

GENDER VIOLENCE AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

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SUMMARY

The focus of this article is to show that in Italy nowadays it is not important to relate psychopathology with violence. That is because it seems that it is more important to study gender and domestic violence as a social and cultural phenomenon than analyzing its psychopathological issues. Obviously, in accord with the literature there is a relationship about psychopathology and violence and this relationship concerns only about 5% of the total violence reported.

Key words: gender - domestic violence - Intimate partner violence (IPV)

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INTRODUCTION

Scientific literature about domestic violence lacked trials until the past 20 years. The United Nations has identified gender-based violence against woman as a global health and development issue. Research is needed to identify the causes, dynamics and outcomes of gender based-violence, including media effects and how this type of violence depends on the cultural context (Russo 2006, Tiihonen 1996).

LITERATURE AND DATA

Gender based violence is a problem that is increasing, the data revealed that at least 5% of those women younger than 18 have been abused at home. Studies in the USA indicate that between 15% and 30% of women undergo some type of aggression in their relationship as a couple (Holtzworth 2000).

Those who perpetrate domestic violence usually present significant psychological deficits such as cognitive bias, mainly distorted thoughts as to sexual roles and the inferiority of woman. But they also demonstrate irritability, and a failure to control impulse, alcohol abuse and pathological jealousy (Echeburúa 1998).

Moreover, personality disorder has frequently been identified among aggressors. Antisocial, borderline and narcissistic personality are the most frequently noted (Huss 2000).

The therapeutic perspectives consist in specific intervention programs, based on psychoeducation and cognitive psychotherapy. The outcomes depend about the ability of the men involved to complete the programs. One of the most important difficulties is that perpetrators deny or at least minimize the problem.

The relationship between IPV and mental disorder has yet to be explained. Many men using IPV have experienced childhood abuse that are associated with adult mental disorder (Corsi 1995)

The literature tell us that the psychiatric symptomatology is not very much higher than in the general population.

The studies revealed that the relationship between psychopathology and violence is not higher in those men who participate in specific intervention programs spontaneously; however the relationship is higher in that group who are or were in prison for their violent behaviours.

In Italy the specific intervention programs had a beginning in 2009 in Florence and actually there are only 12 associations who dispensed these programs. The association for women against violence are more of 300. So Italy is largely late with the prevention and treatment of the phenomenon of domestic and gender violence.

Theoretically, violence can be interpreted as a behavioural or criminal problem, but could be also interpreted as a function of underlying psychological or psychiatric difficulties. Both conditions appear often simultaneously and have influence on each other.

So the intervention program about IPV includes assessment, knowledge and treatment of psychiatric disorder and it is necessary that there is cooperation of many health services so the intervention program is effective (McHugh 2006).

CONCLUSION

The most important issue seems to be to start specific programs of intervention about men who perpetuate violence, independently from the incidence of psychopathology.

There are few studies in Italy and in the future it will be useful and interesting to collect the experiences of the 12 associations in order to build a representative case database and to start scientific studies. We hope that the associations who make specific programs can be involved in specific studies and improve specific programs against gender violence.

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