



Factsheet

Forms and dynamics of domestic violence

Definition of domestic violence

Domestic violence is defined as any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in families or intimate relationships. It includes any abuse or violence occurring within a family, for example between siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, in-laws and elders. Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of sex, gender, profession, social background, culture, religion or sexuality.

Definition of intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence is any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, emotional, sexual, economic and social harm to those in the relationship. An intimate relationship may refer to a survivor's current or previous partner or living companion, including same sex relationships.

Forms of domestic violence

Physical violence

Physical violence is any use of physical force or threat by use of physical force which compels the victim to do or to abandon or to suffer or restrict or move her or him or to cause the victim pain, fear or humiliation, whether personal injury has occurred or not.

Physical injuries may range from minor trauma, which may or may not be visible, to broken bones and lacerations, head injuries and injuries to internal organs. Some victims are threatened with weapons, such as knives, or household items such as a hot iron, cigarettes

or a length of rubber hose. Physical abuse can take many forms such as smashing property, or killing or hurting family pets.

Strangulation is a common and serious form of domestic violence. Recognising any signs for strangulation is of major importance as strangulation is a strong predictor for future severe domestic violence and subsequent homicide.

Examples for physical violence:

- Locking their partner in the house or stopping them from leaving
- Restraining, pushing, slapping, hitting, kicking, strangling or burning
- Drugging their partner with prescription, pharmaceutical, or illegal drugs
- Breaking possessions or punching /kicking walls

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is any conduct of sexual content that the victim does not consent to, is coerced into, or because of their level of development, does not understand their meaning, the threat of sexual violence, and the public disclosure of sexual content about the victim.

It is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes any form of rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, everyday harassment and any organized form of sexualized violence.

It includes every action that restricts the sexual self-determination of a person.

Examples for sexual violence:

- Pressuring victims to have sex or do sexual acts when they don't want to
- Pressuring, forcing or tricking partners into having unsafe sex
- Making partners have sex or do sexual acts with other people
- Sexually assaulting (raping) them

Verbal violence

Verbal violence is everything said by the perpetrator to or about the victim in order to harm him or her.

Examples for verbal violence:

- Putting the victim down, e.g. telling them that they are ugly, stupid, worthless or incompetent
- Ridiculing
- Insulting
- The use of swear/curse-words or name-calling
- Humiliating partners in front of friends, family or in public
- Undermining the relationship between the partner and their children
- Threatening to self-harm or commit suicide
- Intimidating and threatening to use other forms of violence against the partner or against somebody or something dear to him/her
- Threatening to hurt pets
- Threatening to harm family members or children

Psychological violence

Psychological violence is the conduct and dissemination of information by which the perpetrator of violence causes fear, humiliation, feelings of inferiority, danger and other mental distress in the victim, even when committed by using information and communication technology.

Examples for psychological violence:

- Stalking
- Isolation or confinement
- Controlling behaviours
- Withholding information
- Disinformation
- Publicizing of threatening to publicize private information
- Manipulation
- Stopping the partner from visiting their friends or family
- Threatening to hurt or hurting pets
- Threatening to harm family members or children
- Threatening to spread rumours about victim
- Threatening to publicly disclose intimate or other materials potential to harm reputation of a victim

Socio-economic violence

Socio-economic violence is the unjustified control or restriction of a victim in disposing of income or property with which the victim independently disposes or manages or unjustifiably restricting the disposition or management of joint property of family members, unjustified failure to fulfil financial or property obligations to a family member or unjustified shifting financial or property liabilities to a family member.

Examples of socio-economic violence:

- Taking the victims money, controlling their income, or accessing the victim's accounts without consent
- Making and controlling all the decisions about joint money and assets
- Refusing to give the partner money or making them account for everything they spend
- Threatening to withdraw financial support as a means of control
- Preventing the partner from working so they become financially vulnerable or reliant on the perpetrator

- Manipulating and coercing the partner to sign financial contracts with third parties
- Making the partner responsible for all the joint bills and debts, or making the partner responsible for the perpetrator's debts
- Impersonating or posing as if being the partner to access their accounts or to sign up for credit or debts

Neglect

Neglect is a form of violence where the perpetrator abandons the due care of the victim, which is needed due to illness, disability, age, developmental or other personal circumstances.

Stalking

Stalking is a wilful repeated unwanted contact, pursuit, physical intrusion, observation, restraint in places where the victim moves or other form of unwanted intrusion into the victim's life.

Special forms of violence

The following special forms of domestic violence are in some countries crimes on its own. Different types of crime are often related to domestic violence when family members are involved.

Child, early and forced marriage

Child marriage is when at least one of the parties is a child (usually below the age of 18, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but this may be different in some countries).

Early marriages involve a person aged below 18 or marriages where both spouses are 18 or older but other factors make them unready to consent to marriage:

- Their level of physical, emotional, sexual and psychosocial development
- Lack of information regarding the person's life options.

Forced marriage is any marriage which occurs without the full and free consent of one or both of the parties, where one or both of the parties is/are unable to end or leave the marriage, or as a result of duress or intense social or family pressure.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation includes all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia.

Trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Sexual exploitation / forced prostitution

The term "sexual exploitation" means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. Some types of "forced prostitution" can also fall under this category.

Gender-based sex selection / Infanticide

Son preference:

- May mean that a female child is disadvantaged from birth
- May determine the quality and quantity of parental care and the extent of investment in her development

- May lead to selective abortion or female infanticide

Sex selection:

- Before a pregnancy is established
- During pregnancy through prenatal sex detection and selective abortion
- Following birth through infanticide or child neglect

Femicide

Femicide is the murder of women because they are women.

Femicide is also broadly categorised by type, motivation and aggravating factors, including direct and indirect femicide, with different categories, such as intimate femicide, racist femicide, 'honour' based killing, femicide of girl-child and elderly women, femicide of lesbians, femicide of women in prostitution, femicide through organised crime and trafficking, femicide in conflict, among others.

Crimes committed in the name of honour

Honour related violence (HRV, honour violence, honour-based violence) is any form of physical (battery, rape, murder, FGM), physiological (mental pressure, threatening, deprivation of personal liberty) or social violence (e.g. restricted movement, restricted circle of friends, coercive control, forced marriage, human trafficking) that is carried out within the family or the community in the name of 'family honour'.

HRV is related to situations where a person is not following social, sexual or familial roles and expectations, given by a traditional ideology, or is suspected of having broken the chastity values of a community. The conflict is not tied only to someone's behaviour but also on rumours or gossips. Honour related violence is not restricted to certain countries, ethnic groups or religions but occurs within different kind of communities.

Honour related violence is often seen as a violence against women and girls. It is

important to note that also men, boys and persons identifying themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or transsexual may experience the honour related violence and psychological pressure.

Elderly abuse/maltreatment

Elderly persons are in vulnerable situation regarding domestic violence. Research has identified risk factors that make older people more vulnerable to elder abuse. These risk factors are aged greater than 80, gender being female, monetarily challenges, poor health, cognitive impairment, mobility difficulties, depressive symptoms and poor social network. Elder abuse includes physical, psychological or sexual violence inflicted upon an older adult, their financial exploitation, or neglect of their treatment or welfare, or abandonment, by people who are directly responsible for their care.

Examples elderly abuse/maltreatment:

- Physical violence: may include e.g. infliction of pain or injury, physical coercion, hitting, slapping, pushing, spitting, misuse of medication or inappropriate sanctions.
- Psychological violence: may include e.g. emotional or verbal abuse, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, intimidation, coercion or withdrawal from supportive networks.
- Financial exploitation: may include e.g. illegal or improper exploitation or use of funds or resources by theft, fraud, coercion, pressure in connection with wills, financial transaction, or misuse of power of attorney.
- Neglect or abandonment: may include intentional or unintentional refusal or failure to fulfil a caretaking obligation, e.g. ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to services, withholding medication, adequate nutrition or heating, or failure to provide appropriate equipment.

Sources

Ali, McGarry (2020): Domestic Violence in Health Contexts: A Guide for Healthcare Professions

Elder Abuse Context and Theory (2016): Finland, Ireland, Italy and Romania: http://www.combatingelderabuse.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Booklet_stage.pdf

Hegarty (2011): Intimate partner violence – Identification and response in general practice: <https://www.racgp.org.au/download/documents/AFP/2011/November/201111hegarty.pdf>

HelpGuide (2019): Elder Abuse and Neglect: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/elder-abuse-and-neglect.htm>

RACGP (2014): Abuse and violence – Working with our patients in general practice: <https://www.racgp.org.au/clinical-resources/clinical-guidelines/key-racgp-guidelines/view-all-racgp-guidelines/white-book>

The Finnish League for Human Rights (2020): Honour-based violence in Finland: <https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/english/honour-based-violence/>

UNWOMEN: Virtual knowledge centre to end violence against women and girls: <http://www.endvawnow.org/>

Victim Support Finland (2020): Honor related violence: <https://www.riku.fi/en/various-crimes/honor-related-violence/>

Women's Legal Service NSW (2019): When she talks to you about the violence – A toolkit for GPs in NSW: <https://www.wlsnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/GP-toolkit-updated-Oct2019.pdf>

WHO (2012): Understanding and addressing violence against women – Intimate partner violence: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/77432/WHO_RHR_12.36_eng.pdf;jsessionid=3F1A933AEC96DD02709A535113399E7F?sequence=1