ATTACHMENT STYLE AND PARENTING PRACTICES OF MOTHERS-VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract. The association between early attachment style, life satisfaction and adult relationship satisfaction is supported by both theory and research. Literature overview shows that attachment security enhances relationships, while attachment insecurity contributes to intimate partner violence. Domestic violence is a serious problem both in Bulgaria and worldwide. According to NSI data, in 2021 every third Bulgarian woman is a victim of domestic violence, which significantly reduces their life satisfaction. The aim of this study is to examine the predictive power of attachment style over the parenting practices of mothers (-victims of domestic violence), taking into account the role of the experienced types of domestic violence and mental functioning of the mothers. Bulgarian mothers (N = 207) of children (0–18 years old) completed a structured questionnaire that complied Bulgarian adapted versions of Alabama Parenting Questionnaire – APQ (Frick, 1991), measuring parental control, commitment to the child, the consistency of disciplinary practices, the use of corporal punishment and positive parenting practices; The Screen for Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms – SPTSS (Carlson, 2012), measuring the psychological functioning of the mothers; The Experiences in Close Relationships – Relationship Structures Questionnaire - ECR-RS (Fraley et al., 2011), measuring their attachment style and Severity of Violence Against Women Scale – SVAWS (Marshall, 1992), measuring domestic violence. Multiple regression results show that both anxious and fearful attachment styles of domestically abused mothers are significant positive predictors of a complex traumatic syndrome (PTSD, including symptoms of depression, anxiety and hostility), while both secure and dismissive attachment styles – its negative predictors. Furthermore, the problematic psychological functioning has a positive effect on their parenting practices such as the use of corporal punishment and inconsistent disciplinary practices, and negative effect on positive parenting practices, which perpetuates the cycle of domestic abuse.

Keywords: attachment theory, domestic violence, parenting practices of mothers-victims of domestic abuse, a complex traumatic syndrome, parents with insecure attachment style, corporal punishment