

## ETIOLOGY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**Abstract:** The search for possible solutions and tools to fight domestic violence always ends up with searching for the causes of this negative phenomenon. To answer what causes domestic violence turns out to be a challenging issue. Knowing the causes of domestic violence could be the key to the elimination of domestic violence from our society. Aetiology is a partial component of criminology that focuses on the discovery and investigation of the causes of criminal behaviour in individuals. Knowing the causes of crime as such is in itself a very demanding process. The cause creates a causal relationship between the phenomena which are unchangeable. The causes of violent behaviour in domestic violence have never been accurately and unequivocally proven. For this reason, it is more appropriate to identify and investigate criminogenic factors of criminal behaviour. These are factors, which in themselves, or in a combination of them, support, enable, incite, facilitate the emergence or development of criminal behaviour. The determination of the exact causes of domestic violence is very difficult, nearly impossible, so the factors that can indicate violent behaviour in a family are the most important to analyse and deal with.

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### Introduction

The search for possible solutions and tools to fight domestic violence always results in searching for the causes of this negative phenomenon. The questions which can be asked are, why is there domestic violence at all? Why do certain groups of the population (either women, children, men or seniors, etc.) become victims of domestic violence and on the other hand, what makes the aggressor to behave violent? Why are some entities in the same group of the population becoming victims of domestic violence and other entities from the same group under the same conditions not? Maybe the answers seem to be simple at first glance, but in fact, it is a challenging issue. Knowing the causes of domestic violence is seen in the current available literature as the knowledge of its roots. The removal of its causes is being compared to the elimination of domestic violence from our society. Many researches are devoted to the knowledge of domestic violence, that is to its partial questions. However, there are fewer researches that have focused on identifying and investigating the causes of domestic violence in individual groups of the population. Most frequently these studies are focused on detecting and studying the causes of domestic violence on women and children. Only a minimum number of studies are examining the causes of domestic violence on seniors or on disabled people. Researches examining the causes of domestic violence on men are very rare, even though they are one of the possible groups of victims of domestic violence. With development itself, emancipation and the consistent promotion of human rights we are increasingly confronted with families in which women have the dominant position. They are abusing their position in certain ways and they are getting into the position of the aggressors towards their partners or husbands. Studies of the causes of the above mentioned behaviour as violence against men are unfortunately still absenting in our country. Clearly from these facts it is seen that even in this very frequently studied area, there are some partial aspects that have not been sufficiently examined or described (Tittlová, 2017).

### Cause or the risk factor

Regarding the causes of domestic violence, as Holcr (2008) writes it is necessary to clarify the fact that knowledge of these causes is extremely demanding or even impossible. For this reason, most criminologists tend to identify criminogenic factors as the risk factors of domestic violence or violent behaviour in the family in general. As we have already mentioned, the key is to answer the question of why does domestic violence occur at all, and why do certain entities from different groups of the population become victims of this phenomenon and others not. It is often possible to completely compare the living and subsistence conditions of all subjects and it is interesting that some of them become victims of domestic violence and others which are exactly in the same conditions do not. Therefore, it is not possible to clearly state that the cause of domestic violence is one or the other phenomenon. Consideration is given only to certain risk factors where the possibility of violent behaviour is increasing. Some of these risk factors may appear, but it does not mean that they will

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necessarily occur in every case. There is a high number of internal and external factors, affecting the emergence of domestic violence, while the development and the course of many of them cannot be accurately described in any way. Interestingly, besides the external factors, on the rise of violent behaviour in families even internal factors are significantly participating. These factors are generally investigated on the side of the aggressor, but the behaviour of the victims may contribute to their own victimization, though without their knowledge or intention (Cabanova, 2006). It is important to be aware of the constant features of domestic violence against other types or forms of crime. In the case of domestic violence, two life paths are confronted, which are connected with relatively deep bounds. Both subjects – the victim and the aggressor – naturally grew up in a family environment that influenced and shaped them in a certain way. Similarly, both of these entities form together a family or another very close community, which greatly affects its members and forms their personalities. Last, but not least, cohabitation in families also affects other subjects, so the behaviour of the victim and the aggressor, and individual attacks in the context of domestic violence also affects them, naturally in a negative way.

In the criminal procedure point of view, domestic violence in case of grievous bodily injury and is a reason for issuing the European arrest warrant (Klimek, 2012), even if the requested person would not accept it (Klimek, 2014).

### **The division of the risk factors**

Among the different criteria for categorizing the risk factors of domestic violence, we found it most appropriate to break them down into these factors:

- Individual factors, that is relating to an individual,
- Factors rooted in the idea of society – social factors,
- Factors depending on the nature, character and linkage that arises in a relationship (also known as factors of relationships),
- Factors operating in a certain closed environment in which domestic violence subjects live – so called factors of kinship community.

All of these categories include a variety of factors that can be economic, financial, material, social or related in their nature. Nowadays, the social, financial and material factors undoubtedly can be considered as highly risky in the society. These factors often have the effect of creating an environment in which domestic violence will break out or it will escalate. The social situation, the financial circumstances or the economic situation of families are, according to international organizations, one of the most risky factors not only for domestic violence, but of criminal behaviour in general.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible to subsume a whole range of factors under the above mentioned groups of risk factors which in families do not usually act independently, but in various combinations. The increasing number of mutually combining risk factors naturally weakens each of them and increases the probability of violent behaviour. The following risk factors can be subsumed under different groups:

- Individual factors (relating to an individual)
  - Low age, that is the partners' youth which is associated with the level of their personal maturity, physical and psychological predispositions; opportunities to become parents and to function in this role,
  - Excessive alcohol consumption of one of the partners,
  - Usage of narcotics by one of the partners,
  - Mental illness, disorders, serious depressive states,
  - Strong temperament, emotional lability, affectivity,
  - Any or only basic or vocational education,
  - A financially poorly ranked job classification resulting in low income in general,
  - Dispositions of domestic violence which are encoded in individuals from their original family environment (usually when they were directly exposed to domestic violence or they were witnesses of domestic violence as children).

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<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization: World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva, 2002, s. 98

- Factors rooted in the idea of our society – so called social factors
  - In society there is a family arrangement where the man represents the head of the family and he is its guardian and leader,
  - Hierarchy of relationships between a woman and a man in which the woman has a subordinate, inferior and less-ranked position,
  - Social perception of a woman solely as a wife and a mother with which she takes care of the household,
  - The existence of norms that help the survival of violence in society (different sayings in which domestic violence often occurs).
- Factors based on the nature, character and linkage that can arise in a relationship (so called relationship factors)
  - Quarrels and conflicts in partnerships, parent-children relationships or the one between children, grandparents, etc.,
  - Incompleteness of families,
  - Pathological and criminal behaviours in families,
  - Instability in relationships,
  - Excessive male dominance,
  - Preference for one of the offspring over another,
  - Social weakness of families, poverty,
  - Economic imbalance.
- Factors operating in a certain environment in which the subjects of domestic violence live (so called factors of community, collective or environment)
  - The absence of legislation that deals effectively and comprehensively with the problem of domestic violence,
  - Difficulties in detecting and proving domestic violence,
  - Relatively low sanctions against aggressors for their violent behaviour in domestic violence,
  - Benevolence against domestic violence, its oversight, its alleviation, accusation of victims,
  - Low social awareness,
  - Weak community cohesion,
  - Disinterest.

### **The scope of the risk factors**

#### Alcoholism as a risk factor

Excessive consumption of alcohol or alcoholism has a significant role in cases of violent behaviour of individuals in general. It also significantly impinges on violent behaviour in domestic violence. It helps the formation, development and escalation of domestic violence and prevents its effective solution. Alcoholism is one of the pathological manifestations in families which is directly and very closely related with domestic violence. In lots of studies it can be clearly seen that alcohol releases barriers, increases aggressivity, helps to ventilate stressful situations and increases tensions and plays a very important role in domestic violence. Alcoholism itself can be perceived as a risk factor, but not in its traditional perception. A certain link between alcoholism or the usage of other narcotics and domestic violence is evident, but these addictions are much more able to exacerbate the existing problems in different forms of risk factors which are present. According to statistical surveys, it appears that on average up to 70 % of aggressors were under the influence of alcohol or other drugs during attacks. In conjunction with several factors, alcoholism or other addictions contribute to the outbreak or to the increase of intensity of domestic violence. However, no research has confirmed the casual relationship between the usage of alcohol or other drugs and domestic violence. According to psychological studies, heavy alcoholics only rarely behave violently in the family. As psychologists, Mikitová and Matejovská (2006) write alcohol is not the reason of the domestic violence and the aggressor most likely will continue in his/her violent behaviour even when (s)he is not consuming alcohol. Their conduct is focused and motivated differently. Domestic violence in these cases justifies the existence of other risk factors. Although under the influence of these substances the aggressiveness

of physical attacks may increase, but at the time of soberness other forms of domestic violence are present – psychological violence, sexual violence, neglect, social or economic control. This fact, on the contrary to other forms, can occur during the full awareness of the aggressor, suggests that the cause of domestic violence has its roots in other risk factor or is a combination of them, but it is not the dependence itself. In the case of some aggressors a thorough preparation or the planning of the violent attack was shown and alcohol was only the trigger in these cases. According to psychologists if there were no alcohol or drug abuse, these attacks would certainly still occur.

Although a link between alcoholism and other addictions cannot be denied, domestic violence as abuse from dominant position is not a direct result of these pathological phenomena. More often alcoholism is being used by aggressors as an excuse to hide or justify violent attacks. It is necessary to realize that alcoholism or other addictions are currently very widespread, but only a certain percentage of people are acting violently in the family under their influence. On the other hand, violent behaviour occurs in many cases even without different addictions. Alcoholism and other addictions as causes of domestic violence need to be perceived as one of the myths in the field of justification of this phenomenon.

#### Factors of violence against women

For the causes of domestic violence against women there are several theories that try to justify this phenomenon. We see theories that justify domestic violence with factors on the side of the individuals, they give specific explanations (different addictions, alcoholism, stress, psychological problems, etc.), but such justifications are not sufficient and neither entirely consistent. However, all of the above mentioned phenomena may be the trigger of aggressive behaviour, but the risk factors which justify the domestic violence against women do not elucidate completely. Significantly more effective are structural approaches to justify domestic violence against women. These approaches emphasize that as a result of socialization, our society lives in an environment dominated by gender stereotypes. Violence against women, which occurs in families, is thus only a reflection of the imbalance between men and women which still remains in society. Naturally, the most notable imbalance could be seen in the economic, human rights or intimate sphere. These negative trends remain with us, are the remnants of past eras in which such organization and hierarchy were strictly applied. Nowadays, these phenomena are perceived as highly negative. The political, social or economic dependence of women automatically creates a space for building a power position for the male gender. This is how a space is created for the application of the old habits, traditions or arrangements that were typical for previous eras. Characteristic features of these cases are a consistent class arrangement and gender inequality. The acceptance of gender equality between sexes in all areas of social life is the basis for eliminating violence against woman in their family. Of course, in many cases (in many cultures and areas) domestic violence against women is rooted in a strict religion, majority belief. Typically, Muslim countries are considered to be those in which religions, traditions and customs promote gender inequality between men and women, that means they clearly prefer the male gender. Men there have not only a monopoly on power, but also a monopoly on decision-making, material monopoly, financial monopoly and a monopoly on education. In some cases, the media also contributes to gender inequality with the formats they present. Furthermore, especially in the intimate area, like the sexual, the educational institutions present a traditional view of the roles of men and women in relationships. This all contributes to the existence of gender inequality in our society, in relationships and overall in the imagination of a considerable part of the population. The dominant position, the power monopoly, the ability to make decisions about the family or about financial issues is attributed to the man which naturally leads to a certain discrimination of the female sex. These very facts alone are seen as serious interference with the rights of women. This nature can be clearly associated with violent assaults for which gender imbalance is the source and basis (Egger, 1999).

Other factors which help the emergence of violence against women in the family can also be the traditional views of the male sex in itself. In addition to physical dominance a man is presented as a protector, breadwinner and a dominant subject. In the traditional role of a man, no personal failure or manifestation of personal weakness is allowed. Boys are often brought up with this from their childhood. The belief that a man must be strong, stable in decisions and successful in any case often leads to the emergence of risk factors of domestic violence. The manifestation of different forms of domestic violence are supposed to present outwardly what is expected from a man and what does an individual miss in particular cases (e.g. obedience). According to the results of a number of German

surveys which were summarised by Bentovin (1998), failing the required standards for the male role in society, seems to be one of the key causes of aggressive behaviour in families (both against children and women). Aggressive and violent behaviour is a form of self-assertion (of a man) in the social environment. Apart from whether the schemes of violent behaviour were encoded in a man from his childhood, this knowledge makes possible to justify the violent behaviour not only against women, but also against children with any male individual. Of course, not all men behave violently, though potentially this tool of self-assertion can be used. Different surveys have shown that all individuals using violent models of behaviour have come from families and an environment in which the typical division of roles, tasks or positions has been applied, so the traditional perception of man and woman was not questioned. The man finds it difficult to reconcile with a change in his dominant position in which he was brought up and he automatically wants to regain his position. He wants to succeed (to get the position of power) in the new environment and he uses violent forms of behaviour in the family for these purposes.

Available resources point to the fact that many males who behave violently in their families lived and had been brought up in an environment dominated by an extreme patriarchal structure. For men who have been raised in such system, their dominant position is absolutely natural. For such men, violence against women and children is a natural tool for ensuring obedience and proper functioning of the household. Domestic violence is a reaction to the failure of women or children to do what suits the man's ideas. Such a rooting of violent behaviour from the aspect of the appearance of domestic violence at a later time is highly risky and almost always leads to domestic violence.

#### Factors of violence against children

Domestic violence in relation to children is in many cases very similar to violence against women. It is a manifestation of the dominant and authoritarian position of a man in the family household. It is some kind of means of forced obedience and promoting the man as such. As it used to be in the past, the man deciding the education of children, so it was the man, who decided the physical existence of the children a few thousand years ago. Similarly, in Rome male offspring were promoted to the detriment of female offspring. They were associated with additional costs and so it was economically less beneficial to have a girl than a boy. The perception of this important position of a man in our society still persists. Often this traditional position is the cause of child abuse. Last, but not least, it is a tool of obedience enforcement and a child-raising tool in families, which is naturally not acceptable. Neglect as a form of violence against children is a manifestation of a kind of benevolence towards their own children, and a form of abuse or education method for punishing a child. Such forms of abuse are more commonly used by parents (mothers and fathers alone or together) who did not want to have children or who do not have a positive relationship with their children. However, the abuse of children may also be a response to their uncontrolled behaviour, the failure of parents with their education and the fact that parents are no longer able to manage children who are hyperactive or very lively. Violence against them may therefore have an educational character for the parent, but it can also be the summit of the long-term accumulated tensions and stress which are often caused by the education of children (Sobotková, 2016).

#### Factors of the violence against men

If we talk about men as victims of domestic violence, usually these forms are not physical, but psychological violence, economic or social control. To a certain extent, this albeit unusual, but realistic phenomenon can be ascribed to the level of emancipation of women and its improper perception. In many ways, women want to be self-sufficient, independent and deviate from the perception as the gentle sex. They become dominant in the family even in the property or financial relationships and thus they want to decide on the issues in their privacy. For this reason, some forms of domestic violence against men arise. One of the reasons is also the interest of women in revenge against the opposite sex. In most cases, we talk about women who have been victims of a classic stereotypical perception of the role of women in their original family or became victims of violence as children. The rooted hatred of the male sex, which is a psychological problem in this case, leads women to power and dominate manipulation of the male sex. The forms of psychical violence are very insidious and usually motivated by revenge or by interest to harm the male sex – insulting, mockery, underestimating, pointing to the weakness of a man, his low income or inability to secure a family. The pursuit of perfection, the achievement of total harmony or trouble-free functioning leads

perfectionists to such psychological, economic or social violence. We encounter physical violence very rarely, because in most cases women physically do not exceed men. Similarly, this phenomenon is motivated by the interest of domination in the relationship, the household management or by the interest in revenge on men.<sup>3</sup>

#### Factors of the violence against seniors

A specific category of victims of domestic violence are seniors. They are often overlooked in domestic violence cases even if they suffer from repeated attacks. Some of them are unable to solve this problem because of their physical and mental condition. Many of them do not talk about it or do not try to solve this problem, even though it is in their power. They are grateful for every attention, for every expression of interest from the aggressor or they perceive themselves as a burden, so they choose to accept the violence. Last but not least, they are sometimes afraid of the shame and the feelings of failure in the upbringing of the aggressor. Often the aggressors are the only relatives they have, so they do not want to interrupt their relationships and do not want to solve the domestic violence that occurs to them either. The causes of domestic violence against seniors are many – from stress to financial or property causes. Risk factors of seniors are considered:

- Older age
- Physical disability
- Typical diseases characterized by older age
- Mental illness
- The need for senior care, his or her dependence
- Financially demanding treatment
- Quality property and financial facilities, etc.

Taking care of seniors as well as disabled people is not easy and often requires some professional qualifications or frequent visits to doctors. The aggressor usually has their own family and own world and they have to work in a certain way, so the care for the senior becomes demanding for them financially, time wise, as well as other aspects. From the aggressor's point of view the senior becomes a burden that exhausts them and they hence cannot do what they want to do (their job, family, interests, etc.), which leads them to a feeling of helplessness, fatigue, often anger and exhaustion. If he or she cannot secure the care of the senior, it can result in a situation where the senior is being unknowingly neglected. All these feelings – the frustration that is caused by the seniors – is a significant risk factor. It is often the basis, on which certain forms of domestic violence begin to emerge. These are usually physical attacks, psychological abuse or neglect of seniors. In a very similar situation are people with disabilities. It is striking that seniors can become victims of domestic violence due to property or financial reasons. In this case the aggressor is the child or grandchild of the senior who gains a substantial part of the senior's pension in this way. The aggressor is also very often interested in other properties of the senior (usually different real estate or valuable movable property). Violent behaviour of children may also be motivated by transferring the property rights to him or her, or the interest in forcing the seniors to leave their original homes and to place them in a retirement home (Škrovánková, 2017).

#### Conclusion

Based on the above mentioned information, recognizing the causes of domestic violence is a very difficult process. This is because the determination of the exact causes of domestic violence is very difficult and hence we are interested in analysing the factors that can indicate violent behaviour in a family. That is why the contribution in its first section introduces domestic violence in itself and the difference between the causes and risk factors. Subsequently the contribution deals with the division of risk factors and with these risk factors in different areas against different groups of people.

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<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jun/07/feminism-domestic-violence-men>  
See: <https://melmagazine.com/what-domestic-violence-against-men-looks-like-74ce9500ab8d>

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