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Ethical aspects of social research – the case of research on domestic violence against children and young people

Etyczne aspekty badań społecznych – casus badań nad przemocą domową wobec dzieci i młodzieży

Abstract

Aim. The literature on domestic violence makes it possible to perceive significant discrepancies in its presented scale, on the basis of the studies described (even several dozen percentage points). Such a situation leads to a number of problems of both a theoretical and a practical nature, which mainly come down to issues of diagnosing the phenomenon. The article presents three types of these differences: methodological (research procedures), cultural (ways of understanding phenomena) and ethical (norms of implementing scientific research), with deeper considerations focused on the importance of changes in the ethical rules of conducting research for the depiction of phenomena.

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Methods and materials. The authors use the example of their own research on domestic violence against minors (questionnaire auditory interviews in research samples for selected municipalities of Western Pomerania) to address the issue of the impact of ethical requirements for sociological research on the results obtained.

Results and conclusion. A comparative view of the results of surveys carried out using the same methodology, but with the changing requirements of the ethical procedures, reveal a difference of up to 17.3% in terms of the overall scale of domestic violence, and up to 23% in terms of experiencing psychological violence. Faced with the cognitive needs of depicting social problems as accurately as possible, and the need to depict them in a manner consistent with the canon of ethical requirements, it turns out to be good practice to set up competent boards to optimise research projects. The authors share their experience of setting up and operating research ethics committees at their home university.

Keywords: comparative study, methodology of social sciences, domestic violence, ethics of social research, research ethics committee.

Abstrakt

Cel. Piśmiennictwo na temat zjawiska przemocy domowej pozwala dostrzec znaczące rozbieżności w jego przedstawianej w badaniach skali (nawet kilkadziesiąt punktów procentowych). Sytuacja taka prowadzi do szeregu problemów natury zarówno teoretycznej, jak i praktycznej, sprowadzających się w głównej mierze do zagadnień diagnozowania zjawiska. Artykuł omawia trzy typy czynników tych różnicowań: metodologiczne (różnice procedur badawczych), kulturowe (różnice sposobów rozumienia zjawisk w poszczególnych społeczeństwach) oraz etyczne (normatywy realizacji badań naukowych), przy czym pogłębione rozważania skoncentrowane zostały na znaczeniu zmian etycznych reguł prowadzenia badań z udziałem ludzi.

Metody i materiały. Autorzy korzystając z przykładu realizowanych przez siebie badań nad zjawiskiem przemocy domowej wobec dzieci i młodzieży szkolnej (kwestionariuszowe wywiady audytoryjne w próbach badawczych dla wybranych gmin Pomorza Zachodniego), podejmują problem wpływu zmieniających się wymogów etycznych dla badań socjologicznych na uzyskiwane wyniki. Porównują oni wyniki badań zrealizowanych w oparciu o odmienne regulacje dotyczące prowadzenia badań w szkołach.

Wyniki i wnioski. Komparatywne ujęcie wyników badań realizowanych tą samą metodologią, lecz przy zmieniających się wymogach procedur etycznych realizacji badań, ujawniają sięgającą 17,3% różnicę w ogólnym ujęciu skali przemocy doświadczanej ze strony bliskich oraz nawet 23% różnicy pod względem – z jej strony najczęściej doświadczanej, a z drugiej szczególnie trudnej do badania – przemocy psychicznej. W obliczu potrzeb poznawczych związanych z możliwie precyzyjnym obrazowaniem problemów społecznych oraz wobec konieczności ich obrazowania w sposób zgodny z kanonem wymogów etycznych dobrą praktyką okazuje się powoływanie gremiów kompetentnych w zakresie optymalizacji projektów badawczych. Autorzy dzielą się doświadczeniem związanym z powoływaniem i funkcjonowaniem komisji etyki badań naukowych w ich macierzystej jednostce.

Słowa kluczowe: przemoc domowa, badania porównawcze, etyka badań społecznych, metodologia nauk społecznych, komisja etyki badań.

Introduction

Domestic violence is increasingly perceived as a significant social problem. For this reason, the phenomenon is attracting the interest of social researchers and practitioners as well as organisations such as the World Health Organization, the United Nations and others (Brownell, 2015; Grunfeld, Larsson, Mackay, & Hotch, 1996; Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002; *Human rights...*, 2010; Podnieks, Anetzberger, Wilson, Teaster, & Wangmo, 2010; WHO multi-country..., 2005; Global status report..., 2014).

In Poland, interest in this issue has been growing since the last decade of the twentieth century (Halicka, 2014; Śniegulska, 2016), while initially rather cross-sectional studies were conducted on the scale of the occurrence of this phenomenon (Przemoc i konflikty [Violence and conflicts...], 2005; Korzeniowski, 2009; Korzeniowski, Radkiewicz, 2015; *Diagnoza dotycząca...* [Diagnosis of...], 2011; *Diagnoza zjawiska przemocy...* [Diagnosis of the phenomenon of violence...], 2010), only later did researchers' attention turn to particular social categories, such as children or the elderly (Mossakowska, Więcek, & Błędowski, 2012; Terelak, Kołodziejczak, & Balsa, 2019; Tobiasz-Adamczyk, 2010).

A noteworthy aspect of current research, with a growing number of projects in progress, is the large discrepancies in the results obtained regarding the extent of domestic violence against individuals belonging to specific social categories. Various references in the literature provide estimates of the extent of intimate partner violence (IPV) ranging from 1–71% (Chan, Chen, & Chen, 2021). In contrast, the incidence of domestic violence against the elderly is estimated at 3.2–27.5% (Williams, Davis, & Acierno, 2017), and as high as 74% (Pickering, Yefimova, & Maxwell, 2019). The scale of domestic violence against children, meanwhile, is estimated in studies to range from 2–4% to 70–90% (Gumowska, 2017). Such significant discrepancies may stem from (1) cultural differences regarding the communities in which the research is undertaken; (2) differences in the methodological approaches used; or (3) changing ethical requirements for conducting research with human subjects, and in particular with children and adolescents.

Cultural differences

Discrepancies in the research results obtained on the extent of domestic violence, which may be due to cultural differences, concern articles and studies that cite research results from different countries and often from different geographical latitudes (Armour, Sleath, 2014; Chane, Adamek, 2015; Chan et al., 2021.; Jewkes, Levin,

& Penn-Kekana, 2002; Syukriani et al., 2022; Tittlová, 2018). For example, when considering research on domestic violence against women alone, the proportion of women who an intimate partner has physically assaulted varies from country to country. In Canada in 2009 it was 1.3%, and in Sweden in 2012 – 2.2%, in Poland in 2012 – 2%, in Germany in 2014 – 3%, in Hungary in 2014 – 6%, in Turkey in 2014 – 11%, and Zimbabwe in 2015 – 19.9%, in Mozambique in 2011 – 27.7%, in Uganda in 2011 – 34.6%, in Rwanda in 2010 – 44.3%, in Afghanistan in 2015 – 46.1%, and Bangladesh in 2011 reported 50.7% of women experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner (*Gender Statistics...*, 2016). The UN Department of Statistical Analysis data are collected from surveys carried out with different methods and in different years but show great variation between countries (not all countries collect such data, the UN reports results from 89 countries). Suppose one aggregates the country data by geographic region, counting basic measures of central tendency. In that case, one can observe clear differences between the intensity of violence against women in intimate partner relationships. In terms of mean percentages of women experiencing IPV, women living in North American countries are least likely to be victimised in this way (3.95%). In contrast, women living in Oceania countries are most likely to be victimised in this way – 28.87%. Data in this regard is presented in the table below.

Table 1

Measures of statistical description for the proportion of women experiencing physical and/or sexual domestic violence by a current or former intimate partner (IPV) in the 12 months preceding the survey by geographical region

Africa	N	Important	41
		Missing data	0
	Mean		25.505
	Median		26.300
	Dominant		36.8
	Standard deviation		10.8170
	Range		40.1
South America	N	Important	4
		Missing data	0
	Mean		19.725
	Median		14.700
	Dominant		12.1
	Standard deviation		11.8480
	Range		25.3

North America	N	Important	2
		Missing data	0
	Mean		3.950
	Median		3.950
	Dominant		1.3
	Standard deviation		3.7477
	Range		5.3
Central America	N	Important	14
		Missing data	0
	Mean		12.071
	Median		10.650
	Dominant		7.7
	Standard deviation		4.1975
	Range		13.0
Asia	N	Important	16
		Missing data	0
	Mean		16.863
	Median		12.600
	Dominant		15.2
	Standard deviation		13.7210
	Range		49.8
Europe	N	Important	40
		Missing data	0
	Mean		4.955
	Median		4.000
	Dominant		6.0
	Standard deviation		3.2980
	Range		13.5
Oceania	N	Important	4
		Missing data	0
	Mean		28.875
	Median		24.850
	Dominant		24.0
	Standard deviation		8.6268
	Range		17.8

Note: The values reported were counted from the percentages reported in surveys collected by the statistical analysis department of the United Nations.

Source: Authors' own study based on (*Gender Statistics*, 2016).

Research results published in Australia in 2004 reveal that the rate of female victimisation among Indigenous people on the continent can be 40 times higher than among non-Indigenous women (Mitchell, 2011).

Methodological differences

Differences in the methodological approaches applied (this context can also be seen in cross-cultural research) can be found in many of the research projects undertaken. These differences concern, on the one hand, how domestic violence and its forms are defined and topologized and, on the other hand, how they are operationalised in the form of the selection of various indicators. For example, forms of domestic violence have been studied worldwide for a long time (Dutton, Goodman, & Bennett, 1999), and many divisions are used: from a dichotomous one, distinguishing between psychological (psycho-emotional) and physical violence, also including sexual abuse (Flury, Nyberg, & Riecher-Rössler, 2010), to more extensive categorisations, such as physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect, psychological neglect, and violation of a person's rights (Brownell, 2015, 2016). In terms of operationalisation, in turn, it is good practice to select indicators understood as acts (actions or omissions) of particular forms of violence (physical violence, psychological violence, economic violence, sexual violence, neglect, and overprotection). The selection of indicators for well-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 different forms of violence and not only acts of violence. Sometimes, however, researchers do not define forms of violence, using only indicators – acts of violence. For example, an extensive study characterising the situation of older people in Poland, in the section referring to seniors' experiences of domestic violence, distinguished not its forms, but nine acts – perpetrators' behaviour towards victims (Mossakowska et al., 2012). Such an approach is of limited benefit in depicting the structure of the phenomenon and its in-depth view (here, the best results are obtained by using qualitative research methodology), and additionally, relatively few examples of scales for studying the level of the phenomenon can be found in the literature (Marshall, 1992b, 1992a). It is particularly difficult to compare the results of studies based on methodologies that do not formulate a definition of forms of violence, but are only based on acts (behaviours, omissions), with the results of studies in which indicators were selected for individual forms of violence, thus creating a cascade structure of the phenomenon (an act of violence—a form of violence—a phenomenon of violence). This

makes it possible to characterise the phenomenon both from the level of specific acts of behaviour of one family member towards another, as well as from a level allowing for a more generalised characterisation (physical violence, psychological violence, etc.).

As an example, Polish research on domestic violence against seniors presents varied results regarding the scale – from 5% to over 40% of families affected (Wiśniewski, Kędziora-Kornatowska, Ślusarz, & Filipka, 2020) and the problem of understanding the forms of violence experienced by its victims. It should be stated that although there have been studies on violence against the elderly in Poland, violence experienced in the home environment was not the main research focus. In addition, these studies did not include a detailed reference to the gender of older people – victims of domestic violence (Halicka, Halicki, & Ślusarczyk, 2012, pp. 57–61), which makes it even more difficult to depict the phenomenon and to compare the results of the research with those obtained by other researchers. It should be mentioned that a second PolSenior study has recently been completed (2016–2020), conducted within the National Health Programme (Bandosz, Zagożdżon, 2021). As in the first edition of the PolSenior survey, domestic violence was discussed there in an aggregate manner, being one of the categories of violence against the elderly experienced by family members and others (Błądowski, Grodzicki, Mossakowska, & Zdrojewski, 2021, pp. 963–977; Mossakowska et al., 2012). Even greater discrepancies are noted in the dimension of the scale of domestic violence against children and adolescents. An analysis of the contemporary literature in this area reveals a diversity of methodological approaches and significant discrepancies in the scale of the phenomenon, which is estimated to range from 2–4% to 70–90% (Gumowska, 2017, p. 88).

The authors of this paper have been researching the extent of domestic violence for several years. The research concept involves the participation of primary and secondary school students. In the course of an audiotaped interview, respondents are asked to indicate whether and how often, in the six months preceding the survey and possibly in the past, they have experienced, from their family members, specific examples of actions representing particular forms of violence expressed in indicators selected based on previous qualitative research (individual in-depth interviews and focus group interviews), as well as the quantitative tests presented in the table below.

Table 2

Indicators of forms of domestic violence used in the study

Forms of domestic violence	Indicators used in the questionnaire (either selected at the operationalisation stage or selected in the survey)
Psychological violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — harmful criticism, humiliation, — forced submission by shouting*, — stubborn mockery/derision/ridicule in the eyes of others, — blaming for even minor mistakes, failures/multiple blaming for the perpetrator's own mistakes, — offensive comments, vulgar expressions towards the victim,
Physical violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — jerking and/or poking or pushing, etc., e.g., to hasten the victim*, — single or repeated slamming with a hand and/or kicking, etc, — beating with a tool that leaves no clear, permanent marks on the body, — beating that leaves clearly visible bruises or wounds,
Neglect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — lack of concern for problems and/or ignoring feelings/trivialising emotions*, — unjustified deprivation/restriction of food, drink, sleep, — disregard for ill-health or neglecting care in case of illness, — failure to provide necessary medical assistance,
Economic violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — disproportionate, persistent control of expenditure, — refusal to pay/provide for reasonable needs, — deprivation of money/income,
Sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — unpleasant, unwanted sexual remarks about the victim, — “groping,” inappropriate touching places on the body, — sexual abuse - inappropriate, unacceptable sexual behaviour towards the victim.

* studies conducted in 2015 and 2016 did not include this indicator.

Source: Authors' own study

Changing ethical requirements for the conduct of research involving people

Ethical issues in research involving participants have been increasingly raised in Poland in recent years. While this usually does not cause controversy in cases of medical or psychological research, in which the participants of the projects conducted are most often granted the status of a patient, to which specific regulations (including legal ones) and procedures, already applied almost automatically, the situation is somewhat different in the case of social sciences such as sociology. Ethical issues concerning participation in sociological research (surveys, observations, and interviews) are addressed in various documents with different legal statuses. The issues of personal data and so-called “sensitive data” are regulated by the *Ustawa o ochronie danych osobowych* [Act on Data Protection] (Ustawa [Act], 2018), in addition to which individual research institutions develop their own sets of ethical dispositions in research proceedings, an example of which is the *Kodekst postępowania w dziedzinie badań rynkowych i społecznych* [Code of Conduct in Market and Social Research] of the Opinion Research Section of the Polish Sociological Association, which is the first to appear in Polish sociological sciences. This code is a reproduction (commissioned by the PTS and published in 1994) of the International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice – a document adopted in 1992 by the European Association of Opinion and Market Research and the International Chamber of Commerce (Sozański, 1999). There are more documents establishing ethical standards for the conduct of social research, including the ICC/ESOMAR International Code for Market and Opinion Research, Social Research, and Data Analytics (2016), the *Kodeks etyki socjologa* [Code of Ethics for Sociologists] (2012) of the *Polskie Towarzystwo Socjologiczne* [Polish Sociological Association] or the *Kodeks etyki pracownika naukowego PAN* Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Polish Academy of Sciences] (2020). A set of requirements on ethical issues for research grant applicants has also been developed by the National Science Centre (Karoński, 2016).

There have been an increasing number of attempts in recent years to unify and codify the ethical aspects of research conduct in the social sciences during research involving human subjects. The documents created often refer to solutions that already exist and are extensively used in the world. Here we can point to the ethical principles of psychologists and the code of conduct (2017) American Psychological Association, Declaration of Helsinki – Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects (2013) World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki, 2013) or the *Konwencja o prawach dziecka* [Convention on the Rights of the Child] adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989 (Konwencja [Convention], 1989).

It should be stated that despite so many attempts, it has not been possible to create a single coherent system of ethical standards in research proceedings conducted by sociologists so far in Poland. What is at stake, however, are such solutions to protect the rights of research participants without limiting, or even preventing, the recognition of the phenomena under scrutiny. Research on domestic violence carried out with the participation of senior primary and secondary school students is a good example of the dilemmas confronting researchers.

Domestic violence research – the case of consent for children and young people to participate in research

Research on domestic violence among school children and adolescents of West Pomeranian municipalities has been carried out for several years by the authors of this paper. In the surveys conducted in 2015 and 2017, in which the cultural diversity between the students of the schools of the individual municipalities of the province is small (one language, minimal ethnic and religious diversity, etc.), with a homogeneous methodology, there were significant differences in the results obtained. In 2015, the participation of students in the survey was decided by the school principal, without the parents (legal guardians) of the students being involved in this decision. The headmaster's decision was preceded by a detailed discussion with the researchers on the issue and the procedure for collecting empirical material. Particular attention was focused on minimising the possibility of so-called "secondary victimisation" (Bieńkowska, 2008, pp. 65–74), a phenomenon characteristic of such a sensitive issue as experiencing domestic violence. The adopted solution was treated as fully justified in situations where the research issue concerns phenomena in which parental consent may limit the spectrum of the parent's view. Domestic violence is precisely one such phenomenon. In 2017, meanwhile, there was a requirement imposed on school principals – and thus also on researchers – that students' participation in the survey (regardless of the research topic) should be conditional on obtaining written consent from their parents (legal guardians). At the same time, in addition to pupils who did not start answering the questionnaire, interrupted their participation in the study or returned uncompleted questionnaires (situations of this kind in studies on domestic violence are relatively constant, not exceeding a few percent), there was a category of students whose parents did not agree to them participating in the study.

The results concerning the magnitude of the experience of domestic violence in the two surveys turned out to be markedly different. This is presented in the three graphs below.

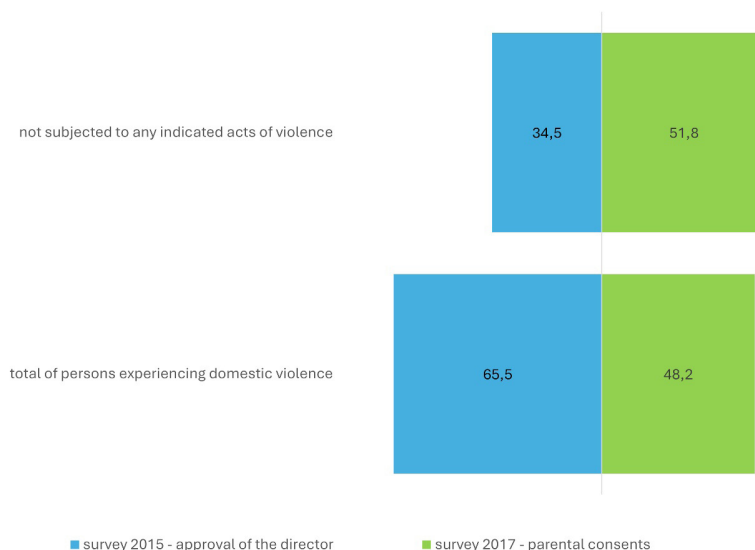


Figure 1. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of domestic violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented as %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%. The standardised value of the Z-statistic in the Mann-Whitney U-test for independent samples is -5.640, the asymptotic significance (two-sided test) $p < 0.001$, allows to reject H_0 about the equality of the proportion experiencing domestic violence in the two studies with a probability higher than 99.9%.

Source: Authors' own study.

A comparison of the results of the two surveys shows lower proportions of declarations of experiencing domestic violence by students in 2017 when parental (legal guardian) consent was necessary than was the case in the 2015 survey when the consent of the school principal alone was sufficient. The difference here is more than 17 percentage points.

A more in-depth analysis also reveals differences in terms of the scale of the experience of domestic violence, expressed in terms of the number of its forms experienced by victims (psychological, physical, economic, sexual violence, and neglect). In the literature, this situation is referred to as concurrency (Chan, Chen, 2022, pp. 79–90). Both among those declaring to have experienced one form of violence and among respondents declaring to have experienced more than one form of violence, a lower proportion of respondents' declarations was registered when the need for parental (legal guardian) consent was introduced into the procedure.

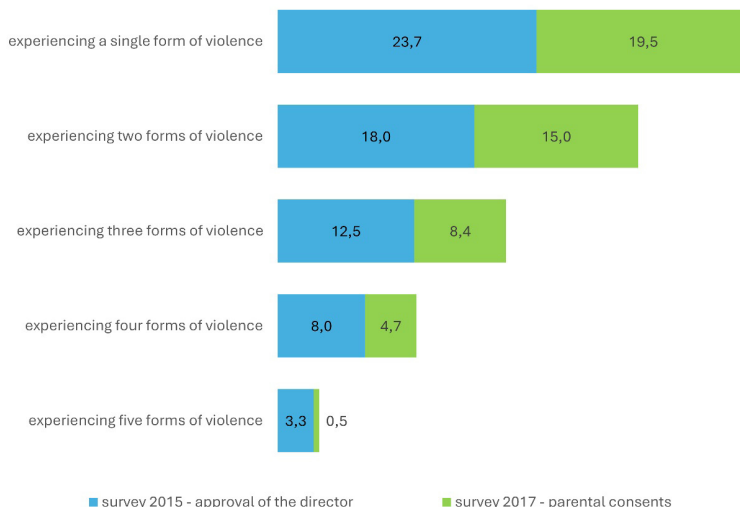


Figure 2. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of several forms of domestic violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented as %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%. The standardised value of the Z statistic in the Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples is -5.818, the asymptotic significance (two-sided test) $p < 0.001$, allows us to reject H_0 about the absence of differences in the distributions of the analysed variable in the studied communities with a probability higher than 99.9%. When analysing in detail the proportion experiencing one form of domestic violence, the Z-value was 1.640, the significance of the one-sided test $p = 0.051$, the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.101$ does not give grounds to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies. When analysing the proportion experiencing two forms of domestic violence, the Z-value was 1.264, the significance of the one-sided test $p = 0.103$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.206$ does not provide grounds to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies. On analysing the proportions experiencing three forms of domestic violence, the Z-value was 2.048, the significance of the one-sided test $p = 0.020$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.041$ allows us to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies with a probability of 95.9% and 98% respectively. When analysing the proportions experiencing four forms of domestic violence, the Z value was 2.031, the significance of the one-sided test $p = 0.021$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.042$ allows us to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies with a probability of 95.8% and 97.9%, respectively. When analysing the proportion experiencing the five forms of domestic violence, the Z-value was 2.926, the one-sided test $p = 0.002$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.003$ allows to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in the two studies with a probability of 99.8% and 99.7%, respectively.

Source: Authors' own study.

In the area of experiencing particular forms of domestic violence, lower shares of declarations were also reported. Among those experiencing psychological violence, the shares are lower by more than a third (23 percentage points), among those declaring experiencing economic violence it was 16.1 percentage points lower, while those experiencing neglect were declared by 1.2 percentage points fewer students in 2017 in comparison to the 2015 study.

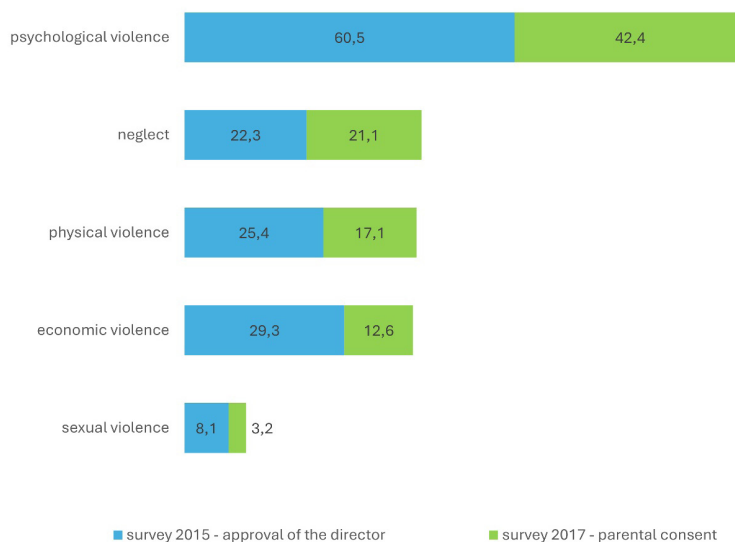


Figure 3. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of particular forms of domestic violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%. In the test of proportions experiencing psychological violence for independent samples, the Z-value was 5.807, the significance of the one-sided test was $p < 0.001$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p < 0.001$ allows us to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies and to claim with a probability higher than 99.9% that the proportion experiencing this form of violence in the 2015 study population is significantly higher. In the test of proportions experiencing neglect for independent samples, the Z-value was 0.496, the significance of the one-sided test $p = 0.310$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.620$ does not provide grounds to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in the two studies and thus leads us to assume that the shares of those experiencing this form of violence in the two communities are not significantly different. In the test of proportions experiencing physical violence for independent samples, the Z-value was 3.172, the significance of the one-sided test was $p < 0.001$, and the significance of the two-sided test $p = 0.002$ allows us to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies and to claim with a probability of 99.8% that the share of those experiencing this form of violence in the 2015 study collective is significantly

higher. In the test of the proportion experiencing economic violence for independent samples, the Z-value was 6.242, the significance of the one-sided test $p < 0.001$, the significance of the two-sided test $p < 0.001$ allows to reject H_0 about the equality of proportions in both studies and to claim with a probability greater than 99.9% that the proportion experiencing this form of violence in the study population in 2015 is significantly higher.

Source: Authors' own study.

Going down to an even lower level of analysis of the collected empirical material, it can be seen that there is an advantage in the shares of declarations of not experiencing the behaviours adopted in the survey that constitute acts of domestic violence in the 2017 survey compared to the 2015 survey. This situation is illustrated by the data in the following five charts.

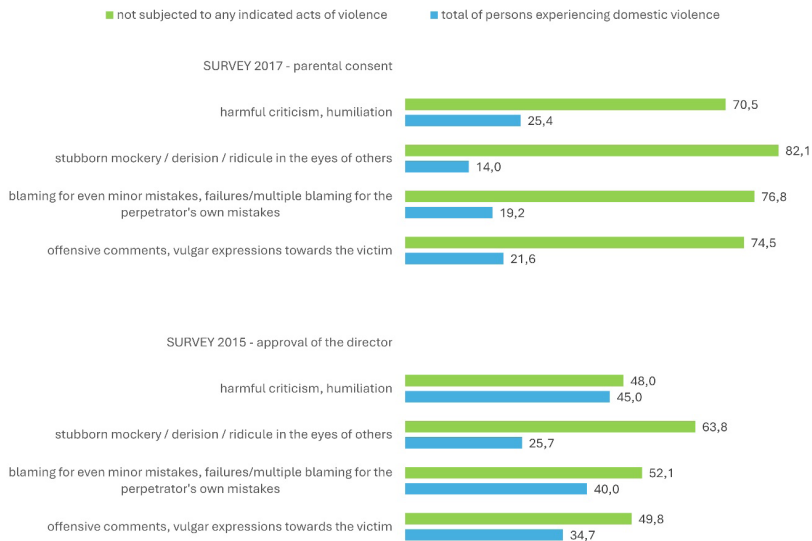


Figure 4. Distributions of declarations related to pupils' experience of psychological violence were obtained in the 2015 study (the school principal's consent determined participation) and in the 2017 study. (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%.

Source: Authors' own study.

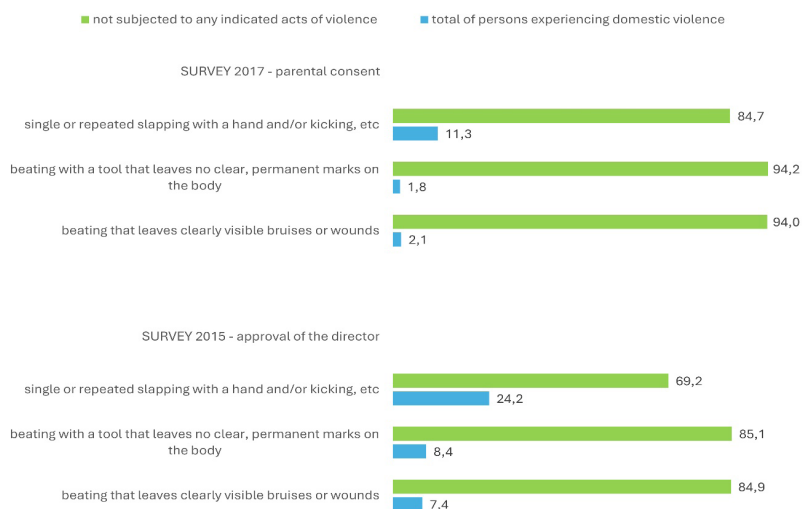


Figure 5. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of physical violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%.

Source: Authors' own study.

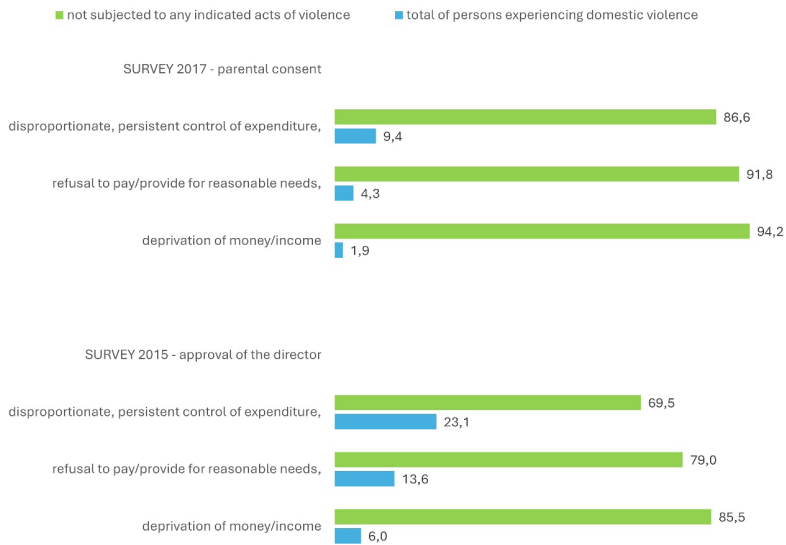


Figure 6. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of acts of economic violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%.

Source: Authors' own study.

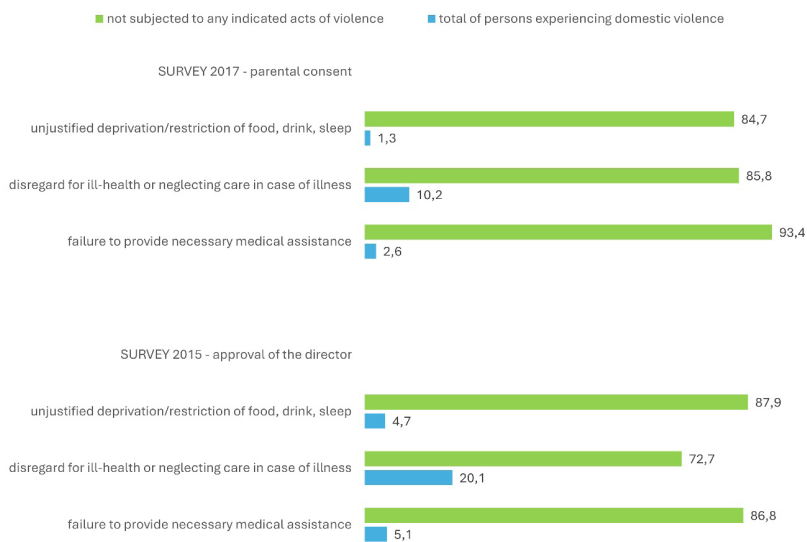


Figure 7. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of acts of neglect were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%.

Source: Authors' own study.

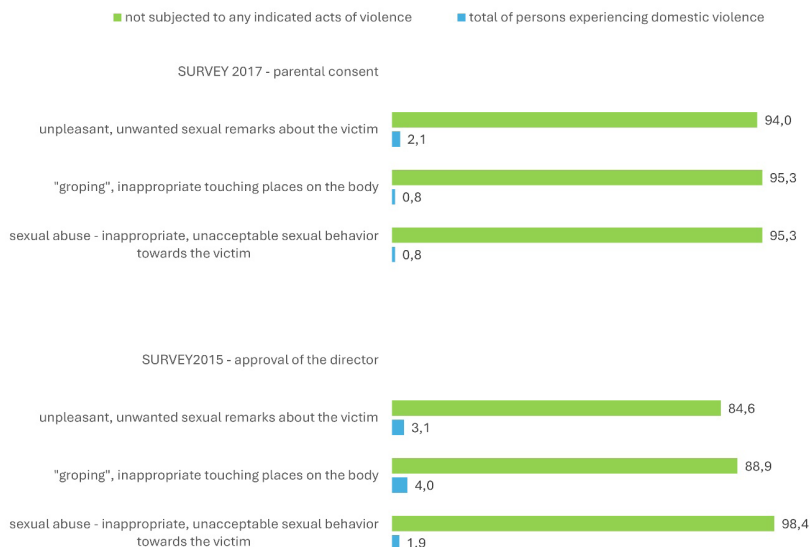


Figure 8. Distributions of declarations related to students' experience of sexual violence were obtained in the 2015 study (participation was determined by consent from the school principal) and in the 2017 study (participation was determined by parental/legal guardian consent).

Note: Data presented in %; n study 2017 = 380 = 100%; n study 2015 = 779 = 100%.

Source: Authors' own study.

The greatest differences in the shares of declarations of not experiencing individual acts of domestic violence between the two analysed studies can be seen in the dimension of psychological violence, where the shares of declarations of not experiencing in the 2017 study are higher by at least a few percentage points than in the 2015 study: persistent mockery, unpleasant ridicule, ridicule in the eyes of others – a difference of 18.3 percentage points; harmful criticism, humiliation – a difference of 22.5 percentage points; blaming for even minor failures and repeatedly blaming for the victim's own mistakes – a difference of 24.7 percentage points; using insults, vulgar terms towards the victim – a difference of 24.7 percentage points.

A slightly smaller magnitude of differences between the two surveys is revealed by data showing the experience of acts of physical violence and economic violence. In the 2017 study, the differences in the shares of non-experiencers of the mentioned acts ranged from 8.7 percentage points – taking money away, forcing to give money

back (economic violence) – to 17.1 percentage points – excessive, persistent control of spending (economic violence).

In the fields of neglect and sexual violence, there was one type of violent behaviour each, where the shares of those declaring not experiencing them in 2017 are lower compared to 2015. These are unreasonable deprivation/restriction of food, drink, and sleep (neglect) – a decrease of 3.2 percentage points and sexual abuse – inappropriate, unacceptable sexual behaviour towards the victim (sexual violence) – a decrease of 3.1 percentage points.

However, it cannot be said that the differences observed are explicitly caused by the fact that one survey was conducted in a situation where the consent of the school principal was sufficient for students to participate in the survey and the other in a situation where such consent had to be given by the parents (legal guardians) of the students, the magnitude of these differences raises important questions about this factor. Indeed, while it was impossible to arbitrarily limit students' participation in the study in the case of a study where the school principal was the deciding factor, such a limitation seems likely in the case of a study where parental consent was the deciding factor. This may explain to some extent the differences in the results obtained and may be the subject of separate research. If, for example, in cooperation with municipal Interdisciplinary Teams for the Prevention of Family Violence, an anonymous survey was conducted in families with a domestic violence problem included in the Niebieska Karta [Blue Card] procedure (Rozporządzenie [Regulation], 2011), as long as the members of these families agreed to their children's participation in various types of research (including research on domestic violence), the share of respondents declaring that they did not agree to their children's participation in such research would be an indicator of the extent of "research unavailability." Thus, it would provide a measure of the underestimation of the social scale of the phenomenon studied.

Conclusion

The changing social reality and the conditions for conducting scientific research make it possible to ask questions about the extent to which the obtained results are influenced by the tightening of requirements related to the ethical dimension of the empirical aspect of science, e.g., participation in research of minors, dependent persons or identification of specific social problems, such as domestic violence, addiction-related phenomena, deviations, and social pathologies, etc. (Jarosz, 1975, p. 7). Similarly, it is the case with certain research techniques where the research participant does not know the research procedure (e.g., covert observation, e.g., using a Venetian mirror or a hidden camera).

Because of the specificity of the research workshop of individual scientific disciplines, the necessity of making decisions on the ethical dimension of the researcher-participant relationship is usually realised at the intersubjective level through the work of a committee of specialists forming a committee of research ethics. For example, the *Komisja Etyki Badań Społecznych* [Committee on the Ethics of Social Research] (October 10, 2023) of the Institute of Sociology of the University, when considering proposals for individual research projects, takes into account the following aspects of the planned project:

- Does the planned study involve people under the age of 18?
- Does the planned study involve the participation of people with intellectual disabilities?
- Does the planned study assume the participation of students in classes, prisoners in the place of incarceration or soldiers, and police officers in the place of work?
- Does the planned study assume the participation of consenting participants in the absence of knowledge of the real purposes of the study (based on masking instructions or in the absence of information that they are participants in the study, e.g., in natural experiments)?
- Does the planned study assume the participation of terminally ill persons?
- Does the planned study assume the participation of family members of terminally or chronically ill persons?
- Does the planned survey assume the participation of people who are victims of disasters, war traumas, etc.?
- Does the planned survey involve people who are victims of violence?
- Does the planned research involve the participation of people who are perpetrators of violence?
- Does the planned research involve active socio-technical or psycho-technical intervention aimed at changing people's behaviour?
- Does the planned research concern controversial issues (e.g., abortion, the death penalty, religious beliefs, or attitudes towards minorities)?
- What safeguards against breaching ethical standards have been applied in the research design?
- What is the content of the information for the research participant used in the research procedure, e.g., information about the study at the beginning of the questionnaire?
- How will the personal data of research participants be safeguarded?
- How is the information on specific elements of the research procedure formulated, such as experimental manipulation, threatening stimuli (likely to provoke danger, strong emotions, or otherwise be debilitating), subliminal stimuli, concealment

of purpose/masking of instructions, de-briefing procedure (information given to participants after the study about what happened during the study), de-briefing procedure, other procedures or activities that may raise ethical concerns?

Despite the lack of objective factors to resolve ethical issues of research, the involvement of the Commission allows to achieve a higher intersubjective value than the subjective opinion of the author of the project, an intersubjective view of the solutions applied (Such, 1996), focusing the opinions of expert researchers involved in the work of the Commission. This is not a perfect situation, but one that allows satisfactory results to be achieved in terms of the compatibility of the scientific objectives of the study with the requirements of ethical standards.

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