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*Halyna Fedoryshyn*

## GENDER STEREOTYPES AS A DRIVER OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

*Суспільство нав'язує чоловікам та жінкам різні ролі, що стереотипно приписуються йому/їй соціумом і передаються від покоління до покоління. Деструктивний вплив гендерних стереотипів можна спостерігати у сім'ї у різних проявах насильства стосовно чоловіків чи жінок. Дослідження вітчизняних і зарубіжних дослідників дають підстави стверджувати, що в основі гендерного насильства у сім'ї лежать патріархальні уявлення і переконання про функціонально-рольову структуру сім'ї. Однак не всі чоловіки з такими установками вчиняють насильство. У статті здійснено аналіз сутності феномену «гендерні стереотипи», його складових та різновидів, виявлено особливості впливу гендерних стереотипів у поєднанні з іншими чинниками (економічними, психофізіологічними, психологічними) на прояви насильства у сім'ї щодо чоловіків і жінок, окреслено напрями подолання гендерних стереотипів.*

**Ключові слова:** *стереотипи, гендерні стереотипи, насильство, гендерна рівність, гендерна дискримінація, патріархальні уявлення і переконання.*

*Society pressures men and women into playing certain roles, prescribed by the community and passed down from generation to generation. Destructive impact of gender stereotypes can be observed at the family level in various forms of violence against men or women. Studies of domestic and foreign researchers give grounds for arguing that it is patriarchal attitudes and beliefs concerning the functional and role structure of the family that account for gender-based violence in the family. However, not all men with such attitudes commit violence. This paper analyses the nature of gender stereotypes, their components and varieties. We explore particular impact of gender stereotypes together with other factors (economic, psychophysiological and psychological) on acts of domestic violence against men and women and suggest ways to challenge gender stereotypes.*

**Keywords:** *stereotypes, gender stereotypes, violence, gender equality, gender discrimination, patriarchal attitudes and beliefs.*

**Topic Outline.** Gender stereotypes as a set of conventional generally accepted rules and attitudes in respect to male and female status, codes of conduct, motives behind their actions and need patterns are the most persistent social stereotypes. They consolidate prevailing gender differences and relations [1].

Gender stereotypes usually have a destructive function and encourage various acts of domestic violence. It is women who most often fall victims to spousal abuse [2]. According to L. Heise, M. Ellsberg, M. Gottemoeller, the proportion of female victims of domestic violence ranges throughout the world from 10 to 50% [3, p. 16]. This is especially true of traditions in rural regions. For example, if a husband believes that his wife does not cope with her role as a housewife, calls into question his rights or challenges the established limits, treats him disrespectfully, he has every right to resort to violence and punish her.

We should note that it was due to international influence that our government turned attention to gender inequality in the country in the early twenty-first century. It was after the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000 that Ukraine proclaimed promotion of gender equality as a priority of the national policy and adopted a number of legal acts aimed at ensuring gender equality. As a result, several legal acts were adopted, such as Decree of the President of Ukraine *On Improving Social Status of Women in Ukraine* dated April 25, 2001 [4], *Prevention of Family Violence Act* dated November 15, 2001 [5], Law of Ukraine *On Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* dated June 5, 2003 [6], Decree of the President of Ukraine *On Improving the Work of Central and Local Executive Bodies on Ensuring the Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men* dated July 26, 2005 [7], Law of Ukraine *On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men* dated September 8, 2005 [8]. On September 10, 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine issued the Order *On Integrating Principles of Gender Equality in Education* [9] and on November 21, 2012, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine issued the Order *On Approval of the Concept of the State Program for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men till 2016* [10]. For violation of laws ensuring the equal rights and opportunities for women and men, citizens and public officials are liable civilly, administratively and criminally. Thus, gender policy as a system of purposeful interrelated actions addressing gender-sensitive issues and promoting gender equality has been developing in Ukraine since 2000. However, constitutional guarantee of equal rights and opportunities for women and men does not eliminate the necessity for the reform in the field of gender-sensitive issues. It is also necessary to put in a great deal of effort to challenge gender stereotypes in the public perception. Freedom from violence is one of the fundamental human rights.

Domestic violence is legal and philosophical, as well as sociocultural and psychological issue. However, in terms of theory and methodology, the issue of gender stereotypes' impact on acts of domestic violence has not been finally resolved. Therefore, **the paper aims** to explore the nature of gender stereotypes and their influence on acts of domestic violence against men and women.

**Data.** Deep-rooted gender stereotypes are usually adopted in childhood: in the family, in kindergartens and schools. Later they shift to adult life, person's own family. So, ABC books (for example, Soviet ones, where mom was washing a window frame and dad was working) put forward certain ideas about gender roles. First of all, the idea that window washing is not work but so-called leisure activity; that

household chores are assigned to women and dad does more serious work. Later, we see that in school manual training is divided into servicing work for women and so-called technical work for men, that even teachers attribute certain roles and expectations to children, suggesting what is more important for boys (that is, mostly sciences and IT) and for girls, what subjects they should choose for further education. Gender stereotypes are promoted by mass media, for example, talk shows «Bachelor», «From tomboy to young lady», «Weighted and happy», «4 weddings» convey certain common messages concerning the way a true woman and a real man are perceived or should look.

Gender stereotypes are complex in their structure and combine at least four components: standard ideas about somatic, psychic, behavioral properties characteristic of men and women (men are dominant, independent, aggressive, self-confident, inclined to logical reasoning, able to control their feelings, while women are passive, subordinate, emotional, caring and tender); typical gender activities (women are traditionally considered to be good at operating, servicing activities, while men are believed to be good at tool-making, creative, leadership careers); gender-related careers and social roles (the main male roles are in professional spheres, whereas the purpose of women is homemaking); as well as evaluation of appearance [11]. Thus, gender stereotypes reflect our understanding of male and female traditional gender roles, common ideas about male and female behaviour; what is considered to be feminine and what is masculine; what women and men can and cannot do; which careers are for men and for women.

Gender stereotypes come out in the course of linguistic communication and depend largely on mentality, occupation, social role. Special differentiated activity of ancient man and woman also played its role, when men as hunters had to keep silent, think logically and have a sense of direction, while women as housewives and child carers were much more talkative [12]. Hence, the specific perception in communication, when men mostly use their left brain which is more analytical, verbal and orderly, while women are both left-brained and right-brained, that is more visual and intuitive.

Practice shows that the vast majority of women follow cooperation style in communication, while men adopt competition style, therefore, they use their specific means of communication – women usually follow sequencing order of speech, whereas men tend to assert themselves and dominate. The major difference, however, is in their attitudes to feedback – evidence suggests that women see feedback as sign of mutual understanding rather than respond to the message as such, while men perceive it as information which can run counter to their conception and thus can be challenged or even sometimes proved false. Apparently, these differences can be observed in family communication and in their destructive forms such as verbal aggression and violence.

J. Williams and D. Best have made a significant contribution to recent efforts to explore peculiarities of gender stereotypes. They have conducted thorough research aimed at identifying social and cultural specificity of gender stereotypes. The researchers argue that gender stereotypes arise on the basis of gender roles. Deep-rooted stereotypes are seen as rules by women and men and are patterns for gender-

role socialization. There is a pancultural tendency to teach and study gender-based behaviors, although there are some differences in what exactly they are taught, depending on the culture [13, p. 39]. Based on J. Williams and D. Best's research, D. Matsumoto [14] has carried out a detailed study of gender roles typical of men and women and finds that they are different in all cultures.

Modern-day researcher T. V. Bendas argues that gender stereotypes are changing today. For example, the stereotype of femininity, which developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but remains popular until today (especially with men), is that a woman should be tender, beautiful, soft, gentle and, at the same time, passive, dependent. But women themselves believe that they need to be smart, energetic, entrepreneurial, that is, display male qualities. The stereotype of masculinity has also changed – traditionally it included physical strength, suppression of tenderness, functional attitude to women and, at the same time, unreserved expression of anger and passion. The present-day profile is different: intelligence is valued over strength; it is acceptable to show tenderness and suppress «rough» feelings, although less-educated people adhere to a more traditional stereotype of masculinity [15, p. 204]. That is, the author relates the degree of stereotype manifestation with the intelligence level of an individual and prevailing set of their cultural values. The author's statement draws upon the substantiated idea of close relationship between imagination and intelligence, and it is imagination that is the key to the development of the individual's intellectual realm. A lower level of education of an individual is believed to lead to a more profound influence of stereotypes on their behavior, since the person cannot imagine any other behavior pattern.

Gender stereotypes can be constructive or destructive [16]. In Ukrainian society, most gender stereotypes are destructive. For example, public opinion has it that a woman can be happy only when she has children and can take care of them. Most people think that a woman cannot be successful in management, business and politics. Consequently, women usually have lower social status, occupy less responsible positions and earn less money. They also enjoy less personal liberty. So, here, we can observe gender discrimination against women. Gender stereotypes also contribute to discrimination against men by preventing them from becoming real partners in the family and promoting their violence. Therefore, gender stereotypes prevent both women and men from fulfilling their rich human potential, limit human rights and result in gender discrimination, that is, violate human rights according to gender identity.

Based on the analysis of research literature, we single out two main types of gender attitudes and stereotypes – patriarchal and feminist – affecting public opinion and social morality. Patriarchal attitudes are characterized by: 1) opinion that there must be a strict division of male and female roles in social interactions and family relations; 2) attitude according to which the man has a leading, active role in the family and society, and the woman is subordinate, passive; 3) belief that values of women and men are different – family and love are female priority values, while business, work, self-realization outside the family are male values; 4) preference to family relationships, where the husband is the head of the family, the breadwinner;

5) considering the main female role in the society to be the role of mother; 6) condemnation of female behavior, dominated by commitment to self-realization outside the family, career, professional achievement; 7) ideas that the patriarchal model of society is natural due to gender biological differences; 8) condemnation of equal rights of women and men.

According to D. Zimmerman, M. Claes, I. Kon, V. Kagan, M. Paludi, K. West, D. Myers and other representatives of social and cultural approach, patriarchal standards of morality, cultural practices, opinions, attitudes and estimates dealing with family relations, as well as dominating role of men in social interactions, are the main reasons that provoke violence both in intergender relations in general and in the family in particular. These views were also reflected in the UN Strategies for Combating Domestic Violence, stating that the origins of violence are located in the social structure and the complex set of values, traditions, habits and beliefs which relate to gender inequality. In this way, the causes of violence are transferred to the social and cultural level, the sphere of contradictory public opinion on the issues of husband-wife relations and views on their roles in the family.

For example, men who commit and (or) encourage violence in intergender relations were revealed to have traditional gender role attitudes. However, not all men with such attitudes commit violence in intergender relations [17, p. 170]. What this means is that masculine gender role attitudes lead to violence offenses only in combination with some other risk factors. Ukrainian researchers in the field of violence believe that violence in intergender relations is associated with patriarchal cultural standards [3; 18]. Competition for family leadership, tyrannous instincts, family budget planning, household chores sharing, single person decisions on significant issues (such as childbearing), as well as craving for independence, claiming the right to personal life, different views on morals in regard to sexual relations, disagreement concerning marital infidelity contribute to conflicts and domestic violence [18].

Overall, domestic violence is fairly widespread around the globe and in all walks of life. Offenders may belong to any social class and can be found among people with different levels of education and amenity. Victims of domestic violence may be representatives of any or all age, national, social and economic, education, professional, religious and other groups. However, their common trait is that they fall victims to their nearest and dearest [19].

In Ukraine, most gender stereotypes need to be challenged since they are mostly discriminatory, destructive and hinder harmonious family relations.

Gender equality theory provides for equal opportunities for men and women to fulfill their potential in various gender roles, not only those given by nature. Introduction of gender education is a significant step for the government on the path of mutual understanding with the society on gender issues. However, implementing such education activities at school only, without resorting to family, would mean prolonging the process of challenging gender stereotypes for decades. In our opinion, to gradually change gender stereotypes and effectively implement gender policy it is necessary, among other things, to provide all officials with relevant training on

gender equality issues, introduce responsible parenting schools in every city, develop a chain of gender education centers. Moreover, the media should give coverage to advantages of gender-sensitive community and inform the population about positive experience of other countries in this field. The media are often referred to as the fourth branch of government alongside with the legislative, executive and judiciary branches, due to the fact that it is the media that have access to information and serve as information primary source and extender. The media impose certain rules of interpreting social relations, thus, playing a very important role in shaping gender stereotypes and gender standards and promoting gender culture in society. However, we should reiterate the reasonability of gradual changes of social stereotypes, with obligatory consideration of national mentality.

**Conclusion** Summarizing, we want to note that, firstly, domestic violence occurs in both its cruelest instances (murder, rape, hooliganism), and in less pronounced forms which do not result in criminal penalty or any other social sanctions (disregard, isolation, humiliation, rejection). A number of factors contribute to domestic violence, with gender stereotypes playing a significant role.

Secondly, for full development and personal fulfillment one needs to get rid of limitations imposing traditional stereotyped mentality on male and female behavior. After all, gender stereotypes tend to change over time. Nowadays, women can balance employment outside home and household chores, as well as family roles, while men are allowed to show tenderness, exercise care, especially towards children. Freedom from gender stereotypes contributes to people's mental and physical health, enables them to live a full life, fulfill their potential in different gender roles, not only those given by nature.

Thirdly, stereotypes are rather difficult to challenge. It takes time, as well as deliberate actions on the part of communal majority, public associations, movements and government support. In the absence of any of these factors, it is almost impossible to bring about any changes in any stereotype.

Fourthly, since gender-typical attitudes, which dominate the modern Ukrainian community, are oriented toward the traditional patriarchal distribution of gender roles, the primary goal of feminist movement in Ukraine is to change woman's role of the victim, to establish her equal rights with her husband, to help her develop skills of independent life choices and combat violence.

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