

ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΔΥΤΙΚΗΣ ΑΤΤΙΚΗΣ ΣΧΟΛΗ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΩΝ ΥΓΕΙΑΣ & ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑΣ ΤΜΗΜΑ ΜΑΙΕΥΤΙΚΗΣ

ΠΜΣ ΠΡΟΗΓΜΕΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΚΜΗΡΙΩΜΕΝΗ ΜΑΙΕΥΤΙΚΗ ΦΡΟΝΤΙΔΑ

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Μεταπτυχιακή Διπλωματική Εργασία

Οικογενειακά μοτίβα και παιδική κακοποίηση κατά τη διάρκεια της πανδημίας Covid-19

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Diploma Thesis

Family patterns and child abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic

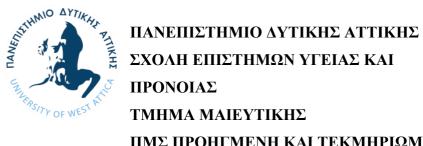
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Μέλη Εξεταστικής Επιτροπής συμπεριλαμβανομένου και του Εισηγητή

Η μεταπτυχιακή διπλωματική εργασία εξετάστηκε επιτυχώς από την κάτωθι Εξεταστική Επιτροπή:

Α/α	ΟΝΟΜΑ ΕΠΩΝΥΜΟ	ΒΑΘΜΙΔΑ/ΙΔΙΟΤΗΤΑ	ЧНФІАКН ҮПОГРАФН
	ΣΑΡΑΝΤΑΚΗ ΑΝΤΙΓΟΝΗ	Αναπληρώτρια Καθηγήτρια Επιβλέπουσα	
	ΔΑΓΛΑ ΜΑΡΙΑ	Αναπληρώτρια Καθηγήτρια Μέλος	
	ΝΑΝΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΙΝΑ	Επίκουρη Καθηγήτρια Μέλος	

ΔΗΛΩΣΗ ΣΥΓΓΡΑΦΕΑ ΜΕΤΑΠΤΥΧΙΑΚΗΣ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΣ

Η κάτωθι υπογεγραμμένη Πλαστουργού Μαρία του Χρήστου, με αριθμό μητρώου 20053 φοιτήτρια του Προγράμματος Μεταπτυχιακών Σπουδών Προηγμένη και Τεκμηριωμένη Μαιευτική Φροντίδα του Τμήματος Μαιευτικής της Σχολής Επιστημών Υγείας και Πρόνοιας του Πανεπιστημίου Δυτικής Αττικής, δηλώνω ότι:

«Είμαι συγγραφέας αυτής της μεταπτυχιακής εργασίας και ότι κάθε βοήθεια την οποία είχα για την προετοιμασία της, είναι πλήρως αναγνωρισμένη και αναφέρεται στην εργασία. Επίσης, οι όποιες πηγές από τις οποίες έκανα χρήση δεδομένων, ιδεών ή λέξεων, είτε ακριβώς είτε παραφρασμένες, αναφέρονται στο σύνολό τους, με πλήρη αναφορά στους συγγραφείς, τον εκδοτικό οίκο ή το περιοδικό, συμπεριλαμβανομένων και των πηγών που ενδεχομένως χρησιμοποιήθηκαν από το διαδίκτυο. Επίσης, βεβαιώνω ότι αυτή η εργασία έχει συγγραφεί από μένα αποκλειστικά και αποτελεί προϊόν πνευματικής ιδιοκτησίας τόσο δικής μου, όσο και του Ιδρύματος.

Παράβαση της ανωτέρω ακαδημαϊκής μου ευθύνης αποτελεί ουσιώδη λόγο για την ανάκληση του πτυχίου μου».

Η Δηλούσα

Πλαστρυργού Μαρία

Οικογενειακά μοτίβα και παιδική κακοποίηση κατά τη διάρκεια της πανδημίας Covid-19.

Περίληψη

Όταν γίνεται λόγος για ενδοοικογενειακή βία, συχνά το κοινό αντιλαμβάνεται αυτόματα τον όρο ως τη βία που υφίστανται οι γυναίκες, οι μητέρες και οι σύζυγοι της οικογένειας. Έχει γίνει εκτενής αναφορά στη βία που υφίστανται τα άτομα αυτά, αλλά υπάρχουν και άλλα μέλη της οικογένειας που είναι αποδέκτες της βάναυσης συμπεριφοράς του θύτη και δεν είναι άλλα από τα παιδιά που αποτελούν την οικογένεια. Είναι γνωστό ότι τα παιδιά πέφτουν θύματα βίας σε ποσοστό παρόμοιο με αυτό των γυναικών, επομένως κρίνεται σκόπιμο να μελετηθεί αυτό το τραγικό φαινόμενο, δηλαδή η παιδική κακοποίηση. Στόχος αυτού του άρθρου είναι να μελετήσει το πλαίσιο των οικογενειακών προτύπων και της παιδικής κακοποίησης κατά την πανδημία του COVID-19.

Family patterns and child abuse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Abstract

Up until now, whenever there had occurred a talk about domestic violence, it automatically described the violence suffered by women, mothers and the wives of the family. An extensive reference has been made to the violence they themselves suffer, but there are other members in the family who are recipients of the abuser's brutal behavior and they are none other than the children who make up the family. It is known that children are victims of violence at a rate similar to that of women, so it is considered appropriate to study this tragic phenomenon, which is child abuse. The aim of this article is to study the context of family patterns and child abuse in the times of COVID-19.

Definition of Family

The institution of the family is of great importance for Greek reality and is intertwined with the concept of two-way and profound love and support between family members. According to Giddens (2002), family is a type of organization of the private life of acting subjects. It consists of at least two members, who are usually bound together by blood ties or socially determined ties, emotional and/or practical reasons, and their relationships are governed by a matrix of rights and obligations. It could be said that Giddens attributes a more biological substance to the term in contrast to Mousourou (1996), who states that the family is the foundation of the organization of individual and collective life. The importance attached to it is mainly due to its role as a 'link' connecting both social and individual life and public and private life. As a social institution, the family is a public institution that refers to the organization of collective life, while at the same time being dependent on collective and social conditions. At the same time, however, the family has a private character insofar as it refers to the organization of individual life and contemporary societies, as well as depending on personal values, conditions and expectations (Mousourou, 1996). This extended rendering of the term examines the institution sociologically by placing the individual as a whole and does not leave it exposed to its uniqueness. In other words, when referring to the family, Mousourou (1996) does not separate its members and considers them individually, but places them in society and considers their interactions with it.

In conclusion, a definition given by the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) is presented, according to which a family is a "social group formed by at least two persons and comprising either a couple, married or not, and, if any, their unmarried children, or a parent and his or her unmarried children under the age of 25" (INSEE). Of course, it is obvious that such a complex term as the institution of the family cannot be defined in just a few lines. As it has already become evident, the family is a living organism with actions and reactions, each of which leaves its mark on society; this is what characterizes it in its entirety. It is an institution governed by characteristics of stability, and structural and functional structure. It has not only managed to survive over time, but through difficulties and challenges, it has managed to establish itself in people's consciousness and is now a structural element of society as it is known today.

In conclusion, as Mousourou (1996) states in her book, "Sociology of the Modern Family", "family as an institution has important purposes and a multifaceted task", meaning that it serves the needs of society, but at the same time it is charged with the role of integrating individuals into it, as it is the first agent of socialization of the individual; it is the first social group that the individual joins at birth (Mousourou, 1996).

Child abuse

The phenomenon of child abuse has not been observed in recent years, but it has been known for many centuries. Defining this tragic phenomenon, one would say that child abuse is the violence, mistreatment or even neglect of a child by the person who has undertaken his protection, such as a parent, brother, uncle, etc., and may occur in the child's home or some other place. For any of the above to be considered child abuse, it must cause fear, pain, feelings of dissatisfaction and discomfort to the child. Essentially, abuse is an abuse of power and a violation of the child's trust (Panagopoulou, 2007). In conclusion, the World Health Organization (1999) defines child abuse as "the abuse or maltreatment of a child and includes all forms of physical or emotional maltreatment, sexual

abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, or exploitation for commercial purposes, which results in concrete or potential harm concerning the life and development of the child, in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust and power". Consequently, the basic forms of abuse, which the scientific community agrees on, are four: physical, sexual, psychological (emotional, verbal) and neglect.

Sexual Abuse

Thirty years ago, the phenomenon of child abuse was considered extremely rare, as an incident of this type of abuse occurred at a frequency of two in a million. Nowadays, however, this type of abuse is the most nightmarish form of abuse a child can experience, and is now quite common. Of course, it is something that is accompanied by universality, as it is found in all societies (Chatzifotiou, 2005). Sexual abuse is much more common than people may think; this occurs as it is very difficult to report. It is extremely unpleasant for a child to relive through his sayings something so painful for him. Another reason for concealing the incident is the fear of possible punishment from the abuser as a consequence of the extent that this incident may take. These two, however, should not stand in the way of his freedom and his salvation. In the event that the child remains in an abusive relationship, the damages that will be caused are long-term and devastating, affecting their psychological and emotional state (Prekate & Giotakos, 2005).

Sexual abuse, although it may be often hidden, is relatively easy to be detected in a medical examination or even through the observation of the child. Sexual abuse has some characteristics, through which a health scientist can distinguish the signs of abuse. Some of these are difficulty to walking, refusing to participate in group activities, reporting nightmares, changes in appetite, or even pregnancy or the onset of venereal disease. The Children's Health Institute lists some more important characteristics of the dependence of the victim on the abuser and the lack of understanding of the concept of abuse and its content (Chatzifotiou, 2005). In addition, Prekate and Giotakos (2005) give some more characteristics of child sexual abuse. First, there is an unwarranted phobia of doctors and any medical procedure. At the same time, there is a fear of a certain person and a strong desire to avoid meeting him. Also, drawings that represent sexual acts are observed, as through the drawing the child captures his thoughts and experiences. Finally, there is a change in toilet habits as the child shows a strong need to use the toilet more often than usual.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse occurs when an injury is intentionally inflicted on a person (shock, burn, bite, punch, etc.), whether it creates a body impact or not (Avramika, et al., 2013). It is known that physical abuse to a child can only cause psychological problems and traumatic memories. However, most types of hitting that parents provoke in their children do not fall into the realm of physical abuse. What can describe this category are some repetitive and excessive methods of discipline. It is important to consider the cultural background of the family. In any case, violence as a method of discipline must be avoided and replaced by alternative methods that will not put the child at any risk. In order to differentiate the terms physical abuse and corporal punishment, there are two characteristics, which are the seriousness of the act and the cultural legitimacy.

According to Chatzifotiou (2005), it is difficult to give a general definition of physical abuse. Instead, it is suggested that there are four main elements that should be included in a definition. The first is to clarify the

intention of the action, the second is the reaction of the child to this action, the third is the reason why it happened and finally, the socio-cultural criteria of the family.

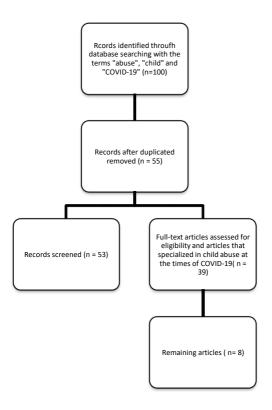
Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is something that is difficult to be detected; this occurs because emotional abuse does not have characteristic and distinct signs, such as physical abuse. Bruises, burns and abrasions are absent, while there is something that wounds the child more deeply and probably scars it for the rest of its life. In fact, several health scientists consider emotional abuse less important, compared to sexual and physical abuse. In addition, it is reported that it is difficult for emotional abuse to be detected by professionals, as it is still not clear what exactly constitutes emotional abuse, since the victims are silent, the symptoms are not clear and there are no findings in any medical examination (Katsiaounis & Mitaridou, 2021).

According to the UK Department of Health, emotional abuse occurs when a child's parents or guardians ignore them, make them feel inferior and helpless, and hold them responsible for not being loved by their parents. The demands of the parents are excessive and are not achievable given the age of the child, so the child is also frightened or stressed. All these characteristics get combined with the parents' avoidance of communication with the child and when it exists it is governed by insults. The latter may exploit their child and push them into illegal, anti-social and destructive activities such as prostitution. For Panagopoulou (2007), emotional abuse means the fragmentation of the child's psychological state and emotional stability, which is evident from the change in behavior, increased anxiety, traces of depression and aggressive behavior. Also, Theophanous (2014) mentions psychological abuse as "repeated behaviors of psychological abuse and usually accompanies the other forms of abuse, while it is the one that is more difficult to recognize and that is why the victims usually receive the least understanding and help".

Method of essay

The empirical part of this essay is to be conducted with the method of a systematic review. In order to discover, select, and critically evaluate pertinent primary research as well as to collect and analyze data from the studies that are included in the review, systematic reviews must be explicit and methodical in their approach. The procedures must be transparent and repeatable. Above there follows the shape that is required for the systematic review, the shape that shows the procedure of choosing the final number of the articles that are reviewed in this essay,



while there is also given a table that describes the studies that were used.

Authors	Title	Content	Design Type
ActionAid (2020)	Επιβιώνοντας από την πανδημία COVID-19: Με οδηγό τις γυναίκες	Domestic Violence, COVID-19, Women	Comparative Research
Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2020)	Συμβουλευτική Επιτροπή για την Πρόληψη και Καταπολέμηση της Βίας στην Οικογένεια	Violence, COVID- 19	Advisory Board Activities
Baron et al. (2020)	Suffering in silence: How COVID-19 school closures inhibit the reporting of child maltreatment	Child Abuse, COVID-19	Combination of three primary datasets
Gentilini et al. (2020)	Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures	COVID-19, Social Protection	Review of Country Measures
Guedes et al. (2020)	Five ways governments are responding to violence against women and children during COVID-19	Violence, Women, Children, COVID- 19	Survey

Sinigoros tou Politi	Εισηγητική Έκθεση.	Violence, COVID-	Report
(2020)	Η Ίση Μεταχείριση	19	
	κατά την Πανδημία		
UNICEF (2020)	Child Protection	Child Violence,	Brief Report
	Learning Brief #1 -	COVID-19	
	Responding to the		
	Shadow Pandemic		
United Nations	UN Special	Child Violence	Report
(2020)	Representative of		
	the Secretary-		
	General on		
	Violence Against		
	Children		

COVID-19 and child abuse

Concerning the cases that are brought about by the pandemic in the phenomenon of child abuse, it should be noted that there has been an increase in incidents of violent behavior against children, as well as an increase in adolescent delinquency. This increase concerns 10% and 30% respectively during the previous year according to a survey carried out by the organization "Protovoulia~gia~to~Paidi", a partner body of "Mazi~gia~to~Paidi" association. More specifically, there was recorded an increasing trend of incidents of physical abuse of children that attend primary school ($\Pi\alpha\iota\delta\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}~X\omega\rho\iota\acute{\alpha}~SOS,~2021$). Concerning at least half of these cases, it should be noted that the parents had no previous dysfunctions. They reached the point of using physical violence in order to punish and discipline the children, which must also be attributed to the fact of the universal "lockdown" due to the pandemic. In other words, it has been observed that the pandemic brought about an increase in cases of physical abuse, as well as obvious behavioral problems.

It should also be mentioned that there has been a 50% increase in requests from parents to provide counseling and psychological support given the conditions prevailing with the pandemic. This is particularly encouraging, however, because parents address experts in order to be able to manage any difficult situations that arise within the family environment and, in no case, they may resort to the imposition of physical punishments. Of course, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that there was also some increase in those incidents regarding the commission of delinquent acts by teenagers. Specifically, these acts concern burglaries and destruction of foreign property, as well as their involvement in the use of drugs and alcohol. However, it should be noted that there were also incidents of emotional neglect, as the expression of violence and the manifestation of delinquent behavior by children and adolescents originate from the emotional neglect of parents towards them within the family environment, as well as from the lack of respect for basic institutions of society (European Parliament, 2020).

According to research that was carried out by ActionAid (2020), women suffered the most the consequences of

According to research that was carried out by ActionAid (2020), women suffered the most the consequences of the imposition of measures to deal with the spread of COVID-19. Specifically, this category concerned either working women in the health sector or in other important sectors for society or women who faced increased cases of domestic violence. In particular, the cases of domestic violence marked an increase of 59% in Italy, 230% in Greece, 700% in Nigeria and Palestine as well as 983% in Bangladesh. As far as Greece is concerned, within a year and while the pandemic goes on, sixteen femicides have occurred in total, a number quite alarming, which

should alarm the state (ActionAid, 2020). At the same time, according to the statistics from the Greek organization *Spiti tou Paidiou* concerning the year 2020, *Xamogelo tou paidiou* provided services to 336 children, while it received 126 requests for children's therapeutic assistance; a total of 195 children continue to receive therapeutic services (Το Χαμόγελο του Παιδιού, 2020).

According to a 2020 report of *Sinigoros tou Politi*, regarding equal treatment during the pandemic period, it seems that, during the pandemic period, the Authority was particularly concerned with the aggravation of the phenomenon of domestic violence-gender violence during the period of application of the restrictive measures, as well as the increased risk faced by the victims due to the curfew and the time spent under house arrest. Specifically, with regard to domestic violence, it appears that, in addition to wives or partners, people who belong to vulnerable groups, people with disabilities, the elderly, asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants, LGBTI+ were also threatened ($O \Sigma \nu \nu \dot{\eta} \gamma o \rho o \zeta \tau o \nu \Pi o \lambda \dot{\iota} \tau \eta$, 2020).

In addition, it is worth noting that in Cyprus, according to research that was carried out by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (2020), a dramatic increase in incidents of domestic violence against children and women was observed, something that is inextricably linked to the outbreak of the pandemic. Specifically, since the 9th of March to the 17th of March 2020, 750 calls for domestic violence were recorded; also, four requests for individual counseling as well as five requests for admission to accommodation facilities were recorded too. In practice, these figures correspond to a 30% increase in domestic violence incidents in Cyprus.

According to a Report of the Greek Police (2020), during the year 2020, where there was a universal lockdown, there was a significant increase in incidents of domestic violence compared to the year 2019. Specifically, 192 incidents of domestic violence were recorded compared to the previous year, with 73% of the victims being women and 82.5% of the perpetrators being men. In fact, 48% of the attacks involve bodily harm, while 44% of the incidents involve threats in general. According to data from the Greek Police, there is a slight increase in incidents of domestic violence in the year 2020, the number of which amounts to 5,413 in total from the 5,222 incidents that occurred in the previous year of 2019. The ages of the perpetrators are also of particular interest, in a percentage of 32% and 33% range between 35-45 years and from 45 to 60 years respectively.

According to research by Baron et al. (2020), most K-12 public schools in the United States of America were closed in March 2020 to contain the spread of Covid-19. However, it was noted that, while one might have expected the stress caused by the blanket ban due to the pandemic to lead to a spike in child abuse cases, it was found that the actual number of complaints reported overall was lower by a percentage of the order of 27% of what was expected for the two months that the "lockdown" was in effect.

Furthermore, according to research conducted by UNICEF (2020), China witnessed 162 reports of domestic violence in February, 2020, compared to 47 reports pf 2019, an increase attributed to the pandemic-related impact. Colombia reported an overall 250% increase in incidents of abuse against women in the first two weeks of the coronavirus lockdown. In Cyprus and Singapore there was a 30% and 33% increase respectively in telephone reports of abuse incidents, while in Argentina during the general curfew and enforcement of measures against the spread of the coronavirus, there was a 25% increase in emergency calls (UNICEF, 2020).

Moreover, according to research by Gentilini et al. (2020), during the early stages of COVID-19, children were

usually treated as invisible carriers that posed a risk of infection to others. Globally, over 1 billion children aged 2 to 17 each year experience incidents of sexual, emotional or even physical violence. Therefore, understanding the relationship between the spread of the pandemic and violence against children is a particularly complex issue for which measures were taken during the pandemic - and continue to be to some extent - and which can affect both the experience of abuse and incident reporting rates. For example, in a study that was conducted in the United States of America in Florida (Gentilini et al., 2020), there was a decrease in emergency calls to child abuse lines precisely because schools were closed and there was an inability to communicate with teachers. In contrast to Florida, in Venezuela and Colombia there was an increased tendency to the use of child abuse hotlines. In 2017, with the outbreak of the cholera epidemic in Yemen, several sick children were sleeping outside the treatment centers and thus exposed to an increased risk of harassment and abuse. Something similar seems to have happened with the Ebola virus epidemic in Sierra Leone and the Congo, while the rates of child abuse that were recorded during the coronavirus pandemic are also worrying, a situation which must awaken society in order to receive overall more measures against the spread of all sectors combined with the phenomenon of child abuse (Gentilini et al., 2020).

According to Guedes et al. (2020), regarding the ways in which governments reacted to violence against women and children during the coronavirus, it is noted that related factors such as social isolation and confinement better meet the demands of the pandemic. More specifically, the article recommends expanding helplines and information sharing, funding shelters and other safe housing options for domestic violence survivors, expanding access to services for survivors, additional violence-related risk reduction factors such as banning the sale of alcoholic products, a measure taken by the Government of Ireland and the Government of South Africa. Finally, as a solution, the Australian government proposed the amendment of the provisions of family law and the justice system in general. In particular, in Australia, courts were allowed to impose electronic monitoring requirements for bail and suspended prison terms, while also standardizing a new offense with an increased fine and extending the statute of limitations for restraining orders in cases of abuse (Guedes et al., 2020).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that eight United Nations entities have already presented an agenda to protect children from violence in response to COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020). More specifically, the agenda calls for a strong mobilization of governments, society and citizens, as well as the private sector to ensure social protection, health and the protection of services related to the rights of the child. The agenda also mentions a section on the rights of the child and the framework for action for children, while recalling that all decisions and activities concerning children must be guided by a specific principle, namely the principle of the best interests of the child in Convention on the Rights of the Child. Finally, the United Nations Interagency Working Group on Violence against Children (2020) calls on the international community to work and respond to the pandemic and child abuse issues from a three-pronged perspective: more information, more solidarity and more rights for the child.

Conclusion

Violence means any illegal act, omission or behavior that directly causes physical, sexual or mental harm to any member of the family by another member of the family and includes violence that is used with the aim of achieving sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim, as well as the limitation of his freedom. In fact, in the event that such an act or omission or behavior is performed before a minor, then this act is considered a criminal offense. Abusive behavior leads to the disrupting of the smooth communication and interaction of family members, as well as it disrupts the unifying fabric of the family institution. It is observed, in a reasonable way, that the prevalence of this phenomenon of abuse negates the assumption of family roles, which is necessary in a privileged state as a "foundation stone" for the smooth and proper functioning of the family.

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