

**THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE VULNERABILITY OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING: SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS****ВПЛИВ ДОМАШНЬОГО НАСИЛЬСТВА НА ВРАЗЛИВІСТЬ ЖІНОК ТА ДІТЕЙ ДО ТОРГІВЛІ ЛЮДЬМИ: СОЦІАЛЬНІ ТА ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ**

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The article is devoted to the study of the impact of domestic violence on the vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking through the prism of social and psychological aspects. The authors have determined that domestic violence is a factor that significantly increases the risk of being exploited (labor, sexual, etc.), is an unconscious impulse that encourages a woman or child to seek happiness as far away from their homeland as possible. Domestic violence was a serious problem in Ukrainian society even before the war began, and today, during the full-scale invasion, it has not only not disappeared, but has taken on new forms and become more widespread due to the difficult conditions in which Ukrainians find themselves. Stress, constant psychological tension caused by worries about family, friends, and the future, economic instability, and the constant threat to physical security only exacerbate the situation, contributing to an increase in domestic violence. Women and children are the most frequent victims - they live under constant pressure, and the situation is only exacerbated in times of war. In addition, the armed aggression has led to the mobilization of resources and efforts to the frontline, which can weaken control over the situation in the rear and complicate the fight against domestic violence at the level of local authorities, law enforcement agencies and social services. Therefore, with the outbreak of a full-scale war, new problems arise that require special attention and effective measures to overcome them, and there is a need to create new effective mechanisms to combat both domestic violence (as one of the factors that affects the level of vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking) and human trafficking, and to consolidate the efforts of state and public institutions aimed not only at preventing trafficking but also at ensuring protection and providing comprehensive assistance to victims. The vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking increases as a result of exposure to domestic violence, which is ensured by a number of social and psychological factors, including, in particular: social isolation of the victim, economic dependence, "normalization" of violence, dominance of a culture of silence in society and lack of support, traumatic experience of the person and his or her dependence on the offender, low self-esteem of the victim and feelings of guilt, psychological isolation.

**Key words:** human trafficking, domestic violence, exploitation, anti-trafficking, prevention, social work.

Стаття присвячена дослідженню впливу домашнього насильства на вразливість жінок та дітей до торгівлі людьми через призму соціальних та психологічних аспектів. Авторами визначено, що домашнє насильство виступає фактором, який істотно підвищує ризик потрапляння в експлуатацію (трудова, сексуальна тощо), є несвідомим поштовхом, який спонукає жінку чи дитину шукати щастя якомога далі від батьківщини. Домашнє насильство і до початку війни було серйозною проблемою в українському суспільстві, сьогодні ж, під час повномасштабного вторгнення, воно не лише не зникло, а й здобуло нові форми і стало більш масовим через важкі умови, в яких опинилися українці. Стрес, постійна психологічна напруга зумовлена хвилюваннями за рідних, близьких, майбутнє, економічна нестабільність і постійна загроза фізичної безпеки лише посилюють ситуацію, сприяючи збільшенню випадків насильства в родині. Частіше жертвами стають жінки та діти - вони живуть під постійним тиском, і в умовах війни ситуація тільки загострюється. Окрім цього, збройна агресія призвела до мобілізації ресурсів і зусиль на фронт, що може послаблювати контроль над ситуацією в тилу та ускладнювати боротьбу з домашнім насильством на рівні місцевих органів влади, правоохоронних органів і соціальних служб. Відтак, з початком повномасштабної війни з'являються нові проблеми, що потребують особливої уваги та ефективних заходів для їх подолання, є необхідність у створенні новітніх дієвих механізмів протидії як домашньому насильству (як одному із факторів, який впливає на рівень вразливості жінок та дітей до торгівлі людьми), так і торгівлі людьми, консолідації зусиль державних та громадських інституцій, спрямованих не тільки на запобігання торгівлі, а й на забезпечення захисту та надання комплексної допомоги постраждалим. Вразливість жінок та дітей до торгівлі людьми збільшується в результаті впливу на них домашнього насильства, це забезпечується низкою соціальних та психологічних чинників, серед яких зокрема: соціальна ізоляція жертви, економічна залежність, "нормалізація" насильства, домінування у суспільстві культури мовчання та відсутність підтримки, травматичний досвід особи та її залежність від кривдника, низька самооцінка жертви та почуття провини, психологічний замкнутий стан людини.

**Ключові слова:** торгівля людьми, домашнє насильство, експлуатація, протидія торгівлі людьми, профілактика, соціальна робота.

**Statement of the problem.** The open armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has led to an increase in the level of criminal offenses that existed in Ukraine before these tragic events. Many social problems, including domestic violence, which was a serious problem in Ukrainian society before the war, not only did not disappear during the full-scale invasion, but also took on new forms and became more widespread due to the difficult conditions in which Ukrainians found themselves. Stress, psychological tension, economic instability, and the constant threat to physical security only exacerbate the situation, contributing to an increase in domestic violence. Women and children are more likely to be victims - they live under constant pressure, and the situation

is only exacerbated in times of war. In addition, the armed aggression has led to the mobilization of resources and efforts to the frontline, which can weaken control over the situation in the rear and complicate the fight against domestic violence at the level of local authorities, law enforcement agencies and social services. Therefore, with the outbreak of a full-scale war, new problems arise that require special attention and effective measures to overcome them, and there is a need to create new effective mechanisms to counter both domestic violence (as one of the factors that affects the level of vulnerability of women and children to human trafficking) and human trafficking, and to consolidate the efforts of state and public institutions aimed not only at preventing trafficking

but also at ensuring protection and providing comprehensive assistance to victims.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** Certain aspects of domestic violence and human trafficking have been studied in the scientific works of such domestic and foreign scholars as A. Berendieieva, T. Vakulich, L. Gerasina, O. Gumin, O. Kovaleva, N. Lishchuk, L. Maksymova, H. Rymarchuk and many others. At the same time, there is no comprehensive research in the scientific field that would link these negative phenomena together. This is what led to the choice of the research topic.

**Summary of the main material.** The development of society in Ukraine as a democratic state is inextricably linked to the improvement of legislation and ensuring proper law and order. The existence of criminal manifestations in any society inevitably leads to tension and distrust in government agencies. A sense of security, ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, an adequate level of security and the fight against crime are among the main tasks of the state [4, P.345]. In solving these complex tasks, the problem of combating any manifestations of violence is of particular importance. The increase in the level of violent crime in Ukraine is caused by various factors, in particular: socio-political instability, economic crisis, unemployment, military actions that pose a threat to the life and health of citizens [5, P.126].

In today's environment, the growth in the illegal use of human beings for the purpose of exploitation is particularly alarming. Preventive measures taken today by the National Police of Ukraine, the International Organization for Migration, institutions assisting victims of human trafficking, etc. ensure good public awareness of human trafficking, but prevention efforts aimed at actively eliminating risk factors are still lacking. This is due to the fact that combating human trafficking requires a systematic approach, as there are many reasons why people are exploited.

The modern scientific community draws attention to the fact that the scope of human trafficking is very broad, there are various ways of exploiting people, and the actions and means by which trafficking takes place vary. Therefore, in addressing the problems of combating human trafficking, it is necessary to take into account the relevant context, as well as the fact that an effective solution to this problem increasingly requires the efforts of many specialists from different fields, including interdisciplinary cooperation. For example, social work, healthcare, criminal justice, and economics each offer unique perspectives and methods for understanding and addressing human trafficking [9].

Victims of human trafficking can be of any age, any gender, and from anywhere in the world. However, traffickers primarily target marginalized individuals or those in difficult life circumstances. Illegal migrants and people in desperate need of work are particularly vulnerable [6, P.54]. Victims may be coerced or deceived into an exploitative situation that constitutes trafficking after traffickers use violence, deception or blackmail. As for children, child traffickers target victims from very poor households, dysfunctional families, or abandoned or deprived of parental care [10]. Art.10 of the Law of Ukraine "On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" states that the tasks in the field of human trafficking prevention include, in particular, research into the state, causes and preconditions for the spread of the phenomenon of human trafficking [8]. In this article, we will focus on the study of the psychological and social preconditions for women and children to get into a situation of human trafficking.

Violence against women, including domestic violence, is often one of the factors that prompts women to seek a better life outside the country. According to Art. 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence", domestic violence is an act (actions or omissions) of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence committed in the family or within the place of residence, or between relatives, or

between former or current spouses or between other persons who live together in the same family but are not related to each other or married to each other, regardless of whether the perpetrator of domestic violence lives in the same place as the victim, as well as threats of such acts [7].

Based on conversations with women victims of human trafficking, we can conclude that domestic violence is a factor that significantly increases the risk of being exploited (labor, sexual, etc.), and is an unconscious impulse that encourages a woman or child to seek happiness as far away from their homeland as possible. This is due to a number of both social and psychological factors. First of all, let us consider social factors, among which we can distinguish the following:

#### 1. Social isolation of victims:

Women and children who experience domestic violence often find themselves isolated from the outside world. This situation can occur due to restricted access to friends, lack of normal communication with family, restricted access to education, and lack of an active social life. Isolation of a person creates conditions for manipulation, including by traffickers who may present themselves as the only saviors and offer a "way out" of violent relationships. In this context, it is also worth noting that the situation has become somewhat more acute in the context of the war. Due to forced migration, women and children may be dependent on the help and protection of other people. In such circumstances, women become more vulnerable to gender-based violence, including human trafficking (sexual slavery, sexual harassment, labor exploitation, forced marriage or pregnancy, etc.) [3, P.30].

#### 2. Economic dependence

Domestic violence is often accompanied by the victim's financial dependence on the abuser. This makes women and children particularly vulnerable to exploitation, as they may be willing to accept any conditions to stop experiencing domestic violence. In such cases, traffickers may offer false hope for a better life or stability in exchange for complete submission.

#### 3. "Normalization" of violence

Ongoing domestic violence contributes to the formation of feelings of helplessness and subordination in children and women. This reduces their ability to recognize signs of exploitation, objectively analyze their life situation, and protect themselves from traffickers, which increases their risk of becoming victims.

#### 4. A dominant culture of silence and lack of support

In cultures or societies where victims of domestic violence are stigmatized or violence is seen as a normal part of life, victims may not seek help. This can make them an easy target for traffickers. While this situation is not typical for Ukraine today, such risks cannot be completely ruled out in the post-Soviet space.

As for the psychological aspects, we believe it is necessary to identify the following areas:

#### 1. Traumatic experiences and dependence on the abuser

Women and children who have experienced domestic violence may develop traumatic attachment, also known as dependent behavior syndrome. This psychological condition is characterized by the inability to stop the relationship with the abuser, even when it is clearly harmful and poses certain threats to a person's life and health. This behavior can also be manifested in relationships with traffickers, where victims agree to conditions that seem less painful than those they experienced in their families.

#### 2. Low self-esteem and guilt:

Constant humiliation by another person and emotional abuse in the family can lead to low self-esteem and guilt. This makes women and children more vulnerable to manipulation by traffickers who may use these feelings to control and exploit them.

#### 3. Psychological withdrawal

Domestic violence can lead to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These conditions can

impede women's and children's ability to navigate dangerous situations or make decisions, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Psychological trauma experienced in the family can cloud their perception of other threats, such as human trafficking.

To confirm the above facts, we will provide examples of court practice. For example, the conclusion of a forensic psychiatric examination in criminal proceedings under Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine found that the victim showed signs of a mental disorder in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder. The victim's mental state was characterized by a low mood, emotional lability, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, confusion, asthenization, fixation on the traumatic situation, and narrowing of the circle of interests. The prolonged nature of psycho-traumatic factors, namely, the conflict situation with her ex-husband, his constant negative behavior towards her, led to the consolidation of emotional and affective disorders, which are manifested by various changes in her mental functioning and contribute to the maintenance of a state of constant subjective distress, impede her social functioning and productivity with the inability to stay and cope with this psycho-traumatic situation on her own. The person's mental disorder in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder arose as a result of her ex-husband's systematic domestic violence, which was manifested by her husband in the form of systematic quarrels and threats of violence [2].

According to the results of a forensic psychological examination in another criminal proceeding under Article 126-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, it was established

that the man's actions caused a violation of the victim's usual stereotype of life, infringed on the fundamental personal values and needs of the person for personal well-being, peace and well-being of children, active and productive life, self-confidence and future, and full communication with the environment that is important to her. The situation for her is significantly psychotraumatizing (stressful), which directly causes mental discomfort, resulting in prolonged and intense physical and mental suffering [1].

**Conclusions.** Combating domestic violence and violence against women is an integral part of ensuring gender equality and empowerment of women and men and represents a significant step in ensuring human rights. At the same time, many issues remain unresolved and need to be finalized, primarily due to the weak control over the situation in the country, which is due to the fact that almost all resources and efforts are mobilized to combat the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. This type of criminal offense is dangerous in itself. However, the topic of the relationship between domestic violence and vulnerability to human trafficking reveals deeper social and psychological problems that require a comprehensive approach. Prevention of human trafficking should start with the prevention of domestic violence, ensuring the effective existence of supportive social networks and building psychological resilience in women and children who have experienced violence. It is also important to develop programs that help victims of violence rebuild their self-esteem and provide opportunities for social and economic independence.

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