

SEBASTIAN KOŁODZIEJCZAK
University of Szczecin

ALBERT TERELAK
University of Szczecin

MAREK BULSA
University of Szczecin

Domestic Violence Against Older Adults in Rural Areas of Western Poland: A Characterization Based on the Accounts of Female Victims

Abstract: This article presents the results of qualitative research aimed at understanding violence against older women in Polish homes. Two research objectives were set: (1) to understand the beliefs of the research participants concerning the sources of domestic violence, and (2) to understand how the participants perceived the various forms of violence occurring within their households.

The characteristic consequences of prolonged exposure to domestic abuse were shown to be marginalization and being unable to lead a safe, fulfilling life as an older adult citizen. These effects were linked to a long process of identity change occurring within socio-cultural templates that have perpetuated dysfunctional relations and domestic abuse in rural families and communities.

Keywords: quality of life, rural areas, marginalization, elder abuse, qualitative analysis, domestic violence

Introduction

Violence against older adults, which is also known as elder abuse or elder mistreatment, is increasingly recognized as a significant social problem. This newfound recognition is reflected in the increased study of the subject by researchers, social workers, and organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations (Brownell 2014; Grunfeld et al. 1996; Krug EG et al. 2002; OHCHR 2010; Podnieks et al. 2010; WHO 2005, 2014).

Although research on domestic violence against the elderly has been conducted relatively often in other countries and these studies have used both quantitative and qualitative methods (Meyer et al. 2019), there have been relatively few such studies in Poland so far.

An important issue that has been increasingly addressed in the research literature is the proportion of women among the victims of elder abuse (Brownell 2014). For example, according to an analysis of data from the Spanish Instituto Nacional de Estadística, in 2012 in Spain, 92.1% of all the people aided by institutions addressing domestic violence

were women (Verdejo & Calvo 2014). A deeper issue is the familial relationship between perpetrators and victims. Results from the 2005 Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women (WHO 2005) showed that physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner is experienced by between 15% and 71% of older women (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006).

In Poland, as elsewhere, the attention devoted to this problem is growing. However, the pace and scope of this new recognition seem insufficient, and the lack of urgency is also reflected in the limited research efforts and social practices addressing the abuse of older adults. From the small amount of research on the subject, it can be seen that (1) there is a lack of sufficient knowledge of both the scale and character of the phenomenon, and (2) the structural factors associated with each country or region, such as culture, political dynamics, and quality of social services, affect the prevalence of elder abuse.

Gaps in Knowledge

Since the mid-1990s, domestic abuse has been a subject of research in Poland (Halicka 2014; Śniegulska 2016). However, such research has focused mainly on the scale of the phenomenon and on identifying the types of victims. Previous studies have aimed to address the characteristics of family abuse (CBOS [Public Opinion Research Center] 2005; Korzeniowski 2009; Korzeniowski & Radkiewicz 2015; SMG/KRC 2011; TNS OBOP 2010) and tended to emphasize victims who were children, and women in intimate partnerships. Subsequent researchers have shifted their attention toward older adults (Mossakowska et al. 2012; Tobiasz-Adamczyk 2010), yet such research remains scarce and presents varied findings on both the scale of the violence and the forms it takes. For example, estimates of the percentage of Polish families affected by violence range anywhere from 5% to over 40% (Tobiasz-Adamczyk 2010; Wiśniewski et al. 2020). Disagreement over the scope and forms of violence directed at older adults is frequently a problem of definition, as researchers to date have usually done a poor job of articulating the full phenomenon of violence, and have only described its *acts*. For instance, an early, broad research project called "PolSenior," led by Małgorzata Mossakowska, characterized the situation of older adults in Poland. However, the authors' depiction of the older adult participants' experiences with domestic violence did not fully present all its forms. Ensuing research found violence to include a broad range of acts: physical violence, psychological violence, neglect, economic violence, and sexual violence. In fact, there are *nine specific acts* that are considered to constitute elder abuse: 1) "insults, epithets, ridicule, disregard"; 2) "intimidation, blackmail"; 3) "restricting freedom, for instance, in terms of moving around the apartment, locking [the victim] in a room"; 4) "limiting access to a doctor, contacts with family, friends, acquaintances"; 5) "throwing [the victim] out of the home (being evicted from the home by family)"; 6) "taking/using [the victim's] personal property without asking and consent"; 7) "forcing sexual behavior, for instance, forcing [the victim] to have intercourse"; 8) "pushing, poking"; and 9) "hitting, kicking, choking, mutilation" (Mossakowska et al. 2012).

Another shortcoming of the Polish research on violence against older adults to date is its lack of focus on abuse that occurs within the family. Furthermore, previous research

projects did not investigate in detail the gender of older victims of domestic abuse (Halicka et al. 2012; Makara-Studzińska & Sosnowska 2012), with the exception of research by Maćkiewicz (2012), which was based on police documents. One recently completed stage of the second PolSenior research project, conducted by the National Health Program, collected data in 2016–2020 (Bandosz & Zagożdżon 2021). The first PolSenior study was conducted in 2012 and described domestic abuse in a collective manner, that is, violence against older adults was only one of several categories reviewed (Mossakowska et al. 2012, pp. 511–530).

In 2013, the Polish Commissioner for Human Rights published a report containing important information on the fact that the national system for preventing family abuse did not consider the specific situations of older women, even though they are a group that is especially prone to suffer such violence. The system completely omitted them while collecting data and generating statistics on other forms of violence (Commissioner for Human Rights 2013, p. 93). There is thus a clear need for further research into domestic abuse that affects older women.

Structural Obstacles

The current lack of knowledge about preventing domestic violence against older women stems from structural and cultural factors. One crucial issue is Poland's traditional patriarchal culture, which is especially visible in rural areas (Hoppe 2020; Michalska 2016, 2020; Rorat et al. 2016). Another is the influence on social life of the rightist-conservative political parties that have ruled Poland since 2015.

This article reports the results of research to fill the gaps in information about domestic violence against elders, and in particular, the sociocultural effects on women who have endured such abuse over a prolonged period of time. The participants in our study had experienced violence from a variety of family members, including their partners, their children and their partners, and their grandchildren, so in this study we have used the terms “domestic abuse,” “domestic violence,” “family abuse,” and “family violence” interchangeably (Rutherford et al. 2007).

The existing literature related to domestic violence discusses the consequences of domestic abuse on the victims' health—both physical and mental—and economic situation (Flury et al. 2010; Makara-Studzińska & Sosnowska 2012; McGarry et al. 2011; Meyer et al. 2019; Michalska 2016). This paper explores the lesser known consequences of violence against older people, examining the influence of prolonged domestic abuse on changes in the victim's position in the family and rural society, along with modifications to the victim's identity. To meet this objective, we used qualitative research methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the issue of domestic violence from the viewpoint of the older women involved.

Our research assumed the theoretical perspective of ethnomethodology and focused on the victims' common (everyday) manner of understanding their situation and visualizing facts of the social world.

This article presents the results of our qualitative research, which had two objectives: (1) to understand the beliefs of the respondents concerning the sources of domestic

violence, and (2) to understand how the respondents perceived the various forms of violence occurring within their households.

Methods

For this study, the authors sought qualitative data that depicted the authentic experiences of the women participating. We analyzed the data along the following three lines:

- 1) the sociocultural genesis of domestic violence (DV) against elderly people—the interpretation of domestic violence is based on the provisions of the Polish Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence of 2005, which defines domestic violence as “(...) a single or repeated intentional act or omission infringing the rights or personal property of persons [...], in particular exposing these persons to the danger of loss of life, health, violating their dignity, physical integrity, freedom, including sexual freedom, causing damage to their physical or mental health, as well as causing suffering and moral harm...” (Act of July 29, 2005 on Counteracting Domestic Violence, art. 2, point 2, 2005);
- 2) how the participants understood diverse manifestations of domestic violence;
- 3) the impact that experiencing harm from loved ones had on the self-image of the participants, including changes to this image.

The status of “older adult victim” of domestic violence is not fixed, being in essence a dynamic phenomenon, that is, it occurs in the social interaction between an elderly family member and the person’s younger relatives, and also with members of the local community in which the elderly person lives. The research concept is therefore situated in the field of symbolic interactionism, examining the factors that play fundamental roles in the cognitive processes shaping our subjects’ understanding of their situation, including its course and the accompanying circumstances (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock 1996). Our subjects actively engaged in the process of socially negotiating their status as an identity entangled in domestic violence. As this study demonstrates, the identity of victims of domestic violence tends to undergo dynamic transformations. The qualitative aspect of this project is based on Znaniecki’s (1927) concept of the humanistic coefficient, which dictates not imposing a conceptual framework on the participants of a study but rather focusing on authentic interpretative constructs of the analyzed phenomena as they have developed within the community.

In line with the above approach, this study focused on analyzing the everyday life activities of our participants, the older women who were interviewed, in an attempt to understand the lived reality of families with these violent patterns. Both the perpetrators and the victims, as well as other family members who witnessed the violence/participated in their lives, were involved in this violence in everyday interactions. Our approach allowed us to adopt Garfinkel’s (2019) theoretical understanding of the everyday knowledge and resources of the family. According to Garfinkel (the founder of ethnomethodology), family interactions such as “occasional expressions, sanctioned vagueness, pretense of agreement, retrospective-prospective sense, [all] serve to elaborate and make sense of the activities—and roles—undertaken and performed by the participants of social interaction” (Garfinkel 2019, p. 36).

Our grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 2006) methodological approach dovetails nicely with both Znaniecki's (1927) and Garfinkel's (2019) theories. Both of these scholars emphasized the need to follow the patterns of people's everyday thinking in order to expand knowledge in the social sciences. The development of a grounded theory should mirror as closely as possible the process of forming social reality; in a sense, it should even imitate this process.

The authors made every attempt to minimize as much as possible our preconceptualization of the research topic. This approach has the significant advantage of intentionally avoiding consideration of the existing theories about the issue, as it is based on the assumption that the researcher should treat the studied reality as a sort of "terra incognita." This enables the researcher to experience an unrestricted, creative perspective on the studied processes and phenomena. The ultimate goal is to allow the cognitive process to be realized in the "context of discovery" (Reichenbach 1938: 382–383).

During the first stage of our research, we used the auditorium questionnaire technique on a sample of 121 women in the post-working age group (60+ years of age) living in the research location (a sample representing 14% of the region's total female population in this age group—N = 864). We invited the older women to meetings in rural community centers, including local seats of the Senior Club, which was active in 14 locations within the area.

In the course of those meetings, we asked the participants for their permission to include them in the research, presented its scope, and discussed the questions used in the research tool in detail. Next, the women who agreed to take part in the project completed the questionnaire with the help of the interviewers. This initial questionnaire asked generally about the participants' experience of domestic violence against older women. It focused on the *scale* of the violence experienced, as manifested in five forms: psychological violence, physical violence, neglect, economic violence, and sexual violence.

Our next set of meetings with the participants was devoted to qualitative data collection. We obtained the permission of 48 women (termed "participants") to conduct interviews, and we conducted focus-group interviews on what they believed domestic violence is, how it is manifested, and what triggers it. We conducted a total of five focus-group interviews, each time with women from a different village. Eight women gave additional permission for second, more in-depth interviews to discuss their individual experiences related to domestic violence. Interviews with individual persons allowed for a deeper understanding of the information obtained from the focus-group interviews. Furthermore, in accordance with the grounded theory procedure, the in-depth interviews made it possible to saturate the analytical categories with the theoretical concepts revealed during group conversations.

The sociodemographic characteristics of all the 121 research participants are presented in Table 1, below. Forty-eight (48) of these women participated in our qualitative data collection, sharing their original experiences and knowledge about domestic violence. They were participating in the research process as partners, on whom the knowledge acquired by the researchers, and consequently the results of the study, depended. This constitutive feature of ethnomethodology entitles "subjects" to be regarded as co-participants—as equals of the researcher. Adopting this approach assists researchers in developing questions that avoid suggestive wording or "leading questions" and allows data collection to stem principally from the actual experiences of the participants (that is, direct descriptions, in their own words). It was therefore essential to develop a research environment in which the

participants would willingly help the researchers understand what was at the core of their experiences, thoughts, and beliefs. The participants were encouraged to speak openly and with enough authenticity to allow the researchers to understand their stories, while at the same time, the researchers brought an informed perspective to those experiences, beyond the subjectivity of the participants' personal perspectives.

Table 1

Sociodemographic characteristics of the older women participating in this research

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
60 to 69	73	60.3
70 to 79	37	30.6
above 79	11	9.1
Education		
Primary	40	33.1
Vocational	40	33.1
Secondary	35	28.9
Post-secondary	4	3.3
No data	2	1.7
Marital status		
Married	64	52.9
In a partnership	3	2.5
Divorced	4	3.3
Separated	1	0.8
Widowed	42	34.7
Divorced and remarried	1	0.8
Divorced, remarried and currently widowed	1	0.8
No data	5	4.1
Children		
None	2	1.7
Has children	114	94.2
No data	5	4.1
Total	121 =	100.0%

Source: the authors.

Results

The qualitative analysis consisted of three forms of coding of the empirical material: (1) open coding, (2) selective coding of the most important categories emerging from the open coding, which were then subjected to theoretical elaboration through (3) axial coding using the so-called coding paradigm, which is characteristic of grounded theory (Charmaz

2006; Glaser & Strauss 2006; Konecki 2000). This approach helped us to organize the categories and properties emerging from the empirical material. In the present study, we assumed that the coding paradigm would be used to identify particular categories within the central category: domestic violence against older women. These categories are determined by individual elements of the coding paradigm (the causal conditions for the occurrence of the phenomenon; the phenomenon itself; the context, that is, the temporal conditions, the place of occurrence of the phenomenon described by the given category; the intervening conditions, that is, what weakens or intensifies the occurrence of the phenomenon; the actions or strategies and techniques used in social interactions; and the consequences of the actions and interactions relating to the phenomenon), with a modification treating the context as part of the conditions that create the immediate circumstances in which domestic violence against older adults occurs.

The emergent categories listed below were subjected to selective coding. Codes were developed during our preliminary analysis of the empirical interview material from the older women as they discussed the sources, causes, or determinants of domestic violence (research problem 1), as well as the manifestations of violent phenomena in their lives (research problem 2).

Sources, causes, and determinants of domestic violence against older women:

1. a social order that promotes the exclusion of older adults;
2. dysfunctional patterns of family life;
3. downgrading of the status of older adults;
4. opportunistic attitudes adopted by the younger generations;
5. the catalyzing occurrence of violence: property succession and addictions in the family.

Manifestations of domestic violence against older women:

1. failure to provide necessary care;
2. exploitation of older adults;
3. harm to the sense of dignity of older adults; and
4. marginalization of older adults.

Because each of the above categories involves a range of diverse behaviors, we organized them based on clustering and typology and were thus able to identify the characteristics of each category (Hallberg 2006; Vollstedt & Rezat 2019). Phrases the participants used in the qualitative interviews were grouped by the similarity of content they expressed. These particular “source records” were given synthetic terms, thus creating their unique names and revealing the “properties” of each category of violence against older adults.

Sources and Causal Factors of Violence Against Older Adults

A social order that promotes the exclusion of older adults

The first category refers to the sources of domestic violence against older women. It has all the hallmarks of a structural property of the larger social system, as it consists of features of the social order that foster the exclusion of older adults. Based on numerous statements,

an image emerges of a kind of consent to the deterioration of the social situation of people entering later life: “Well, sir,” said one participant, “that’s the fate of old people. It has always been like that in the village.” Another added that “Everyone knows—no one is interested in old women. An ordinary social desensitization, lack of interest.” Violence on the part of relatives appears to be somehow inscribed in this situation. In some cases, due to its prevalence, it is treated as something natural. “Well, that’s how it is,” concluded a participant, adding, “There are no homes where bad things don’t happen, but no one will admit it.”

The reduced ability of older adults to resist mistreatment from family members is a result of several factors, as listed above. First is the belief that there is no possibility of avoiding the “fate of old people,” which is fueled by fatalistic thinking about the position of the individual in the social world. Younger family members describe the situation of their older relatives in ways that increasingly deny their agency. “It comes from the helplessness of the elderly people. They simply cannot deal with these kinds of things,” said one participant. Another added, “After all, we are talking about old people. It is about the helplessness of the elderly against the aggressor.” The younger family members’ beliefs stem from the limitations of older age, as well as from young people reproducing family patterns of violence, which were initiated earlier by the present-day older adults.

Furthermore, the limitations of the systems for counteracting domestic violence result in a culture that reproduces that violence. According to one study participant, “Everything seems to be in order, but you can’t prove some things.” “How can one prove,” they continued, “that someone frightens you, for example, [or] that you are afraid of him? [There is a] lack of legal regulations.” Social workers are placed in conflicting positions of trust within the family. As another participant said, “Those who hurt [others] often have this sense of impunity. Because they are practically safe. Where I live, I haven’t heard that there was a case of wife-beating in our village.”

Given the limitations of the domestic violence prevention systems, the abusers’ feelings of impunity are less surprising, and this connection was repeatedly stressed by our older adult participants. Add to these factors the dysfunctional nature of transferred family templates, and the outlines of a culture perpetuating violence can be seen.

Dysfunctional patterns of family life

Long-standing dysfunctional patterns reveal three levels of familial violence against older adults. First, there is a deficit of emotional ties, the specificity of which—paradoxically—includes a kind of “emotional disruption” of relations between family members. The older women in our study emphasized both the disappearance of positive emotions in the family and the eruption of bad ones. “Going to church is not enough,” according to one participant, “There is often a lack of love and respect in the family, and this is what violence comes from, and beating and mistreatment.” Another went further, saying that “If everyone hates each other like this, then it all happens because of hate. Persistent hatred.”

A second frequently seen dysfunctional pattern revolves around retaliation for the past, generated by past situations and the ways some family members had of treating others. One study participant stated that the

“Unequal treatment of children is not good. If you treat children unequally, favor one of them, then there are such unpleasant situations.” A second agreed, adding that when there was a “use of violence out of revenge and jealousy, it is always there where children were hurt when they were little. When they didn’t get everything evenly.”

The third dysfunctional pattern centers on generational differences resulting from the “ailments” of old age. Unfortunately, some participants viewed this as a “fact of nature,” as demonstrated by the following metaphor: “Generational warfare. Young wolves have always fought older wolves, but there it went too far, to the point of violence.”

Downgrading of the status of older adults

The next category in the coding paradigm is situated within the causal conditions of the phenomenon. The category condenses the specific situational context of the violent incidents—their status degradation in the family. If the older person does not succumb to the overwhelming influence of structural factors determining their unprivileged position in the larger society, as well as the depreciating factors of intra-family relations, their position in the family will not degrade, and the risk of experiencing violence will be reduced. Thus, the downgraded status of the older person seems to be a necessary condition for the development of violence within the family. For example, if the older person does not legally guarantee themselves decent living conditions, and at the same time passes the deed of ownership of an apartment, house, or farm to the younger generation, they open the way for the degradation of their position in the family.

Opportunistic attitudes adopted by the young generation

Part of the intergenerational violence against older adults appears to be related to an instrumental attitude adopted by the young. The older women in our study describe an almost deviant drive for financial gain among some of their younger family members. The study participants were convinced that the instrumental attitudes of youth were dictated, above all, by their desire to minimize effort. One said that “That easy-going attitude of the young is shocking. You get the impression that half of them don’t understand that everything comes from work. No pain, no gain. I was a teacher for so many years, so I’ve seen enough of it.” Another said she wished her younger family member “would do some honest work at least once.” “Work,” she continued, “unwillingness to take it up all the time and nothing else.”

According to the statements we collected, this attitude constitutes a sufficient justification for exploiting the “weaker” position of older adults in the family, often making the pension (or other benefits received by the older adult citizen) the only source of family income. Moreover, the attitude of the young provides a justification for the use of various kinds of coercion to convince the older adults to transfer the title to their apartment, farm, or other such property.

“After all, I can see that everything he does is out of the desire to extort money. I’ve known him since he was a child. He can’t hide anything from me.”

Catalyzing the occurrence of violence: property succession and addictions in the family

Our coding paradigm assumes that specific, intervening, and contextual conditions either increase or decrease the occurrence of domestic violence against older women. This category emerged from the older women's statements about two catalyzing phenomena leading to domestic violence: property succession and addictions in the younger generation. "As long as you don't sign over [your property] to the kids, there's peace of mind," recounted one participant. "They care for and love, they look after their parents. Troubles begin when the property is transferred to them."

When the older person's weakened position in the family co-occurs with declining family relations and opportunistic younger family members, older adults may even engage in status self-degradation. At that point, violence against older adults was seen by the participants in our interviews as certain. This is especially true if substance abuse emerges in the younger generation.

"The children's abuse of alcohol and beating their parent—you hear so much about it," said one participant. "On television or in conversations, it usually looks like that. I never thought such things would happen to me." The compounding financial problems frequently accompanying drug and alcohol dependency predictably worsen situations. "It's always the same with my son—lack of money because of substance abuse and taking money from his parents." The same goes for property succession: if older adults do not legally guarantee themselves decent living conditions, and at the same time pass the deed of ownership of their apartment, house, or farm to the younger generation, they open the way for even further degradation of their position in the family.

"As long as we owned our property, everything was fine. But we wanted to have the inheritance matters done and now we have what we wanted... After the house is signed over to the children, the parents move to the basement."

Manifestations of Violence Against Older Women

The five categories discussed above refer to the participants' *beliefs, knowledge, and experiences* of violent phenomena in their lives. The following four categories emerged from the properties selected according to the coding paradigm and illustrate the *actions, strategies, and techniques* used in social interactions, revealing the specific manifestations of violence in these women's lives.

Failure to provide necessary care

The first highlighted manifestation emerges as an effect—and simultaneously as an element—of family dysfunction. Older adults are confronted with neglect, or with the failure of family members to fulfill the fundamental duties traditionally assigned to their family role, in which some family members take care of others and provide their needs (Zwoliński 2015). In discussing the prevailing attitudes of her community, one participant said that

"Failure to provide assistance to a sick person should be treated as a crime. My neighbor was seriously ill and they [the family] didn't even call a doctor for her."

The behaviors that constitute the characteristics of the category in question seem, to a large extent, to correspond to the form of domestic violence defined as neglect. Therefore, the behaviors are generally a failure to take certain actions, rather than active violence. “When he gets angry with her, he just won’t give her food. He rations it for her. This is, after all, starvation,” said one participant about another older woman in her community. Such situations both create and perpetuate inequalities between family members and thus provide fertile ground for further violence. They also contribute to younger family members’ general depreciation of the elderly, and even to the self-degradation of older adults:

“If I had a bigger pension, it would be easier. But it’s the lack of funds for medical treatment, and the children will not [pay for it], I guess.”

Exploitation of older adults

A more active manifestation of domestic violence is the exploitation of the vulnerability and unprivileged positions of older women by other “stronger” family members—acts we identified with the analytical category of *exploitation* of older adults.

“My neighbor—when his father transferred the house to him—did a renovation and now [that man who is] a grandfather has to climb a ladder to get to his room, because he lives in the attic now.” Another participant shared similarly devastating stories. “Locking [a person] in different rooms. ‘Let grandma sit there, because we have guests now.’”

The natural decline in vitality and social activity within and outside the family are both connected with generational changes in familial roles, and also with an ostentatious push for property succession or the realization of succession through domination. The dominance is expressed as the appropriation of domestic space and the exploitation of the increasing dependence of older family members—to the point of poverty-inducing deprivation of financial resources.

“The worst part is that it is like forcing [me] to sign over [my] property (apartment). It’s not about constantly talking about it and reminding me of it, but the fact that my children probably care only about it.” Another participant added that “They keep extorting money for an apartment. Even the mediator ordered [the elderly person] to pay rent, when there was no need to do so, because the apartment had been assigned to the daughter with lifetime-use rights by the older person.”

By its very nature, such exploitative behavior is clearly intentional, meaning it is defined as a violent attitude toward older adults in the family.

Harm to the sense of dignity of older adults

Further manifestations of violent behavior degrade an older woman’s sense of identity and well-being. One example included a participant who said of her son that “He had the nerve to tell me ‘you’ve lived too long.’ Do you understand? [My] own son!” Another older woman agreed, saying, “These are not ordinary words, after all, this is not how you speak to your mother. This is an insult, intended to humiliate.”

Marginalization of older adults

The characteristics of the above categories illustrate an ensemble of behaviors that each have a highly individualized impact on the self-esteem of older adults. Each is also a symptom of the degradation of the older adult's sense of self. The marginalization of older adults pushes them away from social environments and mainstream family life, reduces their importance and position, and leaves them to themselves.

"I don't even remember when my son last asked me what I wanted," remarked one of our participants. "They are making their plans, but they don't really ask me. Being pushed away from joint decisions like that—I feel bad about it. There were times when my husband and I made decisions, and today they don't even want to listen. It's just as if I wasn't in this family anymore." Another participant agreed, stating that "Old age is not pretty, so it's best to isolate it. Perhaps it would be best not to leave my room at all."

A comprehensive summary of our qualitative analysis is presented in Fig. 1, which, based on our coding paradigm, organizes the individual analytical categories into a system of relations between violence, its manifestations, and its consequences. While the causal conditions, situational contexts, intervening conditions, actions, strategies, and techniques used in social interactions have already been characterized, one of the consequences of violence—marginalization—calls for a more detailed presentation. This phenomenon, as our participants' statements indicate, is one of the most complex and painful consequences of family violence.

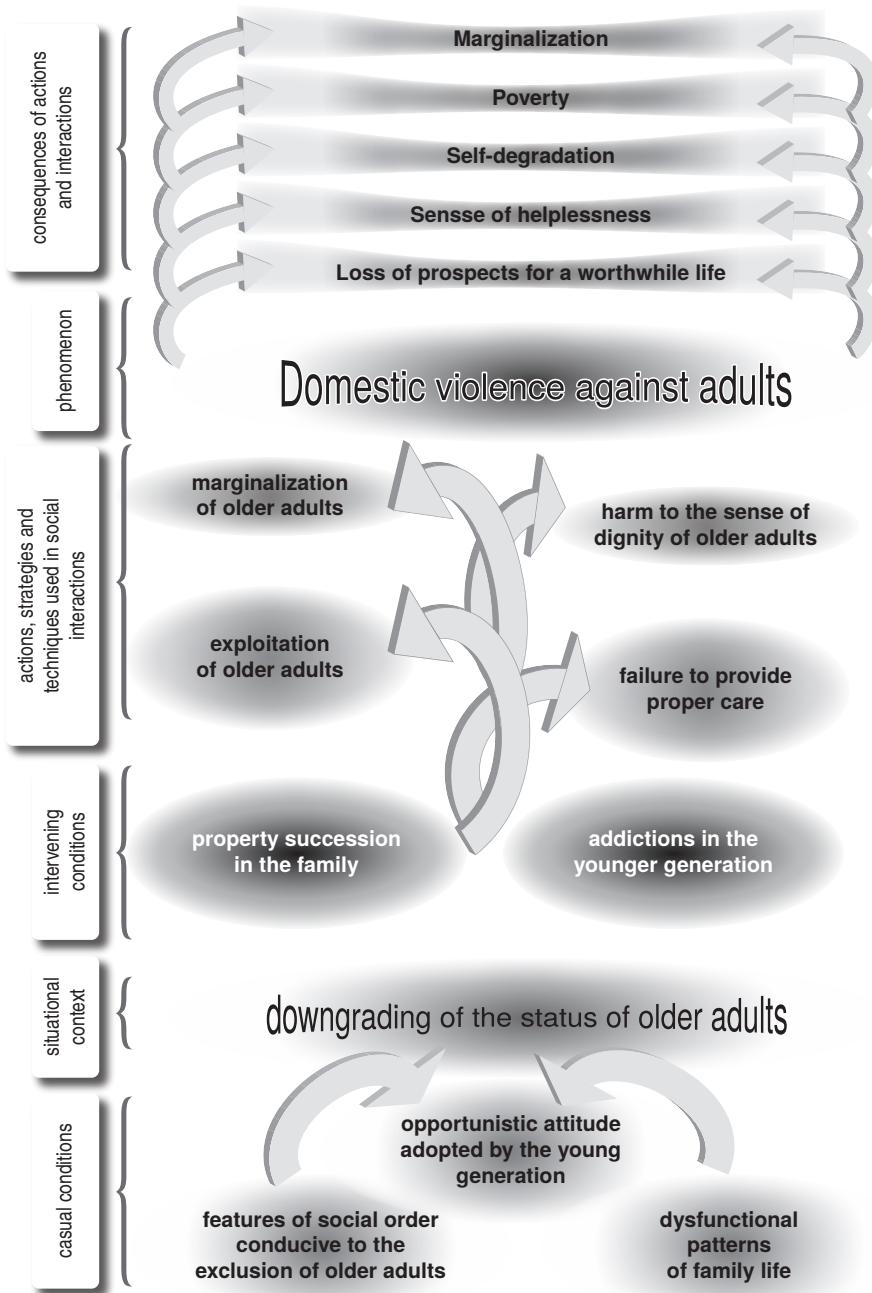
Marginalization means that the older adult loses their prior importance in the family. As a result, older adults experience unpleasant feelings of being unnecessary, with devalued life experiences, achievements, and personal dignity. Older adults may be excluded from the process of making important decisions, as well as from participation in some—and, in many cases, all—family leisure activities and family events, such as holiday celebrations (Galor et al. 2014).

Marginalization usually begins with a shift in an individual's previously stable position in life. This shift affects their prior functioning in social reality and they gain a new role in this reality that is significantly different from, or almost completely incompatible with, their previous role (Terelak & Kołodziejczak 2014). In the case of older women, these shifts may begin when they sign a deed of property over to the younger generation, or when younger family members experience a deterioration of health, or addiction problems. In the lives of some of our participants, events took place within the context of particular family circumstances or in the broader social environment. Frequently mentioned was a common conviction about the "difficult fate" of older adults, and issues that included family-life patterns saturated with negative emotions, the significant focus of younger generations on maximizing financial benefits, and, as a peculiar culmination of the aforementioned elements—but also constituting another causative factor—the progressing degradation of the older woman's status within the family.

Our participants were living within a developing matrix of the above factors; their family members were increasingly engaging in specific acts and interaction strategies bearing all the hallmarks of violence. The narratives of these older adults revealed a sense of limited possibilities, a perceived loss of status, and a growing sense of helplessness about

Fig. 1

Domestic violence against older adults—arrangement of factors of the phenomenon



Source: the authors.

the irreversibility of the changes taking place. The consolidation of their situations (as well as forces in the broader, sociocultural environment) had created patterns of family behavior that led to these women's increased withdrawal and loss of hope. Our study participants expressed a bankruptcy of self-confidence, a loss of faith that their "bad luck" would change, and an ensuing identity crisis. Their marginalization was, in a way, "sealed" by the absence of appropriate reactions to their loss of status within their social environment; they had lost the prospect of a fulfilling life, and a sense of helplessness and self-degradation had set in. Finally, the process was exacerbated by falling into poverty, which limits the possibility of independent action and may even threaten one's existence.

Discussion

The majority of world research on domestic violence against older women has concentrated on victims' perceptions of their abuse and on their interpretations of their violent domestic situations (Ludvigsson et al. 2022; Meyer et al. 2019). Our qualitative research expands the scope and depth of prior studies by describing and explaining domestic violence in the context of its specificity as a result of interactions between the abuser and the victim, and in the consequences felt by the abused women, in their own language.

The analytical categories of domestic abuse experienced by our participants take the form of a multilayered set. These categories include: (1) interactions that shape specific acts of violence; (2) inter-generational and family-specific templates of how family members interact with each other, which includes the existing sets of socio-cultural templates that organize the life of the local community (local institutions, neighbor-to-neighbor relations, social organizations, support groups, etc.); and finally (3) in the broadest sense, features of the social system in which societies function (legal norms, social policy, the social control system, existing templates for social gender-role distribution, the position of older adults in the social order).

The third category (features of the social order conducive to the exclusion of older people) deserves special attention, as it signals the syndrome of a culture perpetuating violence, and evokes in our minds the key structural basis for the cultural and social conditions that allow for violence. The source literature describes the existence of social norms that encourage the hiding of abuse, for instance, accepting the role of victim for the good of the family (Band-Winterstein 2012, 2015; Band-Winterstein et al. 2014; Band-Winterstein & Eisikovits 2009; Bhatia & Soletti 2019; Buchbinder & Band-Winterstein 2003; Grunfeld et al. 1996; Nahmiash 2002; Zink et al. 2003). Studies on domestic abuse often note that the patriarchal cultural setting in which older people were raised affects both their way of understanding domestic abuse and their ability to handle it (Dimah & Dimah 2004). Researchers have pointed out that this is especially important in the case of older women, who often give priority to family stability and thus hide the abuse committed by close family members (Band-Winterstein 2015; Brabeck & Guzmán 2009). This situation is more typical in rural areas, where families frequently function according to traditional models, and women put the supposed good of the family over their own well-being (Buchbinder & Band-Winterstein 2003; Hoppe 2020; Phillips 2000). Often, they

underwent socialization as young girls that taught them to perform their duties in a manner that strengthens male dominance (Band-Winterstein 2015; Roberto & McCann 2021). Of note in this context is the fact that Poland occupies 24th place in the European Union (EU) when it comes to gender equality. The score for Poland was 55.2 points out of a total of 100 points, which is lower than the EU average by 12.2 points (Gender Equality Index 2019 n.d.).

Another feature of the social order conducive to the exclusion of older people is Poland's current political landscape. The conservative Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) and two small satellite parties have ruled Poland since 2015 (Gajewski 2019; Jaskiernia 2017; Wojtasik 2020). Changes made by this government in "state and family" relations are especially significant on the society-wide scale, as domestic violence and violence against women have lost their priority in social policies. The case of Zakopane is particularly meaningful as it is the only borough in Poland where a conservative local government refused to take systematic actions to prevent domestic violence (Statement No. 4/2020 of the Zakopane City Council of October 22, 2020 on the need to examine the constitutionality of the Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence, 2020). Since 2010, Polish law requires each borough to set up a so-called interdisciplinary team for the prevention of domestic violence. Zakopane's disregard of the law is explained by its faithfulness to tradition, with particular stress on the Catholic religion. An unprecedented paradox was created when the national government officially praised the Zakopane authorities for their "uncompromised protection of Polish national values."

Our grounded theory coding paradigm (Charmaz 2006) enabled us to analyze relationships between the categories presented above, generating conclusions in line with the approach known as the Socio-Ecological Framework for Elder Abuse (Teaster 2017; Teaster et al. 2006). In terms of causal conditions and contexts, our analyses revealed four relevant categories and patterns of abuse: *not providing sufficient care*; *exploiting older adults*; *undermining the dignity of older adults*; and *marginalizing older adults*. The characteristics of these categories—which emerged from the actual language in research participants' narratives—underscore the significance of the neglect, both passive and active, these older women experienced from their families. Our study's conclusion serves as another voice in the ongoing Polish national discussion about the essence of this form of domestic violence against older women (Brownell 2014). Because of the qualitative nature of the research and the small size of the sample, we did not consider the effect of education on the women's manner of understanding violence.

In accord with a large body of existing scholarship on domestic violence, the women in our study often associated violence with lowered psychophysical well-being (Band-Winterstein & Eisikovits 2010; Eisikovits & Band-Winterstein 2015; McGarry et al. 2010, 2011, 2017). Their stories also showed that an important consequence of the violence they experienced was a feeling of helplessness about their situation and that this attitude facilitated the continuation of that very violence. This pattern has been described by other researchers as well (Band-Winterstein 2015; Grunfeld et al. 1996; Meyer et al. 2019). Such a feeling is important, because it lowers a woman's ability to take defensive action (Walker 2012, 2016). As an element of the broad characteristics of domestic violence, these feelings of helplessness are part of the mechanism that pushes older adults into the margins of their

social and family lives and that result in permanent marginalization (Ferreira & Lindgren 2008; Gürsoy & Kara 2020). Worse, the reduced status of older women is sanctioned both by the existing cultural templates that degrade the position of older adults and by the limited capacity of the system to prevent such domestic violence (Bhatia & Soletti 2019; Terelak et al. 2010; Yan 2015).

Our interviews with older women revealed a characteristic conviction that the loss of their former position in the family and society was inevitable—that is, it was the natural “circle of life”—and this convinced them to accept their “bad fate” and live with the violence (Buchbinder & Band-Winterstein 2003). Moreover, beliefs about the intergenerational perpetuation of violence in the family were especially resonant (Pollak 2004). During the interviews, it was often stressed that this violence is reproduced (as a kind of outline of domestic life) in the next generation, and is transferred from the children (former victims) onto their older parents. In the context of structural conditions, the rich sphere of possible relations between the abused older women and support institutions is underutilized. If such institutions are less accessible in rural areas (Dimah & Dimah 2004) or their responses to violence are insufficient (and with the embarrassment and lower self-esteem of the victims taken into account), acts of violence may not be sufficiently identified (Lazenbatt & Devaney 2014; McCleary-Sills et al. 2016; Roberto et al. 2013). Existing social orders apparently place a low priority on preventing domestic violence against older women.

Conclusions and Limitations

We found that the situation of older women experiencing domestic abuse is influenced by degradation in status and marginalization, and this conclusion is novel in research on domestic violence against the elderly. Without the first factor, acts of violence are less likely to take place, and the second is a direct consequence of the first. In other words, an older woman who has not lost her position in the family is unlikely to experience exploitation, the undermining of her dignity, or insufficient care, etc., from her loved ones. Conversely, women who are exposed to prolonged periods of such neglect and violence from their loved ones are pushed into the margins of the family, and often of social life.

Although the roles and statuses of older adults within the family are consolidated in interactions, this process occurs in the context of a specific socio-cultural environment. Qualitative research allows us insights into that environment, and the results show that, next to psychological abuse, simple neglect plays a significant role and meaning in these women’s stories. Neglect is a category of abuse insufficiently addressed in Polish research endeavors to date. Furthermore, more research using this study’s grounded methodological approach is needed to allow these older women to speak. In Poland’s current conditions, researchers have seemingly overlooked their voices.

For a more complete diagnosis of the phenomenon of domestic violence against the elderly, a quantitative study should be conducted to determine the scale of the phenomena described in the model presented in this article. Similar research among older women living in cities is another important requirement. An interesting development of the

research concept would involve its enrichment with an interdisciplinary dimension, through cooperation with psychologists and anthropologists.

References

- Act of 29 July 2005 r. On counteracting domestic violence, Art. 2, point 2. (2005, July). *Journal of Laws* No 180, item 1493.
- Bandosz, P., & Zagórzon, P. 2021. Health status and its socio-economic covariates in the older population in Poland—The PolSenior 2 study, *WebSite of Medical University of Gdańsk*. <https://polsenior2.mug.edu.pl/>
- Band-Winterstein, T. 2012. Narratives of aging in intimate partner violence: The double lens of violence and old age, *Journal of Aging Studies* 26(4): 504–514. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2012.07.003>
- Band-Winterstein, T. 2015. Aging in the Shadow of Violence: A Phenomenological Conceptual Framework for Understanding Elderly Women Who Experienced Lifelong IPV, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 27(4–5): 303–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2015.1091422>
- Band-Winterstein, T., & Eisikovits, Z. 2010. Towards Phenomenological Theorizing About Old Women Abuse, *Ageing International* 35(3): 202–214. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12126-010-9067-y>
- Band-Winterstein, T., Smeloy, Y., & Avieli, H. 2014. Shared reality of the abusive and the vulnerable: The experience of aging for parents living with abusive adult children coping with mental disorder, *International Psychogeriatrics* 26(11): 1917–1927. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610214001495>
- Bhatia, P., & Soletti, A. B. 2019. Hushed Voices: Views and Experiences of Older Women on Partner Abuse in Later Life, *Ageing International* 44(1): 41–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12126-018-9331-0>
- Brabeck, K. M., & Guzmán, M. R. 2009. Exploring Mexican-Origin Intimate Partner Abuse Survivors' Help-Seeking Within Their Sociocultural Contexts, *Violence and Victims* 24(6): 817–832. <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.24.6.817>
- Brownell, P. 2014. Neglect, abuse and violence against older women: Definitions and research frameworks, *South Eastern European Journal of Public Health* 1. <https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/SEEJPH-2014-28>
- Buchbinder, E., & Band-Winterstein, T. 2003. “Like a Wounded Bird”: Older Battered Women's Life Experiences with Intimate Violence, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 15(2): 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1300/J084v15n02_02
- CBOS. 2005. Violence and conflicts at home. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2005/K_027_05.PDF
- Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Commissioner for Human Rights. 2013. Counteracting violence against women, including elderly women and women with disabilities. Analyses and recommendations, *Bulletin CjHR* no 7. https://www.rpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Biuletyn_Rzeczniczka_Praw_Obywatelskich_2013_Nr_7.pdf
- Dimah, K. P., & Dimah, A. 2004. Elder abuse and neglect among rural and urban women, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 15(1): 75–93. https://doi.org/10.1300/J084v15n01_06
- Eisikovits, Z., & Band-Winterstein, T. 2015. Dimensions of suffering among old and young battered women, *Journal of Family Violence* 30(1): 49–62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-014-9655-9>
- Ferreira, M., & Lindgren, P. 2008. Elder abuse and neglect in South Africa: A case of marginalization, disrespect, exploitation and violence, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 20(2): 91–107. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946560801974497>
- Flury, M., Nyberg, E., & Riecher-Rössler, A. 2010. Domestic violence against women: Definitions, epidemiology, risk factors and consequences, *Swiss Medical Weekly* 140, w13099. <https://doi.org/10.4414/sm.w.2010.13099>
- Gajewski, S. 2019. The Results of 2019 Parliamentary Elections in the Perspective of 2018 Local Government Elections, *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 48(4): 632–641. <https://doi.org/10.15804/pps2019408>
- Galor, Z., Goryńska-Bittner, B., & Kalinowski, S. (eds.). 2014. *Life on the Edge—Social Margins of a Big City*. Bielefeld: Societas Pars Mundi. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267182909_Zycie_na_skraju_-_marginesy_spoleczne_wielkiego_miasta
- García-Moreno, C., Jansen, H. A., Ellsberg, M., Heise, L., & Watts, C. H. 2006. Prevalence of intimate partner violence: Findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence, *The Lancet* 368(9543): 1260–1269. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(06\)69523-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69523-8)
- Garfinkel, H. 2019. Common Sense Knowledge of Social Structures (1959). A Paper distributed at the Session on the Sociology of Knowledge, *Fourth World Congress of Sociology, Stresa, Italy, Septem-*

- ber 12, 1959 (Vol. 11) [workingPaper]. Universität Siegen: SFB 1187 Medien der Kooperation. <https://doi.org/10.25819/ubsi/685>
- Gender Equality Index 2019: Poland. (n.d.). European Institute for Gender Equality. Retrieved 9 June 2021, from <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2019-poland>
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. 2006. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction A Division of Transaction Publishers. http://www.sxf.uevora.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Glaser_1967.pdf
- Grunfeld, A. F., Larsson, D. M., Mackay, K., & Hotch, D. 1996. Domestic violence against elderly women, *Canadian Family Physician* 42: 1485–1493.
- Gürsoy, M. Y., & Kara, F. 2020. Prevalence of violence against older adults and associated factors in Çanakkale, Turkey: A cross-sectional study. *Geriatrics & Gerontology International* 20(1): 66–71. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ggi.13819>
- Halicka, M. 2014. Old people as victims of violence, in: P. Szukalski, B. Szatur-Jaworska (eds.), *Active Aging Preventing barriers*. Łódź: University of Łódź, pp. 91–110.
- Halicka, M., Halicki, J., & Ślusarczyk, P. 2012. Violence against older people, in: *Medical, Psychological, Sociological and Economical Aspects of Aging in Poland*. Poznań: Termedia Wydawnictwo Medyczne. <http://gerontologia.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/pliki/ol/polsenior.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,-171,683>
- Hallberg, L. R.-M. 2006. The “core category” of grounded theory: Making constant comparisons, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being* 1(3): 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620600858399>
- Hoppe, S. J. 2020. Traditional values and domestic violence: An examination of older women’s attitudes and the ability to care for oneself, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 32(5): 471–488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2020.1830216>
- Jaskiernia, J. 2017. The Development of the Polish Party System: A Perspective of the Parliamentary Elections Results, *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 2(46). <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppsy2017214>
- Konecki, K. 2000. *Studies in the Methodology of Qualitative Research. Grounded Theory*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Korzeniowski, K. 2009. Domestic violence against the elderly and the disabled. Part II—Professionals Survey Report, Polish Academy of Sciences.
- Korzeniowski, K., & Radkiewicz, P. 2015. Domestic violence against the elderly and the disabled. Report from the national survey 2015 and comparative research from 2009–2015. Polish Academy of Sciences.
- Krug, E. G. et al. 2002. World report on violence and health. Geneva: World Health Organization, *Le Journal Médical Libanais. The Lebanese Medical Journal* 51(2): 59–63. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ip.9.1.93>
- Lazenbatt, A., & Devaney, J. 2014. Older Women Living with Domestic Violence: Coping Resources and Mental Health and Wellbeing, *Journal of Clinical Nursing* 1: 10–22.
- Ludvigsson, M., Wiklund, N., Swahnberg, K., & Simmons, J. 2022. Experiences of elder abuse: A qualitative study among victims in Sweden, *BMC Geriatrics* 22(1): 256. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12877-022-02933-8>
- Maćkiewicz, J. 2012. *Elder abuse in the family—Polish research*. 488–494. https://www.academia.edu/11575931/Elder_abuse_in_the_family_Polish_research_pp_488_494
- Makara-Studzińska, M., & Sosnowska, K. 2012. Violence against old people—a review of the literature, *Psychiatria i Psychologia Kliniczna* 12(1): 57–61.
- McCleary-Sills, J., Namy, S., Nyoni, J., Rweyemamu, D., Salvatory, A., & Steven, E. 2016. Stigma, shame and women’s limited agency in help-seeking for intimate partner violence, *Global Public Health* 11(1–2): 224–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2015.1047391>
- McGarry, J., Ali, P., & Hinchliff, S. 2017. Older women, intimate partner violence and mental health: A consideration of the particular issues for health and healthcare practice (Vol. 26). <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.13490>
- McGarry, J., Simpson, C., & Hinchliff-Smith, K. 2011. The impact of domestic abuse for older women: A review of the literature, *Health & Social Care in the Community* 19(1): 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2524.2010.00964.x>
- McGarry, J., Simpson, C., & Mansour, M. 2010. How domestic abuse affects the wellbeing of older women, *Nursing Older People* 22(5): 33–37. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nop2010.06.22.5.33.c7795>
- Meyer, S. R., Lasater, M. E., & Garcia-Moreno, C. 2019. Violence against older women: A protocol for a systematic review of qualitative literature, *BMJ Open* 9(5): e028809. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-028809>
- Michalska, S. 2016. Domestic violence against women in rural communities in Poland, *Wieś i Rolnictwo* 4(173). <https://doi.org/10.53098/wir042016/08>

- Michalska, S. 2020. *Social Structure and Changes in Social Roles of Rural Women* (1st ed.). Warszawa: Scholar. <https://integro.bs.katowice.pl/33205945612/michalska-sylwia/struktura-spoeczna-a-zmiany-rol-spoecznych-kobiet-wiejskich?bibFilter=3>
- Mossakowska, M., Więcek, A., & Błądowski, P. 2012. *Medical, Psychological, Sociological and Economic Aspects of Aging in Poland*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Medyczne Termedia. <http://gerontologia.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/pliki/ol/polsenior.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,-171,683>
- Nahmiash, D. 2002. Powerlessness and Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 14(1): 21–47. https://doi.org/10.1300/J084v14n01_02
- OHCHR. 2010. Human Rights of Older Persons: Summary of the Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (Report A/66/173). United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).
- Phillips, L. R. 2000. Domestic violence and aging women, *Geriatric Nursing* 21(4): 188–194. <https://doi.org/10.1067/mgn.2000.109584>
- Podnieks, E., Anetzberger, G., Wilson, S., Teaster, P., & Wangmo, T. (2010). WorldView Environmental Scan on Elder Abuse, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 22: 164–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946560903445974>
- Pollak, R. A. 2004. An Intergenerational Model of Domestic Violence, *Journal of Population Economics* 17(2): 311–329.
- Reichenbach, H. 1938. *Experience and Prediction: An Analysis of the Foundations and the Structure of Knowledge*, by Hans Reichenbach. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Roberto, K. A., Brossoie, N., McPherson, M. C., Pulsifer, M. B., & Brown, P. N. 2013. Violence against rural older women: Promoting community awareness and action, *Australasian Journal on Ageing* 32(1): 2–7. PubMed. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6612.2012.00649.x>
- Roberto, K. A., & McCann, B. R. 2021. Violence and Abuse in Rural Older Women's Lives: A Life Course Perspective, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 36(3–4): NP2205–2227NP. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518755490>
- Rorat, J., Szelaż-Sikora, A., & Gródek-Szostak, Z. 2016. Traditional and new women's roles in rural areas, *Problems of Small Agricultural Holdings / Problemy Drobnych Gospodarstw Rolnych*. <https://doi.org/10.15576/pdgr/2016.2.99>
- Rutherford, A., Zwi, A. B., Grove, N. J., & Butchart, A. 2007. Violence: A glossary, *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 61(8): 676–680. <https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2005.043711>
- Schwalbe, M. L., & Mason-Schrock, D. (1996). Identity work as group process. *Advances in Group Processes* 13(113), 47.
- SMG/KRC. 2011. A diagnosis of people using domestic violence: Domestic violence from the perspective of the adult population of Poland. https://archiwum.mriips.gov.pl/gfx/mpips/userfiles/_public/1_NOWA%20STRONA/Przemoc%20w%20rodzynie/dane%20statystyczne/1%20RAPORT_POLACY_PRZEMOC_W_RODZINIE_FIN.pdf
- Śniegulska, A. 2016. Violence against women and elderly people in a family environment, *Journal of Modern Science* 31(4): 101–124.
- Statement No. 4/2020 of the Zakopane City Council of 22 October 2020 on: The need to examine the constitutionality of the Act on counteracting domestic violence. (2020, October 22). Zakopane City Council. <https://zakopane.esesja.pl/posiedzenie/f7df5b7f-25b7-4#collapse12>
- Teaster, P. B. 2017. A framework for polyvictimization in later life, *Journal of Elder Abuse & Neglect* 29(5): 289–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2017.1375444>
- Teaster, P. B., Roberto, K. A., & Dugar, T. A. 2006. Intimate Partner Violence of Rural Aging Women, *Family Relations* 55(5): 636–648.
- Terelak, A., & Kołodziejczak, S. (2014). Foreign economic emigration in conditions of marginalization, in: Z. Galor, B. Goryńska-Bittner, S. Kalinowski, *Living on the Edge: The Social Margins of a Big City*. Bielefeld: Societas Pars Mundi, pp. 667–682.
- Terelak, A., Kołodziejczak, S., & Klepajczuk, B. 2010. Integrated action towards family violence. Manual of creating and coordinating interdisciplinary teams. Marshall Office of West Pomerania Voivodeship.
- TNS OBOP. 2010. Diagnosis of the phenomenon of domestic violence in Poland against women and men. Part I—a report on nationwide research.
- Tobiasz-Adamczyk, B. 2010. Elderly and disabled people as a category of people particularly vulnerable to violence, in: *Domestic violence against the elderly and the disabled. Tutorial for first contact employees*. Ministry of Labour and Social Politics.

- Verdejo, I. C., & Calvo, C. B. 2014. Analysis of violence against elderly woman, *Procedia—Social and Behavioral Sciences* 161: 110–114. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.018>
- Vollstedt, M., & Rezat, S. 2019. An Introduction to Grounded Theory with a Special Focus on Axial Coding and the Coding Paradigm, in: G. Kaiser & N. Presmeg (eds.), *Compendium for Early Career Researchers in Mathematics Education*. New York: Springer International Publishing, pp. 81–100. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-15636-7_4
- Walker, L. 2012. Battered Women Syndrome and Self-Defense, *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy* 6(2): 321.
- Walker, L. 2016. *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. New York: Springer Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1891/9780826170996>
- WHO. 2005. WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: Summary report of initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/43310>
- WHO. 2014. *Global status report on violence prevention 2014* [WHO Press]. World Health Organization.
- Wiśniewski, A., Kędziora-Kornatowska, K., Ślusarz, R., & Filipka, K. 2020. Prevalence and associated factors of elder psychological abuse—a cross-sectional screening study, based on a hospitalized community from Poland, *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics* 90: 104152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.archger.2020.104152>
- Wojtasik, W. 2020. Changes in the Party System in the Context of Deconsolidation of Democracy in Poland, *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 49: 55–66. <https://doi.org/10.15804/pps2020105>
- Yan, E. 2015. Elder Abuse and Help-Seeking Behavior in Elderly Chinese, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30(15): 2683–2708. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514553628>
- Zink, T., Regan, S., Jacobson, C. J., & Pabst, S. 2003. Cohort, Period, and Aging Effects: A Qualitative Study of Older Women's Reasons for Remaining in Abusive Relationships, *Violence Against Women* 9(12): 1429–1441. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801203259231>
- Znaniecki, F. 1927. The Object Matter of Sociology, *American Journal of Sociology* 32(4): 529–584. <https://doi.org/10.1086/214184>
- Zwoliński, A. 2015. Cultural Basis on Violence Against The Elderly, in: *Violence Against the Elderly. Challenges—Research—Action*. European Association of Schools of Social Work.

Biographical Notes:

Sebastian Kołodziejczak (Ph.D.), Institute of Sociology, University of Szczecin. Sociologist focused on social norms issues. Interested in migration, social development and since 2007 domestic violence.

ORCID iD: [0000-0002-3642-6295](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3642-6295)

E-mail: seb.kolodziejczak@o2.pl

Albert Terelak (Ph.D.), Institute of Sociology, University of Szczecin, Poland. Sociologist focused on methodological issues of social problems. Interested in migration, social development and domestic violence.

ORCID iD: [0000-0003-2033-6946](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2033-6946)

E-mail: albert.terelak@usz.edu.pl

Marek Balsa (Ph.D.), Professor at the Institute of Sociology, University of Szczecin, Poland. Main field of interests, sociology of health.

ORCID iD: [0000-0001-8135-2240](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8135-2240)

E-mail: marek.balsa@usz.edu.pl