Parenting Style and Children’s Behavioral Problems Among the Urban Roma Community in Georgia

By: Nino Nustubidze M.A. (Georgia) Supervised by: Dr. Smadar Dolev Mentor: M. Slonim

Introduction

Various studies suggest that parenting plays a central role in understanding the development of internalizing and externalizing behavioural problems. Baumrind’s (1971) theory categorizes parents into three global parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive typologies.

Basic Parenting Styles

One of the most robust findings reported in the literature on parenting styles and behavioral problems is that children of authoritative parents were more resilient and competent, had more positive role modelling and better adaptive coping strategies, as well as better learning of consequences of risk-taking behavior (Kritzas & Grobler, 2005).

Children reared by authoritarian and permissive parenting style in different cultural contexts tend to develop a wide range of internalizing and externalizing behavioral problems such as anxiety, depressive symptoms or aggression.

From the perspective of an ecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) children raised in Roma community’s development can be understood only if their unique environmental context is examined.

The Roma communities in Georgia are the most marginalized with extreme social-economic challenges accompanying poverty and discrimination.

The report Don’t Call Me a Street Child in Georgia (Wargan & Dershem, 2009) found that the majority of street children in Georgia are left alone on the streets during daylight hours and their main activities are begging and working in-order to bring money to their community. Roma children, on the other hand, are accompanied by their caregivers or other adult family members.

Hypothesis

- Roma female caregivers will tend to present more authoritarian and permissive parenting styles than authoritative parenting styles compared to non-Roma female caregivers.
- Children of authoritarian and permissive female caregivers will present higher levels of internal and external behavioral problems compared to children of authoritative caregivers.

Method

120 dyads: female caregivers and 3 to 5 years old children recruited from Child Care program of Social Service Agency.

Two comparison groups:
- 60 dyads, self-identified as part of the Roma community
- 60 non-Roma dyads from the lowest SES families living in the most vulnerable districts of three the biggest cities of Georgia.

Measures

Parenting Style and Dimensions (PSD)

The PSD is a 53 item parent-report measure of parenting practices extracted from the Parenting Practice questionnaire (Robinson, Mandelco, Olsen & Hart, 1995).

Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL Achenbach, T.M)

Child Behavior Checklist for Ages 2-3 is a 100-item questionnaire designed to assess behavioral and emotional problems in children ages 2 to 3, and can be used up to the age of 5.

Socio-Demographic Questionnaire

The study intended to obtain reliable information about the dyads’ demographic characteristics, family situation, educational status, accessibility to social and health services and household income variables.

Conclusion

This research project will be used as a baseline for the further advocacy for the Roma community in Georgia and as a basis for intervention programs to increase associability to various services for this population. It will also help support efforts to ensure Roma children’s rights and public awareness of their situation.