



Missing
Children
Europe



Hear me out – psychological research

Research methodology

Aim: to measure the wellbeing of families who are faced with an international child abduction and to identify the factors that influence this wellbeing in cases of international child abduction.

Sample:

- Survey data: 353 parents, including with 196 parents with whom the child resides
- Description of the 196 parents
 - 80,1% left-behind parents
 - In 71,9% of the cases the child returned
 - Great variety in duration of abduction
 - Time elapsed since abduction: 1 to 12 years, median time = 6,10 years

Definitions

International child abduction

The removing by one of the parents of a child to another country without the consent of the other parent, assuming that this other parent has a right to determine the residence of the child, whether called “custody”, “parental authority” or “parental responsibility”. The abduction can consist of taking the child to another country, or of retaining the child after a lawful visit in a country other than that of the habitual residence of the child.

Family Resilience

A family's resources to cope with stressors and to foster positive outcomes for children.

SDQ-score

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) is a behavioral screening instrument for children aged 6-18 years, consisting of four subscales which allows the evaluation of four types of problematic behavior in youth: conduct problems, hyperactivity or inattention, peer problems and emotional symptoms.

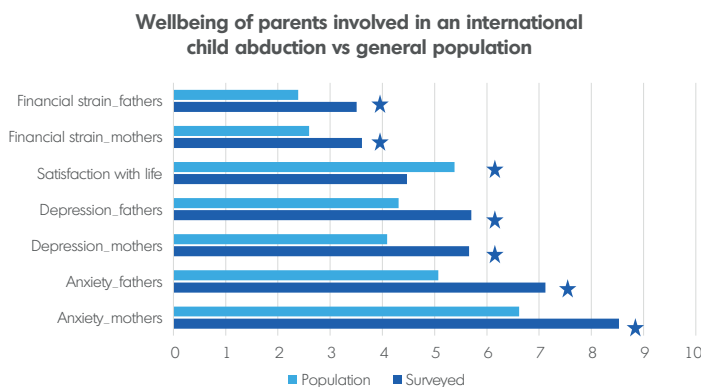


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Results

Research Question (RQ) 1: Do families who have been involved in an international parental abduction differ from families from a general population, in terms of family resiliency?

The results indicate that parents who participated in the survey score significantly higher in anxiety and depression, lower in satisfaction with life, higher in financial strain and lower in social support as compared to scores achieved in general population samples.



RQ 2: Is the wellbeing of left-behind parents lower than the wellbeing of abducting parents?

There were no statistically significant differences between the abducting and left-behind parents on any of the study variables, including anxiety, depression, parenting stress, parent-child communication, satisfaction with life, financial strain and social support. It should be kept in mind, however, that these results are based on a measurement that took place several years after the abduction ended. It is possible that abducting parents do differ from left-behind parents in terms of their resilience when the abduction is still ongoing.

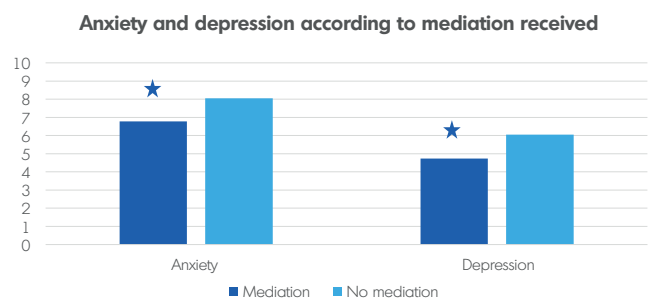
RQ 3: How does family resilience relate to the child's wellbeing?

Children have a higher SDQ-score – indicating that they experience more socio-emotional and behavioral problems – when parents experience more parenting stress, more anxiety and depression, less satisfaction with life, more financial strain and when the communication between the parent and the child is less open. While the experience of social

support by the parent is not directly associated with the child's wellbeing, social support is associated with less anxiety and depression and less financial strain. **Therefore, the lower the family resilience, the lower a child's wellbeing will be.**

RQ 4: Is the use of mediation related to parents' wellbeing?

The results found that parents were significantly less anxious and less depressed when mediation was used.



RQ 5: How does perceived support from professional stakeholders relate to parent wellbeing?

During and after the abduction, parents are in contact with a range of professionals who can play a supportive role. Support was provided by the mediator, the central authority, the police, an attorney, the embassy and social services. **During the abduction, most support came from an attorney, followed by the central authority.** The mediator and the embassy were experienced as the least supportive. This is not surprising, since mediators have a neutral position within the conflict between the parents.

