



Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



Older Women's Experiences of Psychological Violence in Their Marital Relationships.

REFERENCE

Montminy, L. (2005). Older Women's Experiences of Psychological Violence in Their Marital Relationships. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 46(2), 3-22.

TEXT TYPE

Format: Scientific article

Content: Empirical

DISCUSSED THEMES

Definition, extent of the phenomenon, forms of mistreatment at home, risk factors, vulnerabilities, concept of gender, profile of the mistreated person, perpetrator of mistreatment, consequences, barriers to reporting, prevention, intervention, burden and stress.

GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This study points out the problem of psychological violence experienced by older women who have been living in a marital relationship, while offering concrete avenues for both practice and research.

PROBLEM

The literature review offers little research on domestic violence among older couples and none is specifically related to psychological violence. Yet it remains the most common form of mistreatment within these couples.

METHODOLOGY

The sample comprises 15 women aged 60 to 81 years who are now experiencing psychological violence in their marital relationship or have experienced it in the previous 24 months. They have also been identified as victims of psychological violence through an instrument specifically developed for the study. During individual interviews, the participants were asked to tell their story in which they were victims of this type of violence by their spouse. Their comments were then analyzed in order to illustrate the main themes. These themes were also confirmed by the analysis of another researcher who came to the same conclusions.

RESULTS

Fourteen major types of psychological violence emerged from the observations of the participants regarding their experiences. We are talking about control, denigration, deprivation, intimidation, threats, abdication of responsibility, manipulation, blame, harassment, negation of reality, indifference, making the wife feel guilty, sulking and infantilization.

DISCUSSION

Psychological violence occurs both through what the husband says and does (active forms), but also through what he does not say or do (passive forms). Control is the active behaviour most frequently reported by the participants and tends to increase at retirement. Husbands have used several types of psychological violence (including intimidation and threats) in order to exercise control. It is also noted that isolation caused by multiple behaviours of psychological violence is an important barrier to reporting mistreatment situations. As for passive forms of violence, the majority of the participants consider the disengagement of their husbands from household chores and the education of children as a form of psychological violence. Such behaviour is in part explained by the socialization of these older women and men. Indifference and negation of reality are also part of the types of passive violence and leads the wife to ask herself questions about her life and her identity.

CONCLUSION

This study allows a better understanding of the psychological violence within older couples, in particular, by stressing on the importance of passive forms of violence. Psychological violence is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon, which explains in part the difficulty for researchers and practitioners to identify its presence. It is therefore important to understand this complexity so actions can be taken more effectively with women who are subjected to this type of violence.

AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Interventions with these women must be undertaken with a perspective of empowerment and cover the theme of responsibility and social roles according to gender. Direct interventions should also include emergency accommodations in shelters for women. In addition, the author insists on the importance of prevention activities among young people to stop the violence. Finally, additional efforts are required to develop interventions tailored to the reality of these older women.

DRAFTING DATE

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