

Research Analysis Report

TRADITION AND CUSTOMES DO NOT EXCUSE VIOLENCE

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Research analyses

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INTRODUCTION

The problem of violence seems to become more and more present in the contemporary world, when it occupies the social systems that are to protect people, such as the family. For this purpose, today domestic violence may be considered as a socially most recognizable form of violence. **How can this be explained?** Maybe with the fact that until recently the problem was considered exclusively private and its consequences are social blindness and lack of legal regulations in this area. Also, it has often been considered that the violence within one family occurred only as an incidental case of terrorization and physical maltreatment of the woman.

On the other hand, due to the feeling of shame, lack of information and lack of knowledge, the victim, often ignores and keeps quiet about the problem of domestic violence. Economic dependency, lack of alternative accommodation, inability to take care of the children as a single parent, threats and the fear of tearing the family apart are recognized as the main reasons for not reporting domestic violence. That is why women tolerate violence for a long time, do not report it, and even when they decide to report the violence, in many cases they are left without adequate and timely reaction by the bodies for legal protection against violence. This makes it clear that the family does not always fulfill the expectations for happy life of many women.

Domestic violence and its consequences, duration, ruination of physical and mental being of women is a serious problem of human rights, safety and well being of the women.

In Macedonia, the issue of domestic violence is not monitored in an organized manner; it is not regularly evidenced and in many cases it is underestimated. The statistical data on the number of women victims of violence mainly refer to the cases registered in the police and the social services, and rarely in health institutions. It is mainly revealed in cases of divorce, murders where women are victims of their husbands, or when the woman murders the intimidator in order to protect herself and her children.

In these past years in Macedonia, women's non-governmental organizations show greater interest in the issue of domestic violence. Their intention is to expose domestic violence, to support women in strengthening their self-conscience in order to liberate them from the subordinate position in the family, for the purpose of making domestic violence accessible for prompt and efficient social reaction.

The range of occurrence of domestic violence cannot be determined in exact terms. The partial knowledge on this issue in the Republic of Macedonia is largely supplemented by certain researches. The research results primarily highlighted the conclusion that every fourth woman in the country has been exposed to some kind of violence within her family. This indicates that domestic violence is wide spread in our surroundings, within all ethnic groups and with different range in its separate forms. However, the highest rate (61,5%) belongs to mental violence, then physical (33,5%), and on the lowest level is the sexual violence (5,0%). Also, it has been confirmed that these types of violence do not usually occur individually, but are a combination of several types.

According to the findings, Roma women in Macedonia belong to the group of most exposed women to physical violence. For the purpose of introducing some of the major characteristics of the domestic violence among Roma population in Macedonia, the Roma Women and Youth Association "Luludi" performed this simple research with pleasure. We would like to express our gratitude to the OSCE Mission to Skopje for the given opportunity.

1. BASIC INFORMATION

1.1. Important social and demographic characteristics

The Roma population in Republic of Macedonia is represented with 2,6% in the entire population. The Roma population has inhabited bigger cities for more than 50 years and they still live in the suburban areas. The Roma population is inhabited in almost every part of the country (which is not the case with the other ethnic communities in Macedonia), but, the Roma population is mainly concentrated in urban areas, such as: Skopje (48%), Prilep (8,2%), Kumanovo (7,1%), Tetovo 5,6%, Gostivar 4,9%, Bitola (3,9%), Shtip (3,3%) etc.

The average Roma family consists of 6,4 members, and 2/3 of the total number of Roma families consist of 6 or 7 members. It is certain that these families have the tendency to be too large, when we consider the quality and the quantity of the living space.

The Roma, as an ethnic group, are characterized by a low living standard, unemployment, minimal educative-cultural level, lack of elementary health standards, higher birth and mortality rates in comparison to other ethnic communities etc. Many

of these issues also characterize the position of the Roma population in other European countries.

1.2 Tradition and customs from the aspect of family life

In major number of cases the Roma population lives in multi-generational or extended family. Further on, the Roma family is characterized with: early establishment of the marital community, woman's subordination in family responsibilities, giving birth to a greater number of children and existence of the patriarchal customs and norms.

Marital communities are usually illegal, due to the under-aged partners, but recently, they are more and more legalized, in order to obtain the right to social and children's aid. By marrying at an early age, the partners being underage are usually unemployed and not able to form their own home, thus remaining dependent on their parents. Unfortunately, due to the difficult economical situation, young couples almost all their life remain living in multi-generational wide families, without the opportunity to become independent and choose their own life style. Besides, we should take into consideration the fact that Roma culture traditionally determines the role of the woman and the man within the family in accordance to the patriarchal models.

The position of the Roma woman is still determined by the customary "peoples' law". Although the practice of buying women is almost abandoned, she remains subordinated to her husband and the elders of the family, and under the supervision of her mother-in-law in the accomplishment of the household activities. The daughter-in-law is usually slapped when she does not complete her daily household activities with "satisfactory" quality, which she accepts as a disciplinary measure for improvement.

The Head of the patriarchal community has the final word in all-important issues related to organization of life. By the rule, it is the father, who, as a "food-provider" of the family, sets an example for the behavior of his sons, and in time, they will inherit his attitude. The subordination towards the husband and the glorification of his authority is more an expression of gratitude that he is the provider for his wife and children, rather than an expression of love. In addition to this are the reasons for the violence in the family, connected to the unsolved existence and poverty, which are often claimed to be the woman's fault.

Men, misusing their dominant position in the family, may spend money on alcohol, get drunk and maltreat their wife and children, since they consider them as personal property. Therefore, the conflicts and exploitation in the family may influence the

primary family relations and stimulate deviant behavior in the performance of family roles and increase the level of aggressiveness.

Tradition and customs prevail in all areas where Roma people live, and the Roma family remains immune to all social changes that are usually characteristic for the contemporary Macedonian family. Some slight change in the tradition of understanding these issues exists among the younger and more educated generations of this ethnical group who live in bigger cities.

1.3 Domestic violence as a model of behavior

The term "domestic violence" is used when referring to certain incidents of the following types: **physical attack** (from injuries with scarves to murder), than **mental violence** (insults, harassment, limitation of movement, forbidding contacts even with the closest persons) and **sexual violence** (forcing to sexual intercourse). The violence is manifested in many forms: pushing, kicking, spitting, slapping and throwing of different objects, beating to death, strangling, burning, stabbing with a knife, throwing of hot water or acid etc. The forms of violent behavior differ in different groups of population, as well as in different environments. The term domestic violence also refers to aggressive behavior towards children, but in reality, the synonym for domestic violence is the violence performed by the intimate partner or spouse over a woman.

The definition of domestic violence, indicated in the UN Declaration for Elimination of All Forms of Violence over Women, Resolution 48/104 of the General Assembly, determines every act of violence, based on belonging to certain gender, which results in physical, sexual or mental injury, suffering of women, including also the threats for these acts.

According to the Beijing Action Platform, domestic violence is not limited only to physical violence, but, also, sexual harassment, rape, prostitution and forcing to it, as well as forcing to abortion. Or, according to it, the violence over women is an even more serious problem in cases where there is limited access to the legal system, non-existence of legal regulations or insufficient training for the causes of violence.

2. EMPIRIC RESEARCH

2.1 Need for implementation of the research

The research "Tradition and customs do not excuse violence" starts from the well-known reality that the family violence among the Roma community is a latent

problem. Although this problem refers to the violence that the women of every nationality in Macedonia are faced with, it is especially present in the Roma family. Although it is known that the husband is the most common oppressor of the woman in the family, in the Roma population, who live in large families-households, the father in law, mother in law may also be found in the role of the oppressor and in many cases the father, the step-father and even the brothers, when the woman is not married. The wife, even if her husband is the most violent tyrant, even when she knows that he rejects her or enjoys torturing her on daily basis, agrees to survive even the lowest level of humiliation, and still does not report the violence. A very important reason for the implementation of this research is also the fact that most of the Roma women lack information on how and where to search for help when exposed to violence and who will be able to help them. In addition, the tradition and customs which proclaim the man to be the head of the family and therefore his authority has to be supported and maintained may be the most important obstacle. It is connected with the intention to keep the family together at any price and due to the economical dependency from her husband. In this sense, the research should determine the representation, types of violence and the oppressors of the women within the family. The issue of prevention of violence should be raised on the basis of the information received directly from the Roma women victims of violence. This can be achieved by adapting the women to a new way of thinking that the tradition and customs must not be used for their maltreatment and humiliation by the persons who should protect and help them.

2.2. Research implementation

The method of survey was used in the research for the purpose of revealing the characteristics of the domestic violence related to the tradition and customs in the family life among Roma population in the Republic of Macedonia.

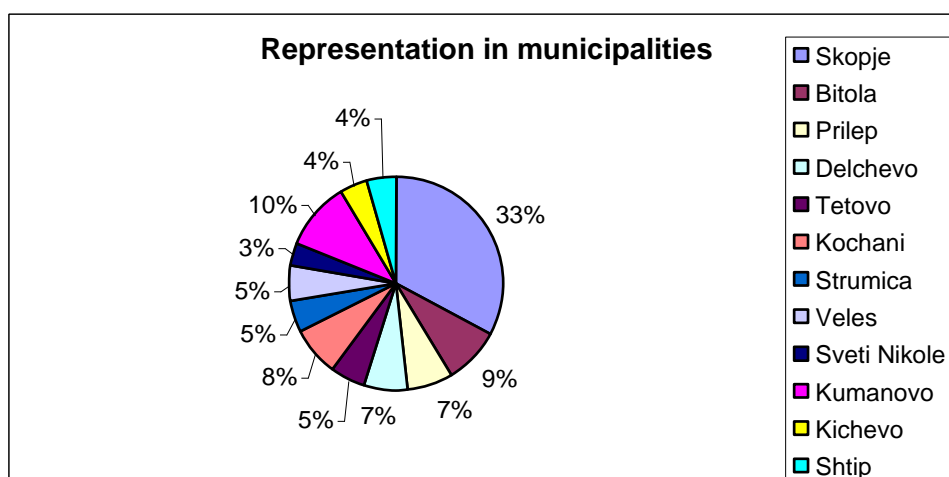
The Roma Women and Youth Association "Luludi" organized platforms on the subject of domestic violence that were held in the cities mostly inhabited by Roma population (Skopje, Bitola, Prilep, Tetovo, Kochani, Kumanovo, Shtip, Veles, Kichevo, Sveti Nikole, Strumica and Delchevo) greatly contributed to the preparation of the research. Mainly women were present on these platforms and they were familiarized with the basic information, characteristics and solutions of this dangerous and complex problem. The daily newspapers "Dnevnik", "Vest", "Makedonija Denes" and "Nova Makedonija", as well as almost all TV stations in the country such as

Shutel, MTV, Telma, Sitel, Kanal 5 and certain local TV stations in the cities where the platforms were organized (TVKiss, TVStar, TV Orbis, TV Prilep, TV Kochani, TV Delcevo, and some radio stations (Makedonsko Radio, Cherenja, Urban Star), were informed of the undertaken activities. The Ministry of Interior, The Office for Promotion of Gender Equality - Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and NGOs which work on women's issues supported this campaign.

We plan to work with Roma women and youth target groups on the initiated activities by the state authorities and NGOs on raising awareness of women regarding the domestic violence and other important issues related to it.

The research based on a questionnaire with 11 questions was conducted in the second half of 2004 on 292 Roma women. Random selection of places inhabited with Roma population was used in the selection process, such as: Skopje (96), Bitola (25), Prilep (20), Delchevo (20), Tetovo (15), Kochani (22), Strumica (14), Veles (15), Sveti Nikole (10), Kumanovo (30), Kichevo (12) and Shtip (13).

Figure 1 Representation in municipalities



The surveyed women were selected according to the age criteria. Starting from the already stated custom for getting married at an early age before gaining maturity, the minimal age was determined at the minimum of 14 and the maximum of 60 years of age. In the first age group 14-30 years, 102 females were involved for whom we expect to have different positions on education, employment, attitudes toward the tradition and customs in family life from those of the women who belong to the older group. The second, older group is composed of 190 women at the age of 31-60 years.

Educational status of the surveyed women

According to education, the structure of the surveyed women is the following:

Table 1 Educational status of the surveyed women

Type of education	from 14-30 y	from 31-60 y	Total	%
No education	15	43	58	19.8
Incomplete primary education	37	56	93	31.8
Primary education	26	53	79	27.1
Secondary education	19	30	49	16.8
High education	5	8	13	4.5
Total	102	190	292	100.0

The given data clearly indicate that the surveyed women have unfavorable education, since more than a half of them do not have any kind of education. In this sense, the situation of the younger group of women is not better. In this group, the process of formal education according to the age is already completed, and many of them are illiterate or just are able to read and write. Therefore, we must indicate that in the contemporary Roma family, regarding the education of the female members, there is almost no improvement in comparison to the previous generation. Due to this, it is assumed that there is a great possibility for them to be exposed to domestic violence. On the other hand, without the ability to read and write and follow the events, they remain unformed how to help themselves in cases of domestic violence.

Employment status of the surveyed women

Employment is one of the important aspects related to the position of the women in the society, as well as in the family. According to the data, few of the Roma women are employed, which makes them economically dependent on their husband and on other family members.

Table 2 Employment status

Employment status	from 14-30 y	from 31-60 y	number	%
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Employed	10	42	52	17.2
Unemployed	92	148	240	82.8
Total	102	190	292	100.0

Also, it is evident that women from the younger group are mainly unemployed and have the status of housewives, thereby continuing the tradition of subordination to their husband. According to this, the old belief that the woman is not supposed to get employment outside of the house and contribute to the existence of the family still exists. Her duty is to give birth to children and to perform all the household duties for the whole family. In recent year, due to the general impoverishment of total population in Macedonia, the Roma woman is less engaged in cleaning apartments, or as an agriculture laborer, which is one more indicator of her unfavorable economical situation. This indicates that a major part of Roma women have the "obligatory" unpaid job in the family, and the progress of the contemporary family does not easily reach the average Roma family. This condition makes the women dependent on their husband and family, and they are often exposed to humiliation and in many cases physical maltreatment.

Marital status of the surveyed women

The marital status of the woman also has a certain impact on the explanation of the domestic violence. Thereby, it is very important to note that the cultural tradition in the Roma community highly values the institution of marriage and giving birth to children in the marriage. The customary structure of the family and the rules of behavior are very important within Roma communities. Having in mind the cult of the marriage and the man - husband as pillar of the family, it is absolutely expected that the major part of the surveyed women are married. The following data confirm this conclusion:

Table 3 Marital status of the surveyed women

Marital status	from 14-30 years		from 31-60 years	
Married	35	34,3	152	80,1
Not married	58	56,9	10	5,2
Divorced	6	5,8	11	5,7
Widow	3	3,0	17	9,0
Total	102	100.0	190	100.0

RESEARCH RESULTS

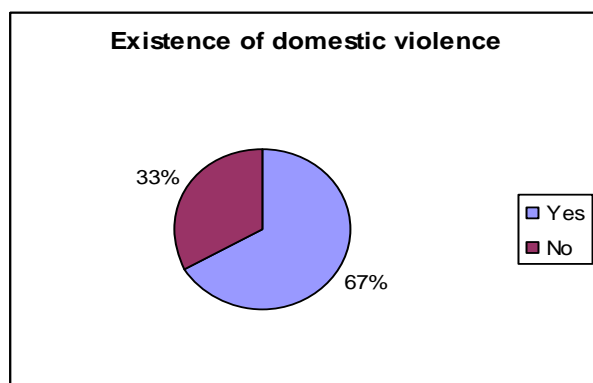
The information acquired from the conducted survey give the opportunity to show the basic characteristics which illustrate the essence of the problem of domestic violence in the Roma ethnic group. In the following text, we will discuss the most characteristic questions and answers.

To the question *Do you think that there are cases of domestic violence in your neighbourhood?*, 66,7% of the total number of surveyed women, answered positive, which indicates that this negative phenomenon is recognised as normal behaviour within Roma family.

Table 4 Existence of domestic violence

Answers	Number	%
Yes	195	66,7
No	97	33,3
Total	292	100.0

Figure 2 Existence of domestic violence

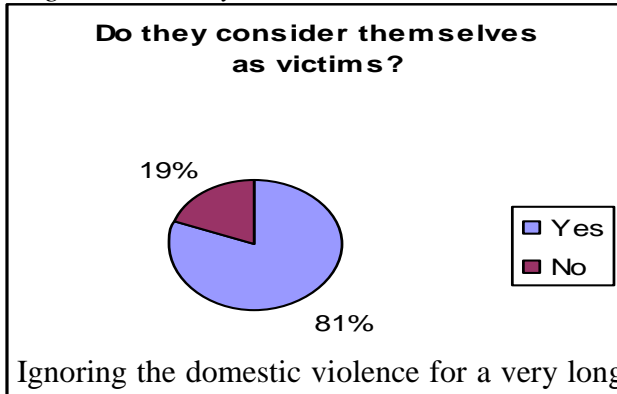


For the purpose of obtaining more information on this issue, we asked the following question: - *Do you think that the women, who endure domestic violence, feel like victims?* Most of the surveyed women (80.8) gave positive answers, indicating that this female population has also developed a negative attitude toward the violent behaviour they suffer in their own families, which can be seen from the following table:

Table 5 Do they consider themselves as victims?

Answer	Number	%
Yes	236	80,8
No	56	19,2
Total	292	100.0

Figure 3 Do they consider themselves as victims?



Ignoring the domestic violence for a very long period may mostly be connected with the victimization of the woman, i.e. her feeling of a victim. Although very well known today, this problem has still not been studied sufficiently. Investigation in this area is mainly directed toward discovering a concrete incident and its connection to the social and other factors. In addition, the codex of the patriarchal family is neglected, which ensures ultimate authority in the family to the husband.

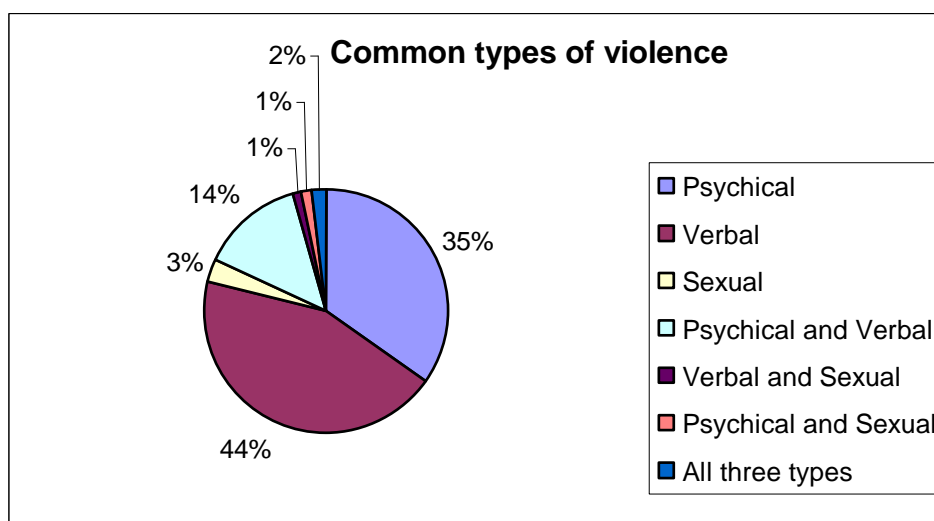
The non-interference of the society in the problem of domestic violence, leaving this issue in the private sphere of the family, should also not be forgotten.

Emphasising the knowledge on the extent of domestic violence in the surroundings, the surveyed women tried to differentiate types of violence, which in their opinion, occur in the families of their relatives, friends, neighbours and others. In their opinion, the domestic violence in the above given forms represents a serious problem within the Roma population as well. This can be confirmed by the answers received from the surveyed women:

Table 6 Types of violence that occur in the surroundings

Answers	Number	%
Psychical	101	34, 8
Verbal	129	44, 2
Sexual	9	3, 0
Psychical and Verbal	40	13, 6
Verbal and Sexual	3	1, 0
Psychical and Sexual	4	1, 3
All three types	6	2, 1
Total	292	100. 0

Figure 4 Types of violence that occur in the surroundings



Verbal or in other words, mental violence and psychical violence have proven to be the most dominant forms of violence in the Roma families in Macedonia. This means that every second Roma woman is insulted on regular basis, and every third Roma woman is subjected to physical maltreatment. According to the answers of the surveyed women, the phenomena of the women getting beaten or at least slapped happens very often in Roma families. According to the surveyed women, in such cases of violence, the relationship between the partners is built on tutorship, which shows that the mentally stability and psychical integrity of the women exposed to domestic violence have been disturbed. Given that the violent behaviour is manifested through uncontrolled aggressiveness, the family cohesion gets disrupted and directly endangers the development and education of the children.

Without going into deeper elaboration of the presence of other types of violence, we should highlight that usually there is not one single type of violence, because the psychical violence rarely excludes the emotional, and even the sexual violence. These

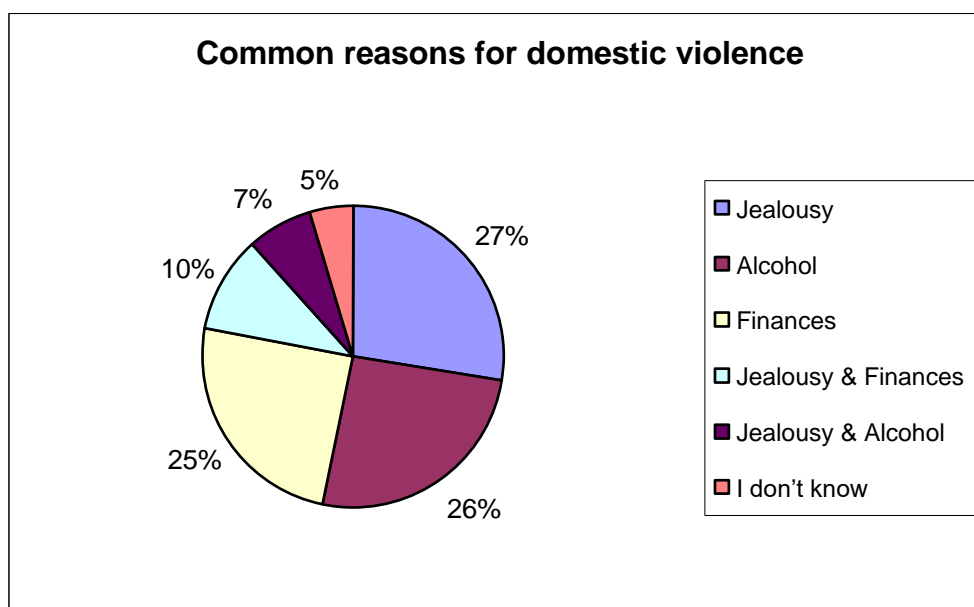
conditions contribute to the additional complexity of the problem of domestic violence.

Aiming at getting more objective information regarding the phenomenon we are investigating, we showed special interest in the most common reasons for the occurrence of domestic violence in Roma population in Macedonia. The answers to this question may be grouped into three specific groups of reasons: jealousy, alcohol and finances.

Table 7 Common reasons for domestic violence

Reason	Number	%
Jealousy	80	27,4
Alcohol	76	26,1
Finances	72	24,8
Jealousy & Finances	30	10,2
Jealousy & Alcohol	20	6,8
Does not know	14	4,7
Total	292	100.0

Figure 5 Common reasons for domestic violence



The stated reasons for the occurrence of domestic violence contribute to the domestic violence with the same extent in other communities in Macedonia as well. We believe that the tradition and customary norms are primary reasons for the occurrence of this phenomenon within Roma population. However, we should be very precise when making conclusions regarding the tradition. The tradition should be understood in the manner of generational inheritance of the attitude that girls should not be educated, and should get married at an early age and give birth to more children. All this is also accompanied with the woman's economical dependency on her husband all her life.

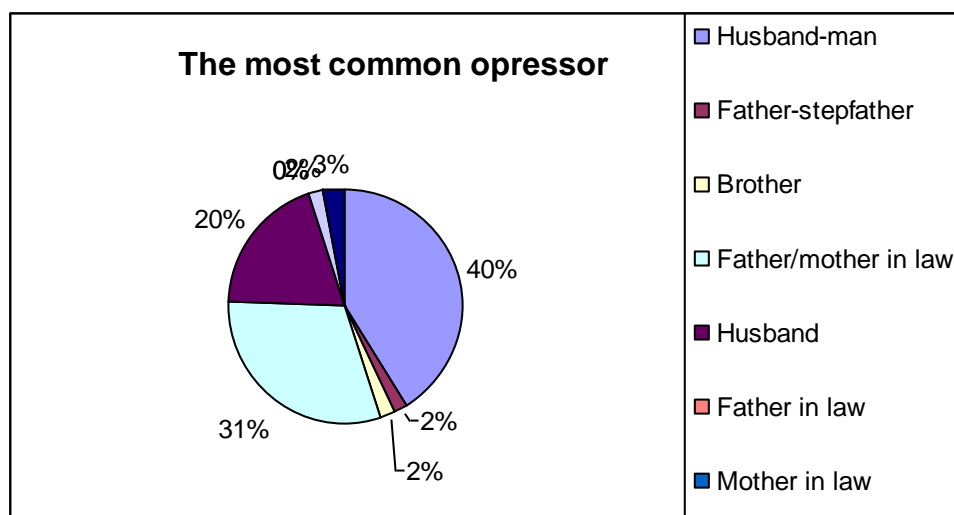
The jealousy should never be accepted as limitation of the movement of the women, as well as of freedom to be employed out of the household.

One third of the surveyed women answered that the father and mother in law may act as oppressors over their daughter in law, which may be considered as a significant indication of the traditional influence over the domestic violence. Also, here we should mention the specific collective unity as oppressors: the husband, the father in law and the mother in law. Other oppressors are persons who are also in other communities in Macedonia (man-husband, father, step-father), which may be seen in the following table:

Table 8 Who is the most common oppressor

Answer	Number	%
Husband-man	120	41,0
Father-stepfather	6	2,0
Brother	5	1,7
Father/mother in law	90	30,9
Husband, Father in law, Mother in law	57	19,6
Father, stepfather, husband	6	2,0
Does not know	8	2,7
Total	292	100.0

Figure 6 Who is the most common oppressor

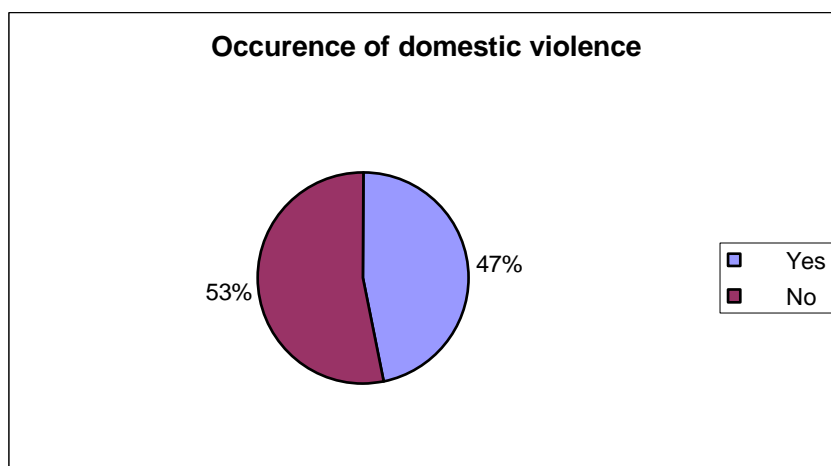


For a better understanding of phenomenon we connected the research results to the personal experiences of the surveyed women with any type of domestic violence through the question: *Are there cases of domestic violence within your family?*

Table 9 Evaluation of the existence of domestic violence

Answer	Number	%
Yes	137	47,0
No	155	53,0
Total	292	100,0

Figure 7 Occurrence of the domestic violence



The positive answer of almost half of the surveyed women objectively confirmed the extent of the phenomenon. On the other hand, we believe that in the objective answer there may be hope for possibilities to help these women face this problem. Also, this should be understood as positive indication that if certain forms of their encouragement are organized, these women will be prepared to speak openly of the violence and overcome it.

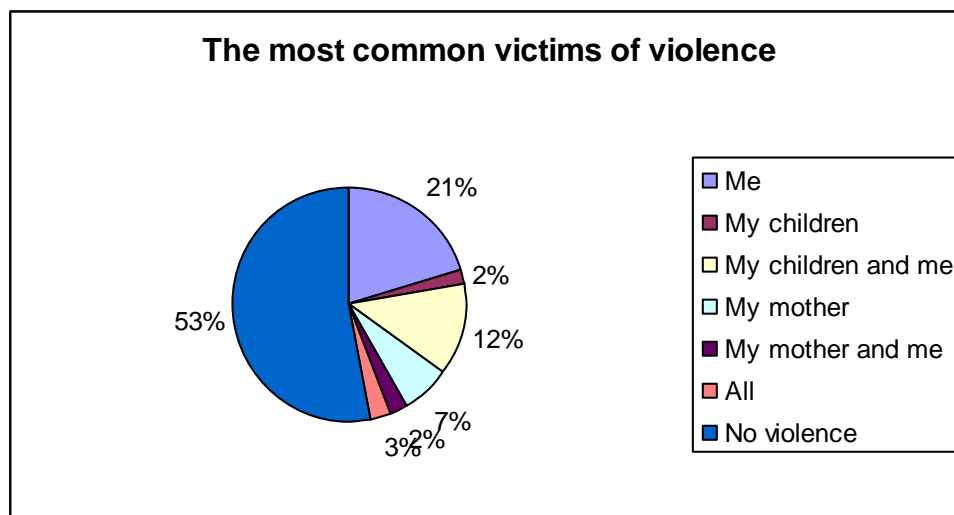
The statements of surveyed women, that apart from them, their children also suffer domestic violence, contributed to the general picture of the domestic violence as a multilayered and more serious problem than it is considered.

Table 10 Who is the most common victim of domestic violence in the family

Answer	Number	%
I	60	20,0
My children	6	2,1
My children and I	36	12,6
My mother	20	6,8
My mother and I	7	2,3
All	8	2,7
No violence	155	53,0

Total	292	100.0
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Figure 8 Who is the most common victim of domestic violence in the family

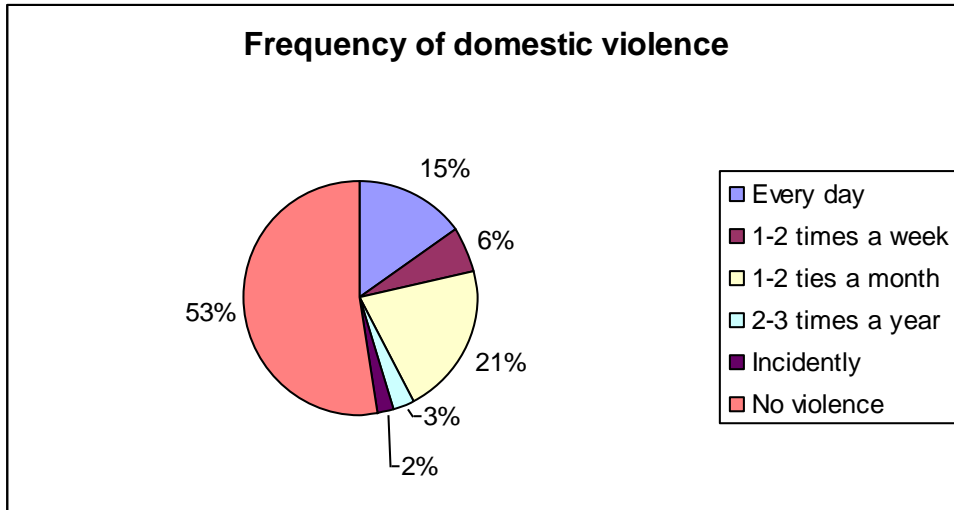


The surveyed women were asked to give their opinion on the frequency of the maltreatment, which proved to be very sensitive issue for them. We received a very broad list of the frequency of the occurrence of violence, which indicate a more frequent violent behaviour, even on an everyday basis. The data on this aspect of domestic violence may best illustrate its seriousness, which should exclude this phenomenon from the private sphere and to ensure implementation of the law on sanctioning the oppressor.

Table 11 Frequency of the occurrence of domestic violence

Answer	Number	%
Every day	45	15,4
1-2 times a week	19	6,5
1-2 times a month	61	20,8
2-3 times a year	9	3,0
Rarely	7	2,3
No violence	155	53,0
Total	292	100.0

Figure 9 Frequency of the occurrence of domestic violence



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conducted research on the subject “Tradition and customs do not excuse violence” indicated several major conclusions and certain recommendations upon those conclusions. However, the presented observations and recommendations should be understood as directions to future initiatives for potential programs and projects in relation to the Roma community in Macedonia.

1. There is a lack of precise information regarding the issue of domestic violence in Roma population in Macedonia. Although the problem is as old as these communities, in recent years non-governmental organizations initiated certain activities for its comprehension. This research may be considered as classical example of the case study, which will offer initial information on more important influences of the tradition over the violence within the patriarchal Roma family.
2. The obtained results justify the realization of the research, and at the same time, confirm that the domestic violence is highly represented within ethnic Roma community in Macedonia. Traditional norms – lack of interest for education of young Roma girls ("there is no need"), early marriages, economical dependency on and subordination to the husband and other elders in the family, including the poor life conditions in these neighbourhoods, dictate rules of degradation of the woman, with all forms of violent behaviour.
3. The reticence and isolation of the Roma family keep it aside of all contemporary influences. This isolation establishes specific rules, family beliefs and meanings which have power, and thus violent behaviours and activities are being accepted as private family issues.
4. In the process of determining directions for further reaction to tradition and customs over domestic violence within Roma population in Macedonia, the issue of certain illegitimate activities by NGOs for encouragement of women victims of violence had proven to be of exceptional importance. Using the experiences from countries with larger experience on this issue, the SOS phone service for assistance and support, legal education, information and access to free of charge legal services are among the more important activities that are organised.
5. The studious approach in overcoming the traditional influences over the domestic violence in the family should start from implementation of activities

related to modification of the awareness of the Roma population aiming at real understanding of gender relations and gender roles.

We would like to highlight the following as recommendations for future activities:

- Elimination of the prejudices and stereotypes regarding the subordination of the woman to her husband within the marital and family community;
- Changing the attitude towards early marriages;
- Initiating mechanisms for supporting and encouraging Roma women to be able to comprehend their capabilities and qualities by themselves in order to be able to fight for their family and social status;
- Development of programs for training and education of young Roma regarding the gender values and determinations.