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PERSPETIVA DOS PROFISSIONAIS SOBRE APOIOS E ACOMPANHAMENTO PARA AVÓS COM A GUARDA DOS NETOS
PROFESSIONALS' PERSPECTIVE ON SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE TO GRANDPARENTS WITH GRANDCHILDREN CUSTODY
PERSPECTIVA DE LOS PROFESIONALES SOBRE APOYOS Y ACOMPAÑAMIENTO A ABUELOS CON CUSTODIA DE NIETOS

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RESUMO

Introdução: Em Portugal, a Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo prevê a medida de apoio junto de outro familiar, situação na qual a criança é temporariamente afastada dos seus pais e colocada sob a guarda dos avós.

Objetivo: Conhecer a perspetiva dos técnicos das Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens sobre que circunstâncias determinam a medida de apoio junto de outro familiar na pessoa dos avós e que apoios e acompanhamento lhes são prestados.

Métodos: Estudo qualitativo de natureza exploratória, no qual participaram 37 técnicos de diversas Comissões nacionais, que responderam a um questionário depois de prestarem o respetivo consentimento informado, livre e esclarecido.

Resultados: Esta medida procede do comportamento negligente dos pais, sendo a situação de perigo mais referida a de criança negligenciada, abandonada e maltratada (52.8%). A grande maioria dos profissionais (94.4%) confirmam que os avós antes de assumirem a responsabilidade parental já mantinham um vínculo afetivo e ocupavam um papel importante na família e que o apoio prestado aos avós é sobretudo económico (59.5%), havendo grande desconhecimento sobre programas de educação parental.

Conclusão: Os avós devem contar com diversos apoios, sobretudo psicossociais, e afigura-se indispensável implementar programas, de que é exemplo o Programa de Educação Parental, a aguardar regulamentação desde o ano de 1999. Sugere-se repensar a classificação da medida de apoio junto de outro familiar, permitindo que a família alargada constitua uma modalidade de acolhimento familiar.

Palavras chave: avós e netos; medida de apoio familiar; apoio social; educação parental

ABSTRACT

Introduction: In Portugal, the Law for in Danger Children and Young People Protection enables the support measure of another family member in a situation in which the child is temporarily removed from their parents and placed under grandparents' custody.

Objective: To find out the professional perspective of the Children and Young People Protection Commissions on which circumstances determine the support measure of another family member in the person of the grandparents and what support and accompaniment is provided to them.

Methods: A qualitative study of an exploratory nature, in which 37 technicians from various national Commissions took part, answering a questionnaire after giving their free, informed consent.

Results: This measure stems from the negligent parents' behaviour, the most frequently mentioned situation of danger was that of a neglected, abandoned or abused child (52.8%). The great majority of the professionals (94.4%) confirm that grandparents already had an emotional bond and played an important role in the family before taking on parental responsibility and that the support given to grandparents is mainly economic (59.5%), with a great deal of lack of knowledge around parental education programmes.

Conclusion: Grandparents should have various forms of support, especially psychosocial support, and it seems essential to implement programmes, such as the Parental Education Programme, which has been awaiting regulation since 1999. We suggest rethinking the classification of the support measure with another family member, allowing the extended family to be a form of foster care.

Keywords: grandparents and grandchildren; family support measure; social support; parenting education

RESUMEN

Introducción: En Portugal, la Ley de Protección de la Infancia y la Juventud en Peligro prevé la medida de manutención con otro miembro de la familia, situación en la que el niño es separado temporalmente de sus padres y puesto bajo la custodia de los abuelos.

Objetivo: Conocer la perspectiva de los técnicos de las Comisiones de Protección a la Infancia y Juventud sobre qué circunstancias determinan la medida de apoyo a otro familiar en la persona de los abuelos y qué apoyo y acompañamiento se les presta.

Métodos: Estudio cualitativo de carácter exploratorio, en el que participaron 37 técnicos de diversas Comisiones nacionales, que respondieron a un cuestionario tras dar su consentimiento libre e informado.

Resultados: Esta medida surge del comportamiento negligente de los padres siendo la situación de peligro más mencionada la de niño desatendido, abandonado o maltratado (52,8%). La gran mayoría de los profesionales (94.4%) confirma que los abuelos ya tenían un vínculo afectivo y desempeñaban un papel importante en la familia antes de asumir la responsabilidad parental, y que el apoyo que se presta a los abuelos es principalmente económico (59,5%), mientras que existe un gran desconocimiento sobre los programas de educación parental.

Conclusión: Los abuelos deben contar con diversas formas de apoyo, especialmente psicosocial, y parece esencial poner en marcha programas, como el Programa de Educación Parental, pendiente de regulación desde 1999. Sugerimos repensar la clasificación de la medida de apoyo con otro miembro de la familia, permitiendo que la familia extensa sea una forma de acogimiento familiar.

Palabras clave: abuelos y nietos; medida de apoyo familiar; apoyo social; educación parental

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INTRODUCTION

In Portugal, the Law for the Protection of Children and Young People in Danger – Lei de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens em Perigo, briefly referred to as LPCJP in the Portuguese abbreviation, provides promotion and protection measures to ensure the well-being of children and young people at risk. One of these measures, specifically outlined in Article 35(1)(b) of Law 147/99 of 1 September 1999, is the support by another family member, a situation in which the child is temporarily removed from their parents and placed in the care of other family members, such as grandparents, uncles, or siblings. This is a transitional measure which aims to remove the child or young person from the danger they were in, providing them with a safe environment while their parents are accompanied until they regain the capacity to exercise parental responsibilities.

Because this measure is applied in a natural living environment, it may not imply that the parents must move away, and they may visit their children at their grandparents or another relative's house so that the principle of the family prevalence and the primacy of deep psychological relationships continuity (article 4 of the LPCJP) between the parents and their children is respected. Under the terms of article 26 of Decree-Law no. 12/2008 of 17 January, when a child or young person is entrusted to grandparents, they exercise the powers and duties of custody, representation, assistance, and education, to the necessary extent for the child's/young's protection.

It is the Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People (Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens - CPCJ) responsibility to accompany the parents in order to remove the danger and act accordingly, under the terms of the law, ensuring that the express consent of the parents, legal representative or person, who has the custody of the child or young person has been obtained (art. 9 LPCJP), in order to intervene impartially and with a view to prevent and to put an end to any situations likely to affect the safety, health, training, education or integral development of the child or young person (art. 12 LPCJP).

In Portugal, in the year 2022, 1902 children and young people lived with their extended family, of which 617 lived with their maternal grandparents, 411 with their paternal grandparents, and 197 children and young people lived with just one of their maternal grandparents (Comissão Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos e Proteção das Crianças e Jovens [CNPDPJ], 2023).

Although grandparents are a fundamental support in caring for children within families, their role as carers is not properly recognized since society is used to seeing them as potential care recipients, when in reality it may be the grandparents who often provide it (Plá & López, 2011).

Portugal, like the rest of Europe, has seen an increase in three-generation grandparent households (Glaser et al., 2013), grandparents with economic stability, more liberal and attentive to health care, giving rise to new forms of relationship with their grandchildren (Zanatta & Arpini, 2017). The increase in average life expectancy has also made it possible for several generations to live together in the same family, bringing parents, children, and grandchildren together to live in the same home, with grandparents increasingly taking part in family life (Plá & López, 2011).

Several authors confirm that grandparents play a fundamental role in their grandchildren's development and are important support figures in family organisation and in the performance of parental duties (Plá & López, 2011; Glaser et al., 2013). The involvement of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives is an important issue in social policy, often analysed from a quantitative point of view, such as the amount of time they devote to their grandchildren, although studies show the beneficial effect of grandparent care, little is known about what leads to these observed positive effects (Denby et al., 2017).

A study carried out in Europe by Glaser et al. (2013) shows a correlation between the proximity of grandparents' and grandchildren's homes and the likelihood of taking on their care, with 38% of grandparents living within five kilometres of their children's homes taking care of their grandchildren, and 20% living more than hundred kilometres away. Proximity determines opportunity, and grandparents are the first to offer economic support but also, in certain situations, to take on the role that would have fallen to the parents before they were completely absent from this responsibility. The increasingly close and permanent relationship means that grandchildren can recognise their grandparents as their own parents (Dias & Albuquerque, 2019), thus creating a new bond in addition to the biological one. This affective connection, called by Oliveira (2008, p.8) as the "guardianship bond" and this participation in their grandchildren's lives, is what professionals favour when they suggest grandparents as the legal representative and as a support measure to be carried out in the natural environment.

For many grandparents, bringing up their grandchildren gives them a sense of fulfilment as parents, and many dedicate themselves to this role with joy and gratification because they feel they are acting with more wisdom and experience (Cardoso, 2014). In addition, the involvement of grandparents in their grandchildren's upbringing lays an important foundation for future intergenerational transfers (Igel & Szydlik, 2011), promotes bonds of affection, respect and admiration, and a positive view of the image of grandparents (Ribeiro et al., 2020).

Jappens and Bavel (2020) confirm that the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren and the associated beneficial effects tend to reduce the risk in children's lives. Ruiz et al. (2020) add that it has reciprocal positive benefits such as an increase in self-esteem, self-confidence, and tolerance in the face of adversity, which helps to cushion the effects of exposure to risk that children/young may experience. Considering the vulnerability associated with increased responsibilities, grandparents should be able to count on continuous and adequate monitoring and support (Hunt, 2018).

Some studies related to children fostered by grandparents (e.g., Hayslip et al., 2014; Dolbin-MacNab, 2015; Fruhauf et al., 2015; Chan et al., 2019) show that this protection measure is the one with the least professional contact, the minimum information on

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processes and the least support on the carer. Therefore, because of the lack of monitoring, the situation in which the grandparents actually live is unknown, and they end up not receiving adequate support (Muñoz & Rebollo, 2010).

The lack of studies in Portugal and the scarcity of literature on grandparents who take custody of their grandchildren prompted this study, which aims to find out the perspective of the professionals from the Children and Young People Protection Commissions (Comissões de Proteção de Crianças e Jovens - CPCJ) about the circumstances which determine the support measure for another family member in the person of the grandparents, whether they consider the prior participation of grandparents in family life to be decisive and what support and accompaniment they are aware of and have been given.

1. METHODS

1.1. Participants

Thirty-seven professionals from the national CPCJ took part in this study, representing at least one Commission from each district of Portugal and each Autonomous Region. Of these, 83.78% were female, aged between 29 and 69 years old, 32.44% had the predominant profession of Teacher, followed by 24.33% Social Work Technician and 21.63% Psychologist. As for the position held, the President of the respective Commission stands out, with 54.05% representation, and the length of time they have held their current position in the CPCJ varies between 6 months and 18 years.

1.2. Data collection

The questionnaire used to collect the data was based on a literature review of the subject and on the guidelines of Hill and Hill (1998) for this research instrument. This questionnaire, which was drawn up on the Google Forms platform, was sent by email to all national CPCJs, totalling 311 local commissions, spread across mainland 18 districts and the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and the Azores. The data was collected during the months of January and February 2022.

The questionnaire, which included direct and specific questions aimed at gathering facts, information and opinions, was structured in four sections, with 20 questions in total. Eight of the questions were open-ended, requiring a constructed and written response, 11 were closed-ended, with the participants being able to select one of the previously defined alternative responses, and only one of the questions had a mixed response. In the first section, an introduction to the study and the request for informed consent were given. In the second section, the aim was to obtain information about the Commission's area of intervention and the socio-demographic data of the cases being monitored. In the third section, the professionals were asked to answer questions about the "Promotion and protection measure to support another family member in the person of grandparents" based on their professional experience and knowledge of their role. The fourth and final section explored "Support and programmes for grandparents with custody of their grandchildren". Finally, they were asked to comment on any other information they felt was pertinent to this study.

1.3. Data analysis

Data gathered from the questionnaire was analyzed through content analysis, based on procedures that aim to create inferences from different types of content (verbal, visual or written) in order to interpret a certain phenomenon and the circumstances in which it occurs and that translate the key ideas of the information being considered (Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021). The information obtained from the open-ended questions was analysed, taking into account the explicit information, and classified according to the criterion of the object of reference cited. After pre-analysing the data set and knowing that these procedures were exploratory because there were no preconceived and solid ideas about the subject under study, the data was processed, inferred and interpreted. With regard to the closed-answer questions, with answer options already filled in, the respective tabulation and quantification were carried out.

2. RESULTS

2.1. Age of grandparent careers

With reference to the individual cases in progress at the local Commissions in 2021, the professionals reported that the average age of the grandparents with the support measure varied between 41 years (5%) and 80 years (8%), with the highest incidence in the 61 to 70 age group (43%), followed by the 51 to 60 age group (37%), with no grandparents under the age of 41.

2.2. Circumstances that justified the intervention

Table 1 shows the situations of danger applied to the circumstances that led to the application of the support measure with the grandparents. The most reported situation of danger was that of a "neglected, abandoned or abused child" (n=19, 52.8%).

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Table 1 - Circumstances that justified the intervention with the promotion and protection measure

Circumstances	n	%
Neglected, abandoned or abused child	19	52.8
Parents dependent on alcohol or drugs	13	36.1
Parents with mental illness or emotional problems	7	19.4
Parents in prison	7	19.4
Underage or very young and inexperienced parents	4	11.1
Parents living abroad	3	8.4
Child victim of domestic violence	2	5.6
Parental death	1	2.8
Number of children in the household and parents' poor parenting skills	1	2.8
Not applicable	1	2.8

2.3. The importance of emotional bond and prior participation of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives

To the questions "whether the affective bond was considered a determining factor in the decision to propose the support measure for grandparents" and "whether the prior participation of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives was relevant", 94.4 % of the professionals answered in the affirmative, in line with the guiding principles of intervention, namely the continuity of affective, quality, and meaningful relationships (art. 4 LPCJP).

2.4. Monitoring the support measure with another family member and support for grandparents

Regarding information these professionals had on types of support, within the scope of the promotion and protection measure, the reference to "economic support" stands out (32.5%). Regarding the programmes they are aware of, it is worth highlighting that 21.6% of the professionals are not aware of any (Table 2).

When asked what kind of support was actually provided at the local Commission, the "economic" (59.5%), "social" (40.5%) and "psycho-pedagogical" (21.6%) programmes also stood out. To the question "do you know about the parental education programme provided for in the law", 11 (29.7%) professionals replied that they were not aware of this programme.

Table 2 - Support and programmes that professionals know about for grandparents within the framework of the measure

Support	n	%	Programmes	n	%
Financial support	12	32.5	Parental education programmes	3	8.1
Family Support and Parental Counselling Centre	2	5.4	Adélia Project; Positive parenting	1	2.7
Social support	2	5.4	Local contract for social development	1	2.7
Grandchildren's allowance	3	8.1	Detox programme	1	2.7
Psychological support	1	2.7	No support/programme known	8	21.6
			Various (no nomination)	2	5.4
			No support needed	1	2.7

3. DISCUSSION

Promotion and protection measures aim to protect minors in situations where their rights are threatened. This is considered to occur whenever the child or young person is in danger, as established in Article 3 of the LPCJP, namely when they are abandoned or living on their own; suffer physical or psychological abuse or are victims of sexual abuse; do not receive the care or affection appropriate to their age and personal situation, among many others.

In this study, the CPCJ professionals reported neglected, abandoned, or abused children as the most frequent situation of danger, followed by parents dependent on alcohol or drugs. These results are in line with the data published in the Annual Activity Evaluation Report 2022 of The National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People – Comissão Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos e Proteção das Crianças e Jovens (CNPDPJ, 2023) and the Casa Report 2022 (Instituto de Segurança Social [ISS], 2023), in which, of the situations of danger reported in 2022, and as has been seen in previous years, neglect stands out, with a percentage of 30.5% and 69%, respectively.

Portugal is not isolated in this regard, since in Spain, according to the Boletín de Datos Estadísticos de Medidas de Protección a la infancia y la adolescência 2021 (Ministerio De Derechos Sociales Y Agenda 2030, 2022), the type of mistreatment that stands out above the others is also neglect, with 42.75%, which corresponds to the situation of danger most often reported by various authors (e.g., Wu et al., 2021).

In fact, there is strong evidence that parental neglect, by omission or as a pattern of behaviour, can affect various areas of the child's development (Fonseca & Ferreira, 2019). The principle of prioritising the application of promotion and protection measures

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in the family environment, and in all cases the possibility of returning the child or young person to their natural environment, is justified by the existing bonds and affective ties and the monitoring and training for parents and other family members provided for in the LPCJP and Decree-Law no. 12/2008.

The importance of the affective bond and the prior participation of grandparents in their grandchildren's lives was unanimous and very significant for the measure application, with 94.4% of professionals agreeing. According to Barnett et al. (2010), several studies show that grandparents provide financial assistance to families and participate in reducing housing costs or collaborate in caring for their grandchildren in order to avoid paying for childcare and other support services. This involvement on the part of grandparents, especially grandmothers, can reduce the negative impact of negligent parenting and provide social adjustment for children (Barnett et al., 2010). In many cases, it is grandparents who take on the full-time education and support of their grandchildren in difficult and challenging situations (e.g., Glaser et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2021), are an element of stability in family crises (Ruiz et al., 2020), and in various circumstances, grandparents promote and develop strong emotional bonds with their grandchildren, occupying a leading place in their children's support network (Igel & Szydlik, 2011; Jappens & Bavel, 2020).

When the professionals were asked about the types of support and programmes they knew of for grandparents with custody of their grandchildren, 32.5% mentioned economic support, but 21.6% said they didn't know of any specific support or programme for grandparents. When asked to select from the support provided for by law, which support is applied within the scope of this measure, economic support stands out (59.5%), followed by social support (40.5%), the latter known only by two professionals, but put into practice by 15 local commissions. Another fact is that although no reference was made to the knowledge of psycho-pedagogical support, eight professionals replied that this support had been applied.

Decree-Law no. 12/2008 of 17 January regulated the system for implementing promotion and protection measures for children and young people at risk, as set out in the LPCJP, and established family-centred intervention with a view to strengthening the skills needed to exercise responsible parenting. To this end, it is considered essential to list and characterise the different forms of support to be given to parents, other family members or suitable people of a psycho-pedagogical, social and economic nature. With regard to psycho-pedagogical support, psychological and pedagogical intervention is provided for the child or young person and members of the household, including the identification of special needs, the promotion of specific school and vocational training activities and the building of positive interactions between children and their families or guardians (art.11 of Decree-Law no. 12/2008). Social support is characterised by the creation of adequate conditions for food, health, hygiene, safety, and education, the promotion of personal, social and professional skills, the provision of information and advice, participation in training, cultural and leisure activities, and promoting interactions with the community (art.12 of Decree-Law no. 12/2008). Economic support, which consists of a cash benefit with a maximum limit of 1.2 of the Social Support Index – Indexante dos Apoios Sociais, IAS in the Portuguese abbreviation (art. 12/2 of Decree-Law no. 12/2008 and art. 30/2 of Decree-Law no. 139/2019), a monthly amount identical to that set for the foster care measure, is awarded by the social security services, with a view to maintaining the child or young person and the household with which they reside.

The legislator paid equal attention to all the types of support regulated but postponed the regulation of a Parental Education Programme (article 41 of the LPCJP), which was provided for in the LPCJP and which could be accessed by the parents or other family members to whom the child was handed over, and which he considered to be in preparation in 2008, with the participation of various bodies, but which has not yet been enacted.

When asked if they were aware of this programme - Parental Education - to strengthen parenting skills, 29.7% of professionals answered in the negative.

Monitoring the support measure with the grandparents is essential to understand whether or not there is a need to renew the promotion and protection agreement, to assess the children's adaptation and the change in habits on the part of the parents. Knowing that grandparents who take responsibility for their grandchildren may feel a sense of guilt for having failed as parents, specialised support that facilitates the union of the three generations makes it possible to overcome the conflicts and frustrations of the past (Lanyado, 2019). This is because when families are properly supported, and their resilience is promoted, they have the ability to pass on this resilience to the children in their care (Denby et al., 2017).

The study by Wu et al. (2021) emphasises the importance of government support for grandparents with custody of their grandchildren, concluding that "social support is a protective factor against grandparents' mental health problems" (p. 930). Igel and Szydlik (2011) also investigated whether there was a relationship between public policies and the well-being of grandparents and grandchildren and concluded that "public spending seems to have a positive effect on the occurrence and a negative effect on the intensity of childcare provision" (p. 219).

Most grandparents caring for their grandchildren are domestic workers, retired or receive pensions that are insufficient to cover their own expenses (Muñoz & Rebollo, 2010). However, despite the importance of economic support, it cannot be the only support because, as several authors have pointed out (e.g., Wu et al., 2021), grandparents who take on the care of their grandchildren are more likely to develop feelings of anxiety and stress.

The law provides for this support and monitoring by professionals from CPCJ and, if necessary, by professionals from the Multidisciplinary Court Teams – Equipas Multidisciplinares de Apoio Técnico aos Tribunais (EMAT in the Portuguese abbreviation), who are "professionals with experience in the fields of family empowerment and the integral development of children and young

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people" (Article 15 of Decree-Law no. 12/2008 of 17 January), but it can be seen from the responses obtained in this study that the support provided to grandparents is fundamentally economic support.

From the analysis of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People Evaluation Reports between 2017 and 2021, there are several constraints reported by the national local Commissions with regard to the absence or insufficient responses in the area of family intervention in terms of parenting skills programmes, mediation and family therapy, psychological and psychiatric support, suggesting that the local Commissions should evolve in the area of effective monitoring of the measures applied (CNPDPCCJ, 2020). However, the actions most often recorded in the Promotion and Protection Agreements (PPAs) within the scope of the support measure with another family member in 2022 (CNPDPCCJ, 2023), are of a psycho-pedagogical and social nature (e.g., adapting the punishments used, support in developing negotiation techniques for conflict situations, raising awareness of safety issues outside the home, support in defining timetables, promoting regular contacts/visits with the family/referral persons and promoting activities of interest to the child), which shows that the actions provided for in the PPAs are not always implemented.

The study carried out by Muñoz and Rebollo (2010) in Spain confirmed that 94.3% of grandparents fostering their grandchildren had not received any information about the fostering process, 64.3% had not received any support during the measure, and 97.1% had not received any counselling.

Considering that grandparents are usually the closest and most available family and that they are the first choice of professionals to take in their grandchildren, Pinazo-Hernandis and Lluna (2011) unexpectedly realised during their research that, precisely because they are family members, grandparents do not receive any kind of training or support, such as that given to foster families. Accompanying grandparents who formally take in their grandchildren as part of the extended family support measure is essential for improving their parental role and educational styles, both for their own benefit and that of the children (Pinazo-Hernandis & Lluna, 2011). This was demonstrated by Pinazo-Hernandis and Lluna (2011), who, after applying a Psychoeducational Intervention Programme to a group of grandmothers who had custody of their grandchildren, found that the grandmothers improved their self-esteem, found it easier to resolve conflicts and learned new ways of dealing with problems, concluding that by improving their quality of life, they consequently improved the quality of life of their grandchildren.

CONCLUSION

The data obtained in this study points to the possibility of confirming that the support measure with another family member stems from the situation of danger in which the child or young person found themselves as a result of their parents' negligent behaviour. The results suggest that grandparents were already a support figure and played an important role in their grandchildren's lives before the promotion and protection agreements, in line with the scarce literature and some studies, carried out on the subject (Plá & López, 2011; Arrais et al., 2012; Glaser et al, 2013; Denby et al., 2017; McLaughlin et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2019).

Since kinship is a determining factor and is considered to be an important aspect in the involvement of grandparents, who have been asked to take custody of their grandchildren, close and constant monitoring by experts is essential in order to encourage the family - grandparents, children and grandchildren - to agree on attitudes and overcome problems, so that the child or young person grows up in an environment of respect and security to which they are entitled.

From this study, it emerges that despite the various forms of support available under the law, professionals seem to favour economic support over social and psycho-pedagogical support, even though the law does the opposite: "the support to be provided, within the scope of the implementation of the measures, is of a psycho-pedagogical and social nature and, when justified, of an economic nature" (art. 10 DL 12/2008 of 17 January). Knowing that studies carried out by some authors point to the need for grandparent carers to have various forms of support, especially psychosocial support, and despite the fact that some grandparents have incomes that don't justify economic support, it seems essential to implement programmes, such as the Parental Education Programme, which has been awaiting regulation since 1999.

It is also considered that Decree-Law no. 12/2008, of 17 January, later repealed by Decree-Law no. 139/2019, of 16 September, restricts foster care to placement in families without any kinship ties. This had two consequences: on the one hand, it diminished the importance of foster care as a placement measure; on the other, placement in extended families (families with some degree of kinship) does not seem to be subject to the same external scrutiny as other forms of foster care (Delgado, 2020). In other words, the classification of the support measure with another family member should be rethought, allowing, as it happens in several countries, such as Spain (*familia extensa*) and England (Kinship Care), the extended family, to be a form of foster care. Only in this way will it be possible to reconcile prioritising the essential assumption of the right of children and young people to be brought up by their own family, plus the right to promote the acquisition and strengthening of skills in the family that will provide minors with an environment of safety and well-being.

We recognise some limitations in this study, such as the size of the sample and the lack of research on the subject, especially in Portugal, which makes it impossible to compare and contrast results. Nonetheless, the social relevance of this subject implies a subsequent study to find out the perspective of grandparents who take in their grandchildren as part of the promotion and protection measure in order to understand the reality of their experiences, the support and monitoring they receive from those

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who must provide it, and their level of satisfaction in terms of their needs and those of their grandchildren, children and young people in their care.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization, R.F., M.J.A. and R.F.; data curation, R.F.; formal analysis, R.F.; investigation, R.F.; methodology, R.F.; supervision, M.J.A. and L.A.; writing-original draft, R.F.; writing-review and editing, R.F., M.J.A., L.A. and D.S.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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