



U N A R S

Understanding Agency & Resistance Strategies:
Children in situations of domestic violence & abuse

**UNDERSTANDING AGENCY AND
RESISTANCE STRATEGIES (UNARS):
POLICY ANALYSIS - The Policy
Situation in relation to Children Living
with Domestic Violence
In Greece**



ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ
ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.

This Report reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Project Code: JUST/2012/DAP-AG-3461

Suggested citation:

Deliyanni-Kouimtzi, V., Kouimtzi, E., Papathanasiou, M., Psalti, A., Loizou, D., Babalou, Ch., Bali, V. (2015) UNDERSTANDING AGENCY AND RESISTANCE STRATEGIES (UNARS): POLICY ANALYSIS - The Policy Situation in relation to Children Living with Domestic Violence In Greece

An electronic copy of this report and other UNARS Project publications are available at:

<http://www.unars.co.uk/>®

UNars Policy Analysis

The Policy Situation in relation to Children Living with Domestic Violence In Greece

V. Deliyanni-Kouimtzi

E. Kouimtzi

M. Papathanasiou

A. Psalti

D. Loizou

Ch.Babalou

V. Bali

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND POLICY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	7
2.1. Children’s Rights in Greece	7
2.2. Legislation and Policy in relation to Domestic Violence	9
Legislation	10
National Policy	12
2.3. Placing Children and Young People in Legislation and Policy on Domestic Violence	14
Legislation	14
The Policy context in Greece	15
3 . METHODOLOGY	17
3.1 Policy documents	17
3.2 Professional Stakeholders	18
3.3 Carers	19
4 POLICY ANALYSIS FINDINGS	19
4.1 Thematic analysis of the policy documents	19
4.1.1 Main Theme 1: Experiencing Harm	20
4.1.2. Main theme 2: Countering Harm	24
4.2. Professional Stakeholders Conceptualization of the DVA Policy Context: Findings	27
4.2.1 Main theme 1:The child in domestic violence	28
4.2.2 Main Theme 2: Role of Professionals and Agencies	32
4.3. Carers Conceptualization of the DVA Policy Context: Findings	35
4.3.1 Main theme 1: The child in domestic violence	35
4.3.2 Main theme 2: Role of agencies and professionals	37
REFERENCES	39

1. INTRODUCTION

The Definition of Domestic violence

In Greece, there are 2 documents in which domestic violence issues are described. The first description is given in the Law 3500/2006 (article 6) which is known as the Law for domestic violence. The second description is provided in the document entitled "Violence against women: A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures" (Tata-Arsel, 2011) published by the General Secretariat For Gender Equality. Both documents are very important in Greece. The Law represents the institutional power of what constitutes domestic violence. The "Violence against women" document is an official document used by many Counselling Centres offering services to women with problems of family/domestic violence.

It should hereby be said that the Law 3500/2006 is a very important legislation, resulted from the campaign of women's movement and of feminist organizations as well as by the directives (1582/2002) of the Council of the European Union.

The Law states that domestic violence exists when a family member causes the following criminal acts to another member of the family:

- (a) Physical injury or harm in his (sic) health or not serious physical injuries systematically
- (b) Serious (dangerous) physical damage
- (c) Very serious physical damage

Based on the above statements, it is obvious that the Law doesn't make any explicit statement about psychological violence, but includes statements about physical violence only. However, the notion of severe psychological harm is introduced in article 4, and it is viewed as a consequence of the intense physical abuse or injuries. In addition, in article 7, the Law implies some references to psychological violence by stating that when a member of the family causes worry or extreme fear to another member then this member is punished with imprisonment. The problem with these references is that psychological violence is legitimized only by its obvious or tangible consequences, and by its severe consequences. Other forms of psychological violence such as preventing someone from meeting relatives, jealousy etc. are not described. Marital rape is also penalized for the first time in Greek legislation (see article 8). Generally speaking, the existing definition is restricted, because it doesn't refer to other forms of domestic violence such as emotional, psychological, social and financial. It doesn't describe any form of stalking, which could occur in romantic relationships, in dating or intimate partner violence.

This definition is neutral, as the articles describe cases of violence "*against a member of the family*", in general, giving thus a gender neutral connotation. Even in cases that the grammatical pronoun is used,

this is of the male gender. This definition does not document offenses **as sex discrimination and as a violation of the principles of equality**. Only in reference to rape cases, there is a distinction regarding the use of violence against women in the family. The law does not recognize the gendered dimension of violence, as it does not mention either the fact that domestic violence primarily affects women nor the punitive/correctional role of against his wife and children. (Gouliarou, 2008). In a similar vein, it doesn't recognize men or other people in need as being affected by domestic violence. It represents domestic violence as an issue that concerns only family members, ex-partners or people who are cohabiting. The law fails to recognize the violence among same sex couples and among young people. It fails to recognize the violence existing among couples who have a romantic relationship, who are dating, but they are not cohabiting.

The second official document in Greece, is entitled "Violence against women". In this document, the used term is that of "violence against women". It could be argued that in Greece, domestic violence is described interchangeably with the term "violence against women". In other words, violence against women and domestic violence appear to be identical and synonyms. In the above document, violence against women is described as

"any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether violence occurs in public or in private" (Tata-Arcel, 2011).

Types of violence include sexual, physical, psychological violence against women and children as well as some forms of economic violence (Gouliarou, 2008. Tata-Arcel, 2011).

This definition, drawn from Article 1 of the Declaration of the United Nations on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW), recognizes the gendered dimension of the phenomenon of violence (Tata-Arcel, 2011). However, it does not acknowledge that men, young people, or gay/lesbian people could experience domestic violence.

The importance of these definitions is that they have an impact on (a) what forms of domestic violence are criminalized and (b) who are the beneficiaries of the official support offered by Greek Services for Domestic violence issues. Regarding (b), the first one is more inclusive regarding children. It is evident; however, that both imply that there is no support to be offered for gay/lesbians, young people, and the elderly. Therefore, services operating under the Tata-Arcel (2011) framework accept almost inclusively women with family abuse problems.

On the other hand, the definition used by Law has a very restricted view of what are the forms of

domestic violence, as it refers to physical violence or extreme psychological harm only. Having as a primary objective to protect the institution of the family, or people who are cohabiting, it leaves unprotected group of people who are in romantic/open, dating relationships.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND POLICY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2.1. Children’s Rights in Greece

The legislation for Children’s Rights in Greece is influenced by the “Declaration for the Rights of Child”. The Greek State recognizes that children are entitled to attention and protection by the State and the competent institutions, as this is highlighted in the introduction of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which states that *“the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth”* (see Children’s Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). Regarding the Rights of the Child in Greece, these are recognised and protected by the principles dictated by the relevant Convention of the United Nations Organization (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC). *“The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first global legally binding code”*, which sets the basic principles for *“the rights that all children should enjoy at different stages of their development”* (Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, Society for the Protection of Minors, 2014). This international treaty was unanimously adopted by the UN (United Nations) General Assembly in 1989 and brought into force on September 2, 1990. Formally Greece ratified the UNCRC in 1992, with the establishment of the Law 2101/92 (Official Gazette 192/2.12.92) (Children’s Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) consists of 54 articles, which can be grouped into four broad categories:

- (a) Rights of Survival covering the right of the child to life as well as to basic life needs, (b) Rights of Protection which require the protection of children from any kind of abuse, neglect, and exploitation,
- (c) Rights of Development, which refer to everything that is essential so that children can reach their full potential, such as the right to education, play, freedom of thought, etc., and
- (d) Rights of Participation, according to which children are allowed to play an active role in their societies and nations (Athens Society for the Protection of Minors, 2014).

According to Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children (2012) the State's obligations to the child – resulting from the International Convention–include child protection against any form of violence, such as physical, verbal, sexual, psychological (Child Protection Rights). In addition, the state must protect children from any other forms of violence such as: of systemic (practised by systems, such as education, various institutions etc.), of visual (exercised through exposure to violent images) and of symbolic violence (like the one portrayed in many modern videogames). The Ombudsman for Children argues that according to article 19, paragraph 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child "States Parties" are obligated:

"to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect the child from all forms of violence, insult, physical or mental violence, abandonment or neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual violence" (see also article 34)...to be vigilant to ensure that no child shall be subjected to (...) degrading punishment or treatment" (article 37).

In the development of the Rights of Child in Greece, the establishment of the institution of Children's Ombudsman constitutes an important factor. This institution aims at defending and promoting Children's Rights in Greece. It was established in our country in 2003 and is part of the Independent Authority of "The Greek Ombudsman" (Law 3094/2003).

One of the main contributions of Children's Ombudsman to the establishment of Rights of Child in Greece is his/her act to prohibit the use of corporal punishment as a means for disciplining children. His/her act was included in article 4, in the Law of domestic violence 3500/2006) (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). This article is of great importance for the Greek legislation. The law specifically states that the use of

"physical violence against children as a means of discipline constitutes a bad practice of custody and results in the removal of the custody or of the parental responsibility of the offender"

Furthermore, article 9, para. 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stressed that *"separation of the child from his parents (...) is necessary for the best interest of the child in special cases, such as when there are grounds of neglect or maltreatment/abuse by parents"* (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012).

On the occasion of the examination by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of the 2nd and 3rd Periodic Report submitted by the Greek Government in July 2009, the Greek Ombudsman summed up the main findings and proposals regarding the implementation of the International Convention on the

Rights of the Child in Greece during 2003-2012. In this Report, the need for the implementation of a National Action Plan on Children's Rights with bi-ministerial support was stressed, which Action Plan will have specific goals, methodology and a system for monitoring the implementation of the Plan at a national and regional level. Furthermore, the Independent Authority of the Greek Ombudsman shall submit an Annual Report, which will include all the activities and interventions carried out within the year, to provide information to all concerned parties. The Greek Ombudsman found that psychosocial services in the community as well as those associated with education, fall significantly behind in the provision of safeguards for the protection of minors from neglect and abuse. In the Report of 2012, it is noted that *"issues of failing policies pertaining to children (which have been recorded by the Greek Ombudsman) in the fields of education, health, welfare, justice, labour, Mass Media and general policies for the effective protection/safeguarding of the rights of the child in social life are highlighted"* (The Greek Ombudsman, 2012). Historically, the National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child has not yet received final approval (Moschos, 2014).

2.2. Legislation and Policy in relation to Domestic Violence

Until 2006, there was no systemic-legal framework in Greece regarding the prevention and combating of domestic violence, a lack against which the feminist movement was struggling over the past decades in Greece. Even international organisations, like the United Nations Organization and the European Union, were sensitised to address the issue and have contributed to the adoption of laws and generally to the shaping of policies (Gouliarou, 2008) in order to address the issue of DV in most European countries.

An important step toward the promotion of gender equality and women's rights was taken in 1979 with the adoption by the UNO (United Nations Organization) General Assembly of the historic Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which brought together 186 Member States and entered into force in 1981. In Greece, the Convention was ratified and came into force with Law 1342/1983 (Gouliarou, 2008). The General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSE) of the Ministry of the Interior is the national organisation responsible for preparing the national report and for presenting the report before the CEDAW.

Despite the fact that our country had ratified numerous international human rights conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW with Law 1342/1983) and the Optional Protocol (with Law 2952/2001), it has been resisting the adoption of a law on domestic violence, since it was believed until fairly recently that the existing laws addressed the phenomenon adequately. However, the term "domestic violence" did not exist as such in Greek law and therefore, it did not justify the right of recourse to justice (Gouliarou, 2008). In March 2005, the UN Commission on Human Rights recommended in Greece, the promotion of legislation on domestic violence. The relevant bill, with some modifications, was adopted on October 24, 2006 and became a law of the State with number 3500/2006 titled *"On combating domestic violence and other provisions"* and was implemented on January 25, 2007 (Gouliarou, 2008). This law criminalised the abuse of women and marital rape and at

the same time included provisions on the abuse of children (e.g. Gouliarou, 2008 & 2011; Zorba, 2011; Sourli, 2011).

Historically, a number of national policies-actions against violence have contributed to the passage of this law. For example, it is worth mentioning the campaign organized by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) and the Research Center for Gender Equality (KETHI) in the context of a pan-European campaign by the Council of Europe in 2000, on domestic violence which lasted for 8 months. In 2002, the Interministerial Commission submitted a draft law on violence against women to the Ministry of the Interior, which draft law was not passed (Zorba, 2011). That same year, Law 3064/2002, promoted policies to combat human trafficking, crimes of sexual freedom, child pornography, economic exploitation of sexual health and also policies for victim support. There were efforts to prevent and combat violence between the years 2004-2008 within the Axes for Action of National Policy Priorities on Gender Equality, under the pressure from Non-governmental Organizations and groups which were active in this field. Finally, in July 2005, the General Secretariat for Gender Equality (GSGE) established a Task Force that prepared an official report on combating domestic violence which became the basis for Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence. The Official Report included proposals for dealing with the phenomenon in terms of Criminal Law, Criminal and Civil Procedure as well as in terms of support structures for victims and perpetrators. This was the step taken to support women and families and protect the fundamental rights of family members through the institutions of criminal mediation and through the reinforcement of support structures (Zorba, 2011).

More recently, as part of the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013, a Special Legislation Committee was established to work on the draft law in July 2010. The goal of the Committee was to amend the legislation on domestic violence. Emphasis was placed on the promotion of sensitisation and protection measures for victims of all forms of violence and on safeguarding women's rights to information and free legal assistance (Zorba, 2011). The amended Law 3500/2006 also provided for the establishment of victim support Centres/Counselling Centers and Shelters. These amendments however, did not occur until now.

Legislation

The main legislation for combating Domestic violence in Greece draws from Article 1 of the Declaration of the United Nations on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW) recognizes the gendered dimension of the phenomenon of violence. CEDAW include diverse types of violence such as sexual, physical, psychological violence against both women and children as well as some forms of economic violence (Gouliarou, 2008. Tata-Arcel, 2011).

In our country legislation on domestic violence has been harmonised with the European Directive,

through Law N. 3500/2006, which criminalised the abuse of women and marital rape (e.g. Gouliarou, 2008., 2011. Zorba, 2011.Sourli, 2011), while stating that the obstruction of the administration of justice is punished (Gouliarou, 2008).

In particular, article 1 of Law 3500/2006 states that *"domestic violence constitutes a penal crime and violence among family members is prohibited"*. Article 2 specifies that *"the protective provisions of the law apply to both the permanent partner/companion and the children, who may be born to both partners or to only one of them, if the (unmarried) couple cohabits"*.

Legislative regulations report that the exercise of domestic violence constitutes a presumption for the breakdown of marriage and the imposed sentences vary depending on the seriousness of the offence, from imprisonment of 6 months to 10 years. In particular, the exercise of physical violence before a minor family member is punished with at least 1 year of imprisonment, while when the victim, who suffers intense physical or psychological violence with serious consequences on his/her physical or mental health, is a minor, then the imprisonment can be at least 10 years (Gouliarou, 2008).

One of the points of the law worth mentioning is the institution of criminal/penal mediation, which is put into practice as long as perpetrator and victim **wish to activate it** and it allegedly aims at *"restoring the harmonious cohabitation and the peace of the family"*. According to Gouliarou (2008) this institution does not constitute a good practice in the way it is structured, as *"it does not seek primarily to stop domestic violence, providing security and assistance to the victims, but to protect the institution of the family(pp. 344-347)"*, ignoring the dangers to the victim which may arise from his/her cohabitation with the perpetrator. Furthermore, it seems that the offender *"is not treated as a criminal, but as a person suffering from mental disorder"* (Gouliarou, 2008). From an overall assessment of the institution, it follows that the law favours the aggressor through his/her legal impunity. The legislative regulations allow for the justification of the aggressor, as the victim is the person who bears the full responsibility for the level to which he/she will move the process and whether she/he will eventually resort to divorce. Furthermore, this institution has also problems in its implementation because there are no State Services, apart from the National Center of Social Solidarity in Athens and Thessaloniki) or NGOs to offer specialized treatment programmes for violent people or violent men.

The legislative framework that addresses the issue of domestic violence has only been recently developed in Greece and concerns mostly heterosexual women and children, victims or witnesses of violence. This legislation does not concern other group of people such as men, elderly, young people, gay/lesbians. The main objective of the law is to protect the family and not women or children, men, young people, and people who are dating. Its language is gender-neutral, asexual and does not document offenses as sex discrimination and as a violation of the principles of equality or other forms of

domestic violence apart from physical or extreme psychological harm. However, this legislative framework is innovative insofar it introduces the concept of domestic violence for the first time in the Greek context.

National Policy

Greece has only recently addressed national policies for combating domestic violence (e.g. Liapi, Zeis, Milioni, and Albanis ,2012). These policies include both the legislative regulations that aim at preventing and combating violence against women, and other initiatives aiming at supporting the victims such as the establishment of helpline 15900, Counselling centers for women etc..

Under the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013, the Special Legislation Committee worked to improve Law 3500/2006 by creating Victim Support Centres and short-term hospitality Centres/Shelters for victims and their children (Zorba, 2011). In this context, the National Programme on Combating Violence against Women was proposed by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality for the period 2009-2013 and is in operation until today. The programme, cited as the second pillar in the National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 has the following aims/objections:

1. The protection of all women's rights through the promotion of gender equality and design and implementation of interventions towards groups of women facing multiple discrimination.
2. The prevention and combating of all forms and types of violence against women.
3. The support of women's employment and their financial independence.

In particular, the National Programme for Prevention and Combating of all forms of Violence against Women includes 8 Actions regarding legislation, structures, services, prevention, training, research, civil society and the institutional/legal framework for cooperation.

1. In terms of the legislation, the National Programme provided for the improvement and reinforcement of the existing Law 3500/2006 and also of the laws on rape and human trafficking. The amendments aimed to introduce a gendered language in the Law, and took actions against gender discriminations, and violations of the principle of the gender equality.

2. Regarding the establishment of structures, the National Programme includes actions, such as the creation of Counselling Centres and Shelters in the capital city of each Region, the operation of a National Emergency SOS Telephone Line (15900), the running of awareness-raising campaigns to prevent violence, etc. (PROJECT 3, PROJECT 4, PROJECT 5, PROJECT 6).

3. Services include psychological, social, economic and legal support, legal advisory and information. In addition, there is provision for the referral and escort of women to the police or other

authorities.

4. Prevention involved public awareness-raising actions through nationwide campaigns on domestic violence and rape. There were also provisions for cooperation with the National Radio and Television Council/Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) so that the dissemination of messages that offend the dignity of women can be prevented. During 2009- 2014, campaigns on TV and the National Radio encouraged abused women to “break the silence” and access GSGE Counselling Centres for help.

5. Training is associated with staff training/education in Counselling Centres and also of all public officials (e.g. police, prosecutor) on gender issues.

6. Research involves surveys on gender-based violence and its effects along with sociological research on honour crimes, murders of women and the development of monitoring tools.

7. In terms of civil society, the National Programme provided for financial aid to the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) to promote public policies to combat phenomena of violence, which in turn will result in the promotion of policies on gender equality.

8. Finally, as for the institutional/legal framework of cooperation, the National Programme provided for the launch of cooperation efforts between the ministries of Citizen Protection and of Health and Welfare. It also provided for the re-opening of the National Observatory on Combating Violence against Women which was established in 2003 and has not been in operation since then.

Today, all the Counselling Centres for Battered/Abused women and Guest Houses/Hospitality Centres are in operation, providing social, psychological and legal counselling services. Women are hosted by these Guest Houses, their access, however, is hindered either because of bureaucracy and certain requirements, or due to bad professional practices, e.g., lack of staff, decision-making by non-qualified people etc. The services are offered mainly to women who are married, or divorced. Some hospitality centres don't accommodate women with boys aged 13yrs old and above. The idea behind this exclusion is totally gender biased.

The same philosophy is shared by various NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) active in this field that provide counselling and legal support. In addition, the new Code on Municipalities and Communities (Law 3463/2006) provides, as a new responsibility of the Local Government Organisations of first degree, counselling support to victims of domestic violence and violence between cohabiting persons (Zorba, 2011). Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI), in an effort to continue to supervise the actions regarding the issue of domestic violence, conducts a survey titled "Domestic Violence- Sampling Statistical Utilization of data relating to the abuse of women" (for women that seek help from Counselling Centres), and every year on November 25 data resulting from this research study is announced (Zorba, 2011).

According to Liapi et al (2012) the “National Programme for Prevention and Combating of all forms of Violence against Women” of Greece established a combating framework of 2 different speeds. The first

concerns the traditional institutions such as police, juridical system, prosecutors, lawyers. The second concerns the establishment of a network of services for women with problems of family abuse across the country under the supervision of the State. However, this Programme and the current legislation have problems due to the lack of material and human resources. Furthermore, the NGOs have a restricted role in combating the violence because they are financially depended by the state and have been recently affected by the recession.

Finally, it should be said that a lack of support structures for the identification of domestic problems and for the support of other groups of people such as men, gay/lesbians, young people, intimate/dating partners is evident in the policy context. A complete system of support structures should include family counsellors, a sensitive and effective police force, school psychologists, social care centers, shelters for abused women and shelters for abused women with adolescents boys. Despite the existence of the National Programme, these structures are in many cases rudimentary.

2.3. Placing Children and Young People in Legislation and Policy on Domestic Violence

Legislation

In terms of parental care for children, the Rights for the Protection of Children seek to ensure that children are protected from exposure to any kind of abuse, including abuse occurring in the family. The violation of these rights is prosecuted by Law 3500/2006 on domestic violence.

In particular, the Law on Domestic violence (articles, 3, 4 & 9 /3500/2006) states:

“If the physical violence occurs in front of a minor then the act is penalized with 1 year of imprisonment at least”

“the use of physical violence against children as a means of discipline constitutes a bad practice of custody and results in the removal of the custody or of the parental responsibility of the offender”

Another provision of the law on judicial intervention dictates that family members are not examined under oath and minors are not considered witnesses in court. If, however there is a deposition, this is read in court. In any case, it leaves open the possibility that children may be called by the Court as witnesses provided this is deemed necessary (Gouliarou, 2008).

In addition, article 23 of law 3500/2006 stipulates that teachers of Primary and Secondary Education pledge, when they receive information about the exercise of domestic violence against minors, to act so as to protect them, e.g. to report to the competent public prosecutor or to the nearest police authority.

Specifically it is stated that *"A teacher of primary or secondary education who, is aware that there has been committed a crime of domestic violence against a student, he/she is obligated, without delay, to inform the Director of the school unit. The Director of the school unit announces, immediately, the offence to the competent prosecutor or to the nearest police authority"*. From the above it becomes clear that the law covers and engages teachers who obtain information about the exercise of domestic violence against minors to take an active role in the protection of children (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). However, as the Children's Ombudsman notes, a network between schools and local services must be present, in cases in which the information that a teacher receives is not completely clear, as well as when an appeal to criminal prosecution procedures is not considered the most appropriate first step to action at the moment. It could be argued that the Law recognizes the harm effects of witnessing physical violence in children but fails to recognize the effects of other forms of domestic violence on them. It mainly aims at protecting children from physical punishment, considering physical assault as a mean of punishment used for disciplinary reasons only. Finally it introduces protective and safety measures for children as the separation from the family context in cases of abuse, or actions that should be taken by the teachers of Primary and Secondary Education.

In sum, the issue of interconnection between children abuse and domestic violence is only superficially mentioned in the Law and children are presented as passive victims or witnesses, as we will try to show below. However, even though this approach has a lot of drawbacks, it is recognized as the first official attempt to address the issue of children experiencing domestic violence in Greece.

The Policy context in Greece

In Greece, according to Moschos, (2014) the bodies that deal with issues relating to children, such as children's rights and their protection, include

- the Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children,
- the local Societies for the Protection of Minors
- Local psychosocial services, such as welfare services of local authorities, child psychiatric units in hospitals and mental health centres

- Psychoeducational Centres, Centres for Family Support (SOS Children's Villages, Helplines),
- The National Center for Social Solidarity etc.

The Children's Ombudsman bureau is one of the sections of the Greek Ombudsman institution and operates since July 2003 (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). Its action is interwoven with the monitoring of the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, through the network of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), which was created on an initiative of the Independent Authority (Greek Ombudsman, 2012). The jurisdictions of the Children's Ombudsman permit him/her to investigate serious violations of the rights and freedoms of children on his/her own initiative and to carry out visits to schools, hostels, hospitals, detention facilities, etc., in order to ascertain if children's rights are protected. The Children's Ombudsman examines reports that are submitted to him/her regarding violation of the rights of minors and takes care to ensure that the competent bodies undertake, in accordance with the law, the protection of children's rights. The Children's Ombudsman can also act ex officio or make institutional proposals in Parliament (Moschos, 2014). Protecting children from various forms of violence is an important field of activity for the Children's Ombudsman. The prohibition of corporal punishment of children as a means of discipline (article 4, Law 3500/2006) is his/her own institutional intervention (Moschos, 2014).

Societies for the Protection of Minors also deal with defending issues that concern children. These are public law entities/legal entities under public law, represented by an Administrative Board and supervised by the Ministry of Justice. Their main purpose is to *"contribute to the prevention of juvenile delinquency"*. Their objectives include *"the provision of material and social assistance to minors who are in reformatory institutions as well as the provision of vocational training, education, cultural education, entertainment, and shelter to minors"*, covering thereby the fulfilment of the essential vested rights of the children (Athens Society for the Protection of Minors, 2014).

The Civil Code contains provisions according to which the context and content of the exercise of parental care and custody as well as the limits of the parental role are described. The State through the judicial officers may intervene to protect the rights of children whose parents violate their duties. The Juvenile Prosecutor can also take similar measures temporarily. The Penal Code includes a series of provisions for offences regarding the exercise of physical violence and the deliberated physical harm against minors, sexual abuse/assault against minors, pornography, neglect of minors resulting to perpetration etc (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012). In particular, Law 3500/2006 on combating domestic violence includes important provisions that ensure increased protection for victims of violence in the family. This law establishes that all these offences are prosecuted ex officio, i.e. an indictment on the part of the parents or of the children who are victims of violence is not required (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012).

The Children's Ombudsman has also arranged for the sensitisation of teachers on the issue of domestic violence. This need arose from the fact that teachers are not informed about the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and school curriculum seems to include only a few references to the Convention. The Children's Ombudsman, through briefings and visits to schools seeks to give the children the opportunity to get to know, discuss and reflect upon their rights and how to defend them. In addition, in the school year 2008-2009, after an initiative by the Ombudsman, the full text of the Convention was distributed in primary schools (Children's Ombudsman/Ombudsperson for Children, 2012).

The Greek Ombudsman's actions for the protection of children's rights include campaigns that inform both the public and the State on issues of domestic violence. Specifically, the report of the Deputy Ombudsman for the Children's Rights to the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, Youth and Human Rights, in early 2010 presented certain findings and recommendations on this social phenomenon (Update of the Parliamentary Committee on Domestic Violence, 2010). This report stressed the inadequate staffing of existing support structures, such as the lack of psychologists and social workers in schools and poor and / or inadequate teacher training in dealing with similar situations. Submitted recommendations pertaining to schools also included the need for hiring mental health specialists in schools and for the appropriate training of teachers regarding the law on domestic violence (Law 3500/2006), as well as about the ways they themselves can intervene in the best interest of children. At the same time, the need for support services and centres in local communities has emerged, focusing mainly on family counselling and support, and on establishing structures that provide hospitality and care to children who are victims of abuse. There is also a recommendation regarding the need for staffing social services with juvenile prosecutors as well as for the operation of family courts (Update of the Parliamentary Committee on Domestic Violence, 2010).

3 . METHODOLOGY

3.1 Policy documents

We looked for national documents addressing both issues of Domestic violence in children and adolescents and in women from September 2013 till January 2014. In particular (1) we asked from the Greek Ombudsman Office to supply us with the relevant documents. (2) We contacted the General

Secretariat for gender equality asking to supply or indicate the relevant documents. (3) We were informed by key persons (a lawyer and a professor) about publications on the topics. (4) We searched in our library through the Heal link database using the Greek key words for “children abuse and domestic/family violence”, and “adolescent abuse and domestic/family abuse”.

In general, we spotted the following texts which are used for our analysis:

- (1) Law 3500/2005.
- (2) Committee of the Rights of the Child- Sixtieth Session (2012). *Consideration of reports submitted by State Parties under Article 44 of the Convention- Concluding observations: Greece*. Convention of the Rights of the Child, August.
- (3) The Greek Ombudsman (2012). *Parallel Report to the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child: Findings and Recommendations on the Implementations of Children’s Rights in Greece 2003-2011*. The Greek Ombudsmen- Department of Children’s Rights
- (4) ENOC-ENYA (2010). Draft Joint Recommendations for Preventing Violence against Children. *ENOC 14th Annual Convention*, Strasbourg, 7-9 October
- (5) Petroulaki K., Tsigoti, A., Kouveli, E. And Sotiriou, P. (2013). *Escaping from a Violent Relationship: A Guide*. Athens: The European Network Against Violence
- (6) Tata-Arcel, L. (Ed.) (2011). *Violence against women: A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality
- (7) The National Programme for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women 2009 -2013 (Issued by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality). (Παραπομπή: ιστοσελίδα)

These texts were chosen based on the relevancy of their **direct** reports to the rights of the child and to issues of domestic violence. We highlighted the sections and paragraphs referred to the topics of children/adolescents abuse and family/domestic violence/abuse. The documents were estimated as being representative of the texts for the topics under discussion.

For the analysis of the documents thematic analysis has been conducted on the selected texts, as a way to reveal the key messages contained in them.

3.2 Professional Stakeholders

For the investigation of professional stakeholders’ views on DV and their experience of dealing with

children and adolescents living in violent families, four Focus Group discussions have been conducted, with the participation of eighteen female professionals, aged 34 to 59 years (mean age 41,9 years). As to their professional specialization, participants were:

4 social workers

1 social worker + family therapist

5 psychologists

1 psychologist-operational child protection coordinator

1 psychologist-psychotherapist

3 child psychiatrists

2 early childhood educators

1 Albanian language and literature specialist

Years of related to DV work experience: 2 to 31 years

3.3 Carers

Four focus groups with carers were conducted with 13 female participants (mothers victims of domestic violence) in total. Their mean age was 40,5 yrs old (Min 29 yrs old-Max: 60yrs old). The majority were divorced or separated. Twelve of them were of Greek nationality and one of Albanian. The participants lived in the city of Thessaloniki and in urban areas such as the city of Volos and Drama. Initially, participants were informed about the project by their counsellors and agreed to participate by giving their permission to us to contact them, in order to get more detailed information. The first contact was by phone.

4 POLICY ANALYSIS FINDINGS

4.1 Thematic analysis of the policy documents

Before presenting the analysis it is important to note that children are not a matter of primary concern in the policy documents tackling domestic violence issues in general. In most of the cases, very few references to children are to be found, with the exception of the documents discussing issues of

children’s rights. As to their approach, the chosen texts form three distinct categories

- (a) The legal system and the specific versions of policy documents(Document No 1 and 7 above) describe children through a biological - deterministic model, treating them as people who require protection and care that must be enforced; in particular, children require legal protection. In other words, the adoption of laws or policies on the protection of children is a prerequisite with a mandatory connotation within the legal texts. In these texts, protection is mainly repressive and punitive and concerns penalties that can be served. It is also descriptive, as it refers specifically to forms of abuse or neglect. Finally, there are no references that reinforce children’s positive behaviours or initiatives and promote respect or empowerment.
- (b) The documents issued by the Children’s Rights Bureau of the Greek Ombudsman for the purpose of the United Nations or the relevant Conventions (documents No 2, 3, and 4 above) primarily focus on the protection of children’s rights by giving emphasis on intervention strategies, policies and measures that are generally needed for the protection of children’s right and, particularly, for the prevention or the treatment of damages caused to children who live in domestic violence situations.
- (c) The texts dealing with domestic violence as a social problem and are addressed to professionals in order to be used as guides for their work (documents 5 and 6 above), have as an aim to offer an understanding of the phenomenon, usually under a feminist perspective. In most of the chapters women victims of domestic violence/ abuse are standing in the forefront and only short chapters, a few paragraphs or even lines are referring to children.

Thematic analysis revealed 2 main themes *Experiencing Harm* and *Countering Harm*. Each theme is divided into sub-themes as presented in table 1. In this analysis, “N” expressed the number of thematic codes generated per theme.

Table: The structure of thematic analysis of the policy documents

Main Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
Experiencing Harm	Manifestations of harm	Duration of harm	
Countering Harm	Protection from harm	Harm prevention	The Child’s Voice

4.1.1 Main Theme 1: Experiencing Harm

Experiencing harm (N=24) relates to the ways DV affects children’s personality, psychosocial behaviour, general development and everyday reality. It is constituted by two sub- themes and offers a construction of harm as a phenomenon that affects children in all aspects of their lives, having direct and non direct, short-term and long term negative effects. Even if only a small amount of references on children

witnessing domestic violence are to be found in the analysed documents, it is evident that their aim is to show how dangerous it is for a child to live in such an environment:

“Growing in such a “war zone”, which constitutes a source of fear and insecurity, can have a series of negative effects on children’s lives.... These effects can be visible, when they influence the behaviour of the child, or invisible, when they affect its feelings and way of thinking” (Petroulaki, et al 2013, p.27)

Two aspects of the experience of harm have been identified in the documents: The first relates to the description of the different aspects of harm and the way it overwhelms children’s lives and the second is connected with the permeation of harm, i.e. its perceived duration and long or short term effects.

As it is pointed out in the texts, violent families can be a damaging environment for children:

“Growing up in such an environment can have negative effects in their social, emotional and cognitive development” (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 26).

“A child, however, no matter how young it maybe, hears, sees or feels much more than what we think and may be experiencing abuse of his mother in various ways“

This theme tries to describe the severity of the DV experience for children, the range of damages caused by this experience and the extent to which these damages can affect a person’s life in general. Harm is constructed as severe for two reasons: (a) because it affects almost all aspects of children’s lives, their mental and physical health, personality and psychosocial behaviour and (b) because its effects are not only immediate and direct, but remain as a source of problems years later, affecting the adult life of the victim. The theme splits into two subthemes: 1) *Manifestations of harm* 2) *Duration of harm*

Sub Theme 1 : Manifestations of harm(N=16): The description of the different manifestations of harm observed in children as a result of their experience of domestic violence are to be found almost exclusively in the documents that have as an aim to inform and sensitize professionals about the phenomenon of domestic violence and women’s abuse. Thus, what happens to children of the abused women is presented as a side effect, as an additional proof of the severity of the situation that reinforces the need for specific actions and measures. The following categories of manifestations have been identified:

- Direct psychological consequences (feelings of loneliness, insecurity, helplessness and fear, due to the direct exposure of the child to domestic violence)

“The child may feel helpless and confused, with mixed feelings towards his/her parents” (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 26)

“Children don’t talk about their experience, because they fear the consequences that this could have at home, at school or their peer group”(ENOC ENYA 2010, p. 4)

“They feel insecure and neglected and this could have as a result even more violence” (ENOC ENYA 2010, p. 5)

- Psychological harm (harm affecting their personality and psychosocial behaviour)

“Children feel a psychological burden and ay be psychologically divided and anxious, because they avoid to take the part of either parent (Tata-Arcel 2011, p. 48)

“These children... have deficiencies in social skills and are unable to face difficult interpersonal situations” (Tata-Arcel 2011, .4)

- Developmental harm:

“Domestic violence experience can have negative effects on the normal physical, emotional and cognitive development of the child”. (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 26)

- Physical harm:

“We should not forget that children living in a family in which their mother is abused are more likely to suffer themselves some form of abuse from either the same person or from their mother”.(Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 27).

- Abuse:

“Children in violent families suffer different forms of abuse that have specific consequences for their development: physical abuse... , sexual abuse..., neglect...” (Tata-Arcel, 2011, p.46)

- Negative academic consequences:

“(these children)... have fewer basic skills when entering school...” (Tata Arcel 2011, p. 47)

This sub-theme constructs children leaving in violent households as passive recipients of the consequences of their DV experience. Children are described as damaged in almost all aspects of their behaviour and personality and are labelled as problematic and maladjusted.

Sub Theme 2: Duration of harm (N=8). This theme is spread in different places in the same documents as sub theme 1 and has to do with the attempt of the authors to show the extent of harm affecting children that live in DV situations. Harm is not only direct, influencing the life of the child during the period of the manifestations of DV only. Its consequences can follow their development and their lives years later,

even when they become adults. The consequences can be

- Direct (short-term):

It includes

- different forms of direct abuse

"In violent families, the perpetrators abuse their children as much as their wives" (Tata-Arcel, 2011, p. 47)

"Neglect is the more common form of abuse of children living in families with DV" (Tata-Arcel 2011, p.46)

"Also, when a child is present during a violent incident can be physically injured, either by mistake, or when trying to intervene to help his/her mother". (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 26.

- Financial problems, poverty

"If the mother wants to sue (i.e. the violent husband), it is obvious that it is impossible to bear the costs of the proceedings without any help from the side of the State, to simultaneously address the living expenses of her family and, in addition, to ensure the protection of her children and of herself, when the perpetrator of violence will get out of jail". (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 28)

- Long term, including:

- Antisocial or self-damaging behaviour later on in life, during adolescence and youth (use of drugs, excessive aggression, delinquency), as a result of the DV experience or its direct impact (for example, neglect)

"Children experiencing domestic violence, especially boys, may, when attending adolescence, exhibit behavioural problems, like, for instance, aggression, disobedience, increased delinquency and use of drugs" (Tata-Arcel 2011, p. 47)

- Difficulties in their successful transition to adolescence or adult phase

"Neglected children often fail to continue school, show difficulties in establishing targets for the future and are more likely to drop out from school" (Tata Arcel 2011, p. 48)

- Violent behaviour as adults. This long-term impact is discussed more than once in the analysed documents suggesting that children, more precisely boys, may learn the abusive behaviour and become violent partners themselves, in a process of recycling the abuse they have witnessed during their childhood.

"In the long run, the most consistent finding is that, among the abusive men, there is an overrepresentation of men who, as boys, witnessed domestic violence. This means that violence in one generation is possibly reproduced in the next generation" (Tata-Arcel 2011, p. 48)

"Finally, there seems to be more likely that these children become themselves either perpetrators or victims of abuse in their romantic relationships (Petroulaki et al 2013, p. 28)

Summarising the above findings one could say that the concept of DV as a harmful experience sees the child as a passive witness and/or a powerless victim and focuses on the deterministic impact of the phenomenon leaving no room for resilience or positive ways of reacting against. This determinism is more evident there where the vicious circle of violence is constructed, in the frame of a discourse that gives emphasis on the inevitable continuation of violence and the reduced chances of escaping.

4.1.2. Main theme 2: Countering Harm

Countering Harm (35) refers to all the attempts suggested as necessary or important in order to prevent or fix the problems related to DV. It is an action oriented theme in the majority of the policy documents, especially those issued by national or international policy making/ decision taking institutions (United Nations, European Union, National Legal System or Children's Ombudsman). This Theme is to be found almost exclusively in the documents 1,2,3,4 and 7 and includes all measures, legal regulations and recommendation taken or suggested with the aim to fix the harm caused to children experiencing DV situations.

This Theme splits into three sub-themes: (a) *Protection from harm*, (b) *Harm Prevention* (c) *The child's voice*

Sub-theme 1: Protection from harm (N=14). In the frame of this sub-theme, DV is constructed as a dangerous situation for children. Therefore, specific measures have to be taken, in order to protect the child's interests. Different ways are proposed that develop a protective net for children:

- Legal protection: Law 3500/2006, in art.4, art.11/3 and art.19/1&2, offers specific regulations protecting children witnessing DV. Art. 4, for instance stipulates that

"minors (witnessing DV)... are not summoned as witnesses in the audience, but their testimony, if any, is read in court, unless the examination is deemed necessary by the court".

Similarly, the Children's Ombudsman proposes specific protective measures for the witnessing child:

"In particular, the thorough investigation and multidisciplinary treatment of cases of sexual violence (and other serious cases of domestic violence) against minors, require the development of special areas based on international standards, where the police personnel can work together with the competent health and welfare services on examining child victims and recording their testimonies in electronic audiovisual means, based on a specific and legislated process". (Parallel Report, p. 7)

- Establishing protective policies and supportive services: All the documents dealing with the protection of children propose a series of policies, intervention strategies and services with the aim to combat the consequences of domestic violence on children. In

the frame of these policies the protection of children is a main issue with the aim to avoid the perpetuation of their victimization and is conceived, among others, as psychological support, the establishment of accommodation centres, facilitation of referrals, creation of supporting networks etc.:

"If schools do not have psychologists or social workers, it should be ensured, under certain conditions, that pupils have access to the relevant public services without requiring the consent of a parent for their initial submission of a request or report". (Parallel Report, p.8)

"Strengthen support for victims of violence, abuse, neglect and maltreatment in order to ensure that they are not victimized once again during legal proceedings" (Committee of the Rights of the Child, Article 48)

"Provide access to adequate services for recovery, counseling and other forms of integration in all parts of the country (Committee of the Rights of the Child, Article 48)

- The role of the schools: Schools are considered to be important places for the protection of the child that lives in a violent domestic environment. The analyzed documents highlight the role of teachers and other education professionals in recognizing the symptoms of domestic violence and acting as a protective agent, as well as the need of establishing specific services in the school context, that could intervene in collaboration

"Primary or secondary education teachers who... become aware that a child is experiencing domestic violence must inform, without any delay, the Head of the School. The Head of the school must immediately notify the offense to the public prosecutor in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 37 of the Criminal Code, or the nearest police authority."(Law 3500/ Art. 23 §1)

"Recruiting school psychologists and counsellors in schools that provide professional assistance to children will really help them to deal with their problems. Social scientists and professionals in the health sector who collaborate with the school should be available for children, known and recognizable by them". (ENOC ENYA 2010, p.5)

Sub-theme 2: Preventing harm. This sub-theme provides a different approach in dealing with DV, suggesting forms of prevention. These are

- Raising awareness by providing and disseminating research data, figures and statistics and training professionals in order to become able to recognize early symptoms and be able to intervene on time

"In particular, the Committee is concerned at the lack of statistics on children at risk of domestic violence

and/or other forms of abuse and ill-treatment, child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and other children in need of special protection, including children with disabilities, unaccompanied children, and refugee and asylum-seeking children".(Committee of the Rights of the Child, Article 47)

"A more systematic training and guidance of frontline professionals (teachers, early childhood educators, pediatricians, etc.) is needed to recognize the signs of abuse and know what they should do in each case".

(Parallel Report p.9)

"The knowledge regarding the actual extent of violence against children should be systematic.... We need reliable data to inform and support our actions. The most important aspects of violence against children remain hidden for the moment". (ENOC ENYA 2010, p. 4)

- Strengthening the role of Education, by promoting intervention strategies and sensitizing teachers, parents and pupils

"To systematically train teachers...To include education on children's rights and the content of the Convention in the educational curricula of all education levels, and conduct this through participatory - experiential methods... Schools to inform parents and to arrange meetings and seminars..." (Parallel Report).

Sub-theme 3: The child's voice. This is a very short theme found in two documents. It includes a representation of the child as active participant of his/her life and gives emphasis on

(a) Children's resilience, i.e. their capacity to overpass the harmful experience of DV

'But there are cases of those children who manage to "break this vicious circle", especially if found in a supportive environment, or if the mother herself was able to react and end the mistreatment'.(Petroulaki et al 2010, p. 28)

(b) The importance of hearing what children have to say about their experience? Children's voice is useful in order to help policy makers, professionals and carers understand the deepest aspects of the harmful experience, as well as children's feelings and needs, in order to establish policies and services

"We want to stress that the children's own experiences should be used in the design and development of services so that children can trust them". (ENOC ENYA 2010, p. 4)

The actual extent of violence against children should be systematically studied through surveys asking the children themselves ("research on child victim") about the violence they have experienced in different environments(ENOC ENYA 2010, p. 5)

In accordance with the discourse developed within Main Theme 1, children experiencing DV are also constructed by Main theme 2 as powerless and helpless, as needing assistance and care. This theme,

however, because of its content, emphasizes, at the same time on action and agency, offering the hope that policies and intervention strategies may create better circumstances for children with DV experience. The notion of the voice of children as a mean of better conceptualizing the actions needed could be a positive aspect of the analyzed policy documents.

Summarizing the findings of the Policy Documents’ analysis, one could come to the following conclusions:

- The child witnessing DV is not the main issue in the Greek Policy Documents and is faced as a collateral damage in the phenomenon of Domestic Violence. In most of the texts, very little amount of attention is dedicated to the children of violent families. On the other hand, texts emerging from the initiatives of United Nations and having to do with Children’s Rights are child-centred by nature, they deal, however, with children’s rights in general and with all the aspects of violence experienced by children, dedicating little space to domestic violence
- Children are described in the documents as passive victims, vulnerable and helpless, doomed to suffer from this experience all their life long.
- In parallel with the above concept, policy documents’ recommendations and initiatives are oriented towards measures and strategies that should primarily face the psychopathological symptoms observed in children with DV experience. The resilient child is described as an exception.

4.2. Professional Stakeholders Conceptualization of the DVA Policy Context: Findings

Athematic analysis was performed on the transcriptions

Thematic analysis revealed two main themes: *The Child in Domestic Violence* and *The Role of Professionals*. Each one of the main themes is divided in sub-themes, as shown in Table 2 below

Table 2: Structure of Thematic Analysis

Main Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3	Sub-theme 4
The Child in DV	The Child-victim	The Child in Action	The Resilient Child	The Next Generation: intergenerational transmission of violence
Role of Professionals	Importance of Integrated	Lack of Agencies and	Dangers of the	Legislation and Judicial

and Agencies	Partnerships	Supportive Structures	Profession	Authorities
--------------	--------------	-----------------------	------------	-------------

4.2.1 Main theme 1: The child in domestic violence

This main theme includes references discussing children’s experience of DV. It is divided in 4 sub-themes: *The Child-victim, The Child in Action, The Resilient Child* and *The Next Generation*

Sub-theme 1: The child-victim

The child victim is a dominant category in the theme “The child in violence”. Professionals tend to victimize children. There is a certain and beyond doubt belief that children who experience domestic violence are harmed deeply, mainly mentally and psychologically. In this category the child-victim is described as

- *vulnerable and fragile*. The more frequent words in the professionals narratives associated with the child victim are “lost”, “scared”, “innocent”, “harassed”. Professionals view the child as a helpless creature whose most immediate protectors failed to provide him with the environment children are supposed to grow in. Additionally the child victim is considered totally dependent on his/her parents.

Participant 1: *“the sight of children reserved, and what Participant 3 described, being lost”* Focus group 3

Participant 2: *“children are the weak links”* Focus group 1

Participant 3: *“it is young, this creature is so innocent”* Focus group 2

Participant3: *“it is a very very frightened child, lost in space”*Focus group 3

Participant 2: *“it is stuck to his/her mother”*Focus group 3

Participant3:*“until the age of ten (the child) is totally dependent”*Focus group 4

- *in need of protection*. The child victim as vulnerable and lost needs to be protected. Professionals very often use the word “unprotected”. Being protected appears as children’s fundamental right, as a basic and highly valued part of the parental and family role. The child victim reflects the parents’ failure to meet the principal requirements of parenthood such as providing a safe environment.

Participant 5: *“I am telling her ‘your parents haven’t protected you”* Focus group 1

Participant 4: *“all these children who lack the minimum of care, someone just to protect them”* Focus group 4

Participant 6: *“When the child is unprotected...”* Focus group 1

- *passive recipient* of their abusive experience. These children have experienced violence either as victims themselves or as observers of domestic abuse. This experience is broadly accepted by the professionals that has damaged almost extensively major domains of life. They accept the normative view that children are inevitably harmed by domestic abuse such harm has a long term effect.

Participant 4: *“the trauma is long-term and repeated and it has been established in the child’s personality”* Focus group 3

Participant 2: *“all these, neglecting, abuse, all these deprive your personality”* Focus group 3

Participant 3: *“they (cases of violence) are recorded on the children we see”* Focus group 1

Sub-theme2: The child in action

The child in action is another category in the theme “The child in violence”. Professionals describe the child in action as the child who recognizes and identifies the problem of domestic violence. The child has come to realize that there is a problematic situation taking place – usually, for quite some time - and activates him/herself to improve his/her well being. Some of the actions the child takes include:

- urging the mother to do something, such as leave the abusive environment. The child is pressing and reacting even persistently to the maternal indecisiveness

Participant 1: *“the reaction towards his mother is ‘what’s going on?’ and ‘let’s leave’”* Focus group 3

Participant 3: *“when the child is older, is more demanding in ‘let’s leave, let’s leave’”* Focus group 3

Professionals find the child’s role catalytic in mothers’ choice to seek help or take action.

Participant 1: *“the mother admits she found strength and decided to leave the abusive environment because her child told her “hey, until when is this going on? Leave it and let’s go”* Focus group 3

- seeking help. A very common characteristic attributed to the child in action. The child has reached the point where he/she realizes that he/she has to address to agencies or services to save him/herself.

Participant 1: *“he/she came here asking for lodging”* Focus group 3

Participant 1: *“he/she had called every agency in order to ask for help”* Focus group 4

Participant 6: *“she activated a whole system, school, us, the public prosecutor’s office, the police, she turned everything upside down”* Focus group 1

- distancing him/herself from the immediate family. The family environment is so problematic that the child takes a hard decision to leave the family. The child is described as mature and determined. Professionals also emphasize the organizational skills required by such an action.

Participant 2: *“she realized what was happening and decided “I want to have nothing with them” and she now says “I don’t want any relations with them (...) go study in a far away city and not see any of them, ever”* Focus group 1

Participant 2: *“the oldest daughter left home”* Focus group 1

Participant 1: *“he had his backpack with some essentials and he had left”* Focus group 3

Participant 1: *“He had money, took a taxi and came here”* Focus group 3

Sub-theme 3: The resilient child

Another dominant category in the theme ‘the child-victim’ is the resilient child. Resilience in children victims of domestic violence is described by professionals in two distinct ways. There is resilience as a personality trait/ characteristic that is internal to children. It acts as an instinct that pre-exists and helps children survive through abusive situations.

Participant 3: *“How they say, the dowry each child has, its temperament, its dynamic”* Focus group 3

Participant 2: *“I would add this feeling and the need of survival, which (...) makes children, develop skills so they can survive everywhere”* Focus group 2

Professionals view the resilient child as having an internal strength, for which they themselves express awe and admiration.

Participant 1: *“they are touchingly strong children”* Focus group 2

There is resilience as a skill which develops in children due to the abusive situations they experience. According to the professionals experiencing violence seems to help children develop survival skills.

Participant 2: *“makes children develop skills so they can survive everywhere”* Focus group 2

Therefore professionals approve even aggressive or manipulative behaviors from children-victims as a proof of them having resilience skills.

Participant 2: *“there are many children who are’ killers, that is ready to do anything, there is no way, you see that in a child, this child will survive everywhere.”* Focus group 2

Participant 1: *“she is very sensitive on one hand and on the other she tries all the time, she exhibits a very- very aggressive character, that’s what they say in school;, where she has attacked half the children.”* Focus group 2

Participant 1: *“which is an awesome skill, which if you see it the other way round, is a basic mean of having survived, of having managed situations, everything.”* Focus group 2

Professionals recognize certain characteristics in the resilient child. The resilient child manages to find other resources that empower them, such as academic success, or other alternatives.

Participant 3: *"he/she has found a way out, some way even problematic, just a way out"* Focus group 4

Participant 3: *"the ways of escaping a child has developed, even if it is a hobby or a talent, all these are ways of escaping"* Focus group 4

The resilient child very often adopts the role of the family prostate, by protecting the other vulnerable members, or providing the necessary income. This role is acknowledged frequently by the professional who strongly seem to agree that it acts as empowerment for children and as a factor enhancing resilience.

Participant 2: *"in the case of older children I see that there are children who have the leading role, that is the role of the parent"* Focus group 3

Participant 2: *(the children) have the role of the mother, a little girl has the role of the mother and takes care of her little brother or her mother (...) and you see the child being more mature more thoughtful"* Focus group 3

Participant 4: *"Very often when children are the breadwinners they are also the family rescuers."* Focus group 1

Participant 1: *"children who have coped mainly are older siblings who have to take care of younger ones."* Focus group 2

Sub-theme 4: The next generation: intergenerational transmission of violence

Professionals express their concern about the intergenerational transmission of violence. Children who grow up in abusive homes acculturate the patriarchal values (which are the abusive ones).

Participant 1: *"you recreate what you live"* Focus group 3

Participant 3: *"I have observed that this pattern was repeated in their relationships, what they have lived in their families"* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"so the father, himself an abused person, thought that 'so nothing happened to me, I am a fine man and I have a family'"* Focus group 1,

Participant 1: *"they will either adopt the role of the abused or the role of the abuser"* Focus group 4

Domestic violence acts as a model of conflict-solving which leaves the child with no essential problem-solving skills. Therefore aggressive behavior is the only effective way of reacting.

Participant 2: *"it cannot be otherwise. If the child has learned to live under these codes, why would he/she think there is something else besides that"* Focus group 4

However they acknowledge a gender difference in the cycling of violence. Boys become the abuser and girls become the victim. More specifically, boys victims of domestic violence, later in youth and adult life either exhibit delinquent behavior or engage in violent behavior themselves.

Participant 2: *“They (children in domestic abuse) will return either as drug users or as exhibiting delinquent behavior”* Focus group 1

Participant 2: *“so the father, himself an abused person, thought that ‘so nothing happened to me, I am a fine man and I have a family”* Focus group 1,

Whereas, in the case of girls, professionals express their concerns that girls victims of domestic violence will engage in relationships where the partner is abusive.

Participant 3: *“they have learned to make relationships which are masochistic, abusive, that is what they know and trust”* Focus group 4

Participant 2: *“the mother revealed that the child follows the same path, she is involved with a much older man, she is beaten and having a hard time”* Focus group 3.

4.2.2 Main Theme 2: Role of Professionals and Agencies

Professionals talk very passionately about their role and about the role and the services of the agencies involved in domestic violence. They definitely acknowledge the cutting back of resources and services but when talking about the problems in their work they don't emphasize so much on that. So it is as if they take this situation of limited funding as granted and they have got used to working like that. Although one would expect to listen about issues such as the agencies not having enough personnel (a very urgent and serious matter in the Greek public sector at the moment) or dealing with basic staff such as heating etc., professionals address issues having to do with the quality of services and the real purpose of the services the agencies provide.

Three sub-themes were revealed through the thematic analysis:

Sub-theme 1: Importance of Integrated partnerships:

Professionals very strongly express their concern about the lack of a central coordination scheme that will dictate the function of each agency, its responsibilities and its limitations. The collaboration between agencies must be centrally coordinated and not lie in the good will of the professionals working there..

Participant 3: *“not even an agency collaboration, this a core issue, which means a case may use many services and in fact it doesn't get any help”* Focus Group 4

Participant 3: *“things are done in an incomplete way and there isn't any internal update so that we can move forward; so that our work becomes easier and more essential; so that we don't provide the same services to the same people”* Focus Group 4

Participant 2: *"I also agree that the most important thing, apart from understaffing, is the lack of coordination"*
Focus Group 1

This lack of coordination presents serious problems in dealing with serious cases and diminishes the quality of services provided. Professionals feel that people don't get the help they need due to these deficiencies. They also address the lack of this national core coordination scheme in comparison with other countries where they seem to know such coordination exists.

Participant 2: *"So with the same family, with the same case, many agencies are involved"* Focus Group 1

Participant 2: *"The parent may use one agency and the child another"* Focus Group 4

Sub-theme 2: Lack of agencies and supportive structures.

Professionals express their concern about the lack of supportive structures that can provide services to the victims of domestic abuse. They acknowledge a number of agencies that would be necessary and they stress the fact that if they existed the system would be more functional and effective. Such agencies are locally located social services, sheltering solutions for women, structures for children over 18, and mainly teenage and adolescent boys, hosting structures for children.

Participant 4: *"There aren't structures appropriate to host boys of that age, this is a very big problem in the case of domestic violence"* Focus Group 3

Participant 3: *"there aren't enough shelters for women"* Focus Group 2

Participant 4: *"where will you take the 15 year old boy who has left?"* Focus Group 3

Sub-theme 3: Dangers of the profession.

Professionals address safety issues related to their profession. When dealing with cases of domestic abuse there are often threats concerning their physical safety.

Participant 1: *"and the threats we get!"* Focus Group 3

Participant 4: *"what with the threats, what with the things they have broken here! They will close our homes! Hers (points at a colleague), who is the first who met them, a social worker, they will close her home."*
Focus Group 3

Participant 3: *"you don't know how your every day at work will end, what will happen to you"* Focus Group 3

Moreover what worries them is the free access to their reports when cases are tried in court and they feel exposed to indictments with which they deal themselves without any support from the system.

Participant 2: *"the social reports are completely accessible to anyone (...) and all the information is exposed"* Focus Group 2

Participant 4: *"there are professionals who have been sued by the other parent (...) and you are unprotected. You pay the lawyers yourself"* Focus Group 4

Participant4: *"we are easy to be found, that's the truth"*Focus Group 3

Sub-theme 4: Legislation and Judicial Authorities

Professionals acknowledge the importance the legislation play in their work since agencies' function and procedure are established by legislation. The legislation is pictured as something imposed by others and they don't seem to have the power to alter anything. They have to take what they are given.

Participant 1: *"Experts and the state have a great responsibility in that matter (DVA), that is the system, the way the judge..."*Focus Group 3

Professionals identify plenty of positive elements in the latest Greek legislation concerning DVA. They mainly discuss about aspects that simplify their work in the agencies and ease the procedures when having a case of DVA.

Participant4:*"the whole institutional framework has helped after 2006"*Focus group 3

Participant4: *"the legislation has protected the family"* Focus group 3

Participant1: *"(the legislation) has positive elements about domestic abuse"* Focus group 1

Participant 4: *"the fact that (the law) names domestic abuse (is important), especially for the Greek society where spanking is accepted"* Focus group 3

Professionals talk about the effectiveness of the agencies when collaborating with the Public Prosecutor's Office. They address there when dealing with difficult cases and they agree that when there is an established cooperation, problem solving is more efficient and time-saving.

Participant 4: *"when things get too hard, we turn to the public prosecutor"* Focus group 3

Participant 2: *"having the public prosecutor support you is very important, because the whole situation can be safeguarded"* Focus group 2

Summarizing the above finding professionals outlined the basic notion of the child in domestic violence as heavily victimized and programmed to recycle violence or victimhood in his/her future relationships. However the active resilient child also emerges very powerfully in their views of CYP accepting that the child can survive and thrive in spite of the negative experiences. Professionals' role and the role of the agencies involved in domestic violence is definitely endangered by cutbacks and limited financial resources but their main concern is the lack of a central coordination scheme who will simplify and enhance the quality of the services provided.

4.3. Carers Conceptualization of the DVA Policy Context: Findings

A thematic analysis was performed on the transcriptions

Thematic analysis revealed two main themes: *The Child in Domestic Violence and The Role of Agencies and Professionals*. Each one of the main themes is divided in sub-themes, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Structure of Thematic Analysis

Main Theme	Sub-theme 1	Sub-theme 2	Sub-theme 3
The Child in DV	The Child-victim	Child 's Voice	Mother's role
Role of Agencies and Professionals	Supportive services	Non-supportive authorities	

4.3.1 Main theme 1: The child in domestic violence

This main theme includes references discussing children's experience of DV. It is divided in 3 sub-themes: *The Child-victim, The Child's voice and Mother's Role*.

Sub-theme 1: The Child-Victim

The Child-victim is a dominant category in the theme "The child in violence". Carers tend to victimize children and describe them as vulnerable and damaged. There is a certain and beyond doubt belief that children who experience domestic violence are harmed deeply, mainly mentally and psychologically.

Participant 1: *"What he has been through, only his soul knows and god."* Focus Group 2

Participant 1: *"This is very heavy for his little soul."* Focus Group 2

Participant 2: *"for these tender ages (...) it is so so heavy."* Focus group 2

In this category the child-victim is described as:

-affected by violence in a very dramatic way. The child-victim is described in relation to the consequences the DVA has on his/her personality and mental health. These consequences appear to be very serious and are demonstrated mainly in the child's behavior, which becomes disruptive, harmful and aggressive.

Participant 2: *"He still has some reactions"* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"He was a very good child, clever. And he reached a point where he didn't want to do anything, even eating. He became a monster. He was harming himself, he put on the diaper."* Focus Group 2

Participant 3: *"(violence) harms them very much and they reach very bad."* Focus Group 1

-in need of protection by their mothers/carers. Protecting CYP is described not as given fact, something that carers do anyway, but as a choice. Carers seem to be proud for their conscious decision to protect their children from harm. As these carers have themselves experienced DVA and have been exposed to harmful situations they realize that protecting yourselves and others can be a choice and something that you accomplish.

Participant 1: *"I think I protected it (the child), I did something good so that it (abuse) won't affect it"* Focus group 1

Participant 4: *"(the children are) very much protected. They are not alone."* Focus Group 1

Participant 2: *"It was us who wanted the children to be ok, we were interested in their soul, above everything."* Focus Group 2

Sub-theme 2: Child's Voice

The child's voice provides a different representation of the child in DVA. The child has an active role, it reacts and expresses his needs and wishes and has definite opinions about his/her well-being. Carers describe a mature, hands-on child who wishes to improve his/her living conditions.

Participant 2: *"She thinks about it herself and she speaks for herself"* Focus group 1

Participant 2: *"I think these children were mature"* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"So I Think because they didn't like what they were seeing, when they saw something they opened their mouth and spoke"* Focus group 2

In the theme 'the child's voice' an interesting finding emerges. The child's voice **reacts to the father** and **protects the mother**. Children appear to oppose their fathers and express openly their objection towards his violent and/or harmful behavior. In parallel, they appear protective towards the mother accepting their dynamic role in preventing the father to harm her.

Participant 2: *"She (the daughter) is the one who tells it. When she is alone with him (the father) (she says) "Why do you hit mum?"* Focus Group 1

Participant 2: *"and that child after two months said 'I am not talking to the phone with dad again because he is bad, he hit mum."* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"(the child was telling the father) 'Don't drink, don't gamble"* Focus group 1

Participant 3: *"(the child) said 'Mum it's better not that you left, you are calmer' and 'Calm yourself, it's better, don't worry"* Focus group 1

Sub-theme 3: Mother's role

The mother's role is described in relation to child protection. Probably women experiencing DVA focus primarily on protecting their children from being abused themselves or from the consequences of witnessing abuse.

Participant 4: *"First of all a mother supports the family"* Focus group 1

Participant 1: *"I was saying I would enjoy being with her (the daughter), I may be crying on my own (..) but with the child I would manage to have a good time."* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"You will find the way, to go to the playground, play with the child (,,) I was being crazy for the children not to remember not to think (the DVA)."* Focus group 2

Participant 1: *"You put your role first."* Focus group 1

This dimension of their role is related to their decision to seek help or take action. They emphasize that their primary concern is their children's well-being and they would do anything to ensure that.

Participant 4: *"If I am fine, my children will be fine"* Focus Group 1

Participant 2: *"I struggled a lot, I turned everywhere, (agencies) so that he (the father) wouldn't see them alone but always with a third person present"* Focus group 2

4.3.2 Main theme 2: Role of agencies and professionals

This main theme includes references discussing the Role of Agencies and Professionals in DVA. It is divided in 3 sub-themes: *The Child-victim*, *The Child's voice* and *The Role of the School*

Sub-theme 1: Supportive services

Carers acknowledge the support they receive from agencies and professionals. These supportive services are mainly psychological support they have received from professionals from the agencies they have visited. They have at least once used these services and they feel they have benefited.

Participant 1: *"I visited a center of mental health before I left"* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"I think the psychologists helped the most"* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *"You start a struggle, and with the psychological support, I can't deny it, you get stronger."* Focus group 2

However they mainly talk about the support they have received in relation to the needs of their children. This emerges again as their first concern. They either consult experts about their children's problem or they have referred their children in order to receive psychological and academic support.

Participant 2: *“now the kid has started having psychological support”* Focus group 2

Participant 1: *“I referred A (name of the daughter) to a psychologist”* Focus group 1

Participant 1: *“I made sure I was consulting some experts”* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *“and he receives academic support”* Focus group 2

Sub-theme 2: Non-supportive authorities.

In contrast to the supportive services, carers feel unprotected and unsupported by the authorities such as the legal system (legislation, public prosecutor) and the police. They firmly emphasize the lack of supportive mechanisms that will act immediately and without bureaucracy in emergency situations. They express their disappointment and their despair in the authorities inability to protect them.

Participant 1: *“You don’t feel secure in the police”* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *“After the events (DVA) they (police) told me that I have to have evidence against him. So he has to kill me first to have evidence”* Focus group 2

Participant 2: *“I was telling them ‘Check what is legal, take him in to prove that this man is a drug user, he is not functioning properly’. They told me I had to take these actions when I was still leaving with him. How was I supposed to know?”* Focus group 3

Summarizing the above findings, once again the idea of the vulnerable victimized child, damaged deeply by the DVA emerges from the carers of CYP. However the child’s voice is also acknowledged as the child is described to express his/her needs and address his/her well-being. The mother’s role as the child’s protector is definite and clear and accepted as the primary role of the mother. In this perspective carers outline the supportive services they have received mainly by psychologists in contrast to the non-supportive authorities which fail to act immediately in and provide security.

References

Children's Ombudsman (2010). *Update of the Parliamentary Committee on Domestic Violence*. Retrieved on January 25, 2014 from

<http://www.0-18.gr/gia-megaloyis/nea/enimerosi-epitropis-tis-boylis-gia-tin-endooikogeneiaki-bia/?searchterm=None>.

Children's Ombudsman (2012, June 15). United Nations. Document CRC/C/GRC/CO/2-3. Convention on the Rights of the Child. Athens Retrieved on January 25, 2014 from <http://www.0-18.gr/gia-paidia/tadikaiomata-soy>

Committee of the Rights of the Child- Sixtieth Session (2012). *Consideration of reports submitted by State Parties under Article 44 of the Convention- Concluding observations: Greece*. Convention of the Rights of the Child, August.

ENOC-ENYA (2010). Draft Joint Recommendations for Preventing Violence against Children. *ENOC 14th Annual Convention*, Strasbourg, 7-9 October

General Secretariat for Gender Equality (2010). *National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality (2010- 2013)*. Athens. Retrieved on January 25, 2014 from

http://www.isotita.gr/en/var/uploads/HOME%20PAGE/NATIONAL_PROGRAMME_GENDER_EQUALITY_2010_2013.pdf

Gouliarou, A. (2008). The law on domestic violence. Arrangements, the deficiencies and problems of implementation. In L. Tata-Arsel, M. Haritou-Fatourou, and T. Adamaki (Eds.), *Breaking Barriers. Counselling and empowering women* (pp. 339-351). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.

Kavvadia, A., & Stratigaki, M. (2011). Counselling Centres and Shelters for Abused Women. In L. Tata-Arsel, M. Haritou-Fatourou, T. Adamaki & (Eds.), *Breaking Barriers. Counselling and empowering women* (pp. 355-388). Athens: Ellinika Grammata.

Law 3500/2005.

Liapi, M., Zeis, Th., Milioni, F., & Albanis, A. (2012). *Guide for the public operators in Greece (DAPHNE Project III)*. Athens: Center for Research on Women's issues "DIOTIMA" and Center for information and Training "DIMITRA.

Koukouli-Spiliotopoulou, S. (2005). Comments on the New Parliamentary Bill on Intra-family Violence. *Women's Struggle*, 79, 20-5.

Krommidas, A. (2005). Report of the Special Committee set up by the General Secretariat of Equality on ways to combat domestic violence. *Women's Struggle*, 79, 12-18.

Ministry of Justice Transparency and Human Rights. (2014). *Form of the Society for the Protection of Minors Athens*.

Retrieved on January 25, 2014 from http://www.act4people.org.gr/data/entypo_et-prost-anilikon.pdf.

Moschos, C. (2014, personal correspondence). *The protection of children from violence and the role of the Children's Ombudsman*.

Petroulaki K., Tsirigoti, A., Kouveli, E. And Sotiriou, P. (2013). *Escaping from a Violent Relationship: A Guide*. Athens: The European Network Against Violence

Society for the Protection of Minors of Athens. Retrieved on January 25, 2014 from

<http://www.epaa.gr/>.

Sourli, S. (2011). The legal framework for all forms of violence against women. In L. Tata-Arsel (Ed.). *Violence against women A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 178-182

Tata-Arsel, L. (2011). The forms of violence. In L. Tata-Arsel (Ed.). *Violence against women. A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 29-30

Tata-Arcel, L. (Ed.) (2011). *Violence against women: A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality

The Greek Ombudsman (2012). *Parallel Report to the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child: Findings and Recommendations on the Implementations of Children's Rights in Greece 2003-2011*. The Greek Ombudsmen- Department of Children's Rights

Tsaklagkanou, G. (2008). The international system of protection of human rights of women. Action to promote rights at national level. In L. Tata-Arsel, M. Haritou-Fatourou, Adamaki & T. (Eds.), *Breaking Barriers. Counseling and empowering women* Athens: EllinikaGrammata, 389-404

Zorba, E. (2011). National policies to fighting violence. Women's movement and violence against women. In L. Tata-Arsel (Ed.) *Violence against women. A Guide for Counselling Women and Running the Supporting Structures*. Athens: General Secretariat for Gender Equality. 82-87