

ACTORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract: *In today's society, domestic violence is an extremely widespread phenomenon, being found both in rural communities and in the largest cities and urban settlements. The transition from a totalitarian state to a democratic rule has led to major changes in society as a whole, with Romania facing major changes of a political, economic, social and cultural nature. Along with the occurrence of these changes, the idea of family has also suffered, because, in the context of modern life, it is moving further and further away from its traditional model. The investigative approach consisted in conducting a quantitative research, the main tool being the questionnaire applied to a sample of 30 people, of which 28 came from urban areas and 2 from rural areas. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 65 years.*

Keywords: portrait; victim; aggressor; domestic violence; family.

1. Introduction

In our country, the phenomenon of domestic violence became a topic of public discussion after 1995. The modernization of society has led to a certain emancipation of women, and this has caused profound imbalances in the family, women becoming more independent and more concerned with her personal, social and professional development.

As far as men are concerned, we can say that, although the Romanian society has undergone a significant evolution in recent decades and the differences between men and women have diminished considerably, most Romanians continue to have a traditional mentality, which places women in a position of inferiority, her abilities and aspirations being treated with superficiality or even indifference by men. Social attitudes and stereotypes are those that legitimize the dominant role of men and the subordinate role of women, and they have been perpetuated throughout human history, so the mentality of authority and superiority of men over women is one of the main factors generating violence in the home.

2. Portrait of the family aggressor

Aggressive behaviour can take many forms as defined from various perspectives on behaviourism, interactions with others, perception, culture and type of education, the society to which the individual belongs. Aggression is often associated with irresponsibility, isolation, lack of empathy, destructive desires, selfishness (<http://www.revistacalitateavietii.ro/2018/CV-3-2018/CV-3-2018.pdf>).

In most cases, aggression is instinctive in nature, but the influences of the environment in which the individual interacts are inevitable. People may be tempted to imitate the deviant behaviour of others and may be encouraged to engage in destructive behaviour. According to Bonea, (2013), aggression can be influenced by several factors: cultural typology, customs and habits of the community, socialisation models; mental predisposition prone to excesses of anger; tolerance promoted in society towards blunt behaviours towards family members; as well as accessibility to various hallucinogenic or alcoholic substances.

Characteristics of domestic aggressors: They often have low self-esteem; they exhibit an interpersonal dependence on their intimate partner; building relationships in a short time; abusers are overly jealous; manifests a controlling behaviour over the victim; they often have unrealistic expectations and pretensions; use isolation as a strategy.

As regards the typology and the portrait of the family aggressor, consulting the studies carried out by Dutton, 1997 in "Journal of Interpersonal Violence", Constantinescu (2008:95) presents the characteristics that are found in subjects who abuse their family, namely:

- **Type 1** – violent / antisocial people, who represent the most physically violent typologies, with a penchant for alcohol, drugs etc.;
- **Type 2** – borderline personalities, group, comprising individuals who are difficult to attach, are impulsive, hypersensitive, capricious, oscillating between anger and indifference;
- **Type 3** – represents people with emotional instability; this group includes 25% of violent individuals whose behaviour is emotionally aggressive.

Depending on the risks to which the victim is subjected, Healy et al. (1998) make another classification of the aggressors, namely:

1. The low-risk aggressor, who represents the individual with the first violent behaviour, who did not have a history of violence, did not have a chaotic behaviour, did not commit offenses during the separation period;
2. The average risk abuser is the person with more than two risk factors, namely: child abuse, countless separations, a partner who abandoned the family and had casual relationships, fines or arrests for domestic violence, has no friends, has a history of other crimes;
3. The high-risk aggressor is the individual who presents the following risk factors: medical problems, arrests for domestic violence, offenses committed during the separation, previous substance abuse, when the aggression was committed, denial of any aggression or crime, refusal to let go the partner (Constantinescu, 2008:94).

3. Portrait of the victim

In everyday life, in the chapter of aggression on the part of the life partner, the woman plays a key role, and this is mainly due to her physical inferiority and her psycho-behavioural characteristics. It is difficult to understand the behaviour of the family aggressor, and not infrequently that of the victim, this dilemma leads us to the approach of analysing the portraits of the two actors involved. Canadian specialized studies, also conducted by the Canadian Correctional Service, outline the psychosocial

profile of the victim of domestic violence, a profile also described in the paper "Breaking the cycle of domestic violence" (1998), which presents the following: health problems manifested by chronic pain; frequent visit of the doctor; low self-esteem; episodes of violence during childhood; dependence on the partner; prioritizing the needs of the partner; alcohol / tranquilizers abuse; persistence of suicidal ideation or acts; child abuse by the mother; night disorders: insomnia, violent nightmares; anxiety, nervousness, agitation; difficulty concentrating, confused thinking, inability to make decisions; rigid views on the role of women and men (Constantinescu, 2008:96). The sign under which the victim lives is not only panic, anxiety, but also a bitter judgment. "I don't mean anything for those I come in contact with. But there is a substantial change in me" (Bogza, 1987: 371).

3.1 Victim's dependence on the aggressor

People can develop various dependencies or addictions, such as: tobacco, alcohol, gambling, work addiction or even people who cause them both physical and mental suffering. Silion, on the addiction syndrome of the victim of the aggressor, states that it is a special, particular case, called Stockholm syndrome. „Addicted people are actually trapped in a relationship from which they have no escape, nowhere to go, they are stigmatized, threatened and have no support outside the relationship. Or they don't even realize that they are victims until intense mental suffering or physical abuse occurs" (www.csid.ro/lifestyle/psihologie). In cases of financial dependence of abused people, a phenomenon existing in various families is a lack of reaction from the victim. The woman stays with her husband because she cannot support herself, she does not have the possibility to pay a monthly rent, to support her children and thus she chooses the option to be patient. Since the vast majority of abused women do not have the financial and material means to support their children, they do not have the alternative of an independent life. If the woman is active in the labour market and her income is in the small or medium range, this does not allow her to raise her children alone and, at the same time, to bear the expenses for the maintenance of a house.

Victim's dependence on the aggressor. The reasons why the victim does not leave the relationship are accurately illustrated in the literature, and the vast majority of surveys found that 26% of respondents consider violence a common problem in the family (mentality, cultural model), 17% of them expect for the aggressor to change (passive action strategy), only 14% love their partner (emotional dependence), 12% have no financial resources, and 12% have become accustomed (internalizing the violent model and accepting it as a way of life), 10% have no place to live (they lack the support network), 9% do not want children to suffer, ignoring the role of collateral victim of the child (Luca, 2009:173).

4. Reasons why women remain in abusive relationships

Women who are abused in the relationship experience a lot of feelings and emotions, each episode of violence has serious repercussions on them, but many of them choose to remain in the abusive relationship. Analysing the literature, we find the main reasons why women remain in abusive relationships:

1. **Distorted thoughts.** Controlling and harming people is traumatic and leads to confusion, doubt, or even self-blame;

2. **Low self-esteem.** As a result of the degrading treatment, the value that the victim has in her own eyes drops rapidly, especially since the aggressor sometimes repeats to the victim that she has no value and is alone, until the victim thinks that she did something bad and deserves to be assaulted (Whiting, 2016: 142);
3. **Fear.** The threat of bodily harm and emotional harm is strong and they use this argument to control and keep the victims captive, women are more often victims of this game than men;
4. **Desire to be a saviour.** Many women stay with abusive partners out of a desire to help them change through the love they offer. Other women are so dedicated to the marriage that they just want to show how devoted they are to those they have married. There are also women who put the interests of their partners above their personal interests, such a woman believing that she is God's help for a man who had a difficult childhood (Whiting, 2016:141);
5. **Child protection** is another reason why women refuse to separate from their aggressive partner, believing that the aggressor will direct their aggression against children if they escape from the common dwelling, while other women consider it a trauma for children to live. without a father. The conception of women is that it is their duty to keep families together, to tolerate abuse for the sake of their children (Zink, 2003:1429);
6. **Victim's family expectations and experiences** may be other reasons why women do not leave their abusive partners. If she lived in an environment where men assaulted women, they may live with the impression that healthy relationships include such incidents. Other women, though dissatisfied with the way their relationships are evolving, will refuse to separate on religious grounds or because of family pressure on them (Whiting, 2016: 141);
7. **Financial constraints** are often grounds for accepting abusive relationships, especially if children are involved. On the other hand, due to frequent abuse, the woman cannot keep a job or is even forbidden to get a job, but there are also women who are tempted by large sums of money by those they are in a relationship with;
8. **Isolation of the victim from family and friends** is another common tactic. Sometimes the isolation is physical, effective, but other times it is only emotional, as they are blackmailed and made to choose between loved ones and partner;
9. Although these reasons are the most common, every woman experiences aggression in her own way. But we must not forget that women can also be aggressors. The basic idea is that if the victims were listened to with compassion, not accused, they would talk about their situation and thus they can get help (Whiting, 2016:142).

5. Research methodology

Applied research outlines a clear picture of the perception of the domestic violence phenomenon, presents the repercussions of domestic violence on victims. The social investigation technique used was the sociological questionnaire.

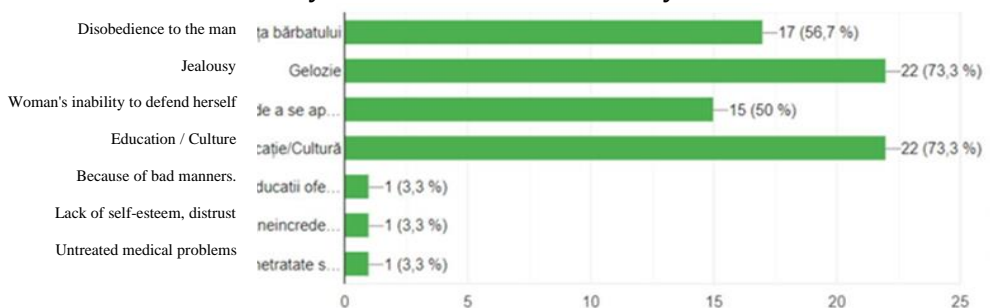
The aim of the research was to identify the causes of domestic violence against women, as well as the reasons that lead abused women not to end abusive

relationships. The aim of the research was to obtain the targeted information, according to the criteria: age, occupation, level of education, marital status, factual variables that characterize the objective situation of respondents and have a significant influence on shaping their opinions, attitudes and behaviours. By stratifying the criteria, it was possible to cover the range of interest for the study in question.

The questionnaire survey took place between April and May 2021, in the city of Resita. The analysis and interpretation of the data of the questionnaire was done through Google Docs.

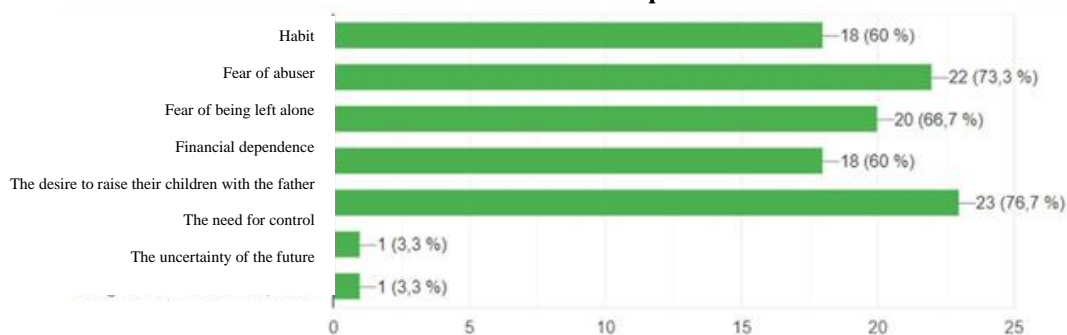
6. Data analysis and interpretation

Fig. no. 1 Identifying the reasons behind the abuse of women
1. What do you think are the reasons why a woman is abused?



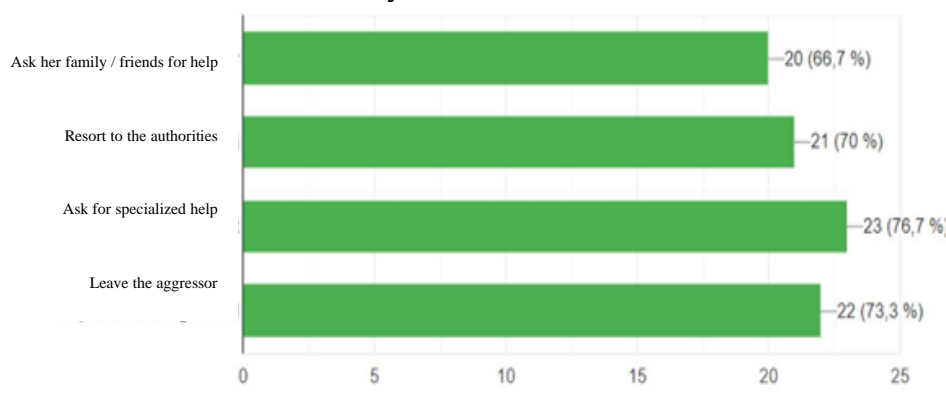
Observing the reasons behind the abuse of women, we find that 56.7% of respondents considered disobedience to men as a reason for abuse; 73.3% of people considered jealousy to be one of the reasons for abuse of women; 50% of the respondents considered the woman's inability to defend herself as a motive for the abuse; also, 73.3% considered the level of education or culture as a reason for domestic abuse. In only three cases did the respondents come up with personal answers, considering the reasons for the abuse of women as follows: "because of a poor education offered to men and the outdated mentality of the population"; "medical problems not treated or even not accepted by the partner"; "lack of self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, the concern about the public opinion... and instead of leaving and getting on with her life, she prefers to remain in a toxic relationship and be abused".

Fig. no. 2 Identifying the reasons why a woman remains in an abusive relationship
2. What do you think are the reasons why the victims remain in the abusive relationship?



Analysing the answers **referring to the reasons why the woman remains in the abusive relationship**, we emphasize that the habit registered a percentage of 60%, the fear of abuser was recognized as a reason in proportion of 73.3%, the fear of ending up alone was also considered a reason of 66.7%. Furthermore, 60% of respondents considered that women remain in an abusive relationship because of the financial dependence, and 76.7% considered that a woman's desire to raise her children with their father is also one of the reasons. Two respondents added as reasons the man's need to have control and insecurity of the woman's future, as she has no alternative to leave the house with her children.

Fig. no. 3 Solutions for victims of domestic violence
3. What do you think the victim should do?



We find, by viewing the answers of the subjects interviewed in connection with the **solutions to the problems of victims of domestic violence**, that 66.7% of respondents believe that it would be best for the victim to ask for help from family or friends. 70% considered that an effective method would be for the person who is subjected to domestic violence to turn to the authorities. Most of the respondents, 76.7%, concluded that the victim should seek specialized help, and 73.3% considered that leaving the aggressor would be the most effective solution.

6. Conclusions

Domestic violence is a particularly complex phenomenon with major repercussions on the family structure, becoming less transparent and open to the social environment.

Following the analysis of the results obtained by conducting the quantitative research, by applying the sociological questionnaire to a number of 30 women assaulted by their life partner, we find that most abusive acts are caused by excessive alcohol consumption and the existence of an abusive history in the man's family of origin, he himself having often been the victim of domestic violence. Abuse of power is also a cause of domestic violence, even though society has evolved and the differences between men and women have diminished considerably, there are still men who want to have absolute control, do not agree with the idea of professional development of women by his side. We also find some cases of occupational abuse, men trying to force their partners not to integrate into the labour market, out of the desire to dominate them, they feel good when they "put" their life partners in a lower place, their

achievements being unimportant to them, they look with superficiality and disinterest at everything they do.

With regard to the reasons that make abused women remain in an abusive relationship, the present investigative approach has highlighted the fact that women who are victims of domestic violence choose to remain in an abusive relationship for the following reasons: habit, fear of the aggressor, fear of independence, because they have developed a state of strong dependence on the aggressor, considering that from a financial and material point of view they could not cope alone; fear of loneliness, to end up alone with children in care.

Therefore, the phenomenon of domestic violence is a very complex one, with important repercussions at the individual, family and societal level.

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