the study samples to other groups of professionals in the family support field, such as psychologists, educators, pediatricians, physicians, nurses, and lawyers, to improve the results' generalizability and standardization. Also, it would be essential to find out how to analyze the literature on family support skills in other areas and professions that may use different terms. Despite the description of skills, no study addresses whether there are skills or characteristics of professionals that are more effective. Finally, many studies indicated that professionals can describe idealized skills or respond according to expectations that may not reflect the skills they use in their professional practice. Thus, it would be interesting to develop observational studies to describe and evaluate the skills that professionals actually use in their practice to compare these with their perceptions and reported skills.

Limitations can also be identified in the present study. First, only peer-reviewed scientific studies with their full text available were included, which may have excluded relevant articles. It might be worthwhile to explore books, book chapters, and grey literature to investigate whether other pertinent studies should be integrated.

Our sampled studies predominantly included one professional group, social workers, which may indicate that the identified skills are mostly related to the intervention of this professional group and may not be representative of other professionals in the family support field. Future studies should ensure the inclusion of several groups to allow generalization to a wider range of professionals. As the aim of this work was to identify the skills of the family support workforce, the families' and professionals' most valued skills were not explored independently, which would be an interesting topic for future research.

Finally, despite the present study ensuring the inclusion of studies in four languages, it is possible that relevant studies in other languages would complement our insights and findings. Although the qualitative assessment was also a strength of this study since it allowed a differentiation in terms of quality levels and the inclusion of only those considered of medium and high quality, the MMAT (Hong et al. 2018) does not define categories for evaluating studies, which may introduce some subjectivity in the researchers' choices. It would have been important to complement this tool with another quality assessment instrument to increase the objectivity of the assessments and the instrument's validity.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Composition of samples from the included studies.

Author(s)/Year of Publication	Families					Professionals			
	At Psychosocial Risk	Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Disorders	Accompanied by Early Childhood Services	Children with Serious Illnesses	School-Age Children	Social Workers	Child Protection Professional	Nurses	Other Professionals
Littell and Tajima (2000)	✓						✓		
Sheppard (2002)	✓								
Trotter (2002)	✓						✓		
Blue-Banning et al. (2004)		✓				✓			✓
Platt (2008)	✓					✓			
Devaney (2008)						✓		✓	✓
Whitton et al. (2008)				✓					
Woodcock and Tregaskis (2008)		✓							
Lawrence and Smith (2009)						✓		✓	✓
Winter (2009)	✓					✓			
Lietz (2009)							✓		✓
Darlington and Feeney (2009)	✓						✓		✓
Leake et al. (2010)							✓		
Tregeagle (2010)	✓								
Nunes and Ayala (2010)									✓
Gladstone et al. (2012)	✓					✓			
Fordham et al. (2012)			✓						
Reimer (2013)	✓					✓			✓
Gladstone et al. (2014)	✓					✓			
Kemp et al. (2014)	✓						✓		
Lindsay et al. (2014)						✓			✓
Wolfe (2014)					✓				
Biebel et al. (2014)									✓
van Houte et al. (2015)						✓			✓
Torres and López (2015)		✓							

Table A1. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Year of Publication	Families					Professionals			
	At Psychosocial Risk	Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Disorders	Accompanied by Early Childhood Services	Children with Serious Illnesses	School-Age Children	Social Workers	Child Protection Professional	Nurses	Other Professionals
Oliver and Charles (2016)							✓		
Migliorini et al. (2016)									✓
Weiber et al. (2016)						✓		✓	✓
Schaefer (2016)						✓		✓	
Whittaker et al. (2017)								✓	✓
Brassart et al. (2017)						✓			✓
Damiani-Taraba et al. (2017)	✓					✓			
Westlake and Jones (2017)						✓			
Helm (2017)						✓			
Matei and Ghenţa (2018)			✓						✓
Cort and Cline (2017)	✓								
Dolan et al. (2018)									✓
Mallette et al. (2018)							✓		
Meysen and Kelly (2018)						✓			✓
Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (2018)	✓								
Rawlings and Blackmer (2019)							✓		✓
Jiménez et al. (2019)									✓
Bernard and Greenwood (2019)						✓			✓
Schultz et al. (2019)									✓
Stanford et al. (2020)		✓							
Bosk et al. (2020)									✓
Villarreal-Montoya et al. (2020)							✓		

Table A1. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Year of Publication	Families					Professionals			
	At Psychosocial Risk	Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities/Disorders	Accompanied by Early Childhood Services	Children with Serious Illnesses	School-Age Children	Social Workers	Child Protection Professional	Nurses	Other Professionals
Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2020)	✓					✓			✓
Saia et al. (2020)	✓					✓		✓	✓
Stabler et al. (2020)	✓								
Sletten and Ellingsen (2020)						✓			
Rollins (2020)						✓			
Forrester et al. (2020)						✓			
Corradini and Panciroli (2021)	✓								
Grant et al. (2021)						✓		✓	✓
O'Connor (2022)						✓			
Georg et al. (2022)									✓
Alexander et al. (2023)						✓			✓
Trawver and Brocious (2023)							✓		

Appendix B

Table A2. Aims, main findings, strengths, and limitations of the 59 included studies.

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Littell and Tajima (2000)	Identify two different components of parents' engagement in intensive family preservation services (FPSs): collaboration in intervention planning and compliance with program expectations.	The outcomes support a comprehensive view of intervention participation as a multifaceted phenomenon affected by client, professional, and program characteristics. There were external influences on the intervention and interactions between these factors.	While the study provides valuable information about multi-level influences on client participation, there are limitations in terms of explained variance, data collection, and the scope of considered factors.	100%
Sheppard (2002)	Analyze the effect of depression on mothers' capacity to engage in partnerships in childcare and family care.	Depression has a significant impact on mothers' capacity to engage in partnerships in childcare and family care, participation in decision-making and implementation of decisions. Social work practice should take these factors into account and may require high levels of sensitivity and specialized techniques (e.g., cognitive–behavioral therapy) to address them.	This work has political and practical implications, and highlight the need for greater attention to the mental health needs of mothers in child and family care.	80%
Trotter (2002)	Analyze the extent to which child protection professionals use certain skills and whether their use is related to better results for clients.	When effective practice skills were used, the outcomes were generally positive. Professionals believed their clients showed better progress, clients were more satisfied with results, and cases were likely to be closed within 16 months.	There is no clear evidence in this study that any skill is more powerful than the others. Most skills seem to be effective most of the time.	80%
Blue-Banning et al. (2004)	Trace culturally accepted common elements, as well as specific actions, attitudes, and behaviors that constitute collaborative partnerships, to achieve a more measurable consensus on their meaning.	The agreement between parents and professionals about what is considered positive behavior by the professionals is quite remarkable. Both parents and professionals emphasized the importance of communication, commitment, equality, skills, respect, and trust to ensure successful relationships.	The types of behaviors and attitudes that these participants suggest as components of positive partnerships, generally, do not require a significant investment in new resources for education and other service systems.	100%
Platt (2008)	Analyze the effects of more coercive and less coercive interventions on the relationships between social workers and parents.	The main components of the relationship between a social worker and a parent that were identified were the social worker's sensitivity, honesty, openness, provision of appropriate information, and accurate listening and understanding. A qualified professional develops a good intervention relationship in a variety of procedural contexts.	Predominantly, women were interviewed, so caution is needed when assuming that the outcomes may be applicable, for example, to a sample of fathers.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Devaney (2008)	Explore the opinions of childcare professionals about families with long-term and complex needs, with a focus on child and family characteristics, the intervention process with families, and the effects of organizational structures in practice.	Childcare professionals need strong interpersonal skills and access to specialized therapeutic services to support families with long-term and complex needs. Good communication between professionals and families is crucial for effective practice.	This study contributes to the growing body of research on interprofessional collaboration in child protection, which may inform policies and practices in this area.	80%
Whitton et al. (2008)	Evaluate a new palliative care service for children in rural communities according to the perceptions of both families and service providers.	Families assessed "respectful and supportive care" as the highest domain in MPOC-UK and "providing general information" as the lowest.	The Measure of Process of Care (MPO) has proven to be a useful tool for assessing how care is provided in a relatively small population. The use of MPO has enabled interventions to be targeted at the service's weaknesses.	80%
Woodcock and Tregaskis (2008)	Address policy and practice guidelines to make family support services more responsive and inclusive across a variety of parental contexts.	The main themes identified in the analysis indicate that social workers needed to adopt specific communication strategies to avoid excluding the parents of children with disabilities from professional discussions and avoid the imposition of professional pressure on parents to conform to professional agendas.	The perspectives of some ethnic minority groups and parents were excluded from the study, and the researchers' perspectives may not necessarily represent those of professionals.	100%
Lawrence and Smith (2009)	Explore how professionals approach the tasks of communicating, guiding, and advising families with younger children on disciplinary practices, and to understand how well-prepared they are to fulfill this role.	Professionals play an important role in supporting parents in using effective and positive discipline.	The study was conducted during a period when the amendment to the law banning the use of parental force for educational purposes was high on the national political agenda, which may have influenced participants' responses.	60%
Winter (2009)	Confirm the importance of relationship development between social workers and children. Question the ability of new development policies to facilitate these relationships.	Although the new proposals address some superficial structural and organizational factors, they do not tackle factors related to attitudes, values, and emotional skills that are crucial for social workers to build a successful relationship with children. Inter- and intrapersonal attitudes and attributes are very important.	The results highlight the complexity of the factors that hinder the development of relationships between social workers and children.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Lietz (2009)	Evaluate the level of critical thinking within the context of a state child protection program.	This study reinforced the need to increase critical thinking skills within child protection agencies to support professionals in the challenging task of making and articulating decisions in complex situations, such as those involving children's well-being.	The questionnaire was not a standardized measurement tool, which may result in inherent differences between individuals who completed the instrument and those who did not answer.	80%
Darlington and Feeney (2009)	Explore implications for practice of the interaction between child protection and mental health services.	Consistent support for parents with mental illness should include appropriate management of parents' mental health and attention to the family support needs, including a flexible approach to caregiving and support for children. It necessarily involves close cooperation and communication among the various service providers.	The conclusions support the importance of intersectoral coordination and collaboration, as well as the need for service structures that may support the immediate safety and continuous well-being of parents' children with mental illness.	80%
Leake et al. (2010)	Address the challenge of increasing culturally responsive practices within a safe and permanent context, as defined by American political and cultural values.	Training may be structured to support attitude and belief development, which enables greater knowledge, skill, and cultural sensitivity.	The assessment was designed to gather informative feedback on the design and program applied, creating a continuous feedback cycle for the project team to make ongoing improvements. The results suggested that many participants perceived this program as profoundly different from others about cultural skills, and it succeeded in improving awareness of the cultural issues faced by the Latino families it served.	60%
Tregeagle (2010)	Perform a qualitative study on users of two systems that are widely used in Australia: "Looking After Children" (LAC) and "Supporting Children and Responding to Families" (SCARF).	Children, young people, and parents reported positive experiences with case-oriented interventions: intervention goals were generally clear, processes were productive, and relationships with social workers were possible.	The service users identified barriers to participation and limitations to the assessments, and described diverse experiences with the interventions. Although the results challenged critics, they also suggest that LAC and SCARF could be further developed to better meet families' expectations.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Nunes and Ayala (2010)	Analyze the communication techniques used by pediatricians during consultations in child development follow-up programs.	Pediatricians use a set of limited techniques to inform, advise, and offer narrative support to patients. Significant differences were observed among pediatricians in the frequency of usage of most techniques. The lack of homogeneity among pediatricians suggests different communication styles, depending on the quantity and quality of the communication techniques employed.	This study allows for the improvement of pediatricians' counseling skills, removal of barriers in counseling, and reinforcement of the appropriate practices. The existence of different communication styles is a useful finding that should be confirmed with larger samples of pediatricians.	80%
Gladstone et al. (2012)	Understand what facilitates the engagement between parents and child protection professionals and determine the relation between this engagement and intervention outcomes.	The study demonstrates that engagement between clients and professionals is related to positive outcomes and supports the idea that the promotion of engagement is crucial for a successful intervention in child protection.	This study contributes to the demonstration of the importance of engagement as a part of the changing process in child welfare practice.	100%
Fordham et al. (2012)	Understand families' experiences with family-centered early childhood intervention services, and to explore other factors that may influence these experiences.	Providing general information, as well as specialized information about their children, to families was highly correlated with the empowerment assessments results reported by the families. Professional support was highly correlated with positive caregiving experiences.	This study provides valuable conclusions about the factors that have an impact on families' experiences with family-centered early childhood intervention services.	80%
Reimer (2013)	Explore in-depth multiple perspectives on the development of relationships among professionals working with families and parents when there is a concern about neglect.	Building trust is crucial for establishing working relationships with parents. Parents test the professionals' reliability and try to reduce perceived inequalities of power between them and professionals.	The study was exploratory and requires additional research to test the reported conclusions.	100%
Gladstone et al. (2014)	Analyze how professional skills are related to the engagement of parents with the professionals providing family support.	The use of specific skills by family support professionals has an impact on professional and client engagement and thus on client positive outcomes. Key skills of social work that reflect collaborative relationships with clients are necessary, resulting in the increased engagement of clients in the process of change.	There may have been a selection bias, as the parents and professionals who participated were more engaged since the beginning. This study contributes to the advancement in the conceptualization of the changing process involving parents.	80%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Kemp et al. (2014)	Explore the relation between family-centered practices and parental engagement.	The results empirically supported a connection between parents' willingness to engage and the use of strengths-based interventions.	The study emphasized the dynamic and often fragile nature of parental motivation and engagement, and the need for professionals to respond appropriately.	100%
Lindsay et al. (2014)	Explore social workers' experiences to provide culturally sensitive care to immigrant families with a child with physical disabilities.	Although social workers face multiple challenges in providing culturally sensitive care to these families, they act as cultural intermediaries to connect immigrant families to resources and mediate differences between the cultural orientations of patients and clinicians.	It identified the critical role of social workers but excluded the role of other professional groups.	100%
Wolfe (2014)	Analyze parents' perceptions about the United Kingdom Resilience Programme (UKRP).	The study supports and expands on previous studies, highlighting the importance of meaningful partnerships between parents and schools, providing new evidence to guide collaborative policies between home and school, and effective intervention practices with parents.	The sample size was small, and the findings cannot be generalized to wider populations.	100%
Biebel et al. (2014)	Explore the challenges in improving professionals' ability to implement an intervention for families living with parental mental illness.	It emphasized the importance of the identification of the complex needs of the family, anticipation of children's needs, and addressing the training and support needs of the team when implementing a family intervention.	The results contribute to the psychiatric rehabilitation field by emphasizing the need and support for specialized training for professionals to offer appropriate services for the family.	100%
van Houte et al. (2015)	Gain knowledge into daily professional interactions with parents in the context of a family support intervention.	The results suggested a delicate balance between professionals' commitment to involving parents and their expectations regarding parents' abilities to act in the best interest of the child.	The article highlighted the need to recognize power imbalances in partnerships and discussed the implications for professional relationships in child and family welfare interventions.	100%
Torres and López (2015)	Explore parents' experiences regarding their relationship with professionals at different stages of their children's lives.	The interviewed parents mentioned the importance of having competent professionals who can convey information, consider their circumstances and values, and establish a bidirectional communication process.	It was a descriptive and preliminary study.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Oliver and Charles (2016)	Describe a component of a mixed-method study in a large child protection agency in Canada, where 225 workers stated how they applied the ideas of strengths-based practice in their daily interventions.	The study suggested a useful model to assist professionals in understanding and navigating relationships in which they need to reconcile their authority and expertise with genuine support for the authority and expertise of their clients.	Further research is needed both in this child protection agency and in others to assess the extent to which strengths-based practice is congruent with other professionals' practices.	80%
Migliorini et al. (2016)	Analyze the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of professionals in educational services for children aged from to 6 years in Italy, and to examine the skill profiles of professionals from Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).	The professionals reported a greater need to acquire social skills in their relationships with children and families, especially in cases of psychosocial risk situations.	Valorization of an ecological and multicomponent perspective to assess the skill and quality of ECECs.	80%
Weiber et al. (2016)	Describe which types of support measures are available for families when one of the parents has an intellectual disability, and how this support is implemented.	Collaboration between sectors and communication among professionals was considered crucial to avoiding gaps in the overall welfare system. The lack of information links between professionals from different sectors was viewed as a significant problem.	Possible bias and limited representativeness of the sample.	80%
Schaefer (2016)	Examine the personal characteristics of a sample of home-visiting professionals who have excelled in this type of fieldwork.	Effective home-visiting professionals have certain personal characteristics that contribute to effective practice.	The study only analyzed home-visiting professionals who were considered excellent by their administrators.	100%
Whittaker et al. (2017)	Develop an understanding of the hiring and retention practices for health-visiting professionals by examining what current employees and new hires desire in their jobs, their professional aspirations, and what encourages them to start and stay in their positions.	Health-visiting professionals appreciated the opportunity to work with families to develop helpful relationships that foster person-centered practice and value sufficient professional autonomy to apply their knowledge and expertise.	Participants were self-selected and did not include those in the pre-application stage.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Brassart et al. (2017)	Analyze the knowledge of professionals about barriers and strategies to improve the engagement of immigrant parents of a child with a disability in the intervention.	Professionals highlighted the use of various strategies that may be seen as facilitators for the engagement of immigrant parents: (a) overcoming the language barrier; (b) developing a shared understanding of the child's condition, and (c) assisting the parents in understanding the intervention process.	This study only investigated the perceptions of the professionals. Additionally, it focused on the strategies used by a small number of professionals in each discipline.	100%
Damiani-Taraba et al. (2017)	Improve the understanding of the relationship between child protection professionals and clients through the development of a client engagement model.	Professional engagement predicted satisfaction with case outcomes and whether professionals believed families would contact the agency in the future. Client engagement predicted professional engagement, although it was presumed to be an interactive and reciprocal process.	Although the study attempted a representative sample of 11 child welfare agencies across the province of Ontario, these organizations may not represent all professionals and families involved in child protection.	100%
Westlake and Jones (2017)	Explore how social workers can communicate effectively using an interpreter. Analyze how professionals working with children and families describe their experience of working with interpreters. Analyze the challenges they faced in practice.	It was possible to communicate effectively through an interpreter. Specific techniques for communicating with non-native clients were identified.	This study emphasized the centrality of social workers' skills in managing mediated sessions by interpreters and improving practice for non-native families.	100%
Helm (2017)	Explore the ways in which professionals operate in child and family welfare teams to make sense of the information on their work.	Strict judgment was at the core of assessment practices, and it is important to make sense of what the collected information means for the lived experience of clients.	The presence of an observer may have led participants to act differently, potentially influencing the outcomes.	100%
Matei and Ghenţa (2018)	Analyze the quality of early childhood education and care workforce from the perspective of parents within the context of the early childhood reform agenda in Romania.	It highlighted the significance of a well-trained team in providing high-quality early childhood education and care services to positively influence the child's outcomes. The positive parental assessment emphasized the importance of communication and relationships between coworkers.	It allowed the outcomes to be generalized to rural communities, because the study was based on a representative sample.	60%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Cort and Cline (2017)	Explore opinions of women who experienced domestic violence to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of abuse on their role and identity as mothers. Use this information to guide professional practice.	Educational psychologists were identified as playing a positive role in expanding the evidence, increasing the awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children and families, supporting mothers in recognizing their parenting skills and strengths, and promoting positive parenting approaches.	This study explored mothers' perspectives, an aspect of domestic violence that has received relatively little attention in research.	100%
Dolan et al. (2018)	Revisit the central messages of family support for social workers dealing with children and families to establish connections between the findings from high-profile child protection cases in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.	It emphasized the value of person-centered and strengths-based approaches to engagement with families, which may contribute to successful outcomes.	It promotes a relational and strengths-based approach when working with vulnerable and complex families, for both social workers and other professionals, as well as family support.	80%
Mallette et al. (2018)	Examine how sociodemographic and work characteristics are associated with variations in attitudes of child welfare professionals towards parental involvement and family instability, and how these attitudes relate to whether they consider relationship and marriage education relevant to their efforts in supporting families.	Training programs that reinforce the value of parents in their children's lives and provide strategies for engaging parents in cooperative and low-conflict relationships with the child can enhance the skills of child welfare professionals in delivering holistic and family-centered services.	This study broadens the literature by providing perspectives on the characteristics of child welfare professionals who value the integration of Relationship and Marriage Education (RME) in their interventions.	80%
Meysen and Kelly (2018)	Explore the practical and ethical dilemmas for professionals to ensure child protection in the complex and non-clinical context of individual families.	Despite a shared commitment to child protection, there were cultural variations in intervention and policy approaches. Professionals often felt uncertain, caught between overly authoritarian actions and unwarranted inaction, struggling to find the right balance in safeguarding children from harm.	It highlighted the importance of high levels of professional skill in child protection work and the need to consider ethical dilemmas while preserving the dignity and autonomy of both children and parents/caregivers.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Percy-Smith and Dalrymple (2018)	Explore common factors in the trajectories of at-risk youth towards institutionalization, the needs of both youths' and families' experiences with services, and reflections on points where interventions were needed but not received.	It uncovered the need for a different approach in the response to families facing difficulties involving person-centered and holistic family support, along with a more reflective and relational approach to professional practice.	This study employed an innovative visual co-production called "river of experiences", which facilitated a unique and in-depth understanding of children's and families' experiences.	80%
Rawlings and Blackmer (2019)	Develop and test the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) for two scenarios, regarding its validity and reliability in assessing engagement skills in social work within the public child welfare domain.	Social workers can have a significant positive impact on client engagement in child welfare through the effective use of micro-skills.	Only a small sample and students from a single institution were used.	80%
Jiménez et al. (2019)	Advance existing evidence by providing an updated review with a focus on families at psychosocial risk as the target population and family education and support initiatives as the implementation format.	Ensuring an evidence-based approach remains a challenge for most European countries. For progress to occur, two areas of action were highlighted and should be included in the policy agenda of European countries: evidence-based interventions and a framework for standardizing professional skills.	The study considered only the perspective of a single type of informant.	80%
Bernard and Greenwood (2019)	Explore social workers' experiences in intervening with affluent families, where there are concerns regarding child protection.	This study emphasized the need for an authoritative practice and discussed the skills and knowledge required for effective intervention in cases of child neglect within affluent families.	The definition of families as affluent was based exclusively on participants' reports.	100%
Schultz et al. (2019)	Analyze the practices in the development of a community-based home-visiting workforce by describing the development and assessment of a university-based training certification program for home visitors and supervisors.	The training program received high satisfaction ratings from both professionals and supervisors with a significant increase in self-efficacy in the training topics.	Despite the demonstrated satisfaction with the training and self-reported use of skills, it was not investigated whether changes in the intervention behaviors of professionals lead to better outcomes for the child and the family.	60%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Stanford et al. (2020)	Investigate the positive experiences with professionals and services from the perspective of mothers of children with autism.	The participants valued the engagement, manner, and interactions of professionals and attributes of the service delivery and professionals such as knowledge, community building, and the development of practical skills.	There was not enough evidence, from the thematic analysis, to substantiate any relationships or directional connections between the concepts of best practices.	80%
Bosk et al. (2020)	Understand the relationship between the characteristics of professionals working with children and families, the adoption of Trauma-Informed Care (TIC), and turnover intentions.	Paying attention to how professionals' relational styles influence service delivery helps organizations to identify whether they align with adopted practical approaches and ensures proper supervision for the success of professionals.	There was difficulty in understanding whether the professionals' attitudes toward trauma-informed care corresponded to their actual practical behavior.	80%
Villarreal-Montoya et al. (2020)	Present the systematization of a model for family guidance interventions that are consolidated in the "Guiding Families" Extension Project (POF) of the National University of Costa Rica.	The systemic methodological intervention allowed professionals to promote learning experiences with personal meaning for families, which provides opportunities to work on transforming the family system and better forms of social coexistence.	The investigation process was not explicitly described.	80%
Hafford-Letchfield et al. (2020)	Explore the practices and meaning of "being a father/mother" and "caregiving" for family care professionals working with parents of diverse gender identities in the UK.	Good practices in health and social care organizations involve recognizing and respecting the diversity of families and all their members, and ensuring that services provided are inclusive and responsive.	As an exploratory study, there was insufficient data to perform an intersectoral analysis of professional experiences.	100%
Saia et al. (2020)	Explore the perceptions of youth, parents, and professionals regarding interprofessional collaboration (IPC) in the social rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Estonia.	Relational components were considered key factors in the provision of interprofessional services in the social rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents.	The results were specific to a particular context.	100%
Stabler et al. (2020)	Explore and understand how children and young people experience the time spent with their social workers and the skills that professionals employ.	It suggested that there is no archetypal "good" social worker. Instead, some skills were beneficial for specific children at specific times within the context of specific relationships.	Innovative research model.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Sletten and Ellingsen (2020)	Explore how social workers experience two commonly used standardized tools in Norway and how these instruments influence the professional role of Child Welfare Services workers.	The standardized tools in child welfare services enhanced the perceived professional skills of social workers and challenged their base professional knowledge, reflective practices, and professional accountability.	It focused on a limited selection of standardized tools.	100%
Rollins (2020)	Explore the social worker–client relationship from the perspective of practicing social workers.	The results confirmed the centrality of the social worker–client relationship in achieving outcomes and revealed a distinct practical approach, and the social worker–client relationship was seen as the workspace for the intervention, and the social worker acts as an agent in building the relationship.	It did not include the clients' perspective on the social worker–client relationship.	100%
Forrester et al. (2020)	Explore patterns of practical skills found in social work home visits to children and families.	Three fundamental dimensions of best practices emerged: care and engagement, good authority, and support for behavior changes.	It encourages other researchers to explore the complex and fascinating nature of practice and its relationship with intervention outcomes for children and families.	100%
Corradini and Panciroli (2021)	Investigate the experiences and feelings of 16 individuals regarding their parenting skills.	Most participants described a challenging journey, but it was also marked by positive experiences, emphasizing the value of a participatory approach. They particularly highlighted the importance of the personal characteristics of the involved professionals.	The decision to select participants through law offices resulted in the sample including individuals with a moderate to high income.	80%
Grant et al. (2021)	Explore how professionals and parents with mental illness experience their relationships.	The professionals' transparent, non-judgmental, empathic, and positive approaches, along with the ability to form partnerships and share power with parents, were crucial in building trusting relationships between them.	Not all professional groups involved in the context of mental health were represented in the sample.	100%
O'Connor (2022)	Contribute to a new understanding of how social workers engage in what the author calls "emotion agile practices".	The professionals' emoticons should be recognized as functional practices that inform relational practice, analysis, and evaluation.	The author's approach to emotions may have shaped the observations and discussions with the participants, potentially representing limitations to the data collection and analytical method choices.	100%

Table A2. *Cont.*

Author(s)/Publication Year	Aim(s)	Main Findings	Limitations/Strengths	Qualitative Assessment
Georg et al. (2022)	Investigate whether training in mentalization skills for professionals conducting home visits in the German IPI contributes to ongoing professional development.	A brief mentalization skills training for home visit professionals resulted in a significant positive change in the quality of working relationships with families.	The study did not include an independent control group.	60%
Alexander et al. (2023)	Understand whether the attitudes and beliefs of child protection professionals varied from those of the public regarding domestic violence.	Attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence impact how child protection professionals assess risks for children, which, in turn, influences the decisions they make regarding families.	The questions about participants' characteristics did not inquire about personal experiences of domestic violence.	80%
Trawver and Brocious (2023)	Contribute to the limited literature and assess an integrated coaching and mentoring program from the perspective of those who received mentoring.	The results demonstrated that a recently implemented mentoring program in a state child welfare agency was positively assessed by participants, who believed that the program made a difference in their ability to demonstrate the agency's practice model skills.	This study covered the pre-COVID and early COVID-19 periods, which may have impacted the data as it involved many significant changes in how the intervention was being conducted in this public protection agency.	60%

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