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PREVALENCE AND TYPES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract: Violence against women is a global problem with major implications for the physical and mental health of victims, as well as for social development. By carrying out this study, we aimed to analyze the prevalence and diversity of types of violence against women in different social and cultural contexts, highlighting the factors that contribute to its perpetuation, so that directions can be drawn for interventions and prevention policies that are as effective as possible. Violence against women is a form of discrimination and abuse that affects all societies, regardless of the level of economic or cultural development. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over a third of women worldwide have been victims of physical or sexual violence at least once in their lives. Understanding the types and prevalence of violence against women in various social and cultural contexts is essential for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies. The purpose of this study is to identify how violence is perceived and understood by the study subjects, the risk and prevention factors in the case of this phenomenon, their experience with violence, as well as the awareness and support that can be provided in these cases.

Keywords: woman, violence, social, cultural, prevalence

Résumé : La violence à l'égard des femmes est un problème mondial aux conséquences majeures sur la santé physique et mentale des victimes, ainsi que sur le développement social. Cette étude vise à analyser la prévalence et la diversité des formes de violence à l'égard des femmes dans différents contextes socioculturels, en mettant en lumière les facteurs qui contribuent à sa perpétuation, afin d'orienter les interventions et les politiques de prévention les plus efficaces possible. La violence à l'égard des femmes est une forme de discrimination et d'abus qui touche toutes les sociétés, quel que soit leur niveau de développement économique ou culturel. Selon l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS), plus d'un tiers des femmes dans le monde ont été victimes de violences physiques ou

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sexuelles au moins une fois dans leur vie. Comprendre les types et la prévalence de la violence à l'égard des femmes dans divers contextes socioculturels est essentiel à l'élaboration de stratégies de prévention et d'intervention efficaces. Cette étude vise à identifier la perception et la compréhension de la violence par les participantes, les facteurs de risque et de prévention liés à ce phénomène, leur expérience de la violence, ainsi que la sensibilisation et le soutien qui peuvent leur être apportés.

Mots-clés : femme, violence, contexte social et culturel, prévalence

Rezumat: Violența împotriva femeii reprezintă o problemă globală cu implicații majore asupra sănătății fizice și mentale a victimelor, precum și asupra dezvoltării sociale. Prin realizarea acestui studiu am avut în vedere analizarea prevalenței și diversității tipurilor de violență împotriva femeii, care are loc în diferite contexte sociale și culturale, evidențiind factorii care contribuie la perpetuarea acesteia, astfel încât să se poată trasa direcții pentru intervenții și politici de prevenire cât mai eficiente.

Violența împotriva femeii este o formă de discriminare și abuz care afectează toate societățile, indiferent de nivelul de dezvoltare economică sau culturală. Conform Organizației Mondiale a Sănătății (OMS), peste o treime din femeile din întreaga lume au fost victime ale violenței fizice sau sexuale cel puțin o dată în viață. Înțelegerea tipurilor și prevalenței violenței împotriva femeilor în contexte sociale și culturale variate este esențială pentru dezvoltarea unor strategii eficiente de prevenire și intervenție. Realizarea acestui studiu are în vedere identificarea modului în care este percepută și conștientizată violența de către subiecții studiului, a factorilor de risc și de prevenție în cazul acestui fenomen, a experienței acestora în legătură cu manifestarea violenței, precum și a conștientizării și a sprijinului ce se poate oferi în aceste cazuri.

Cuvinte-cheie: femeie, violența, social, cultural, prevalență

1. Introduction

Violence is considered one of the most serious social challenges faced by various global communities. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines domestic violence as a context in which power or control is consciously used, including both physical, sexual, psychological, and economic forms of violence directed against a person, most of the time by a family member or an intimate partner. These actions damage the integrity, dignity, personal security, or rights of the affected individual.

Violence, being a complex phenomenon, has aroused the interest of both researchers, in particular, and society as a whole, given its impact with serious consequences on both the individual and the community. It is important to define violence as accurately as possible to achieve an understanding and an effective approach to this phenomenon.

Johnson (2008) defines domestic violence as any physical, emotional or sexual behaviour manifested between members of a family or between partners involved in an intimate relationship and that produces physical, psychological or social damage.

This definition is also supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), which points out that domestic violence can include, but is not limited to, beating, verbal abuse, sexual coercion, coercive control and neglect (WHO, 2002). One aspect that is worth mentioning about domestic violence is the fact that it is not limited to physical aggression, but can also involve subtle aspects, such as emotional manipulation or excessive control. In the context of Romania, recent academic research highlights that these subtle forms of abuse, such as economic control, serve as invisible barriers that prevent victims from leaving abusive relationships due to financial dependency (ASOCIAȚIA ANAIS, 2024). Furthermore, statistical data in Romania reveals a sharp escalation in reported domestic violence cases, which reflects both a persistent structural phenomenon and a progressive increase in victims' willingness to seek institutional help (Raport Monitorizare, 2026).

It is important to take into account the cultural and social context in which it occurs, as some cultures tolerate or even accept certain forms of violence, which can complicate addressing this phenomenon globally (Gibbs, 2021). In Romanian society, empirical studies show that patriarchal stereotypes and cultural tolerance remain high; for instance, a significant part of the population still considers certain restrictive and controlling behaviours by male partners to be acceptable, framing psychological violence as a cultural norm rather than an abuse (Centrul FILIA, 2022). This normalization is deeply intersectional, as the vulnerability of women in Romania increases exponentially when gender disparities overlap with rural isolation, low education levels, and poverty (Bragă, 2020; Stănescu, 2023). Additionally, severe cases of gender-based violence and femicide in Romania are often the tragic culmination of a long, unaddressed continuum of domestic abuse, emphasizing the need for stricter legal definitions and targeted public policies (Trandafir, 2025). In implementing policies, it is important to define the concept of violence to make interventions more effective in combating this phenomenon and providing support to victims.

2. Forms of violence

As specified in the literature, when discussing violence, we must take into account that it manifests in several forms and can be classified according to its nature and manifestations. The types of violence included in the literature, but not limited to these, are:

Physical violence, which is defined as any form of physical aggression directed against a person, both within a family relationship or between partners, as well as between persons. These acts may include beatings, stabbing, strangulation, or any other form of physical contact that causes bodily harm or distress (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Emotional or psychological violence is the form of violence that refers to verbal or non-verbal behaviours used by a person to intimidate, humiliate, control,

or manipulate another person. These behaviours may include insults, threats, social isolation, or denial of the individual's rights and needs (Stark, 2007).

Sexual violence is a type of violence that involves any form of sexual assault or coercive sexual behaviour directed against a person without their consent. This type of violence includes rape, sexual harassment, sexual coercion, or any other form of sexual exploitation (Finkelhor et al., 1988).

Economic violence is violence that consists of controlling or limiting a person's access to the financial or material resources necessary to ensure their well-being and independence. This may include limiting or disrupting access to money, destroying property, or preventing them from getting a job (Adams et al., 2008). In Romania, statistics indicate high prevalence, with 28.2% of women experiencing physical violence and over 60% of abuse victims facing economic control (Salvați Copiii România, 2025; Asociația ANAIS, 2024). You can review these findings on the Salvați Copiii România and Asociația ANAIS websites.

Violence can also manifest itself against children and refers to any abusive or negligent behaviour directed against children within a family and beyond. This can include physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect, and can have serious consequences on children's development and well-being (Cicchetti & Toth, 2005).

To tackle all these types of violence as effectively as possible, it is necessary to recognise and understand them in all their forms.

When examining institutional interventions against physical and emotional violence, recent literature published by the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Press analyzes the critical role of frontline police officers and the efficacy of emergency protection orders, noting that a rejection of such legal instruments deeply damages the victim's trust in authorities and severely amplifies the aggressor's coercive control (Gîtlan, 2023).

3. Characteristics of victims of violence

Violence in general and domestic violence in particular can affect people from all social categories. However, there are certain characteristics and factors identified that can increase or decrease a person's vulnerability to this phenomenon, such as:

The gender of the person subjected to violence, as evidenced by studies, shows that women are more likely to be victims of violence, especially domestic violence, as opposed to men, and this is reflected in a significantly higher proportion of women who report experiences of abuse in their relationships (Archer, 2000).

Archer, in his 2000 study, found that women are twice as likely to be victims of domestic violence as men (Archer, 2000). This discrepancy in the prevalence of victimization between the sexes indicates the existence of specific dynamics and risk factors that can influence women's exposure and vulnerability to domestic violence.

Age is another element that determines vulnerability to the manifestation of violence; for example, young people and younger women may be more likely to

experience violence in their relationships, as they are often more emotionally and financially dependent on their partners (Capaldi et al., 2012). This vulnerability can be attributed to several factors, especially in the case of domestic violence, including their level of emotional and financial dependence on their partners. Young people and younger women may have fewer personal and social resources to cope with situations of abuse. They may be less prepared to identify and seek help in such difficult circumstances (Capaldi et al., 2012). Thus, it is evident that age plays a significant role in determining an individual's exposure and vulnerability to domestic violence.

Socio-economic status is a very important factor when analyzing vulnerability to violence, especially in the case of domestic violence, according to recent research. People with limited financial resources or living in disadvantaged communities are often at increased risk of becoming victims of this phenomenon (Huang et al., 2021).

There are many reasons for this vulnerability, including the fact that low-income people may find it difficult to ensure their financial independence and access the support they need to escape from an abusive relationship, as well as the fact that they may have limited access to services and support resources available to victims of domestic violence, such as emergency shelters or psychological counselling. Thus, the lack of financial and social resources can cause difficulties for people affected by domestic violence who feel trapped in an abusive relationship, without the possibility of escaping or seeking help (Huang et al., 2021). Also, people with limited financial resources or living in disadvantaged communities are often at increased risk of becoming victims of this phenomenon (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2020), as they may have difficulty in ensuring their financial independence and accessing the necessary support to escape from an abusive relationship, and may have more limited access to services and support resources available to victims of domestic violence, such as emergency shelters or psychological counseling.

Marital status, in cases of domestic violence, can be a favoring factor, so that people who are married or those who are in a cohabitation relationship may be exposed to a higher risk of domestic violence, than those who are single or not involved in a stable relationship (Johnson & Leone, 2005), data also confirmed by other recent studies (Kimmel et al., 2020). There is also research that shows that commitment to a cohabiting relationship can determine an environment conducive to the manifestation of abusive behaviours, and people involved in an official relationship, such as marriage, may have greater difficulty recognizing or assuming their rights to end the abuse (Kimmel et al., 2020). Thus, marital status can significantly influence exposure and vulnerability to domestic violence, and understanding this aspect is very important for the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies.

People who have experienced domestic violence in the past may be more predisposed to experience it again in their relationships, as they may be prone to repeat the patterns of behaviour in their previous relationships (Dutton & Painter, 1993).

Previous experience of abuse is an important factor in the analysis of risk and exposure to domestic violence, according to studies carried out, which also indicate the existence of persistent behavioural and relational patterns among people who have survived abuse in the past; thus, these people can develop a complex set of reactions and coping strategies that can predispose them to increased risk in their future relationships. At the same time, psychological and emotional trauma resulting from the previous experience of abuse can affect a person's ability to identify and end abusive behaviours in their subsequent relationships (Dutton et al., 2020).

4. Specific legislation in cases of violence

Legislation specific to violence in general and domestic violence in particular is a very important tool to combat this phenomenon and protect victims. At the international level, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention, is a key document that sets standards and measures to combat this phenomenon at the European level (Council of Europe, 2011).

Regarding the legislative framework in our country, Romania adopted Law no. 217/2003 for preventing and combating domestic violence, which defines and penalizes domestic violence and provides protection and support to victims (Romanian Parliament, 2003). This law was subsequently amended and supplemented several times to improve its effectiveness and coverage.

Recently, in 2021, Romania adopted a new law to prevent and combat domestic violence, Law no. 109/2021 (Romanian Parliament, 2021). This law represents a significant update on the existing legal framework, strengthening protection measures for victims, introducing tougher sanctions for perpetrators, and establishing clearer and more effective procedures for the intervention of the authorities in cases of domestic violence.

In addition to these legislative initiatives, Romania has adopted other legislative and policy measures to address the issue of domestic violence. An example is the National Strategy of 19 December 2022 on promoting equal opportunities and treatment between women and men and preventing and combating domestic violence for the period 2022-2027, which sets concrete objectives and measures to prevent and combat this phenomenon (Romanian Government, 2020).

These legislative and policy efforts reflect the commitment of the Romanian authorities to combating domestic violence and protecting the rights and safety of victims.

The legislation in Romania for preventing and combating domestic violence is established and regulated by the following normative acts, namely:

Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence is an important legal instrument in the fight against domestic abuse in Romania. This law includes several essential aspects for addressing and solving problems related

to domestic violence. The law clearly establishes what domestic violence means, specifying that it includes any form of abusive or violent behaviour between members of a family, causing physical, mental or emotional suffering.

Law no. 30/2016 for the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. This law has as its main purpose the adoption and implementation of the necessary measures to ensure the protection of women and victims of domestic violence. States Parties are obliged to protect victims of violence against women and to punish perpetrators in accordance with national laws. States Parties, including Romania, are obliged to adopt and implement the necessary measures to comply with the provisions of the Convention in their national legislation.

The Order of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Minister of Labour and Social Justice no. 146/2578/2018 on the way of handling cases of domestic violence by police officers regulates the way police officers handle cases of domestic violence. It allows them to issue provisional protection orders valid for 5 days to protect victims. It includes intervention procedures, cooperation with other institutions, a risk-assessment methodology, and the implementation of protection orders. The police can intervene ex officio or based on the notifications received through various channels, including emergency calls to 112 (ICDE - European Romania).

Law no. 211/2004 on some measures to ensure the protection of victims of crime, with subsequent amendments and completions. To ensure the protection of victims of crime, this law regulates measures to inform victims of their rights and to provide psychological counselling, free legal aid, and financial compensation by the state. The purpose of the law is to support victims in their recovery and social reintegration, ensuring them the necessary protection and access to essential resources.

Law no. 197/2012 on quality assurance in the field of social services, with subsequent amendments and completions. This law regulates the process of evaluation, certification, monitoring and control for quality assurance in the field of social services. The provisions of this law apply to all social services and to public and private social service providers operating in Romania. The objective of the law is to guarantee high standards and efficiency in the provision of these services to beneficiaries.

The Social Assistance Law no. 292/2011, as subsequently amended and supplemented in Romania, establishes the rules for the organization and functioning of the social assistance system. The main goal is to protect and support individuals and groups in need. The law details the types of services and aids that can be offered. These include counselling, rehabilitation, personal care, housing support and financial aid (e.g. allowances and social benefits). The law identifies groups that can receive help, such as: children, the elderly, people with disabilities, families in difficulty, homeless people and victims of domestic violence.

Government Ordinance no. 68/2003 on social services, with subsequent amendments and completions. Social services, for this ordinance, represent the complex set of measures and actions undertaken to satisfy individual, family or

group social needs, to prevent and overcome situations of difficulty, vulnerability or dependence, to preserve the autonomy and protection of the person, to prevent marginalization and social exclusion, to promote social inclusion and to increase the quality of life. The changes and additions brought over time aimed at adapting social services to the evolving needs and requirements of Romanian society. *Government Ordinance no. 68/2003* regulates social services in Romania, defining them as a complex set of interventions aimed at satisfying individual, family, and group needs and at preventing and overcoming social difficulties and vulnerabilities. These services are designed to protect people's autonomy and well-being, prevent marginalisation and social exclusion, promote inclusion, and improve quality of life. The ordinance has undergone adjustments over time to reflect changes in social needs and challenges in Romania.

Government Decision no. 49/2011 for the approval of the Framework Methodology on prevention and intervention in multidisciplinary teams and networks in situations of violence against children and domestic violence and of the Methodology for multidisciplinary and interinstitutional intervention on exploited children at risk of exploitation through labor, child victims of human trafficking, as well as Romanian migrant children victims of other forms of violence on the territory of other states.

Government Decision no. 797/2017 for the approval of the framework regulations for the organization and functioning of the public social assistance services and the indicative personnel structure. Its role is to ensure better use of resources and effective coordination between the different levels of public administration.

Order no. 20840/2022 for the approval of the Mandatory Minimum Standards for the application of case management within social services for victims of domestic violence - mandatory minimum standard of 21 September 2022 on the application of case management within social services for victims of domestic violence.

5. Methodology

Objectives

This study aims to highlight the links between socio-economic conditions, personal experiences, and the degree of social awareness, and to identify psychosocial barriers and mechanisms that can support community involvement and preventive education across different social and cultural contexts.

In line with the general aim of the study, the research pursues the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the influence of the level of education and the environment of residence on the perceptions of the severity, causes, and forms of manifestation of violence against women.

2. To assess the associations between socio-economic factors (income, educational level, background) and the probability of victimization or the type of violence experienced (physical, psychological, economic, sexual).

3. Assessing the psychosocial barriers (fear of reprisals, shame, lack of trust in public institutions) that contribute to the non-reporting of cases of violence.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. The level of education and the environment of residence influence the perception and awareness of violence against women.

Hypothesis 2. Socio-economic factors (income, education, environment) are associated with the increased risk of victimization and the type of violence experienced.

Hypothesis 3. Psychosocial barriers — fear of reprisals, shame and lack of trust in the authorities — are the main reasons cited for not reporting cases of violence.

Study participants

Table 1. Socio-demographic distribution of the research sample

Variable	Categories	N (%)
Age	Subs 20 and – 13 (11.9%) • 21–30 and – 34 (31.2%) • 31–40 and – 36 (33.0%) • 41–50 and – 19 (17.4%) • Peste 50 and – 7 (6.4%)	
Gender	Female – 98 (89.9%) • Male – 11 (10.1%)	
Education	No education – 1 (0.9%) • Secondary school – 3 (2.8%) • High school/college – 13 (11.9%) • Undergraduate/postgraduate education – 92 (84.4%)	
Marital status	Single – 31 (28.4%) • Married – 45 (41.3%) • Long-term partnership – 23 (21.1%) • Divorced – 7 (6.4%) • In relationships with other people – 3 (2.8%)	
Residency	Urban – 83 (76.1%) • Rural – 26 (23.9%)	
Monthly income	No income – 18 (16.5%) • Under 3000 lei – 22 (20.2%) • 3000–5000 lei – 32 (29.4%) • Over 5000 lei – 37 (33.9%)	

The research sample (Table 1) included 109 respondents, predominantly women (89.9%), aged between 31 and 40 years (33.0%) and 21 and 30 years (31.2%), reflecting a young, professionally active adult population. Most participants come from urban areas (76.1%) and have university or postgraduate education (84.4%), indicating a high level of education and social awareness. Regarding marital status, 41.3% are married, 28.4% are single, and the rest are in long-term partnerships or other forms of relationship. The income distribution shows a balanced representation, with 33.9% of respondents earning over 5000 lei/month and 29.4% between 3000 and 5000 lei, suggesting a socio-economic diversity relevant to the analysis of perceptions regarding violence against women.

Instruments

The research tool used was a self-administered questionnaire, developed to assess perceptions, experiences, and awareness of violence against women in different social and cultural contexts. Built based on the literature and international guidelines on the prevention of gender-based violence (WHO, UN Women, Council of Europe – Istanbul Convention), the questionnaire is structured in five main sections: perception and awareness of violence, risk factors and prevention, personal and observational experience of violence, awareness and institutional support, as well as demographic data of respondents. The items combine closed-ended questions with single- or multiple-answer options, and open-ended questions intended for qualitative analysis of the answers. The tool was prepared for clarity and subsequently applied online, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, and the answers were statistically and thematically analyzed to capture the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation.

Analysis and interpretation of results

Hypothesis 1. The level of education and the environment of residence influence the perception and awareness of violence against women.

Table 2. The relationship between socio-demographic variables and perceptions of violence against women

Variables analysed	DF	χ^2 (Pearson)	p (2-tailed)	Result statistic
Level of education × „Violence against women is a major problem in society”	3	57.75	.000	**Significant**
Level of education × „Society has an appropriate attitude towards victims of violence”	3	7.68	.053	Statistically insignificant
Environment of residence × „Violence against women is a major problem in society”	1	0.77	.381	Insignificant
Residence environment × „Society has an appropriate attitude towards victims of violence”	1	0.08	.783	Insignificant

The results obtained (Table 1) highlight the fact that the level of education significantly influences the perception of violence against women. The Chi-square test reveals a strong association between education and the perception of the severity of the phenomenon ($\chi^2(3, N = 109) = 57.75, p < .001$), which indicates that people with university or postgraduate studies tend to consider to a significantly greater extent that violence against women is a major problem in society. This

relationship suggests that a higher level of education is associated with increased awareness and sensitivity to the issue of gender-based violence.

In contrast, the link between the level of education and the perception of society's attitude towards victims is not statistically significant ($\chi^2(3, N = 109) = 7.68$, $p = .053$), although the general trend shows that more educated people are more critical and less inclined to consider that society reacts adequately to situations of violence.

On the other hand, the environment of residence (urban/rural) does not exert a significant influence on the general perception of violence against women ($\chi^2(1, N = 109) = 0.77$, $p = .381$), nor on the assessment of society's attitude ($\chi^2(1, N = 109) = 0.08$, $p = .783$). These results show that, regardless of the environment of origin, participants manifest similar perceptions in relation to the severity and social treatment of the phenomenon of violence.

In conclusion, hypothesis 1 is partially confirmed: the level of education proves to be a significant factor in the formation of perceptions of violence against women, while the environment of residence does not significantly influence these perceptions.

Hypothesis 2. Socio-economic factors (income, education, environment) are associated with the increased risk of victimization and the type of violence experienced.

Table 3. Association between socio-economic factors and the type of violence experienced (Chi-square test, N = 109)

Variables analysed	df	χ^2 (Pearson)	p (2-tailed)	Statistical result
Level of education × Type of violence experienced	9	23.20	.006	**Significant**
Residence Environment × Type of Violence Experienced	3	2.95	.400	Insignificant
Monthly Income × Type of Violence Experienced	9	7.01	.636	Insignificant

The results of the Chi-square test (Table 3) indicate a significant association between the level of education and the type of violence experienced ($\chi^2(9, N = 109) = 23.20$, $p = .006$). People with a lower level of education (no education, middle school or high school) reported experiences of verbal/psychological violence or multiple forms of abuse more frequently. In contrast, respondents with undergraduate/postgraduate education showed a lower incidence of these forms of victimization.

In contrast, the environment of residence (urban/rural) did not show a significant association with the type of violence ($\chi^2(3, N = 109) = 2.95$, $p = .400$), suggesting that the risk of victimization is similar regardless of the environment of origin. Also, monthly income does not significantly influence the type of violence reported ($\chi^2(9, N = 109) = 7.01$, $p = .636$). However, the general trend shows that

people with lower incomes tend to experience forms of psychological violence more frequently.

In conclusion, hypothesis 2 is partially confirmed. Among the socio-economic factors analyzed, the level of education is the only significant predictor of the risk of victimization, while income and residential environment do not have a statistically significant influence on the type of violence experienced.

Table 4. Results of binary logistic regression on the influence of socio-economic factors on the probability of victimization (N = 109)

Predictor	B	S.E.	Forest	df	p	Exp(B)	95% CI for Exp(B)
Age	1.98	—	1.98	4	.739	—	—
Level of education	—	—	6.49	3	.090	—	—
Low level (≤ high school)	−1.70	.68	6.32	1	**.012**	0.18	[0.05, 0.69]
Monthly income	—	—	2.68	3	.443	—	—
Constant	.16	.83	.04	1	.850	1.17	—
Model global							
$\chi^2(10, N = 109) = 9.69$, $p = .468$							
R^2 Cox & Snell = .085, R^2 Nagelkerke = .123							
Hosmer–Lemeshow $\chi^2(7) = 5.28$, $p = .626$							
Total Correct Classification = **74.3%**							

The logistic model (Table 4) tested the effects of age, education level, and monthly income on the likelihood of being a victim of violence. Although the overall model is not significant ($\chi^2(10, N = 109) = 9.69$, $p = .468$), it explains between 8.5% (Cox & Snell) and 12.3% (Nagelkerke) of the variance in victimization and correctly classifies 74.3% of cases.

Of the predictors included, only the level of education was found to have a significant effect ($p = .012$), indicating that people with lower educational attainment (no education, middle school, high school/college) have a higher probability of victimization than those with a university education. The negative coefficient ($B = −1.70$, $Exp(B) = 0.18$) suggests that education is protective against the risk of violence.

In contrast, age and monthly income did not have significant effects ($p > .05$), suggesting that the risk of victimization does not vary significantly across age or income categories.

In conclusion, hypothesis 2 is partially confirmed. Among the socio-economic factors analyzed, the level of education is the only significant predictor of the risk of victimization, while income and residential environment do not exert

a statistically significant influence on the type of violence experienced or the probability of becoming a victim.

Hypothesis 3. Psychosocial barriers — fear of reprisals, shame and lack of trust in the authorities — are the main reasons cited for not reporting cases of violence.

Table 5. Distribution of psychosocial barriers and reporting of experiences of violence among participants (N = 109)

Barrier Category / Reporting	Examples of wording in the answers	Frequency
1. Fear of reprisals	„I was afraid", „afraid of the aggressor", „„fear of consequences"	50
2. Shame/stigma	„shame", „what will the world say", „social stigmatization"	33
3. Lack of trust in authorities	„I do not trust the police", „no measures are taken", „I don't have evidence"	22
4. Other reasons	„I think it won't happen again", „I didn't know where to go", „another reason"	4
Total barriers	—	**109**
Reporting the experience of violence	„Have you ever reported your experience of violence to the authorities?"	
"Yes"	—	16
"No"	—	93
Total Reporting	—	**109**

Note: The frequencies were obtained by recoding the multiple responses into dominant thematic categories, according to the bariere_categ scheme (1 = fear, 2 = shame, 3 = lack of confidence, 4 = other reasons).

Table 5 illustrates the main obstacles preventing women from reporting their experiences of violence to the authorities, as well as the proportion of those who nevertheless decided to refer the matter to the competent institutions. The analysis of the data confirms that psychosocial barriers – fear of reprisals, shame and lack of trust in authorities – are determinants of non-reporting of violence, being closely linked to the emotional and social protection mechanisms of victims.

The most common barrier identified is the fear of retaliation, reported by 45.9% of the participants. The formulations they offer – „I was afraid", „fear of the aggressor", „fear of consequences" – highlight a heightened state of anxiety and anticipation of negative reactions from the aggressor or the social environment. This type of fear, both psychological and pragmatic, reflects a climate of insecurity in which the victim perceives reporting as a potential source of danger. The results converge with international data, according to which fear of escalating violence is one of the most common causes of victims' silence (Heise, 2011).

In second place is shame and social stigma, reported by 30.3% of women. These responses, such as „shame", „what will the world say" or „social stigma", suggest the internalization of traditional cultural norms that transfer guilt from the

aggressor to the victim. In such contexts, domestic violence is often perceived as a private problem, and its public exposure can generate labelling, marginalization or social rejection. This dynamic is supported by the literature (Gracia, 2014; Meyer, 2018), which indicates that shame functions as a social defence mechanism, maintaining victims' silence and isolation.

Another important factor identified is the lack of trust in the authorities, mentioned by 20.2% of respondents. This is expressed through formulations such as „I don't trust the police", „no action is taken" or „I don't have evidence". Distrust in state institutions highlights a deep structural problem related to the perception of inefficiency in victim protection mechanisms. The participants believe that the authorities' interventions are often delayed, bureaucratic, and insensitive to the victims' real needs. This widespread perception contributes to reducing women's willingness to seek institutional support and reinforcing a climate of reluctance and silence in the face of abuse.

A small percentage of participants (3.7%) cited other reasons, such as the belief that „it won't happen again" or lack of knowledge of reporting procedures ("I didn't know where to go"). These responses can be interpreted as a form of resignation or helplessness, but also as an indication of insufficient information about the support resources available at the community level.

In terms of reporting behaviour, only 14.7% of the participants said they had notified the authorities, while 85.3% did not report experiences of violence at all. This significant disproportion confirms the cumulative impact of psychosocial barriers on the decision not to act. Fear, shame, and mistrust do not act in isolation; they interact, forming a vicious circle that amplifies silence and reinforces perceived helplessness.

The results indicate that the non-reporting of violence should not be interpreted as a lack of initiative or passivity on the part of the victims, but as a self-protection strategy in the face of a context perceived as hostile or dangerous. Psychologically, silence can function as a control mechanism, a way for the victim to try to reduce the risk of retaliation or stigmatization. On the social level, however, this silence perpetuates the invisibility of the phenomenon and reinforces the perception that domestic violence is a marginal problem.

The general interpretation of the data supports the hypothesis that psychosocial barriers – in particular fear of retaliation, shame and lack of trust – are the main predictors of non-reporting of violence. Consequently, reducing these barriers requires not only individual interventions, through counselling and psychological support, but also institutional and educational actions aimed at restoring trust in the protection system and changing cultural attitudes regarding the role of women and the guilt of the victim.

Thus, the results presented in Table 7 confirm the research hypothesis: psychosocial barriers exert a major influence on the probability of reporting cases of violence, and addressing them is an essential condition for increasing transparency, institutional accountability and real access to justice for victims.

Conclusions

The present study confirms that violence against women is a persistent, cross-cutting and complex social phenomenon, influenced by educational and psychosocial factors rather than simple structural variables such as residence environment or income level. The results highlight the central role of education both in shaping perceptions of the severity of the phenomenon and in reducing the likelihood of victimization. Participants with a high educational level show a greater awareness of the structural dimensions of gender-based violence, and predictive analysis indicates that education works as a protective factor in relation to the risk of victimization.

In contrast, urban-rural areas and monthly income did not show statistically significant associations with the type of violence experienced or with the probability of becoming a victim, suggesting that violence against women cannot be reduced to a specific problem of certain socio-economic categories. This cross-cutting nature indicates the need for systemic interventions that go beyond approaches focused solely on economic vulnerability.

A particularly relevant result is the high level of non-reporting of experiences of violence. Most participants did not notify the authorities, and the main barriers identified were fear of reprisals, shame, and a lack of trust in public institutions. These psychosocial obstacles act cumulatively and contribute to maintaining the invisibility of the phenomenon, limiting victims' access to protection and specialized support. Non-reporting does not reflect passivity but rather a strategy of self-protection in a context perceived as insecure or insufficiently receptive to victims' needs.

From an applicative perspective, the results support the need to develop integrated interventions, simultaneously oriented towards: (1) strengthening education on gender equality and violence prevention, (2) increasing trust in institutional protection mechanisms through trauma-sensitive interventions and effective procedures, and (3) reducing the social stigma associated with reporting abuse.

The limitations of the study are the relatively small sample size, the self-declarative nature of the data, and the disproportionate distribution of participants across gender and education criteria, which may restrict the generalizability of the results. Future research with larger, more heterogeneous samples is needed, as are longitudinal studies exploring the dynamics of reporting and the effects of educational and institutional interventions.

Overall, the research contributes to the understanding of the mechanisms by which education and psychosocial barriers shape the perception, experience, and reporting of violence against women, highlighting the systemic nature of the phenomenon and the need for evidence-based public policies oriented towards prevention, protection, and institutional accountability.

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