

Miscellaneous

Domestic Violence – a Current Problem of Romanian Society

**Sandu Mihaela Luminița¹, Tănase Tasente², Postaru (Voinea) Dorina³,
Nadoleanu Gheorghe⁴**

Abstract: The effects of domestic violence phenomenon and its severity were recently acknowledged worldwide, most European Union countries faced with significant increase in cases of domestic violence. Due to the inefficient public social services in combating and preventing domestic violence, services like this are taken mostly by civil society. However, help victims of domestic violence, there are several protection services, and a range of social services targeting the aggressors.

Keywords: domestic violence; phenomenon; European Union; Romanian society

Introduction

The effects of domestic violence and its severity were only recently acknowledged worldwide, most European Union countries being confronted with a significant increase of domestic violence cases. Due to the inefficiency of the public social services system in combating and preventing domestic violence, this type of services are mostly taken over by the civil society. To help victims of domestic violence there are nevertheless several protective services and a range of social services targeting the aggressors.

Violence is a concept with multiple dimensions and connotations. In the Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Spanish Language, violence is defined as “*the application of unnatural means to things or people in order to overcome their resistance.*” Based on this conceptualization, violence was defined as “*the use of*

¹ Dr. Psychology Specialist – Individual Psychology Cabinet, Romania. Address: 144 Mircea cel Batran Str., Nr. 144, Bl. MD7B, Sc. B, AP. 32, Constanta, Romania. E-mail: mihaela_psy1977@yahoo.com.

² PhD in progress, Andrei Saguna University, Constanta, Faculty of Communication and Political Sciences, Romania. Address: 13 Al. Lapusneanu Blvd., Constanta, Romania. Corresponding author: tashy@tashy.ro.

³ Psychologist, R.A.E.D.P.P (Regia Autonomă de Exploatare a Domeniului Public si Privat/Autonomous Agency for Developing the Public and Private Domain), Romania. Address: 101 Tomis Blvd, Constanta, Romania, E-mail: dorinavoinea@yahoo.ro.

⁴ Priest/ Psychologist, Archdiocese of Tomis, Romania. Address: 23 Arhiepiscopiei Str., Constanta, Romania, E-mail: George.nado@gmail.com.

force, open or hidden, in order to achieve the consent of an individual or group who do not wish to consent freely” (Herra, 2000, p. 31). According to the statements of M. Ashley (1986), domestic violence represents “all acts or omissions directed towards the members composing the family group (by marriage, blood or affiliation) that transforms in mistreatment the relations between them, causing physical, emotional, sexual, economic or social damage to one or more members of the family group.”(Ashley, 1986).

Domestic violence is a global issue that all countries get confronted with, well hidden and disguised by many misrepresentations about the traditional role of men and women in family and society. Domestic violence occurs due to lack of culture, the erroneous perception of family and social values, either due to their neglect.

The mentality is what makes some services to be considered as being useful, necessary, requested or rather in disagreement with the state of things, avoided and ignored by those who should be the beneficiaries. Domestic violence became defining for disorganized families or socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

More than a behavioral expression, violence is seen as a tool for achieving social goals, to maintain a certain order or disorder or social status quo. Highlighting the causes and social aspects of violence, conceptions in this category have the merit of violence to seek remedies all social, social policy measures and legislation. Not genes determine the level of aggressiveness of the people but their social situation. Economic, education, social status of the persons involved, family and community traditions and relationships of all they can increase or decrease the chances of developing contrast the phenomena of violence by an individual, family or group. Regarding gender differences, this is due to social influences, cultural expressed as expectations of roles and discourses prevalent in the community that fosters violence committed by men¹.

Impaired interpersonal relationships between spouses and between generations, between brothers and sisters, today becomes the most serious forms (from physical abuse at psihotraumatizant from physical and sexual molestation anomia communicative and moral). Literature into the foreground abused wife (Walker, 1994), physical and sexual abuse of children (Trepper & Barrett, 1989) indicate a significant increase in recent years of violence, being perceived as a major social problem (as cited Metrophanes, Mushroom, 1998).

Children who grow up in an atmosphere of conflict, marked by violence, even if they are not direct victims are subjected to more intense trauma with lasting consequences and deeper than the children who are direct victims of neglect and abuse, whatever their nature, from parents (Killen, 1998).

¹ (<http://www.scribde.com/sociologie/PROBLEMATICA-VIOLENTEI-IN-FAMI74465.php>).

Behavioral and emotional problems identified in children from families disharmony as anxiety, irritability, refusal to attend school, phobias, sleep disturbances, seizures or aggression against fellow schoolmates or play, encopresis, enuresis, hyperactivity, impaired food intake, impaired attention spans, headache, nausea etc. (Ciofu, 1998, p. 137).

In the literature, models of communication seem to be modified by wrong habits learned to cope with conflict. This type of behavior is unlearned substitute forms of communication, but new patterns of behavior can be understood as learning new skills observed. Counseling by professionals is one of the effective methods when a person has been abused or misused by anyone. Today we put great emphasis on anger control techniques, which will reduce the phenomenon of abuse, although research in this area have a long way to address the human need for dominance and control (Baban, 2003).

Dealing with aggression, anger and dissatisfaction is not a simple communication situation. There are three ways of expressing anger (Lacombe, 2005): positive expression and negative manifestation: acceptable aggression, unacceptable aggression

Aggression is acceptable that allows a suitable strategy dynamics aggressor, aggression is unacceptable that does not allow us to give a logical answer aggressor. Face the interlocutor means to protect ourselves not to be or to feel overwhelmed by this show of emotion.

Domestic violence manifested for a long time, but its awareness as a social problem occurred only in the last four decades. During the communist regime, domestic violence was not even officially recognized as a social problem (Rădulescu, 2001, p. 17).

The main way to prevent and eradicate domestic violence education is the changing patterns of children within the home and distribute loads equally to all men and women. Regarding health should be given to health, including the biomedical, beyond the treatment of asymptomatic lesions, moving eyes on trauma and social relations linking the person and his environment. The health sector should become one of the most sensitive poles and orientation detection of domestic violence.

Women's movement activities and community organizations to institutionalize the problem and socio-cultural environments in different areas of society could be seen as the conclusions made.

Implementation of awareness campaigns and awareness on the serious consequences of domestic violence and campaigns to popularize the existing legal and institutional frameworks for the protection of victims would be solutions to prevent domestic violence. Rural areas should enjoy special attention in this regard.

Ana Muntean (1999) discusses the analysis of Stark and Flitcraft (1996), which established three ways to prevent domestic violence, namely:

- Primary prevention - keep changing behavior depending on the environment in which they occur. Primary prevention measures are:

- educate communities to recognize the phenomenon;
- awareness of the seriousness of the situation the victim;
- evaluation of safety for women who have left abusive relationships;
- informing victims about the risks and consequences of the assault .

- Secondary prevention - apply to cases identified, aimed at rapid and effective . Secondary measures include:

- identify cases;
- validation;
- apply medical treatment for victims;
- assessment of their mental health;
- careful and discreet collection of information about the victim, children or partner and family in general;
- the safety assessment is the victim;
- the reference case for the law to be applied;
- referral to specialized community services .

- Tertiary Prevention - refers to intervention agencies and organizations that have the ability to develop specialized services. They must have:

- specialist staff experienced in the domestic violence;
- recording system cases;
- networking with other services

Because violence is a complex problem and to develop programs to prevent and combat domestic violence requires a thorough psychosocial investigation that thoroughly analyze the variables that contribute to the occurrence of violence from the abuser. In the absence of appropriate solutions and a consensus on the definition of family violence, it is still a problem of contemporary societies, including in Romania.

2. Methodology and Research Objective

The study of the perception and attitude of women subjected to domestic violence compared to the perception and attitude of women who were not abused by their partners on domestic violence. We also propose the assessment of self-esteem in women subjected to domestic violence, considering that it is different from the self-esteem of women living in a non-confrontational environment.

2.1. Research Hypotheses

Hs₀₁: It is assumed that women who have not undergone domestic abuse have a realistic perception about domestic violence, against women who live with a violent partner.

Hs₀₂: The attitude of nonabused women is unfavorable towards domestic violence, while women who were subjected to family abuse have a more favorable attitude towards violence, since they live permanently this experience.

Hs₀₃: The self esteem of women who have been subjected to domestic violence is lower than that of women who did not have such an experience.

Hs₀₄: If the self-esteem of women subjected to domestic violence is low, they have a more favorable attitude towards domestic violence.

Hs₀₅: There is a significant correlation between social perception of domestic violence and women's attitude in this regard, meaning that a distorted perception of violence is associated with a favorable attitude towards it.

2.2. Study Participants

This study involved a total of 40 women, 20 of them being recruited with the help of “Sfanta Maria” Shelter in Cernavoda, that were the subject of repeated domestic violence, and 20 women from the general population, which have not been subjected to familial violence.

The age of women participating in the study ranged between 25 and 56 years, with an average of 39.35 years. Significant for the research is both the age of women subjected to domestic violence, and that of the women who were not subjected to such abuse. The average age of abused women is 39.20 years and that of nonabused women is very close, being of 39.50 years. Abused women age ranges between 26 and 53 years, with doubles for the women aged of 35, 38, 42 and 47. The age of nonabused women is between 25 and 56 years, with doubles for the women aged 37 and 38 years, and a triple number of women aged 35. Of the 20 women subjected to domestic violence involved in the research, 12 women (60%) are residents of urban areas and 8 women (40%) from rural areas. In the case of nonabused women, 13 of them come from urban areas (65%) and seven from rural areas (35%).

In terms of education level, of the total of women that were the subject of violence of their husbands, three are 3 graduates of primary education (15%), 5 are graduates of secondary education (25%), 4 women graduated from high school (20%), 5 women have a professional degree (20%) and three women have a university diploma (15%). Regarding the group of women who were not subjected to domestic violence, 8 women are high school graduates (40%), 6 women are

graduates of vocational studies (30%), 4 women have an university diploma (20%) and only 2 women are graduates of secondary education (10%).

It is also important to consider how many children have the women in the research. From the half of the group of women that were the subject domestic violence, the number of children varies from one to five children. Thus, out of the 20 women, three (15%) have only one child each, 3 women (15%) have 4 children, a woman (5%) has 5 children, 6 women (30 %) have two children and seven (35%) have 3 children each. In the group of 20 women who were not subjected to family violence, 4 (15%) have 4 children, 5 women (25%) have 3 children, other 5 women (25%) have only one child and seven women (35%) have 2 children each. It is significant to know the number of children that every woman has, especially in the case of those that were the subject of family violence because, in addition to the suffering of the mother the children suffer to, or, worse, the children are also the subject of the father's violence, leading to repercussions on their physical and emotional health.

In the case of women that were the subject of domestic violence, a higher percentage can be observed among the women that have only the concubine status (45%), against women who are not subject to violence by their partners (30%).

The total of 40 women participating in the study includes women who belong to ethnic groups other than Romanian, namely Romani, Turkish and Tatar ethnicity.

2.3. Instruments

In order to meet the reasearch objectives and verify the initially established hypotheses were used three psychological tests, of which two of own composition and one of standardized construction.

Based on the theoretical considerations presented in the first chapter, we have proposed the construction of two instruments in order to measure “the attitude of women towards domestic violence,” and “the perception about domestic violence,” especially aiming the perception of women, given that they are most commonly the subject of family violence. In order to achieve this desideratum a scale and a questionnaire were constructed, titled “The scale of women attitude towards domestic violence” and “The questionnaire of social perception of domestic violence.”

2.4. Analysis and Data Interpretation

In the development of this study was performed firstly a primary analysis of the data obtained from the three types of questionnaires. It aimed to analyze the

frequency of responses for the scale of attitude towards domestic violence and self-esteem scale.

Most women have a mid-level social perception about violence. Women who were permanently the subject of domestic violence can identify themselves with the aggressor at some point and understand his way of thinking and behaving. Therefore they have an erroneous perception about this matter, sometimes accusing themselves for provoking the abuser. These women may have a very low self esteem because they do not have a word to say against their partners and always have to act in accordance to their wishes. They can not express their point of view due to fear of being assaulted. Even women who are not the subject of domestic violence may have a low self esteem because of abusive childhood experiences.

2.5. Validation of the First Hypothesis

In order to validate the assumption according to which women that were not abused have more realistic perceptions about domestic violence, against women who live with a violent partner, the data undergone a comparative analysis by means of the t test for independent samples.

Table 1. Average scores regarding social perception about domestic violence depending on the abusive state

	Abuse	N	Average	Standard deviation
Social perception	Abused women	20	34,50	5,453
	Nonabused women	20	49,40	4,581

In Table 1 it can be observed that the average scores obtained by women who are not subjected to domestic violence is higher than the average scores obtained by women abused by their partners in terms of the social perception.

Table 2. Comparison between the average scores obtained for the social perception about domestic violence of abused and nonabused women

Independent Samples Test

		Levene Test for Dispersion Equality		T Test for Averages Equality			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference between averages
Social Perception	Homogeneous Dispersion	,503	,482	-9,356	38	,000	-14,900
	Heterogeneous Dispersion			-9,356	36,903	,000	-14,900

The performed statistical analysis allowed the identification of significant differences between the two groups of women in terms of the social perception about this social phenomenon. The t Test for independent samples ($t_{(38)} = -9,356$, $p < 0,01$) statistically confirms this hypothesis.

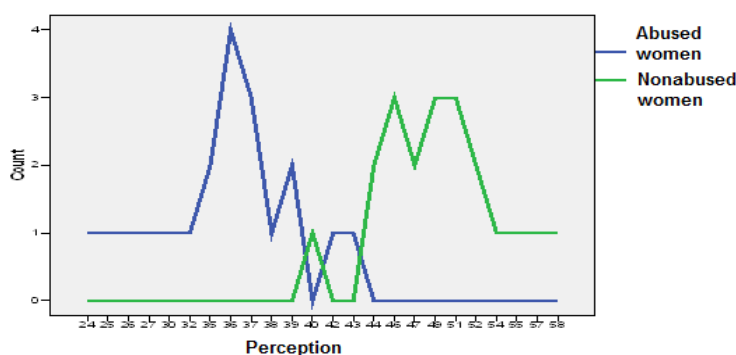


Figure 1. Comparative distribution of social perception depending on the women exposure to violence

It can be observed that the value of the t-test is negative because non-abused women perceive violence in a realistic manner, obtaining higher scores than women who are being mistreated and perceive violence in an erroneously way. From the perspective of social norms, violence is not beneficial to any member of society, especially when it comes to the own partner, in relation to which one should show love and respect.

Validation of the second hypothesis

Important for our research is to determine whether there are significant differences between the two groups of women in terms of their attitude towards domestic violence.

Table 3. Average scores obtained regarding the attitude towards domestic violence depending on the abuse exposure

	Abuse	N	Average	Standard deviation
Attitude	Abused women	20	34,50	5,453
	Nonabused women	20	49,40	4,581

In table 3 it can be noticed that the average for the obtained scores of nonabused women is significantly higher in terms of their attitude towards family violence.

Table 4. Comparison between the averages of the scores obtained regarding the attitude towards domestic violence for the two groups of women

Independent Samples Test

		Levene Test for Dispersion Equality		T Test for Averages Equality			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference between averages
Attitude	Homogeneous Dispersion	9,161	,004	8,799	38	,000	23900
	Heterogeneous Dispersion			8,799	30,631	,000	23900

The performed statistical analysis allowed the identification of significant differences between women abused by their spouses and women that are not mistreated in terms of their attitude towards domestic violence. The t Test for independent samples ($t_{(30,63)} = 8,799, p < 0,01$) statistically confirms the hypothesis. It can be observed that the value of the t-test is positive due to the fact that women who were not mistreated by their husbands have an unfavorable attitude towards domestic violence, obtaining higher scores.

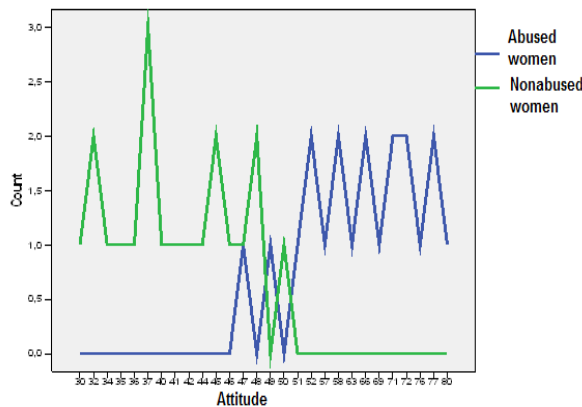


Figure 2. Comparative distribution of the attitude towards domestic violence for the two groups of women

Abused women have a more favorable attitude towards violence than women who were not subjected to abuse, which can be explained by the supportive attitude of these women to all the violence applied by the partners, but most importantly,

because of the defense mechanisms that they use to protect their personal image and the fear of being exposed to other violent episodes.

Validation of the third hypothesis

In order to confirm the third hypothesis of the present research, which states that the self-esteem of women who have been subjected to domestic violence is lower compared to the self-esteem of women who did not have such an experience, the collected data undergone also the comparative analysis.

Table 5. Average scores for the self-esteem of the two groups of women depending on the abuse exposure

	Abuse	N	Average	Standard deviation
Self-esteem	Abused women	20	19,90	4,930
	Nonabused women	20	32,85	3,453

Table 5 shows that the average scores obtained by women who are not subjected to domestic violence is higher than the average scores obtained by women abused by their partners in terms of self-esteem.

Table 6. Comparison between the scores averages obtained for the self-esteem of the two groups of women

Independent Samples Test

		Levene Test for Dispersion Equality		T Test for Averages Equality			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Difference between averages
Self-esteem	Homogeneous Dispersion	3,007	,091	-9,622	38	,000	-12950
	Heterogeneous Dispersion			-9,622	34,026	,000	-12950

The performed statistical analysis allowed the identification of significant differences between women abused by their partners and women who were not the subject of violence in terms of self-esteem. The t Test for independent samples ($t_{(38)} = -9,622$, $p < 0,01$) statistically confirms this hypothesis.

It can be observed that the value of the t-test is negative due to the fact that women who were not mistreated by their husbands have higher self-esteem, achieving higher scores than women who were abused.

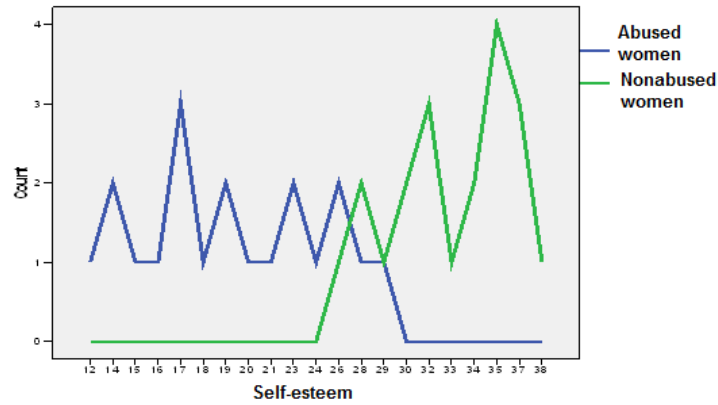


Figure 3. Comparative distribution of the scores obtained for the self-esteem of the two groups of women

Violence contributes to lower women self-esteem, especially when it comes to various abuses, so that the woman no longer trusts her own and those around her and is always fearful that something wrong could happen.

Validation of the forth hypothesis

In order to confirm the fourth hypothesis which states that if the the self-esteem of women subjected to domestic violence is low, they have a more favorabe attitude towards domestic violence, the data undergone a correlational analysis by determining the value of Bravais-Pearson correlation coefficient.

Table 7. Correlation between the attitude towards domestic violence and women self-esteem

		Attitude	Self-esteem
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-,648(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	40	40
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	-,648(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	40	40

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 7 presents the results obtained after the secondary data processing, which shows a significant correlation between the attitude towards violence and the self-esteem of women participating in the study ($r = -0,648$, $p < 0,01$). This correlation is negative, which indicates that a favorable attitude toward domestic violence results in a decrease of self esteem.

Correlation table analysis identifies a significant negative correlation between the attitude towards domestic violence and self-esteem level, which permits us to conclude that the fourth hypothesis was confirmed. In other words, the attitude towards violence affects women self-esteem in the sense of self appreciation of their own image.

Self-esteem reflects the extent to which an individual feels comfortable with himself, in the sense of self-appreciation and self-respect. It is a dynamic concept that is built continuously by facing the successes and barriers in personal and professional life, in relation to the standards that we have set for ourselves and others set for us.

Validation of the fifth hypothesis

The correlational analysis by which we tried to validate the fifth hypothesis - there is a significant correlation between social perception of domestic violence and women's attitude towards it, meaning that a distorted perception of violence is associated with a favorable attitude towards domestic violence - indicates that this hypothesis was consistent.

Table 8. Correlation between the perception of family violence and women attitude towards it

		Social perception	Attitude
Social perception	Pearson Correlation	1	-,621(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	40	40
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	-,621(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	40	40

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 8 summarizes the results obtained after the secondary processing of the data, which shows a significant correlation between the social perception and the attitude towards violence for the women participating in this study ($r = -0,621$, $p < 0,01$). It can be noted that this correlation is also negative, which means that a realistic perception of domestic violence is associated with an unfavorable attitude towards it. Statistical data obtained thus also confirm the fifth research hypothesis.

3. Conclusions

The above scientific approach aimed to validate the hypotheses by respecting the research algorithm, which led to the extraction of the present conclusions.

The results of this study support the general conclusions of other surveys, underlining the importance of the field of law in approaching the problems related to domestic violence. It is commended the promulgation of the law against domestic violence because of the implications at the level of stopping the phenomenon.

The existence of statistically significant differences between women subjected to domestic violence and those not receiving such treatment in their families, in terms of attitudes and social perceptions of violence, entitles us to assert that these abused women consider their cause is lost and therefore must remain in the abusive relationship. Moreover, if the family includes children, the woman consider that she has to sacrifice herself for their benefit, so that they could “grow up with a father.”

In Constanta County there are no centers to house the women subjected to domestic violence, so that many of these women have nowhere to go and who to ask for help for themselves and their children. The fear that they will be searched for if they leave the family home and will undergo greater violence makes them not to leave the abuser and continue to bear the violent behavior.

The confirmation of the third hypothesis completes the picture of the attitudes and perceptions of the women abused by their partners by also taking into consideration self-esteem, showing that abused women have very low levels of self-esteem compared to other women. Self-esteem is an important dimension for every human being. The risks of low self-esteem are multiple, ranging from emotional problems (anxiety, depression), to behavior problems (aggression), increased risk of alcohol and drug use, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, etc. The concept of self-esteem is related to the sense of competency and the awareness of the own values. Individuals with low self-esteem usually focus on impressing others, have low self-confidence, have doubts regarding their value and their social acceptance, don't take risks and try to avoid failure. They seek the confirmation of their own values and decisions from others and are easily influenced.

We mentioned above that self-esteem is linked to impulsive behaviors. Many researchers believe that people with aggressive tendencies generally have low self-esteem, don't trust their own powers and capabilities. Based on this idea we believe that both the abused women and the abuser have the same low threshold of self-esteem, leading to the identification of women subjected to domestic violence with the aggressor.

Increasing the self-esteem of these women would develop their ability to take responsible decisions and to cope with the pressure of the abuser.

Domestic violence is a omnipresent phenomenon, and by its characteristic of low social visibility is dangerous and hard to control, but also difficult to detect in official statistics. Far from being a particularity of Romanian society, domestic violence is today both a social problem and a public health concern.

As a general conclusion we can state that the results obtained following the research confirmed the initially established hypotheses and the objectives have been achieved. As an accomplished practical objective two instruments were constructed and validated, which could be helpful for experts investigating this phenomenon.

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