ABSTRACTS OF POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Delimitation Problem in Child Sexual Abuse Cases with Children Under the Age of Sixteen

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Background: Criminal Code of Lithuania provides criminal liability for sexual assault and sexual molestation of a person under the age of sixteen years. These two criminal acts are very similar and this similarity creates a lot of problems when courts try to delimitate one from another. Delimitation of these two crimes is very important, because punishment for them differs several times – sexual assault of a child can be punished with a custodial sentence for a term of three up to thirteen years and sexual molestation of a child can be punished by a restriction of liberty or by arrest or by a custodial sentence for a term of up to five years.

Aim of the study: to determine and assess delimitation criteria for crimes of sexual assault and molestation committed against children in Lithuanian court practice.

Method: Analysis of cases of sexual assault and sexual abuse crimes against children in court practice of a Supreme Court of Lithuania for the past 14 years (since 2005), all cases related to mentioned crimes (Article 150 and 153 of Criminal Code of Lithuania) were analyzed.

Results: After analyzing Lithuania’s Supreme Court practice it is obvious that main delimitation criteria for crimes of sexual assault and molestation committed against children is a nature of sexual contact. Usually a person is sentenced for sexual assault after penetrating girl’s genitals, masturbating a boy, forcing to masturbate the perpetrator or touch him till ejaculation, touching victim’s body (except hands) with his penis. And if a person touches or caresses boy’s or girl’s genitals, forces a child to touch perpetrators genitals it is usually considered a child’s molestation.

Discussion/Conclusion – current criteria used to determine whether the crime should be classified as a sexual assault or sexual molestation of a child has no scientific, logic nor realistic ground. From psychological perspective, consequences of child sexual abuse (with penetration or without) may vary dramatically and occur as internal or external problems, vary in intensity and occur straight away after the incident or years after (Hornor, 2010; Martin et al., 2004; Yuce et al., 2015). Therefore we recommend that all cases where a perpetrator touches child’s genital organs (with penetration or without) should be considered as child sexual assault.
Impact of the Nonviolent Communication Intervention Program on the Social Behavior of the Participants: Overview of the Systemic Research Analysis

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Study purpose. The Nonviolent Communication interventional program (NVC), of which a prototype developer is an American psychologist and mediator of conflicts M. Rosenberg (2005), has been applied to improve social behavior, interpersonal and social relationships, conflict resolution and prevention from violence. The aim of this work is to systematically analyze empirical studies, which have evaluated the impact of the NVC program on the social behavior of its participants. The main questions of systematic analysis are: 1) What social behavior constructs are explored when assessing the impact of the NVC intervention program? 2) Is the NVC interventional program an effective tool for changing the various social behavior constructs of the participants? In addition, the aim was to assess the limitations and opportunities of research on the effectiveness of the NVC interventional program.

Protocols and method. This review is based on PRISMA standards (Liberati, 2009). Computerized bibliographic databases EBSCOhost, Scopus, Sage, Taylor & Francis were used to search for scientific publications. Systematic analysis selection includes peer-reviewed articles on the impact of the NVC intervention program, published until 13th of July of 2018. Range of search terms were used using Bulls logic: (nonviolent/nonviolent communication* AND NVC* OR empathy* OR intervention*; compassionate communication* AND NVC* OR empathy* OR intervention*; NVC* AND empathy* OR intervention*).

In order to answer the questions of systemic analysis, the survey included various types of research that met three criteria: 1) the interventional NVC method was used in the studies, 2) the evaluation of the constructs was made before and after the intervention, 3) the results in the qualitative studies were followed by the results after the applied intervention. In total 213 articles were obtained, 202 duplicates were excluded, 3 references were excluded during the screening because of not meeting the criteria leaving 8 full papers for further analysis.

Results. An overview of the research has shown that participants’ abilities of empathy, expression of negative emotions, ability to cope with stress, awareness and relationship-enhancing communication in conflict situations has been investigated most often while using the NVC interventional program. Individual research identified individuals’ participation in conflicts, risk of crime (of recidivists), marital satisfaction, and the ability to transfer non-violent communication skills to personal life. The research methodology is differing, the authors refer to the main principles of the NVC program, but it is modeled depending on the circumstances (age of the participants, situation of life, circumstances of the research, etc.). In most cases (75%), significant, positive changes in the above constructs were identified, assessed at both individual and group levels. It can be assumed that the NVC interventional program can be an effective tool for changing the patterns of social behavior of individuals and groups, as it enhances the communicative empathy, sensitivity to one’s and other needs and experiences, develops the ability to verbalise, empathetically deal with stress and conflicts.

Conclusion. A small number of studies and methodological limitations encourage the continuation of research on the effectiveness of the NVC interventional program, taking into account the possible
impact of the situational factors that may affect both the elements of the program and the characteristics of the participants on its effectiveness.
Recovery of Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence

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Intimate partner violence is an act perpetrated by a partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm in intimate relationships (WHO, 2010). Violence against women remains a serious social problem concerning researchers from all over the world. Most of the studies are investigating negative outcomes following intimate partner violence, although in recent years more attention is given to factors that help women to recover from this traumatic experience (Anderson, Renner ir Danis, 2012). The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of social support for posttraumatic growth and identity processes in female survivors of intimate partner violence.

Participants and methods. 217 women who experienced intimate partner violence participated in this study, and these women were reached from shelters, social support centers, and through counseling psychologists. Participants were asked to fill in questionnaires administrated both on paper and online. Self-report measures were used: Bosch Support Measure (Bosch & Bergen, 2006), Short form of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI-SF; Cann et al., 2010), Dimensions of Identity Development Scale (DIDS; Luyckx et al., 2008), 16-item severity of violence checklist developed by authors of this study (1).

Results. Results showed that social support is important predictor of PTG and was positively associated with all five identity processes indicating that social support may induce the reconsideration of one’s identity. Moreover, PTG was positively associated with positive identity processes such as commitment making, identification with commitment, and exploration in breadth. Regarding the control variables, results indicated that more time after violence, severity of violence and higher personal income were positively associated with PTG. Also, results showed that higher education was associated with social non-support indicating more support needed for more educated victims of IPV.

Conclusions. Results of this study shed light of the importance of social support in seeking positive personal changes following traumatic experiences of IPV. More specifically, findings indicate that social support predicts higher levels of PTG and positive identity processes. Also, findings indicate that contextual factors such as time after last violence episode, severity of violence, and personal income are important in supporting PTG. Practitioners should provide and encourage victims of IPV to actively seek support from various sources, whereas received support can be helpful for recovery. Also, these findings can be used for educational reasons to ensure the importance of active support for victims of intimate partner violence.
In this presentation we will discuss highly relevant issue, which yet is very new in the discourse of combating violence against women. Due to structural inequality woman are already more vulnerable to adverse climate change effects. Emerging evidence suggests that climate change-related extreme weather events (e.g. rise of temperatures, floods, droughts, storms, hurricanes, etc.) around the globe threatens not only Planet’s ecosystems, but also are found to be associated with the outbreaks of interpersonal violence (Hsiang, Burke, & Miguel, 2013; Whittenbury, 2013; United Nations Women, 2014; Plante, Allen, & Anderson, 2017; Clayton, Manning, Krygsman, & Speiser, 2017). Studies indicate that extreme weather events were related to increase of domestic violence and crime against women and girls in developing (e.g., Chad; Masson et al., 2019) as well as in developed countries (e.g., Australia; Whittenbury, 2013) (e.g., USA; Harville, Taylor, Tesfai, Xiong, & Buekens, 2011) (Anderson, & Delisi, 2011). Therefore, along with classical antecedents of domestic violence (structural inequality (Assembly, UN General, 1979); witnessing or experiencing abuse in childhood (Spaccarelli, Coatsworth & Bowden, 1995); social acceptance of violence against women (World Health Organization, 2012), etc.) climate change-related extreme weather events could be considered as a new risk factor, potentially contributing to the increase of the violence against women around the globe (Auliciems & DiBartolo, 1995; Whittenbury, 2013; UNWomen, 2014; WHO, 2014; Masson, Benoudji, Reyes, & Bernard, 2019).

According to IPCC (2018) extreme weather events are likely to increase therefore can and the likelihood of violence against women. This raises new challenges for experts and professionals working in intimate partner violence field, thus it is timely and relevant to discuss the future prospects of theoretical and practical paths in the field.

In the presentation we will discuss: the need to inform help providers on climate change effects on women and their safety in intimate relationships during and after climate change-related extreme weather events; create training programs, protocols of protection and intervention during and after climate change-related extreme weather events for the first responders; bring gender perspective into the policy making related to climate change; the necessity to upgrade policies and regulations that would provide first responders with strategies to effectively address this new dimension of violence against women.
Criminalized Victimhood: A look at the Complexity of the Cases of Women Sentenced for Domestic Violence

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Domestic abuse and its effects on the individual and society is becoming one of the trends in current research. This paper presents analysis of several cases of women sentenced for domestic violence from the perspective of trajectories leading them into the path of violence. Such format has been chosen to highlight the complexity of interaction of victimhood and criminal behavior that is present in many of these cases and which is often overlooked by the law-enforcement and court, in this way, creating prerequisites for secondary trauma. Case analysis are presented in the context of literature analysis of psychological risk factors for secondary traumatization, sexual exploitation, human trafficking that can be both prerequisites and consequences of experienced victimization prior to the crime. Analysis show that cases analyzed are related to personally experienced domestic violence prior to the crime and show the complexity not only outward factors leading to violence towards partner, but also internal thinking patterns that developed during lifespan because of experienced abuse. The results of presented case analysis could become a valuable addition to the aspects studied in the research of domestic abuse.