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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN INTIMATE PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO WOMEN'S NEEDS

Although there are tendencies to portray women in partner relationships as physically equally aggressive as men, initiating violence, revenge, and using deadly force almost as much as men, men's violence against women is more pernicious, characterized by more severe and frequent acts of greater range, manifestations, and with more severe consequences. It is therefore unjustified to speak of gender symmetry, and present this type of violence in gender-neutral terms. This paper provides an overview of the most important features of the observed phenomenon, focusing on psychological violence, which plays a key role in "breaking the resistance", and in providing a "voluntary sacrifice", i.e., coercive control, structural in nature and extending to all aspects of a woman's life. Paradoxically, leaving a violent partner is a risk factor for violence and is considered to be potentially more dangerous than staying in a relationship. In the literature, help seeking and coping strategies used by women who have experienced violence are conceptualized in various ways, and research confirms that they depend on the features of violence and the resources available. It is shown that the crucial precondition for women who want to break out of the circle of violence and begin a new life is a fact that professionals understand the gender nature of violence, that effective social control of violent behaviour is established, that women are lent support through specialized independent programs over a longer period, which should be multidimensional and well synchronized, so as to include women, and take into account their needs, reinforcing their sense of security and space for action.

Keywords: breaking out of the circle of violence, coercive control, institutional support, intimate partner violence, victim needs

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Introduction

There is still a lot of confusion both in the literature and in practice regarding the key characteristics of intimate partner violence, especially its gender dimension, the needs of women with experience of violence, and the appropriate institutional response. Polovina (1997) points out that intimate partner violence is difficult to talk about due to numerous protection, denial and avoidance mechanisms, because of personal (conspiracy of silence, shame), social (traditional beliefs and "licenses" for male aggression), and official aversion to acknowledge which behaviour is involved (unspecified competencies) within services, as well as the lack of interconnectedness of the institutional system. Violence in intimate partner relationships constitutes a specific form of domestic violence. In international treaties ratified by the Republic of Serbia, domestic violence is defined as "any act of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence occurring within the family or household, or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the offender shares or has shared the same residence with the victim." [2]

The data confirm that women are at higher risk and are disproportionately more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence. Violence against women is widespread, although it is not easy to compare the data due to methodological differences (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Women will most often be injured, raped or killed by men they know and often love (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Physical violence is reported in 13–61% of women, sexual in 6–59% of women, and the prevalence of psychological violence is 20–75% (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Wattset, 2005; UN, 2006). When violence against women have led to a fatal outcome, in 40-70% of cases perpetrators are their intimate partners, which is in sharp contrast to the prevalence for men, which ranges from 4 to 9%.

Reviewed data for Europe highlight the importance of variations in methodology, but also indicate that between 20 and 25% of women at the minimum have experienced physical violence by partners at least once during their lifetime, more than 10% have experienced sexual violence, and between 19 and 42% have endured psychological violence (Hagemann-White, 2006; Martinez & Schröttle, 2006). Research conducted in European Union countries (by using a uniform methodology) shows that every third woman over the age of 15 has experienced physical and / or sexual violence, most commonly inflicted by her intimate partner (FRA, 2014).

In Serbia, data from surveys conducted at different times, on different samples, and with diverse methodology, show a similar and consistently high prevalence of violence. One in two women over the age of 15 has experienced some form of violence by an intimate partner, every fourth (or fifth) has experienced a physical assault, and every twentieth has experienced sexual violence (Babović,

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[2] Law on Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, "RS Official Gazette, International Treaties", no. 12/2013, Art.3.

Vuković, & Ginić, 2010; OEBS, 2019; Otasević, 2005; Petrović, 2010; Vidaković, 2002). Serbia also records a large number of women killed by their partners, and in the family context, without an appropriate social response (Jovanović, 2013; Lacmanović, 2019; Lukić, 2013; Mršević, 2014).

This paper outlines some of the key features of this phenomenon, most notably its gender character, the way in which power and control over women are achieved, and continue beyond the termination of a partnership. The prevalence and incidence of this phenomenon, as well as its effects on the health and well-being of women, and also their families, communities and society in general, focuses on supporting effective strategies in combating violence, and achieving better social control of perpetrators. It particularly focuses on the long-term support for women in rebuilding their lives after breaking out of a violent relationship. This includes not only adequate community resources, but also the professionals' relative knowledge and appropriate attitudes.

Characteristics of Violence against Women in Intimate Partner Relationships

The global character of violence against women is reflected through its presence throughout history and worldwide, in all cultures and social systems, which confirms its structural and systematic character. The similarity in the characteristics of this phenomenon indicates both their structural nature and their uniform meaning, that is, that violence against women occurs because they are women (and not due to any of their personal attributes / individual traits)[3]. However, the universality of the phenomenon means neglecting neither the context (cultural and historical differences and personalities), nor local events that influence changes in the manifestations and reactions (individual and social) to violence against women (Hester, 2004; Lybecker Jensen, & Nielsen, 2005).

Gender Imbalance of Violence in Intimate Partner Relationship

Although there is a tendency to portray women in intimate partner relationships as physically equally aggressive as men (Archer, 2000, 2002; Gelles, Straus, & Murray, 1988), initiating violence, being vindictive, and using lethal force almost as much as men (Lysova, 2018; Sewel & Sewel, 1996, according to Dasgupta, 1999), numerous studies confirm that men's violence against women is more pernicious, as it is characterised by graver and more frequent acts, with a greater range of manifestations, and with more serious consequences. Although women and men alike can express frustration and anger, the gender asymmetry is clearly present when it comes to control-motivated violence, where women who physically attack and / or defend themselves are at risk of much more serious

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[3]   United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation no. 19, Violence against Women, Count 6.

retaliation by men (Kimmel, 2002). Therefore, it is unjustified to speak of gender symmetry, and refer to this type of violence in gender-neutral terms (Ignjatović, 2014).

Research on aggression and violence (though still insufficient and descriptive) also indicates gender differences in expression, consequences, motivation, and intention (Kambel & Manser, 1998). Aggression that occurs in the context of conflict is more widespread in intimate partner relationships, yet violence in the context of coercion is much more harmful to a woman (Cook & Goodman, 2006; Tjaden, 2006). Men are more likely to use forms that provoke fear and control of the victim, as well as the loss of freedom and autonomy, which is a critical component of intimate partner violence (Hester, 2009; Stark, 2004; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000).

Furthermore, the difference between men's and women's understanding and attitudes to partner violence has been confirmed. Men deny violence, describing it as an "ordinary", nondramatic event, diminishing their power and influence (normalizing violence), and see it mainly as a specific event (at a certain time, in a certain place), whereas for women it is a process that overwhelms them in their daily lives, and which prevents them from breaking out of the circle of abuse (Hearn, 1998). At the same time, men are less likely to report violence because its forms are not alarming (Hester, 2009), although statements made by men may attract more attention because of the numerous gender role stereotypes (Ajduković, 2000). Research also shows that women commit violence in the context of the violence they suffer. They use weapons most commonly in the context of protection (Dasgupta, 1999; Hester, 2009), while emotional abuse, even when not dissimilar in frequency, differs in its typical forms (Swan & Snow, 2002).

This does not mean that women do not have the capacity to be violent, but the question is whether women's violence manifested in a heterosexual partner relationship can be termed "abuse" or long-term, repeated, gross mistreatment, which includes control, coercion and threat, leading to a systematic fear and submission (Dasgupta, 1999). Dasgupta (2002) points out that when both partners are treated equally, it actually means that they are both treated as if they were men, because a woman who reciprocates or takes revenge on a man risks being accused of violence, since the system conceptualizes her as passive and helpless. Concepts of mutual aggression suggest that this is a phenomenon that similarly affects women's and men's well-being (as if the aetiology and nature of the problem were similar), leading to completely wrong prevention and intervention programs (Reed, Raj, Miller, & Silverman, 2010). It is therefore emphasized that research and explanations for this complex phenomenon must take into account gender characteristics and context in order to increase its understanding (Myhill, 2017; Renzetti, 2006).

Achieving Power and Control over a Female Partner

Although physical violence is the focus of institutional response, psychological violence plays a key role in "breaking the resistance" and in providing a "voluntary victim" (Herman, 1996). In this way, "more severe" forms of violence (physical and sexual) are not requisite in gaining power and control over a partner, except as a potential threat (with a serious possibility of realization), which keeps a woman in constant fear for her life, health and well-being (Pence & Paymer, 1993).

Psychological violence comprises a number of manifestations, which occur on their own or in combination with other forms (previously or simultaneously present). The analyses suggest at least two subdivisions of this phenomenon: verbal aggression (shouting, swearing, moderate criticism) and emotional abuse (tactics of control, domination, threats, disparaging, humiliation, isolation, denial of resources). Although repeated verbal violence can damage partner communication, it does not produce the detrimental effects of emotional abuse, while their non-discrimination and / or equalization exacerbates the unwillingness to stop the abuse and create a social climate that reproduces it (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Ganley, 1998).

The perpetrator chooses a partner who will tolerate or forgive the abuser, skilfully disguising his behaviour. However, he is hardly satisfied with mere obedience, but needs the victim's approval (respect, gratitude, even love), so as to psychologically justify his violence with the ultimate goal of (gladly) making a voluntary sacrifice. Whimsical sharing of "petty / occasional favours" undermines the victim's psychic resistance, sparks the hope that a desirable change will occur, which is more effective than constant denial, threat, or violence, and is critical to breaking the victim's resistance (Herman, 1996; Pence & Paymer, 1993). During these periods, the woman "barely remembers" the bad times, and because of the mechanism of separation and isolation, she seems to be leading two different lives (Kelly, 2003).

Nevertheless, the perpetrator's power is limited as long as the victim maintains relations with other people. Therefore, he actively seeks to isolate her from sources of information, emotional support, and concrete help. As she becomes more dependent and begins to look at the world through the eyes of the perpetrator, she lives in the conviction that he is omnipotent: that no one can stop or control him and that resistance is futile. The final control is achieved when a woman "betrays / abandons" her moral principles and fundamental relationships with other people (Herman, 1996).

Violent behaviour is rarely an individual incident, limited to a specific time and place. It represents a set of daily and unpredictable behaviours that, according to Stark (2007), draws on a woman's energy, exhausts her sense of self, and isolates her from others, which has been articulated in the literature as the concept of power and control (Pence & Paymar, 1993), coercive control (Stark, 2007), or as intimate terrorism (Johnson, 2009). This type of control is structural in na-

ture and consists of destructive forms of deprivation (money, food, and other life resources), imposing choices, micro-regulation of everyday behaviour, a limitation of options and sources of support, which extends to all behaviours and spaces (he also decides and controls where she goes, who she socializes with, how she dresses, how much money she has at her disposal, what jobs in the home, outside and related to the children she effectuates, and in what way, determines access to information, or bans it, sets standards, monitors and punishes) (Stark, 2007). In particular, the abuser exploits the victim's multiple, complex, and interdependent needs and experiences (disability, mental illness, substance abuse) in order to enhance coercive control (Harris & Hodges, 2019).

Violence perpetrated by men is conscious, deliberate, and intentionally conducted behaviour aimed at establishing control and causing psychological pain. Therefore, it should not be reduced to an individual / psychological level of explanation, and interpreted neither as a deficiency in coping skills, lack of conflict resolution skills, lack of communication skills or low self-control, which it is not in most cases, nor as the result of illness and mental disorder, but socially adjusted and deliberately chosen behaviour that brings about the desired effects (Bancroft, 2015; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Thus, interpreting violence against women in an intimate partner relationship as individual and psychological (rather than as a political, economic, or social problem) can be powerful in blaming the victim (or reducing her powerlessness) (Romito, 2008). Referral to psychotherapy treatment, family therapy or mediation can (completely) ignore the violence, or treat it as an incidental manifestation of a covert disorder (the victim receives a mental instability label, which confirms what the perpetrator says to her: "You are crazy", "The children will be taken away from you"), and it harbours a number of risks (Päivinen & Holma, 2017; Stanley & Humphreys, 2017). Moreover, psychological programs for perpetrators of violence may also show insufficient concern for women's safety, and examinations of their effects have shown controversial results (Gondolf, 2002). These actions "shift" the intervention from legal to psychological, from the public to the private sphere, which does not take into account the imbalance of power and the victim's limited capacity to represent herself effectively, or potentially jeopardize the victim's safety and decision-making in her own best interest (Eriksson & Hester, 2001).

Although exposure to violence requires psychological help, it is emphasized that psychology must be aware of its limitations (avoid psychologizing in interpreting the phenomenon, suggesting incorrect theoretical models, inadequate interventions within the health or social assistance system) to produce "tools" for understanding reality and social action (Romito, 2008). The standards of psychotherapy work with victims of intimate partner violence clearly indicate that the deficit-oriented approach is inadequate, i.e., that it should be sensitive to the victim's traumatic experiences and use empowering language (APA, 2019). Specialized psychotherapy programs that respect safety issues understand the ex-

istential reality of the victim of violence, and alleviate the symptoms of multiple stressors to which they are exposed. These programs show promising results, and their improvements require further work (Johnson & Zlotnick, 2009; Johnson, Zlotnick, & Perez, 2011). Also, contemporary and professionally designed prevention programs for working with perpetrators of violence emphasize the importance of an integrated and victim-oriented approach that respects the gender nature of violence, as well as close cooperation with specialized programs to support women[4] (Logar, 2015).

The Continuation of Violence after the Breakup of the Intimate Partner Relationship

The separation period from a violent partner may be accompanied by risks of an increase, or occurrence of new forms of violence (Ignjatović, 2016; Pomicino, Beltramini, & Romito, 2018; Saenger, 2000). It has been reported that between 43% and 87% of abused women end their abusive relationship by leaving their partners, departing from their shared household with the children, which increases their vulnerability in terms of continued violence and the onset of poverty (Conroy, 1994; Schechter & Edleson, 1994). Although partner separation does not always end in violence, leaving a violent partner is a risk factor for violence that is considered to be potentially more dangerous than staying in a relationship (which seems paradoxical even to professionals).

Verbal threats, physical and psychological violence, "a climate of fear", harassment in the workplace, threats of financial stifling or exhausting litigation, inability to receive social assistance or fear of losing it, risk of becoming a homeless woman, taking advantage of children (a child abuse), threats of harming or abducting children, murder threats, health problems and mental disorders in women, are just some of the forms of violence and its consequences during separation and post-divorce parenting, which often lead to negotiation process and acceptance of a compromise at the expense of the victim of violence (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002; Conroy, 1994; Hardesty, 2002; Hester, 2009; Ignjatović, 2016; Ignjatović & Pešić, 2012; Jaffe, Crooks, & Poisson, 2003; Liss & Stahly, 1993; Saunders, 2007; Schechter & Edleson, 1994). The primary motive for violence during the separation and post-divorce periods is the partner's tendency to maintain control over her (the feeling of "ownership" of the partner, as well as of their common children).

There are numerous limiting circumstances for leaving, and even more for staying out of a violent relationship reported by women - mothers: the age of the child (daily routines conditioned by the children's needs), the desire to preserve the father-child relationship (the desire of the woman, but also the pressure of the environment, including the law and institutions), economic dependence on

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[4] Which are also the standards of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, Art. 16.

partners (and abuse of the right to child support), inability to get a "comfortable home", safety and stability (leaving a child-friendly environment), illness or disability of children (requiring specific conditions). If they did not have children, women's choices would probably have been different, because, even when some of them were skilled and would have been able to break out of the violent relationship, they rarely prioritized their needs over their children's, which is indicative of the need for intervention and support for women victims of violence who are mothers, that would respond to their specific needs (Ignjatović, 2013; Ignjatović, 2016; Katz, 2019; Kelly, Sharp, & Klein, 2015; Krane & Davies, 2002; Pomicino et al., 2018).

Consequences of Violence against Women in Intimate Partner Relationships

Victims of violence consistently suffer from lower general health status. They-have more problems in physical and mental health, more difficulties in achieving a satisfactory family, social and professional life, which is coupled by significant gender differences in the health consequences of violence (Krug et al., 2002; Martinez & Schröttle, 2006; Walby & Allen, 2004).

Violence against women poses a risk to physical and reproductive health, with the incidence of physical injury and functional health disorders varying between 40% and 75% (Đikanović, 2006; Krug et al., 2002). In our social environment, the research also shows that women who have experienced physical and sexual abuse are two to four times more likely to report health problems, with injuries being present in 29% of these women, and suicidal ideas being three to five times more frequent compared with women who have not had such an experience (Otašević, 2005).

Mental health problems, though they often remain undiagnosed, also present a risk of violence (Harris & Hodges, 2019; Warshaw & Barnes, 2003). The spectrum of conditions ranges from (brief) stress reactions, through symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, to complex syndromes of long-term, recurrent trauma (Herman, 1996). The link between psychic violence and non-specific suffering and psychiatric disorders has been confirmed (Lamy et al., 2009). There is more frequent occurrence of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, over three times more frequent and with more pronounced symptoms in women victims of violence, especially sexual violence. (Campbell, 2002, according to Đikanović, 2006; Chandan et al., 2019; Martin & Macy, 2009). A the same time, in psychiatric clinics, more than two-thirds of female patients have had a history of physical and / or sexual violence (Dennis et al., 2009; Mechanic, Weaver, & Resick, 2008a, 2008b; Warshaw & Barnes, 2003). There is a link between violence and substance abuse, or psychoactive substance abuse and suicide attempts (Lamy et al., 2009; Martin, Beaumont, & Kupper, 2009; Salomon, Bassuk, & Huntington, 2002; Stark, 2004).

At the same time, there is a tendency to reverse the cause and effect, and instead of seeing violence as a reason for substance abuse, abuse is interpreted as a reason for everything else (including violence), with women being referred to psychiatric institutions for addiction treatment, or to some of the family or group therapies, where their abusers are in turn designated as their "caretakers". This closes the "vicious circle" initiated by the abuser, for which the women have originally appealed for help (Romito, 2008; Stark, 2004).

Violence experienced by women is also associated with a variety of psychological consequences: altered experiences of self, neglect of one's needs, loss of confidence in oneself and others, feelings of inferiority and shame, helplessness, inability to make decisions or manage one's own life (Smith, Thornton, Devellis, Earp, & Coker, 2002; Herman, 1996; Murray & Powell, 2009). The perceived threat or subjective evaluation of the victim of the partner abuse is shown to be the factor that most influences her behaviour and reactions to the traumatic event (Padejski & Biro, 2014). An exposure to violence during her lifetime increases the risk of recurrence and transmission of violence to subsequent generations (Chamberlain, 2006; Mitković, 2010).

Women victims of violence are at a much higher risk of poverty and social exclusion, and far more often beneficiaries of social and material assistance (Klein, 2009; Seith, 2001), since violence limits their access to resources and opportunities in different fields. They have significantly more difficulty in finding a job, tend to be absent from work, and also lose their jobs more often, due to health problems or because they do not have the childcare support. They have a number of financial difficulties, as well as problems to provide permanent and quality accommodation (Ignjatović & Pešić, 2012; Kelly et al., 2015; Lybecker Jensen & Nielsen, 2005; Romero, Chavkin, Wise, & Smith, 2003).

Coping Strategies

Although previous research has emphasized passivity and maladaptive behaviours and reactions (Calvete, Corral, & Estévez, 2008), it appears that abused women (especially those who have turned for help and managed to leave their violent partners) have used various strategies, depending on the characteristics of violence and the resources available (Bastiani, Saurel-Cubizolles, & Romito, 2018). If they remain in a violent relationship, they do so due to a lack of knowledge, opportunities, or inadequate community interventions and resources (Dutton, 1992, according to Chiara & Scott, 2008), or other reasons that limit the ability to look at a complex situation and take decisions, and make choices in their best interests.

Coping strategies include a broad range of activities, cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and / or internal demands, emotion-oriented (aimed at reducing emotional distress and changing subjective assessment

of the situation), and towards the problem (altering the objective situation) (Half, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, according to Chiara & Scott, 2008). Although less commonly used, security planning strategies give better effects, while avoidance strategies and attempts to end the relationship exacerbate the situation (Muftić, Hoppe, & Grubb, 2019). Two models are also used in the literature to conceptualize help seeking behaviour, survival hypothesis, and stage model, which are not mutually exclusive, and see the victim as a person overcoming many obstacles while actively seeking help and support, resorting to all available means, in stages, so as to achieve her goal, which is a process influenced by individual, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors (Bastiani et al., 2018).

The resources available to women are linked to their decisions. Employment (work outside the home) and more support from family and community have been shown to lead to more frequent use of problem-focused strategies, and more frequent search for protection against violence. When violence has been stopped, coping strategies play a key role in the recovery, coping and post-traumatic growth of a woman (Calvete et al., 2008; Pomicino et al., 2018). Women emerging from violence face the difficult task of creating a new life. It is important for professionals to have a contextualized understanding of their behaviour, in order to be less judgemental towards those who return to a violent relationship and organize interventions better (Chiara & Scott, 2008; Kelly et al., 2015; Krug et al., 2002). In this respect, it is important to review the measures and services offered to women with the experience of violence, which, with psychological and legal support, should include access to information and specific assistance (Ignjatović & Pešić, 2012; Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018; Postmus, Severson, Berry, & Yoo, 2008).

Rebuilding Lives after Leaving an Abusive Relationship and Institutional Response to Women's Needs

Research shows that most abused women (80% - 90%) have not used the formal sources of assistance. The most common reasons put forward for this are that there is no need or no use, and a number of obstacles of an external and internal nature (money, time, lack of knowledge about resources, childcare or inability to provide transport to the services, being prevented by their partners, or not believing that they are going to receive help, shame, fear of being condemned or criticized, protection of partners and many others) (Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005).

Women report on (dis)satisfaction with the services provided by the institutions, pointing to the various factors on which this depends: feeling that they have not ben seriously taken in charge, that they have not been trusted, that they have not been understood or listened to, or that they have not received the services they requested (Lybecker Jensen & Nielsen, 2005). Research confirms that

experts do not recognize the impact of violence, but rather reduce it to physical attacks, focus on short-term security, underestimate post-separation violence, put the pressure on women to get out of a violent relationship before establishing safe circumstances, have contradictory expectations, especially regarding the child protection in situations where women do not receive support for it (Kelly et al., 2015). A positive assessment of the institutional response is associated with the absence of prejudice, the identification of women's needs and the confidence of women in the ability of professionals to help (Lybecker Jensen & Nielsen, 2005).

In our context, likewise, women with the experience of violence rarely turn to institutions for help (Babović et al., 2010; Ćopic, Nikolić-Ristanović, & Petrović, 2010; OEBS, 2019), and experts' reactions are perceived as restrained and inappropriate, with frequent shifting of responsibilities to other institutions, long procedures and the possibility of their violent partners extending those in different ways, lack of information and support during the proceedings, lack of available and concrete assistance (Ćopić, 2002; Ignjatović, 2011; Ignjatović, 2016; Ignjatović, Pavlović-Babić, & Lukić, 2015; Lukić & Jovanović, 2001). The women's experiences confirm multiple vulnerability, developed fears and feelings of helplessness, especially among those who are unemployed, with lower education, from rural areas and / or from underdeveloped regions of Serbia, with no home / apartment ownership. These women often lack understanding and support of their family, friends and the community, which is why they remain in abusive relationships for a long time (Ignjatović & Pešić, 2012; OEBS, 2019). An effective institutional response implies multisectoral action, a combination of legal measures and sufficiently accessible social services (Hagemann-White, 2006; Hagemann-White & Bohn, 2007). so that the measures taken do not conflict with the victim's goals and interests, and ensure her participation in the decision-making, taking into account her understanding of empowerment and justice, and understanding the factors that influence her to renounce to further actions (Hagemann-White, 2019). Therefore, understanding the context and the assessment that mobilize appropriate protection strategies are crucial. The system intervention is more effective when the victim is motivated and willing to accept help, when institutions exchange information, informs women, and when support is concrete and provided for a sufficiently long period of time (Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018; Robinson & Tregidga, 2007).

Women with the experience of violence seek exits and support, more often than informal sources, which themselves become targets of attacks, and which will determine their involvement (Gregory, 2017). From institutions, when violence is more severe in nature, children are affected (Bastiani et al., 2018). It has been shown ascrucial that support for women during the process of leaving an abusive relationship and building a new life is available for at least two years, and that should be multidimensional and well synchronized (including appropriate security activities, re-establishing relationships, providing concrete assistance and specialized services, recovery from traumatic experience and empowerment,

until normalization of life in diverse domains) (Bastiani et al., 2018; Ignjatović et al., 2015; Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018; Pešić, 2016).

The occurrence of fewer violent events (which is ensured by legal protection measures) does not mean that violence has been completely stopped. This constitutes the difference between being safe and feeling safe. Given that few perpetrators of violence experience liability in criminal or civil proceedings, victims are expected to undertake a range of security activities, which consumes a lot of time and energy in "battles with the system" (Kelly et al., 2015).

In Serbia, there are no data on the actual effects of emergency, and protection measures against domestic violence, which are supposed to stop violence and prevent its recurrence, but their numbers are steadily increasing (Ignjatović & Macanović, 2018, 2019). Although the international standards require accessible and affordable general support services for women and their children[5] (financial and psychological support, legal aid, social and health care, housing, employment, childcare), in our context there is no aggregated publicly available information as to which services, to what extent, in what period of duration, and from which providers are available to victims.

Victim support services are often of a project nature, being reduced due to austerity or lack of funding in underdeveloped municipalities (Ignjatović & Drobnjak, 2014). They are also characterized by one-dimensionality and / or focus on short-term interventions (for example, lump-sum financial assistance or temporary safe accommodation), without a long-term plan and measures, or a mismatch (for example, between measures to protect against domestic violence and the model of maintaining a child's personal relationships with a non-trusted parent who behaves violently) (Ignjatović, 2013; Ignjatović, 2016; Pešić, 2016). Services for women with complex needs (women with disabilities, chronic illnesses and mental illnesses, the poor, the unemployed, the Roma population, with many children and others) are completely inadequate (or completely lacking), as well as monitoring and assessing the effects of the measures taken (Ignjatović, 2013; Ignjatović & Drobnjak, 2014; Ignjatović & Pešić, 2012). The mentioned shortcomings have not been eliminated even with the latest legal amendments (Ignjatović & Macanović, 2018, 2019), because they require harmonization of legal solutions, strategic and operational measures and activities, as well as adequate financial resources.

Leaving an abusive relationship is a complex process (not a one-off act that depends on the will of the woman), a unique "long-distance journey" in which new coping skills are acquired (Kelly, 2003; Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018). Building a life after breaking out a violent intimate partner relationship begins by moving beyond the perpetrator's control, and expanding the space for action across a number of areas: parenting, self-awareness, friends and family, community, seeking help, housing, competencies, well-being and security, financial situation.

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[5] Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, Art. 20.

While the space for action is growing in all the aspects, the biggest changes are happening in the sense of security, appealing for help, and personal competencies (Kelly et al., 2015). Safe and permanent housing for many women is more important than other domains, while accessible care for children is vital for single mothers. The space for action is linked to psychological health, but many women report modest health system responses and are critical of the predominance of medication treatment approach. For most, the challenge is to focus on them, and to control their emotional state, mental and physical health, which is the basis for the renewal of one's life and success in other areas. A continuous support for specialized independent programs (for example, within women's organizations that understand violence, respect women's independence, mediate and advocate for women's needs in institutions), as well as support from friends and family, is important in building confidence, rebuilding relationships with children and others, as well as exercising the right to protection and support (Kelly et al., 2015).

The few longitudinal studies of women's needs during and after leaving an abusive partnership highlight several key topics that should guide interventions (Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018). Going through judicial procedures, ending violence, recovering and rebuilding one's life takes time. It is essential that professionals understand the violence (which occurs before and after separation), in order to be able to support the victims. Being able to provide a safe home and financial independence (being and feeling safe) are essential conditions for recovery and rebuilding one's life. The efficient social control of the perpetrator's abusive behaviour, as well as the will and capacity of the institutions to respond to the needs of women and their children, especially those of multiple, complex and interdependent nature, are requisite (yet often lacking). Community resources can be helpful or they present obstacles (when they are inadequate or lacking), which will support or discourage women from the process of breaking out of a circle of violence, recovery, and attaining independence.

The crucial role of specialized independent programs for women with experience of violence, their mediation and representation of women before the institutions, is being confirmed: supporting victims in becoming aware of the dynamics of violence, promoting self-protection and protecting children, using effective overcoming strategies more often, and gaining more access to community resources (Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018). Psychological programs that focus on stabilization, safety, empowerment, and the skills to manage PTSD symptoms, anxiety, and depression play an important role.

In all the procedures, it is important that the experiences of the victim / survivor are heard and respected, and that the lent support better recognizes their needs. The victims must be reassured that justice protects them, not only before they leave the abusive relationship, but also afterwards, in order to successfully rebuild their lives (Kelly et al., 2015; Pomicino et al., 2018).

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NASILJE PREMA ŽENAMA U INTIMNOM PARTNERSKOM ODNOSU I INSTITUCIONALNI ODGOVOR NA POTREBE ŽENA

Iako postoje tendencije da se žene u partnerskoj relaciji prikažu kao jednako fizički agresivne koliko i muškarci, da iniciraju nasilje, svete se i koriste smrtonosnu silu gotovo isto kao i muškarci, nasilje muškaraca prema ženama je ozbiljnije, čine ga teža i učestalija dela, većeg raspona manifestacija i sa težim posledicama. Zbog toga je neopravdano govoriti o rodnoj simetriji i ovu vrstu nasilja predstavljati rodno neutralnim pojmovima. Ovaj rad sadrži pregled najvažnijih odlika posmatranog fenomena, stavljajući fokus na psihičko nasilje, koje igra ključnu ulogu u „slamanju otpora" i u obezbeđivanju „dobrovoljne žrtve", odnosno kontrolu prinudom, koja je strukturne prirode i koja se širi na sve aspekte života žene. Paradoksalno, napuštanje nasilnog partnera predstavlja faktor rizika za nasilje i smatra se da je potencijalno opasnije od ostajanja u vezi. U literaturi se na različite načine koncipira traženje pomoći i strategije prevladavanja koje koriste žene sa iskustvom nasilja, a istraživanja potvrđuju da one zavise od karakteristika nasilja i dostupnih resursa. Pokazuje se da je za izlazak iz nasilja i uspostavljanje novog života ključno da stručnjaci razumeju rodnu prirodu nasilja, da postoji efikasna društvena kontrola nasilnog ponašanja, podrška ženama pružana od specijalizovanih nezavisnih programa, u dužem periodu, koja je višedimenzionalna i dobro sinhronizovana, tako da uključuje žene i uzima u obzir njihove potrebe, šireći njihov osećaj sigurnosti i prostor za akciju.

Ključne reči: institucionalna podrška, izlazak iz nasilja, kontrola prinudom, nasilje u intimnom partnerskom odnosu, potrebe žrtve