

“In-family Violence: Minors who assault their parents”

Page 2-1 : Project Description

In a first step, contacts have been settled with all possible relevant entities of the violence area, in order to gather more information about the subject.

An intervention program was elaborated, with the intention of trying to reduce and/or extinguish minors' aggressive behaviours towards their parents. The phases of the intervention are divided in three main fields: **the evaluation**, that is to say the moment in which the problem is noticed and diagnosed, among several other identified problems; **the definition**, with the parents and the child, **of different working hypotheses** ; and finally the **intervention**, based on relationship techniques, in the framework of a cognitive and behavioural therapy, using different methodologies, among which : controlled risk activities, dynamic relationships, and individual and group psychotherapies interventions ; these will work through the creation of a group, which will be the reference group at the end of the intervention, being young people's or parents' group.

On the other side, the investigation served as vehicle of information, to spread the Guide of risks indicators and to help the intervention technicians, as a factor of prevention. The school for parents, trained and adapted to this practice, serves as well as a preventive primary action, in the sense that a group of parents that goes to the school, are parents of children, who are identified as problematic (absenteeism, school abandonment, behaviour difficulties, difficulties with the respect of rules and norms, small consumption of drugs, usually hashish). Thus, one of the short-term positive aspects of the project is the integration of training modules, related to filio-parental violence, giving the families a chance to learn strategies that allow them to detect, in an early and effective way.

The technicians' training, one of the other actions carried out in the project, will have a positive effect on their way to approach the problem, as well as it will provide them moments of reflexion and share, that will make easier their future interventions, both

with families and young people. The awareness about the filio-parental violence, due to the diffusion of the Guide of Risk's Indicators and the intervention procedures, will allow the involved technicians, to have a different and better approach of future situations.

Page 2-2 : Analysis

The investigation about "Minors who assault their parents" had an immediate and positive effect in Portugal, in the reflexion capacity on this matter and its diffusion, about a problem, which until then, was not differentiated from other types of violence, and which was so, in a certain way, camouflaged by the understandable shame felt by the parents who were attacked.

Beside the translation and diffusion of Indicators' Guide, an analysis of the study cases previously mentioned was realized. From the analysis of these cases, resulting of different types of intervention, some common indicators could have been identified:

INDIVIDUAL

Parental Factors

- Ignorance about the child's development characteristics and needs – 105/205 (3 Cases)
- Poor interpersonal abilities – 109/209 (3 Cases)
- Little tolerance to stress – 111/211 (4 Cases)
- Inadequate coping strategies – 112/212 (4 Cases)

Minor's characteristics

- Behavioural problems – 305 (5 Cases)
- School absenteeism – 316 (4 Cases)
- Aggressiveness towards parents – 317 (5 Cases)

FAMILY

Parental filial interaction

- Unsettled - 400 (3 Cases)
- Raising cycle of conflict and aggression – 401 (5 Cases)
- Coercive discipline techniques – 402 (4 Cases)
- Absence or lack of affection towards the child – 403 (4 Cases)
- No transmission of pro social values – 412 (4 Cases)
- Inadequate expectations on the minor – 413 (5 Cases)
- Rejection/delegation of the parental functions – 416 (3 Cases)
- Assertiveness deficit – 417 (5 Cases)

SOCIOCULTURAL

Labour Field

- Precarious employment – 127/227 (3 Cases)

Social Networks of support

- High social mobility – 504 (3 Cases)

Cultural Factors

- Cultural acceptance of the physical punishment – 131/231 (3 Cases)

Page 2-3 : Results

Despite different circumstances of intervention, and being aware of the necessary adaptation to the social politics of Portugal, in order to allow a coherent approach and intervention, that would meet the inherent needs of the studied problem, we consider that some of the practices met in other countries, in the field of minors aggressors interventions, are likely to be adapted and useful, in the Portuguese context.

Other major relevant results obtained thanks to the project have been : the diffusion of the Guide of Risk Indicators and of all the procedures associated, in case of dealing with minors who attack their parents; this diffusion allowed a larger raising of awareness on the problem at a national scale, as well as a better training for parents and technicians, making easier the primary, secondary and tertiary interventions in the approach of minors who attack their parents.

Another significant result of the investigation and obtained almost immediately, has been the creation and development of narrow and continuous partnerships, like the ones between “Questão de Equilíbrio” and the “Tribunais de Família e Menores” (The Minors and family Courts), the CPCJ (Comissão de Protecção de Crianças e Jovens – Children and Young People Protection Commission), the DGRS (Direcção Geral de Reinserção Social – General Management of Social Reintegration). These partnerships allowed gathering a lot of information about a phenomenon, which, even if it had already been identified thanks to some detected cases, was suffering a limited and modest approach in its study. Once detected the cases, it becomes possible to offer an adequate answer in an intervention level, and to design a whole process of care and protection, where young aggressors can be integrated in Youth Homecare. In case of filio-parental violence associated with many other deviating or delinquent behaviours, the minors are objects of a whole and heavy educational process, and fostered in special educational centres.

In Portugal, the paradigm of children’s and young people’s reception is now different, from what has been diagnosed some time ago. At this time, the reception of children and young people in the childhood and youth houses, meets the basic needs and the deficiencies tend to be observed in the case of children and young people, with delinquent behaviour.

This change of paradigm already led to some reforms in social politics, to the creation of some investigation projects on the subject, with a differentiated approach, which serve as reference frameworks for national investigation, and could lead to significant changes, at mid and long terms. An effective spreading of the results of this investigation, as well as an investment in the diffusion of the adequate methodology to the technicians of the area, will certainly produce very positive effects, on the filio-parental violence matter.

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