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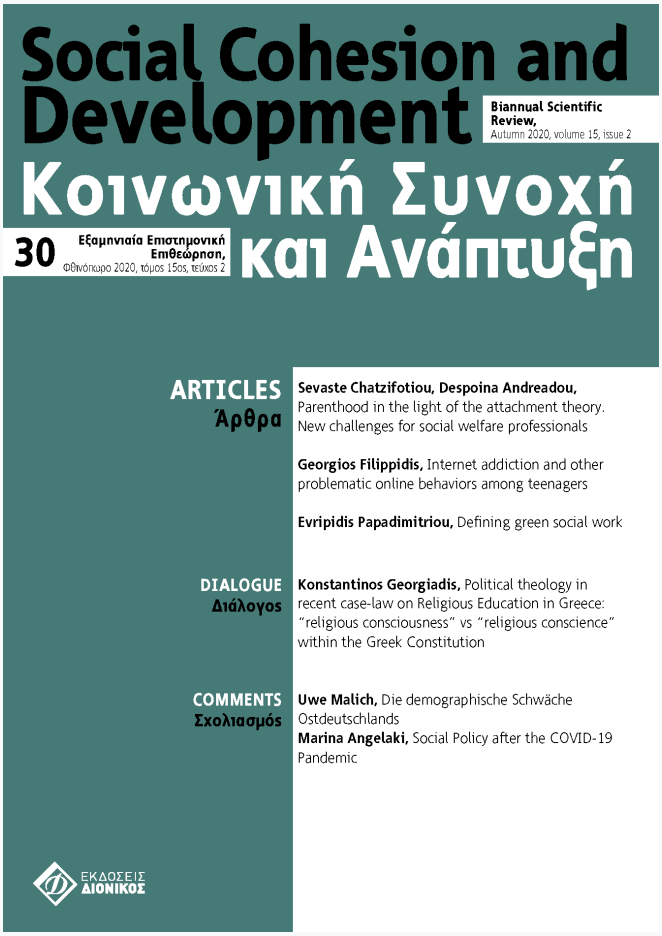

Parenthood in the light of the Attachment theory. New Challenges for Social Welfare Professionals

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Parenthood in the light of the attachment theory. New challenges for social welfare professionals

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Γονεϊκότητα υπό το πρίσμα της θεωρίας της προσκόλλησης. Νέες προκλήσεις για τους επαγγελματίες κοινωνικής πρόνοιας

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on highlighting the challenges and difficulties with regard to parenthood of a group of parents. Initially, the concept of parenthood is outlined as well as the attachment theory principles. Focused group interviews have been applied based on qualitative research methodology that aimed at exploring the potential challenges and anxieties faced by the participants with respect to child raising and other issues. It is argued that there is a strong relationship between the theory of attachment and parenthood. Attachment research in the study of parenthood raises common concerns about the impact of parenthood on the development of children over time. The data analysis and the assessment of group dynamics conducted by the researchers are further presented and discussed. The research sheds valuable light for the social welfare professionals who work with parents, alongside with other disciplines working with this target group.

KEY WORDS: Parenthood, attachment theory, social welfare, qualitative research, focus group interviews.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο αυτό εστιάζει στην ανάδειξη των προκλήσεων και των δυσκολιών που αντιμετωπίζει μία ομάδα γονέων σχετικά με την γονεϊκότητα. Αρχικά, η έννοια της γονεϊκότητας καθώς και της θεωρίας της προσκόλλησης παρουσιάζονται διεξοδικά. Στην συνέχεια παρουσιάζεται η ποιοτική μεθοδολογική προσέγγιση που χρησιμοποιήθηκε με έμφαση στην μέθοδο συλλογής δεδομένων, την ομαδικά εστιασμένη συνέντευξη, η οποία ανέδειξε δεδομένα σχετικά με τα ζητήματα και τις αγωνίες που βίωσαν οι συμμετέχοντες αναφορικά με την ανατροφή των παιδιών τους και άλλα αντίστοιχα θέματα. Η ανάλυση δεδομένων έγινε με την μέθοδο της θεματικής ανάλυσης. Τονίστηκε ότι υπάρχει στενός δεσμός ανάμεσα στην θεωρία της προσκόλλησης και την γονεϊκότητα καθώς η τελευταία δέχεται έντονα τις επιδράσεις της πρώτης καθ' όλη την διαχρονική εξέλιξη της ανατροφής και διαπαιδαγώγησης των παιδιών από τους γονείς. Τα συμπεράσματα της έρευνας ενημερώνουν και διαφωτίζουν ιδιαίτερα την θεωρία και πράξη των επαγγελματιών κοινωνικής πρόνοιας που εργάζονται με γονείς, αλλά και άλλους επιστημονικούς κλάδους που εργάζονται με τον ίδιο πληθυσμό.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ: Γονεϊκότητα, θεωρία της προσκόλλησης, κοινωνική πρόνοια, ποιοτική έρευνα, ομαδικά εστιασμένη συνέντευξη.

1. Literature review

1.1 The conceptualization of parenthood

The concept of parenthood distinguishes itself on three axes: "the experience, which is the art of becoming a parent, the practice of referring to the daily roles of parents, and parental care and practice, which is referred to the mental process that establishes the subject within society based on kinship systems, including their legal dimensions"(Gutton, 2015, p. 129). Parenthood is well understood within the form of a list of functions such as: "birth, upbringing, education, social status, responsibility, exercising the rights of power and prohibiting sexual relations within its context" (Gutton, 2015, p. 130).It certainly is a complex process involving much more than a mother or father providing food, safety and affection to a child. Exercising parental roles requires bi-directional relationships between members of two (or more) generations and can be extended through all the main parts of the relevant life spans of these groups (Pappa, 2017b). It can also relate to all institutions within a culture (educational, economic, political and social) (Pappa, 2017b).

In addition, Belsky (1984, p. 85) "considers that it is useful to look at the kind of parenting that appears to promote optimal child's functioning and to speculate on the type of personality of the parent who is more likely to provide such developmental care".In particular, during childhood, succinct observational studies show that cognitive ability and healthy socioemotional development are promoted through warmth and, more generally, through the care that motivates a child and does not restrict it. As children grow older, the use of justification, discipline, and expression of warmth on the part of the parent have been found to be positively connected to self-esteem, emotional security, independence, social competence and spiritual achievements during school years (Belsky, 1984).

Yet, how could one define the term "parent"? According to Hourdaki, "parent" is the person who acquires, gives birth or becomes legally a mother or father of a child through the institution of adoption (Pappa, 2017b). If family in its natural core is said to constitute the foundation of society, then parents must be recognized as the first unique and irreplaceable pedagogues of children, especially considering the fact that for the first three to five years of life parents are the almost exclusive pedagogues of their children, who largely shape an individual's personality (Pappa, 2017b).

All things said, "the image of parenthood in the bibliography is variable" (Georgieva, 2011, p. 6). Relationships and conflicts between parents and children have now become recurring themes in the bibliography. Although some themes might not have been explicitly or purposefully developed, they are still present enabling us to explore the idea of parenthood through the centuries. "Usually society is gradually trying to define parenthood without making a direct reference to the word itself", thus creating many ambiguities around the subject, a fact which, however, provides a rich background for innovative academic research (Georgieva, 2011, p. 6).

1.2 Theory of attachment

The perception that early emotional ties between parents and children are important for development stems from the psychoanalytic theory of Freud, emerging nearly a century ago (Waters & Cummings, 2000). More specifically, Freud proposed a model in the context of a psychosexual theory of human development that should take into account the emotional ties formed between infants and their mothers. This first relationship was subsequently called "dependence"

by American scholars who sought to interpret psychoanalytic concepts as consistent with the theory of social learning. It is worth noting that Bowlby (1958) applied the term "attachment" to differentiate these early parent-child emotional ties from previous descriptions expressed by psychoanalytic and social learning theories.

Both Ainsworth's own pioneering work and that of his colleagues has shown that aspects of parent-child relationships are developed via specific parent-child interactions (Ainsworth, 1967; Ainsworth et al., 2015). There are four types of relationships that can be observed between parent and child, namely safe, avoidant, ambiguous, and disorganized relationships (Craig &Baucum, 2007). To elaborate on each, a safe bond is the desired form, and is characterized by the following; a child shows dissatisfaction when parted with her/his parent, rejoices when s/he returns and generally prefers her/his parents over other people. On the other hand, the avoidant bond entails absence of parental preference over foreigners. These children rarely seek their parents to comfort themselves. The ambiguous bond is described by discomfort when the child is separated from her/his parent, without the discomfort being diminished when the parent returns, and quite often with aggression towards the parent. Finally, the disorganized bond is characterized by a combination of avoidance and anxiety behaviors. The last three types of bonds shape together what we call an "insecure bond" (Craig, &Baucum, 2007).

Furthermore, an essential body of clinical research on the consequences of long-term separation, lack of care and loss has provided evidence on the importance of close parentchild relationships for the long-term adjustment of children as well as on the negative repercussions of absence, loss or deprivation in these first relationships.A conclusion to Bowlby's research is that the formation and maintenance of emotional ties between parents and children has promoted a healthy adaptation of children, despite dependence and the potential risk of dysfunctioning (Cummings & Cummings, 2002). Last but not least, Ainsworth (1967) has found that parents and children's relationships, in which parents respond to children's needs, are associated with desirable developmental outcomes, and that, on the contrary, the absence of such relationships or the existence of disorders, for that matter, are linked to developmental and communicative problems in children. Therefore, an individual's reassurance of the attachment figure's availability-as a "safe base"-is a key element for establishing secure attachment, which is considered normal, desirable and necessary throughout the individual's life (Waters & Cummings, 2000).

1.3 Attachmentas a perspective on parenthood

Attachment refers to an emotional bond between parents and children. The idea is that children form emotional ties with parents who have been present over the years and with parents who maintain a mutual relationship with their children, respectively. In fact, the relation between attachment, children's performance and adult roles has been repeatedly commented (Ainsworth et al.,2015). Indeed, attachment theory is essential to the study of parenthood, providing for a constructive relationship between the two, a fact which deserves special attention.

What is more, many attachment characteristics can be found in other close relationships, including romantic and marital relationships, with implications for the psychological function of the individual (Crowell, Fraley & Shaver, 1999). Bowlby stressed that positive experiences in a companionship relationship may result in the reconstruction of an initially unsafe attachment model. For example, a companion or a therapist can provide a "safe basis" for exploring and addressing early attachment experiences (van IJzendoorn, &BakermanKranenburg, 1997). According

to the theory of attachment, there is no direct link between the first experiences of parental attachment and parental behavior. Past attachment experiences are always filtered through the current mental representation of the attachment,thus influencing parental behavior and the formation of new attachment relationships (van IJzendoorn, &Bakerman-Kranenburg, 1997). Current attachment is formed not only on the basis of early attachment, but is also influenced by later relationships(Simpson, &Rholes, 2019). A good friend or spouse can provide a "safe basis" for exploring unfavorable childhood experiences (van IJzendoorn, &Bakerman-Kranenburg, 1997). Also, people with high levels of attachment allow their partners to be more cooperative and more sensitive and coordinated parents (Millings et al., 2013). Attachment theory offers the most appropriate framework for examining both parentchild and parent-parent relationships (Cummings & Cummings, 2002).

Ultimately, researchers have drawn a connection between the attachment which exists in the couple's relationships to that in s the parenting of infants, toddlers and adolescents (Cowan, Cowan & Mehta, 2009). Studies show that attachment in the couple alludes to parental care, expectations, experiences, interactions and behaviors. Cowan, Cowan & Mehta (2009) have reported for partners that clinging to one's own parents as well as couple attachment itself could both stand assignificant indicators of the couple's interaction, which, in turn, affects parenthood. In contrast, some studies have shown that adults with a secure attachment to their companions tend to be more affectionate, more sensitive and more interested in their children (Feney, 2002). In their research, Cowan et al. have also found that adults with a more secure attachment history have more positive parenting behavior (Millings et al., 2013). Moreover, partners with secure attachment are able to promote or foster a more secure attachment to their children and exhibit a more devoted parenting behavior. These studies indicate that the relationship between partners or spouses affects each individual's parenting (Millings et al., 2013).

2. Methodology of research

In the present study attachment theory is being examined with the purpose to understand the ways through which parents interact with their own children. The aim of this study has been to investigate the challenges and anxieties with respect to parenthood. Research is based on qualitative methodology that acknowledges the value of evaluating personal or social experiences, attitudes, perceptions, ideas and behaviors in terms of parenthood, in the context of communal life. Also, it provides space for the participants' voice to be heard, while they openly share their experiences through real-life stories.

The method of data collection has been that of focus group interviews (Poulopoulos, 2010). In particular, a focus group with adult individuals experiencing parental anxieties was formulated with the scope to address those anxieties and fears and empower participants to develop interpersonal skills such as active listening, empathy, and to enable them regain their lost self-esteem and self- confidence in their role as parents. As Archontaki and Philippouargue, (2003) in such a group the goal is to develop specific skills and acquire knowledge that would find application in daily life. Of course, this could be achieved by providing knowledge, information and the necessary psychological support to exercise their role(Pappa, 2017a). Indeed, under the proper guidance of the group coordinator the participants can set their work within a realistic context and be stimulated (Pappa, 2017a). Focus group participation helps them recognize their unique value and strength and teaches them to take their own decisions about their life as well as the life

of their children. Focus groups are based on instilling into their members a sense of belonging, and on reinforcing their confidence in a feelingofsecurity and trust. Participants contribute to this processindividually, by stating their own personal experience, ideas and knowledge (Pappa, 2017a).

In a non-governmental family and child protection organization located in northern Greece, where one of the authors of this paper used to be employed as a social worker, service users were requested to participate in professional counseling on parenthood issues. As a result, a group of interested parents appeared and was assigned with the task to discover and pinpoint anxieties and challenges in relation to their parenting role as well as to generally exchange their views and concerns on the topic. The group consisted of 6 women who had children at preschool age, 2 to 6 years old. The average age of participants was 28 to 35 years old, all married and graduates of secondary level of public education, living in a semi-urban community. All of them participated in the survey voluntarily being informed on confidentiality and anonymity issues, which bound the ethical dimension of the present study. The coordinator carried out meetings with the participants three times in a month, with each session lasting for two hours. The interview agenda included basic and introductory questions at its beginning, followed by more sensitive and reflective ones in the middle stage, concluded by questions in the final part of the interview that helped the coordinator recap the basic themes of discussion. The researcher assumed the role of group coordinator using circular discussion and active listening techniques to employ an attitude of concern, acceptance, authenticity and empathy (Poulopoulos, 2010). Technically, by the means of coordination the researcher attempted not only to guide the group towards a common goal, but mainly to reach an understanding of what is happening and "how" it works. In other words, "what happens" concerns the subject matters discussed by the participants, whereas the "how it happens" involves the participants' emotions and the general team atmosphere (Trilliva & Anagnostopoulou, 2008, p. 93).All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim for the analysis.

Thematic analysis was used to process the data, a method of defining, analyzing and reporting the various issues that arise according to the data. A more general way is to select the keypoints of the interviews, decode the transcript on the basis of research questions and then focus on the main issues so as to find common ground among participants (Tsiolis, 2018).

3. Findings

Data were decoded, categorized, analyzed, and provided to the authors under seven thematic categories, as follows:

3.1 Developmental challenges

Parents of infants and preschool children are worried about when and how a two-year-old will learn to eat on his/her own, sleep on time, not cry when leaving his/her parents, play along with other children, not exhibit strong fears, adapt easily and not be demanding and obstinate (Pappa, 2017a).

Sleep problem

Owen & Cox (1997) have demonstrated that negative consequences of conjugal conflict on parental behaviors affect the development of attachment over time. The reflection of marriage

quality or marital relationships on child attachment and parenthood indicate that marital relationships should be considered as a major influence on the emotional safety of children (Davies & Cummings, 1994).The projection of marriage quality on relationships where children also participate as well as attachment and other dimensions of parenthood show that marital relationships ought to be acknowledged as influential factors in the emotional safety of children (Davies & Cummings, 1994).In this case, the findings show that mature cooperation with the spouse results in an effective treatment of the child's sleeping issue. Indicative is the following extract:

E: "My older child who is eight still sleeps with us or with me or with his father ... me and my husband are handling this problem together and it has taken us days… but now we are good and [now] our child sleeps alone.We work along to tackle our children's issues."

Also, a child's sleep is an issue that concerns all parents, when for example their children often refuse to sleep alone and resort to parents' bed in the evening. At the same time, there are ways for this problem to be solved by the parents themselves. Some participants said:

M: "I had an issue with my child, who is 4…she likes to sleep with me in bed …"

D: "..all of my children have occasionally come to our bed, now my little one is coming too.."

Problem adjusting to the kindergarten

One's own reassurance of the attachment figure availability as a safe base lies therefore at the heart of attachment safety. Expanding on that, a child in a foreign environment would use this attachment person as a "safety base" to explore space and interact with adult strangers. Under insecure circumstances, he/she would seek contact with the attachment figure. However, these reactions, which Bowlby (1958) has characterized as adhesion reactions, fall into the gap when no attachment face is present and can last long. When the child is in the nursery or kindergarten without his/her parents, then it is a matter of time for an incident to occur that would trigger the child's attachment reaction - if this has not already happened during the parent's effort to bid their child farewell. The result may be long periods of continuous crying or discomfort that would take days and could not be alleviated by the still unknown [environment]. As mothers report, their children experience similar difficulties with adjusting to the kindergarten. Indicative are the extracts from their speech:

E: "Another problem I'm facing is that I bring my little one to the kindergarten every day and she screams asking me to take her back home ..."

T: "You know what I think [it] could be? and I have faced the same in the past...you can do what she wants inside the house but in the kindergarten there are some rules, program, so I realized why she refuses to go ..."

Jealousy and competition among siblings

Parents still describe events in which jealousy and competition among siblings are evident. Specifically, they comment :

D: "they constantly fight withone another….trying to capture my attention all the time and getting angry, if I favour one over the other… "

3.2 Daily routine and lack of free time

Modern living conditions (e.g. exhausting working hours)are not only unhelpful to parents, yet even hardly bearable for them (Pappa, 2017a). Parents find daily routine too tough, especially

because it is boring and usually a source of problems and not joy (Pappa, 2017a). Indeed, what is clearly stated by all participants is the fact that in their everyday life they lack time for themselves, because of the never-ending duties to their children, which makes life even harder. They mention characteristically:

X: "I do not leave them to grandmother ... I do not go out at all ...there is no free time only when they are at school.. As I say, you sacrifice many things to raise your children… I quit my job. "

D: "I feel like I'm suffocating. All I need is some time on my own…."

M: "I do not have time for myself..sometimes I cannot even go to the bathroom…I'm tired of everyday life, I cannot stand it.."

S: "I want some space and time on my own, even for a half an hour would be great, but I don't have it ..."

3.3 Grandmothers' role in the upbringing of the child

The first attachment is most likely to be formed with the mother, but this may soon be complemented by other attachments with one or a few specific individuals (Ainsworth & Hopkins, 1969). Once formed, either to the mother or to another person, an attachment tends to withstand. Attachment is not a term that should apply to any transitory relationship or a purely occasional state of dependency. Relationships depend on the requirements of the given situation (Ainsworth & Hopkins, 1969). Admittedly, attachment behavior may present fluctuations according to the particular situational factors, yet the attachments themselves remain ever-persistent, even under the impact of unfavorable conditions (Ainsworth &Hopkins, 1969).Thus, it becomes increasingly obvious that it is necessary to consider the broader functions of the family such as marital relationships, brotherly relationships, relationships with wider family members (e.g. gradparents), in order to fully understand attachment as an important aspect of parenthood. In this research, most mothers expressed their dissatisfaction with the grandmothers' involvement in child raising. Parents' concerns have to do with whether grandmothers should contribute to children's upbringing. As they claim, there is a sense of denial from their side since grandmothers often defy their role and take care of children their own way. A representative example is quoted below.

X: "You know… they cancel the role of mom, they want to keep it their way ...but this creates problems to me [as] a mum»

M: "I do not interfere with the grandparents' work, but nor should the grandmother intervene in mine."

3.4 Remorse

Another issue arising out of the mother's speech is the feeling of remorse, when parents are unable to be fully committed to their children due to reasons such as postpartum depression, pregnancy, which prevents the development of a healthy relationship and communication between mother and child. Nevertheless, the group coordinator suggested ways for the mother to re-approach the child (i.e. activities).In short, attachment theory provides rich feedback for parent-child, parent-parent and parent-environment affective and social relationships. The theory of attachment is considered to embrace a holistic view where external influences are acknowledged. For instance, when examining safe attachment, Egeland Erickson (1999, p. 4) states : "The development of attachment,

like all human behavior, does not occur in isolation but within a network of influences operating at many levels". In fact, negative events in life such as parental divorce, parent psychopathology, parental loss, illness or domestic violence are important predictors of change in attachment.Weinfield, Sroufe &Egeland (2000) have found that shifts in attachment are linked to difficulties in family conditions (eg depression of the mother and problems in family function due to early puberty).The findings of the present studyreveal that something similar has happened to one of the mothers, who admitted that persistent depression did not let her develop the kind of attachment she wanted with her own daughter. Quoting the participant's words:

D: "I still feel remorse for my daughter because after I gave birth I suffered from postpartum depression, I did not breastfeed her, nor did I became attached to her ... I am trying to find a way to catch up with the lost time now"

E: "We all feel remorse ...We cannot help it"

3.5 Limits and rules

The issue of setting boundaries is crucial for parents of infants and preschoolchildren, who usually move from excessive generosity and permissiveness to prohibitions. In terms of defining the limits, the search for measure is perhaps the most important request of parents at this stage of child development. A balanced and calm approach to the issues that arise in the relationship with their children is what is required (Pappa, 2017a).Some of the parents report that they often find it difficult to set rules and limits, and resort to reward, for example, toys. Limits make children feel safe. Rules help school-age children practice decision-making and gain an understanding of natural and logical consequences.The coordinator then proposed that mothers must not promise material goods to children, but rather suggest a nice walk or an activity together, instead. Yet, only one of the parents said she was able to set limits and rules for her children depending on the circumstances.

Some participants mentioned:

M: "The rules and limits are imposed on the younger ages ...there must be limits on nutrition ... I have put them within limits, I am very good at it, but also very strict where I think it is needed..."

E: "We do not make it through, many times ...."

D: "I now come to this logic, I used to be more lenient "

3.6 Parenting techniques

Punishment or reasoning

Parents react differently when their children cause damage or misbehave. Some of them reported focusing on behavior, namely explaining to their children that they are not behaving properly, while others adopt the measure of punishment to pull children together.In general, they encourage them to focus on verbal communication and dialogue,in case of potential difficulties. Negative parenting attitudes, involving physical and non-physical punishment, have been associated with both parental and child mental health problems. Also, parents exchange views on the technique of punishment and reasoning in order to correct or improve some of their children's attitudes.

S: "The positive thing that M. says is that there must be rules and limits. And, when the children-something bad, wetry to make them understand what they did wrong.Now, M. followed thisway; another mum however can behave differently. This does not mean that any way applies to any child...It is important that you all want to guide children's actions, it is advisable to do it in a sensible way, which of course is determined by the circumstances. In any case, it is beneficial to encourage verbal communication and dialogue with your child"

Encouragement and praise

It is worth noting that most parents also focus on the technique of encouragement, which has prolific effects on child behavior regulation (Sizer, 2013). Sizer (2013) holds that parental attention, time, and verbal encouragement are perhaps the most effective tools in enhancing desirable behaviors; and indeed, children are in need of the acceptance and emotional support of parents or primary caregivers, so as to develop equally across various domains (cognitive, social, emotional, etc.). Encouragement is one of the most significant means to improve our relationship with children (Pappa, 2015). It is the process by which we direct our attention onto their positive aspects, cultivating in this way their self-esteem (Pappa, 2015). The encouraging parent helps children accept their own mistakes and learn from them, while also promoting the idea of acting perfectly (Pappa, 2015). In addition, praise is also used as a means of encouraging and enhancing the desired behavior (Pappa, 2017c). Parents praise children, reward them verbally, offering positive feedback on their performance and behavior (Pappa, 2017c).

In the parents' speech, another important element is that of encouragement and praise. In particular, most participants reported reinforcing their children's attitude or artistic expression in order to make them feel important and confident. Accepting the facts presented, the coordinator pointed out that it is very positive that they adopt the technique of encouragement, because only this waywouldthe children wish to maintain their good behavior and perhaps try even further.

As they report:

D: "….I like to praise them…"

S: " …we all need to encourage the positive attitudes or, in general, the good elements of our children .... Recognition of effort and improvement is very important …

3.7 Supporting and mirroring the concerns of other parents

At the end of the meetings with the group, the coordinator asked them what their impressions from the group had been. Some of the parents said that they felt relieved when realizing that there were other parents who had similar dilemmas and concerns. Still, one of the basic acknowledgements that prevailed was the experience of being part of a group along with other mothers, something which gave them the opportunity to gain knowledge, exchange views, learn a lot about themselves as well as about others and, ultimately, understand the importance of their behavior in depth.

X: "This worked as pure psychotherapy to me...."

D: "I saw that we had many common experiences as well as different ones at the same time…I saw how each of us grew their children up, and I am relieved that I'm not alone any more, every mom is worried about the same things..."

E: "I feel the same, it helped a lotto talk honestly and exchange views, experiences and new ideas onboard ...I definitely feel more confident than ever…"

4. Discussion

In the present research, participants largely showed that there had been a need for them to learn new things to help them improve their communication skills with their own children and feel more empowered to handle the situation. Attachment theory proved to play crucial role in interpreting their own behavior regarding child raising. All participants were quite active in the group, making extensive references to personal issues about their children and expressing their concerns and worries. Furthermore, there was a climate of acceptance, cohesion and interaction in the group, which is apparent from the understanding and support shown by the participants, when realizing that they had experienced similar fears and anxieties in the raising of their children. This intimacy was expressed by all of them, stating that there was proximity and consistency among group members throughout. More specifically, in all meetings, intimacy and positive mood for communication was evident, while there were no negative implications such as intense controversy, negative criticism or isolation that undermined the proximity and cohesion of the group.

The purpose of this study has been to cast light on participants' anxieties and challenges of parenthood and empower them to face it. The group participation provided them with the opportunity to get in touch with other parents, who were experiencing similar problems, and this has had a positive impact on their self-stimulation because they discovered they were not alone, and that others shared the same dilemmas and concerns with them. Indicative is the following extract by a group member : "… I'm not alone any more… every mom is worried about the same things I also experience." Finally, they learned a great deal about themselves, through feed back from the reactions of fellow-participants. By participating in this group, members realized that they cannot be perfect and that it takes time and courage to accept this. Making mistakes is something to be realized by themselves and, via these group interviews they restored their self-confidence and esteem as well as the knowledge that would assist them in formulating a guide to wiser, more appropriate choices for the future (Pappa, 2017a).

5. Conclusion

In view of the above, we conclude that a central issue in the study of attachment is to appreciate its rich and unique theory in relation to parenthood, that serves as the basis for its "field" and is a useful tool in the educational inventory of every specialist. Attachment is still supposed to be subject to change, if the parenthood or environmental context alters substantially over time (Cummings & Cummings, 2002). Like "objective relationships," attachments occur at all ages and do not necessarily imply immaturity or weakness (Ainsworth&Hopkins, 1969). Attachment is not a term that should apply to any transitory relationship or a purely occasional dependency transaction. It refers to a bond that an individual forms with another specific individual.

Finally, the authors believe that this study carries new knowledge and information, hence opening a new path for parenthood and attachment theory on real practice level for social welfare professionals, such as social workers, developmental and social psychologists, pedagogists, educators, etc, who work with the target groups at hand, in order to help them uncover, mobilize, develop and conquer their own strengths and competences, so as to lead a successful and rewarding personal, family and social life.

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