



## COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY: THE LAST HOPE FOR ADDRESSING INTERNAL VIOLENCE AGAINST REFUGEE AND IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S STAYING IN CAMPS

**Panagiotis J. Stamatis<sup>1i</sup>,**

**Evangelia G. Raptou<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>PhD, Associate Professor,

University of the Aegean,

1 Demokratias Ave., GR-851 32 Rhodes,

Greece

<sup>2</sup>PhD, Postdoctoral Student,

University of the Aegean,

Riga Fereou 5, GR-402 00 Elassona,

Greece

### **Abstract:**

With no doubt, all refugees and immigrants staying in camps are suffering for many reasons. Every individual who lives in camps under poverty and stressful situation everywhere on earth is suffering. This is something that happens in Greek camps as well. Among individuals who stay at camps women experience the greatest danger. They are at great risk as they may be victims of rapes, as they stay for hours alone at containers looking after the "housekeeping" and children nurturing, as they live in fear and danger for many reasons. Within this framework, communication and publicity of hazard situation that exists in the camps is considered the last hope for addressing internal violence against refugee and immigrant women's staying there. Communication and publicity of the particular problem may wake up those who are responsible for this situation and the defense of human rights. They have to do all necessary for the sooner and best resolution of this mess.

**Keywords:** gendered-based violence, women, refugees, immigrants

### **1. Introduction**

According to the data United Nations currently published about refugees and immigrants, it has becoming evident that 74.600 individuals have entered the Greek boundaries in 2019 that is 50% more than last year (UNHCR, 2019). Most of them are

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [stamatis@rhodes.aegean.gr](mailto:stamatis@rhodes.aegean.gr)

families raising children arrived from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. Also, there are Africans in a several number. 59.700 individuals arrived to the Eastern Aegean Greek islands from Turkish coasts through sea, and 14.900 more other persons arrived in Greek mainland through ground frontiers. The reception centers and the camps sited on the Greek islands are overwhelmed. 36.400 people live all together in a space in which barely could live 5.400 persons.

In January 2020, the total amount of refugees' and immigrants' arrivals in Greece was 3.445 individuals. 2.795 of that arrivals have taken place in Greek islands and 650 of them arrived in Greek mainland. The vast majority of them wishes to reach European countries other than Greece, especially those one of sited in central and north Europe as stated. Actually, they use Greek territory as a safe Balkan passage to the Central Europe. The reception of immigrants and refugees is a duty under the auspices of the Ministry of Immigrant Policy which is in co-operation with other ministries for its mission accomplishing. Those Ministries are the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Citizen Protection, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education Affairs, actions and decisions of which are tuned beneficiary one another. The policy of immigrants and refugees inclusion is consisted by precise activities related to socialization into the host state in order social cohesion become stronger in that state.

## **2. Daily Circumstances**

Nevertheless, according to Greek Immigrants and Refugees Council report, the Greek refugees and immigrants inclusion system has several difficulties which need to be addressed (GCR, 2018). Despite the agreement signed between EU and Turkey in 2016's International Summit (IS, 2016), Greek hospitality structures proved insufficient because of the constant flows that every day arrive to Greece from Turkey. So, in the hot-spot camps was mandatory to stay more people than the capacity of that camps was allowed. So, instead of 3.000 people in Moria-Mytilini camp stays more than 16.800 individuals (HRW, 2019).

According to Amnesty International 2017/2018 report, the Center of Reception and Identification of Immigrants and Refugees (CRIIR) in Lesvos Island of which hospitality capacity was 3.100 persons had accepted 8.675 persons, the CRIIR of Chios Island 2.266 persons instead of 1.014, the CRIIR of Samos Island 3.809 instead of 648 persons and the CRIIR of Samos Island 1.248 instead 816 persons had accepted.

The great agony and main stress source in regard to immigrants and refugees - who are disparately asylum seekers- was mainly to hear a refuse for asylum giving, their arrest and compulsory return back to the country of origin (Volkan, 2017). Stressful situations to the asylum services were high due to hundredths of children and adolescences having lost families, the big gathering of male and female individuals at the same place, lack of plenty and clear water, expired and damaged foods, unhealthy living conditions, long-time waiting for using toilet, sewer problems, insufficient hygiene and medicine cure, lack of police protection or police violence combined with so many problems (Hunt &

Scarborough, 2018). Educational structures nonexistence is also of a great concern as among others it is related to future safety and progress of the children, domestic language learning, and parents' relief from exhausting nurturing even for a few hours every day. All of the above mentioned circumstances are offending human dignity. Thus, living conditions in refugees and immigrant camps ironically called "hospitality centers" are extremely inhumane (HRW, 2019). This is a true that future immigrants and refugees must know in order to make their final decision and before they start walking seeking Europe through Greece leaving Turkey behind.

### **3. Women in a Hazard Situation**

Among immigrants and refugees women and young girls experience absolute unsafety the most. Studies and media that shed light or describe the existing situation that women experience into camps are terrible. Sexual harassment or abuse, rapes, domestic and family violence and trafficking sounds to be a normal situation in the camps every day, even though research is not easy in gathering data about gender-based violence. According to Amnesty International 2017/2018 report, women organizations released research information related to existing daily situation within immigrants and refugees camps. Every day even vital activities may hide a threat for corporal safety, for body health or hygiene, even for the life itself. In the night the situation of women, children and weak people is getting worse because of the darkness which is everywhere due to the lack of public lighting inside the camps.

The danger for women is not only in the camps sited in the islands but even in Greek mainland where camps exists. Many of women stated in a study (Lilja, 2019) that feel abandoned and unprotected. They have spoken about the lack of safety and inhumane conditions of living. Some of them stated that have seen armed men walking the night in the camp. They are refugee and immigrant men who act like camp gangsters and mafia members. So, stress, nightmares, lack of sleeping, and depression are basic feelings that unsafety gives birth every day and night. In another related study (Lucas, 2019), women and girls who live nearby to men who are not their own relatives experience a threatening and violent environment where there is no sexual abuse protection and gender-based violence.

According to paper articles or blogs presenting reports or comments of the employees at humanitarian organizations who witnessed sexual abuse cases and sexual violence mainly against women, the unsafety that women feel staying inside the camps is mentioned. Also, in some records of non-profit government organizations cases of sexual abuse are mentioned. Harassment and rapes against women and young individuals who are walking alone either in camps or nearest streets are also known. Furthermore, some cases have been mentioned concerning exchanging sex services to common goods or money, cases of prostitution the existence of which women deny themselves due to the fear, threats and bullying they receive in regards to their staying in the host country.

The problem of violence and/or abuse is getting bigger in case a camp is overwhelmingly full, as it happens in Moria, Lesvos Island. One could easily see abused women over there, pregnant unmarried and pregnant married women, single or widows women fighting with her own strength for growing up their child/children, handicapped women etc. All of women are extremely vulnerable and exposed to various abuse and violence. Even though some of them may live in chambers especially constructed for women usage they do not feel safe. This happens because sometimes in women chambers secretly enter young men who stay next door. They may abuse young women and especially girls in puberty. Women that have been raped usually keep their mouth silent as they are afraid of the rapist who does not care about their victims at all. Unfortunately, women's life is not valuable for the vast majority of Muslims anyway. Thus, many of the women suffered in the camps killed themselves in order to avoid further abuse and humiliation (Liapi, Charidi, & Tyrovolas, 2016).

#### **4. The Power of Communication against System's Weaknesses**

Assessing the violent and fear situations that refugee and immigrant women experience into "hospitality centers", one could easily understand the weakness of communication abilities women have. They can't communicate with people in care charge or authorities which might diminishes violent actions against women into the camps. It is extremely important women's voices to be heard loudly in the camps. Everybody must listen to the voices of women demanding safety, dignity and justice. Language barriers and lack of translators in combination along with women's ignorance for the new environment stay and limited provided information in regards to camp services lead women feel fear and depression forcing them stay indoors even for days. This makes some women isolated and keep distances from other women which is something that increases danger for more malicious attacks against them by men. Where social rules collapse, violence increases. Furthermore, many women staying in camps neither know their rights nor the way for demanding them. At the same time, according to UNHCR (2019) records, refugee and immigrant women's weakness and ignorance for seeking asylum or any other kind of possible protection service makes them suffer gender-based violence.

The power of Media in disclosure and publicity of painful situations aiming at public opinion sensitization is well known (Tolchin, 2019). Publicity may activate governmental services, non-governmental organizations or other authorities for their involvement in time and avoidance of danger phenomena related to gender-based violence happened inside the camps (Ades, 2020). A related research conducted in Cyprus (Karakoulaki, 2019), concluded that refugee and immigrant issues publicity through Cypriot mass media contributed to public opinion changing in regards to racist perceptions and activities of locals against foreigners. Publicity of the problem women deal with in the camps will brings best solutions. This is the main purpose of this communication paper.

In the same way, mass media can act alarmingly and pre-cautiously against violence phenomena related to refugee and immigrant women. That phenomena erase basic woman rights like dignity, access to justice and gender equality. The “culture of silence” that has affected all forms of violence against women for decades has begun to collapse. Activists, citizens, domestic and international social organizations, governments, mass media, artists and spiritual people have joined their power in order to move the social phenomenon of gender-based violence from darkness to publicity light to make known the phenomenon. Mass media through power given by communication may operate effectively showing the size that all its dimensions have in our modern, globalized society (Kawasaki & Fitzpatrick, 2014).

Communication may contribute in human view's expression, expression of ideas and feelings, action plans development and social or interpersonal relationships shaping (Stamatis, 2017). Finally, publicity and constant presentation of the violent behavior against refugee and immigrant women inside the “hospitality” camps they are forced to stay through mass and social media and other communication networks could effectively contribute to authorities' and human's true and not fake information. Gender-based violence against women like any other form of violence against humans, creatures or nature are a shame on humanity. Thus, it must stop immediately all over the world.

## **5. Concluding Statement**

Refugees and immigrants who stay in Greek camps really suffer. Actually, the problem does not belong to Greece in which residents are friendly and hospitable for several years now. The spirit of hospitality belongs to the Christian and democratic culture and to humane principles in which Greek people believe over time. Immigration and refugee flows are huge problems. The roots of these problems are extended around the world. Thus immigration and refugee flows are actually a global and international problem. This problem constitutes perhaps the beginning of a horrible future that maybe has been caused due to many reasons including wars for water and energy sources, unemployment, climate change etc.

In this case, the authors put emphasis on power of mass communication, on power of social media and other networks as they strongly believe that media and networks can highlight and present publicly and globally the problem of human violence. Spreading true information all over the world media and networks will help in addressing human violence concentrated on women staying in camps. Everybody must be informed and know the truth about the real situation existing in refugee's and immigrant's camps. This may be the last hope for addressing violence. Therefore, if this article has encouraged at least some readers concerned or related to human rights defense to look more closely at this fascinating subject and act themselves against violence – and especially that one which is against refugee and immigrant women's staying at camps- the authors consider their purpose fulfilled in its entirety.

### About the Authors

**Dr. Panagiotis J. Stamatis** (BA, BA, PGDE, PhD) is an Associate Professor of Communication Education at the Department of Preschool Education Sciences and Educational Design, University of the Aegean, Greece. His studies are focused on preschool and elementary school education. His main research interests concentrate on the field of instructional and family communication and on school communication violence approaching it as a barrier for addressing bullying and bias problems among children stemmed from different social environments. He has long term experience in school teaching, school administration and school counseling.

**Dr. Evangelia G. Raptou** (BA, MEd, PhD) is a postdoctoral student at the Department of Preschool Education Sciences and Educational Design, University of the Aegean, Greece. Her main studies are focused on Greek literature, popular culture, school administration and educational planning. She has long term experience in secondary education teaching and on issues related to culture and gender studies.

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