



DOI: 10.61905/wwr/175106



„Wychowanie w Rodzinie” t. XXX (1/2023)

Submitted: May 16, 2023 – Accepted: July 30, 2023

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## **The complexity of domestic violence against older women in rural areas. Characteristics of the co-occurrence of forms of violence and the relationship between perpetrators and victims**

**Złożoność zjawiska przemocy domowej wobec starszych kobiet na obszarach wiejskich. Charakterystyka współwystępowania form przemocy i relacji między sprawcami a ofiarami**

### **Abstract**

**Aim.** The study of the phenomenon of domestic violence against senior women, carried out in rural areas of Western Pomerania, was oriented to the characteristics of the structure of the phenomenon (in the form of – well-established in the research tradition and described in the literature – five of its forms: psychological violence, physical violence, neglect, economic violence and sexual violence), as well as the characteristics of the relationship between perpetrators and victims.

**Methods.** The research concept was carried out using an auditory interview technique based on a questionnaire.

**Results.** 35.5% of elderly women experience psychological violence, 22.3% experience neglect by relatives, 8.3% - acts of economic violence, 5.8% physical violence and 0.8%

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sexual violence. Considering the perpetrators of domestic violence against older women, 60.6% are men, most often the husbands of victims (50%), and sons (25%). Perpetrators of violence are more likely to be the victims' husbands than their children, who in turn are perpetrators of violence against elders more often than their spouses (i.e., the victims' sons-in-law/daughters-in-law), concubines or partners.

**Conclusion.** Neglect is more likely than not to co-occur with psychological violence. Two types of acts of psychological violence: humiliation, persistent teasing/ mocking in the eyes of others, and blaming for even minor failures, failures/multiple blames for one's own mistakes are characterized by a high potential for associating psychological harms with neglect. They remain correlated with almost all, accepted for study, acts of neglect. This correlation of forms of domestic violence can be read as a kind of complex of dysfunctional relationships between family members. The results of the study confirm the thesis that the situation of families is characterized by a peculiar accumulation of conditions having the hallmarks of pathological patterns of family life, expressed in the occurrence of entire complexes of experienced harms, usually belonging to more than one form of violence.

**Keywords:** domestic violence, elderly women, perpetrators of violence, physical violence, psychological violence, economical violence sexual violence, negligence.

### **Abstrakt**

**Cel.** Badanie nad zjawiskiem przemocy domowej wobec kobiet w wieku senioralnym, zrealizowane na obszarach wiejskich Pomorza Zachodniego, zorientowane zostało na charakterystykę struktury zjawiska (w postaci – ugruntowanych w tradycji badawczej i opisanych w literaturze – pięciu jego form: przemocy psychicznej, fizycznej, zaniedbań, przemocy ekonomicznej i seksualnej), a także charakterystykę relacji między sprawcami a ofiarami.

**Metody.** Koncepcja badawcza zrealizowana została przy zastosowaniu techniki wywiadu audytoryjnego bazującego na kwestionariuszu.

**Wyniki.** 35,5% starszych kobiet doświadcza przemocy psychicznej, 22,3% doświadcza zaniedbań ze strony bliskich, 8,3% – aktów przemocy ekonomicznej, 5,8% przemocy fizycznej oraz 0,8% przemocy seksualnej. Mając na uwadze sprawców przemocy domowej wobec starszych kobiet, 60,6% stanowią mężczyźni, najczęściej mężowie ofiar (50%) oraz synowie (25%). Sprawcami przemocy częściej są mężowie ofiar niż ich dzieci, te z kolei są sprawcami przemocy wobec starszych częściej niż ich małżonkowie (czyli zięciowie/synowie ofiar), konkubenci czy partnerzy.

**Wnioski.** Zaniedbania częściej współwystępują niż nie współwystępują z przemocą psychiczną. Dwa rodzaje aktów przemocy psychicznej: poniżanie, uporczywe naigrywanie się/przykre wyśmiewanie/ośmieszanie w oczach innych oraz obwinianie za choćby drobne porażki, niepowodzenia/wielokrotne zrzucanie winy za własne błędy charakteryzują się wysokim potencjałem wiązania krzywd psychicznych z zaniedbaniami. Pozostają one w zależności z niemal wszystkimi, przyjętymi do badania, aktami zaniedbań. Taka korelacja form przemocy domowej może być odczytywana jako swoisty kompleks dysfunkcji relacji między członkami rodziny. Wyniki badania potwierdzają tezę, iż sytuację rodzin charakteryzuje swoista kumulacja warunków posiadających znamiona patologii wzorców życia rodzinnego, wyrażająca się występowaniem całych kompleksów doświadczanych krzywd, należących zwykle do więcej niż jednej formy przemocy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc domowa, starsze kobiety, sprawcy przemocy, przemoc fizyczna, przemoc psychiczna, przemoc ekonomiczna, przemoc seksualna, zaniedbanie.

## Introduction

In 2013, the Ombudsman published a report stating that the national system against domestic violence did not take into account the situation of elderly women, a social category particularly vulnerable to violence. As a result of this fact, the system overlooked them when collecting data and building statistics on the phenomenon of domestic violence. The report emphasises that knowledge of the causes, nature and, scale of the phenomenon of violence against this category of victims is essential for the creation of support programmes (Ombudsman, 2013, p. 93). Poland's situation is not isolated. In 2013, the United Nations also noted that in most countries there are no legal provisions distinguishing the category of older women (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013), while a 2015 report highlighted the scarcity of research on violence against this category of victims (UN Economic and Social Council, 2015). Programmes involving the study of violence against older women and systemic support for them were already missing in Poland in the National Programme for Counteracting Family Violence 2014–2020 (National Programme for Counteracting Family Violence 2014–2020, 2014).

Currently in force – published in March this year – is the National Programme for the Prevention of Family Violence for 2023, which provides for gender differentiation for all the categories of victims mentioned (children, adults, and elderly, persons with disabilities). For all these categories, the programme provides for the collection of data on cases of domestic violence and the creation of prevention programmes (*Krajowy Program Przeciwdziałania Przemocy w Rodzinie na rok 2023* [National Programme against Family Violence for 2023]).

Thus, we are faced with a situation in which research into this phenomenon among older women is still an urgent need due to the necessity of its in-depth and multifaceted characterisation and – as a result – the development of effective victim support programmes. Intensification of research in the area described above will make it possible to supplement the narrative on domestic violence in Poland with an aspect of violence against older women, which has not yet been sufficiently recognised.

Looking at the issue from a slightly broader perspective, it should be noted that interest in domestic violence in Poland has been growing since the 1990s (Halicka, 2014; Śniegulska, 2016). Initially, there were mainly cross-sectional studies on the phenomenon's scale (CBOS, 2005; Korzeniowski, 2009; Korzeniowski, Radkiewicz, 2015; SMG/KRC, 2011; TNS OBOP, 2010). Subsequently, the attention of researchers has been directed to violence against children, and more recently to the elderly (Kołodziejczak et al., 2019; Mossakowska et al., 2012; Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2010). However, these are relatively few studies (Halicka et al., 2012; Makara-Studzińska, Sosnowska, 2012). The fact that violence against the elderly is a relevant issue is evidenced by the completion of the second edition of the *PolSenior* survey conducted re-

cently (2016–2020) as part of the National Health Programme (Bandosz, Zagożdżon, 2021). The first edition took place in 2012. However, domestic violence is not a separate research category in this study, but only a component of violence against older people in the broadest sense (Mossakowska et al., 2012, pp. 511–530).

Research on different forms of domestic violence has a rich tradition worldwide (Dutton et al., 1999). Many typologies of forms of violence are in use, ranging from a dichotomous one distinguishing between psychological (psycho-emotional) and physical violence, which also includes abuse of a sexual nature (Flury et al., 2010), to more expansive sets such as physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, physical neglect, psychological neglect, and violation of *Personal Rights* (Brownell, 2015, 2016). The definitions of the different forms of domestic violence provide a source of validated indicators, understood as distinguished acts of these types of violence. The selection of indicators for clearly defined forms of violence has the undeniable advantage that the results of studies obtained by different researchers are comparable, thus making it possible to characterise the structure of the phenomenon of domestic violence relatively precisely, understood as its different forms precisely, and not only acts. The research practice present in existing Polish studies shows that it is not uncommon for domestic violence against the elderly to be characterised by specific acts of violence, without taking into account the forms of violence of which these acts are indicators. Such a situation occurs, among others, in the already mentioned *PolSenior* study characterising the situation of older people in Poland. In this study, nine indicator behaviours of perpetrators towards victims were adopted to characterise the phenomenon of domestic violence (Mossakowska et al., 2012). Such a procedure has limited cognitive value as it reduces the possibility of characterising the structure of the phenomenon, focusing only on measuring the scale of the phenomenon. There are examples in the literature of scales being constructed to measure the level of the phenomenon with good results (Marshall, 1992a, 1992b). However, it needs to be emphasised that the selection of indicators that do not target the particular forms of the phenomenon whose level is to be measured poses the danger of over-representation of one type of behaviour and a disproportionate number of other behaviours, which can result in a kind of distortion of the image of the phenomenon under study.

A point worth emphasising is the discrepancies in the results of studies on the scale of occurrence of domestic violence, including domestic violence against particular social categories. It should be emphasised here that there are many studies on the scale of the incidence of domestic violence, and the discrepancies in the results obtained are spectacular. For example:

- the co-occurrence of *Intimate Partner Violence* (IPV) and *Elder Abuse* (EA) is estimated to range from 1–71% (Chan et al., 2021);
- the prevalence of Elder Abuse 3.2–27.5% (Williams et al., 2017, p. 45) and 74% (Pickering et al., 2019).

With an increasing number of studies on the extent of violence against older people (including older women), the discrepancies in the results obtained are still large. However, it is not clear to what extent they are the result of cultural differences (studies come from different countries and geographical latitudes) and to what extent they are the result of different methodological approaches in the research projects carried out.

A second issue, crucial for undertaking further research on the problem of domestic violence, is the relations and connections between its different forms. The particular role of psychological violence is usually highlighted, as the form that most often accompanies the occurrence of the others or even reinforces their severity (O'Leary, Maiuro, 2004; O'Leary et al., 1994). It should be emphasised that the state of research on the relationship between the different forms of domestic violence is still unsatisfactory (Meyer et al., 2019). Instead, there is a growing interest in polyvictimisation, which refers to the co-occurrence of different types of domestic violence, such as IPV, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *Violence Against Women*, and EA (Chan, 2017; Chan et al., 2019, 2021). However, it is important to emphasise that polyvictimisation is often referred to as the co-occurrence of different types of violence, not just violence in the domestic environment (Finkelhor et al, 2007; Ramsey-Klawnsnik, 2017; Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Heisler, 2014; Ramsey-Klawnsnik, Miller, 2017). In the research presented in this paper, the aspect of polyvictimisation was addressed, however, only in terms of domestic violence in which different family members of older women (spouses/partners, children and grandchildren, and their spouses/partners as well as distant relatives) are perpetrators and victims.

These considerations underlie a research project conducted as part of a rural domestic violence prevention system in one of the municipalities in Western Pomerania. Its primary aim was to characterise in as much detail as possible the domestic violence that older women experience as victims and that they observe from the position of witnesses. We used a distinction between five forms of domestic violence: psychological violence, physical violence, neglect, economic violence, and sexual violence (Brownell, 2015, 2016; Flury et al., 2010; Mazur, 2002). In the study, we analysed two dimensions:

1. The complexity of domestic violence against older women:
  - 1.1. distributions of forms of domestic violence in the experiences of senior women;
  - 1.2. the co-occurrence of these forms of violence.
2. The specificity of domestic violence entanglements in older women's families:
  - 2.1. family relations between perpetrators of violence and its victims – older women;
  - 2.2. family relations between victims of violence and perpetrators of violence when older women witness it.

## Methods

To implement the adopted research intentions, we used five sets of indicators identifying individual forms of domestic violence: psychological violence, physical violence, neglect, economic violence, and sexual violence. The complex of nineteen indicators – behaviours constituting acts of domestic violence – is the result of several years of work on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the issue of domestic violence.

In the first stage, we used individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews to identify indicators of specific forms of violence. In the second stage, we carried out quantitative tests on all identified acts of violence (65 acts), to finally select those indicators with the highest level of relevance and reliability (the values of the Pearson linear correlation coefficient in the analysis of discriminatory power of indicators were above 0.7; in the reliability analysis, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for indicators of psychological violence was 0.875, for indicators of physical violence – 0.970, for indicators of neglect – 0.673, for indicators of economic violence – 0.833, for indicators of sexual violence – 0.703). To construct a consistent and homogeneous scale, resulting from the ordering of acts of violence as indicators of the different forms of violence, we used a procedure modelled on Louis Thurstone's expert method (Babbie, 2013)<sup>1</sup>.

The process of gathering empirical material focused on the measurement of all selected indicators to characterise the different forms of domestic violence in two dimensions of the seniors' social lives:

- in their own experience (when they experienced harm from loved ones/relatives);
- in their observation and indirect experience, when a member of their family experienced/experienced harm from their loved ones.

Taking such a broad view of the phenomenon under analysis presupposed the acquisition of knowledge possessing two particularly cognitively significant properties:

- its in-depth nature (1). This knowledge relates not only to the picture of the scale of domestic violence against the older women participating in the study themselves but also to the scale of the complexity of the problem of violence in the families affected by it.
- its cumulative nature (2). The respondents' declarations about harm suffered by members of their families – from other household members or closer or further relatives - expand, in a way, the scale of the phenomenon in the study area. Fur-

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<sup>1</sup> Independent judges (students attending a seminar on domestic violence) were asked to rate the indicator value of the acts of violence – that is, whether each illustrates one of the five forms adopted for the study – and to determine their position on the scale. The degree of similarity of the judges' ratings was measured by the quarter deviation, which, for the nineteen indicators finally used for the study, did not exceed the value  $Q = 0.99$ .

thermore, according to the concept adopted, the survey was oriented towards identifying perpetrators of acts of domestic violence, according to the relationship of kinship and affinity to the victims.

The survey tool included questions addressed to female respondents:

- whether – and how often – in the six months preceding the survey (and possibly in the past), they had experienced the behaviours indicated above from household members;
- whether – and how often – during this period (and possibly in the past) there were situations in which a member of the respondent's family experienced the listed behaviours from household members. The acts of violence included in the questionnaire, which are indicators of the different forms of violence, are presented below:

Psychological violence:

- hurtful criticism,
- forcing submission by shouting,
- humiliation, persistent teasing/harsh ridicule/mockery in the eyes of others,
- blaming for even minor failures, multiple blame for own mistakes,
- using insults (epithets) and vulgar terms against the victim.

Physical violence:

- jerking and/or poking or pushing, etc., for example, to force a rush,
- punches or several slaps with the hand and/or kicks, etc.,
- beating with some instrument that does not leave clear, permanent marks on the body,
- beating leaving obvious bruises or wounds.

Neglect:

- lack of interest in problems and/or ignoring feelings/ neglecting emotions,
- unreasonable deprivation (restriction) of food, drink, or sleep,
- disregarding ill health/illness or neglecting care in illness,
- failure to provide necessary medical attention.

Economic violence:

- excessive, persistent control of spending,
- refusing to pay/put money toward manageable needs,
- taking away money/forcing to give money back.

Sexual violence:

- unpleasant, unsavoury sexual remarks toward the victim,
- touching places on the body that an individual should not so touch,
- sexual abuse – inappropriate, unacceptable sexual behaviour toward the victim.

An issue that is important from the perspective of understanding the phenomenon of domestic violence is the identification of perpetrators. In the survey, female respondents were requested to categorise the perpetrators of the violence they experienced into the following categories and, additionally, in a further question, perpetrators in other situations of domestic violence known to them.

The categories of perpetrators of domestic violence identified in the study:

- own wife of the person experiencing harm,
- own husband of the person experiencing harm,
- own daughter of the person experiencing harm,
- own son of the person experiencing harm,
- daughter-in-law, concubine/partner of the son of the person experiencing harm,
- son-in-law, cohabiting partner of the daughter of the person experiencing harm,
- the abuser's grandchildren,
- someone else in the family of the person experiencing harm.

The study was carried out using the audience questionnaire interview technique, on a research sample of one hundred and twenty-one senior women (60 years and over) living in a rural area of one of the municipalities of Western Pomerania in Poland (14% of the population of women aged 60 and over, N=864). The senior women were invited to meetings in village day centres – the seats of local Senior Citizens' Clubs, operating in fourteen villages in the study area. At the meetings, we asked the participants for their consent to take part in the study, presenting its issues and discussing in detail the questions contained in the research tool. The women who gave their consent then completed the questionnaire, assisted by interviewers. Later in the meetings, we conducted focus group interviews with all participants on what domestic violence is, how it manifests itself and what its causes are. With those seniors who gave separate consent, we conducted individual in-depth interviews about their individual experiences of domestic violence. The present material reports the results of the questionnaire survey, which is a data-rich aspect of the study in its own right, designed to capture the issues expressed in the introduction of this paper.

The results of the qualitative research form the subject of a distinctive reflection on the issue of domestic violence against older women. It is maintained in an ethnomethodological convention, placing the primary emphasis on the colloquial (every day) way



of knowing and depicting the facts of the social world. In it, we based the methodological context on research procedures appropriate to Grounded Theory (Glaser, Strauss, 2006). The analysis of the qualitative data addresses the issues of functioning with the problem of violence by relatives in the long term, the impact of long-term violence on the identity of the victims, their status degradation and marginalisation in the family and the local social environment. The characteristics of the sample are presented below:

Table 1

*Socio-demographic characteristics of older women participating in the research study*

Age	frequency	percentage
60–69 years	73	60.3
70–79 years	37	30.6
79 years and more	11	9.1
Education		
basic	40	33.1
basic vocational	40	33.1
Secondary	35	28.9
higher	4	3.3
no data	2	1.7
Marital status		
married	64	52.9
cohabiting	3	2.5
divorced	4	3.3
separated	1	0.8
widowed	42	34.7
divorced and remarried	1	0.8
divorced, remarried and now widowed	1	0.8
no data	5	4.1
Having children		
has no children	2	1.7
has children	114	94.2
data gaps	5	4.1
Housing conditions		
living in single-family homes owned or co-owned by them,	69	57.0
living in single-family houses not owned or co-owned by them	14	11.6
living in flats in multi-family houses that they own or co-own	23	19.0
living in flats in multi-family houses which they do not own or co-own	6	5.0
otherwise	2	1.7
data missing	7	5.8
Revenue sharing		
not sharing their own revenue with anyone	61	50.4
sharing own revenue with other family members	47	38.8
data gaps	13	10.7

Number of people using the respondent's revenue		
N/A	61	50.4
1	33	27.3
2	10	8.3
3	1	0.8
4	2	1.7
6	1	0.8
no data	13	10.7
Total	12 = 100.0%	

Source: Authors' own research.

## Results

We analysed the results of the study on several levels, according to the research question adopted:

- the scale of experiences of violence in the research sample;
- forms of domestic violence experienced by older women;
- the shares of acts of domestic violence, within particular forms of violence, experienced by older women;
- relationships between forms of domestic violence experienced by older women;
- family relationships between perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

In the survey, we obtained more than 40% of older women declaring to have experienced acts of violence in the domestic environment. The dominant form of harm experienced is psychological violence – 35.5%. Negligence on the part of family members is experienced by 22.3% of the female participants in the study, with less frequent cases of economic violence (8.3%), physical violence (5.8%), and sexual violence (0.8%). This scale of the phenomenon justifies asking questions both about the quality of life of older people (De Donder et al., 2019; Honarvar et al., 2020; McGarry et al., 2010; Ziółkowski et al., 2015) and about the patterns of daily family life practices. It should be emphasised that if violence on the part of loved ones is present in the everyday experience of such a large category of senior women, it can be assumed that this phenomenon somehow fits into the existing social order and the cultural patterns associated with it. A characteristic feature of rural communities in Poland is the continued presence of traditional, patriarchal values and patterns of intra-family relations (Michalska, 2020). In the consciousness of women, the permanence of the family is perceived as a very important issue and the well-being of the family is more important than one's well-being (Buchbinder, Band-Winterstein, 2003; Hoppe, 2020; Phillips, 2000).

The proportions of declarations of acts of violence – specific behaviours of the perpetrators – taken as indicators of particular forms of domestic violence reveal the specificity of older women's experience of psychological violence, neglect, economic violence, and physical violence. The following table contains the shares of declarations of experiencing individual acts of violence, whereby acts of sexual violence, due to the negligible number of indications (less than 0.7%), have been omitted.

Table 2

*Acts of particular forms of domestic violence experienced by older women*

	experiencing acts of violence [%]	not experiencing violence [%]
Psychological abuse		
hurtful criticism	26.4	73.6
blaming for even minor failures, repeatedly blaming for one's own mistakes	24.8	75.2
humiliation, persistent teasing/ mocking in the eyes of others	15.7	84.3
forcing compliance with a yell	12.4	87.6
using insults, vulgar expressions towards the victim	12.4	87.6
Negligence		
disregard for ill health/illness or neglect of care in illness	13.2	86.8
lack of interest in problems and/or ignoring feelings/neglecting emotions	10.7	89.3
failure to provide necessary medical assistance	7.4	92.6
unjustified deprivation (restriction) of food, drink, or sleep	3.3	96.7
Economic violence		
refusal to make payments for possible needs	5.0	95.0
excessive, persistent control of expenditure	5.8	94.2
withdrawal of money/forcing to give money away	4.1	95.9
Physical violence		
pulling and poking or pushing, etc., for example, to force a rush	5.0	95.0
hitting or several punches with the hand and kicks, etc.	3.3	96.7
beating with an instrument that does not leave obvious permanent marks on the body	2.5	97.5
beating leaving obvious bruises or wounds	2.5	97.5

Note: n = 121 (100%).

Source: Authors' own study.

When considering the two forms of violence most frequently experienced by senior women from their family members – in the case of psychological violence (unlike in all the others), each act exceeds 12% of the sample share. This fact testifies to the most common nature of this form of violence, experienced by more than one in three senior women (35.5%).

Conversely, looking at those subjected to psychological violence alone (43 women in the sample, as shown below), its acts constitute a complex of activities indicative of a highly problematic quality of life for older women victims of domestic violence.

Table 3

*Older women experiencing acts of psychological violence*

		hurtful criticism	blaming for even minor failures, repeatedly blaming for one's own mistakes	humiliation, persistent teasing/ mocking in the eyes of others	forcing compliance with a yell	using insults, vulgar expressions towards the victim
experiencing acts of violence	n	32	30	19	15	15
	[%]	74.4	69.8	44.2	34.9	34.9
43 = 100.0%						

Source: Auhors' own study.

Criticism that evokes a sense of injustice, blaming even for trifles in an atmosphere of excessive vulgarity, ruins the sense of dignity of people who should be reassured and respected for their experience and achievements, and “indulge” in weaknesses due to age.

For the second most frequent form of violence experienced by relatives – neglect (27 women – 22.3% of the total experienced), two types of acts are particularly noteworthy:

- disregarding ill health/illness or neglecting care in illness (13.2%),
- lack of interest in problems and/or ignoring feelings/ neglecting emotions (10.7%).

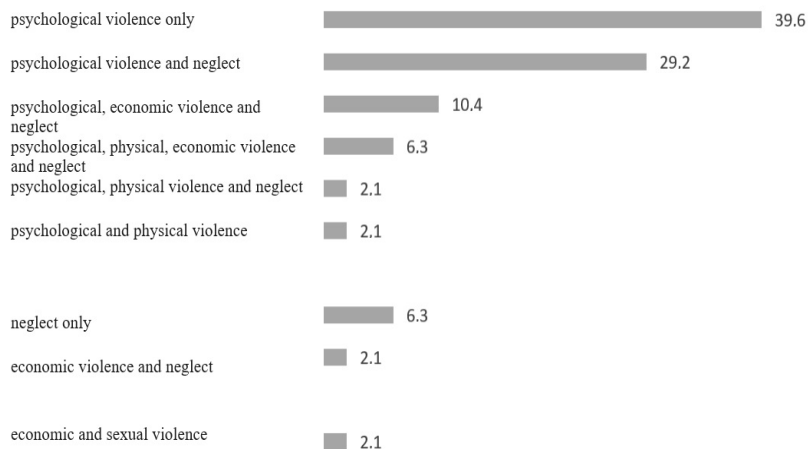
Their participation in the sample leads one to reflect on the lack of care and interest in the other person revealed in the study – a loved one from one's own family who, because of their age, is particularly in need of interest, understanding, and caring.

An even more detailed picture of the phenomenon of domestic violence is revealed from the perspective of its complexity. 54.2% of the 48 female victims of domestic violence experience it in the form of harm belonging to more than one form. Of these, the proportion experiencing violence in the form of two forms was 35.4%, the proportion experiencing acts belonging to three forms was 8.3%, while the proportion of victims of four forms of violence was 10.4%. By contrast, in the study, we found no case of experiencing domestic violence in all five forms.

Some victims indicate that their experience of a particular form of violence consists of not one, but two, three or more types of expressive acts. This means that we are dealing with entire complexes of experienced harm, which can be treated as a peculiar situation of accumulation of conditions having the hallmarks of pathological patterns of life in the family environment (Terelak et al., 2019).

Analysing more closely into the specifics of the phenomenon in question, one can see:

- a clear predominance of experiencing only acts of psychological violence;
- in the cases of co-occurrence of different forms of violence, the greatest share is the simultaneous experience of psychological violence and neglect; the co-occurrence of the other analysed forms of violence can be observed relatively less frequently. This is shown in detail in the chart (picture) below.



*Picture 1.* Experience of cumulative forms of domestic violence. *Note:* Data expressed in %; n = respondents experiencing domestic violence = 48(100%). *Source:* Authors' own study.

Table 4  
 Statistical measures of the relationship between acts of psychological abuse and acts of neglect [ $n=121$ ]

Acts of psychological violence	Acts of negligence		
	<i>lack of interest in problems and/or ignoring feelings/emotions</i>	<i>unjustified deprivation (restriction) of food, drink, or sleep</i>	<i>disregarding ill health/illness or neglecting care in illness</i>
harmful criticism	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 11,35; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,45$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 12,00; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b> , 1-str. <b>p=0,001</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,47$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 18,96; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,57$	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 0,26; ni;  $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 19,56; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,56$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Correction for continuity = 4,20; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,04</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,028</b> , 1-str. = <b>0,028</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,31$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 20,18; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,58$	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 2,77; ni  $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 6,28; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,012</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,014</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,014</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,38$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 32,05; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,69$
shouting for compliance	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 2,40; ni  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b> , 1-str. <b>p=0,001</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,47$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 18,96; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,57$	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 20,18; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,028</b> , 1-str. = <b>0,028</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,31$ $\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 20,18; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,58$	$\chi^2$ (1, $n=121$ ) Yates corrected = 32,05; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> , 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b> ;  $C_{kor} = 0,69$

humiliation, persistent teasing/mockery in the eyes of others	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 24,48; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,61</b></p>	The chi-square criterion was not fulfilled	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 28,13; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,64</b></p>	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 11,73; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,001</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,001</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,47</b></p>
blaming for even minor failures, repeatedly blaming for one's own mistakes	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 7,79; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,005</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,006</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,006</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,39</b></p>	The chi-square criterion was not fulfilled	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 26,57; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,000</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,64</b></p>	<p><math>\chi^2</math> (1, n=121) Yates corrected = 8,64; Ist. as. 2-str.: <b>p=0,003</b>;</p> <p>Dt Fisher: Ist. 2-str.: <b>p=0,005</b>, 1-str.: <b>p=0,005</b>;</p> <p><b>C<sub>kor</sub> = 0,42</b></p>

*Note:* In brackets: number of degrees of freedom; n – sample size. Outside brackets: Yates' corrected (correction value for Yates' continuity of Chi-square test); then Ist. as. 2 p = ... (asymptotic significance level of the test for the two-sided critical area) and Fisher's Dt – in cases where Fisher's exact test is used – Ist.: ... (exact significance for the two-sided and one-sided critical area);  $C_{kor}$  – corrected C-Pearson contingency coefficient; ni – statistically insignificant Chi-square test result. *Source:* Authors' own study.

It is noteworthy that of the forty-eight female participants in the study who are victims of domestic violence, forty-three declared experiencing psychological violence. Almost 40% experience only psychological violence, and half of the victims declare experiencing psychological and other forms of violence from their family members. Women experiencing psychological abuse and neglect make up the largest proportion in this category.

In the context of the aforementioned considerations, the numerous co-occurrence of experiences of psychological violence and neglect makes it possible to further expand the previous considerations to the issue of analysing the relationship between the various acts of these forms of violence. Such an analysis provides an ascent to theoretical findings on the phenomenon of domestic violence and thus allows one to come closer to a more profound understanding of it. In it, the use of the Chi-square test of independence to test the relationship between each act of psychological violence and each act of neglect makes it possible to determine which of them are in statistically significant relationships, while their strength is indicated by the values of the adjusted contingency coefficient. The following table summarises the statistical measures (values in bold are subject to interpretation) for the relationships between those acts of both forms of violence analysed, which, in the course of analysis, were found to be highly statistically significant ( $p \leq 0.002$ ), with at least average strength of association (Pearson  $_{CKor} > 0.3$ ).

Relationships between neglect and psychological abuse are most clearly revealed in cases of:

- lack of interest in problems and/or ignoring feelings/ neglecting emotions,
- disregard of illness or neglect of care in illness.

The first of the indicated forms of neglect is in statistically significant relationships with all the analysed acts of psychological violence; their strength is at least average. The second enters into relationships with acts of psychological violence (except forcing submission by shouting), with slightly higher strength on average.

The observed regularities allow the following hypotheses to be put forward for further research on representative samples:

- firstly – there is a higher probability that experiencing any of the listed forms of neglect is accompanied by experiences of psychological violence than the absence of experiences of this form of domestic violence;
- secondly – the observation of any of the acts of psychological violence suggests that there is also a lack of interest in problems, troubles and/or ignoring feelings/ neglecting emotions;
- third – forcing submission by shouting at the victim does not allow one to expect that the victim is also experiencing neglect in the form of disregard for illness or neglect of care in illness.



Another important pattern worth emphasising is revealed by the relationship between humiliation, persistent teasing/harsh ridicule/mockery in the eyes of others and blaming for even minor failures, repeatedly blaming one's own mistakes, and neglect. The two forms of psychological violence mentioned above are interdependent with almost all acts of neglect; being the only ones to co-occur with the failure to provide necessary medical assistance. Presumably, therefore, both types of psychological violence are characterised by the greatest potential for linking harms of a psychological nature with neglect, which can be interpreted as a kind of complex of dysfunctions of intra-family relations. Particularly noteworthy is the finding of a statistically significant association between failure to provide necessary medical assistance with only the two forms of psychological violence discussed. This fact seems to shed some light on the nature of these acts. If family members – one towards the other – allow themselves to be humiliated, persistently jeered at/harassed/mockery in the eyes of others and blamed for even minor failures, repeatedly blamed for their own mistakes, and are also capable of failing to provide the necessary medical assistance, then we are probably dealing with a situation of erosion of family functions.

From the above considerations, there emerges another issue worth posing for further research and analysis. It consists in establishing a predictor in the relationship between acts of psychological violence and neglect (assuming the need to reach a level of measurement that allows probabilistic analyses). Indeed, it is a matter of establishing whether it is from acts of psychological violence that neglect arises, or whether it is a function of such neglect. Going further, making such findings will make it possible to grasp the materiality order organising the observed relationships between the phenomenon of domestic violence and family functioning.

Another issue – complementing the previous characterisation of the phenomenon of domestic violence against older women – is that of perpetrators. This is an extremely sensitive and difficult issue due to the close relationships of those involved in the violence the resulting barriers associated with talking about unpleasant experiences, and the potential for secondary victimisation (Laing, 2016), which requires great sensitivity in arranging the research situation and conducting interviews. In the study presented here, forty-eight female seniors – victims of domestic violence – characterised the perpetrators of the abuse they suffered.

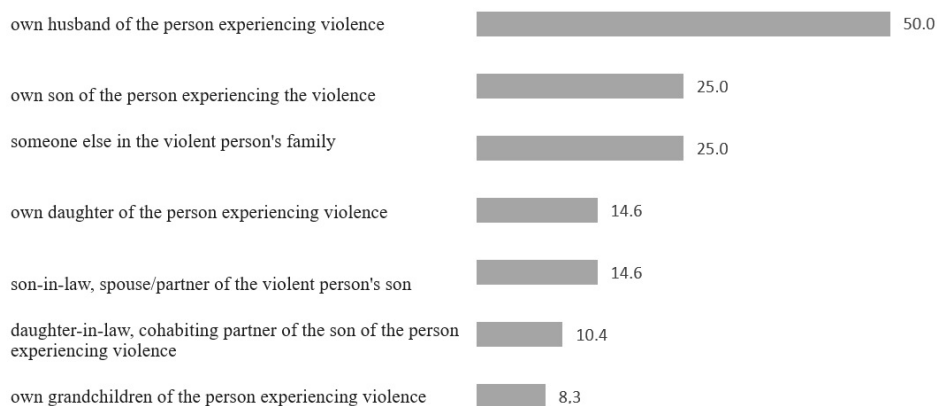
Table 5  
*Perpetrators of particular forms of domestic violence against older women*

Perpetrators	psycho- logical	Forms of domestic violence:				TOTAL
		neglect	economic	physical	sexual	
Husband of the person experiencing harm	13	8	1	1	1	24
Harmed person's daughter	5	1	–	1	–	7
Harmed person's son	4	4	2	2	–	12
Daughter-in-law, cohabiting partner of the son of the person experiencing harm	2	1	1	1	–	5
Son-in-law, cohabiting partner of the daughter of a person experiencing harm	3	1	1	2	–	7
The abused person's grandchildren	4	–	0	–	–	4
Other relatives of the person experiencing harm	5	3	2	2	–	12
<b>TOTAL</b>	36	18	7	9	1	71

*Note:* Indications do not add up to 48 as some perpetrators commit more than one form of violence. Within the category of *Someone else in the family*: aunts, uncles, sisters, mother-in-law, mothers, brothers, and cousins were indicated. *Source:* Authors' own study.

Considering that the survey was conducted among senior women, and therefore those who themselves were raised in the middle of the last century, and who also raised their children at least a few decades ago, it is possible to find a feature of the patriarchal model of the traditional rural family in the survey results presented in the table above (Rorat et al., 2016). An additional argument is the proportion of perpetrators by gender – of the seventy-one perpetrators of domestic violence against older women, forty-three were male (60.6%).

A detailed complement to the above characteristics are the proportions of perpetrators of domestic violence against seniors, by family role, as shown in the chart (picture) below.



*Picture 2.* Perpetrators of domestic violence against older women. *Note:* Data expressed as %;  $n_{\text{respondents experiencing domestic violence}} = 48$  (100%). For the clarity of the picture, we have limited ourselves to presenting the shares of respondents' family members' indications to the number – selected from the whole sample – of categories of people experiencing violence in the domestic environment, rather than to the number of people affected by specific forms of violence, as this better illustrates the scale of the phenomenon. *Source:* Authors' own study.

The most frequently indicated family members of victims committing acts of violence are their husbands and sons. It is important to note, however, that the graph represents the percentage of husbands 50% (24 persons) and sons (25%) who are perpetrators of violence, calculated to the total number of victims of domestic violence among older women.

Although it is difficult to talk about statistical significance (due to small numbers), the fact that perpetrators of domestic violence are usually men has the character of a regularity (to be verified in further research). Moreover, according to the general regularities found, perpetrators of psychological violence and neglect are most often indicated; for both forms of violence, the perpetrators are usually the husbands of the victims.

Additional value is added to the issue of family relations between perpetrators and victims by analysing the number of acts of individual forms of violence according to the degree and type of closeness of family relations between victims and perpetrators of violence. Distinguishing among the perpetrators the following categories: spouses of victims, children of victims, spouses/partners of children of victims and grandchildren of victims, allows one to see an interesting regularity in this regard, as revealed in the table below.

Table 6  
*Perpetrator categories for the different forms of domestic violence against older women*

Perpetrator categories	Forms of domestic violence:				TOTAL	
	psycho- logical	negli- gence	economic	physical		sexual
husbands of persons suffering harm	13	8	1	1	1	24
children of persons experiencing harm	9	5	2	3	–	19
daughter-in-law or sons-in-law, cohabiting partner(s) of the son/daughter of the person suffering harm	5	2	2	3	–	12
grandchildren of the person experiencing harm	4	–	0	–	–	4
anyone else in the family of the person experiencing harm	5	3	2	2	–	12
<b>ŁĄCZNIE</b>	36	18	7	9	1	71

*Note:* Indications do not add up to 48, because some offenders commit more than one form of violence. *Source:* Authors' own study.

Both in general and concerning psychological violence and neglect, spouses of victims, more often than children, perpetrate violence against them. These, in turn, are the perpetrators of violence more often than their spouses (i.e., sons/daughters-in-law of the victims), cohabitators, or partners. This means that within family relationships defined by marital ties, the factors for violent acts are stronger than in first-degree kinship relationships and even stronger than in affinity relationships. This means that there is a paradoxical pattern – which, if confirmed by further research, has significant theoretical implications for understanding the phenomenon of domestic violence – in which the idea of “proximity” (in the sociological sense) does not weaken, but rather increases the impact of the factors of domestic violence. This conclusion therefore provides a hypothesis for further in-depth analyses of the issue of domestic violence perpetration. For, on the one hand, it is indeed a conclusion, i.e., it follows from material that has not been collected to test it as a hypothesis. On the other hand, it is a source of important new questions and as such does not exhaust the analysis.

Additional light is shed on the issues analysed by juxtaposing the co-occurrence of the analysed forms of violence experienced by the female participants of the study in terms of their perpetrators. The effect of this juxtaposition is presented in the table below.



[3 and 9] [3] [3] [3]			1								
[4] [4] [4] [3]			1								
[5] [5] [5] [2]			1								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Σ</b>	19	14	5	3	3	1	1	1	1	48
	<b>%</b>	39,6	29,2	10,4	6,3	6,3	2,1	2,1	2,1	2,1	100,0

*Note:* In the column of *perpetrators* of violence, repeated numbers in square brackets indicate the number of acts of each form of violence perpetrated by the perpetrator. In turn, the values inside the table indicate the number of women experiencing domestic violence in a particular combination of co-occurring forms. For example: [5] [5] [5] [2] in the last line of the table means that the victim's son-in-law is the perpetrator of three acts of violence and the daughter of one. Such experiences are declared by one female participant in the study. *Source:* Authors' own study.

As already established, the most common co-occurring forms of domestic violence experienced by older women are psychological violence and neglect. The data summarised in the table above reveals that the perpetrators of acts implementing this configuration of forms of violence are the husbands, sons, and daughters of the victims. Therefore, among the juxtaposed perpetrators, the closest relatives of the women participating in the study appear to be the most numerous.

Another aspect of the analysed issue of the perpetrator-victim relationship is the image of the phenomenon of domestic violence, resulting from the knowledge of seniors about family situations in which they are not themselves victims, but members of their families. The material gathered, which is the result of seniors' accounts of known situations of violence in their families, has a somewhat different status than accounts of personal experiences of violence by members of their own families. Knowledge of violence experienced by other people can have different sources. Sometimes one witnesses violence against a family member, one knows about it from the victim's or other witnesses' accounts, in other situations one intuitively senses the existence of violence from its more or less obvious signs. In all cases, however, this is not knowledge derived from personal experience of violence and it concerns only those situations and incidents of which the witnesses are aware and therefore necessarily excludes those which they do not know but which are likely to occur. This kind of knowledge cannot therefore be used to determine the scale of the phenomenon, being only a supplement to the picture of the domestic violence phenomenon drawn based on the personal experience of the victims.

Taking into account the comments mentioned before, the empirical material gathered does not allow for an analysis of the scale of the phenomenon studied and the nature of the relationship between perpetrators and victims. However, it provides a valuable platform for analysing the complexity of family entanglements in domestic

violence. The data summarised in the table below allows one to realise the validity of the above remarks and see the findings.

Table 8  
*Perpetrators of domestic violence against family members of older women*

		PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE										TOTAL	
		Someone from the families of victims who have committed violence against someone from the family of older women											
VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE	Family members of older women who have been victims of violence by someone else in their family	0 No indication of the perpetrator										Σ	%
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
		2									3	5	3,9
	brother			2			1					3	2,3
	aunt	1		2			2			1	7	13	10,1
	daughter	2										2	1,6
	children	5	5									10	7,8
	cousin			2	12							14	10,9
	mother	2		1	5	2	1					11	8,5
	husband		1			6		1				8	6,2
	sister									2		2	1,6
	grandson								1	3		4	3,1
	granddaughter								2			2	1,6
	grandchildren						2					2	1,6
	son-in-law											2	1,6
	daughter-in-law	20	4	1	8	6	3	6	1	1	1	51	39,5
	no victim identified												
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Σ</b>	32	10	8	25	14	9	7	4	7	13	129	100,0
	<b>%</b>	24,8	7,8	6,2	19,4	10,9	7,0	5,4	3,1	5,4	10,1	100,0	

Source: Authors' own study.

The victims mentioned in the above list have family relationships with the seniors participating in the study, e.g., they are their sisters, grandchildren, cousins, mothers, etc. In contrast, the perpetrators indicated by these seniors were included in family relationships with their victims. As the analysis reveals, female victim types are indicated by participating seniors significantly more often than male victim types. However, while male perpetrator types dominate over female perpetrators, the difference is not as pronounced as in the case of victim gender. In other words – while female victims of domestic violence are more frequent than male victims, this predominance is noticeably smaller among perpetrators (in the survey conducted, there were twenty-six female perpetrators and fifty-one male perpetrators). In addition, the data shows that domestic violence more often affects those relatively close to seniors (children, parents, and spouses).

The juxtaposition of types of victims and perpetrators makes it possible to recognise the deeper connections occurring in families with the problem of domestic violence, which, in this aspect of the analysis as well, reveals the specific nature of the phenomenon of domestic violence, which is expressed in the differentiated connections between the family members involved. If one looks at the sons of the victims, indicated by the seniors as perpetrators of violence – when their victims are the mothers of the reporting family situation of the participants of the study – it becomes clear that the perpetrators of violence in the indicated cases are the brothers of these participants. Whereas when the victims are the husbands of the seniors reporting cases of violence, the perpetrators (sons of the victims) also turn out to be the sons of these seniors. Conversely, when the victim's daughter is the perpetrator of violence against the mother of the woman participating in the study, she is most likely to be her sister. Similarly, when the victims are the grandchildren of the seniors and the perpetrators are their parents, they turn out to be the children or spouses of the seniors' children.

It seems significant that among the eight seniors indicating their grandchildren as victims of domestic violence, there are five women who themselves experience violence from members of their own families. Among them, one experiences abuse from her grandchildren, who she identifies as victims of her parents; another participant in the study is a victim of violence from her son; two senior women are victims of violence from their son and daughter, who in turn also commit violence against their children (grandchildren of the senior woman participating in the study); in one case, an older woman is a victim of violence from her husband. As can be seen from the supplementary statements of the female participants in the study, there are often situations in which the perpetration of violence against seniors is interpreted by them as a consequence of previous violence against their children. This means that some perpetrators of domestic violence against seniors were themselves formerly victims



of violence by these seniors. Nowadays, they perpetrate violence both against their children (grandchildren of seniors) and their parents, so there is an intergenerational transmission of violent behaviour patterns (models). Admittedly, the small numbers obtained in the study do not yet allow a statistically significant correlation to be established, but it is worth posing this issue as an important element of the problem in further research activities, as it draws one of the – it seems – fundamental aspects of the phenomenon of domestic violence – its syndromic character. In families affected by violence, the problem does not only involve individuals (e.g., spouses), but – on the contrary – it is often experienced by many other family members and it often spreads through the inheritance of patterns of violence even in more than two generations, and more so among immediate rather than extended family members.

## **Discussion**

Globally, research on domestic violence against the elderly is carried out relatively frequently and is both performed using quantitative and qualitative methods (Meyer et al., 2019), whereas in Poland rather few studies have been conducted so far. The results of studies recognising the scale of the phenomenon reveal that violence in the home environment may be experienced by between 4% and 20% of people over the age of 60 (Halicka, 2014). Some of the most widely known projects are the studies conducted in 2009 and 2015 by the Polish Academy of Sciences on samples representative of the collective of Poles over 18 years of age. The results of these surveys show that almost 20% of participants are aware of cases of domestic violence against seniors, with psychological violence being the most commonly indicated – in the 2015 survey, 20.5% of respondents knew of such situations in their environment and 7.5% in their own families. Domestic economic violence against seniors is slightly less common – 19.7% of respondents knew of such cases in their neighbourhood and 8.3% observed it in their own families. Cases of physical violence against seniors in their neighbourhood were known to 13.9% of respondents and 5.8% in their families. Domestic sexual violence against seniors is a relatively rare phenomenon – 3.1% of respondents knew of such cases in their environment and 2.4% reported such situations in their own families (Korzeniowski, 2015, pp. 32–35). The cited studies did not take into account neglect as a form of violence, which turned out to be one of the more frequent forms of violence in the study described in this article, with 22.3% of the seniors surveyed experiencing it. This is the second form of violence experienced by older women, after psychological violence. Moreover, a statistically significant relationship between neglect and psychological violence turns out to be an important aspect of the results of the study conducted.

The results of the survey conducted among senior women (rather than among multiple categories of respondents), reported in this paper, show a slightly different structure of the phenomenon. On the one hand, looking from a general perspective, the estimation of the obtained indicator of the structure of victims in the sample (39.7% of victims) allows, with 95% ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) probability, to define the confidence interval as  $0.31 \leq p_0 \leq 0.48$ , which means that – with statistically significant probability – the share of victims in the collective of elderly women exceeds 30%. On the other hand, in families with a violence problem, psychological violence and neglect have the highest share, while economic, physical and sexual violence are less frequent. It is therefore worth considering the problem of possible distortions in the picture of the phenomenon. Surveys of the phenomenon of domestic violence against persons belonging to specific social categories (children, women or seniors), if carried out within these social categories, produce different – and seemingly more accurate – results than cross-sectional surveys carried out on samples representative of the entire population. This is because there is an important difference between knowledge derived from observing one's environment, even within one's own family, and personal experience of specific treatment from others.

An important issue, increasingly discussed in the literature, is the proportion of women among victims of elder abuse (Brownell, 2015). For example, according to an analysis by the Spanish *Instituto Nacional de Estadística*, in 2012, 92.1% of all people targeted by institutions responsible for dealing with domestic violence were women (Verdejo, Calvo, 2014). Also in the study presented in this article, women represent the majority among victims of domestic violence (73.0%), while men represent the majority among perpetrators (66.2%). As can be seen from the data obtained, although among victims women are in a clear majority, among perpetrators the difference between male and female shares is no longer so significant.

A more profound issue is the family relationship between perpetrators and victims. The results of the 2005 *Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (WHO, 2005) reveal that physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner is experienced by between 15% and 71% of older women (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006) (Farrington, Ttofi, 2020). The issue of perpetrators was addressed in slightly more detail in a study conducted in Boston. They show that perpetrators of domestic violence against seniors are their spouses in 58% of cases, while 18% of perpetrators are their children (Pillemer, Finkelhor, 1988) (Kleinschmidt, 1996), while in a study carried out in 2017–2019 by researchers from the University of Toronto, sons are the most frequently indicated perpetrators (39%), less frequently spouses (27.3%), and cohabiters (24.7%). The results obtained in the study presented in this paper demonstrate that 50.0% of perpetrators of violence against senior women are the husbands of the victims, 39.6% are children and 8.3% are grandchildren.

Anton Grunefeld et al., based on their qualitative research, refer to the problem of husbands' perpetration as "marriage license as a hitting licence," arguing that marriage is one of the clearer moments that activate the pattern of violence in the family. This is particularly true in situations where violence is inherited, which has been referred to as violence "in the family of origin" (Grunfeld et al., 1996). This aspect – the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence patterns – in the study presented here reveals itself as the phenomenon of the young reproducing a family pattern with a violence problem initiated earlier, by the seniors who are present.

Older women usually combine the experience of violence with reduced psycho-physical well-being (Band-Winterstein, Eisikovits, 2010; Eisikovits Band-Winterstein, 2015; McGarry et al., 2010, 2011, 2017). As the analysis suggests, an important consequence of older women experiencing domestic violence is a sense of helplessness in the situation (Grunfeld et al., 1996; Meyer et al., 2019; Band-Winterstein, 2015). It has particular significance in that it reduces the ability to take defensive action (Walker, 2012, 2016). As part of the broader characteristics of the domestic violence phenomenon, the feeling of helplessness, being a consequence of experiencing violence from relatives, is part of the mechanism of pushing seniors to the margins of family life and social life in the local environment, resulting in their permanent marginalisation (Ferreira, Lindgren, 2008), which is sanctioned, on the one hand by existing cultural patterns in society that degrade the position of seniors, and on the other hand, by the limited capacity of the domestic violence prevention system (Bhatia, Soletti, 2019; Terelak et al., 2010; Yan, 2015).

The nature of pathological interactions in families with violence problems is so diverse that the literature refers to the phenomenon of polyvictimisation. It is understood as:

[...] multiple co-occurring or consecutive forms of elder abuse by one or more perpetrators, or a single form of abuse perpetrated by multiple others with whom the older adult has a personal, professional or caring relationship in which there is a social expectation of trust (Ramsey-Klawnsnik, 2017).

In the described research, we rather refer to the co-occurrence of different forms of domestic violence experienced by older women (Hacıaliefendioğlu et al., 2021).

## Conclusion

It is more common to experience acts of neglect combined with acts of psychological violence from loved ones than neglect alone.

Psychological abuse in the form of humiliation, persistent teasing/rubbishing/mockery in the eyes of others and blaming for even minor failures, multiple blame for one's own mistakes has a high potential for linking psychological harms with neglect. They remain correlated with almost all, accepted for study, manifestations of neglect. This allows us to assume the existence of a kind of complex dysfunctional relationship between family members.

The experience of multiple harms, representing different forms of violence, provides an important premise for the claim that the situation of families with violence is characterised by a peculiar accumulation of conditions bearing the hallmarks of pathological models of family life.

Within family relationships defined by marital ties, the factors of violence are stronger than in first-degree kinship relationships and even stronger than in affinity relationships. In other words, "in proximity" (in the sociological sense) the impact of the factors of domestic violence does not diminish at all but increases.

Domestic violence in families of seniors reveals a syndrome of intergenerational transmission of patterns of violent behaviour.

The situation of families is characterised by a peculiar accumulation of conditions bearing the hallmarks of pathological patterns of family life, expressed in the occurrence of entire complexes of experienced harm, usually belonging to more than one form of violence.

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