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THE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXPERIENCING AND USING VIOLENCE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

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**violence in intimate relationship
feeling of experiencing violence
feeling of using violence**

Summary

Objectives: A questionnaire for experiencing and using violence in intimate relationships, namely, the KPDiSP, was constructed and validated to help in the diagnosis and enrich the competencies of psychotherapists working with people experiencing difficulties in intimate relationships.

Methods: The questionnaire consists of eight statements regarding the feeling of experiencing and using violence. By responding to these statements on a five-point scale, a person can determine the level of experiencing as well as using violence. The KPDiSP measures the level of experiencing and using violence in four basic dimensions: emotional, sexual, economic, and physical.

Results: Based on all analyses performed, the questionnaire has good reliability. The KPDiSP can be used as a tool for assessing the intensity of experiencing and using violence and analyzing one's experiences and perceived partner's behavior. Thus, it helps patients gain awareness of the difficulties and threats in an intimate relationship.

Conclusions: Another advantage of this questionnaire is its short form, enabling therapists and patients to familiarize with the content easily.

Introduction

Violence in intimate relationships was recognized and considered a serious problem in the late 1970s [1-3]. The consequences of experiencing and using violence are borne by both partners and other close people involved, particularly children [4]. Children also become victims of violence not only by witnessing but also by experiencing it [5]. In 2005, Polish legislation defined intimate relationship violence as an element of domestic violence. It is an intentional and exploitative action against a family member, violating personal rights and thus causing suffering and damage. The 2005 Act was amended in 2023 [5] to expand the term family violence to domestic violence. Practitioners providing psychological assistance to individuals and couples often encounter people who experience and use violence. When clients seek help from psychotherapists, they report poor physical and mental well-being

and difficulties in communicating with their partners. In many cases, they do not reveal that their condition is related to experiencing violence from their partner because they do not recognize such situations as violence. In other cases, their condition is accompanied by the fear of being disloyal to their partner. This belief specifically characterizes a violent relationship.

The following are examples from clinical practice: a 35-year-old woman who started therapy because of low mood and anxiety did not connect her well-being with her difficult relationship with her partner. When asked by the therapist about her life situation, she replied that everything was fine. As she was leaving the office, she noticed leaflets about domestic violence. She took one, and during the next session, she asked the therapist about certain details related to psychological violence. During subsequent meetings, she discovered many different forms of violence she experienced from her partner. She also justified that she did not want to discuss the issue because there were many harmful behaviors from her side too.

In another example, a couple who came to therapy due to daily communication difficulties presented their problem differently. The diagnosis revealed that their communication problems were caused by the man's use of psychological, economic, and sexual violence. Referring to the Blue Line's violence questionnaire was helpful in this case.

Another example is the situation of a man who came to therapy because he had a "blue card" (the blue card is a procedure for protecting people harmed in the family and is launched against people using violence). He wanted to understand his behavior, of which his wife accused him. By analyzing the situation and the motives for his behavior, this man became increasingly aware that his reactions were motivated by defense. He began to describe his wife's behavior as violence initiated by her.

These cases significantly exemplify situations that psychologists and therapists encounter in their practice. However, experience and literature on violence shows that recognizing the person posing a threat and the person who is at risk is not easy [6, 7]. Therefore, competencies in recognizing who is responsible for the use of violence and to what extent it is used must be developed.

The literature distinguishes four types of violence in intimate relationships [8, 9]: terror, defensive and retaliatory violence, escalating conflict, and violence after separation. The first is the most recognized type of violence. The second type is also associated with experiencing terror in a relationship, and the third type is often identified with tension around divorce. However, diagnosing the type of relationship is not evident in practice. Research shows that both parties often feel they have wronged and been wronged [10, 11]. Considering the many years of practice, we constructed a questionnaire that considers the two perspectives of people who experience violence and people who use it. Therefore, the proposed tool takes into account psychological categories such as the feeling of experiencing and using violence. A questionnaire relating to the feeling of being harmed and harming others could help psychotherapists in making the right diagnosis as well as patients in gaining awareness of their problems with experiencing and using violence.

Tools for researching violence

Most questionnaires examining violence are based on the quantification [12], lifespan [13], or emotional effects [14] of violence. These questionnaires predict the occurrence of violence in specific conditions not related to domestic violence, for example, in psychiatric wards [15]. However, the validation of the English version of the Buss–Durkee Hostility Inventory indicates that their predictive power is low or non-existent [16]. At best, such questionnaires can partially predict the occurrence of acts of violence in a group with psychopathic personality traits and a history of violence [17].

Existing scales also separate the phenomena of perpetration and experiencing violence and are addressed either to victims (e.g., Composite Abuse Scale – CAS, Women’s Experiences with Battering scale – WEB, Physical and Psychological Violence Victimization – PPVV, and Intimate Violence and Traumatic Affect scale – VITA) or perpetrators (e.g., PERpetrator RaPid Scale – PERPS, Propensity for Abusiveness Scale – PAS, and Quantification of Violence Scale – QOVS). This approach also applies to scales existing in the Polish market, whose psychometric properties are most often not specified. Additionally, building on the utilitarian aspect, these Polish scales focus on recognizing the severity of the phenomenon (Blue Line questionnaire mentioned earlier) and predicting threats (SafeLives Risk Assessment Questionnaire, risk assessment questionnaire).

Many scales cover only one type of violence, for example, physical and sexual violence (Abusive Behavior Inventory, Measure of Wife Abuse, Partner Abuse Scale: Physical – PASPH, and Sexual Experiences Survey – SES), psychological violence (Index of Psychological Abuse, Multidimensional Measure of Emotional Abuse), and stalking (Stalking and Harassment Behaviour Scale – HARRAS, Obsessive Relational Intrusion scale – ORI). However, no tools have been established to recognize and quantify violence in a relationship as an act that partners experience and use at the same time.

Validation procedure

The questionnaire was designed to correspond to the most common types of violence (physical, mental, economic, and sexual) and examine the intensity of their use and experience. It shows a low coefficient of Gunning Fog Index. The index indicates the clarity, brightness, and comprehensibility of individual test items and is calculated based on sentence length and the number of difficult words (containing three or more syllables). To ensure that the test items were understandable and correctly interpreted, a think-aloud study was also conducted on 26 students. They read each test item and described their understanding of such items. This study also showed that the test items were understandable. People starting therapy due to difficulties experienced in an intimate relationship were qualified for the study. The study itself was conducted in psychologists’ offices.

The questionnaire consists of eight statements defining the feeling of experiencing violence (statements 1–4) and the sense of using violence (statements 5–8). Each state-

ment is subjectively assessed on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = “I do not feel that this is the case”; 5 = “I clearly feel this is the case.”

Subjects

The recommended number of test takers for each test item is approximately 15. However, gathering such a group of respondents is difficult due to its specificity: the questionnaire is intended to examine the sense of experiencing violence and the sense of using violence. To avoid distortions, the validation was performed on a group of people who started therapy due to difficulties experienced in an intimate relationship. Thus, 174 people participated in the study, including 110 women and 64 men. The average age of the respondents was 40 years (SD = 10.70, min. = 20, max. = 69 years). A total of 110 people were married, and 64 were in consensual relationships. The average duration of the relationship was 13 years (min. = 17, max. = 45, SD = 10.36). Table 1 presents the demographic data.

Table 1. **Demographic data**

Sex	Frequency		%	
Women	110		63.2	
Men	64		36.8	
Total:	174		100	
Type of relationship:	Frequency		%	
Marriage	110		63.2	
Cohabitation	64		36.8	
Age	Min.	Max.	M	SD
	20 years	69 years	39.89	10.7
Relationship duration	Min.	Max.	M	SD
	2 months	45 years	13.67 years	10.36

Figures 1 and 2 below present the distribution of results of the sense of experiencing and using violence, respectively.

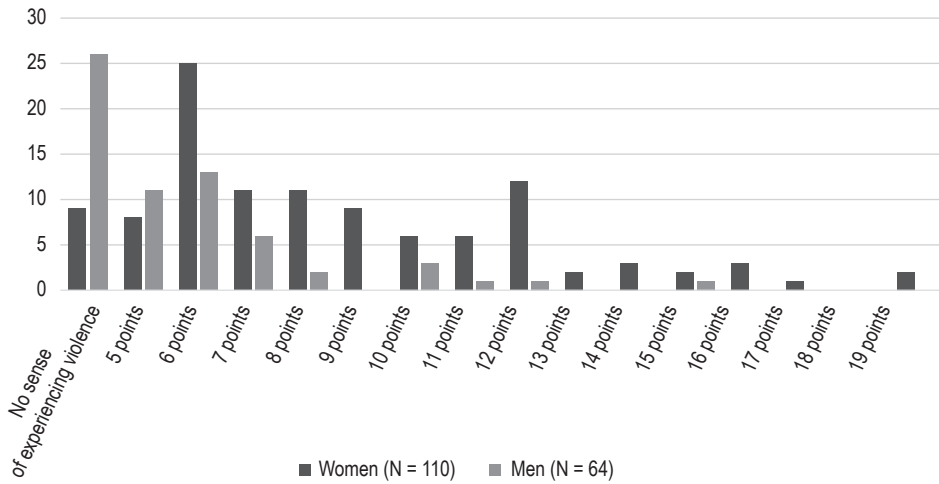


Figure 1. Distribution of the level of the sense of experiencing violence for women and men

In the case of the sense of using violence, the proportions were reversed, that is, women scored lower than men.

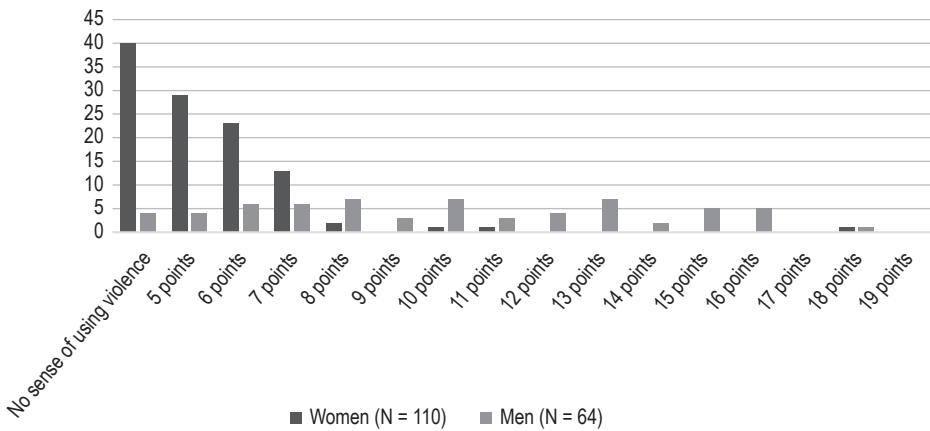


Figure 2. Distribution of the level of the sense of using violence for women and men

People who experienced violence and people who used violence declared the intensity of the feeling of experiencing and using violence. More men than women identified themselves as using violence. Among the respondents, 40 women and 4 men identified themselves as having only experienced violence, whereas 9 women and 26 men identified themselves as only perpetrators of violence. The majority of the respondents (61 women and 34 men) included themselves in both groups: people who had experienced violence and

who had used violence. However, the distribution of results indicated that the majority of the men scored low in terms of experiencing violence. In contrast, women mostly scored higher in the sense of experiencing violence. In the case of the sense of using violence, the proportions were reversed: women rated a lower intensity than men.

Psychometric properties of the tool

Due to the limited sample, the first step was to check the adequacy of the sample. Both the Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2 = 459.11$; $df = 28$; $p < 0.001$) and Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin test ($KMO = 0.809$) indicate the adequacy of analyzing the matrix in terms of the existence of common factors and thus the selected sample.

Subsequently, an analysis of the discriminatory power of the questionnaire items was performed. Table 2 presents the results.

Table 2. Analysis of the discriminatory power of questionnaire items

	After extraction
Item 1 Experiencing emotional violence	0.659
Item 2 Experiencing sexual violence	0.645
Item 3 Experiencing economic violence	0.810
Item 4 Experiencing physical violence	0.837
Item 5 Using emotional violence	0.609
Item 6 Using sexual violence	0.752
Item 7 Using economic violence	0.698
Item 8 Using physical violence	0.636

The discriminatory power of all analyzed items is satisfactory: the correlation of the statements with the overall result ranged from 0.636 for item 8 to 0.837 for item 4. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the entire questionnaire was 0.358. However, the questionnaire does not have a homogeneous structure as it consists of two subscales, which are partially mutually exclusive in the respondents' responses. Respondents with high scores on the scale of experiencing violence had low scores on the scale of using violence and vice versa. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the subscales were 0.74 and 0.82 for the scale of experiencing and using violence, respectively. Therefore, the subscales of this relatively short questionnaire have a very good homogeneity. They explained a total of 62.1% of the variance in the responses.

A principal components analysis with the released number of factors and orthogonal rotation (Varimax) was performed to determine the validity and verify the internal structure of the scale. The Kaiser criterion and the scree test indicated the possibility of distinguishing two factors. Factor loadings above 0.4 were considered a necessary condition for

recognizing a statement as belonging to a given factor, with values lower than 0.4 on each of the other factors. Thus, two factors were distinguished, coinciding with the division into experiencing and using violence resulting from the assumptions of the questionnaire. Table 3 provides the results.

Table 3. **Matrix of rotated components**

Component	1	2
Item 1 Experiencing emotional violence		0.763
Item 2 Experiencing sexual violence		0.765
Item 3 Experiencing economic violence		0.704
Item 4 Experiencing physical violence		0.725
Item 5 Using emotional violence	0.742	
Item 6 Using sexual violence	0.840	
Item 7 Using economic violence	0.813	
Item 8 Using physical violence	0.797	

Method of extracting factors – main components. Rotation method – Varimax with Kaiser normalization.

The rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The first (using violence) and second (experiencing violence) factors included items 5–8 and 1–4, respectively. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov tests indicated that the distribution of scores on both scales differs significantly from the normal distribution.

Conclusion

This research aimed to validate the KPDiSP questionnaire that measures the level of experiencing and using violence in four basic dimensions: emotional, sexual, economic, and physical. The analyses showed that the questionnaire has good reliability. This study has not been expanded to determine the absolute stability coefficient of the tool and has not been compared with other tools to demonstrate its validity. Thus, using the scale with the awareness of its limitations is currently recommended. Research on a larger population will allow for further verification of the tool’s properties. At the current stage of analysis, the results obtained should be treated as supportive, not conclusive.

The questionnaire can be used as a tool not only for assessing the intensity of experiencing and using violence but also for analyzing one’s experiences and partner’s behavior. In the process of psychotherapy or its diagnostic part, short tools can help patients understand and define their experiences and identify their partner’s behavior.

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ANNEX

The Questionnaire for Experiencing and Using Violence in Intimate Relationships (KPDiSP)

(Dyjakon, 2020)

Read and rate each statement on a scale from 1 = “I don’t feel like this is the case” to 5 = “I clearly feel this is the case” as to what extent you feel it is consistent with your subjective experience in your relationship with your partner.

1. In my relationship, I feel like a victim of emotional or psychological abuse from my partner (such as name-calling, insults, verbal assault, humiliation, mockery, lying, and threats to leave, commit suicide, and harm my loved ones).
2. In my relationship, I feel like a victim of sexual violence from my partner (such as forcing me to engage in unwanted sexual activities, forced sex, excessive jealousy, and repeated infidelities).
3. In my relationship, I feel like a victim of economic violence from my partner (such as exerting excessive control over finances and limiting access to common material goods).
4. In my relationship, I feel like a victim of physical violence from my partner (such as pushing, pinching, hair-pulling, squeezing strongly, throwing objects, being deprived of freedom against my will, beating, and slapping).
5. In my relationship, I feel that I am hurting my partner emotionally or mentally (such as name-calling, insults, verbal assault, humiliation, mockery, lying, and threats to leave, commit suicide, and harm my partner’s loved ones).
6. In my relationship, I feel that I am harming my partner sexually (such as forcing him/her to engage in unwanted sexual activities, excessive jealousy, forced sex, and repeated infidelities).
7. In my relationship, I feel that I am causing harm to my partner economically (such as exerting excessive control over finances or limiting access to common material goods).
8. In my relationship, I feel that I am causing harm to my partner physically (such as pushing, pinching, pulling hair, squeezing strongly, throwing objects, restricting her/his freedom against her/his will, hitting, and slapping).

Interpretation

Statements 1–4 are used to measure the sense of experiencing violence.

If a person selects points 2–3 in these statements, then situations corresponding to these feelings should be analyzed.

If a person selects points 4–5 in these statements, then they are experiencing serious problems in their relationship with their partner and should be thoroughly diagnosed as experiencing violence.

Statements 5–8 are used to measure the feeling of using violence.

If a person selects points 2–3 in these statements, then situations that align with these emotions must be analyzed.

If a person selects points 4–5 in these statements, then the relationship with the partner has significant issues, and a thorough assessment of violence should be conducted.

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