

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS SOCIAL DEGENERATION: CAUSES, EFFECTS, CONSEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence cannot be put into a definition, as it has a multitude of manifestations determined by, mentalities, history, religious upbringing, punitive legislation, education, etc, with geographical and historical variability.

Updated studies show that domestic violence can have adverse consequences for family life and for social and economic life as a whole. The causes of domestic violence range from problems of upbringing, mentality, traditions, economic-financial situation, vices, to negative effects in the workplace and the costs incurred by the authorities in protecting the abused. In addition to legislation and education, religious factors play an important role in influencing local customs.

From a historical point of view, it can be said that it is only since the 20th century that the issue of equal rights between women and men, including women's right to vote and the protection of minors, has been raised, but not all states have understood to implement them, with different justifications.

Of course, there have also been strong, more or less minority, even reactionary resistance to maintaining the traditionalist rights of men over family members, so that beyond the many meanings associated with it, violence is an abuse of power, almost always linked to a position of power and the imposition of that power on others. This characterisation best defines the situation of the man in relation to that of the woman, child or elderly person within the family unit.

The development of the economy locally and globally has contributed to an increased need for additional labour, so that the manufacturing industries have differentiated in favour of men and women.

In "civilised" countries with functioning democracies, the state is involved both in the establishment of legislation against discrimination of any kind and in the protection of abused persons of both sexes and minors, and budgetary funds are even provided.

KEYWORDS: *physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual discrimination, other types of discrimination with harmful effects on members of society.*

1. Introduction

As we have shown, violence in the family often continues into violence in society and it can be said that forms of violence can be traditional and/or contemporary, specific to each historical-geographical area. From a legal point of view, violence means the use of physical force or other persuasive means to cause harm, harm to the integrity and rights of a person. In this sense, an act of violence is often premeditated, being intentional or signifying



the intention to cause physical harm or suffering to another person. In a psychological context, violence refers to aggressive behaviour, most often as a result of frustrations that cannot be socially defused [1:Androniceanu A].

The World Health Organization defines violence in relation to physical, psychological and social health and well-being „*the intentional threat or use of physical force or power against oneself, another person, a group, or the community, and which carries an increased risk of causing injury, death, psychological harm, abnormal development or deprivation*" [2:Rădulescu S].

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According to statistical studies, based on relatively objective reporting, only 7% of cases of domestic violence are reported in Romania. It is noted that many cases would go unreported due to the reluctance of some women or even men to confess about the physical/mental abuse to which they have been subjected, so as not to be stigmatised in their rural or urban environment.

The phenomenon of domestic violence manifests itself concretely in our country through:

- Physical abuse of a partner (either female or male),
- Abuse of minors or the elderly within the family,
- Abuse of the psyche of family members through verbal manifestations,
- Restriction of rights or benefits.



Fig.1. View of promotion by authorities

For each, the competent authorities must find a solution, according to the legislation in force, so local centres have been created for victims of domestic violence where they also benefit from housing conditions, medical care, counselling by social workers, psychological

counselling, food and legal advice. These are supported by the specialist bodies of the urban town halls and on the basis of an "individualised plan" drawn up by a social worker who must also specify deadlines for finding a job, securing social or rented housing, enrolling minors in kindergarten/school, going to court to obtain a protection order and the formalities for obtaining maintenance, etc., for which funds must be allocated for each individual case.

In the traditional patriarchal mentality of the Romanian family, the man is the head of the family who assumes the material obligations of maintenance and protection of his family, and the female part the role of housekeeping (food, cleaning, education and supervision of minors). Any dysfunction in the assumption of these duties, as well as in the assumption of a decent and loyal sexual life, can lead to conflicts between family members, even to abuse.

The development of urbanism in Romania has shifted and mixed rural traditions from various areas to the city and has led to new causes, potential conflicts within the same families. In view of this, Romania, as a democratic European state, must promote an integrated public policy to increase the effectiveness of crime prevention and control in the field of domestic violence, based on a proactive attitude aimed at reducing cases of domestic violence, developing quality social services for victims and for the legal and social rehabilitation of family aggressors, increasing public confidence in the relevant institutions and involving civil society in support programmes. The national strategy to prevent and combat domestic violence is based on the political premise of the importance of ensuring the stability of the legislative and institutional framework in this field and the allocation of resources. Thus, the first types of domestic violence appeared in emotional (e.g. insults, swearing, etc.), physical (hitting, beating, spankings, etc.), financial (limiting the right to buy/sell), sexual (rape, etc.), spiritual (church-related, schooling, etc.) forms.

Social life has required the regulation of conflict situations, known generically as domestic violence, through specific legislative rules, the establishment of authorities with powers in this area, for the protection of victims. As a member of the European Union, Romania has also had to adopt legislation to prevent domestic violence, as set out in:

- Law No 217/2003, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No 205 of 24 March 2014;
- Government Ordinance No 6/2015, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, on amending and supplementing Law No 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence
- Law No 217/2003, republished in the Official Gazette of Romania, Part I, No 205 of 24 March 2014
- ORDER No. 304/385/1018 of 21 July 2004 approving the Instructions on the organisation and functioning of units for the prevention and combating of violence, published in the Official Gazette No. 818 of 6 September 2004".

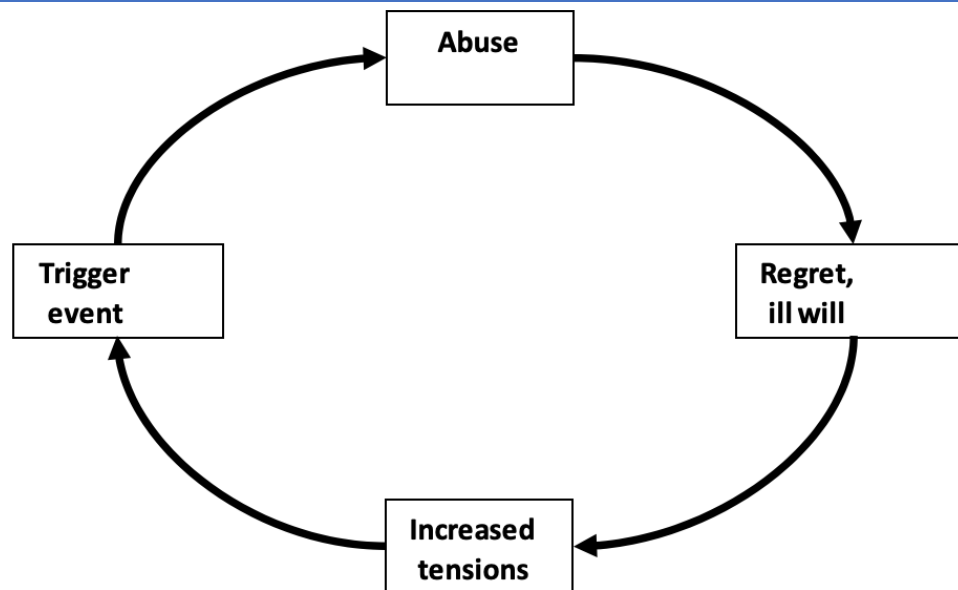


Fig.1.1. Lenore Walker's Theory of Violence

Specialised social services to prevent and combat domestic violence are offered free of charge to victims. The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men shall prepare and submit for approval the draft decision on the completion of Government Decision No 867/2015 approving the Nomenclature of Social Services, as well as the framework regulations for the organisation and operation of social services, with subsequent amendments and additions, in order to regulate the social services referred to in para. (4) letter a). The National Agency for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men shall prepare and submit to the Minister of Labour and Social Justice for approval the draft order on the approval of minimum quality standards for social services, organised as information and counselling services for victims of domestic violence of the helpline type.

As far as the perception of domestic violence by the population in Romania is concerned, no significant progress has yet been made. According to the information provided by the National Institute of Forensic Medicine „Mina Minovici” Bucharest and the Centre for Urban and Regional Sociology, in the framework of the research on the cause of violence in 2019, the Romanian population perceives domestic violence as a common occurrence, and a fairly significant proportion (60%) is tolerant of violent behaviour in the family, considering that such acts are justified in certain situations or sometimes, depending on the context, even in all situations.

In the light of this reality, many victims choose not to take action against the perpetrator, such an approach being based on a whole complex of factors and perceptions, often justified by the lack of material means that would allow the victim to lead an independent life, the fear or even shame of stigmatisation by the community, the lack of knowledge of the law and of available social services that could benefit them.

Although the official statistics of the central public authorities show a number of approximately 82,000 reported cases of domestic violence in the period 2017-2021 and 900

deaths, these figures are however greatly underestimated when compared to the values obtained by statistical, sociological studies which show an incidence of about 20% over a lifetime. Increases in domestic violence have been recorded in the crimes of bodily harm by 35.23%; battery or other violence by 22.04% and ill-treatment of minors by 21.15%.

According to the statistics of the Necuvinte Association, 23,090 cases of domestic violence were registered in the country by the IGPR in 2019. In 2020, 28,204 crimes of violence were reported nationwide, according to the Romanian Police. The total number of victims was 28,796, of which 4,414 were men, the rest were women; 28,362 people were reported to have committed domestic violence crimes (spouse, cohabitant/cohabitant, parent/guardian, son/daughter, or other degrees of kinship). Of these, 24,202 are men, 3,979 women and 181 minors (at the time of the criminal offence).

Results of studies on violence against women

Even if figures obtained statistically, through epidemiological studies or surveys offer only limited reliability, they certainly help us to form an accurate idea of the scale of the problem.

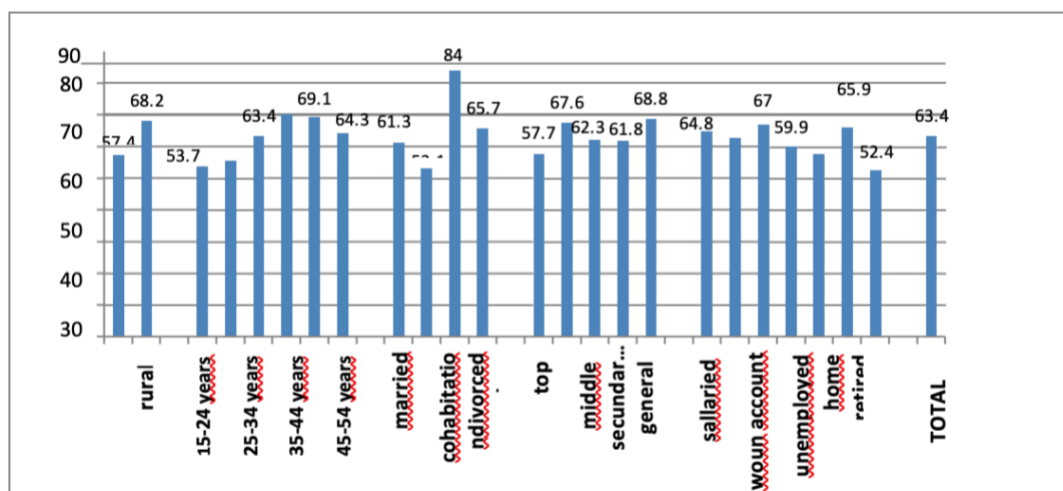


Fig.1 Total lifetime prevalence rate of partner violence (psychological, physical or sexual) since age 15,

% (violence against women in the family)

In terms of the overall rate of violence against women, we can see a fairly high proportion (84%) of those who stated that they end up divorcing or separating from their partner/spouse, where with a high percentage related to age, we note that 70% are aged between 45-54 years.

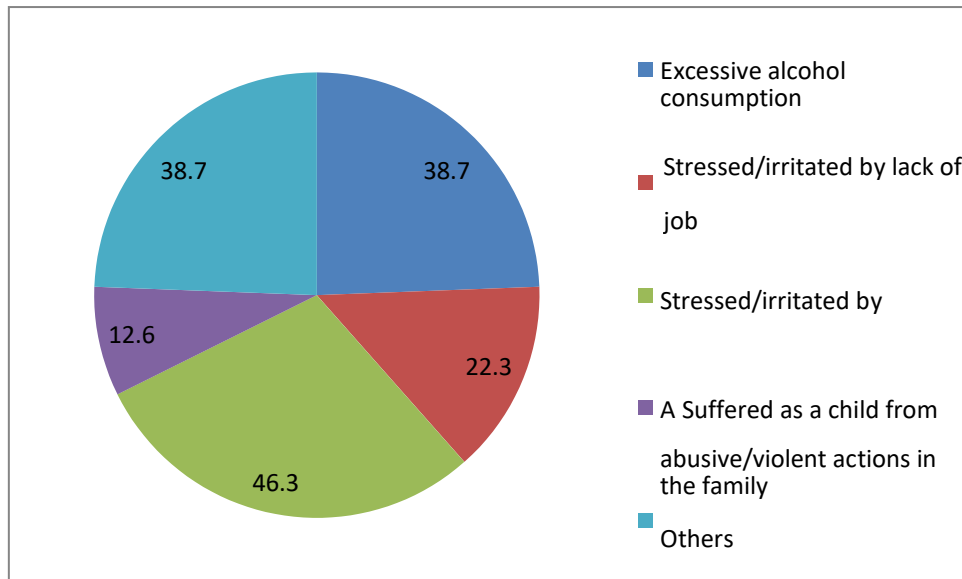


Fig.2 Distribution of female victims of physical or sexual violence by type of health consequences for women

In relation to the distribution of women victims of physical violence throughout their lives, we note that they are victims of partners who consume alcohol (50%), followed by family problems (46%) and only 17% do not have a problem related to physical violence due to these factors.

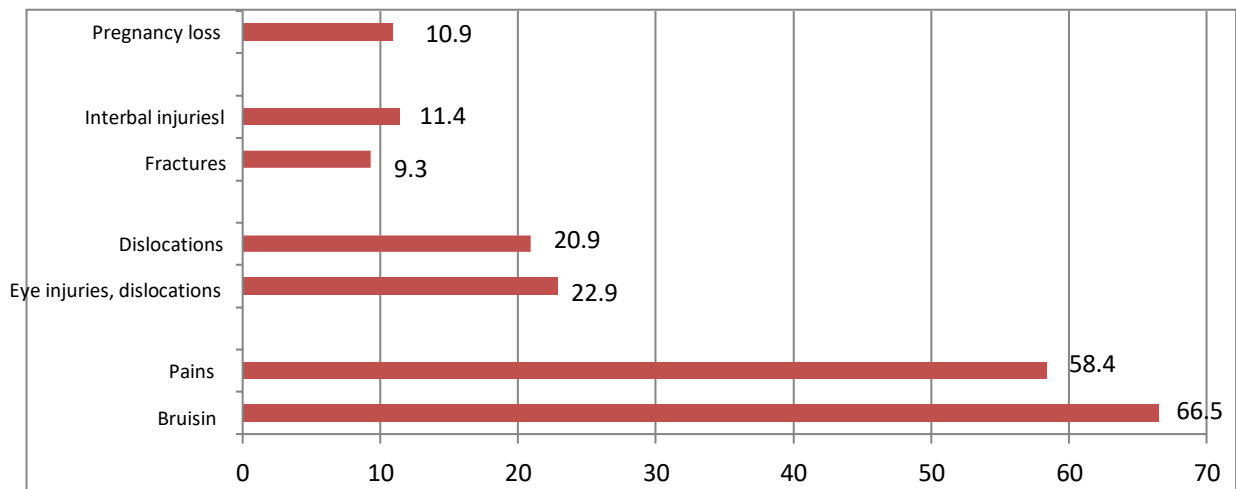


Fig.3 Distribution of female victims of physical or sexual violence by type of consequences on women's health

The analysis showed that the highest proportion was due to bruising, i.e. 66%, followed by 58% due to pain and only 9% due to internal injuries.

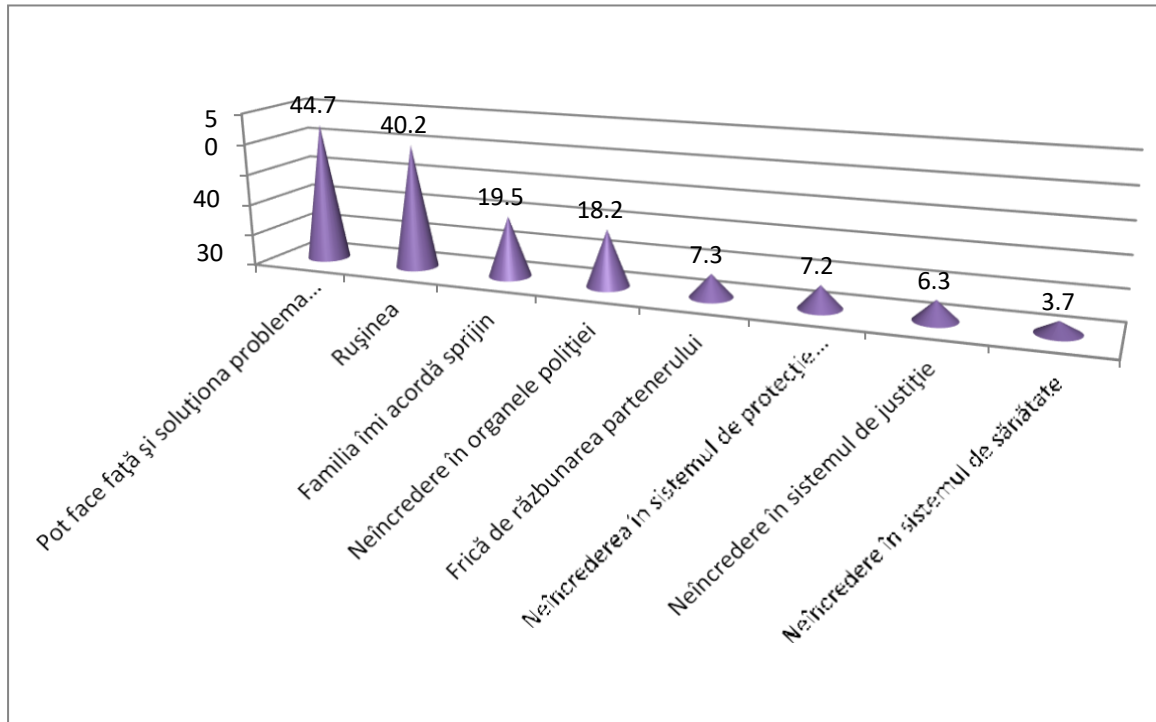


Fig.4 Share of women by reason for not reporting violence

It can be seen that the reason why women do not report violence is due to the fact that 44% of women feel they can cope with it alone and 40% put shame second. It is worth noting that a fairly high percentage (18%) believe that the police do not do their job properly, which leads to mistrust.

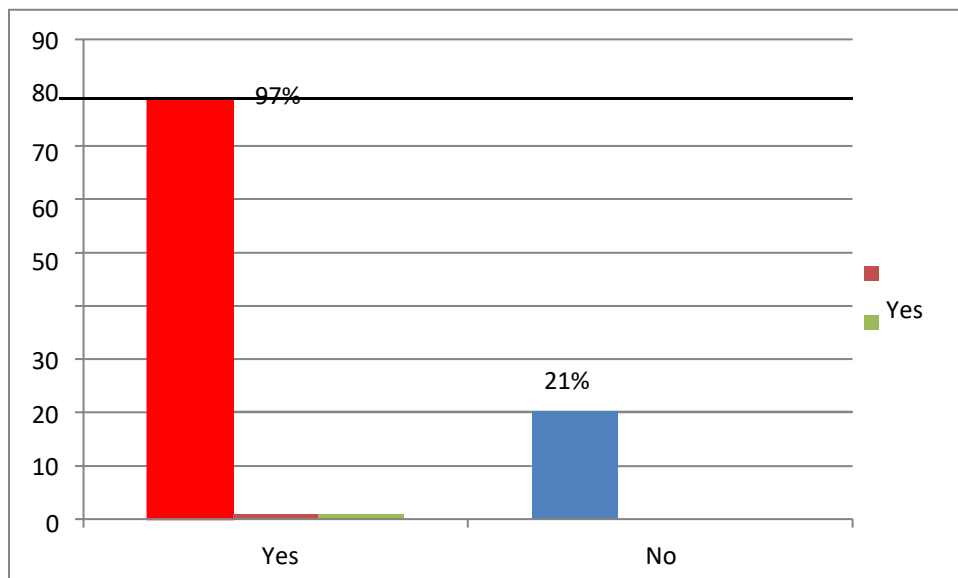


Fig.5 Abused women in the family do not have the courage to leave their homes

It is noted that 97% of abused women do not have the courage to leave home where they no longer feel safe.

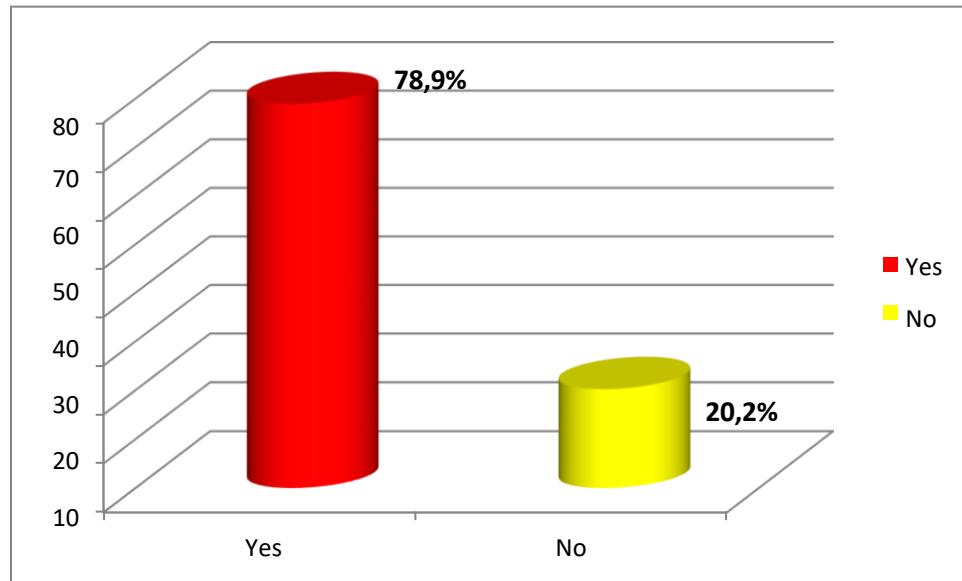


Fig.6. *Violence is a learned behaviour*

It is noted that 79.9% agreed that violence is a behaviour that is learned through repeated exposure to violence.

It is constant that social polarisation, the increase in the number of people below the poverty line for various reasons, the decrease in budget quotas for education and support for young families, unemployment, the sharp drop in quality, etc., will maintain and even increase domestic violence with an increase in the social costs of partial and temporary solutions to manifestations of domestic violence, with long-term negative effects on disoriented youth.

This will be increasingly costly and difficult as long as society as a whole does not develop substantially in economic, financial and educational terms. [3:Burton Mark & Mike Kellaway]

In a public health approach to treating and addressing violence, the following four steps must be taken in sequence:[4:Bouckaer and Pollit]

1. Uncovering and learning about all the basic aspects of violence through systematic data collection (the extent, characteristics and consequences of violence at local, national and international levels);
2. Carrying out studies, clinical and epidemiological surveys to determine the causes, correlations, risk factors, factors favouring violence, as well as factors on which it is possible to intervene, positively influencing the phenomenon;
3. Designing means of violence prevention using the information provided by the studies and applying them with a strong focus on evaluation of interventions.
4. Implementing promising interventions in various settings, disseminating information widely and calculating the cost-effectiveness of these programmes.

Thus, I bring to your attention the following *proposals* for this work: keeping services at a high level of quality, documentation and evaluation are essential factors in this work and in the critical processes to be reviewed.

It is important to involve women and children as beneficiaries of social services in the assessment process. As "end-users" they can provide feedback on what has been helpful and what has not.

This information can greatly improve practices in the future. The main purpose of the quality check is to help review and continuously improve social services. Moreover, both documentation and evaluation must be carefully planned and implemented to avoid abuse.

The fundamental values of quality assurance can be seen as the rights of women forced to seek protection in a shelter for example.

These rights can be:

- The right to the integrity of the soul;
- The right to state protection and assistance for them and their children in the form of safe shelter and support from staff, working at a high professional level;
- The right to dignity.

Quality control also contributes through:[5:Candea Rodica]

- Developing work on women's empowerment;
- Develop strategies to strengthen women's rights in society;
- Developing work on influencing professionals' attitudes towards women victims of partner violence.

In order to achieve these goals, I believe the following methods are necessary:[Cristina Diana]

- Regular monitoring of work and adaptation of concepts and practice according to the needs of women and children seeking help;

- To monitor their work, the following can be used: (anonymous) questionnaires for victims, interviews with victims, questionnaires for community work professionals, external evaluation.

However, in order to provide effective services to women, it is necessary to document the facts. Any information must be treated in strict confidence. It is important that the abusive partner does not receive any information. Data should only be passed on to public authorities with the explicit consent of the women involved. [6:Rădulescu Sorin]

Work evaluation can be carried out internally or externally, depending on the methods and especially on the purposes it can take place permanently or at regular intervals.

In the case of social services, evaluation is seen as a tool to support client-oriented services. This can be done with the help of questionnaires that the woman completes before leaving the shelter. However, feedback should be anonymous so that women are free to express an open and honest opinion.

The mission and purpose of social services aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence is to provide, for a fixed period of time, accommodation, supervision, care, legal and psychological counselling, support for adaptation to an active life, professional integration of victims of domestic violence, as well as rehabilitation and socio-professional reintegration for an independent life.

Also, an important aspect of the services offered in the situation of domestic violence is the issue of the aggressor and the support provided to him.

During monitoring and evaluation visits, social inspectors contributed to the grouping of the work of social service providers in the context of preventing and combating domestic violence, it being important for them to understand the operationalization of quality assurance in terms of urgency of intervention, confidentiality, medical and psychological care, imminent risk of abuse of the victim (adult and/or child).

The work carried out within the network of services covering all the needs of victims of violence requires a high degree of flexibility of action and adaptation to the specific needs of the victim, in a context of maximum confidentiality.

Another proposal to improve quality standards in social services is to increase the number of professionals and their capacity to intervene.

The main areas where intervention is needed are:

1. Increase the number of social workers recruited in social services;
1. Improve the retention of experienced professionals in the system;
2. Improving the intervention capacity of social workers.

The professional accreditation process supports health professionals and organisations to improve quality and consists of a systematic and documented assessment of professionals through formal programmes that include competencies, responsibilities, assessment modalities, etc.

Conclusions

Several studies have shown that concrete measures taken to achieve gender equality in a country's public and private life contribute to faster and more sustainable economic and democratic development. Although domestic violence and human trafficking affect both women and men, and all spheres of society, regardless of gender, age, ethnic and religious affiliation.

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In Romania, as in many European countries, social polarisation, the increase in the number of people below the poverty line for various reasons, the reduction in budget quotas for education and support for young families, the economic and financial crises, unemployment, the massive migration of the labour force and the sharp drop in the quality of compulsory education are all being observed, the disinterest of the leaders of political parties, to which can be added some regional/local causes, will maintain and even increase domestic violence, with an increase in the social costs of partial and temporary solutions to manifestations of domestic violence, with long-term negative effects on young people who are disoriented, uneducated, increasingly irritable, lacking in prospects and politically manipulated.

The integration of victims and perpetrators is becoming increasingly costly and difficult as long as society as a whole does not develop substantially in economic, financial, mental, cultural, political and educational terms.

In addition to the process itself, behaviour in relation to the beneficiary, judgement and professional judgement are important in achieving the quality of a service, all of which constitute the "quality triangle".

Thus, a large proportion of people working in social care are concerned about the quality of the services they provide. Quality is important for beneficiaries, staff, carers and helps to reduce costs as well as providing a better service within the same budget.

Those who can directly benefit from quality are the beneficiaries and carers, because their needs are better met and indirectly, i.e. the next time they come for another service, they will have confidence that they will be treated properly.

The national social assistance system is the set of institutions, measures and actions through which the State, represented by central and local public administration authorities, as well as civil society, intervene to prevent, limit or remove the temporary or permanent effects of situations that may lead to marginalisation or social exclusion of individuals, families, groups or communities.

The issues we discussed are related to the overall prevalence rate of lifetime partner violence (psychological, physical or sexual) from age 15 years onwards, % (violence against women in the family), where we found that 84% of women end up separating from their partner due to domestic violence.

As far as female victims of lifetime physical violence are concerned, we noted that most of them are victims of partners who consume a high proportion of alcohol (60%).

Also, the reason why women do not report violence is primarily because they are afraid, but also because they feel they can cope with it on their own (44%). On the other hand, a high percentage of women feel that the authorities do not do their job properly (40%), which is why they remain trapped in domestic violence.



From the above, I believe that it is necessary to include awareness-raising and education actions to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, especially among young children, through the involvement of local authorities. At the same time, increasing the knowledge and awareness of children, parents, professionals and the general population of all forms of domestic violence plays an important role by: continuing training programmes for education staff in the area of preventing and combating violence, creating databases of good practices in the area of preventing and reducing violence.

Also, the provision of efficient, accessible social services focused on the individual needs of the beneficiary and the relationship between social service providers and their beneficiaries (use of information means, ensuring confidentiality); the development of human resources involved in the provision of social services and the improvement of working conditions contribute to the development of quality standards of social services.

Proposals

Increasing knowledge and awareness of children, parents, professionals and the general population of all forms of domestic violence by:

- Campaigns to change the collective perception of violence, focusing on the negative impact on child development;
- Continue training programmes for education staff in the area of preventing and combating violence in schools;
- Develop databases of good practices in the field of violence prevention and reduction;

Strengthen the capacity of public service providers to prevent and combat all forms of violence by:

- Review the current system for monitoring situations of violence and include teachers in the process of monitoring situations of abuse, neglect and exploitation or any other form;
- Implementation of the mechanism for reporting, intervening and monitoring cases of violence regardless of the environment;
- Establish a system of indicators for monitoring and evaluating the number of cases and evaluating the number of cases;

Awareness-raising and education to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, especially among young children, in small communities in disadvantaged, rural areas, involving local authorities

I also recommend that all approaches that focus on domestic violence should be built according to the following principles:

- Avoidance and compensation of interventions;
- Multidisciplinary teamwork, in partnership with the family;
- Ensure and facilitate access to support and specialist services;
- Respect confidentiality and professional rules.

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