



PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE FOR PARENTS

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NATIONAL DESK RESEARCH

Poland 2021

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Introduction

According to the last report of the Center of Public Opinion Research (CBOS) nearly 80% of Poles consider family happiness as the most important value in their lives. This percentage remains unchanged for nearly 11 years in a row. The second most important factor of happy life is declared to be a „good health”, which with the score of only 55 % stays far behind the number one- „family”. (CBOS Report: „Family, the meaning and understanding”- January 2019).

Nearly 9 out of 10 respondents in this survey claim they cannot find themselves truly happy without having a happy family life.

Polish family bonds are considered to be strong and stable. This is connected with a huge population density as well as with a high frequency of family meetings in our country.

In Poland we used to have a very traditional model of family and children upbringing mostly based on strong Catholic values, which, however, has been transformed lately to a more secular model.

Still most of Polish families are built on a dominant patriarchal system with strong catholic values, which results in a traditional way of upbringing children based on a reward and punishment system.

Nevertheless, in the recent years we can notice some significant changes here. New concepts of family models are winning a popularity in our country.

The preferred family model has changed over a span of the last 15 years. The conviction that equal division of career and household duties is appropriate grows, in spite of a temporary drop in 2006. The mixed model of both partners working but the woman doing the chores also gains in popularity vis-à-vis the traditional model.

On the other hand many parents in Poland are now getting more and more open to different models of parenting such as attachment parenting or methods of self regulations helping them to deal with everyday parental challenges. Ideas such as Self-reg or mindfulness are gaining popularity over the recent years. That process is accompanied by the general change in the structure of the Polish society.

Family model in Poland.

Regardless of how they live, Poles most often consider it best to live in a nuclear family consisting of parents and children. Over half of adults (55%) indicated such a model. Almost a third (32%) prefer life in a large, multi-generational family. Other models were rarely chosen as optimal. (CBOS, Report on Preferred and actual family models, April 2019).

However, in recent statistics we can notice a growing number of single parents as well as divorced ones. This tendency seems even to escalate in the couple of last months due to the pandemic of Covid- 19.

There were 145 thousand new marriages in Poland in 2020, which makes in total over 38 thousand less comparing to 2019 - says the latest report of the Central Statistical Office. Moreover, according to the same report, in 2020 we had over 50 thousand divorced couples in Poland. There is also a constantly growing number of children being born to unmarried couples, and it constitutes now over 25 per cent of the total number of births in Poland (General Statistical Office Report: „Demographic Situation in Poland” – August 2019).

According to Eurostat and General Statistical Office Poland is now placed at the top of European countries with the biggest amount of single parents, reaching at the moment over 2.5 million single parents, which constitutes nearly 20 per cent of the total number of parents in our country. The greater percentage of single parents in Europe can be only found in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Slovakia. What also may draw a special attention here is the fact that only 2.8 per cent of the total number of single parents in Poland are men.

Almost half of Poles (48%) consider the so-called partnership model to be the best for the family. In this model, partners equally devote time to work and household duties. About a quarter (27%) support the mixed model, in which both partners work, but the woman combines career with housework and childcare. More than one-fifth claim that the husband (male partner) should support the family, while the wife (female partner) should care for the household. This is the so-called traditional model.

Nearly all respondents declare they want to have children, while 4% would rather not have them. Every tenth Pole (10%) would like only one child, while half (47%) want two, and a quarter (28%) want three. One in fourteen (7%) want four children or more. Compared with 2013, only small changes in the desired number of children have been recorded. Presently, the number of respondents who want none is slightly higher, but still very low. As before, the largest group would like two children, while the number of people who would like three has slightly increased. The number of respondents who want four or more children has fallen.

On the other hand what may be considered sort of unusual here comparing to the declarations is the fact that nearly one -fourth of Polish families do not have children at all.

Pro-family actions at the national level.

Marriage and family are the foundation of social life and therefore it is crucial to care about their wellbeing in various relevant dimensions.

Legal regulations, which came into force in 2011 and 2012 significantly changed and expanded opportunities to help families, especially in the care of young children. Changes in the material support for families with dependent children: - increase in the threshold of income per family entitling to child benefit (from November 2012 and from November 2014). – Increase of the income criterion allowing the participation in the government program "State aid for feeding "(October 2012), expanded the circle of families – the beneficiaries of this aid. The change in tax relief policy for the third and subsequent child introduced in 2013 was an important support for families with many children. Governmental program for "large" families, established in May 2014, expanded the scope of that support.

In April 2016 the "Family 500+" Programme has been introduced. Its purpose is to partially cover expenditures related to the care and upbringing of a child and to meet his life needs. At the beginning the programme was dedicated to the families with more than one child, unless their income was below the given income limits. Since July 1, 2019, child-raising benefit form „Family 500 +” Programme is payable for every child up to the age of 18, regardless of the family's income.

There is also a governmental programme that supports financing of kids nurseries as well as pre-school and school education on basic level.

According to the Act on care for children under the age of 3 childcare in nurseries shall be provided for children over 20 weeks old. Childcare in kids clubs shall be provided for children over one year old.(Act of 4.02.2011, Art. 7.1 and 2.)

Psychological support programmes for parents.

What must be underlined here is the fact that the most of the psychological support for parents is offered in our country by the private sector. Governmental actions are limited mostly to the people in crises. It seems there is a great gap here between the supply of actions at the national level and the real demand for help which is constantly growing especially at the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

There are generally two kinds of institutions supporting parents at the national level, mostly limited to on-line actions or completely ceased at the moment due to the pandemic restrictions.

First of them is a nationwide net of Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centres.

They offer a support for parents within a project called „The School for Parents”- <http://kot.krakow.pl/tag/szkola-dla-rodzicow/>.

This is a nine-week training aimed to support parents of school and pre-school children. The programme is held in the form of workshops with psychologists and pedagogists.

Parents recruited for the programme are working on development of their parental skills, as well as their personal well-being, especially through the studies of their own emotions, needs and boundaries. This school teaches the rules of mutual trust and respect in everyday family life for both parents and children.

Due to the pandemic restrictions for all the real life trainings this programme has been suspended in the past year. Parents are looking forward to its resumption.

In the meantime Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling Centres in Poland have launched the helpline for parents who face the difficulties in bringing up their children, also connected with recent pandemic restrictions and obstacles.

Other institutions supporting parents at the national level are social welfare centres. They are mainly helping people who found themselves in the state of life crises. They are meant to support especially families in need due to a difficult economical situation.

They used to offer trainings for parents which were available prior to pandemic period. At the moment these trainings have been suspended.

The regional social welfare centres are also responsible for the services of crises intervention centres. The role of crisis intervention centres comprises providing specialist psychological help, social and legal counselling, as well as shelter to persons and families in a state of a crisis, including mothers with minor children and pregnant women suffering from domestic violence or in other crisis situation.

On-line support for parents.

In a span of the past couple months, due to the pandemic restrictions all over the country, real life meetings and trainings had to be replaced to the large extend by the on-line support in the social media.

Nowadays social media have become basic way of communication and support for many parents.

There are many informal support groups in social media which help parents to deal with everyday parenting challenges as well as post-pandemic changes in their lives.

On-line communities are based on most popular trends of self-development such as self-reg, mindfulness or NVC. They focus mostly on general idea of gaining self-control over emotions to deal with everyday stressors. At the moment a parent is able to regulate himself he is also ready to help his child to do the same.

In Poland mostly popular self-control method in recent days seems to be Self-Reg developed by Stuart Schanker, which is based on our ability of recognizing and controlling stressors

outside and inside us. Our self-control contributes to the way we approach our children and help them to cope with the stressors they experience themselves since their nervous system and ability of self-control has not been fully developed yet (Stuart Schanker, 2016).

The other concept which has expanded rapidly in the last few years is Mindfulness developed by John Kabat-Zinn. He developed a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR) for adult patients at the University of Massachusetts Medical Centre to assist with relieving stress and pain associated with chronic medical conditions. In this application mindfulness was used to refer to paying attention to the 'here and now' or present moment rather than thinking about the future or worrying about the past (Kabat-Zinn, 1982).

Regarding parenting styles the traditional one seems to be slowly replaced by attachment parenting philosophy along with Non Violent Communication (NVC) method which have both recently gained a large popularity in Poland.

Attachment parenting idea developed mostly by an American pediatrician William Sears got popularized in Poland mostly by the Polish psychologist Agnieszka Stein, whose first book "Dziecko z bliska" /eng:"Close to your child"/ has become the bestseller in Poland (<https://agnieszkastein.pl>).

Now there are many trainings based on these concepts available mostly on-line due to the pandemic restrictions. Most of these courses are private initiative, not financed by the National Health Found.

However, some of "Schools for Parents", financed by the NHF, are now based on elements of the attachment parenting ideology as well as NVC.

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2. CBOS, Report on “Preferred and actual family models”, April 2019.
3. General Statistical Office Report: „Demographic Sytuation in Poland” – August 2019.
4. General Statistical Office Report : “ Pro-family actions in 2010-2015”.
5. Stuart Schanker, Teresa Baker, Self-Reg, 2016.
6. John Kabat- Zinn, An Outpatient Program in Behavioral Medicine for Chronic Pain Patients Based on the Practice of Mindfulness Meditation: Theoretical Considerations and Preliminary Results. 1982.
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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE FOR PARENTS: IO1.A1.1: DESK RESEARCH

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND RESILIENCE OF PARENTS: CZECH REPUBLIC

Introduction

In the last few years there has been an increased interest in mental health and psychological well-being and its research. However, closely related research of the concept of resilience has focused mostly on the well-being of children, less attention has been paid to the resilience of parents. Nevertheless, the concept of parental resilience is a critical and inseparable element of well-functioning family systems. We can define parental resilience as *“the capacity of parents to deliver competent, quality parenting to children despite adverse circumstances”* (Gavidia-Payne et al., 2015, 111).

There is a series of influences that can serve as protective or risk factors leading towards the accomplishment of parental resilience outcomes. Including psychological well-being, family functioning, financial situation, or social connectedness etc. In addition to that, we need to include current events regarding Covid-19 pandemic that affect everyday lives of many families.

In this paper we are going to review data and statistics connected to these factors in the case of Czech Republic as well as projects and initiatives supporting Czech parents.

1. Factors related to parental resilience: Czech data and statistics

Psychological mental health and well-being

Emotional well-being and mental health of parents have been acknowledged to be tightly connected with parental resilience (Gavidia-Payne, 2015). According to the 2018 data from Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) mental health problems affect tens of millions of Europeans every year, specifically one in six people has this kind of problem. Czech Republic states the rate is 15.1% of the population with at least one disorder (Český statistický úřad, 2019).

Psychological well-being of parents has been much more discussed in the past months relating to the Covid-19 pandemic (see below [Covid-19 pandemic](#)).

Work-life balance

Finding a balance between work and life is a challenge for many workers and especially for working parents. The ability to combine work and family is important for their well-being. The issue of work-care or work-life balance conflict is currently an important and popular research topic and is closely connected with gender studies.

Based on OECD Economic Surveys data, in the Czech Republic, full-time workers devote an average 15,1 hours a day to personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.) and leisure activities (socialising with friends, family, hobbies, etc.). CR is 12th out of 39 countries on the ranking (OECD Better Life Index, 2016).

Marital relationship and divorces

The situation in marriage or relationship is an important contributor to parental well-being. Belsky says that the spousal relationship is a major source of support and/or stress for parents of children of all ages (Belsky, 1984). Marital problems are especially highlighted while parents are at midlife and have school-age children or adolescents (Henry & Miller, 2004). Furthermore, there is a link between marital status and mental health – divorces are a major stressor for both parents and children.

The highest divorce rate in the Czech Republic was in the year 2010 in which half of the marriages were divorced. In the last few years, the situation has stabilized and in 2019 the rate was about 44 %. In the European context, Czechia is in the top 10 countries with the highest divorce rate. Moreover, half of the children today are born out of wedlock and ¼ of them are raised by a single parent. Thus, an estimated 25 – 30 thousand families with children are affected by divorce or separation every year (Český statistický úřad, 2019).

Single parenting

According to Czech Statistical Office there are almost 170 thousand incomplete families in the Czech Republic. In 90% of them the head of the family is a woman. 1/3 of them have a monthly income of less than 10 000 CZK (approximately 390 Euro) (Český statistický úřad, 2019; Klub svobodných matek, 2018).

Covid-19 pandemic

Finally, it is important to keep in mind the year 2020 and pandemic of Covid-19¹. Restrictions adopted against the spread of coronavirus have significantly affected the lives of millions of people in the Czech Republic. Health concerns connected with economic uncertainty have created a chronic situation of stress that can result in serious mental health problems (NUDZ, 2021).

The National institute of mental health of the Czech Republic (NUDZ) states that every third adult has problems with mental health. According to the research, compared to the pre-pandemic period, the depression rate and the risk of suicide increased 3 times and the occurrence of anxiety disorders twice (NUDZ, 2021).

The pandemic significantly affected the mental health of Czech parents. In the survey conducted by Prokop Analysis and Quantitative Research (PAQ), on average 27%

¹ This text is written in February 2021, when the coronavirus pandemic in the Czech Republic is still relevant and CR is one of the most affected countries in the world. Therefore, the information given in the following paragraphs also applies to the following (unknown) period of time and more research regarding the effects of coronavirus pandemic is expected.

of Czech parents reported symptoms of moderate depression and anxiety between April and November 2020. That is a significant increase in comparison with the pre-pandemic period in which the rate was 5-9%. Symptoms were more common among women than men (31% vs. 22%). Similarly, parents without maturita² exam reported more frequent symptoms compared to parents with a maturita exam or university degree (28% vs. 23%) (PAQ Research, 2021).

2. Projects and initiatives supporting parents and their well-being

Well-being

The National Institute of mental health of the Czech Republic (NUDZ) started a new website Opatruj.se (Take care of yourself) at the beginning of 2021. The content of the website was created in cooperation with scientists, experts, and the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic. People can test their own well-being, anxiety rate or find practical information about mental health and activities for taking care of themselves.

The Ministry of Health has recently discussed the impact on mental health connected with the coronavirus pandemic and approved National Action Plan for Suicide Prevention. The Government Council for Mental Health stated that it is crucial to increase the availability of psychotherapeutic and psychosocial support services and target health insurance prevention funds as well as support of psychological resilience (MZCR, 2020).

Parents-related initiatives

The main person who is focused on parental resilience is Ivana Štefková, Czech psychologist, founder of www.rodicovskaposilovna.cz (Parent's gym), a project focused on practical activities on how to build and strengthen parental resilience.

One of the well-known organisations in Czechia is *Aperio* – Healthy Parenting Association. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation focused on the position and needs of parents in the society. They provide free web-based legal and psychosocial counselling, training, and seminars for parents. They also run a free Crisis Telephone Line for Moms and Dads that is ready to help parents with their troubles.

Association focused on single parents, *Klub svobodných matek* (Single Mothers Club), provides families financial, material, and professional legal assistance to single families. They cooperate with field social workers, shelters, and Labour Offices.

² Maturita is an exam taken in the Czech Republic at the end of secondary education and must be passed in order to apply to a university or other institutions of higher education.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE FOR PARENTS

Project Number: 2020-1-PL01-KA204-081824

DESK RESEARCH GREECE



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IO1.A1.1 DESK RESEARCH (GR)

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the opportunities available in Greece for parents to learn about parenting and resilience.

To do that, it will begin from a general discussion of parenting and creating a family in Greece. Then, it will continue with parental learning opportunities and how resilience is understood in the country. Three examples of well-received relevant projects will follow, and it will end with drawing conclusions.

Family and parenting in Greece

Greek society and communities, as is the case in many other western societies, was traditional in the sense that it was static and its values (including parenting practices) passed from one generation to the next without being challenged (Pyrgiotakis, 1999: 168). The extended family, led by the grandparents, functioned as a production unit whose key characteristic was self-sufficiency. It was the main institution responsible for raising, educating and taking care of the health of the children. Children were born and prepared for their future role by observing and working with older family members of the same sex (ibid, 167-170). Remnants of the traditional, extended family are still to be found today, since people over 60 are more likely to have been brought up in such a family.

The industrialization and resulting urbanization of the 1960s Greece, however, brought about a rapid transition from the traditional to the modern nuclear or child-centered (Kataki, 1984: 63) family.

Although many of the functions of the extended family remain relevant, e.g. parents decide the kind of education the children will receive, a major difference is that the child is not asked to learn through observing the family, but through listening to other people both in the family itself, as well as other people involved in their upbringing (teachers, TV programmes, etc) (ibid, 17). Despite how simplistic this may sound, in reality is has



completely transformed the way families behave, having have to abandon being a mere example of static professional, gender, etc roles that children observe, to being able to manage all the different aspects of a child's life.

As a result, parents nowadays need training, guidance and often therapy in order to deal with the complexity of bringing up a child.

Parental learning in Greece

Parental learning in Greece is considered part of informal adult education. Therefore, it is offered by both private and state actors including:

1. freelance psychologists whom parents can turn to for specialized guidance at any point of a child's life.
2. Freelance pediatricians who also discuss parenting with parents, especially during the early years of a child's life.
3. State and private schools of pre-primary, primary and secondary education, where teachers are expected to be able to guide parents as to how to deal with learning and behavioral issues they face with the children. Often these institutions work with freelance psychologists and pediatricians to offer better quality services to parents and teachers .
4. State and private hospitals who are also expected to guide parents as to their own and their children's development, especially when it comes to physical and mental health.
5. NGOs and other Civil Society organization who organize campaigns on relevant issues.
6. The so-called [Schools for Parents](#), designed by the *Youth and Lifelong Learning Foundation*, and delivered by municipalities to interested parents throughout Greece.

An interesting aspect of the Greek educational system is that most state schools do not have access to a nurse and a psychologist as in other countries.

Resilience in Greece

Resilience is a recent approach in general and even more so in Greece. Researching the [National Archive of Doctoral Dissertations](#), which contains doctoral level dissertations written by people studying in Greece and Greeks studying elsewhere, for research

projects relevant to resilience, only twenty-eight such dissertations seem to exist, a third of which is not on the resilience of people, but of material. The earliest relevant project goes back to 2006, although the database contains works even from the beginning of the previous century.

Most of this original writing focuses on resilience of groups that face adversity, for example, parents with children with learning difficulties, refugees, and other vulnerable groups. Only a very few examine the general public, something which might be telling of how resilience is seen in Greece: an approach for those in dire situations.

Parental learning in Greece

There seems to be a wealth of resilience-related services offered for a fee in Greece, while the tax-funded learning opportunities for parents seem to be very few. Three cases of popular projects are the following:

First of all, the most well-known project is the *Schools for Parents*, a portfolio of 6 educational programmes for parents in general irrespective of origin, age and education, as well as parents of persons with disabilities, teachers, grandparents, socially vulnerable groups and future parents.

The aim is to reach-out to every mother and father, so that they are able to successfully meet the challenges of their complex and difficult task, within the framework of the contemporary socio-economic conditions.

The programmes are developed and implemented by specialised scientists (psychologists, doctors, social workers etc.). The courses are very flexible, and a lot of effort is put into forming groups of parents with similar questions so as to be able to help as much as possible.

The main limitation of this project is that, being managed by municipalities, its success and outreach depends on each municipality's overall aims.

There are no statistics as to how many people have attended these courses and what they think about them.

A second interesting project is the *Family Planning Service* at every State Hospital. The purpose of these centres is to guide parents through pregnancy, giving birth, and having

a newborn in their life, including helping them come to terms with various things that can go wrong during the process, possible health problems of the children, etc, as well as dealing with the change they will experience in their lives.

Again, there are no statistics as to how many people have used this service.

The third project started in 2017, when every Region in Greece set up a *Regional Centre of Educational Planning*, whose purpose is to support teachers in that region. The biggest such [centre](#) in Greece, covering almost half the country, has offered many online courses on resilience for teachers of primary and secondary education in the past two years. The content seemed to be differentiated according to school grades, and many different specialists seem to have been involved.

Again, there are no open statistics as to how many teachers and schools benefitted from these courses, something that reflects the fact that the Hellenic Statistical Authority does not measure education and learning outside formal education.

Conclusions

Greece is a country where not many schools have a psychologist and nurse on site. Furthermore, only a few services seem to be available to parents who cannot pay to learn about parenting, and delivering these services is often subject to the capabilities and priorities of a municipality or region. Resilience as a concept is still underdeveloped in the country.

Resources and references

Family Planning Services:
<https://www.nosokomeiokalamatas.gr/ypiresies/iatriki-ypiresia/cheiroyrgikos-tomeas/maieytiki-gynaikologiki/>
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NATIONAL DESK RESEARCH

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1 Introduction

The profession of psychologist, regulated thirty years ago by law 56/1989, over the years has been applied to various contexts, which require new, and sometimes different, methods of intervention. The Law 3/2018 has finally positioned the profession of psychologist among those that "protect the health of every individual" (Article 32 of the Italian Constitution), moving towards a new identity process, in which each individual has a real right to physical health and psychological.

Nevertheless, World has suddenly changed: new technologies have determined new relational contexts, very often "virtual" rather than "real"; economic systems have overcome the limits and constraints of geographical and territorial borders, thus determining a globalization of individual needs, characterized by new social aggregations.

Italian Psychology has been able to grasp the evolutionary path started by our country, gradually and with determination, performance models and epistemological references, which went beyond the dyadic modality.

Reception of unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA, in the Italian acronym), territorial emergencies, humanitarian assistance, local authorities, law enforcement agencies, ethnopsychology and interculturality, nutrition and food education, are the areas that today require particular attention from public and private administrations.

2 Main initiatives

2.1 Reception of unaccompanied foreign minors (MSNA)

The Decree 286/98 states that the best interests of each child must be taken into account as a primary asset in all decisions concerning minors and all the rights provided therein must be applied, for any minor, without discrimination (art. 2).

These interventions fall within the scope of prevention, care and well-being: mental health promotion, social integration and intervention on mental health problems; psychologists, collaborating with cultural mediators, deal with:

- Psychological support for minors at the port, at the border and in the reception centres
- Assessment of minor's vulnerability to plan an individualized path of school training, job placement and placement in the family
- Organization of an adequate clinical setting for the diagnosis and therapy of unaccompanied minors who show signs of disorders related to traumatic and stressful events
- Psychological support for adults and minors in temporary foster care, to facilitate the accompaniment of the minor in the various stages, at least until he reaches the age of majority.
- Training: activity aimed at promoting cross-cultural skills for different care, social, educational professionals, as well as tutors and families who are open to sheltering

2.2 Emergency situations

The "Emergency Psychologist" intervenes in emergency contexts to support people directly involved in critical events, their family and friends and people who have been exposed to the same event, rescuers and the communities where the critical events occurred. He also deals with risk prediction and prevention, rescue planning and management and psychosocial training of rescuers.

These are the main intervention areas:



- Operational structures of the National, Regional, Municipal Civil Protection (Law 24.2.1992 n. 225) for prevention and rescue activities to the populations and support to rescuers in the event of natural disasters or related to human activity
- Emergency-Urgency and Critical Area Structures of the National Health Service or affiliated services for first psychological aid to survivors and family members and to support rescuers in the event of serious accidents and events
- Emergency services activated by other public and non-profit structures (schools, educational institutions, sports organizations, communities) in the event of serious accidents, suicides, sudden deaths affecting students or their families for first psychological aid activities.

The Directive of the Prime Minister GU n. 200 of 29 August 2006 establishes the "General criteria on psychosocial interventions to be implemented in disaster areas", stating psychosocial teams be set up for emergencies (EPE) for psycho-social support to the population affected by disasters.

The Directive of the President of the Council of Ministers (Department of the Civil Protection) of April 6, 2013 establishes a "psychology clinic" in addition to general practitioners, paediatricians, nurses and social workers.

In the last 15 years, although the psychology of the emergency in Italy has filled the gap compared to other Western nations, it remains to be traced in a less random and more shared way, both the profile of the emergency psychologist and the minimum training.

2.3 Psychological support for local areas and authorities

Law 328/2000 mainly promotes interventions to guarantee the quality of life, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and citizenship rights, prevents, eliminates or reduces the conditions of disability, need and individual and family hardship.

However, there are new needs, including the need of families and support and guidance operators in dealing with issues of strict relevance to psychological disciplines that are not included among the psychological services offered exclusively in the health sector.

Therefore, the need emerged for a psychologist who works in the psychosocial and school service of local authorities, able to provide answers in terms of reading critical issues and identifying strategies, in various areas of intervention such as those of family responsibilities, women in difficulty, the rights of minors, elderly people, people with disabilities etc., for interventions aimed at improving the quality of local and relational life and the well-being of contexts and communities.

The areas of intervention fall within those provided for by art. 1 of law 238/2000:

- Preventive interventions, to promote psycho-social health to promote and support the mental health and social inclusion of citizens, guarantee the quality of life, equal opportunities, non-discrimination and citizenship rights
- Interventions with other social and health workers to treat and reduce the conditions of disability, need and individual and family hardship, deriving from inadequate income, social difficulties and conditions of non-autonomy, juvenile school discomfort, (bullying, school dropout, learning and developmental communication disorders);
- Training interventions to promote skills in the psychosocial, educational, school, emergency, cross-cultural, transversal to the different professional, social and educational fields.



2.4 Ethnopsychology and Interculturality

The ethnopsychological perspective offers an external point of view that allows an holistic vision of the culture in which every individual is inserted, underlining “the need to know other psychologies, other knowledge, other representations of man”. Their analysis represents an irrepressible need in modernity for the researcher who wants to work rigorously in the field of psychological sciences. Nowadays the Italian society is increasingly crossed by migratory flows: older migrants, who have borne the fruits of the second and third generations, and the newest ones, with new experiences and needs.

The psychological profile needs to be integrated with the acquisition of specific sociocultural and anthropological tools to keep the latest challenges of health.

Ethnopsychology fits into this context. It states that, since there is no single psyche, there cannot be a global psychology: it is therefore necessary to test the generalization of psychological laws by comparing different cultures, different representations of the person and different theories of the mind.

Psychological research has mostly dealt with the theme of the study of man starting from an already defined image whose characteristics are fixed in the categories of Western culture. The concepts of health and disease vary according to the cultural matrices from which they originate and the historical period in which they are formulated. In the same way, the concept of mind and body may be different which will influence the idea of health and disease, psychological well-being and suffering. These considerations are even more valid in the context of psychological assistance to refugees as clearly indicated by the guidelines drawn up by the Ministry of Health in 2017 which "apply to men, women and minors who have suffered torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological violence , physical or sexual, already holders of international or humanitarian protection status or asylum seekers ".

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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE FOR PARENTS

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NATIONAL DESK RESEARCH

CYPRUS

2021

Institute of Development





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PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE FOR PARENTS

CYPRUS NATIONAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Parenthood is often described as a milestone in a person's adult life. The vast majority of the adult population embarks on parenting at some point in their lives (i.e., around 89.6% worldwide, Ranjan, 2016). Parent and child share a unique, intertemporal and irreplaceable emotional bond (Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2012). According to Bowlby's (1969) body of research, the nature of that bond largely depends on the quality of the attachment that both parties will develop across the life-span of their relationship and the calibre of their interactions. This slow process starts from the very first early stages of a children's life – infancy to be exact. The quality of parenting that children receive, has an immense impact on their overall development. Scientific evidence from behavioral, social, experimental and educational studies, shows that parenting practices have a major influence on children's development (Beyers & Groossens, 1999; Howenstein, Kumar, Casamassimo, McTigue, Coury & Yin, 2015; Mansager & Volk, Roskam, Raes, & Mikolajczak, 2017; Sanders, 2003; Sanders, 2008; Sanders, Kirby, Tellegen, & Day, 2014; Scott & O'Connor, 2012).

Nurturing, warm environments but with a firm set of guidelines, usually create the optimal environments for children and young people's upbringing. Such a setting offers them the support and tools to thrive and develop their talents, aptitudes and unique characteristics to a maximum extent. This can be achieved with the appropriate attention and support from parents to safeguard their offspring current and future healthy development, overall wellbeing and welfare.

FAMILY DYNAMICS, PARENTING & EDUCATION IN CYPRUS

A very significant transition was observed in the past few decades regarding Cyprus family dynamics and the country's cultural-social state. The Cypriot family for the first time lost its extended and patriarchal character and gradually transitioned to a model



er to what is worldwide recognized as the “nuclear family model”. The new generations of teachers and educators, those graduating from Paedagogiki Academia of Cyprus, realized that without the support and cooperation of parents, they will not be able to achieve the supreme results in pedagogy (Phtiaka, 1999). Thus, a long-standing interaction and group effort were achieved, connecting the two most significant pillars in children’s upbringing and character moulding, family- parenting and education.

Moreover, another significant initiation was offered by the popular in Cyprus Adult Education organized body “Epimorfotika”. The aforementioned Adult Education Centers are under the administration of the Department of Primary Education and Cyprus’s Ministry of Education and Culture (<http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/>). According to the information provided yearly in their official website, based on demand they offer a “Parent Education Programme” which addresses itself to young couples, future parents, parents, and grandparents.

Nowadays, Cyprus’s society norms and family dynamics remain traditional, emphasizing the nuclear family and extended kin well into adulthood (Peristianis, 2004). Based on many resources and reports, Cypriots, in general, perceive the notion of “family” as one of the most important aspects of one’s life and the quality among family relationships and ties (nuclear or extended family) affect significantly the Cypriot individual’s emotional health and quality of life in general. That intense bond among family members and it’s extended derives perhaps from the Greek-Cypriot parenting style, which is often characterized as caring but more often than not “overprotective” (Kyriakides, Demetriou, & Charalambous, 2006).

Moreover, in the span of the past 1-2 decades and the use of Social Media, parents and especially new parents use them, as means to connect with other parents, forming groups and organising events and offering opportunities to exchange ideas, knowledge, good practices and if needed support each other.

MARITAL STATUS & PARENTING

The median duration of marriage was estimated at 9,0 years in 2019. The total number of divorces in 2019 increased to 2.308, from 2.114 in 2018. The total divorce rate, which



As the proportion of marriages that are expected to end up in divorce, rose to 361,7 per 1.000 marriages in 2019, from 41,6 per 1.000 marriages in 1980. A proportion of 52,8% of divorced couples reported no dependent children under 18 years old, 25,5% reported one, 16,5% two and 3,8% reported three or more dependent children. Due to the raise of the number of people who pursue Higher Education, the mean age of women at the birth of their first child was 29,6 years in 2019 (Statistical Service, 2019).

A divorce is not considered nowadays an absolute and catastrophic event that will most certainly traumatise the children. However, a divorce often signals some kind of family disharmony and its effects on all family members depend on a number of factors. However, a family breakdown is not a single event, but a process that involves a number of risks and other factors that might indeed have a negative effect on both parents and children's psyche. These inter-connected factors include parental conflict, the quality of parenting, parent's mental health, financial hardships and radical changes in living situation (Pannilage, 2017).

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELFARE NATIONAL PRACTICES IN CYPRUS

The main core of National Practices regarding Psychological Wellbeing in Cyprus is currently offered almost exclusively in the private sector. Mental Health Services Department of the Ministry of Health has its own budget but the provision of services is dominated by the public sector, which has a special hospital – the Athalassa Mental Hospital (Theodorou et al., 2012). Only severe cases that need a specialised programme and care so intensive that family cannot take upon the responsibility are classified as cases that need hospitalised care and they receive governmental or social support. In general, Mental Health services provision in Cyprus is dominated by the Public sector and there is no aid from the government of ministries for therapeutic reasons when it comes to mental health. Individuals who seek support for their psychological health they must fund their therapy from their own resources.

Social Services Officers (Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance) play a key role in counselling parents, networking families with essential services (for example: access to benefits, health services, school) and



munity services (day-care, social support). The vast majority of relevant policies and programmes concerning children are family-centred, aiming to improve the general family functioning (family support).

The Service for Families and Children aims to support the Family unit in order to enable family members to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. In addition, they offer solutions regarding dissolving family conflicts that might threaten the harmonious coexistence among family members, establish a safe space that will protect children's welfare, and prevent aggressive behaviours and domestic violence.

INITIATIVES, SPECIALISED PROGRAMMES & OTHER GOOD PRACTICES IN CYPRUS

Centre for Counselling, Psychotherapy and development “Psychonoisis” (<https://www.facebook.com/psychonoisis/>): The private centre offers counselling and psychotherapy services and specialised couples’ counselling/relationships. Various sessions and services are available to adolescents and adults, including the education “Attachment Parenting”. “Attachment Parenting” is a specific approach that refers to the style parents use regarding the up-ringing infants and young children. The approach focuses on how building a strong emotional bond between parent and/or caregiver and the child can have tremendous benefits for the child’s development in every aspect of their life and overall well-being. A strong bond is formed when the parent/caregiver responds consistently and with precision to the child's physical and emotional needs and signals, especially in the first five years of his or her life. As a result, the child "clings" or ties emotionally to the parent/ caregiver, developing a strong bond - relationship characterized by security and trust (referred to as secure attachment, by the theory of the British psychiatrist John Bowlby).

Ripple Effect: Where Dreams Ripple into Reality “Conscious parenting workshop series” (www.rippleeffect.com.cy): According to the aforementioned notion, conscious Parenting involves parenting by attachment, cooperative parenting, bribe-free cooperation, incentives, disciplinary strategies, time-outs or discipline. The workshop aims to train the participants on how to communicate with their child more effectively and how to set firm limits without overstepping their role as supporters and not

absolute authoritarian figures. In addition, it focuses on the concept of “conscious parenting” and investigates various components of the parenting practices.

Throughout the workshop, participants get a deeper understanding of what “mindful parenting” is and get into the habit of observing themselves and becoming aware of their thoughts, emotions and actions.

Online community “Mums in Cyprus”: One of the leading networks specific for parenting in Cyprus (www.mumsincyprus.com) “Mums in Cyprus” is a free-available to the public online community for mothers. Their approaches are creative and innovative, appealing mostly to a younger new age crowd. Mums in Cyprus, provide an online platform and “real life” network for communication, exchange of ideas, advice and kinship.

EFFICIENT PARENTING (<http://efficientparenting.eu/>): The Erasmus+ EU Project Efficient Parenting aims to offer support and practical applications to new parents of children between ages 0-7, strengthen the three core pillars of “Psychological Wellbeing”, “Social Connectedness” and “Behavioural Management”. The Programmes Outcomes include, a Handbook for Parents, Magazine for Parents, Video Clips with Parabolic Meaning Stories and an Online Platform. In Cyprus the project is carried out by 2 partner-organisations, CARDET and Institute of Development.

Pancyprian School of Parents (<https://www.scholigoneon.org.cy>): The Pancyprian School of Parents was founded in 1968 and it was supported by the Cyprus Educational Research Association and the Pancyprian Society of Mental Health and was offering courses especially designed for parents. Nowadays the Pancyprian School of Parents is running as a Non-Profit Organisation with the main mission to contribute in any way possible to the provision of proper education to children. In addition, it offers support and resources to help parents on how to amplify relevant skills to be in a position to successfully address any issues related to their offspring education and overall healthy upbringing.

CPI- Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (<https://cutt.ly/czzFR33>): CPI offers especially designed seminars exclusively for parents. The seminars main aim is to support parents in any way possible, so they will have the needed skills and knowledge to support to their children and facilitate their educational/academic development. The Seminars are



ally conducted by CPI Officers and/or external collaborators experts in their field. The classes take place in afternoon hours so parents will be able to join and they include both relevant theoretical resources and practical applications.

HOT-AIR BALLOONS PROGRAMME (<https://cutt.ly/jzzH2Kc>): Designed for parents of children between ages 2-8. The main aim of the Programme is to teach parents how to effectively manage children’s challenging behaviors. The Hot-Air Balloons Programme was created in 2011 and is supervised by a scientific committee – a collaboration of scholars from the University of Cyprus and University of Crete. It’s origins derive from the evidence-based programme “Parenting the Strong-Willed Child” by Forehand & Long (2002). The Programme includes 7 weekly 2-hour long sessions and offers parents of young children (2-8 years old) resources and guided training on how to develop essential skills, that will help them manage efficiently and successfully undesirable and challenging children’s behaviors. The programme aims to support the participants to foster the following 5 core parenting skills: Attention, Reward, Planned Ignoring, Effective Guidance and Consequences.



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