

DIGNITY, INTEGRITY AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN THE POLOG REGION

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SEXUAL HARASSMENT - TABOO!

The sexual harassment of women in Polog, and in Macedonia in general, is a topic kept hidden under the veil of silence. The attempt to open this topic among women, albeit only to scratch the surface, results in silent confirmation, nodding and cutting into the discussion by stating that sexual harassment does not happen "... if you don't do anything!". The reasons for not reporting the harassment or keeping silent about this experience are usually rooted in the fear of losing one's job and the fear of being judged by family, friends and coworkers.

"A problem" without a name!

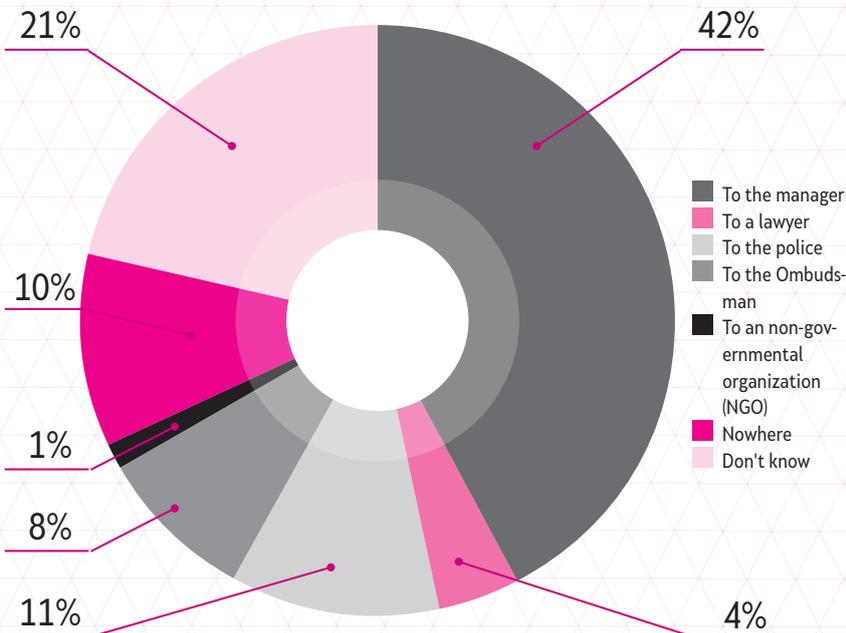
"...I had a friend who got a job and had problems with her boss, and then she quit the job.

You mean because of sexual harassment?

Precisely."

VICTIMS OF MOBBING KEEP SILENT AND THE MOBBING GOES UNREPORTED!

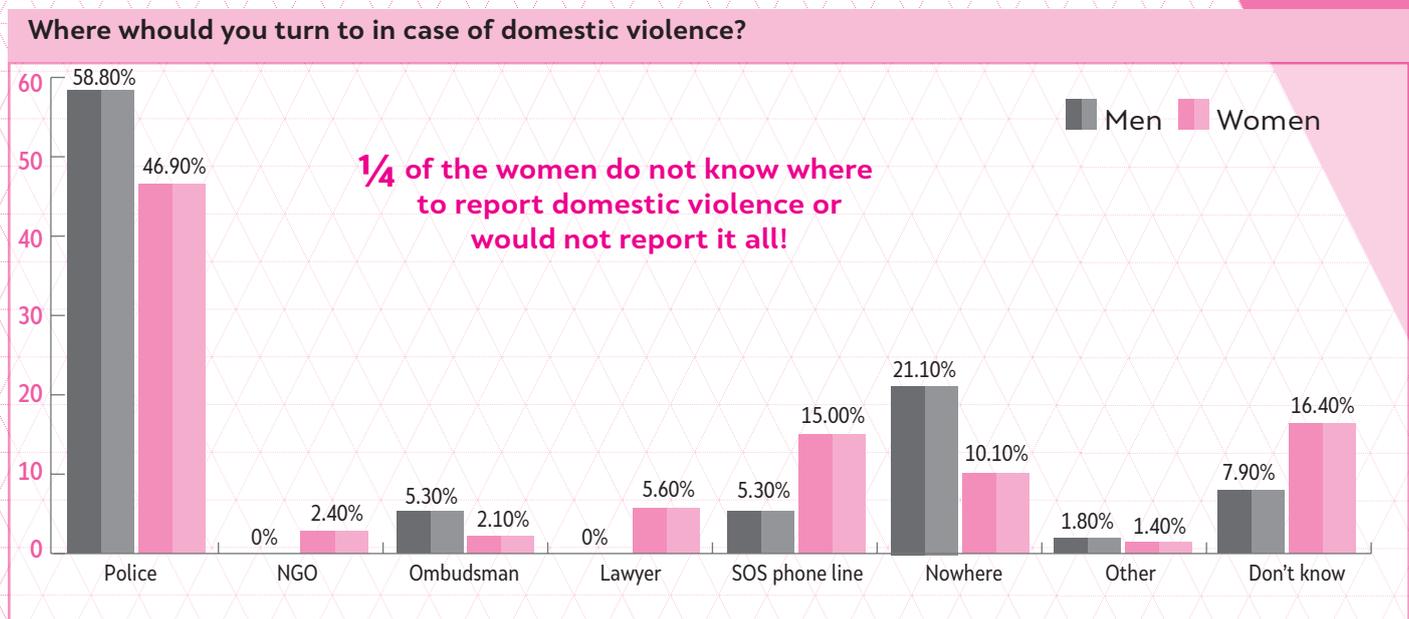
Where would you report mobbing (harassment) on the job?



PROBLEMS WHICH ARE DIFFICULT TO PROVE OR RESOLVE WITHIN EXISTING LEGAL MECHANISMS!

Over 30% of the citizens would not report or they do not know where to report mobbing on the job. The largest percentage (42%) of citizens would report harassment to the manager. There are no differences with respect to men and women on this issue. Such confidence in the authorities and the uncritical relationship is particularly a problem if the bullying is done by the manager. The reasons for not reporting or keeping silent about this experience as well usually lies in the fear of losing one's job and the fear of being judged by family, friends and coworkers.

WHERE IS THE PROTECTION FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?



Women have more confidence in services and activities that do not necessarily imply the inclusion of an institution, such as the SOS phone line (15%). Men have less confidence in such services and activities (5.3%).

THERE ARE NO SHELTERS FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN POLOG!

- The two social welfare centers in Tetovo and Gostivar are very difficult to access for women from the rural areas, where 2/3 of the women from the Polog Region live.
- One third of the population (33.5%) believes that there are possibilities to report violence, but the mechanisms for protecting victims do not function.

Institutional Labyrinth

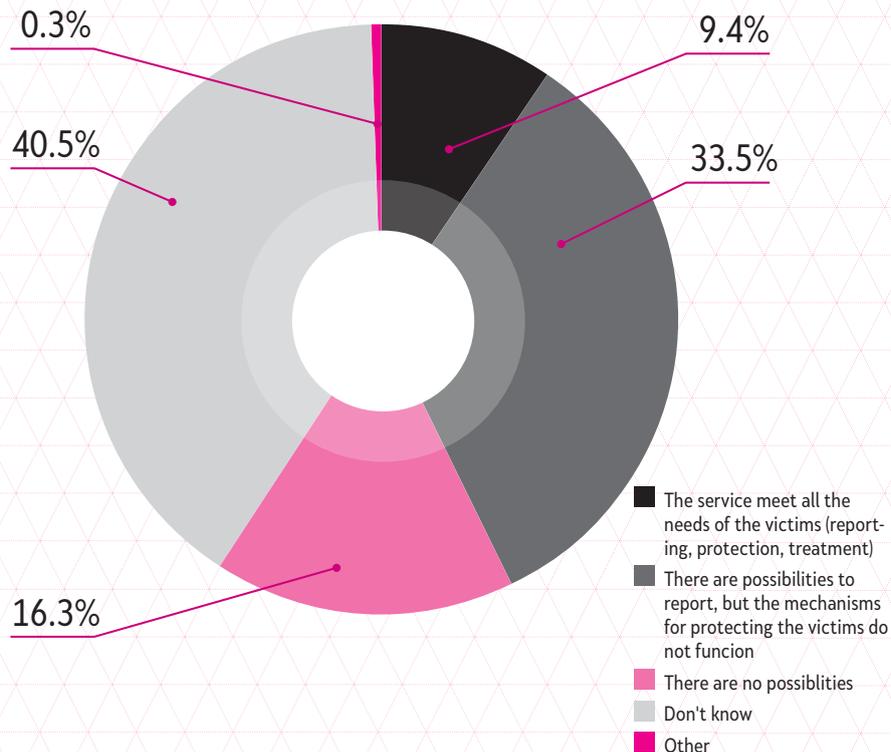
“... a woman reported violence in our organization, but what could we do? Nothing. She can report it to the police and the police can keep her for 24 hours together with other bullies, regardless of the fact that she is a victim, because the police do not have the conditions as well. They can take her in the Center for Social Work –there is a shelter in Skopje which is always full, and they take her from one place to another, and at the end she returns home to the offender, where the situation is worse than before.”

IT IS NOT ONLY THE REPORTING!

PROTECTION ASSESSMENT

Less than 10% of the respondents believe that the services that exist meet all the needs of victims of domestic violence.

How do you assess the existing services for addressing domestic violence?



This is not the solution!

Would you encourage women to report? What would you do in such a situation?

I would not. Because I know how the system works. I will advise her to please him more in order to avoid such a situation."

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN PUBLIC SPACES

Women from different cities and villages from the Polog Region differently perceive the safety in the public spaces.

- Some women do not feel free to go out in public spaces, while others believe that there are no threats or restrictions, other than the ones that women themselves impose.
- The social constrains influence their freedom of independent movement in public spaces.
- Women from Tetovo believe that there are more security threats in the city in comparison to the rural areas.
- Most women share harassment experiences (catcalling, whistling etc.) which occur when they are out alone.

Yes, until dark. I've had a lot of catcalling and whistling even when I had been walking with a child...let alone by myself. Others have experienced this too."

The best thing is to stay at home. Better safe than sorry." (laughing)

There is a lot of whistling, everyone knows that."

Leave aside the catcalling, it becomes a problem if he touches you." (laughing)

CONCLUSIONS

- The issue of sexual harassment in the workplace is a topic that, despite the existing legislation, is still very closed and unexplored.
- Mobbing against women, especially women employed in the textile industry in the region, is a very serious systemic problem.
- The conditions for prevention, care, support and treatment in cases of domestic violence are worsening.
- Lack of capacity in the institutions, as well as an absence of coordination between relevant institutions and organizations have been detected.
- There is no state shelter for victims of domestic violence in the Polog Region.
- Nearly one-third of the citizens lack sufficient information or do not trust the institutions and organizations dealing with the problem of domestic violence.
- The local self-government in the region has no mechanism for dealing with the problem of domestic violence and only deals with individual cases.
- Gender-based violence and women's safety in public spaces is a completely invisible problem and issue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continuous research, awareness raising and sensitization of the public about mobbing against women and sexual harassment in the workplace.
- Developing local policies and systems for protection in order to address the gender-based violence problems.
- Supporting NGOs in raising awareness of the existence of gender-based violence and the possibilities for improving safety of women in public spaces.
- Introducing programs that would enable economic empowerment of women victims of domestic violence.
- Active support of women victims of domestic violence by the NGOs.

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