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Exploration of importance of the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Prevention of Violence against Women by the Ukrainian Government

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Abstract. This paper presents the results of research on the importance of ratification by the Ukrainian government of the Convention on Prevention Violence against women. In this paper, primary and secondary data has been analysed. The primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian women and the secondary data was collected from information on the websites of the United Nations in Ukraine, UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund, ILO and the Council of Europe. The research is significant because the Ukrainian State must use this Convention as a means of reducing domestic violence against women throughout Ukraine.

Keywords. Council of Europe, Istanbul Convention, Ukraine, Violence, Women.

1. Introduction

The Council of Europe Convention, or the Istanbul Convention, is a very important step towards preventing and combating violence against all kinds of domestic violence in the world [1].

The 45 member states of the Council of Europe, including Ukraine and excluding Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation, signed this document. Ukraine, which became a member of the Council in 1995, signed the Convention on 7 November 2011 but, as of May 2020, they have not ratified it. Ten other members of the Council of Europe have also not ratified this convention, Armenia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Slovak Republic, and the United Kingdom [2].

The UN Women in Ukraine called the Ukrainian Parliament to ratify urgently [3].

2. The methodology of the research

The methodology of the research consisted of primary and secondary sources of information.

The primary data was collected using qualitative methods, such as 70 semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian women in different regions of the country. All of the female respondents agreed that their answers could be used in the research and preparation of the paper.

The secondary data was collected from data of the Council of Europe, the United Nations Population Fund, ILO, and the United Nations in Ukraine, UN Women, and other sources.

3. Importance of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention in Ukraine

The ratification of the Convention in the state of Ukraine is an important signal for domestic and international communities for several reasons.

Firstly, the state of Ukraine was a co-author of the Convention and should be among the first to ratify it, not the last.

Secondly, the state Ukraine needs to demonstrate that it is a civilized and progressive country, ready to become part of the European community.

Thirdly, Ukrainian women should be protected from domestic violence in their own country using this international means of protection, the Convention.

4. Ukrainian Legislation and other means for preventing and combating domestic violence

Among others, from the data of ILO, Ukraine accepted Law No. 2229-VIII of 7 December 2017 'On Prevention and Combat Against Domestic Violence' [4]. On 7 January 2018, this Law came into force.

Data from the United Nations Population Fund shows that other means exist in Ukraine for combating and preventing domestic violence, such as the National Hotline, mobile teams of psychosocial help, shelters and crisis centres, cabinets of medical help and the Police anti-domestic violence network, titled 'POLINA' [5]. 'POLINA' is a police pilot project consisting of 'pilot police groups that are trained to counter domestic violence. They have become the leaders in the Police anti-domestic violence network' [5].

5. Previous research on this subject

During the last twenty years, the office of UN Women in Ukraine has collected much information on this subject. Among this information are the results of various campaigns, surveys, reports, and events about and against domestic violence in Ukraine [6].

Among Ukrainian and international researchers, the subject of domestic violence in Ukraine has been studied by G. Gerasymenko [7], T. Bender-Säbelkampf [8], and others [9-10].

6. Preparation of the semi-structured interviews on domestic violence among Ukrainian women

To explore the issue of domestic violence among Ukrainian women, a questionnaire with several questions for semi-structured interviews was been prepared. The questions aimed to explore the opinions, feelings, and experiences of women in different regions of Ukraine on this topic. The questionnaire consisted of questions about age, level of education, employment, marital, and maternity status of women.

The questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews consisted of the following questions:

- Is the ratification of the Convention important for Ukraine?
- How many women in Ukraine suffer from domestic violence?
- What kinds of domestic violence are the most common in Ukrainian families?
- How many female labor emigrants have left because of domestic violence at home?
- How is possible to reduce or prevent domestic violence in the state?

7. The results of the semi-structured interviews on this topic among Ukrainian women

To explore the issue of domestic violence among Ukrainian women, 70 women were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews in Kyiv, Cherkasy, and the Zaporizhzhia regions of Ukraine.

In the research, each of the women was given a number, from R_1 to R_70. The total number of responses was 100%. In their responses, each of the women had some opinion on the issue of domestic violence in the country.

The first part of the interview consisted of questions about age, level of education, employment, marital, and maternity status of women.

Concerning age, the results show 30% of the respondents were 35 - 45 years old; 60% were 46-59 years old and 10% were 60-65 years old.

Concerning the level of education of the women, 75% of the women had a university degree, and 96% of them were employed. Besides, 65% of them were married and 98% of them had children.

The second part of the interview was about the importance of the Convention for Ukraine and the women's level of understanding of this:

Is the ratification of the Convention important for Ukraine?

The responses showed (from R_1 to R_70) that 95% of the women thought that the ratification of the Convention is important for Ukraine and 5% thought it very important. The results of their responses are shown in Fig. 1.

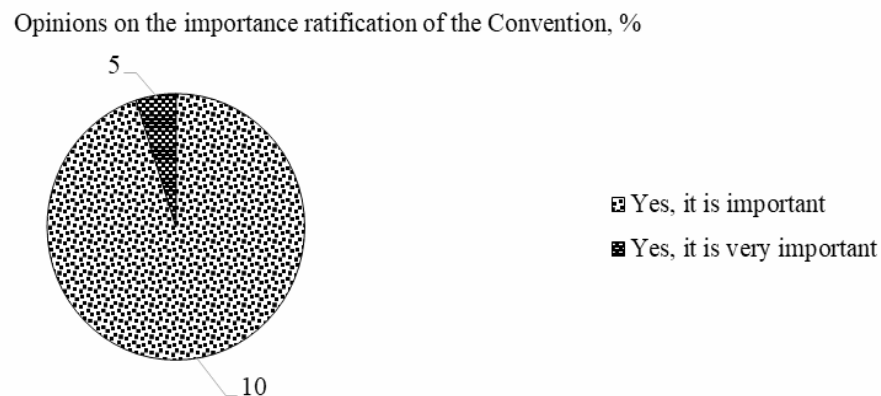


Fig. 1 - The results of responses on the question about the importance of ratification of the Convention in Ukraine

The responses to the first question show that all the women were sure about the importance of ratification of the document in Ukraine because it is an important step on the way to civilized values and human rights in Ukraine.

The next question was about the number of women suffering from domestic violence in Ukraine (Fig. 2):

How many women in Ukraine suffer from domestic violence?

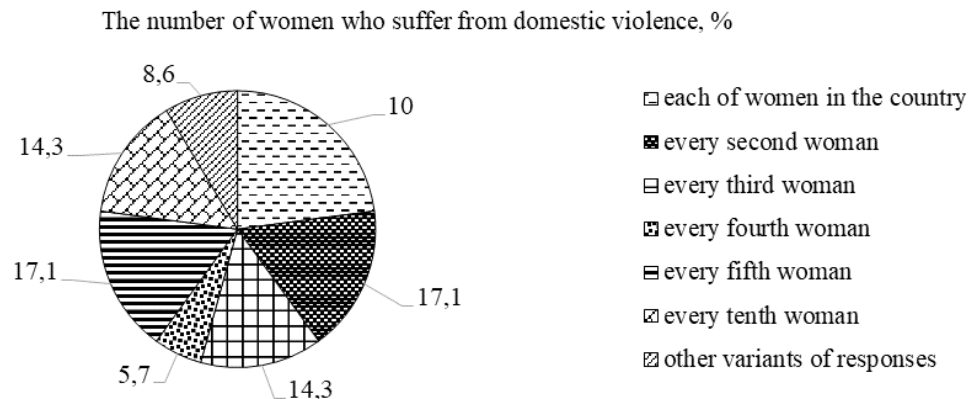


Fig. 2 - The results of responses on number of women who suffer from domestic violence

According to the responses from the 70 women (from R_1 to R_70) from various regions of the country, 22,9% of them thought that all women suffer some form of domestic violence in Ukraine, 17,1% respondents thought that half of the Ukrainian women suffer, 14,3% thought that it is one in three; 5,7% thought that it is one in four; 17,1% responded one in five and 14,3% thought that it is one in ten; with 8,6% giving other responses.

The next question concerned the women's opinions concerning the most common kinds of violence occurring in Ukrainian families, among psychological, economic, physical, sexual, and/or other. (Fig. 3):

What kinds of domestic violence are the most common in Ukrainian families?

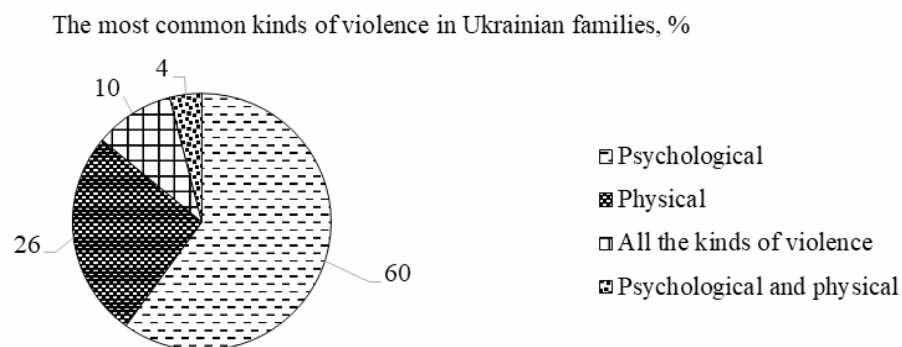


Fig. 3 - The most common kinds of violence in Ukrainian families

The women's responses show that the most common sorts of violence in Ukrainian families are psychological (60%), physical (26%), several different sorts (4%), or all the sorts of violence (10%).

During the last decades of the 20th century, female labor emigration has become very common. [11-12]. Some of the female emigrants chose this because of domestic violence at home. To ascertain how many chose this route, a question on the subject was included in the questionnaire for the interviews. This question was the following (Fig. 4):

How many are women working abroad emigrated because of domestic violence at home?

30% of the women answered that 10% of female labor emigrants from Ukraine left due to domestic violence. 17% of the women were sure that 20% of the emigrants were victims of

domestic violence at home. 23% answered that 30% of female emigrants left to avoid domestic violence at home.

This issue is not been looked at in detail before now because, although other issues and challenges of female labor emigration have been studied, domestic violence has not been seen as a motive for labor emigration by Ukrainian women.

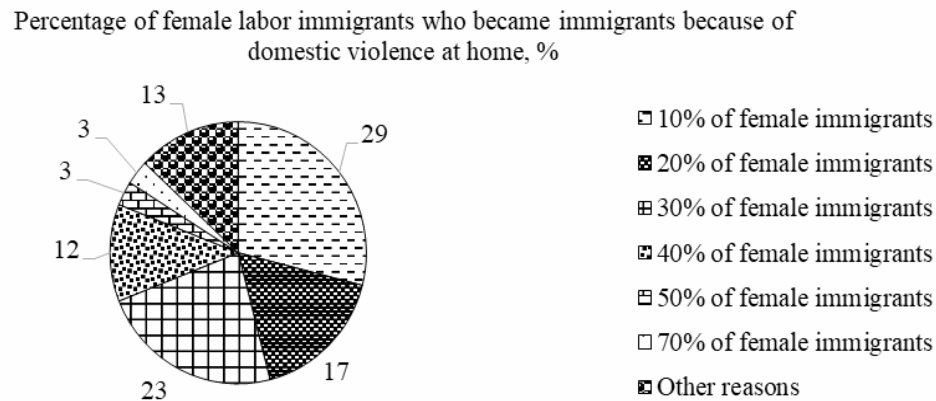


Fig. 4 - Percentage of female labor immigrants who became immigrants because of domestic violence at home

According to the responses from the women, the most common sorts of violence in Ukrainian families are the psychological (60%), physical (26%), several (4%), or all these sorts of violence (10%).

The last question in the interviews concerned possible means of reducing or preventing domestic violence in Ukrainian families. The women all had their own opinion on how to reduce and prevent domestic violence in Ukraine.

For example, in response to this question, respondent number R_8 answered: "It is necessary to educate girls to have self-respect and not to tolerate any form of violence".

Respondent number R-18 answered: "It is very important that conditions are such that women can be self-sufficient and do not need to depend on men".

Respondent number R-45 answered: "The best way to stop domestic violence in a family is for the woman to leave a violent man because this type of man cannot be educated or re-educated".

Respondent number R-53 gave the following response: "Violent men should be imprisoned for a long time".

Respondent number R-61 gave the following answer: "The roots of domestic violence are always in the family".

Respondent R-67 answered: "Women need to get as far away as possible from violence".

From these responses, it is possible to say that confident, educated, and self-sufficient women will not tolerate domestic violence in families. The efforts of the state should be directed towards helping women to become self-sufficient in Ukrainian society. This will reduce domestic violence over time.

Conclusions

From the 47 member countries of the Council of Europe, 45 of them have signed the Istanbul Convention, including Ukraine.

From all members of the Council, only the governments of 11 countries have not ratified the Convention, and Ukraine is one of these.

Ukraine needs to ratify this convention as soon as possible if it wants to uphold its international reputation. It is also important for Ukrainian families to be able to live without violence. Pervasive violence is destroying Ukrainian families and Ukrainian society. It must stop. It is for these reasons that representatives of international organizations in Ukraine, such as ILO, UN Women, UN in Ukraine, and others have urged the Ukrainian President and Parliament to ratify the Istanbul Convention in Ukraine in 2020.

To gauge the situation within the country, 70 women, from three regions of Ukraine, were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews to study the situation with domestic violence in this country.

The results of the semi-structured interviews show that it is important to ratify the Convention in Ukraine as soon as possible, as an important step towards developing civilized values and human rights in Ukraine.

The results of the interviews show that the most common sorts of violence in Ukrainian families are psychological (60%) and physical (26%) violence. The women suggested ways of reducing and preventing this domestic violence by the education of women to enable them to build self-respect, to assert themselves and become self-sufficient while showing zero tolerance for any violence. The state of Ukraine must support the financial, cultural, and educational development of women throughout the country, enabling them to independent, even while raising their children. Only under such conditions will the domestic violence be controlled in Ukrainian families and eventually it will be overcome.

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