
Violence Against Women and Children in Lithuania

**Jūratė Gincman¹,
Brigita Palavinskienė²**

¹ *Institute of Medical Jurisprudence,
Section of Clinical
Expert Examination,
Vilnius, Lithuania*

² *Law University of the Republic of
Lithuania, Faculty of Law,
Department of Criminology,
Vilnius, Lithuania*

Objective: to investigate physical and sexual violence against women and children; to determine consequences of the violence, the most common places, time, type, graveness of the injuries, etc. This is the first investigation of the kind, with forensic physicians involved. **Method:** analysis of anonymous questionnaires filled by 167 women and 149 children during two months. **Results:** women usually suffer physical violence at home (72.3%) and from their spouses (39.5%) or other familiar persons (21.5%). Usually children suffer physical violence at the age of 12–18 years (81.2%), most of them are male (84%); mostly during the daytime or in the evening (62%), outside, at home and in school (more than 15% each). Offenders are familiar or unknown persons (33% each); usually attacks one person (61.7%), punches (61.3%) and causes bodily injuries of various graveness (85.9%). At school mostly suffer children younger than 14 years (68.75%) from other children. **Conclusion:** women and children are not properly protected from physical and sexual violence. Physical violence against women becomes more and more severe every day, various domestic utensils or other things are used. School is not a safe place, there children suffer violence from class-mates.

Key words: child abuse, child, violence, women abuse, women

INTRODUCTION

Violence, especially domestic violence, is one of the major problems all over the world. Consequences of domestic violence are extremely painful and the physical, moral or financial damages of it are enormous. However, our society actually does not know how to overcome this problem.

In most cases victims of domestic violence are women and / or children. Children are the least protected members of our society. Usually they are injured not only because they are not able to protect themselves, but also because of the fact that their fate depends on adults. As is seen from practice, adults, for example, mothers not being aware of how or unable to defend themselves from violence cannot protect their children, either. Often specialists call this problem “violence against women and children”. Of course, it cannot be stated that men do not fall victims of domestic violence, however, such cases are rather rare not only because

men are physically stronger, but also because of various social reasons.

In investigations carried out in West Europe and Scandinavian countries, it was revealed that 5 out of 1000 children fall victims of violence every year. According to specialists of the European Union, 600,000 children suffer from violence every year (4).

An incentive to become more interested in this urgent problem of our society was given by the fact that practically every day women and children that suffer from domestic and other violence address medical services concerning injuries of different type and seriousness. Questionnaires had been compiled for this research and were filled in by medical experts during their examinations of the victims of violence in the place of work or hospitals on the basis of requests and commissions of law enforcement institutions.

The questionnaires include anonymous documentary part (age, sex, address of residence, marital status of a victim); date and place of the event; naming of the offenders and their number; the mechanism by which the injury had been done; evaluation of injury seriousness and other data.

Correspondence to: Jūratė Gincman, Section of Clinical Expert Examination, Verkių 7-110, LT-2042 Vilnius, Lithuania. Tel.: (370-2) 789 043. E-mail: asvela@takas.lt

The problem is physical and sexual violence against women and physical violence against children in family and society.

The purposes of the study were to determine: 1) the extent of violence against women and children; 2) consequences of violence against women, *i.e.* what physical or sexual damage has been caused to the victims; 3) most common places of physical violence against children, time, type, seriousness of the injuries.

The research had been carried out by the method of standard interview, asking clearly and exactly formulated questions. Respondents (women) answered questions of a two-part questionnaire on physical and sexual violence. Children answered questions on physical violence and other.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Social-demographic characteristics of the women

During the period from October till December 2001, 167 women who addressed medical experts of Vilnius, Šiauliai, Marijampolė, Panevėžys concerning various injuries were interviewed.

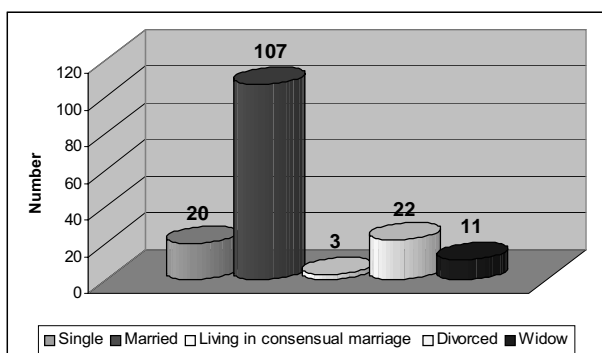
The age of the interviewed women varied from 18 to 81.

In respect of marital status, all the interviewed women could be divided into the following groups: single – 20 (12.4%), married – 107 (65.6%), living in consensual marriage – 3 (1.8%), divorced – 22 (13.5%), widows – 11 (6.7%).

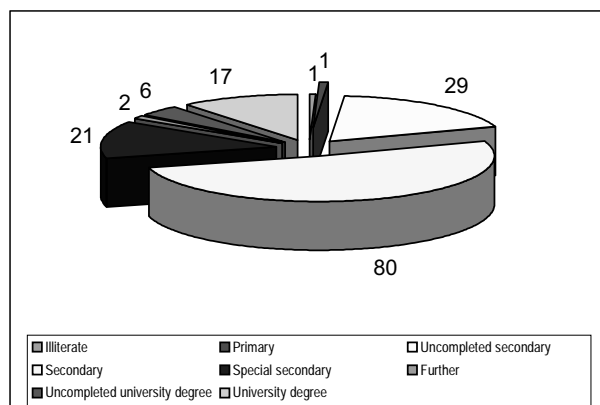
The education of the respondents also varied: university degree – 17 (10.8%), uncompleted university degree – 6 (3.8%), further education – 2 (1.3%), special secondary education – 21 (13.4%), secondary education – 80 (51%), uncompleted secondary education – 29 (18.5%), primary (4 grades) – 1 (0.6%), illiterate – 1 (0.6%).

From the scheme one can see that it is mostly women with secondary or lower education that suffer from domestic or other type of violence. How-

Scheme No. 1. Marital status of the respondents



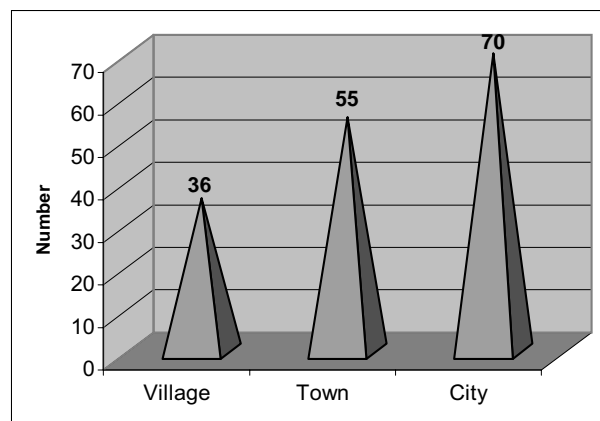
Scheme No. 2. Education of the victims



ever, it cannot be categorically stated that educated women do not suffer from violence. It is known from practice that educated women more rarely address law enforcement institutions or doctors.

The *Place of residence* of the respondents also differed: in cities lived 70 (43.2%), in towns 56 (34.5%), in villages lived 36 (22.3%).

Scheme No. 3. Place of residence of the victims



Social-demographic characteristics of the children

From October till November 2001, 149 children who suffered physical violence in Vilnius, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Marijampolė had been examined. Examinations were carried out on the basis of the request of parents or the older representatives or on the basis of the order of the police officers, investigators or prosecutor's office.

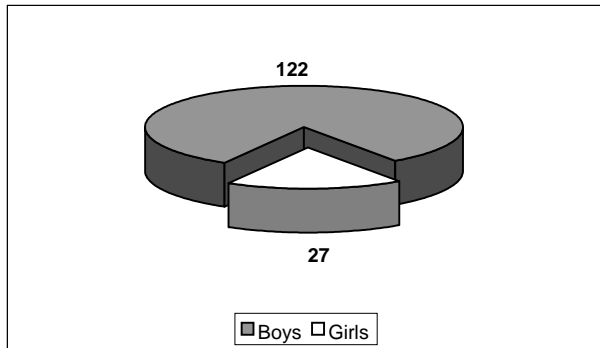
The age of the children examined varied from 1 to 18 years.

As it can be seen from the scheme presented below, out of 149 children there were 122 (81.9%) boys and 27 (18.1%) girls.

Thus, it can be claimed that boys suffer from violence more often than girls. Besides, according

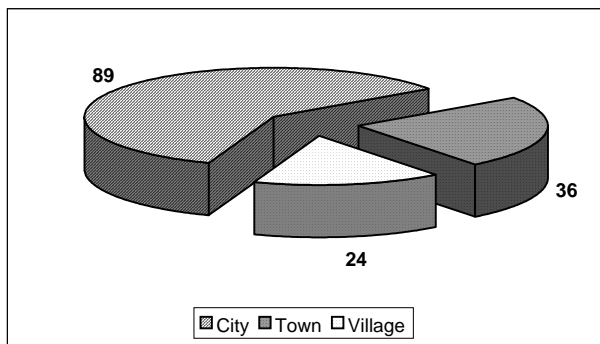
to various investigations, boys are more often punished by physical punishments as compared with girls (5).

Scheme No. 4. Gender of the victims



The place of residence of the respondents also varied: more than half of the children who have suffered violence (89, or 59.7%) lived in the city of Vilnius), 36 (24.2%) children lived in towns, and 24 (16.1%) in villages.

Scheme No. 5. Distribution of the victims according to their place of residence



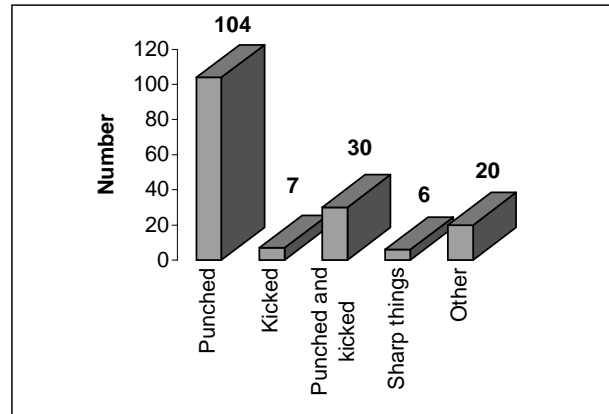
The obtained data allow a conclusion that children in Vilnius suffer from violence more often as compared with children from towns or villages. However, it should borne in mind that people in cities are better informed about the possibility to receive one or another kind of qualified help, while people from districts sometimes cannot address doctors or police officers due to various reasons.

RESULTS

All the 167 interviewed women suffered from physical violence. They complained that offenders punched them (104, or 62.2%), kicked (7 or 4.2%) and

both (30, or 18%). Sharp things were also used (6, or 3.6%): knives – 3 cases, forks – 2 cases, shivers of the bottle – 1 case. As is seen from the scheme, there are also other types of crime instruments. In 20 cases (12%) the following things were used by the offenders: stick – 4 cases, belt – 2 cases, chain, stone, board, butt, pot, chair, wire, wooden clotheshanger, glass vase, plate and other things were used once.

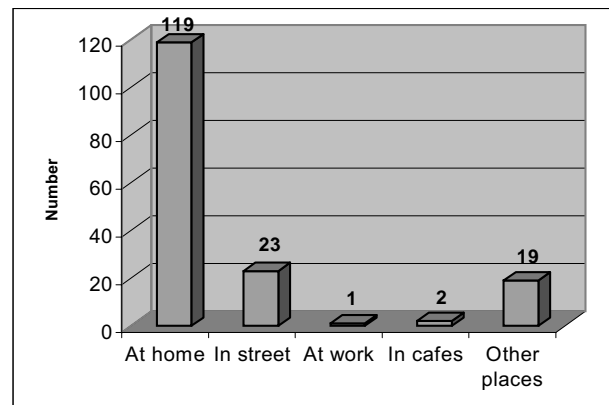
Scheme No. 6. Mechanism of injury



Physical violence against girls and women appears in various places – in family or outside it. According to the specialists of the United States of America, home is not the safest place for women, though it is considered to be. Thus, as is seen from the scheme presented bellow, the interviewed girls and women suffered violence in the following places: at home – 119 (72.6%), in street – 23 (14%), at work – 1 (0.6%), in cafés – 2 (1.2%), other places – 19 (11.6%)

When talking about other places of crimes, it should be mentioned that the victims also indicated the following places: public transport (trolley bus) – 4 cases, staircase – 2 cases, dentist’s cabinet, and other places.

Scheme No. 7. Place of violence commitment



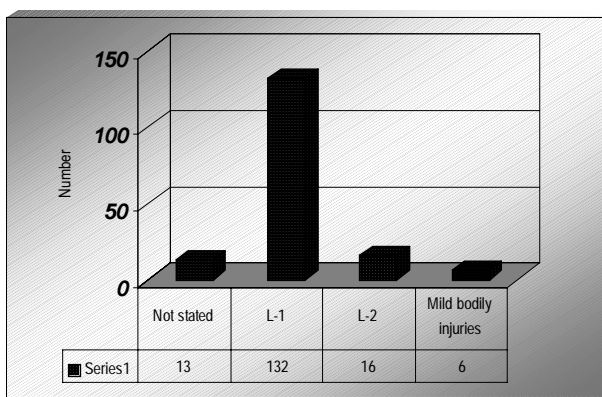
All the girls and women who had suffered violence were examined by the doctors and practically to all of them different bodily injuries were stated. During the study it was determined that *minor bodily injuries which did not cause temporary health disorders* (L-1) were done to the greater part of the examined girls and women – 132 (79%). That is, superficial injuries of body tissues which heal rather quickly (scratches, bruises, superficial, small wounds and other injuries) had been inflicted. Besides, the respondents were ill no longer than for 6 days without losing their ability to work.

Other victims had suffered *minor bodily injuries which cause temporary health disorders or insignificant constant loose of working capacity* (L-2), which was directly related with the injury and lasted more than 6 days but no longer than 21 days. In the case of such injuries usually 10% of general working capacity is deprived (3). There were 16 (9.6%) of such victims.

In 6 (3.6%) victims mild bodily disabling injuries were stated, *i.e.* 10% to 33% of victims were ill for more than 21 days because of the injuries. In such cases the victims usually suffered fractures of the extremities and other injuries.

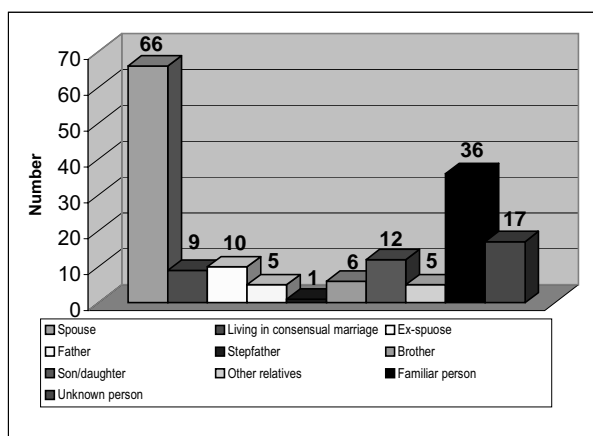
Of all the examined girls and women, only to 13 of them no bodily injuries were stated.

Scheme No. 8. Degree of injuries of the victims



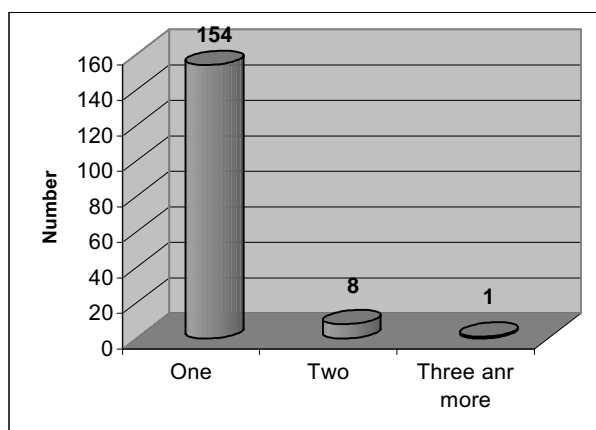
According to the answers of the interviewed girls and women, offenders usually were their relatives or family members: spouses – 66 (39.5%), ex-spouses – 10 (6%), partners of consensual marriage – 9 (5.4%), parents – 5 (3%), sons or daughters – 12 (7.2%), step-father – 1 (0.6%), brothers or sisters – 6 (3.6%), other relatives (mothers-in-law, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law) – 5 (3%), familiar persons – 36 (21.5%). Neighbors, colleagues and others were ascribed to this category, 17 (10.2%) of girls and women suffered from unknown persons.

Scheme No. 9. Offenders



During the study, data concerning the ratio of the offenders' number and victim were also collected. With regard to the fact that women usually suffered from the violence of their spouses, it was determined that most part of the victims suffered physical violence from one offender (154, or 94.5%). Another, smaller group of the victims (8, or 5%) suffered from 2 offenders. Finally, one woman suffered from 4 offenders, who raped her using physical violence.

Scheme No. 10. Number of offenders per victim



Victims of sexual violence were 3 out of 167 women; they were raped by vaginal course. Practically in all the cases sperm was found in the vagina or washings. In all the cases old perforations of hymen were identified.

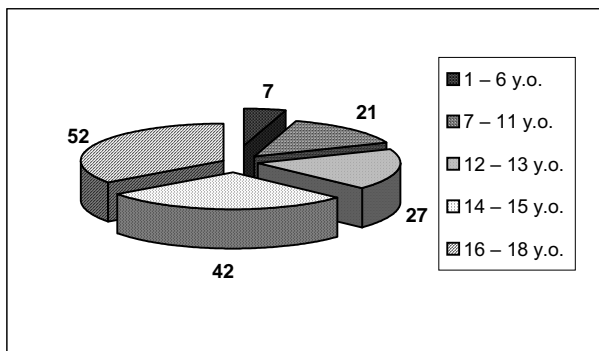
The age of the victims also varied: they were 18, 33 and 38 years old. Thus, sexual violence is not so common as physical violence. However, it should be noted that latency is rather frequent due to various reasons.

One woman was beaten and raped by an unknown person in a street at night (approximately at midnight), another woman suffered from 4 neighbors of her during the daytime at her home, and the third woman was raped in the house of her acquaintance.

Of 3 victims, two had suffered both sexual and physical violence, *i.e.* minor bodily injuries which did not cause temporary health disorders (L-1).

During the research, it was decided to collect data about the age groups of children who most often suffered from physical violence. On the basis of this criterion the following age groups were determined: 1–6 years old – 7 (4.7%), 7–11 years old – 21 (14.1%), 12–13 years old – 27 (18.1%), 14–15 years old – 42 (28.2%), 16–18 years old – 52 (34.9%).

Scheme No. 11. Comparative age groups of victims



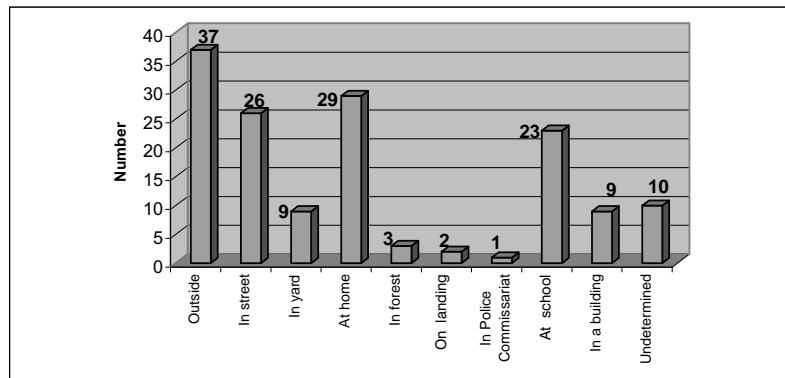
One can see that more than three fourths of children who suffered violence (81.2%) were of older school age (12 to 18 years old), and the rest part (36.9%) – of all the children who suffered from violence were preteens.

Children usually suffered physical violence outside the family, *i.e.* participating in public life and often at school.

In the scheme presented below, it can be clearly seen where children confront violence and the extent of it: outside – 37 (24.8%), in street – 26 (17.4%), in yard – 9 (6%), at home – 29 (19.5%), in forest – 3 (2%), in staircase – 2 (1.3%), in Police Commissariat – 1 (0.7%), at school – 23 (15.4%), in a building – 9 (6%), undetermined – 10 (6.7%).

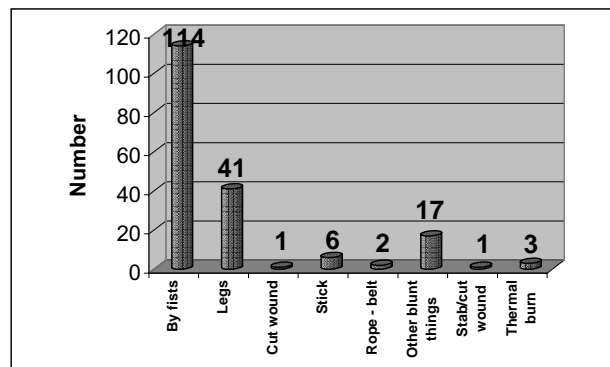
More than half of children were punched (61.3%); kicking as a measure of **physical violence** takes the second place (22%). Approximately 20.3% of children were punched and kicked. Approximate-

Scheme No. 12. Place of violence commitment



ly 5% were beaten by rope, belt or stick; approximately 9.1% were beaten with other things (stone, bottle, etc.).

Scheme No. 13. Mechanism of injury

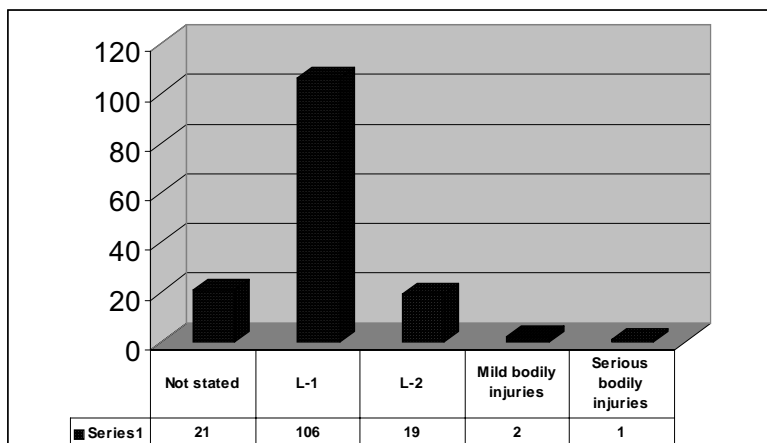


Most of the victims (125 children, or 83.9%) had *minor* injuries (with the reference to the temporary rules of determination of bodily injuries), *i.e.*, due to the injuries their health was not damaged or the disorder lasted no longer than 6 days. Examining such children cutaneous scratches and sub-cutaneous bruises had been stated. Of them, two thirds (11.2%) sustained brain concussion, one third (4%) of the children had fractured nose and head contused wounds. In two cases children suffered fracture of the extremities – *mild bodily injuries* was stated to them.

To *one* of 149 children serious bodily injury – brain contusion – was determined (a 15-year-old boy was attacked by two unknown men in a field; he was punched and kicked, separate parts of the body were burned with the lighter; after all, the boy was undressed naked and left in a cold weather). Approximately to 14.1% of the children no bodily injuries had been stated.

The degree of injuries of the victims studied was as follows: not stated – 21 (14.1%), L-1 – 106 (71.1%), L-2 – 19 (12.8%), mild bodily injuries – 2 (1.3%), serious bodily injuries – 1 (0.7%).

Scheme No. 14. Degree of injuries



(L-1) – minor bodily injury which does not cause temporary health disorders, i.e. when

due to the injury (-ies) health is not or is dranged for no longer than 6 days;

(L-2) – minor bodily injury which causes temporary health disorders, i.e. when due to

the injury (-ies) health disorders are caused for more than 6 days but not longer than for 21 days.

One third (31%) of the children in the evening (from 6 P. M. till 11 P. M.) and one third (31%) during the daytime (from 12 till 5 P. M.) were beaten up; in 19% the time of events had not been determined; 15% suffered violence in the morning (from 4 A. M. till 11 A. M.); 4% – at night (from 12 till 3 A. M.).

Children usually named acquaintances (33.6%) or persons that they knew just from appearance or

did not know (32.9%) as the offenders. Besides, these offenders as a rule are young men or men; 16.1% of offenders were relatives of the victims, and in half of these cases fathers were named as the offenders (one child was beaten up by mother); (12.8%) – form classmates. Below the percentage of the offenders named by children is indicated: father – 14 (9.4%), mother – 1 (0.7%), brothers – 2 (1.3%), step-fathers – 3 (2%), neighbors – 4 (2.7%), classmates – 19 (12.8%), relatives – 7 (4.7%), familiar persons – 50 (33.6%).

Usually (61.7%) the offender acted alone. Approximately 14.1% of children were attacked by several offenders (more than 3 persons).

CONCLUSIONS

1. Women and children are not properly protected from physical and sexual violence.
2. Physical violence against women becomes more and more severe every day, various domestic utensils or other things being used.
3. School is not a safe place; there children suffer violence from class-mates.

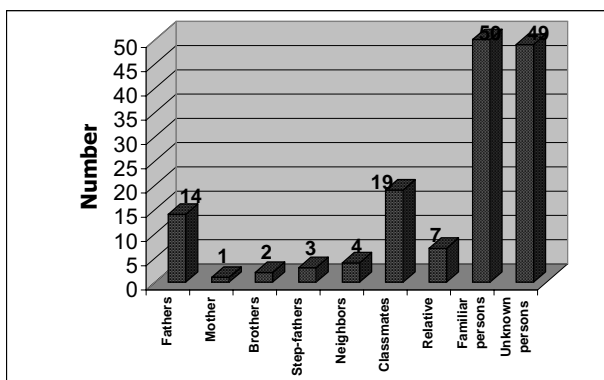
Received 24 January 2002

Accepted 7 March 2002

References

1. Basic laws of the Republic of Lithuania. Penal Code. Vilnius, 1999.
2. Temporary rules of determination of bodily injuries. Vilnius, 1992.
3. Comments of Penal Code of the Soviet Social Republic of Lithuania. Vilnius, 1989.
4. Report on the Meeting of World Health Service Organization. Padova, Italy, 29th–31st October 1998: 113.
5. Violence against women and children in Lithuania. Vilnius University: Center of Women Studies, 1997: 45–115.

Scheme No. 15. Offenders



Jūratė Gincman, Brigita Palavinskiene

SMURTAS PRIEŠ MOTERIS IR VAIKUS LIETUVOJE

S a n t r a u k a

Smurtas, ypač šeimyninis, – viena didžiausių problemų visame pasaulyje. Šeimyninio smurto padariniai yra labai skaudūs, o jo keliama fizinė, moralinė ir finansinė žala – milžiniška. Nepaisant to, mūsų visuomenė vis dar nemo-ka tinkamai su juo kovoti.

Beveik visais atvejais šeimyninio smurto aukomis tam- pa moterys ir/ arba vaikai. Labiausiai neapsaugoti mūsų visuomenėje yra vaikai. Jie pažeidžiami ne tik todėl, kad patys dažniausiai negali apsiginti, bet ir dėl to, kad jų

likimas yra suaugusiųjų rankose. Dažnai suaugusieji (pvz., motinos), patys nemokėdami ar nesugebėdami apsiginti nuo smurto, neapsaugo nuo jo ir savo vaikų. Neretai specialistai šį reiškinį taip ir vadina – „smurtas prieš moteris ir vaikus“. Negalima teigti, jog vyrai netampa šeimyninio smurto aukomis. Tačiau tai gana reti atvejai, ir ne vien todėl, kad jie paprastai fiziškai stipresni, bet ir dėl įvairių socialinių priežasčių.

Vakarų Europos ir Skandinavijos šalyse atlikti tyrimai parodė, jog kiekvienais metais 5 vaikai iš 1 000 tampa smurto aukomis. Pasak ES šalių specialistų, nuo smurto kasmet kenčia 600000 vaikų [4; 113].

Labiau susidomėti šia aktualia mūsų visuomenės problema paskatino tai, jog praktiškai kiekvieną dieną nukentėjusios nuo šeimyninio ar kitokio smurto moterys ir vaikai kreipiasi į medicinos įstaigas dėl įvairaus pobūdžio ir sunkumo sužalojimų. Šiam tyrimui buvo sudarytos anketos, kurias pildė teismo medicinos ekspertai darbo metu, apžiūrėdami smurto aukas darbo vietose bei lankydamiesi ligoninėse pagal teisėsaugos organų prašymus ar pavedimus. Tokie pobūdžio darbai Lietuvoje atliekami pirmą kartą.

Gautų tyrimų analizė parodė, kad moterys dažniausiai patiria fizinį smurtą namuose (72,3%) būtent nuo

savo sutuoktinių (39,5%) ar kitų pažįstamų asmenų (21,5%). Nemaža dalis vaikų patiria fizinį smurtą už šeimos ribų, t. y. dalyvaudami visuomeniniame gyvenime. Dažniausiai aukomis tampa vyresnio mokyklinio amžiaus vaikai, kurių dauguma – vyr. lyties atstovai (84%). Prieš vaikus dažniausiai smurtaujama dienos metu ar vakarais (62%), lauke, namie bei mokykloje (daugiau nei po 15%). Smurtautojai yra pažįstami arba nepažįstami asmenys (po 33%), užpuola dažniausiai vienas asmuo (61,7%) kumščiais (61,3%) ir padaro įvairaus sunkumo kūno sužalojimų (85,9%).

Pasitvirtina pastaruoju metu vyraujanti nuomonė, jog namai nėra pati saugiausia vieta moterims ir vaikams, nes, kaip žinia, moteris, kenčianti nuo šeimyninio smurto, nėra pajėgi apginti nuo jo ir savo vaikų. Susirūpinimą kelia ir tai, kad fizinis smurtas prieš moteris tampa vis žiauresnis: pasitelkiami įvairūs būties ar kitokie daiktai (pvz., lazdos, lentos, peiliai, kirviai ir t. t.), nukentėjusios vis sunkiau sužalojamos. Nesaugia tampa ir mokykla, kurioje fizinį smurtą dažniausiai patiria mažamečiai nuo pačių vaikų.

Raktažodžiai: smurtas prieš vaikus, vaikai, smurtas, smurtas prieš moteris, moterys