

November 25: European Psychologists' Associations join the International Day 'Elimination of Gender Violence against women and girls'

EFPA European Federation of Psychologists Associations

EFPA is the leading Federation of National Psychologists Associations.

It provides a forum for European cooperation in a wide range of fields of academic training, psychology practice and research.

There are 37 member associations of EFPA representing about 300,000 psychologists.

The member organizations of EFPA are concerned with promoting and improving psychology as a profession and as a discipline, particularly, though not exclusively, in applied settings and with emphasis on the training and research associated with such practice.

The psychologists in the member associations include practitioners as well as academic and research psychologists.

The Federation has as one of its goals the integration of practice with research and the promotion of an integrated discipline of psychology.

Abstract

The EU has assessed that psychological violence against women in close relationships affects about 43% of the female population, in addition/cumulative with physical and sexual violence whose impact is assessed by the WHO for around 30%.

EFPA, the European Federation of Psychologists' Associations together with ECPA, the European Association of Community Psychology and the Standing Committee on Community Psychology, join the UN in celebrating the 25th of November as a worldwide International Day for the Elimination of Violence against women.

Keywords: gender violence elimination, domestic violence, psychological report, psychological interventions

EFPA è la Federazione delle associazioni europee di psicologia.

Offre uno strumento per la cooperazione europea in materia di formazione accademica, pratica e ricerca psicologica.

Raccoglie 37 associazioni di psicologi che rappresentano 300.000 psicologi.

Le organizzazioni associate promuovono e accrescono lo sviluppo della psicologia come professione e disciplina, in particolare, ma non esclusivamente in ambiti applicativi con attenzione alla formazione e alla ricerca applicati a tale pratica.

Gli psicologi delle associazioni partner includono professionisti, ricercatori e accademici. La Federazione ha uno dei suoi obiettivi nella integrazione di ricerca e di pratica nella promozione della psicologia come disciplina.

Abstract

L'Unione Europea ha valutato che la violenza psicologica contro le donne nelle relazioni intime colpisce il 43% della popolazione femminile insieme a violenze fisiche e sessuali il cui impatto secondo l'Organizzazione Mondiale della Sanità colpisce il 30% delle donne.

L'EFPA, la Federazione Europea delle Associazioni di Psicologi insieme all'ECPA, Associazione Europea di Psicologia di Comunità e il Comitato Permanente di Psicologia di Comunità dell'EFPA si uniscono alle Nazioni Unite nel celebrare il 25 Novembre come giornata mondiale per l'eliminazione della violenza contro le donne.

Parole Chiave: eliminazione violenza di genere, domestic violence, referto psicologico, interventi psicologici

The European Union has assessed that psychological violence against women in close relationships affects about 43% of the female population, in addition/cumulative with physical and sexual violence whose impact is assessed by the WHO for around 30%.

Violence within relationships usually results in coercion and comprises controlling behaviours, verbal abuse, and economic control, in addition to physical assault. In fact, injury is not the most common physical health outcome of gender-based abuse; however “psychological disorders” are a reality for a significant number of women.

Psychological consequences of abuse are sometimes more serious than its physical effects. The experience of continuing abuse erodes women’s self-esteem and increases the risk of a variety of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, self-harm, cutting, alcohol and drug abuse, and other forms of distress.

Psychologists are active in psychological assessment, risk evaluation and support of women and girls who have been victimized by gender violence and work also with the orphans of femicide.

With a focus on preventive interventions, psychologists actively participate in programs to prevent violence in schools promoting gender equality education in behaviour and the expression of feelings; they also work with young offenders and bullies, considering that some of the offenders themselves might have also been victimized.

Psychologists also support volunteer work and associations against violence, providing consultation, training and supporting the organization of self-help groups, and self-representation groups for the advancement of services and supports adequate for the survivor’s empowerment and recovery.

Psychologists play major roles in emergency units, crisis intervention houses and other support services in many European countries, and have a central role in judicial procedures, including juvenile courts, criminal and civil courts for their expertise in legal psychology, especially required in procedural and regulatory requirements against perpetrators of violence involving families, including children and youth. Finally, psychologists play a role in juvenile and adult prisons, with a diagnostic and therapeutic-reparative function towards detained offenders.

EFPA points out the importance of giving health professionals, both in hospital settings and in general practice, the skills and training to increase their awareness and understanding of the forms and dynamics of domestic violence and gender violence, and to develop procedures for handling such cases most effectively.

Psychologists could have more intervention roles in the Emergency Departments (ED) where women come with severe injuries, but the link between injuries and domestic violence is rarely recognised. Pilot projects suggest that training programmes, and the introduction of procedures and protocols relating to detect and manage assault cases, and injury screening have significant effects on the identification of abused women and on a correct response to their needs. The psychological report in cases of domestic violence is useful for identifying and predicting domestic violence and its effects on health.

Psychologists indeed work in supporting social, education and health personnel in taking care and developing resilience, and have a significant role in working for the constitution of safe and respectful environments where women can freely express themselves physically and emotionally and interact with all human beings without any sort of coercion. Appropriate tools for violence screening and intervention are still lacking in most health facilities, especially in emergency departments where the largest number of women victims of violence by intimate partners are observed, but where medical observations are limited to assessing only physical damages.

Following these considerations EFPA and ECPA underline the need:

- to promote professional and social awareness about gender violence against women among psychologists, and all social and health professionals;
- to establish specific gender guidelines in the EDs and in all public and private services (anti-violence associations, legal consultancy and support experts, Police, Social Services, Ordinary and Specialized Courts) to create a pathway focusing on all the effects of violence.
- to develop training programs aimed at improving staff attitudes and knowledge about battered women, and at developing integrated medical and psychological protocols, and at the same time promoting community awareness and strategies to deal with these events.

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<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

