

THE ASSESSMENT OF LIFE QUALITY AND EMOTIONAL STATE OF WOMEN WHO EXPERIENCED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, AND THE ACCESSIBILITY OF HELP IN LITHUANIA

Project implementation period: 2012

Aim of the study: to assess the life quality and mental state of women who experienced domestic violence and are receiving services in institutions providing help, and the accessibility and efficiency of help in Lithuania.

Tasks of the study:

1. To assess the circumstances and consequences of violence caused by an intimate partner.
2. To assess the life quality and mental state of women who experienced violence from an intimate partner.
3. To assess the accessibility of help for woman who experienced violence from an intimate partner and their attitude towards violence prevention.
4. To determine the search for help of women of middle and older age who experienced domestic violence, the assessment of help and future expectations.

Method of the study: in carrying out the quantitative research, anonymous questionnaire survey was applied, while in carrying out the qualitative research the half-structured interview method was applied.

The target population are the women who experienced domestic violence and are receiving services for violence victims in institutions providing help. 89 women (quantitative research) participated in the questionnaire survey, and 6 women of middle and older age (qualitative research) participated in the structured interview.

Results.

1. It was determined that the main reasons of violence from an intimate partner are the use of alcohol (69.7%) and communication problems: arguments (49.4%) and various complaints (38.2%). The absolute majority (86.5%) of the respondents assessed the effect of violence on physical and mental health as resulting in average to stronger consequences: two thirds (69.7%) had haemorrhages at least once in life, one third (37.1%) experienced eye or ear injuries, one fifth (24.7%) – internal organ injuries, one tenth (9.0%) – miscarriage. Helplessness (42.7%), anger (41.6%), fear (37.1%), and humiliation (33.7%) were indicated as the main feelings accompanying violence.
2. It was determined that the life quality (LQ) value average for women who experienced violence is 18.99, which indicated that the total LQ is low but mostly affected in the physical health area (average 18.15). The level of aggression for women who experienced violence is mostly affected by feelings accompanying violence – anger and hostility. Mental states are interrelated: depression is evaluated as moderate, despair – as mild, while coping with stress and perceived support – as higher than the used instrument value averages.
3. In the past only half of the respondents, who addressed their family members sought help. It was determined that the accessibility of help was negatively influenced by: shame (43.9%), lack of information on help provided (39.0%), and low perceived support (36.6%). Presently, 87.6% of the respondents evaluated the help provided as effective. The majority believes that preventive activities may help to solve the issue of violence against women but they are not willing to get involved in the chain of terminating violence themselves: only half (49.4%) would call the police if a case of violence were to occur in the neighbourhood, while the remaining part does not know what they would do.
4. The search for help for older-age women is obstructed by low awareness and personal qualities: mental health state determined by experienced violence, and personalised stigma. The aspects that encourage the search for help is a crisis situation, organising help provision, and personal motivation. Informants positively evaluated the help received in institutions, and indicated the faults of police-provided help. The informants are encouraged to look at the future optimistically by an increase in employment, financial independence, continuity of help and a change in environment and lifestyle.

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