
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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Abstract: *Violence against women is a major global problem with devastating effects on the physical, mental, and social health of victims. It includes multiple forms of abuse—physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and social—and occurs within the family, the community, and the workplace.*

The phenomenon of violence against women is deeply rooted in gender inequalities and cultural stereotypes, which means that addressing it requires complex interventions at the legislative, social, and educational levels. Analysis of statistical data and recent studies reveals both the progress made and the persistent gaps in victim protection and abuse prevention.

This article analyzes the forms of violence, the determining factors, and the impact on women, providing a detailed perspective on the complexity of the phenomenon.

Keywords: *violence against women, abuse, mental health, social protection, victims*

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, women have been both symbols of creation and beauty and agents of social and cultural change (UNESCO, Women and Cultural Heritage, 2020). In many civilizations, women have been seen as the source of life, protectors of the family, and keepers of traditions. From goddesses in ancient mythologies to leaders and reformers in modern society, women have played a fundamental role in shaping collective values and norms (Lerner, G., The Creation of Patriarchy, 1986.). Women were described as "the soul of the world, the source of life, and the light that guides humanity."

In contemporary society, women continue to play multiple roles, from professional work to education and child-rearing. Studies show that women's participation in politics, business, and science contributes significantly to the economic and social progress of communities (World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, 2022). At the same time, women face specific challenges, such as gender discrimination, domestic violence, and lack of equal access to resources and education (UN Women, Ending Violence Against Women, 2021). An anonymous person once said, "Touch a woman's body only with love; any blow is a sin against humanity."



Women's impact on culture and art is also profound¹. From literature to music, visual arts, and cinema, women have created works that reflect the complexity of the female experience and have influenced society's perception of moral, social, and aesthetic values (Nochlin, L, 1971). This influence is not limited to artistic expression, but contributes to redefining cultural identity and how communities relate to equity and diversity (UNESCO, Women and Cultural Heritage, 2020).

Despite progress, women in many parts of the world continue to be vulnerable to violence and abuse. International organizations and academic studies emphasize the need to protect women's rights, provide equal access to education and resources, and combat stereotypes that limit their freedom and potential (Smith, J., & Popescu, L. 2022) Through their resilience and contributions, women remain an indispensable force for the evolution and harmony of society.

Violence against women is a complex and widespread phenomenon that manifests itself in many forms and affects millions of women globally. It is not limited to physical assault, but also includes psychological, sexual, economic, and social abuse. Its impact is felt both at the individual and community levels, perpetuating gender inequalities and social vulnerabilities.

Recent studies show that one in three women globally has experienced some form of violence during her lifetime (European Institute for Gender Equality. Gender-based violence in Europe). This reality highlights the need for a detailed analysis of the causes and effects of violence, as well as an understanding of how cultural and psychological factors influence the phenomenon.

In this context, the article aims to detail the forms of violence, its causes, and its impact on women, providing a basis for a deeper understanding of the issue.

2. Forms of violence

Violence against women manifests itself in various forms, each with specific characteristics and consequences.

Physical: This includes hitting, assault with objects, or any other form of bodily harm. Women who are subjected to physical violence often suffer visible injuries, but also long-term health effects, including chronic pain, reduced mobility, or somatic disorders.

Psychological: Psychological abuse involves intimidation, humiliation, manipulation, and emotional control². This can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression, affecting a woman's ability to make independent decisions and manage her personal and professional life.

Sexual: Harassment, sexual assault, and rape are forms of sexual violence (UN. (2023)). This causes deep trauma, affects mental health, and can have long-term repercussions on the victim's intimate and relational life.

Economic: Restricting access to money, preventing employment, or Controlling resources are forms of economic violence. This limits women's autonomy and increases their dependence on the abuser, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Social: Isolation from support networks, stigmatization, and discrimination constitute social violence (Ionescu, M. 2021). This affects women's ability to seek help, participate in community life, and build a social protection network.

Forced marriage: Forced marriage is a serious violation of women's fundamental rights, defined as any marriage in which at least one party has not given their free and informed consent (UNITED NATIONS, 2021). This practice limits women's autonomy, affects their freedom of choice, and often leads to social isolation, physical or psychological abuse, and loss of access to education and



economic resources. The psychological impact on victims includes deep trauma, anxiety, depression, and difficulties in interpersonal relationships (UNICEF 2021).

Genital mutilation: Female genital mutilation (FGM) is an extreme form of violence against women, involving the partial or total alteration or removal of the external genitalia of girls or women for non-medical reasons (World Health Organization, 2021). This practice has serious consequences for physical and mental health, including acute pain, infections, complications during childbirth, and profound psychological trauma.

Forced marriage and female genital mutilation reflect power inequalities between the sexes and normalize men's control over women's bodies and lives (Johnson, P. 2018). They affect women's physical health, self-esteem, freedom, and personal development. Effective interventions require clear legislation, educational programs, cultural awareness, and psychological and social support for victims (World Bank, 2020).

3. Causes and determining factors

Violence against women does not occur randomly; it is the result of complex cultural, psychological, and social factors.

Patriarchal cultural norms and gender power inequalities perpetuate abuse (Johnson, P. (2020). In many societies, women are perceived as inferior or as the property of men, which normalizes control and violence.

Economic imbalances and lack of education also contribute to women's vulnerability (Davis, R., & Matei, A., 2019). Women who are poor or have limited access to education have fewer resources to defend themselves or leave abusive relationships.

Psychological factors such as control, jealousy, or unresolved frustrations on the part of the perpetrator increase the risk of abuse. Exposure to violence in childhood or dysfunctional family patterns can perpetuate the cycle of violence in the long term.

4. Impact on victims

Violence has profound consequences for women, both physical and psychological and social.

Physically, victims may suffer trauma, chronic illness, or disability (World Health Organization, 2022). Physical injuries are visible, but psychological effects such as anxiety and depression can be far more debilitating and persistent.

Psychologically, affected women may develop post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, and relationship difficulties (Green, L., & Ionescu, D. 2021). Trauma can affect work capacity, social life, and even long-term health.

The social impact includes isolation, stigmatization, and loss of community support (UNICEF, 2020). Children who witness or are indirectly victims of violence may suffer psychological consequences, perpetuating the cycle of violence and vulnerability.

5. Recent studies on women in Romania

A study published in 2024 analyzes the perceptions of men and women in the North-West Region of Romania regarding gender roles in domestic and professional life. The research identified a significant tendency to maintain traditional attitudes towards women's roles, especially in rural areas and in lower-income households. It also found that women are underrepresented in leadership positions and that there is an unequal distribution of domestic and care tasks between the sexes (UNICEF, 2020).

A study published in October 2024 analyzes the perceptions of young Romanians aged 20 to 35 regarding gender equality and chances of success in their personal, public, and professional lives. The results reveal that, although young people recognize women's skills and competencies, their



underrepresentation in areas such as politics or management remains a persistent problem in Romanian society.

According to the 2024 Gender Equality Index, compiled by the European Institute for Gender Equality, Romania ranks last in the European Union, with a score of 57.5 out of 100, reflecting persistent challenges in women's participation in political and economic life, in combating gender-based violence, and in eliminating stereotypes.

Another study conducted in the North-West Region of Romania analyses men's and women's perceptions of gender roles in domestic and professional life (Elena-Manuela BTrsănuț, 2020). The research highlights the persistence of traditional attitudes towards women's roles, especially in rural areas, as well as their under-representation in leadership positions and the unequal distribution of household tasks.

With regard to women's representation in politics, a 2024 study shows that in the 2020-2024 legislature, women represent approximately 19% of deputies and 16% of senators (RSIS International Journal, 2024). Although there has been a slight increase compared to previous legislatures, male-dominated political culture and informal networks continue to limit women's access to leadership positions.

6. International assessments of Romania

Furthermore, international and European assessments provide a clear picture of Romania's position in this area, highlighting the need for more coherent policies and rigorous implementation of protective measures. This article examines the forms of violence, determining factors, impact on victims, and legislative framework, integrating recent data, national studies, and relevant cases of convictions at the ECHR.

6.1. Gender Equality Index 2024 (EIGE)

Romania ranks last in the European Union, with a score of 57.5 out of 100, below the EU average of 71. This position reflects slow progress in areas such as gender-based violence, women's participation in political and economic life, and persistent gender stereotypes. In the analysis by area, Romania scores lower on women's participation in leadership positions and the unequal distribution of economic resources and domestic tasks.

The EIGE report also highlights the importance of education and social awareness measures to reduce gender stereotypes and promote equality. In addition, it points out that the lack of gender-disaggregated data limits the ability of authorities to accurately assess the impact of equality and gender-based violence policies, which affects the planning of future strategies (Council of Europe, 2025).

6.2. GREVIO assessment (Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention)

In May 2025, GREVIO published a report on the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania. The report acknowledges progress in developing support services for victims, such as counseling centers and shelters, but also highlights gaps in coordination between institutions such as the police, the prosecution, and social services.

Furthermore, GREVIO recommends strengthening prevention mechanisms through gender equality education in schools and communities. It also stresses the need for better collection of statistical data on violence against women in order to enable a more detailed assessment of the phenomenon and effective monitoring of the implementation of legislative measures (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Gender Equality Index 2024)

6.3. UN Women report on gender-based violence in Romania

In 2024, Romania submitted its ninth report under the CEDAW Convention (UN Women, Romania - Country Profile, 2024). The report highlights that programmes to prevent domestic violence, training for authorities and helplines have been adopted, but notes difficulties in the consistent application of legislation at local level.

In addition, the report stresses the need to expand women's access to justice and protection, especially in rural areas, where victims face social, cultural, and economic barriers. UN Women recommends the creation of integrated policies that combine prevention, victim protection, and sanctions for perpetrators (UN Women, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls - Report of the Secretary-General 2024).

6.4. Assessment of administrative data on intimate partner violence (EIGE)

In its 2023-2024 data collection exercise, EIGE found that the available data on victims of intimate partner violence is not disaggregated by sex, which makes it difficult to analyze violence against women specifically (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2024). This lack of detail reduces the ability to effectively monitor the impact of the policies and measures implemented.

Furthermore, data from the justice sector is incomplete, and information about perpetrators is not disaggregated by gender, which limits understanding of the profile of perpetrators and the context of violence. EIGE recommends the creation of a coherent data collection and reporting system that would allow for the evaluation of the impact of legislative measures and support more effective prevention policies (EIGE, 2024)

7. Violence against women in Romania

In Romania, violence against women remains a significant problem, with an impact on the physical and mental health of victims and on society as a whole.

According to available data, 42% of women in Romania have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15, a significantly higher percentage than the European Union average (UN Women, Romania – Country). In 2022, the police recorded 34,776 victims of intimate partner violence, of whom 23,274 were victims of physical violence, 7,792 of psychological violence, 293 of sexual violence, and 1,457 of economic violence (EIGE, 2024).

Despite these alarming statistics, underreporting remains a major problem. A 2024 study shows that only 14% of victims of violence reported the incident to the police, due to fear, shame, or lack of trust in the authorities.

In terms of legislative measures, Romania has implemented the necessary legal framework to combat gender-based violence, including by signing the Istanbul Convention. However, the effective implementation of these measures remains a work in progress, with persistent challenges in the areas of victim protection and prevention.

Romania has been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in several cases where the authorities failed to intervene adequately in cases of domestic violence or violence against women. Among these, we mention:

1. The case of Buturugă v. Romania (2020)

The applicant, Ms. Buturugă, a woman from Tulcea, filed several complaints against her ex-husband for domestic violence and cyber violence. The Romanian authorities did not intervene effectively, and the prosecutor's office dismissed the cases, considering that the threats were not serious enough. The ECHR found a violation of Articles 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment) and 8 (right to respect for private life and correspondence) of the European Convention on Human



Rights, establishing that the Romanian state had failed to protect the applicant from domestic violence and cyber violence. As a result, Romania was ordered to pay €10,000 in moral damages.

2. The case of *A Bălșan v. Romania* (2017)

Bălșan was the victim of repeated acts of domestic violence by her husband. The Romanian authorities did not intervene effectively and, in some cases, blamed the applicant for the conflictual situation. The ECHR found a violation of Articles 3 and 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights, ruling that the Romanian state had failed to protect the applicant from domestic violence.

3. Case of *P. v. Romania* (2023)

In this case, the applicant complained about the lack of promptness and thoroughness in investigating acts of domestic violence. The ECHR found a violation of Articles 3 and 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, establishing that the Romanian authorities had not acted with the necessary diligence to protect the applicant and her children. As a result, Romania was ordered to pay €12,500 in non-pecuniary damages.

These convictions highlight the shortcomings of the Romanian system in protecting victims of domestic violence and underscore the need for reforms to ensure respect for women's fundamental rights.

8. Conclusions. Violence against women

Violence against women remains a major problem, with a profound impact on individuals, families, and society as a whole. Analysis of the forms of abuse — physical, psychological, sexual, economic, and social — shows that the effects of violence are not limited to immediate trauma, but are felt in the long term, affecting women's mental health, social status, and economic participation. This reality underscores the need for comprehensive and coherent measures for prevention and protection.

Recent studies in Romania highlight persistent gender stereotypes and structural inequalities that make women vulnerable to abuse. Despite legislative progress and protection programs, women's participation in politics and the economy, as well as their access to justice and resources, remain limited. International assessments, such as those carried out by EIGE, GREVIO, and UN Women, clearly show that the implementation of legislation is still insufficient and that there are major shortcomings in data collection and institutional coordination.

The cases in which Romania has been convicted by the ECHR for failing to protect victims of domestic violence highlight the real consequences of the inefficiency of the protection system. These decisions reaffirm that respect for women's fundamental rights is not only a moral obligation but also a legal one, requiring prompt and effective intervention by the authorities. Institutional reforms and the practical implementation of legal measures are essential for preventing abuse and effectively protecting victims.

The role of women in society, demonstrated throughout history and through their current contributions to culture, politics, the economy, and education, shows that gender equality is not only a matter of rights, but also a determining factor for social and economic progress. Protecting and promoting women is an investment in the sustainable development of communities, in strengthening social cohesion, and in reducing vulnerabilities.

Ultimately, combating violence against women requires an integrated approach that includes prevention, protection, education, and institutional accountability. Actions must be supported by coherent policies, continuous monitoring, and active community involvement. Only through a



concerted effort at the national and international levels can the impact of violence be reduced and women's fundamental rights be ensured, thus guaranteeing a more equitable and safer society for all.



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