



DAPHNE II: SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION IN VALUES

Summary of the final report including fieldwork results and recommendations for action for the prevention of gender-based violence among adolescents



Summary of the final report

1. General information about the project

The proposal of this pilot project is based on the objective of contributing to the prevention of gender-based violence in Secondary Schools, given that it is one of the stages in which many young people begin their first relationships and begin to shape certain values in relation to the models of attraction. These models respond to certain values that in many cases promote and value violent attitudes, perceiving them as attractive. This project will analyse the context of Secondary Schools, including the analysis of other contexts for socialisation of youth (family, neighbourhood, etc.), in order to propose actions that contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence in relation to education in values. The task and responsibility of working towards the prevention of gender-based violence must be taken on by Secondary Education on the basis of a values education that promotes models of attraction grounded in values of equality, solidarity and respect.

Our objective has been to identify and analyse the types of values in Secondary Education that are having an impact on the models of attraction that influence adolescents' sexual-affective relationships. The study of the situation of violence based on image/perceived 'attractiveness' among the adolescent population in Europe on the basis of existing statistical data has allowed us to further the contextualisation of this issue in this population group. There has been special attention paid to the analysis on the basis of existing statistical data on this issue in the 10 new member countries. We have made a qualitative study in the countries involved in the project too with a methodology with a critical-communicative orientation:

- 18 in depth interviews (6 in each country)
- 33 communicative daily life stories: (11 in each country with adolescents aged 12-18)
- 18 communicative discussion groups (6 in each country)

The results of our research have been the following:

- **First Report:** State of the Art: theoretical contributions and political actions in response to image-based violence among the adolescent population.
- **Second Report:** Violence among the adolescent population in Europe. Contextualisation of the issues on the basis of existing statistical data.
- **Third Report:** In depth study of the situation of this form of violence in the countries that have participated (Cyprus, Malta and Spain).
- **Fourth Report based on the qualitative work:** Causes of image-based violence among the adolescent population and values that contribute to its prevention.

- **Final Report:** Draft guidelines for prevention of gender-based violence among adolescents and recommendations for methodology and plan of action for Secondary Education schools to work on the prevention of this form of image-based violence.

2. Results of the Fieldwork:

Please note that for the purposes of this report the adjective exclusionary is used for factors or perceptions that promote or perpetuate the problem of gender-based violence, and the adjective transformative is used for factors or perceptions that contribute to the prevention of gender-based violence and help in overcoming the problem.

Cyprus

- Infidelity or suspicion of infidelity is the strongest reason that leads to physical violence towards girls by their male partners because it puts the masculinity and therefore prestige (reputation) of the boy under question. Jealousy is another reason that can lead to violence in heterosexual relationships.
- Reputation is a very sensitive issue for girls within the Cypriot context, especially reputation connected to sexual activity. In many cases one effective way to target a girl or bully her is by attacking her reputation, by defaming her in sexual terms (usually via verbal bullying: transmission of rumours by both boys and girls)
- The most common abusive behaviour found in heterosexual relationships between teenagers is the control usually inflicted by boys on their girlfriends. This control can take the form of prohibition to socialize with certain people, or prohibition to wear specific clothes or go to certain places.
- Bullying is mostly inflicted on shy, introvert students usually by popular students who belong to bigger groups and have protection from older adolescents outside the school context. Bullying related to gender is again inflicted by popular students and applies the same intimidation strategy as in other cases: if the victim reports it she/he will receive more bullying as a consequence while she/he will also be marginalized by the other students who want to get along with the popular students.
- Homosexual or perceived as such students constitute one of the primary targets of consistent bullying.
- A lot of teenagers, especially girls have a negative or restrictive concept of 'love': a. they accept abusive behaviour from their partners (they associate love with suffering), b. they don't realise that they have other options, c. they don't realise that what they suffer or submit to is a form of abuse. Most of the female participants rejected this negative model of love and stated that they would not tolerate abusive or oppressive behaviour by their partners. Some of the male participants also stated that they don't understand why girls remain in abusive relationships while others justified this as indication of love.

- Traditional stereotypes regarding gender roles are still maintained among adolescents in Cyprus. Boys are expected to be active (in sexual terms as well) and fit the profile of 'mangkas' that is the macho, manly and reckless guy. Sensitivity and passivity is still associated with femininity while girls that are active either by being naughty in class or by pursuing intimate/sexual relationships are usually stigmatized and considered to be acquiring male attributes. Pressure is inflicted on both genders to act according to these prescribed roles.
- The most popular male model of attraction is the boy who is 'mangkas', has connections outside the school, especially in night clubs and who in most cases also has a good physical appearance. Popular boys are also in most cases the perpetrators of bullying. Girls in a lot of cases are willing to disregard their rude, ignorant or disrespectful behaviour towards other girls if they are attracted by them or have a chance to date them. There are however boys who are popular because of their humour and their very sociable personality but they are less visible within the school context and constitute a smaller number than boys included in the former exclusionary model of attraction. As was noted by participants the latter transformative model of attraction mostly attracts older adolescent girls aged 17 to 18 years old.
- For girls the exclusionary model of attraction that is to be good looking according to the methodology of the research, is very prominent in the Cypriot context. Improving your appearance for both boys and girls is another way to move rank within the school community. There is nevertheless a group of girls that because of their very sociable nature are popular at school but in most cases these girls are also considered good looking. Another group of girls that are popular at school but in a negative way are those who are characterized by their fellow students as 'easy'. This adjective refers to girls who have already had or assumed to have had sexual relationships and are more easily approachable by boys for an intimate relationship. Boys approach these girls only with the intent of having a short-term sexual relationship with them while participants tended to blame the families of these girls for the fact that they are more approachable and 'easy'. Parents were also blamed for the superficial nature of teenage relationships nowadays as they are considered to be more lenient (for example in terms of letting teenagers stay out late at night and permitting them from a young age to go to night-clubs) with their children in comparison with older generations. Furthermore the behaviour of these girls is vilified because it comes in contrast with the characteristics applied to 'proper' Cypriot female behaviour.
- Regarding the models of choice of the participants, most of them had a transformative element. Girls especially aged 16-17 indicated that in order to have a relationship with someone they need him to have qualities like understanding, compassion and trustworthiness. Three of the girls interviewed already maintain this type of relationship. Also most of the boys participating in this research, especially third-year high school

students noted that they are looking for girls that are: understanding, sociable and trustworthy and to whom they can be physically attracted to.

- In the context of the youth club which was investigated in this research (Scouts' club), it was concluded that both teenage girls and boys by participating in its relevant activities found alternative ways of being a teenager rather than the traditional gender-specific models applied by Cypriot society. In the context of the youth club participants said that appearance didn't matter, neither the depiction of power but humour, sociability and observation to the values of Scouts were the key elements for someone to be popular. These values included equality, tolerance, understanding as well as learning to be part of a community and a group. Also through the organized activities Scouts were able to discuss issues that concerned them, including intimate relationships. It is important to note that in this youth club teenagers felt freer to express themselves and their personalities beyond the demanding models of attraction which set the standards for the behaviour of students in the school context.
- Finally in relation to the educational system the following conclusions were drawn from the comments made by both teachers and students interviewees:
 - There is no separate class in which to talk about values in inter-personal relationships like respect, gender equality, and co-existence in a culturally diverse society
 - Teachers do not have enough time to devote on these issues due to their overloaded schedule
 - Teachers are not properly trained to deal with issues concerning adolescents' intimate relationships and family issues
 - Most teachers and especially the older generation don't show an interest in approaching the students or talking with them about these matters. A lot of students complained that in most cases teachers just want to finish their class and leave and this is an attitude made clear to the students
 - Some students also mentioned that issues regarding intimate and sexual relationships are still considered taboo by teachers who don't feel comfortable discussing about them
 - Any awareness and information regarding equal treatment and values in relationships among the genders lies on the willingness and discretion of each teacher individually. The educational system does not provide the time, or the material, or the training in order for the teachers to deal effectively with these issues

- About the concept of violence that adolescents have teachers thought that it was acceptable for adolescents to: Interfere with the way their partners dressed and with their choice of friends; be jealous of one's partner; to close their eyes to domestic violence. A minority of the respondents claimed that: they had the right to interfere in the way their partners dressed, especially the boys to prevent other boys from eyeing and stealing their girls; they had the right to interfere when it came to their partner's choice of friends.
- However, there seem to be more transforming factors. Thus, contradicting the teacher/carer-respondents, most Maltese adolescents seem to: Not associate jealousy and dominance with romantic love; be against interfering in the way their partners dress – although a number claim that they would voice their opinion, if they felt it necessary to draw their partner's attention to the image she or he might be inadvertently projecting by her/his dress style; be strongly against interfering with their partner's choice of friends; oppose jealousy and possessiveness; Be deeply concerned with the seriousness of partner-abuse and domestic violence and determined to help both the abused and the abuser.
- About their concept of Love: Some these teachers claim that: adolescents don't believe in love; many don't believe in marriage; they don't even know what true love is; people are becoming more self-centred and for adolescents it's a survival mode; they give up at the first hurdle. However, most interviewees showed a true understanding of what love is all about, possibly indicating that the majority of Maltese adolescents know what love is, appreciate it and strive to enrich their lives with it.
- When asked to describe popular boys, the interviewees used the following adjectives: bullies/machos, snooty/stuck-up/having an air of superiority over others/arrogant, disrespect/use girls, mistreat or ignore those who study and consider them nerds and 'uncool', disrespect teachers/are disruptive in class/answer back, having a big ego/domineering, show-offs/use bad language, teasers as well as being cold and fake.
- The minority of interviewees associated popular boys with transforming factors (that is, with positive characteristics) – as the following adjectives indicate: good leaders, good listeners, good communicators, good friends/caring/supportive/dedicated, respectful, strong, spiritually strong, down-to-earth/unpretentious/not over-concerned with personal/physical looks/image/genuine/straight-forward/not shallow, self-confident and assertive, outgoing and sociable, sometimes funny/foolish/with a healthy sense of humour.
- The adjectives used to portray popular girls tended to be negative: bullies/bitchy/mean/nasty/bossy Snooty/stuck-up/having an air of superiority over others/arrogant; fake/narcissistic/shallow/flirts/bimbos; disrespect/use boys/use girls; dishonest in attitude and apparel/back-stabbers/double-faced; jealous; gossipers; mistreat or ignore those who study and consider them nerds and 'uncool'; disrespect

teachers/are disruptive in class/answer back; teasers (mock, belittle and make fun of others).

- A few respondents linked popular girls with transforming factors: good leaders; good listeners; good friends/caring/supportive/dedicated/kind/altruistic; respectful; perform well in class/respectful towards teachers/carers; strong (character-wise) and mature; self-confident and assertive; outgoing and sociable; popular with boys; sometimes funny/jolly/with a healthy sense of humour.
- The interview-scripts could indicate that Maltese adolescents are more guided by transformative factors. The majority of respondents focused on positive qualities when describing that which render boys and girls appealing as romantic partners.
- A few insisted that they were greatly influenced by their friends so much so that they would even act differently when they were with them. However, it seems that most Maltese adolescents do not strive to control their friends and/or are not controlled by peer pressure.
- All the teachers/carers interviewed claimed that adolescents build their ideas on love and violence according to what they witness and experience in their families.
- The findings show that the parents (and other close relatives like grandparents, uncles and aunts) *do* determine the interviewees' concepts of violence and love. Admittedly, there were more responses with transforming factors however, there were a few pessimistic responses. On the positive side, this research shows that love is given a good name in most Maltese families and violence is not accepted.
- Ex-boyfriends/girlfriends: whereas some Maltese adolescents completely detach and estrange themselves from their ex-boyfriends/girlfriends and remain bitter (these are exclusionary factors), the majority make it a point to remain on friendly terms with them (these are transformative factors). In addition, they seem to have learned that: thinking positively, being a good listener and a good friend (these are transformative factors) strengthens a relationship.
- A minority of respondents insisted that: they do not talk about; love, relationships and violence at school, during lessons. The majority of the respondents believe that: It is important to talk about love, relationships and violence both in a formal setting (as for example, during lessons) and informally; At school, they had the opportunity to talk about love, relationships and violence, mainly, but not exclusively during PSD lessons.
- The indications are that local youths might be falling prey to the distorted reality purposely portrayed by the media. The exclusion factors that emerged could be summarised as follows: promoting of permissiveness and materialism; contributing towards a decline in moral values; forcing girls and boys to believe that they must look as 'hot' as media stars; reinforcing society-imposed stereotypes; promoting a false idea of love. On the positive side, although it seems evident that most Maltese adolescents enjoy the products of the mass media, they seem to be aware that what they see is not necessarily genuine.

- The majority claim that although they still seek entertainment, they choose to follow those films/programmes that promote: altruism; parental/unconditional love/family ties; hard-work and perseverance; true talent; exemplary deeds; humility and education.

Spain

- There is a big lack of communication between teachers, parents and pupils, which is translated in the ignorance of all of them about the way of thinking that adolescents have, their values, how they interact among them and with other agents, their doubts, etc.
- Adolescents are aware that violence is a problem, however, they sometimes establish aggressive relationships among them, that they consider games of their ages.
- Young people know gender violence, and they consider it as a serious problem, although they relate it to “problems of old people that appear in TV”., they think that it is something very far that is never going to affect them directly, because of that they think that they don’t have to take prevention measures for it.
- The ideas about love that adolescents expressed had a transforming character when we asked them to define it. However, they didn’t associate affective education with gender violence, considering that the prevention of this kind of aggressions wasn’t related to the social learnship of love.
- Although their abstract ideas about love were very mature, its real application to their relationships didn’t use to be like that, because most of them had suffered or knew a few relationships in which concepts of stability, tenderness, respect, etc. didn’t appear.
- The traditional models of attraction keep being totally settled in adolescents mentality. Except a few exceptions, boys leaders that dominate their mates and girls that are considered as the most beautiful keep being the objective to achieve for everybody, independently of the rest of their values.
- According to the adolescents interviewed, the models of election coincide with the models of attraction, although, some of them, specially girls, assured that they looked for other qualities (of transforming kind) when they have to choose a partner, above all when they get older and their relationships are more stable.
- For adolescents their friendship relationships are essential, and although most of them told us that they weren’t influenced by their friends, teachers thought that these influences were evident in their pupils’ behaviours, and they weren’t always positive.
- The interactions with the families of most of the adolescents interviewed were limited to daily coexistence, trying not to involve their parents in their personal lives. However when these interactions were more tight, they were very positive for all of them.
- With regard to the mass media, both teachers and adolescents thought that a better and wide treatment of the questions that we are analysing in this project. In particular,

teachers thought that the mass media transmit a model of attraction that influenced adolescents in a negative way, and adolescents thought that the specific treatment of gender violence in TV wasn't correct.

- The experience of other social agents, like NGOs or young clubs were generally very positive when they strengthened transforming values among adolescents, because they accept them very well and they participate in them voluntarily

3. Recommendations

According to the research, one of the major issues to be addressed is the one of the models of attraction that play a role in our societies. The reflection on the models of attraction that we are developing through socialization appears as a key element for the prevention of gender violence. In a world in which we are continuously exposed to messages that associate love and sex to violence, the analysis of the models of attraction held by our adolescents is necessary in order to develop educative actions that invite youth to make a reflection on their preferences. The development of educative programs addressed at gender violence prevention is one of the main challenges for schools at the beginning of the 21st century.

The recommendations that we find essential for developing an educative program to prevent gender-based violence among adolescents are the followings:

1) The lack of communication between parents, teachers and pupils is a very serious problem that needs to be addressed in order for the activities on education in values and prevention of gender-based violence to be effective. Until now most of the actions directed to the prevention of gender-based violence in schools in Spain have been designed by experts in education and carried out through curricular activities that only involved pupils. In the Republic of Cyprus there are still no actions made in incorporating in the schools' curricula any specific activities that would aim at the prevention of gender-based violence.

As we have seen in the fieldwork analysis, adolescents recognised that there was lack in communication with their parents and teachers in regard to issues of emotional or sexual nature, and, they were sometimes sceptic whether they valued the involvement of adults in their affective and sexual education. Nevertheless those adolescents who have had a closer relationship with their parents, teachers or instructors valued these interactions very positively. Generally the activities in which an expert gave them a speech and proposed to them some activities, were mostly rejected, because young people didn't feel involved in them. The reason for this lack of interest of the pupils could be that they associate this kind of activities with other lessons, because it is the same communicative act: an expert talks and the rest listen. What we propose is a communicative and interactive lesson plan in which pupils will be able to actively

participate in various activities that will help them reflect on their behaviours in relation to their gender and in which they will be able to express their opinions.

In relation to this it must be taken under consideration that adolescents value much more the activities in which they are involved in directly, like, for example, the group dynamics in which they participated in the youth club, chaired by the instructors, where values like tolerance and respect were promoted, but from the point of view of the adolescents.

Besides implicating adolescents in their own education, it is also necessary that other important social agents in adolescents' lives take part in it. Indirectly the pupils interviewed manifested their support for the above because they said that, even if they hear something at school, if at home these transforming ideas are not supported (because of a very traditional family structure for example) then these activities wouldn't be useful for them at all. So the participation of family members in the gender-based violence prevention programmes for Secondary Education should be guaranteed, not only for the social learning of adolescents, but also because these interactions are good for all of those who participate in them. So in this way education in values becomes more democratic by not being restricted to the classroom. Adults can also learn about adolescents' beliefs, and relationships, become more understanding regarding the needs of young people but also reflect on their own intimate relationships and gender stereotypes.

To finish this point, it is necessary to clarify that not only parents can participate but any member of the family can take part in the interactive groups that could be formed to work in gender-based violence prevention, because, as we have seen, in a number of times uncles, aunts, brothers or sisters are more implicated than parents in the affective education of adolescents. Furthermore it was concluded that adolescents and teachers value in a very positive way the involvement of youth instructors, NGOs members, and other professionals in this kind of activities.

2) The activities that will be proposed should take into account that the definition that will be made of violence in general and gender-based violence in particular can't be exclusionary. In Spain for example although adolescents understand the seriousness of all kinds of aggressions, and give the same importance to psychological violence as they give to physical violence, they think that gender-based violence is never going to affect them. Definitely, they don't think that gender-based violence can appear in young couples, or that some beliefs and attitudes that they have now can lead to aggression in the future. The latter comment also reflects the situation in Cyprus but in this case most adolescents identified violence with more physical acts. Nevertheless some of them did identify possessiveness (without physical harm) within the context of violent behaviour. In general adolescents don't associate the traditional models of attraction and choice, or the acceptance of love as an inevitable phenomenon that can't be controlled, with violence that appears in intimate relationships.

Because of all that, the activities that will be proposed must focus on the widest possible definition of gender-based violence thus giving adolescents the opportunity through proposed activities to analyse how mass media, the educative system and society in general handles the definition of gender-based violence, and acquire the sensitivity needed to make their own definition of gender-based violence. Moreover they have to be aware that this constitutes a problem that can affect all people, independently of their social class, race, gender or age.

3) As we have seen in conclusions, adolescents don't associate an inadequate education in values (although most of the youngest teachers did, at least in Cyprus), or an exclusionary model of attraction and choice with behaviours that can lead to violent attitudes. Therefore it is necessary that adolescents understand, through various activities, that the idea of love that everyone has is essential when we relate to other people, that love is a social construction which we learn through our interactions, and that education in values is the basis on which to build a model of intimate relationship which is based on respect and equality.

To do that, we will design exercises in which adolescents have to give their own definition of love, analyse other definitions, debate among interactive groups on what they consider love to be and reflect on how certain notions of love can result in violent attitudes being accepted by both perpetrators and victims of violence. Moreover they can discuss on how the subject of love is treated in schools, in the mass media or among families and friends, and consider whether this treatment is exclusionary (supporting violent attitudes) or transforming (contributing to the development of healthy relationships).

4) Besides the issue of love, there is also the analysis of the models of attraction and choice. In regard to this analysis a lot of activities could be directed in reflecting about how the traditional models persist in our societies, and what we can do to change them.

First it is necessary that pupils understand how the adoption of models of attraction and choice that promote violent attitudes or the adoption of certain notions of what love is, can lead to violent attitudes within intimate relationships. So, after identifying these models, we can exemplify them through familiar cases (friends, parents, TV series, etc.), and see how these models, both male and female, are based on archetypes that don't take into account relevant values like: goodness, trust or respect. Furthermore a discussion can be made on the factors that adolescents follow when they choose a partner for a relationship, asking them to reflect whether these factors are transformative or exclusionary.

An important area on which activities must focus on are the models of attraction which are promoted by TV and the Mass Media which according to both teachers and pupils most of the times reinforce the exclusionary models of attraction and choice, and which most often depict relationships in which jealousy, distrust, or infidelity are quite common. In activities on models of

attraction we must also pay attention on how adolescents consider the people who are characterised by these transforming values (goodness, respect, friendship, and trust), analysing whether, traditionally, these people have been excluded from the definition of “attractive”. An analysis could also be proposed on the treatment that these values have in films, series or other media.

5) Finally adolescents should understand that their interactions with other people (family, friends, educative community, mass media, etc.) constitute a very important part of their personal learning, and their socialisation as individuals, although most of them think that they aren't influenced by their families or friends. To do that a debate can be conducted through which adolescents can exchange personal experiences and interactions that have led to a change in their beliefs.

- Specifically, about “friendship”, group activities can be implemented that will examine in what ways adolescents are influenced by their friends in regard to their intimate relationships and their models of attraction. Different case studies can be proposed on which adolescents will be asked to comment on and give their own opinion of what they would do in those cases and why.

- About “family”, the participation of its members in the interactive groups is, on its own, a way to analyse the interactions that adolescents have with their families, and an innovation with respect to other methodologies on gender-based violence prevention. On the other hand, other activities can be designed like discussions about how adolescents talk to their families about love or violence, how their relationships are with them, involving other family members like brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc.

- The involvement of educative community members comes implicit in the character of the interactive groups that is proposed as a method of work. It is very important that the educational system provides teachers with time and training in order for them to be able to conduct and participate effectively in the proposed activities.

- About mass media, as was mentioned above, various activities can be proposed through which an analysis will be made on how the traditional gender stereotypes, the relationships of young and adult couples, and the concepts of love and violence are treated through various media. Furthermore an online forum can be created on which to debate the activities proposed in the classroom, as well as any opinions about the issues studied and participants' own experiences. In this way education can also be conducted in an environment away from the classroom.

- Activities that promote gender equality can also involve other social agents like NGO members, educational psychologists, counsellors and instructors and members of youth clubs. In the fieldwork we have seen how the interactions among young people in youth clubs gave them a lot of personal and social benefits, because in those clubs attitudes of tolerance and respect were promoted and alternative ways of being were respected which didn't refer to the

popular models of attraction favoured in schools. To sum up, the more heterogeneous the groups are, the richest the outcomes will be.

To do that a specific model is proposed: **The Learning Communities**. They are based on the work among interactive groups formed by 5 or 6 persons (teachers, pupils, parents etc.) that formulate the activities (analysis of the models of attraction on films, daily life, the models of choice, etc.) through an egalitarian dialogue. This model allows a preventive socialization through the interactions that the adolescents have with their teachers, their relatives, other volunteers that participate in the activities, and among themselves. The egalitarian dialogue is an instrument to prevent any type of conflict in the classroom, because as the work in heterogeneous groups is encouraged the creation of exclusionary groups of power is avoided, therefore popular pupils and less sociable pupils have the chance to work together and discuss various issues that concern them. In this way co-existence, tolerance and understanding are promoted while pupils, parents and teachers get the opportunity to critically reflect on their own gender roles in society and how these promote or do not promote violent models of attraction and gender inequality.