



WORKPACKAGE 2: Exploring and analysing the Gender-based Violence attitudes and teachers educational needs on the topic: Literature Review and Comparative Research

Objective(s) of the WP2: is to analyse the gender-based violence attitudes, experience and reactions of teachers and children in EU countries on purpose to inform culture sensitive education and awareness raising material.

NATIONAL REPORT – CYPRUS

1.1 The scope of GBV in Cyprus

Gender-based violence (GBV), includes violations that affect disproportionately women, as psychological, emotional and physical abuse. These can include sexual assaults, rape and domestic violence. All forms of violence and abuse constitute an encroachment of women's fundamental rights with regard to dignity, equality and access to justice. The impact of violence against women affects not only women, but their families and children, friends and the society (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2016). Cyprus has signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, where the state is committed to taking the necessary measures to promote the protection of women's rights, as women are the direct victims of domestic violence, but still, there are a lot of issues to be resolved.

GBV in all its forms, is a result of gender inequalities and reproduces the power relations between men and women. Violence is inter-class and inter-racial and brutally affects the fundamental rights of women and girls who suffer (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2016). Throughout the years, violence against women in Cyprus and world-wide, is an accepted way of submission of women (Outlaw, 2009; WHO, 2002; Intercollege Research and Development Center, 2000), as it manifests "unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over women and discrimination against them by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women (Maynard, & Winn, 1997).

GBV unfortunately does not only affect women, but also Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other non-heterosexual, and non-binary¹ people (LGBTIQ+) as most of the times LGBTIQ+ are considered/perceived not meeting the traditional expectations and social norms of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality and were persecuted by their peers (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003). This is due to the fact that Cyprus is a highly socially conservative country when it comes to issues pertaining to sexuality, or diversity, as violence is rooted in a system of practices and laws which sanction men's rights and active attempts to maintain dominance and control over women (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2011).

Research has demonstrated that Cyprus positions at the 4th place among the EU Member States, in relation to discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation (FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013). Moreover, public opinion in Cyprus ranks among the *least* tolerant in Europe as the vast majority of Cypriots do not accept LGBTIQ+ people in their family and close environment and in general LGBTIQ+ persons in Cyprus perceive social acceptance as moderate to low, whereas Trans people perceived social acceptance at almost the minimum. Thus, LGBTIQ+ are vulnerable to hate crimes, however, homophobic/ biphobic/ transphobic violence is rarely reported officially as it is common that these behaviours come from family members or sexual partners (Kossiva, 2016)

¹ Non-binary is where people feel that they do not fit in the category of "male" and "female," because of their unusual - always according to the social norms- gender expression (National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016)



Focusing on national statistical data about Violence Against Women, in Cyprus, such data are limited and not representative of the magnitude of the problem. Unfortunately, there is no shared database where all the incidents are recorded (Lesta, 2010), and relevant and disaggregated data is collected by authorities only on certain forms of violence such as; “domestic violence, sexual assault, and rape” (APHVF, 2012). There are none population surveys “on perceptions about the prosecution and protection system” for violence against women in Cyprus (APHVF, 2012). Despite these problems in recording of national statistical data, the incidents of violence against women are alarming. It is estimated that at least 22% of Cypriot women aged 15 years and older have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, while 39 % of women have suffered psychological violence from their partner (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Moreover, 60% of women who were the victims of violence did not report the incident to anyone (Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence in 2012). The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family has a 24/7 helpline, where victims can report the incidents and ask for help. They keep records of these incidents for statistical reasons. In 2017 only, 1680 incidents were reported, 48.8% were cases with history of abuse and reporting, and 32.6% were new cases. Of these cases, 89.1% of victims were women and 9% men, 10.2% of victims were under the age of 18, and just 1.2% of perpetrators were under the age of 18. 45% of abuse came from partners of victims and 61.4% are still living with the perpetrator. 68.5% of these cases had children. 30.1% of the victims reported that the abuse was emotional, 53.7% emotional and physical, and 11.3% that abuse included emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Of the cases that went to court, 6.9% of perpetrators just received a warning, 0.4% went to prison, 0.1% received a fine and 0.3% received a restraining order.

Over the past decade, there have been more than 30 murders of women by partners or former partners. Furthermore, there is a dramatic increase in rape and sexual attack, even if they are among the least reported crimes in Cyprus. There is a dramatic increase in the reference rates of rape during the last two decades. From 2010 to 2013, 117 rapes and seven attempted rapes were recorded. Despite the increase in sexual violence complaints, Cyprus has one of the lowest rates convictions in Europe and penalties are insufficient and are not discouraging. Cyprus is of the few countries in the EU where there are no governmental specialized victim support and protection services (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2016). Victim-focused services for people that experienced abuse are lacking in Cyprus. There is limited support and multidisciplinary cooperation is weak (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus, 2017).

In conclusion, GBV is a serious issue in Cyprus, affecting women, children and people that identify as LGBTQI+.

1.2. Description of various policies that are addressing violence, including gender-based violence. (max 2 pgs)

The National Strategy (2016-2019) elaborated in 2015 and its purpose is to set all directions and actions to combat sexual abuse and exploitation of children and child pornography in the Republic of Cyprus. The Cypriot national strategy ratifies all guidelines of the Lanzarote Convention. Its effectiveness of its implementation is based solely on the commitment and cooperation of all public services, policy makers, NGOs and all relevant stakeholders. Several parameters have been included in the strategy to identify and combat this social problem. These are:

- to identify and understand the “scope, size and impact” of the problem by informing and educating children and professionals (school teachers, professors and other staff).





- to recognize the “priorities” for addressing the problem. One example is the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention campaign “One in Five” in Cyprus. Carrying out interventions and campaigns in the wider community for awareness-raising.
- to implement necessary actions to better protect children and young people
- to achieve the main goals to prevent and combat violence in Cyprus

Several public committees have been established in order to maintain and monitor the effectiveness of the National Strategy implementation. Such as, the Ministry of Education and Culture established a Coordinating Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children. Several actions have been taken into consideration by this committee in order to raise awareness regarding these issues focusing on the promotion of healthy relationships at school and at home. Most of the educating materials that are utilized in schools are based on the philosophical and practical guidelines of “Education on Sexuality” by World Health Organization” (WHO).

An advisory committee, represented by members from Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Culture, Attorney’s General Office and Police Department, aims at monitoring the implementation of the National Strategy on the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (2010-2013). The effectiveness of this National Policy is based on the prevention and combating of domestic violence on a holistic and systematic basis, with the collaboration of all governmental bodies, civil society and family (Apostolidou & Payiatsou, 2013).

Moreover, the Ministry of Labour Social Insurance appoints another committee, which has the goal to balance gender equality in employment and vocational training. A counsellor is assigned by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance in cases where complaints of violence are recorded, to provide counselling, to protect and to support victims.

Actions undertaken from several NGOs focused on the prevention and combating of violence against women including domestic violence. They enhance participation in decision-making in political, working and personal level. Increasing education regarding women’s entrepreneurship by changing of stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men in the workforce. “Integration of gender perspectives into all government programs and policies (gender mainstreaming)” (www.mjpo.gov.cy). Another example, is the research project conducted by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) aiming at raising awareness and understanding of the role of gender in young people’s experiences of Information Communication Technologies related abuse (sexual harassment, stalking, cyber-bullying among other) in their everyday life (MIGS, Report in Nov, 2014).

Various initiatives such as, research projects and organization of national and public events are taken place in order to raise awareness to *sensitize* the public on the importance of prevention of all grounds of gender discrimination. These efforts were necessary to raise public’s awareness about European and National policies regarding equality and combating discrimination (e.g., Event organized by European Institute of Cyprus, to raise public Awareness on “Sexual Orientation”. Another event was organized by the Cyprus Family Planning Association, and many more). Several videos highlight some of the actions implemented in Cyprus to protect women and girls and to prevent violence (information retrieved from Cyprus Mail, Nov. 2017, videos on www.facebook.com/USEmbassyCyprus).

The Ministry of Education and Culture established the *Direct Involvement Group* in 2008. The group's





objective is to support school teams to directly address serious incidents of violence and delinquency. There is a specific form that can be completed by the school stating the basic facts of the incident. If necessary, data will be gathered in a multi-subject group with the presence of the children involved in the school and draw up an action plan to manage the incidence of violence and / or delinquency.

The Council for the Prevention and Countering of Crime of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, in cooperation with the Observatory on Violence in the School of the Ministry of Education and Culture provide incentives and rewards to schools that are considered best practices in preventing violence in schools.

Related policies that are addressing violence in schools

Considering the increasing number of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and the effects upon children and the general society, the involvement of the government in combating this phenomenon as well as in developing a child-centered prevention policy is very crucial and necessary. Governmental and Nonpublic organizational involvement can only be achieved through the national strategy and through a clear action plan, which aims at developing a concrete course of actions targeted at this multidimensional problem, proposing specific measures, actions and implementation.

The national plan is based on 5 main pillars which are (information retrieved from Commissioner for Children's Rights website):

Pillar 1 – Primary Prevention based on education of children, professional, official, volunteer, and other member of organizations. Interventions and campaigns in society in general for awareness and information.

Pillar 2 - Secondary Prevention based on training of public officers and professionals who have contact with children to identify children who are at increased risk or identifying vulnerable people from high-risk groups

Pillar 3 - Tertiary Prevention based on the coordination of civil servants for investigating and dealing with incidents (police, services) social care, mental health services, lawyers

Pillar 4 - Research

Pillar 5 - Evaluation. The effective implementation of the strategy will depend on the constructive monitoring and evaluation of actions and programs

The ministry of Education and Culture addresses basic principles for the development of an action plan for prevention and treatment of violence and humanity and proposed action plan for the secondary school of education. Stated on ministry's circulated official document, schools construct Action Plan according to the school's existing structures needs and nature.

The development of the Action Plan is directed by the assistant principal responsible of the School of Health Education and Prevention of School Violence. A group of teachers established the committee to coordinate the actions envisaged in the Plan. The Plan is developed through an open dialogue with the involvement of the general community (such as, involving students, parents, teachers, community and other social stakeholders) who can share their expertise and relevant competencies. The active participation of all the groups increases acceptance and implementation of the Action Plan. The Action Plan ensures provisions on staff training on prevention and combating violence in schools. It includes immediate, medium and long-term objectives to be achieved by all.





In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture has established the Observatory of Violence in the School in 2009. The aim of the Observatory is to record and analyze data on the types of violence that can be encountered in the school area and the extent to which it can take an incident of violence.

In a recent circular issued by the Ministry of Education (January, 2018) it was stated that the Council of Ministers approved the proposal of the Ministry of Education and Culture for its implementation of the "National Strategy for Prevention and Combating of violence in Schools". Through the National Strategy, the Ministry of Education aims to ensure that our schools are democratic, safe and child-friendly environments and that they are places where all children are actively involved, securing their rights, actively participating in decision-making processes, acquire knowledge and skills and cultivate values. According to the circular, the new National Strategy (2018 -2022) will be based on six important actions. These are:

- Development of systems for collecting valid scientific data on violence in school to map the situation, identify needs and evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions / programs.
- Legal and administrative measures to prevent and manage violence at school, concerning the protection of students from all forms of violence at school
- Legal measures to access to rehabilitation and support services
- Educational methods and programs to strengthen the well-being, healthy development and attitudes of students in cases of violence
- Strengthening the multidisciplinary model of services (services such as, social welfare, health, education, psychological support and guidance of children and their parents / guardians).
- Promoting active participation of children in the development and implementation of policies / procedures / measures / actions / programs, etc., effective in reducing violence at school.
- Empowering Parents / Guardians, Teachers, Steering Group, by school and other institutions with the aim of raising awareness and developing their skills for prevention of violence in schools.

Organizations who are actively involved² in actions for combatting GBV:

1. Ministry of Justice and Public Order
2. Ministry of Education and Culture
3. Ministry of Health
4. Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
5. Commissioner for Children's Rights
6. Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory (CGEO)
7. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
8. Observatory on Violence in the School
9. European Institute of Cyprus
10. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (M.I.G.S.)
11. Advisory Committee on the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family
12. The Cyprus Equality Body

² For the purpose of this Literature Review the involvement of the organizations is defined as any action (e.g. policies, educational programmes, awareness campaigns e.t.c.) from a Governmental or Non-Governmental Organization targeting directly or indirectly Gender Based Violence against women and LGBTIQ+ people.



13. National Machinery for Women Rights (NMWR) which promotes women's rights and gender equality established in 1994 by the Council of Minister of Justice and Public Order.

1.3 Availability of prevention programmes/ good practices

Good practices on GBV in Cyprus permeate the legislation system, the Social Welfare Services, the Police, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) and procedures in the school system. In Cyprus there are two legislations regulating GBV and especially domestic violence: The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law of 2000 (Law 119(I) / 2000) and the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law of 2014 (91 (I) / 2014). In addition, Cyprus ratified the Istanbul Convention in 1st of March 2018, upgrading the legislative framework for dealing with violence in Cyprus and enhancing the political action to eradicate gender discrimination, while empowering women. Lastly, Cyprus ratified the Lanzarote Convention in 2015, which requires the criminalization of all kinds of sexual offences against children. Other governmental initiatives include the “Advisory Committee on the Prevention and Fight of Violence in the Family” that was established by the Ministry Counsel of Cyprus Republic in 1996. A new Action Plan for Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (2017 – 2019) is in process, while recently the Ministry of Justice and Public Order has initiated the “Strategic Action Plan on Equality between Men and Women 2014-2017” with the aim to create a unified policy framework of the Republic of Cyprus to promote equality between men and women in all areas.

The two main national operators on GBV matters are the Social Welfare Services (SWS) and the Cyprus Police. The aim of Cyprus Police is the oversee of law and order, prevention and detection of crime and the arrest and prosecution of wrongdoing before the Justice. The aim of the SWS is to support victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation by providing to victims the information they need to protect their rights. When minors are involved, the SWS's work is to prevent and combat sexual exploitation of children. Concerning domestic violence, Family Counsellors in each provincial Social Welfare Office work in order to manage incidents of violence in the family.

The Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family is the only NGO in Cyprus providing a 24/7 helpline for domestic violence, shelters and initiatives for prevention of domestic violence. Another NGO, Hope for Children-CRC Policy Centre, has recently put into operation the “Children's House” aimed to provide forensic examination, assessment, therapy and social rehabilitation to children-victims of sexual abuse and their families. Moreover, if the case is going to court, the House will provide support for the hearing.

Regarding good practices on GBV at schools in Cyprus, there are 3 different clusters of practices. First of all, the Educational Psychology Service provides preventive and intervention programs about GBV. This service runs under the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, along with the Observatory of violence in schools which aim to support actions and programs in schools for enhancing the school climate, in order to prevent violence incidents occurring in schools. The Observatory organizes and supervises the “Conflict Solving Program – School Mediation” in schools, providing students with problem-solving skills. A manual for “Solving conflicts in Primary School” addressed to students and; a “Teacher's Manual” is addressed to teachers, was developed aiming to support them to apply mediation into action. Another program provided by the Observatory is “Recognizing and Handling of Bullying”. A manual of the program provides guidelines to





children to recognize bullying, helps them acknowledge and comprehend feelings of victims and to urge children to report incidents that come into their sphere of knowledge. Another individualized intervention is tailored through Immediate Response Team (working under the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus). The Team's aim is to support the school in handling of phenomena or cases of elevated risk through mobilizing the entire school community, while other specialists can be included into the action plan by referral of the Assigned School Psychologist. Finally, the team delivers the "Mediation" program training to students of Secondary educational level (ages 12 – 18). A member of the team is present at the procedure of handling delinquency acts, penalty enforcements for delinquency while aiming to find alternative educational interventions.

As it shown from the above information, the government and organizations in Cyprus have gone to great lengths to prevent and combat GBV, but there are still many steps to be taken in order to improve our practices. For example, in Cyprus after a serious incident there may be leakage of information and personal data of the victim due to the small society, while at the same time there is excessive exposure of maltreatment incidents to the media and especially sexual abuse incidents. There are still stereotypes in Social Media which create, instil and inflate the stereotypes by portraying them repeatedly.

In addition, in cases of women who experienced domestic violence and who stay at the shelters, they encounter great financial and housing difficulties due to reduced financial recourses and hence they prolong their stay in the shelters. Lack of facilities for child care and of flexibility of working schedule of employers, result into greater difficulty finding work for mothers. On the other hand, the fact that mothers housed in a shelter are not obliged to cover any expenses or to work does not encourage them to take the responsibility of their selves and their children. Therefore, mothers depend on the services provided and it is more difficult to leave the shelter. At the same time, at schools there are not any preventive or controlling methods of bullying (most incidents usually take place at school time, specifically at breaks), while the staff is not adequately trained to manage incidents of GBV. Finally, there is a no appointed full-time psychologist per school, who could possibly deal with violent incidences when they occur.

Some ideas for further improvement could be the instalment of more stringent and ethical rules concerning the supervision of the Social Media language and content, to minimize the exposure of stereotypes. In addition, the media could be used to reach young people through jingles and spot messages, while the schools could organize debates and activities for gender equality. Training teachers on the other hand to prevent and use correctly the language is going to contribute into raising awareness of GBV. Lastly, continuous research from independent organizations is critical in order to evaluate our progress as a society.





1.4 – GBV in the media

Case 1:

In 2014, a 41-year old man using his army-issued G3 automatic rifle shot and killed his wife and 9-year old daughter, shot and critically injured his 14-year old son, before shooting himself dead. His ex-wife had gone to his parents' house, where he lived after being separated, to drop off the children and had a heated argument. As the argument escalated, he got his G3 automatic rifle and shot his ex-wife through the windshield of the car as she tried to get away. The children were sitting in the back and saw this, opened the doors to run from their father. He chased them and managed to kill his daughter and injure his son (Christou, 2014).

The tragic incident has once again opened the debate of issuing firearms to reservists in Cyprus as similar crimes have occurred in the past. However, firearms are not the problem, but the presentation of such incidents. This very serious incident was reported in the media as a “family tragedy,” were the father was suffering from mental health problems and his condition deteriorated after he lost custody of his children. However, the real problem portrayed here is of gender-based violence, a phenomenon based on the concept of marriage and the patriarchal family. Murders of women should stop being viewed as a private matter, as they are seen now, and be seen as a political matter in a society that is based on human rights. The Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS, 2014), in its announcement criticised and condemned the “*apathetic attitude of Cypriot society on hearing of the murders of women,*” which it said only served to maintain the status quo when it came to violence against women.

Case 2:

In 2014, a teacher was convicted with two and a half years of imprisonment term, and three years suspension because he was found guilty of sexual exploitation of a child and child pornography, as he was using a social networking platform with a minor student and sent messages as well as sexually explicit material. It is important to underline that the two and a half years of imprisonment term will be implemented in case of a new similar conviction and in such case, the duration of the old offense (2 and a half years of imprisonment) will be imposed with a new sentence. In addition to the imprisonment, the following fines imposed to the teacher: the teacher would have been monitored for the next three years by the Supervisory Authority for Sentenced Persons and 2) the teacher is not allowed to work in places with children. His sentence was presented in the media as a non-punitive and demonstrated the need for a better legislative framework that will prevent the abuse of children (Simerini news, 2016).

Case 3:

Another worrying incident happened recently, this time involving underage students. A mother had reported a group of three students that had sexually harassed her 13-year daughter in the school setting. According to the allegations, they started by making fun of her, then wrote with markers on various parts of her body, and then made other indecent acts. The incident is being under investigation at the moment and it is done discretely, as the girl is a minor and comes from a small community. The three students have been expelled from the school (Paphos Press, 2018).

Case 4:

Another recent case of sexual abuse came to publicity after the victim's death on the 23rd of March 2018. The woman was a foster child since the age of 2 up until 18 years old. She was a victim of physical and sexual abuse since the age of 4 until the age of 10 by her priest stepfather. Her efforts to seek some help started since 2008 when at the age of 10 years, she reported being abused to the Social Welfare Offices. Nothing happened, according to the media. In 2010, she submitted a new report and after many struggles she managed





to convince the court about the truthfulness of her experience. In 2010, when she was about 20 years old, she took part as a witness at the court against her stepfather, talking about her experience with abuse, along with other difficulties she had to face for years. In 2011, she was a guest at a national television show “Me tin Elita” (translating as: “talking with Elita”), where she told her story masking her face.

Her reports of the abuse to the Social Welfare Services (SWS) resulted in limited action. The Officer responsible for the case reported that she did everything she could but interventions from higher levels of authority prohibited the Officer from taking action. After the court case and the 2-year incarceration of the priest, the latter was acquitted by the Church.

After she had talked about what she was going through and since her stepfather was perceived as an unimpeachable citizen, rumours were going around that “she does it to make money”, and “someone paid her to tell these lies”, “she has a mental illness”, “she is a drug addict.” The society was divided, others supporting and others against the priest - perpetrator. In court, while she was approaching the stand to testify against the priest, people threw tin cans at her and were mocking her.

The result of the court demanded that the priest was convicted in 2-year incarceration from 2013 and was released in 2015. He resumed his duties as a priest and the Metropolitan Priest of Tamasou and Orinis Esaias, provided him a free house next to a kindergarten and a primary school, while in the meantime he was assigned duties as a priest at a women’s monastery. After the conviction of the priest, his release and resume of his duties as a priest, she abandoned her studies and isolated herself, struggling with mental health difficulties which are believed to have led her to her death in 2018. There was a criminal case submitted against her stepmother accusing her for participating in the events of sexual and physical abuse. After the victim’s death, the case cannot be proceeded further in the courts since she was the basic witness of prosecution. Responsibilities are sought through the governmental services for not protecting her when reporting her abuse at the age of 10 and by the Church for acquitting the priest.

A lawyer, who did not know or worked with the victim, made the case public through social media, and with details that violated the privacy of the victim. Even though the case went to court and records of it can be found online (cylaw.com), the records do not have identifying details, which the lawyer revealed.

The lessons to be kept from this case are the consequences of the lack of early intervention for victim’s protection. In addition, this case shows the necessity of training, safeguarding and controlling of the procedures for evaluating cases by the services.

These incidents illustrate that GBV is a grave issue that needs to be resolved. The need to combat gender stereotypes is profound, and it is essential to develop psychosocial programmes that promote equality and respect to all.

Conclusion

Cyprus has been occupied since 1974 by Turkey, and a solution is yet to be found. The political problem, together with the fight for independence from the British during 1955-59, and the need Cypriots have for mediation from external powers for the solution, seems to enhance beliefs in messianic solutions. These beliefs come from religion as well and are related to patriarchal beliefs that men must be in charge of public and domestic affairs (Koutselini & Agathaggelou, 2013). These socially constructed beliefs are illustrated in cases that are present today, such as; the average income of women in Cyprus is still lower than





that of men, women head most single families, and they represent a significantly high percentage of the poor, uneducated and unemployed people (Statistical Service of Cyprus, 2004).

Gender stereotypes and social attitudes have been identified as the major obstacle to the advancement of women. Having in mind the above, as women are discriminated against, it is the same for LBGQTQI+ people, as they do not fit the norm of gender binary. As a result, femininity is “punished” from people that feel very masculine.

Primary school children view women as emotional and hold inferior social roles, whereas men are viewed as having more prestigious social profiles. Students tend to consider men, compared to women, earning higher income, being better as managers than women, are responsible for the financial support of their family, they must be educated and are capable of political offices (statements that got higher mean). In contrast, statements that got high scores for women included; to the role of women as housewives either married or single, their consuming relationship with money, their interest in their external appearance and fashion. It was found that girls associated more positive qualities to women, compared to boys, demonstrating that children perceive gender profile in a different way (Koutselini & Agathaggelou, 2013).

Secondary school children believe that Cypriot man should work and be responsible of the financial aid of his family and the Cypriot woman appears to dedicate most of her daily time in her private life and she experiences a personal-home life that is possessed by negative sentiments particularly hostile ones towards the people of her close familiar environment. She appears to be isolated by the wider social environment, thereby living enslaved to, and absolutely dependent on, the “companion of her life” (Koutselini & Agathaggelou, 2013).

These gender stereotypes are found in the media, and they reinforce socially constructed roles. Unfortunately, even teachers unconsciously reinforce these stereotypes.

According to the statistical data collected by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the family (APHVF), the most common forms of GBV in Cyprus are: psychological and sexual abuse (53.6% of reported cases), followed by only psychological abuse (30%), and psychological, physical and sexual abuse (11.3%). In a research carried out with students conserving homophobia, it was found that in primary school homophobic bullying is exhibited through verbal taunts concomitant with exclusion from school games and activities. In high school, the bullying becomes more severe and aggressive (Shoshilou & Vasiliou 2016). For homophobia against girls, there are scant reports, demonstrating that in a patriarchal society such as Cyprus, it is granted very little space or recognition.

Although issues such as gender equality, gender-based violence and the right to personal integrity are included to some extent in the health education school curriculum of the Ministry of Education, comprehensive sexuality education at all education levels is still lacking. Prevention programmes are implemented by NGOs such as the “Cyprus Family Planning Association, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, and the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, although these are not implemented on a systematic basis and are subject to funding contingency” (Kaili & Pavlou, 2015).

Another training that is offered by NGOs, the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, and the Commission for Administration and Human Rights. However, these programmes “are not implemented on a systematic basis due to lack of resources and as well as the absence of a political will to formally integrate VAW in professional training” (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus, 2017). Front line professionals (e.g. police officers) dealing with victims of violence, do



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“not receive systematic training on all forms of violence “against women. Thus, they often lack the ability to provide “adequate support and protection to victims and lack a gender-sensitive approach” (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus, 2017). The lack of trauma-focused training of judges on violence against women and needs and rights of victims, can lead to re-traumatization of women experiencing abuse. The judiciary is generally reluctant to collaborate with “gender experts and accepting specialized professional training on VAW and gender equality” (Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies in Cyprus, 2017).

There is a serious need for changes in social attitudes. Ways to tackle the problem include education for the elimination of gender stereotypes, the adoption of a Code of Ethics in the Media, research on gender equality issues and the sensitization and training of teachers, parents and students, as well as journalists and policy-makers in the mass media. Thus, a comprehensive educational programme with some guidance for teachers will help them first of all, recognise their own attitudes and stereotypes.

The educational system is a mechanism for social change and can play a key role in cultivating a non-discriminatory mentality and gender equality. This can be done by promoting and emphasising positive contributions from women who are active in political and economic life, while ensuring equal opportunities for boys and girls in the school environment, increase in tolerance and diversity.





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- Εγκρίθηκε η εφαρμογή της Εθνικής Στρατηγικής για την Πρόληψη και Διαχείριση της Βίας στο Σχολείο (CY_10)
- Θέμα: Βράβευση καλών πρακτικών πρόληψης της βίας και της νεανικής παραβατικότητας στο σχολείο (CY_11)
- Θέμα: Συμμετοχή στο Ευρωπαϊκό Συνέδριο με θέμα «Καταπολεμώντας τον εκφοβισμό: Προκλήσεις και Καλές Πρακτικές» (CY_12)
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