

Hetero- and auto-aggressive behaviour in the family

The problem of hetero- and auto- aggressive behaviour in the family has been perceived for a long time mainly as a private and a moral problem. In the last decade the situation changed. The field of hetero- and auto- aggressive behaviour has become attractive for researchers and policy makers. There voluminous body of research literature that provides different disciplinary, theoretical and methodological tools to examine the nature and extent of the phenomena implies that the problem of hetero- and auto- aggressive behaviour in the family requires a multidisciplinary approach. In the present study we used different qualitative/quantitative methods in order to enlighten some of the hetero- and auto- aggressive behaviour patterns in various contexts: attitudes towards suicide, publications and printed media dealing with domestic violence topic, domestic violence acceptance and occurrence in the sample of adolescents, men and women.

Suicidal behaviour has been a national problem in Slovenia already for many decades. Prevention and therapy of suicidal people depend on many different factors, one of crucial ones being the attitudes towards suicide. They determine the recognition of the symptoms of suicidal risk and how the suicidal person searches for help. They influence preventive measures and therapy of the symptoms, they determine how the symptoms of suicidal risk will be presented to the environment and how a person will find professional help. Our research wanted to find out how the above process is seen by four groups: the general population, people who had attempted suicide, GPs and psychiatrists and what explanation model each of the four groups uses. The results showed significant differences in the attitudes of the four groups. While the general population and people after suicide attempt preferred to see the act as the sign of weakness, both professional groups understood it through the medical model and stressed the necessity of therapy of depression.

Studies on family are poor in Slovenia. Those rare are usually random and unsystematic. Consequently, there is little research dealing with domestic violence. The number of studies on domestic violence increased since 1999, particularly in months of NGO' campaign of struggle against violence against women. The publications of experts and researchers on this topic increased, as well in printed media. Authors reporting on domestic violence from 1998 to 2003 prioritized to several topics like types of violence, factors of risk for violence in the victim and the perpetrator, and the consequences and dynamic of violence. They also discussed on violence against women in the family, stressing that in public such discourse is still tabooed. Such situation authors mainly attributed to the absence of suitable educational programmes on violence in Slovenia, and poor connections among those institutions, which have jurisdiction over or are dealing with violence in the family. Finally, they have pointed out that in Slovenia the introduction of holistic legislation on violence is necessary.

The research which dealt with domestic violence occurrence and acceptance in the groups of adolescents, men and women revealed that domestic violence in Slovenia occurs in enormous range of contexts but it still remains uncovered in many cases. Almost all participants of our study reported taking part or witnessing in at least one of behaviour pattern, that could be regarded as violent: beating, shouting, abusive language, abusive sexual behaviour, etc. But only quarter of participants stated that they or their family members were victims of domestic violence. Surprisingly, half of participants did not recognize themselves as victims of domestic violence and they tended to think that violence is less widespread in comparison with victims. Regarding help services in support to victims of violence there is a concerned low share of both, those who think they would seek for help when being victim of violence and even lower share of those who really do so. Researches dealing with the problems of abused women in rural and farm communities are still relatively very rare. Interest for this research topic has been completely absent in Slovenia till now. Our analysis indicates that the phenomenon of family violence and abused women in rural and farm communities is quite widespread in Slovenia and that in the future more attention on research and policy making level should be given to this phenomenon.