

Violence against women and unemployment through a multidisciplinary and critical approach

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Abstract

In this paper we are going to briefly discuss on the issue of (un)employment in relation to women victims of domestic violence and or multiple discriminations. By analyzing data that are already published and concern 14.407 women who are recorded to the network for supporting women victims of domestic violence, we will critically examine the profile of abused women in relation to labor support that they have or have not received. Specifically, by discussing with the current bibliography, both from a psychological and sociological perspective, we conclude that (un)employment for abused women is a complex issue which pertains to cultural, political, psychological and social factors. Finally, we propose more qualitative research in order to investigate this crucial issue in depth and understand the complexity of employment in terms of women who have experienced the different dimensions of violence.

Key words: violence, employment, multiple discriminations, unemployment, complex issue

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Introduction

Race, gender and violence remain core issues in contemporary society. Sexist violence and racism violence share the common denominator of being structured in a larger culture of power. Existing studies reveal similarities between opposite-and same-gender domestic violence, types of abuse, and various dynamics; they dispel myths and they establish a theoretical basis for future research. Today gender is considered a complex, multilevel cultural construction that determines the meaning of being female or male in a particular situational context.

Gender's "rules" (i.e., expected behaviors, rewards, and sanctions for violating those expectations) change over the life cycle. Sometimes there is abrupt change as a result of discrete life events such as losing virginity, getting married, being a first-time mother or starting a new job. Gender organizes women's roles at home and work in ways that place extraordinary burdens on women while at the same time limiting their access to coping resources. The dramatic changes in women's workforce status and participation in the workplace that have occurred over the last five decades have not been accompanied by a concomitant sharing of responsibilities in the family [1].

Gender discrimination against women in the market place reduces the available amount of people in an economy, which has negative economic consequences. Many social practices seen as normal from a religious or cultural point of view leave women out of the economic mainstream. These social practices may have profound economic consequences because they do not allow society to take advantage of women's participation in the social capital. However, gender discrimination may have many other important consequences, including psychological, sociological, and religious (WHO, 2019) [2]. Gender discrimination continues to be an issue that is encountered by women in the workplace; discrimination, harassment, and the «glass ceiling» phenomenon, arguing that many of the factors that preclude women from occupying executive and managerial positions also foster sexual harassment.

Gender equality remains unfinished business in almost every country of the world. Women and girls have less access to education and healthcare, too often lack economic autonomy and they are under-represented in decision-making at all levels [3]. The progress that has been made towards gender equality over the past quarter of a century, though slow and incremental, does however show that change is possible. Legal reform, strengthening gender-responsive social protection and public service delivery, quotas for women's representation, and support for women's movements are all strategies that have made a difference and should be scaled up.

Social structures themselves often reflect inequitable gender relationships that serve to maintain the legitimacy of male violence. Relationships between female workers and male employers, wives and husbands, female patients and male doctors, female athletes and male coaches, for example, share common structural and ideological features that place women in positions of subordination to men. These inequities reinforce a patriarchal worldview in which women's subordination is normal, natural, and expected, and where powerful and competent women are stigmatized and disliked [4]. In the context of the general gender inequality, in this article our aim is to highlight the Greek situation between 2016 and 2018 in terms of the recorded cases of women who have experienced violence or are victims of multiple discrimination. The dimension of (un)employment will be our main focus. This dimension appears to be a crucial factor of daily life and it also receives much attention is given from the European Union (EU) policies. Specifically, we will answer the following main question, why do women victims of violence seek more psychological, social and legal support than labor support?

Gender gap, violence and multiple discriminations

Although it is 40 years since the adoption of the Convention on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) [5], discrimination remains a commonplace in law and practice. On the one hand, 131 countries have add-

ed 274 gender-related reforms to laws and regulations over the past decade, on the other hand it is estimated that more than 2.5 billion women and girls live in countries with at least one discriminatory law in their everyday life. These statutes restrict women's ability to make decisions about marriage, divorce, and child custody and to make choices about getting a job or starting a business, among others. The aforementioned gender discriminations are enhanced via the violence against women, a violence that remains a human rights abuse on a massive scale. One in five women globally has experienced sexual and or physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the past year. While in the 1990s, laws against domestic violence were uncommon, today they are in place in around three quarters of countries. This is important progress, largely driven by feminist activism, although much more needs to be done to ensure implementation and to provide services and access to justice for survivors.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world and it knows no social, economic or national boundaries. Worldwide, one in three women on average will experience physical or sexual abuse once in her lifetime. Gender-based violence undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence [6]. Victims of violence can suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, even death. The social and economic costs of intimate partner and sexual violence are enormous and have ripple effects throughout society [7]. Women may suffer isolation, housing insecurity, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities and limited ability to care for themselves and their children.

Risk factors for both women's experience and men's perpetration of intimate partner violence are: lower levels of education, exposure to child maltreatment, witnessing family violence, harmful use of alcohol, holding attitudes and norms that accept violence and gender inequality, controlling behaviors over women (i.e. unequal power in inti-

mate relationships), mental health problems. Factors associated with women's experience of intimate partner violence are: women's lack of employment, gender discriminatory laws disadvantaging women with respect to ownership of land and assets, marriage, divorce and children's custody. Factors associated with men's perpetration of intimate partner violence are: sexual entitlement (e.g. history of transactional sex and multiple sexual partners), involvement in violence outside home environment [8]. Factors specifically associated with sexual violence perpetration include: beliefs in family honour and sexual purity, ideologies of male sexual entitlement and weak legal sanctions for sexual violence.

According to bibliography, the circumstances and incidents that immigrants experienced in their country of origin (poverty, war, persecution or lawlessness, for example, in areas that are in a state of war for a number of years, there have been established practices that affect predominantly vulnerable groups of the general population, with first women and children), combined with the process of migration and the reception conditions in the country in question, constitute a complex of harmful impact on people, not only for the instant threat of their lives and their physical health (direct impact), but mainly for their mental state (indirect effects) [7, 9]. Psychological violence is perceived as much more dangerous, because it persists to such an extent, that it eventually influences and affects the possibility of balancing and integrating, even when foreigners settle in the new country. The management of post-traumatic stress and its common consequences (sleep and eating disorders, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, inability to make decisions, denial, withdrawal, confusion, sense of helplessness, emotional problems, among others) absolutely act conversely to the ability of immigrant women adapting to a next state or to the degree of acculturation (adaptation - inclusion) [10].

The term "gender-based" is used because such violence is shaped by gender roles and status in society. A complex mix of gender-related cultural values, beliefs, norms, and social institutions implicitly and even explicitly have supported intimate partner violence and provided little recourse for

its victims [1]. In particular, gender roles and expectations, male entitlement, sexual objectification, and discrepancies in power and status have legitimized, rendered invisible, sexualized, and helped to perpetuate violence against women.

Methodology

In order to provide numerical support on answering the question “Why do women victims of violence seek more psychological, social and legal support than labor support?”, in this article we re-analyzed and re-purposed publicly available secondary data that were collected during the implementation of the project “Evaluation study of the operation of supporting structures of women victims of violence in the MIPs (MIPs represents the Greek initials for Integrated Informational System of ESPA) and in the RPS Ops (RPS OPs represents the Greek initials for the: Business Plan, Transformation of Public Sector)”. This project took place in 2019 and it was completed in June 2019. The contracting authority, the European Social Fund: Actions Coordination and Monitoring Authority (EYSEKT) (EYSEKT represents the Greek initials that are used for ESF: ESF Actions Coordination and Monitoring Authority (EYSEKT) assigned the implementation of the project to “CMT Prooptiki Ltd” (<https://cmtprooptiki.gr>). The official deliverable of the evaluation is available online (<http://www.esfhellas.gr/el/Pages/eLibrary.aspx?SType=1&SearchID=1421642>) The secondary data, that were analyzed in the initial project and re-purposed herein, were offered from the Greek Organization of Local Development and Local Authority (EETAA) with the permission of both EYSEKT and the General Secretary of Gender Equality (GCGE).

The primary analysis of these data showed that between 2016 and 2018, 14.407 women had received support from counseling centers and shelters. This primary evaluation addressed multiple questions on the performance of the network of supporting structures (centers and shelters). In this initial analysis both primary qualitative, primary quantitative and secondary data were analyzed interchangeably. Based on the publicly available secondary data of the initial report, we performed a re-analysis of; specific demographic

characteristics, as well as, the services that women asked for and the service that they have received from their contact with the supporting network.

To avoid concluding to mere deterministic points, a synthesis of basic statistical analyses and theoretical perspectives was further performed. This allowed us to more broadly discuss the issue of domestic violence in relation to (un) employment. All secondary data were collected when each woman contacted the supporting structures by telephone. Most question presented in this manuscript have multiple choice answers. Therefore, each woman could select multiple replies among the following, as being “unemployed”, “a single parent”, “refugee”, “asylum seeker”, “immigrant”, “Roma”, “disabled”, “other”, “an incident of domestic violence”. The yearly trend among all these groups were extracted and summarized. In addition, the services received from each group of women were also extracted from the initial report, then, they were summarized and compared both in absolute and relative numbers. Based on these summaries we expect to identify and comment on the frequency that each group of women received references, sessions, follow-ups and assess the final outcome as either a completed or a discontinued case.

Results

After presenting an integrated theoretical environment on gender inequality and violence in sections 1 and 2, we move on to the analysis of the results. As mentioned in section 3, data come from the already published evaluation of the supporting network of women victims of violence and multiple discriminations. The result section presents a re-analysis of data in terms of; the reported multiple discriminations and domestic violence by women (as considered in the network) (**Table 1**) and the services inquired by women and received from the network in the end (**Table 2**).

More specifically, Table 1 presents annual changes in the total absolute number and percentage of women reporting at least one multiple discriminations; being a single parent and or unemployed and or refugee, among others.

The overall annual percentages increased by around 12% (1222 cases) between 2016 and 2017, while they increased by around 4 per cent (435 cases) between 2017 and 2018 (The general increasing trend may represent the popularity of the violence centers and not an increase in cases per se.

An increasing trend is observed among all types of discriminations, except for Roma and disabled women. The largest steady annual relative increases are observed between single parents, refugees and asylum seekers, while the largest absolute increase is observed in unemployed women (This may be due to the centers politics or general directions). In total, throughout all available years, the largest reported discrimination is "being unemployed" reaching a percentage of 51.81%. A woman being a single parent follows with 6.40% and a woman being a refugee with 4.29%. Immigrant women, Roma and disabled are represented with a less than 2% percentage each. 2.48% of women reported "Other" as type of discrimination.

In Table 2 referrals, individual sessions and session outcomes are reported given each category of "multiple discrimination". Every column contains the number and the percentage of women within each category that received referrals and individual sessions. In particular, the most external referrals are observed among immigrants, Roma and refugees, while the most internal referrals are observed among immigrants, asylum seekers and unemployed women. The least external referrals are observed among employed women (17.3%), while the least internal referrals are observed among Roma women (39.6%). Each woman can arrange multiple sessions that can be either implemented or non-implemented. The implemented sessions observed are more often among Roma (84.56%) and immigrant (82.59%) women, while the non-implemented sessions observed are more often among unemployed, single parents and cases of domestic violence (38.4%, 38.71% and 41.7% respectively).

Each individual session consists of psychological, social, legal or labour support. Psychological support is received the most by single parents (39.14%) and disabled women (39.71%), and the least by Roma women (22.15%). Social support is received mostly by Roma (85.23%), refugee and

Asylum seeker women, and the least by employed women. Refugees and asylum seeker women receive the least legal support among all categories, while cases of domestic violence receive the most relative legal support in comparison the other categories (~35%). Labour support is received by single parent and unemployed women the most, while refugees and asylum seekers received the least labour support among all categories (3.88% and 4.76% respectively).

Follow-up sessions are more common to be implemented by single parents (11.62%) and immigrant women (11.94%) but they are less common to be implemented by refugees and asylum seekers (3.88% and 4.46% respectively). Lastly, regarding the outcome of each open cases, the highest percentage of official closure appears among disabled women (44.12%), while the lowest percentage of official closure appears among Roma women (23.49%). Among the three largest categories employed, unemployed and cases of domestic violence, the latter shows the highest percentage of completed cases (41.6% - 4284). The highest percentage of officially discontinued cases appears among Roma women, while the lowest percentage equals to 9.45% is observed among immigrant women (Table 2). The remaining percent of cases within each category of women where neither completed nor discontinued and they are generally reported as closed with or without a reason. Both horizontal and vertical comparisons in Table 2 are sensible, though the latter contain less risks of inserted biases. For example, when comparing the percentages of social to labour support within each group, the difference may depict a difference, if any, in the actual frequency of offered services and not only a difference in the demand for a service from a group of women.

Discussion

In this paper we utilized recorded cases of women who have experienced violence or are victims of multiple discrimination between 2016 and 2018 to offer some information on the relation between violence, discrimination and (un) employment. We have focused on the dimension of (un) employment which appears to be a crucial factor of daily

life and it receives much attention from the EU. More specifically, the EU has established priorities around employment particularly in relation to cases of victims of violence and women who have experienced multiple discrimination. These cases consist of vulnerable groups and sometimes women which are unable to find a job either due to a personal difficult situation or the broader social state of gender discrimination that they face in the workplace. In this context we can see from the analyzed data that the supporting network, which is funded from the EU and operates according to the general EU guides, offers labor support, during which women can either discuss problems of inequality in their workplace or they can get help finding a job.

Discussion for labor support is divided in two main hermeneutical axes. The first axis is that of the horizontal interpretation of labor support in relation to unemployed women. Specifically, as seen from the statistical analysis, unemployed women do seek social, psychological and legal support more than they do seek for labor support; it is important to notice at this point that it is mandatory from all the structures of the network to offer all kinds of support. This attitude could be interpreted either as an indifferent reaction to labor support or as a need of multidimensional support. By adopting a broader perspective from both the sociological and psychological field, we can see that violence in all its forms is stronger than unemployment, meaning that women who have experienced violence need social, psychological and legal support more than labor support. Although employment can offer financial and personal independence, it takes time to reach the goal of independence, thus, multidimensional support appears as necessary. Women reported to the network seem to need all kinds of support in order to deal with the multidimensional and harsh phenomenon of violence and labor support appears to be at the end of this long road.

On the other hand, there is a sociological and critical discussion on the issue of unemployment. Unemployment is considered to be a social phenomenon which, especially in postmodern society, is transformed into a private issue. As Beck (2015) [11] discusses, people in modern society mod-

ify social problems to personal psychological problems. In this context, even if we consider that unemployment is not a matter of gender discrimination in the workplace or a result of domestic violence, the interpretation that could be given to the abovementioned statistics is that unemployed women seek more for psychological and social support as they "blame" themselves for something -in this case for being unable to find a job- that is purely a social problem; few work places or a male-dominated world are translated as lack of skills, lack of time, incapability of doing something right etc. This has as a result a reconstructed relationship with the self, which could lead to psychological problems, physical problems and psychosomatic problems. In the context of abused women and unemployment it seems important not only to enhance women, but also to designate social problems as broad socially constructed phenomena.

The second axis is the vertical interpretation of labor support in relation to all presented categories of abused women. Being more specific, questions are created by a quick look on the data presented in Table 2. As we can see, 3.04% of employed women seek labor support, fact that it is expected; employed women seek for labor support probably either due to a hostile environment in the workplace and how to deal with it or in order to find get advice on how to find a new job. At the same time, the highest percentage is found at the category of single parents (14.04%); single mothers seek for labor support more than all the other categories and this is probably due to the lack of extra financial support at home. On the other hand, we can see that less Roma women seek for this kind of support as only 10.07% of them are found looking for labor support. In the context of Roma women, we can only assume that either they do have a job or they are not allowed from their cultural context to find a job as the western world means it. Similar percentages are found for the disabled (10.29%) who either need support for improving their confidence in terms of seeking a job position or they do not seek for labor support because they are already excluded from the work market, proving the current situation towards the disabled and the discrimination they are experiencing.

Table 1: Absolute and relative numbers of women that reported either a case of domestic violence and/or a case of discrimination. Each category in this table could be selected multiple times for each reported case. All percentages are derived based on the total

Category	2016		2017		2018		Total (+12.2015)	
Single Parent	145	1.01%	355	2.46%	422	2.93%	922	6.4%
Unemployed	1980	13.74%	2576	17.88%	2776	19.27%	7464	51.81%
Refugee	109	0.76%	203	1.41%	306	2.12%	618	4.29%
Asylum seeker	41	0.28%	111	0.77%	184	1.28%	336	2.33%
Immigrant	39	0.27%	69	0.48%	92	0.64%	201	1.4%
Roma	18	0.12%	81	0.56%	49	0.34%	149	1.03%
Disabled	28	0.19%	61	0.42%	46	0.32%	136	0.94%
Other	29	0.2%	155	1.08%	171	1.19%	357	2.48%
Total	2389	16,58%	3611	25,06%	4046	28,08%	10183	70,68%
Domestic violence	2899	20.12%	3597	24.97%	3984	27.65%	10522	73.03%

Table 2: Absolute and relative numbers of women that either had a referral, a materialized individual session by type of session (Psychological, social labour or other support), an arranged follow-up and whether the woman case was completed or discontinued. All percentages of the inner table are calculated based on the marginal totals presented in the last column.

Categories	Referrals		Individual session								Fol- low-up	Outcome		Total (14407)
	External	Internal	(Materialized)	(Non-materialized)	(Psychological support)	(Social support)	(Legal support)	(Labour support)	Other	With no statement		(Materialized)	(Completed)	(Discontinued)
Employed	17.3% (1201)	43,92% (3049)	63.68% (4421)	34.6% (2402)	32.94% (2287)	60.05% (4169)	28.43% (1974)	3.04% (211)	0.48% (33)	0.23% (16)	5.79% (402)	37.85% (2628)	11.12% (772)	100%
Unemployed	27.93% (2085)	50,56% (3774)	75.52% (5637)	38.4% (2866)	34.16% (2550)	72.79% (5433)	29.52% (2203)	14% (1045)	1.09% (81)	0.78% (58)	8.05% (601)	39.52% (2950)	13.46% (1005)	100%
Single Parent	29.61% (270)	46.82% (427)	79.61% (726)	38.71% (353)	39.14% (357)	77.74% (709)	25.66% (234)	14.04% (128)	2.3% (21)	1.54% (14)	11.62% (106)	39.69% (362)	14.36% (131)	100%
Roma	38.26% (57)	39,6% (59)	84.56% (126)	22.15% (33)	22.15% (33)	85.23% (127)	13.42% (20)	10.07% (15)	1.34% (2)	1.34% (2)	10.07% (15)	23.49% (35)	22.15% (33)	100%
Disabled	27.94% (38)	41.91% (57)	77.94% (106)	36.79% (39)	39.71% (54)	72.79% (99)	22.06% (30)	10.29% (14)	0.74% (1)	0.74% (1)	7.35% (10)	44.12% (60)	11.03% (15)	100%
Refugee	35.76% (221)	44.34% (274)	82.04% (507)	30.26% (187)	35.28% (218)	83.01% (513)	5.83% (36)	3.88% (24)	5.66% (35)	2.1% (13)	3.88% (24)	37.22% (230)	10.52% (64)	100%
Asylum seeker	34.82% (117)	50% (168)	81.25% (273)	34.52% (116)	37.2% (125)	83.33% (280)	6.85% (23)	4.76% (16)	6.55% (22)	2.08% (7)	4.46% (15)	38.39% (129)	11.31% (38)	100%
Immigrant	42.29% (85)	56,22% (113)	82.59% (166)	31.34% (63)	31.34% (63)	75.62% (152)	29.85% (60)	7.46% (15)	2.99% (6)	1% (2)	11.94% (24)	33.33% (67)	9.45% (19)	100%
Domestic violence	25% (2574)	44% (4530)	74.3% (7654)	41.7% (4295)	37.8% (3891)	71.3% (7347)	35.2% (3623)	6.9% (711)	0.8% (80)	0.6% (61)	7.6% (783)	41.6% (4284)	13.7% (1412)	100%

At the same time, we have refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, categories that are integrated into a special legal status. Specifically, immigrant women of whom 7.46% appear to get labor support, are directly connected to a legal system that demands of them to be integrated into work market, meaning to have a job. On the other hand, refugees and asylum seekers of whom 3.88% and 4.76% get labor support respectively, are integrated into a different legal system that allows them firstly to be safe by escaping from the hostile environment of their country and seek for legal support; as we can see more of them get legal support than labor support (Table 2). Two other important factors that affect seriously these groups of women to seek and or get labor support, is language and their cultural background.

Refugees and asylum seekers belong to and come from a political, social and cultural system which on the one hand does not allow them to work and on the other hand is completely different from the western. For them, seeking or having a job is a contradicting situation to the one they were used to while living in their countries. Their background appears to have formed strong conceptual and experiential shapes that create a contradiction that needs time to come in harmony with their present environment. At this point it is important to mention that the used "gender perspective" from the network is not enough to deal with such crucial issues. Interculturality appears to be equally significant in order to deconstruct previous conceptual shapes and form new ones that will help them on the one hand integrate gently in their new environment and on the other hand construct a stronger idea of what being a woman means in the western world. These two theoretical dimensions, interculturality and gender perspective, appear to be the most appropriate in order to bridge the gaps and harmonize the contradictions these women seem to experience; in this context there is language, which is integrated into the cultural training that these women need in order to seek for a job [12-14].

What comes out of this short analysis is that EU policies and the network as an operational expansion of these policies are well dealing with the issue not only of violence but

also employment. However, the latter is a multidimensional social issue that needs both an individualized and a social management. Although statistical analysis has shown trends and absolute numbers have provided a picture of the current situation, we need more qualitative data in order to understand the experience of all women, either refugees or single parents, disabled or asylum seekers, in terms of how it is to be discriminated and at the same time struggling for inclusion in a social environment that reproduces discrimination either because it is not ready to deal with all the new, extremely rapid changes or it does not take advantage of the necessary conceptual and theoretical tools in order to provide a safe space for all.

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