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STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILD PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

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Most people are convinced that domestic abuse is an extremely rare phenomenon; it is typical of a small part of population, of people of lower class and of those who have psychological violations and destructive dependences (alcohol, drugs, religious sects, etc.) but domestic violence can exist in any kind of family and can affect anyone. It generates a wide range of social problems: asocial and aggressive behavior, suicides, difficulties in adult relationship, dependence on alcohol and drugs and mental disorders (including dissociative identity disorder, bulimia and some others).

Children are the most vulnerable and unprotected social group. According to the UN about 2 million children annually suffer from domestic abuse, 10 of them die, and 2 thousand commit suicide [5].

Monthly about 30 thousand messages on domestic violence and conflicts come to law-enforcement bodies in Belarus [6]. Low awareness of the actual extent of domestic abuse, of its types and reasons, absence of legislation in Belarus encourage the investigation of the domestic abuse issue, and it is very urgent to take necessary measures to deal with violence.

It is very important to assess students' awareness of domestic violence because they are prospective parents and when they get to know more about the issue and reasons that can make for models of wrong upbringing of children, they will have a choice.

At the beginning of the XX century the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children published the following data: 428 thousand abused children were reported; of them 61 thousand had wounds, bruises and burns left by shovels, whips, leather belts, boiled water; 11 thousand children were raped; 18 thousand died of ill treatment. These statistical data determined the direction of sociological research on the theme of violence against children and adolescents [1].

According to a great number of researches, modern society is characterized by gender-based conflict; women face unequal treatment all over the world. Gender-based conflict often leads to domestic violence. There are considerable changes in the structure of a family as well as in the relations towards each other among its members [2].

Since the second half of the XX century, there have been some new approaches to this phenomenon study. So, in 1961 Henry Kempe offered the concept of "a syndrome of beaten children", where he described pediatric, psychiatric and legal aspects of violence against children. This concept gained further development in Zh. Garverino's work (the concept of "a syndrome of children, beaten in a psychological sense") and researches by E. Trive-Beker. These studies touched upon the subject of psychological abuse of children in families and its consequences for further development of children [2].

In the Soviet Union at the state level domestic violence was a "closed" issue, some kind of taboo, while in the United States of America and in Europe there was a wide discussion of the problem of domestic violence.

As a rule, the study of the issue of child abuse was reduced only to the consideration of physical abuse according to the articles of the Criminal code. Multifaceted nature of this social phenomenon and its various forms were mentioned only in the context of interrelation with physical abuse.

Public discussion of domestic abuse has started quite recently. In 1993 on the initiative of women's public organizations the first publications devoted to this issue came out. It was the beginning of the setting up of the first telephone hotlines, crisis centers, shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Thus it is important to note that in Belarus, meanwhile, there is no special law on the prevention of domestic violence. Standards of the Criminal code of administrative offences aim at eliminating consequences of an act of violence rather than at its prevention and take effect only after the registration of the fact of its commission.

The Belarusian state has no right to interfere with private life before the commission of acts of violence in order to prevent abuse.

Domestic violence is a serious social problem: on average 60% of the interrogated men and women endured violence in some form [3].

Gender-nature of domestic violence, according to some data, is significantly displaced towards violence against women, according to other sources it is symmetric or close to symmetry, but it varies in the degree of caused harm. Domestic violence doesn't depend on homosexuality: it often occurs both in men, and in female same-sex relationships, as well as in heterosexual relationships [4].

We conducted a survey at Polotsk State University. 70 students, 35 women and 35 men, were interviewed. We wanted to identify the level of domestic violence awareness, gender distinctions at understanding of the concept of "violence", and also we were eager to study an acquired behavior pattern of victims of any type of domestic violence.

The questionnaire used in our survey contained questions of frequency and types of punishment applied by parents to respondents, there also were questions about some actions that respondents considered "violence" in relation to a child and about ways of upbringing children that our respondents could choose as "acceptable" in raising their own children.

As our selection is independent on quantitative data processing Mann-Whitney's U-criterion and Pearson's chi-square were used.

As a result of the analysis a number of young women and men who were punished in their childhood were revealed. 94% of young men and 71% of young women were punished.

An essential condition for the determination of the extent of domestic violence is the clarification of the level of students 'awareness of the issue of domestic violence and ideas about violent acts

The data have shown that the vast majority of men and women distinguish as violent actions physical (71%) and sexual violence (100%) quite well. It is interesting to note that ideas about some types of physical and sexual abuse have some gender differences – for example, women take as violence display of pornography to children or coercion to participation in it more often than men (97% females and 74% males). There are gender differences concerning beating (100% of females and 83% of males), and sexual stimulation of genitals of a child (91% of females and 71% of males).

The respondents' assessment of psychological violence is ambiguous – on the one hand, humiliation as manifestation of psychological violence is distinguished by 80% of females and 74% of males, most of the respondents identify insults as violence (77% of females and 69% of males), on the other hand, such forms of psychological violence as banning (17% of females and 31% of males), forcing (34% of females and 29% of males), neglect (31% of females and 37% of males) are badly distinguished by the respondents.

In the questionnaire, the respondents were also offered to choose the methods of upbringing, which, in their opinion, are acceptable for their own perspective children.

Most of the students both females and males had a low level of awareness of forms of psychological violence: coercion (40% of females and 40% of males), banning (63% of females and 66% of males), and, therefore, low awareness of violence consequences. It is also possible to draw a conclusion that the respondents quite poorly realize that physical impact (a slap, a belt), for the purpose of disciplining had harmful influence on child development.

It should be noted that there are gender differences in the acceptable ways of upbringing. For example, a slap was considered as an acceptable way of disciplining by 29% of males and none of females, using a belt by 23% of males and 6% of females. We can speak about some tendency of male respondents' physical impact using on a child.

Thus, we can draw a conclusion that women and men define violent acts towards a child at the same level. It was revealed that most of the students both males and females had a low level of awareness of forms of psychological violence. The respondents badly realize that physical impacts (a slap, using a belt), for the purpose of disciplining children had harmful influence on child development.

Awareness of gender differences on the issue of domestic violence can help in psychological counseling of victims of domestic violence, as well as in prevention of domestic abuse and its destructive consequences.

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