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**UDK: 351.78:616-036.22**

Original scientific paper

DOI: 10.5937/ptp2301013S

Received: 22.12.2022.

Approved on: 24.02.2023.

Pages: 13–26

## THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL IN RECOGNIZING COVID 19 AS A SECURITY RISK

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, the authors emphasize the importance of awareness of security culture, and define its essential characteristics. By using such an approach, they analyse the phenomenon and features of one of today's greatest security risks – COVID-19. In addition, the authors also deal with analysing the security culture through the prisms of school and family, as the fundamental institutions having an influence over the education and upbringing processes. They observe security culture primarily through the ways in which these institutions react to the new security risk resulting from COVID-19, which has become one of the greatest security threats all over the world. It means that nowadays people are preoccupied with finding the ways of preserving both physical and mental health, and protecting themselves, and, at the same time, maintaining a normal lifestyle and daily functioning, without fear and uncertainty.

**Keywords:** *security culture, family, school, educational system, COVID-19.*

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## 1. Introduction

Security is no longer only a synonym for defending a country's territory against external attacks, but also for protecting the community and individuals from all forms of threat. With regard to threats to security, they refer to the existence of phenomena that lead to impairment of the integrity of humans, the integrity and sovereignty of state and its institutions, or of mankind in general. The causes of impairment of security on a local and global scale are diverse (Bjelajac 2017, p. 39). The modern security concept overcomes the need for an exclusively rational approach, opening the possibility of culture-specific analyses. More precisely, with at least several of its dimensions, culture is present in contemporary security, even though it defies a clear definition, being in the strategic, educational, cultural and symbolic sense interwoven with the security concept (Injac 2016, p. 13). The recognition and interpretation of links between the culture and security concepts represents an attempt to not only understand the processes taking place between these two concepts, but also develop a methodological apparatus which would enable their comprehensive analysis and explanation of a new phenomenon which bears the name of security culture.

The first security culture knowledge and concepts are acquired in the family, and further built upon during education and supplemented in the workplace, "they are shaped by cultural identity and patterns, and immediate surroundings, and self-reflected by the character and development of individuals' positive personalities" (Stajić, Mijalković & Stanarević, 2013, p. 45). As a discipline, security culture has been increasingly gaining significance, by contributing to understanding the behaviour of security actors. As a discipline, security culture may provide the guidelines, means and skills of managing contemporary security-related processes. Its role is particularly important on the individual, social and national levels, and it becomes evident through raising social awareness of security challenges and threats (Injac, 2016, p. 12). One of the contemporary and, we might say, one of the greatest security challenges of today is the COVID-19 virus, which has affected all social spheres, including the family and education, i.e. school.

As regards the role of schools in fostering security culture and the development of education in the modern sense of the word, it is connected with new technologies which have become an addition to the existing curricula, in particular in our everyday life pervaded by COVID-19. Teachers and students alike are faced with a real challenge related to integrating information technologies into traditional teaching. The complex and dynamic conditions

of the contemporary social context impose a situation in which the family and school cannot function without one another, i.e. without the other party's engagement (Zuković 2012). Namely, a family is a social group which plays a decisive role for its members and has a powerful impact on their development. It also represents the point of merging of elementary behavioural patterns and knowledge of security culture, while on the other hand the family itself can be confronted with many challenges, such as violence and various deviant forms of behaviour. The most recent challenge that the family is confronted with is the presence of COVID-19. What are the ways in which the family fights this challenge?

## **2. Security and culture**

“Security is a state in which countries find there is no risk of a military attack, political pressure or economic coercion, so that they can freely develop and progress.” (Publication des Nations Unies 1986). The essence of security is that through it society can achieve a certain aim, which consists, primarily, of protecting its own survival and progressive development in accordance with its potential. Miletić (1997) defines security as “a state established, maintained and improved through legally regulated and secured social relations in a country, which enables effective protection of the state and its citizens from all (external and internal) unlawful acts (activities) which threaten the constitutional system, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the state, the work of government authorities, the performance of economic and social activities, and the exercise of the freedoms, rights and obligations of man and citizen” (p. 13). Stajić (2011) expands the quoted definition stating that security represents the state of absence of threats to the international community and neighbours, of all natural, technical-technological, psychological and mental threats, all forms of threats to health, social and cultural development, and a state of absence of hazards to man's environment and nature in general, etc. (pp. 26-27). In essence, security is all that tends towards a general support, facilitation, maintenance and progress of man, society and nature and everything that surrounds man. It is a positive category which does not create material goods and prosperity, but which certainly enables their creation. It is changed, transmitted and received in the process, which is carried out by individuals, groups, countries and the international community (Stajić, 2011, p. 30).

Interdisciplinarity has created frameworks which bring together the apparently unrelated phenomena of culture and security. The broadness of the

concept of culture has created a space for its integration with a large number of social phenomena. Namely, it is a fact that the need for security as a human concept is fostered by culture itself in its broadest sense. The challenges of contemporary society and social reality have increasingly been creating the need for broadening the framework of understanding the complex security phenomena which are seemingly incompatible – culture and security. On the other hand, Stajić, Mijalković and Stanarević (2013) think that security and culture are concepts which have easily found ways to complement each other and develop a certain relationship. In that regard they state that the interconnectedness and causal relationship of these two concepts becomes clear if culture is defined as a set of universal values on the basis of which man determines his position in society and the world in general, and security as protection of these values (p. 42).

Dorđević (1989) defines security culture as “part of the general culture of an individual, a particular area or society. A set of ideas from the field of security (the essential values and legacies which are the subject of attack and protection, the methods and forms, as well as the actors of threats) which make individuals, areas and society more capable of identifying the methods, forms and acts of threatening, as well as the actors of those activities, regardless of where and in what ways they may manifest themselves” (p. 23).

In order to successfully form and improve security culture, it is essential to include all the factors, i.e. actors and institutions dealing with security issues, in educational processes. The role of the family and school is decisive in that process and is manifested in the way in which a child should understand its surroundings, identify and define indirect and direct dangers, risks and threats, and in the ways of manifesting its reactions and choosing adequate modes of action (Bjelajac, 2017, p. 39).

Security culture implies conscious working with the aim of preserving an existing, or creating a more favourable security environment or better living conditions. It is acquired during the development of the individual and the society they live in, and further built upon, changed and transmitted to others. This process is carried out by individuals, family and society as a whole, who exert influence by transmitting the already formed patterns and values of culture, and create conditions for the acquisition of new values. Stajić, Mijalković and Stanarević (2013) define the basic characteristics of security culture, indicating that it is part of the general culture of an individual, social group, etc., and that it includes attitudes, knowledge and skills in the field of security in the broadest sense, relating to the spheres of society, nature and technology. The attitudes refer to the positive approach based on the need to

protect oneself and others, the state and the international community, while the knowledge refers to recognizing and explaining the forms and actors of threats, and skills to the methods and activities of prevention and repression of security threat forms. It also has a preventative role, is the attribute of both individuals and the global society, and its aim is to preserve the values of a society, protect and minimize the consequences of all forms of threats – from the individual to the global level (pp. 44-45).

### **3. COVID-19 – the security challenge of today**

From December 2019 to February 2020, a new breed of the Corona virus was formed, named SARS-CoV-2. The disease caused by this new virus appeared for the first time in Wuhan, in the Chinese Province of Hubei, at the end of December 2019. In January 2020 the epidemic developed in the People's Republic of China and spread to one part of the world. In order to contain the spread of this virus in countries without efficient health care systems, on 30 January 2020 the World Health Organization declared an emergency situation of international significance. The virus kept on spreading and hit all the continents, which led the World Health Organization to declare a pandemic on 11 March 2020. In view of the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic became a new security risk, this demanded a reaction of the state, which enacted a number of decisions and regulations with a view to containing the spread of this virus. As in many other countries, the emergency situation was declared in the Republic of Serbia as well, and the measures and regulations that were passed have radically changed the lives of all its citizens (Krstinić & Počuča, 2020, pp. 173-174). Namely, within a very short period of time, the health crisis brought about by COVID-19 hit the whole world, affecting all spheres of human life, and creating the highest security risk of today. COVID-19 has caused a suspension of ordinary work activities, which has resulted in conditions of social isolation we have been living in for a long time now. People have been deprived of their daily life routines, which has led to emotional and psychological imbalance and depression, anxiety, confusion, anger and fear of uncertainty which comes with every new day (Britvić, 2020).

Corona viruses are a large family of viruses which cause different diseases of the respiratory organs, from a common cold to considerably more serious and severe diseases. The spread of COVID-19 among the population is still in progress, its transmission is quite high, and the final outcome of this epidemic is still uncertain. The symptoms of COVID-19 infection develop

after the incubation period, after five days on average. The period from the appearance of the first symptoms to the fatal outcome in the infected is in the range from 6 to 41 days. This period depends on the patient's age and the condition of their immune system. The most common reported symptoms are high body temperature, coughing, loss of the sense of smell, loss of appetite, headache, a sore throat, a feeling of fatigue, dyspnoea, i.e. the feeling of shortness of breath and difficult breathing. A large number of patients also develop pneumonia, which requires their hospitalization as the patient's condition may be aggravated, i.e. it may result in acute myocardial injury and chronic damage to the cardiovascular system (Vasilj & Ljevak, 2020, p. 11). According to some authors, experiences from Italy indicate that as many as 10% to 25% of the hospitalized patients required connection to mechanical ventilation (Truog, Mitchell & Daley, 2020, p. 1973).

The essential way of spreading the infection is its transmission from person to person. It should be pointed out that besides transmission from sick people, the virus is also transmitted from asymptomatic patients, and persons in the incubation phase. As a result, in order to prevent the infection from spreading, close personal contacts in the population should be reduced to a minimum. This virus is stable and virulent for 72 hours on plastic surfaces, 48 hours on metal, and 24 hours on cardboard, while its virulence on copper surfaces lasts up to four hours (Skitarelić, Dželalija & Skitarelić, 2020, p. 5).

New scientific and epidemiological information on COVID-19 has been arriving continuously, and given that the world as a whole is interconnected by modern technologies, it is quite readily available. As a result, scientists and clinicians have been constantly learning new facts about this virus, which are full of different and, we could even say, contradictory information. For that reason, the story of COVID-19 is neither complete nor finished. However, both scientists and clinicians emphasize social distancing as the most effective method of preventing the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

As a security risk of today, COVID-19 represents an invisible enemy which lurks at every step, being at the same time unpredictable, as we do not know what consequences it will have for each one of us. In order to prevent it, researchers should cooperate on a global scale, but this also applies to the whole society. In view of the fact that the family is the most significant social group, which is the main factor in the formation of personality, it is important to analyse the ways in which the family reacted to the security risk posed by COVID-19.

#### **4. The response of schools to the security risk caused by COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the educational process worldwide. There has been a massive closing of educational institutions – schools and universities, which has not only affected the pupils, students, teachers, families, but has had much more sweeping economic and social consequences (Stepanović, 2020, p. 183). The students' switch to online learning has highlighted a certain inequality in the educational system, from the fact that a large number of children rely on school in terms of support it provides through meals and a safe environment, to a sort of digital division. In other words, children without adequate devices and an internet connection are completely deprived of education (Mustafa, 2020, p. 6). The Republic of Serbia overcame this obstacle by broadcasting the educational contents which are adjusted to the curricula on national-frequency TV, so that they are available to all primary school pupils. However, this method has demonstrated its inadequacies, due to a lack of teacher-pupil interactions. Besides that, the students' state presents an additional problem, in terms of whether they can organize their time, whether they are sufficiently motivated and capable of independent studying. With a view to overcoming the aforesaid problems, there is also the possibility of using the Microsoft teams and Zoom applications, which enable teacher-pupil interactions, which greatly enhance the educational process (Stepanović, 2020, pp. 183–186). On the one hand, COVID-19 has thoroughly impaired the traditional educational methods, and on the other, it has become a driving force for educational institutions, which are now coming up with innovative solutions with a view to raising the quality of education. However, in addition to education in the sense of following and mastering the learning material, we think pupils must be informed of COVID-19. It is essential for children to be aware of the real situation they are living in, because in that way they will also be aware of the security risk brought about by COVID-19. This will lead to a much lower potential for damage to both physical and mental health.

As regards the role of school in promoting security culture, Počuča (2017) is of the opinion that it has been extremely reduced by “efforts to ensure its own safety in the context of the right to uninterrupted good quality work, which would also provide a more positive final outcome, which is an educated and well behaved student” (p. 127). Namely, it is a generally accepted attitude nowadays that the school cannot educate without providing an upbringing. In addition, the traditional conception is accepted according to which education is viewed as the skill of introducing children to acceptance of the norms of a

specific society. In the education process, young people acquire knowledge of the values and customs that a society is trying to promote, on contents that will be given priority in the transfer of knowledge and the means used to accomplish these goals (Potonjak & Šimleš, 1989, p. 126).

In modern times, schools and universities not only contribute to the expansion of man's intellectual potential and world view, but also prepare new generations of people, which will take part in a country's economic life (Gidens, 2007, p. 496). It is for this reason that the acquisition of knowledge, skills and views in the field of security culture is particularly relevant. Modern security risks and threats, protection, security activity, etc., represent a complex of problems the creation, but also the resolution of which involves, in their own ways, all members of a social community. Educational needs relating to this area must be viewed as a special kind of needs, with a different subject matter, methods and organizational forms. In that sense Bjelajac (2019) points out that the introduction of security culture into the educational system would, in an effective way, prepare the young for adult roles, and adults for other roles as well (p. 241).

## **5. The response of the family to the COVID-19 security risk**

The presence of a devoted and healthy family creates a precondition for the existence of a healthy and progressive society (Počuča & Šarkić, 2019, p. 66). Of special importance is the fact of family being irreplaceable for the emotional life of man, and the achievement of his emotional and mental stability. A healthy family atmosphere, filled with love and intimacy, is a crucial condition of a person's socialization (Đorđević, 2006, p. 102). Besides that, it is the place of acquiring elementary patterns of behaviour and knowledge in security culture.

The contemporary family is constantly under the influence of everything going on in society at large, and as a result it faces the same conflicts as contemporary society. In other words, the social dynamics is reflected on the family dynamics as well (Zuković, 2012, p. 39). The changes caused by the occurrence of COVID-19 have developed at a very high pace in the past year and have affected all segments of society, thus contributing to the development of a state of general insecurity in society in general, and in the family as well.

In this new situation, the family's primary function is to provide protection to its members. During the lockdown, the family becomes the only shelter and represents a form of primary protection, of physical and mental health alike. This is particularly emphasized now that the family is also involved



in protecting its members who have contracted COVID-19. The family is also confronted with the changes which include an adjustment of habits and behaviour, as well as a reorganization of shared space and time. In this sense the challenges are all the more prominent the smaller the living area, or the more members it has. Tolerance and patience, and observance of the needs of all family members should become a priority. However, it is inevitable that some families experience an additional rise in tension and uncertainty due to economic consequences.

Furthermore, the new situation has brought about negative forms of behaviour, which are manifested through domestic violence. Peitl et al. (2020) point out that a large number of people have been negatively affected by the introduced measures of lockdown and restriction of movement, which led to conflicts and dissatisfaction within the family. Thus those infected with COVID-19 feel the blame due to the effect of contagion and stigmatization directed towards their families, while with the rise in the number of new cases, there is a growing unease and anxiety in the population, which indicates the need for providing psychological and psychiatric support to patients, and medical staff as well. In addition, families also experience negative, deviant forms of behaviour, like violence. Closed spaces, economic instability, inability to carry out daily activities and an excess of free time have resulted in an increase of domestic violence, in particular directed to children (p. 194).

In order to avoid a state of tension and reduce stress levels in individuals, we should talk openly about the current situation and in the best possible way find the solutions which suit the needs of the family. Otherwise, this could lead to major instabilities on the level of the whole community, i.e. the state. In that sense, Williams (2008, p. 279) points out that the pandemic may result in the occurrence of social unrest, which could lead to destabilizing the state. More precisely, this could lead to a loss of trust in the state if it fails to provide the primary level of protection from the disease, and to marked social inequalities, which in turn lead to public riots, which could result in violence. Furthermore, if most of the people cannot go to work, public services may be at risk, in the sense that they could disrupt the functioning of the state as a whole. If those consequences caused by the pandemic occur, the state will not be able to preserve its security. We think this is exactly the situation taking place in our country at the moment. Namely, inadequate information, distrust and fear often lead to different reactions of the community to the current situation. Very often on social networks and in the media we can find unverified information about COVID-19 and the related conspiracy theories, which can raise the feeling of insecurity and fear, which causes a spread of panic among

the population. Panic is excessive fear, expressed to a much higher extent than the situation warrants, which leads to inappropriate behaviour in the sense of marked fear and concern for our own health and that of people closest to us, problems with concentration and sleep, deterioration of chronic medical conditions, an increased consumption of tobacco, alcohol etc. Contrary to panic, there is another problem which can have dire consequences, which is a total denial of fear, or underestimating of the dangers involved, with such persons acting irresponsibly, exposing to risk both themselves and others (Miloš & Nezirević, 2020). This kind of behaviour is manifested through frequent protests and mass gatherings, which represent a trigger for the virus' further spread and survival.

In view of the recent changes in the family resulting from COVID-19, we can see that they have inevitably affected the contemporary family appearance. On the one hand, negative changes are taking place, which are manifested through domestic violence, but on the other hand, there is a strengthening and a growing importance of the role of the individual and family alike. In the modern challenging conditions, the family has largely succeeded in preserving its original values, which are reflected in the connectedness of individual and society, so that we can describe the present as a time of great challenges and temptations that the family, and in turn the society as a whole is confronted with, in view of the fact that the family represents the basic cell of society, and that the future of the entire society relies on its condition.

## 6. Conclusion

In view of the fact that COVID-19 represents a direct security threat, we think it is essential to design a strategic plan with the aim of containing its further spread. This requires the collaboration of all of us, while institutional and systemic support is of paramount importance. The pandemic has affected all aspects of life, so that the educational process has for a year now been relying on the use of information technologies, which have become indispensable for the functioning of the so-called "virtual classroom". This process required the engagement of the family, in the sense of including parents in the children's school activities through talking about their school obligations, providing guidance and support.

Apart from the regular curricula, we find it is necessary to lay particular emphasis on security culture analysis with a view to raising awareness of its significance. In other words, COVID-19 represents a ubiquitous, serious and dangerous security risk that all the inhabitants of our planet are exposed to.

However, not all people react in the same way to this security risk, which is, we might say, completely absurd. Physicians have for months now been working under extremely difficult conditions, and have witnessed many family tragedies caused by this very virus, while on the other side part of the population does not pay sufficient attention to this security risk, organizing parties, various gatherings and protests, thus unnecessarily exposing to risk both themselves and others.

The country is, on the one hand, confronted with COVID-19, which can cause many health problems, and on the other hand, with its citizens who do not understand the seriousness of the newfound situation in terms of the risks they are, or may be exposed to. This is exactly why we should lay emphasis on the security risk posed by COVID-19 through adequate education with the aim of overcoming this crisis situation.

We think we are all confronted with certain crises which we can call challenges, and that they are part of life. Most of these crises are surmountable with adequate support. It is therefore our opinion that by joining forces we could manage and overcome the crisis caused by COVID-19.

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## **UTICAJ PORODICE I ŠKOLE U PREPOZNAVANJU KOVIDA 19 KAO BEZBEDNOSNOG RIZIKA**

**REZIME:** U okviru rada autori ističu značaj poznavanja bezbednosne kulture prikazujući njene osnovne karakteristike. Pri tome analiziraju pojavu i odlike jednog od najvećih bezbednosnih rizika današnjice – kovid 19. Pored toga autori se bave i analizom bezbednosne kulture kroz prizmu škole i porodice kao fundamentalnih institucija koje imaju uticaj u procesu

obrazovanja i vaspitanja. Bezbednosnu kulturu prevashodno posmatraju u načinima na koji ove institucije reaguju na novi bezbednosni rizik izazvan kovidom 19 koji je postao jedna od najvećih bezbednosnih pretnji u čitavom svetu i preokupacija sadašnjice u smislu kako sačuvati fizičko i mentalno zdravlje, kako se zaštititi, a pri tome normalno funkcionisati i živeti, bez straha i neizvesnosti.

**Ključne reči:** bezbednosna kultura, porodica, škola, obrazovni sistem, kovid 19.

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