

SPOUSAL VIOLENCE: WHO IS A VICTIM**OLGA KATUSHONOK****Polotsk State University, Belarus**

Spousal violence is a widespread phenomenon in today's society. But one always pays attention only to female victims. The author tries to show that this is a narrow approach. The paper attempts to show that men can also be victims of spousal violence.

Socio-cultural stereotypes are the main factor in the proliferation of domestic violence. People believe that family violence is a problem inside of the family. Law enforcement agencies and other organizations should not interfere in this problem. Feminist theory has the opposite point of view. Its proponents believe that domestic violence must be viewed as a problem for the state. The power is in the hands of men, men dominate in all spheres. This is the main reason of domestic violence.

Spousal violence is manifested in various forms of physical, sexual, and emotional violence.

The common types of spousal violence are:

- physical violence, including threats of physical violence and injuries resulting from the threat;
- sexual violence, including sexual harassment and rape;
- emotional abuse, including being shouted at, insulted, put down, and restricted from visiting family and friends [1];
- economic abuse, including taking and controlling a victim's paycheck, harassing the victim at work, cancelling insurance or credit cards without the victim's knowledge, jeopardizing the victim's housing, preventing the victim from pursuing education, working or transportation [2].

In national studies of domestic violence feminist theory plays a dominant role. The study of victims of spousal violence based on the gender principle - only women are victims of violence [3–5]. The terms “gender-based violence” and “violence against women” are often used interchangeably. Technically, the term “gender-based violence” refers to violence directed against a person because of his or her gender and expectations of his or her role in a society or culture. But most often it is used when describing violence against women because women are far more likely than men to experience discrimination or abuse. O.E.Chorstvaja notes that the crucial feature of domestic violence is that it is gender-based [6]. M.A.Butaeva believes that domestic violence is a serious factor of discrimination against women [7].

In foreign studies many authors also write that the victims of spousal violence are only women. Often such spousal violence is perpetrated against women by men [8]. Scientists from Nepal presented the results of a study on the prevalence of women's experience of spousal violence and its connection with the emancipation of women. This research showed that 28 percent of studied married women had experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their spouses during their lifetime. Among these women, 14 percent experienced physical violence, 5 percent experienced only sexual violence, and 9 percent experienced both physical and sexual violence in their lives. The experience of spousal violence – physical violence, sexual violence, both physical and sexual violence, and either physical or sexual violence – differs according to women's age, caste/ethnicity, wealth status, ecological zone, development region, and number of her children. The time of experience of physical violence only and of both physical and sexual spousal violence was greater for older women than for younger women. 35 percent of women at the age of 45–49 experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, compared with just 21 percent of women age 15–19. Women with more than four children were more likely to face either sexual or physical violence than women with three or fewer living children or with no children at all [9].

These authors believe that that female violence may be a reflection of male attacks to which women respond in self-defense or retaliation.

In our opinion, the study of spousal violence from the perspective of "man is an aggressor, a woman is a victim" – a limited view of the problem. Men may also be victims of spousal violence. We must pay attention to women's spousal violence.

In the Republic of Belarus there are no comprehensive researches of female spousal violence. In the Russian Federation in the recent years some scientists have begun to pay attention to this problem (E.A.Braytseva, A.V.Lysova). Foreign researchers are interested in this problem in the 70-s of the 20th century. Then S.Staynmetts introduced a new term "battered husband syndrome" to emphasize the importance of the problem of physical violence against men in the family.

Now there are dozens of solid scientific studies that reveal a different picture of family violence than what we usually see in the media. So, Murray Straus notes that three mutuality types need to be considered when

assessing this phenomenon: Male-Only Violent, Female-Only Violent, and Both-Violent. Studies have found that the most prevalent pattern is mutual violence, and that female-only violence is as prevalent as, or more prevalent than, male-only violence. This is true even for severe partner violence such kicking, attacks with objects, choking [10]. Other studies have shown that although partner violence behavior patterns are similar with both genders, only consequences differ. Women are much more likely to be physically injured by men than men are to be physically harmed by women [11].

Women usually initiate spousal abuse. That means they hit first, and women hit more frequently, as well as using weapons three times more often than men. This combination of violent acts means that efforts to find solutions to the family violence problem need to include appropriate focus on female perpetrators. We need to recognize that women are violent.

For both men and women, the most commonly reported motivations for use of violence are coercion, anger, and punishing misbehavior by their partner. Kernsmith studied a sample of clients of women charged with in partner violence and found that the main motivations rather than self-defense were anger and coercion, to “discipline partner” and to “exert power” [10].

Although in the Republic of Belarus females outnumber males as victims of the most severe partner violence, female perpetration of severe violence is not a rare occurrence. For example, in Haradok (Vitsebsk region) husband and wife were having a birthday party with their friends. After the party the guests went home. When all the guests had left, the man made her a remark about her cooked dishes. The angry woman hit hard his head with a stool. The man lost his consciousness [12]. In Voranava district of Hrodna region a wife broke three bottles of vodka on her spouse's head. Then she kicked him. The quarrel occurred because of her being jealous. The husband and the wife were drinking alcohol [13].

In those cases women did not act in such a way in self-defense or in retaliation. They are aggressors.

So, violence against partner is something women do at least as often as men. There are also some misleading statistics about family violence. First, men do not usually report about their violent wives to police, because they have too much pride to do that. Second, women are the ones who are encouraged to report the spousal violence by countless media reminders. The media always portray the woman to be a victim and the male to be the perpetrator. Men may not report when women injure them, but the dead bodies of the men and children who are the victims of violent women are usually reported.

Thus, the available evidence clearly indicates that there are many similarities in spousal violence perpetrated by men and women. Major and credible studies suggest that women perpetrate physical attacks on male partners at the same or higher rates as men attack female partners and that motives for spousal violence are generally parallel for men and women. But male violence is substantially more likely to result in injury or death, and is more fear provoking. Violence against women, whether perpetrated by husbands or others, and whether it happens inside or outside the home, undermines women's health and well-being. It can also have far-reaching and long-term consequences for the women's children and for society. But do not forget that their husbands also suffer from domestic violence. We must recognize that this problem also exists. Law enforcement agencies and other concerned organizations should work with male victims. This type of violence has the highest latency.

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