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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A PROBLEM OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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Abstract: *Domestic violence is an important global issue and a contemporary society faces this serious challenge on a daily basis. Every type of a behaviour where family members jeopardise each other can be characterised as violence. Studies have shown different types of domestic violence: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and passive violence. Victims can be persons of both sexes and of any age: women, children, the elderly, and, lately, violence against men is on the increase.*

Violence against women happens within a family and, in most cases, it remains unreported to the authorities. There are a lot of reasons why women tolerate violence. However, those reasons are usually divided into those referring to subjective feelings of a victim and those referring to cultural surroundings.

Violence against children involves all types of domestic violence in a family with children. The most frequent types of violence against children are physical, sexual, and emotional. Child neglect is also increasingly present.

Currently, violence against men committed by women is on the increase. A great number of these cases is recorded during a divorce proceeding.

When it comes to violence against the elderly, all types of violence are present. Due to fragile health conditions of older people, consequences can be very serious.

As a matter of practice, there three main types of abusers: a typical abuser (a seemingly normally socialised person), an abuser with a personality disorder syndrome (thinks that violence is a normal reaction to a conflict situation) and an abuser with an antisocial personality disorder (in most cases they have a confirmed mental illness diagnosis).

The statistics divide the data on victims of violence into types of violence, gender structure and age structure. Psychological violence is most common. It is followed by physical, economic and sexual violence. The largest number of victims are women, but male victims are also becoming more common.

Victims of violence are mostly adults. When it comes to children, most victims are under the age of fourteen.

In the Republic of Serbia, the problems of violence are dealt with by the Criminal code, the Criminal procedure code, the Family law, the Law on Police, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act which includes determining the level and type of the imminent violence threat, the means of law application and the application of different regulations. This law defines the authorities of the state bodies and institutions.

The problems of violence should be spoken about more often and without hesitation. The intervention should be quick and direct. The community should support and help all the victims of domestic violence

Key words: *domestic violence, family, victims, society, problem, abuser*

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a global issue and a contemporary society faces it on a daily basis. Since a family is a basic unit of a human society, all the problems concerning its functionality influence all the segments of the society. Strong emotional bonds create a high level of interdependency which can be misused. Domestic violence occurs in such cases.

1. TYPES OD DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour in a family where family members threaten personal integrity and physical and mental wellbeing of other family members. The types of abuse can be verbal, physical, and sexual. Passive or active neglect of family members is also a type of domestic violence.

Domestic violence takes many forms. These are the prevailing types:

- **Physical** violence involves causing different levels of physical injuries;
- **Sexual** violence “includes a physical, visual, verbal or sexual act, which is experienced as a threat or an assault by a woman at the time being or afterwards, and which hurt her or degraded her, and/or which deprived her of a control in the intimate act” (<http://www.recporec.com/seksualno-nasilje/>);
- **Psychological** violence includes all sorts of a psychological pressure, such as threatening, blackmailing, constant criticising, degrading, creating insecurity, verbal abuse, humiliating, blaming the victim, inducing the act of abuse (blame-shifting), harassing, restricting the freedom of movement, isolation.
- **Economic** violence refers to taking away the money and other valuable belongings, control of the earnings, non-fulfilment of the maintenance obligation, making it impossible for the victim to
- exercise the right to dispose of personal and joint money and income, preventing the victim from entering into employment and earning their own money,

controlling and demanding insight into the smallest details regarding money spending;

- **Passive** violence (abuse) cannot be easily seen. In the beginning it is intolerance, aloofness, neglect and later it is physical abuse.

2. VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

2.1. Violence against women

It can be said that violence against women happens within a family. In most cases this type of violence stays unreported to the authorities. Therefore the experts on the matter think that the number of victims is a lot higher than the one found in the statistics. Beside all the quoted types of violence referring to all family members, violence against women takes some specific forms.

Rape is a way of showing dominance and gaining control over a raped woman. The consequences are serious and multiple (physical: difficult injuries and sexually-transmitted diseases; psychological consequences: fear, lack of sleep, concentration problems, depression, decrease of self-esteem, suicidal ideas, alcoholism, drug addiction; social consequences: unwanted pregnancy, impaired family relationships, sense of shame, silent treatment of the surroundings)

Rape is not easily proved unless there are physical injuries.

There are a lot of reasons why women tolerate violence. However, they are usually divided into those referring to subjective feelings of a victim and those referring to cultural surroundings. The most frequent reasons are: promises (made by abusers), sense of guilt, lack of support, illusion of an eventual abuser character change, lack of self-esteem, fear of solitude, fear of the effects of a divorce on the children, fear of running away because of eventual consequences, traditional beliefs, unfamiliarity with legal options concerning the protection from violence. (The woman who is a victim of domestic violence could talk to a trustworthy person, use the strategy of leaving, document injuries and contact the police and, preferably, plan going to a safe place.)

2.2. Violence against children

Svaki Every type of domestic violence within a family with children is violence against children regardless of

The most frequent types of children abuse are:

- Child neglect which refers to the lack of satisfying physical needs of a child (food, clothes, and hygiene), emotional needs of a child (lack of love, caring, and warmth), and educational needs (preventing a child from getting an education and going to school).
- Physical violence which refers to a child being a victim with light or heavy injuries. This type of violence is perceived as a correctional disciplinary measure by the perpetrator.

- Sexual violence is any kind of a sexual action between an adult and a child, as well as seduction or coercion of a child. Most studies show that a perpetrator is a member of a family, in more than 90% of cases. Four-fifths of these perpetrators are men.
- Emotional violence includes belittling, excessive punishment, not showing love to a child.

2.3. Violence against men

Currently, violence against men committed by women is on the increase. A great number of these cases is recorded during a divorce proceeding. This type of violence includes verbal assaults (swearing, insults, and provocation) with a desire to provoke a physical assault feedback. There are cases of physical assaults without a reaction from men in fear of being reported for physical violence against women. Preventing men from applying their paternal rights (done by ex-partners) is also a type of violence.

2.4. Violence against the elderly and the weak

When it comes to violence against the old and weak, it can be said that it includes all forms of violence. Older people often hide the consequences of the violence they suffer because of fear of loneliness and fear of rejection. Economic dependence on the perpetrator of violence is often present, which is why the number of cases of violence against the elderly is always higher than the number officially reported and registered. Due to the fragile state of health of most of the elderly persons, the consequences of violence can be serious and often lead to death outcome.

2.4.1. *Slave Grandparent Syndrome - Exploitation*

The International Health Organization characterizes this syndrome as violence against women. We are talking about elderly women who often willingly take on a large part of the obligations, with the intention of providing help to their families: preparing meals, looking after children, maintaining households, taking care of sick family members, going shopping etc... Over time, the victim experiences exhaustion and health deterioration. Family members silently skip over the obvious, because it suits them. Victims of this type of violence can also be men (in rural environments) although on a lot smaller scale than it is the case with women.

3. PROFILE OF THE ABUSER

In practice, three basic types of abusers are most often encountered

- **A typical abuser** - at first glance, a normally socialised person, with no history of conflict with the law, publicly expresses a negative attitude towards violence,

during the abuse they are rarely brutal, after the aggressive behaviour they show strong remorse;

- **An abuser who shows a personality disorder syndrome** – represents an attitude that violence is a normal and desirable reaction to a conflict situation, shows signs of personality disorders (narcissism, theatricality...), most likely regularly consumes alcohol or narcotics and usually already has a police record;
- **An abuser with an antisocial personality disorder**– in most cases they have a confirmed mental illness diagnosis, they exhibit a markedly sociopathic behaviour and an addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Neil Jacobson and John Gottman present two types of abusers in their book “When men batter women” (When Men Batter Women by Neil Jacobson, John Gottman): cobras that attack a victim in a cold-blooded, blitz-style attack and do not lose control over themselves, and pit bulls who are explosive, insecure and lose control easily.kontrolu.

4. S STATISTICAL DATA ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOR PERIOD 2018 – 2020

4.1. Data on cases of domestic violence by the type of violence

The number of reported cases of domestic violence between 2018 and 2020 was 85,498 and in the same period 89,018 perpetrators were recorded and 96,594 people were victims of violence. Psychological violence occurs in the largest number of cases, 58,926 (59.7%), and it is immediately followed by physical violence 35,780 (36.2%), economic violence 3,361 (3.4%) and sexual violence with 676 (0.7%) cases. Records in the Ministry of the Interior of the RS include more type of violence within one violent case.

4.2. Data on victims of domestic violence by gender structure

Between 2018 and 2020, 96,594 domestic violence victims were reported to the Ministry of the Interior of the RS. The largest number of victims was recorded among the female population (approximately 70%) and a certain increase in the number of male victims was noticed too. In 2018, 22,235 (71.68%) victims of domestic violence were women, and 8,786 (28.32%) were men. In 2019 23,693 cases of female domestic violence victims were recorded (70.70%) and 9,818 (29.30%) male victims. In 2020, the number of female victims of domestic violence was 22,205 (69.26%) and the number male victims 9,857 (30.74%).

4.3. Data on the age of victims of domestic violence

Evidentiranje žrtava The official record of victims in the three-year period indicates that the majority are adults – 89,936 (93.10%), while minors are 6,645 (6.8%). “More than half of the minor victims are under the age of 14 – 3,855 (58.01%), and 2,790 (41.98%) are aged 15 - 17. Among adult victims the majority are aged between 31 and 40 (22%),

they are followed by seniors between 41 and 50 years old (20%)”(Stepanov, 2022, p.53). As for the data by age, in 2018, 29,125 (93.89%) were adult victims and 1,888 (6.09%) minors. In 2019, 31,057 (92.68%) were adults and 2,451 (7.31%) minors, while in 2020, the number of adult victims was 29,754 (92.80%) and minors 2,306 (7.19%).

4.3.1. *Minor and adult victims of domestic violence 2018-2020*

In this period, the data refers to 93% of adults and 7% of minors. There are 42% of people under the age of 14, and the percentage of people between the ages of 15 and 17 was 58%.

5. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND LEGAL MEASURES

In the Republic of Serbia, the issue of domestic violence is dealt with by the Criminal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Civil Procedure Code, the Family Law, the Law on Police and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act which has been in force since the second half of 2017 and it was brought due to the increase in the number of victims in the Republic of Serbia in the last few years. *“The aim of this law is to regulate the organization and the actions of state bodies and institutions in a general and uniform manner and thereby enable effective prevention of domestic violence and immediate, timely and effective protection and support for victims of domestic violence.”*(Zakon o sprečavanju nasilja u porodici („SL glasnik RS“, br.94/2016) član 2) The Law on Prevention of Violence includes determining the degree and form of imminent threat of violence, ways of applying the law to certain criminal acts, enforcing different regulations. It also specifies the competences of institutions and state bodies such as the police, Public Prosecutor’s Office, courts and centres for social welfare. This law also regulates the rules of procedure, forms of protection and support for victims of domestic violence as well as protection of recorded data. Monitoring the implementation of the law on the prevention of domestic violence is under the jurisdiction of the Domestic Violence Suppression Council established by the Government of the Republic of Serbia. The task of the Council is regulated by the Government Act on the establishment of the Council.

CONSLUSION

It is estimated that every single person is a victim of some form of domestic violence. In almost two-thirds of murders involving women, the perpetrators are their intimate partners - husbands or fiancés. Victims of domestic violence very often do not have the courage to confront the abuser. Judging by the data of an interesting private research, 36,000.00 headlines about violence against women were published in the media from 2019 to 2021, in Serbia alone. Partner violence is the most common, followed immediately by violence against children. Last year, 2022, 5,233 cases of domestic violence were reported

to the Center for Social Work, and the total number of victims was 7,666 (3,112 children and 3,226 women). These data are frightening and a common awareness of the scale of the problem of domestic violence is needed. It is necessary to speak loudly about this important issue, to intervene directly and quickly. The community must provide support and every possible type of assistance to all victims of domestic violence.

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