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DIAGNOSING A LOCAL SYSTEM  
FOR COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:  
THE EXAMPLE OF GMINA SKAWINA, POLAND

**Abstract.** This article considers diagnosing a local system for combating domestic violence as exemplified by Gmina Skawina, Poland. In the theoretical part, the article discusses definitional issues related to domestic violence and presents the characteristics of the Polish system for combating domestic violence. The second part presents the methodological assumptions of the process of diagnosing domestic violence in Gmina Skawina, and discusses selected research results and conclusions from empirical analyses.

**Keywords:** domestic violence; family; local system for combating domestic violence; social assistance; violence prevention.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of domestic violence falls within the range of key social problems in the context of how various communities function. Over the past 20 years, in Poland there has been a marked increase in public awareness of domestic violence, its causes and consequences for the functioning of the individual as well as for the entire family system. Provision of assistance to families affected by domestic violence is among the responsibilities of specific services, institutions,

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or non-governmental organizations. This task also occupies a strategic place in the system for combating domestic violence, despite the fact that the system is still being expanded and repeatedly modified.

The structure of assistance activities in the area of combating domestic violence can be presented on the example of a local support system based on a properly developed and effectively implemented program. A special role is attributed to social assistance centers, which are the main entities dealing with cases of domestic violence. Those units diagnose the issue of domestic violence, prioritize, and mobilize resources to provide local solutions. Their other essential task is to create interdisciplinary teams in cooperation with relevant institutions or social services. The lawmakers have normalized the possibilities of combating domestic violence by granting competencies to local government bodies, regulating the role of the police, the educational system, medical services, and other bodies working to combat domestic violence. Interdisciplinary teams have been obliged to provide counseling and to intervene when they receive information about violence (domestic in particular) and above all to provide support to the victims. The specific responsibilities of the interdisciplinary teams include:

- 1) diagnosing the issue of domestic violence;
- 2) taking actions in an environment at risk of domestic violence, aimed at combating it;
- 3) initiating interventions in an environment affected by domestic violence;
- 4) disseminating information about institutions and individuals providing assistance, and possibilities of receiving assistance in the local environment;
- 5) initiating actions against perpetrators of domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

One of the key activities undertaken by local governments when dealing with domestic violence is diagnosing local support systems intended to combat domestic violence. The chief goal of such diagnosis should be to identify as many policy, legal, and statistical documents on domestic violence as possible. The diagnosis should also involve the evaluation of the already implemented actions towards victims of domestic violence, as well as towards those who inflict violence on their relatives. But, above all, the diagnosis should be aimed at gathering opinions of as many decision-makers, experts, and citizens as possible on the issue of violence and the possibilities for seeking appropriate solutions to it.

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<sup>1</sup> Act of 29 July 2005 on Combating Domestic Violence [Ustawa o przeciwdziałaniu przemocy w rodzinie ], Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 180, item 1493.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: AN OVERVIEW

Domestic violence should be considered as one of the most serious social problems in Europe, including Poland. It is a widespread on television, in the press, and in social media (Act on Combating Domestic Violence). It is also a multidimensional phenomenon concerning various groups: children, women, men, the elderly, people with disabilities, foreigners.

In praxeology, violence is seen as physical pressure (physical force) that “causes the subject of an action to be thrust into a situation undesired by the subject which becomes the object of someone else’s action“ (Pilch, 1995, p. 421).<sup>2</sup> Ethicists, in turn, define violence as the use of force associated with violation of moral norms against a person or a group of people, most often in order to force specific behaviors or attitudes (Nowakowska, 2007, p. 21).

Irena Pospiszyl (1994, p.14) defines violence as “any non-accidental act that violates personal freedom of an individual or contributes to physical as well as psychological harm to an individual, infringing social rules of interaction”.

Brunon Hołyst (2007, p. 262) points out that violence is the name for “a specific relationship occurring between two individuals, between a group or team of people and an individual, or between two teams of people. The use of violence implies the use of force or the threat of the use of overwhelming force of various types and magnitude.”

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation”.

Violence as a problem can also affect the family environment. A normative definition of domestic violence is provided in the 2005 Law on Combating Domestic Violence. It provides that domestic violence shall be understood as a single or repeated intentional action or omission, violation of the rights or personal interests of the family members, in particular exposing these persons to the danger of loss of life, health, violating their dignity, corporal integrity, freedom, including sexual freedom that cause damage to their physical or mental health and that cause suffering and moral harm to those affected by violence (Kobes, 2011, pp. 25–27; Kruk, 2016, pp. 86–88; Spurek, 2013, pp. 24–26). CoE’s Recommendation No. R (85) of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Violence in the Family (adopted on 26 March 1985) defines violence in the family as “any act or omission which prejudices the life, the physical

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<sup>2</sup> Translations of Polish quotations are the authors’.

or psychological integrity or the liberty of a person or which seriously harms the development of his or her personality”. The European Parliament has stated that domestic violence includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual, and psychological violence, including battery and sexual abuse of children in the family home (Coss, 1999, p. 23).

Ewa Jarosz (2001, p. 57) defines *domestic violence* as “any form of action or omission (failure to take required, necessary actions) against family members that violates their personal freedom and contributes to their psychological or physical harm, which is incompatible with social values of mutual relations in the family and/or is considered inappropriate or harmful according to professional knowledge”.

A common component in all the definitions of violence, both scientific and normative, is its non-accidental nature. Only actions that are intentional, willful, deliberate and directed against another person can be called violence. To sum up, following Jerzy Mellibruda (1993, pp. 4-10), violence can be regarded as

- the perpetrator’s intentional action intended to control and subjugate the victim,
- violation of personal rights or property,
- preventing the victim from defending themselves,
- pain and suffering,
- power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator.

Domestic violence can have numerous causes related to various areas, and each form of violence may have different determinants rooted in specific factors. On the one hand, violence can originate in the character or temperament of the perpetrator, or from his or her experiences, illness, stress or frustration, alcohol or drug abuse, or from the passive attitude of the victim. On the other hand, the reasons for violence can be sought in social attitudes as well as in historical, social, and cultural backgrounds (Pelowska, 2001, pp. 44-45).

#### SYSTEM FOR COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN POLAND

A system for combating domestic violence has been in place in Poland since the 1990s, and its characteristic feature is the protection of victims of violence in their immediate environment. The problem of domestic violence has been recognized by the law-makers, both in Poland and internationally. The enactment of various conventions, laws, or regulations has made it possible to create solutions that are constantly monitored and improved to meet the needs of local environments. Protection of families, including those affected

by violence, is regulated by specific legal acts, such as the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland,<sup>3</sup> the Act of 12 March 2004 on Social Assistance,<sup>4</sup> the Act of 26 October 1982 on Upbringing in Sobriety and Combating Alcoholism,<sup>5</sup> the Act of 29 July 2005 on Combating Domestic Violence, and by other implementing acts.

The effective functioning of the system for combating domestic violence requires, first of all, developing a comprehensive, systemic strategy for helping families afflicted by domestic violence. To increase the effectiveness of specific measures, the Polish law on domestic violence specifies the responsibilities of government administration and local government units in the field of combating family violence, including the principles of dealing with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. These tasks include: the adoption of the National Program to Combat Domestic Violence by the Council of Ministers (national level) and the development and implementation of local programs (local government level) to combat domestic violence. Their shared goals are to reduce the scale of domestic violence, intensify preventive measures against domestic violence, increase the availability and effectiveness of protection and support for those affected by domestic violence. Another goal is to ensure the implementation of actions against perpetrators of domestic violence, with a significant increase in the level of competence of representatives of the institutions and entities that perform tasks in the field of combating domestic violence, so that it is possible to provide services of the highest possible quality (National Program for Combating Domestic Violence for 2022).

The “Blue Card” procedure, which is the primary tool used in Poland in the process of providing support to victims of domestic violence, plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of protection against domestic violence. This procedure includes a set of actions undertaken and implemented mainly by social assistance personnel. However, it also allows the participation of such experts as specialists employed by gmina commissions for solving alcohol problems, the police, educational institutions, or health care, who take specific actions in response to a reasonable suspicion of domestic violence, a report from a family member or from a witness to domestic violence. The procedure is initiated by filling in the Blue Card – A form. In 2020, an innovative solution was introduced to the system for combating domestic violence. The solution

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<sup>3</sup> Journal of Laws No. 78, item 483.

<sup>4</sup> Journal of Laws No. 64, item 593 (Ustawa o pomocy społecznej).

<sup>5</sup> Journal of Laws No. 35, item 230 (Ustawa o wychowaniu w trzeźwości i przeciwdziałaniu alkoholizmowi).

allows an immediate isolation of the perpetrator from the victim in situations in which there is a threat to the life or health of the household members being abused. The Act of 30 April 2020 amending the Law – Code of Civil Procedure and certain other laws<sup>6</sup> have enabled the police to issue orders or prohibitions as early as at the stage of the performance of activities during an intervention undertaken or upon obtaining, from any source, information about the use of domestic violence, such as a report by the person exposed to domestic violence, a probation officer or social welfare center worker.

One of the strategic objectives of the system for combating domestic violence is the creation of local programs for combating domestic violence. Pursuant to the Act on Combating Domestic Violence, the development and implementation of these programs is the responsibility of gminas, which, using their resources and potential, can perform specific tasks, in particular through interdisciplinary teams and work groups (in accordance with the provisions of the Violence Prevention Act). Specialists, representatives of key institutions operating for the family – such as social assistance, education, the police, health care, the judiciary, or non-governmental organizations – cooperate to identify the problem of domestic violence, take actions aimed at combating domestic violence, promote activities and disseminate information on forms of assistance available from Gmina offices. In turn, work groups, designated to work with a specific family, direct their activities to combat violence in family environments, by taking actions towards both the victims and the perpetrators.

Essentially, a comprehensive and systemic approach to domestic violence enables the existence of parallel task areas: educational, operational, compensatory, and preventive. This involves, first and foremost, the organization of constant institutional cooperation of entities responsible for public security (Trafiałek, 2003, p. 66). The development and implementation of local programs aimed at combating domestic violence requires gaining knowledge about the environment for which specific activities are planned, and, at the same time, identifying what has already been achieved and what still needs to be implemented. Therefore, a diagnosis is an important point of reference for the measures to be taken.

Diagnosing domestic violence is a continuous process, it is “a system of rational activities aimed at identifying the characteristics of some state of affairs, event or object, which is undertaken to solve some practical problem. [...] The essence of any diagnosis is the application of existing general knowledge to identify various components of the reality as being or not being known, on the basis of this knowledge, general categories, classes or types” (Kwaśniewski, 2006, pp. 7-8).

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<sup>6</sup> Journal of Laws No. 58, item 956.

Diagnosis is a key component of rational action and constitutes a basis for getting an idea about the issue in question. In social practice, diagnosis cannot be limited to identifying one aspect. It must also classify, discover the origin, describe the current phase, forecast, and define the meanings (Paluchowski, 2007). Gaining knowledge about the issue should not be limited to just taking every detail into account. First of all, the mechanism, principles, and rules by which a certain process occurs must be defined (Brzeziński, 1991).

Diagnosing the occurrence of domestic violence is a difficult process that can present numerous problems and difficulties. Firstly, it cannot be limited only to a simple determination of who is the victim and who is the perpetrator in a family. It should take into account the mechanisms leading to violent behavior in local communities, and identify groups of people directly exposed to falling victim to violence. Secondly, a diagnosis can be deemed useful when it identifies already existing strategies for action in the environment, the attitudes of professionals towards the activities undertaken, and the types of support provided by specific institutions. Thirdly, it examines to what extent the functioning of institutions responsible for the implementation of local programs for tackling domestic violence has changed due to legislation, mistakes made or inspections conducted.

#### DIAGNOSIS OF THE LOCAL PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: GMINA SKAWINA

##### **Methodological assumptions**

In 2021 and 2022 Gmina Skawina, a unit of administrative division in southern Poland, conducted two studies focused on the development of the municipal system for combating domestic violence. In 2021, a report titled *Diagnosis of local needs in the area of combating domestic violence in Gmina Skawina*<sup>7</sup> was made. The main objective of the study was to carry out a diagnosis of local needs in the area of combating violence in Gmina Skawina. The following specific aims have been formulated for the implementation of the main objective: to identify the current condition of the residents support system for combating domestic violence, to determine the level of knowledge, experience and response to the issue of domestic violence among adults, seventh- and eighth-grade elementary students, and secondary school students residing in Gmina Skawina,

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<sup>7</sup> *Diagnoza lokalnych potrzeb w obszarze przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie* (October 2021), compiled by Katarzyna Wojtanowicz, Iwona Banasiewicz, Barbara Sordyl-Lipnicka, and Adam Białas.

and to produce recommendations for the development of the local system for combating domestic violence. The main research problem has been defined as follows: What are the most important needs regarding the prevention of domestic violence in Gmina Skawina? The following specific research problems were identified based on the main problem: 1. What is the current scale and dynamics of domestic violence in Gmina Skawina? 2. What are the needs of families experiencing domestic violence and of perpetrators of domestic violence? 3. Are there any issues co-occurring with domestic violence? If so, what is their scope? 4. What is the level of awareness among the residents of Gmina Skawina regarding the issue of domestic violence and regarding institutions that provide assistance to individuals and families affected by it? 5. What are the institutional, human, and environmental resources of Gmina Skawina for domestic violence prevention? 6. What assistance is currently offered to individuals and families experiencing domestic violence and to perpetrators of domestic violence in Gmina Skawina? The compiled report was an important starting point for the development of a program for combating violence and for extended studies of domestic violence and of combating it.

In 2022, in accordance with the recommendation of the 2021 report titled *An extended diagnosis of the problem of violence in Gmina Skawina*<sup>8</sup> was prepared. The main objective of the study was to conduct an extended diagnosis of the issue of domestic violence in Gmina Skawina, taking into consideration the perspective of specified study groups. The specific goals of the study focused on the analysis of the issue of violence and the needs in respect of combating it and mitigating its effects in selected social groups of the Gmina's residents: adults (including those from Ukraine), persons with disabilities, the elderly, teachers and students in the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school, and secondary school students (including those from Ukraine), and the development of recommendations for the design of activities aimed at preventing and tackling domestic violence in Gmina Skawina, and for the design of social services in this area that would meet the residents' needs. Additionally, the research problems were specified by defining the main research problem as follows: How is the issue of violence perceived by adult residents (including the elderly, persons with disabilities, citizens of Ukraine, teachers) of Gmina Skawina as well as by children and adolescents attending local educational institutions? Specific problems were specified such as these: 1. What is the social perception of violence

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<sup>8</sup> *Pogłębiona diagnoza zjawiska przemocy w Gminie Skawina* (November 2022), compiled by Katarzyna Wojtanowicz, Iwona Banasiewicz, Agnieszka Lewicka-Zelent, Bartosz Łukaszewski, and Barbara Sordyl-Lipnicka.



among residents of Gmina Skawina? 2. What social groups are most likely to experience domestic violence in Gmina Skawina? 3. What type of violence was most commonly encountered by the residents of Gmina Skawina? 4. What, according to the residents, are the most effective activities regarding assistance for victims of domestic violence?

In the first study, conducted in 2021, the research team focused its assumptions on desk research, the analysis of quantitative research (two surveys conducted using an on-line survey questionnaire among adult and adolescent residents of the Gmina (students in the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school, and secondary school students) and on the qualitative research analysis (focus group interview – FGI), in two expert groups consisting of representatives of key institutions and organizations operating in the Gmina. Those experts assessed the functioning of the domestic violence prevention system, capabilities of inter-institutional cooperation, and the capabilities for further development of the support for families affected by domestic violence. 927 adult residents of Gmina Skawina participated in the quantitative part of the research process. Most of them were women (93.2%), aged 26–42 (54.7%) and 46–60 (34.8%). Slightly fewer were aged 18–25 (6.5%), while the fewest respondents were aged over 61 (4%). Most respondents were university (52.6%) or secondary school (40.3%) graduates. A small percentage of the respondents declared vocational (5.9%) or primary (1%) education. A vast majority of the respondents were employed (85.9%). The qualitative part involved 23 participants, representing institutions such as: the Municipal and Gmina Social Assistance Centre, Family Support Centre, Skawina Municipal and Gmina Office, the police, the Municipal Police, Mental Health Centre, Non-Public Health Care Centre (NZOZ), the Municipal Committee for the Solution of Alcohol Problems, the Council of Elders, Psychological Counselling Centre for Children and Adolescents, Psychological and Educational Counselling Centre, NGOs.

In the following study, conducted in 2022, which was meant to be an extended version of the 2021 analysis, the research team adopted the mixed methods strategy enabling the triangulation of research methods (Kelle, 2022, pp. 163-177). The researchers focused on desk research, quantitative research analysis (eight surveys conducted using an on-line survey questionnaire, addressed to various social groups included in the study: adult residents (both women and men) in Polish and Ukrainian, students in the seventh and eighth grades of elementary school, and secondary school students in Polish and Ukrainian, teachers, persons with disabilities, and the elderly). The exploratory quantitative research was extended using FGI and individual in-depth interviews (IDI). Seven focus groups were

formed (two groups of experts working in the field of combating violence in Gmina Skawina, two groups of persons with disabilities and their caregivers, two groups of the elderly and their caregivers, and one group of teachers) based on five interview scenarios, and 11 individual in-depth interviews (with seven persons affected by violence and four persons inflicting violence) based on two interview scenarios. 865 persons participated in the quantitative part of the research process. The group of adult residents of Gmina Skawina comprised 463 respondents: mostly women (88.8%), living in urban areas (63.9%), aged 36–45 (41%). Most respondents were university (54.2%) or secondary school (39.3%) graduates. A small percentage of respondents declared vocational (5.8%) or primary (0.7%) education. Additionally, the studies involved 18 women of Ukrainian descent living in Gmina Skawina. The group of children and adolescents comprised 224 students of Polish descent and 13 students of Ukrainian descent (girls and boys), most of whom living in rural areas (56.3%) and raised in their biological families. The study also involved 59 teachers (most with over 20 years of professional experience), 19 persons with disabilities (mostly aged 26–35) who did not work due to their diagnosed disabilities, and 69 elderly persons (mainly women aged over 75). 100 persons were subjected to the qualitative part of the study, with special focus on seven women affected by domestic violence, four persons inflicting domestic violence, 22 experts active in the field of social policy in Gmina Skawina, seven education professionals, 34 persons from the community of persons with disabilities (including caregivers), and 26 elderly persons.

### **Selected results and conclusions from the study**

As the presented results of the study show, the respondents see domestic violence as a hidden and sensitive problem that is difficult to diagnose. The 2021 study revealed that those affected by domestic violence are reluctant to reveal the problem, fearing the reaction of people from their environment, revenge from the perpetrator, as well as prolonged and complicated legal procedures. Also, the witnesses of acts of domestic violence are unwilling to take action and, sometimes, adopt a passive attitude. This is reflected in publicly available statistics. According to more than 61% of the respondents (adult residents of the Gmina), domestic violence does not pose a significant social problem. Domestic violence is a significant social problem in their living environment for just over 24% of the respondents. Detailed data are presented in Chart 1 below.

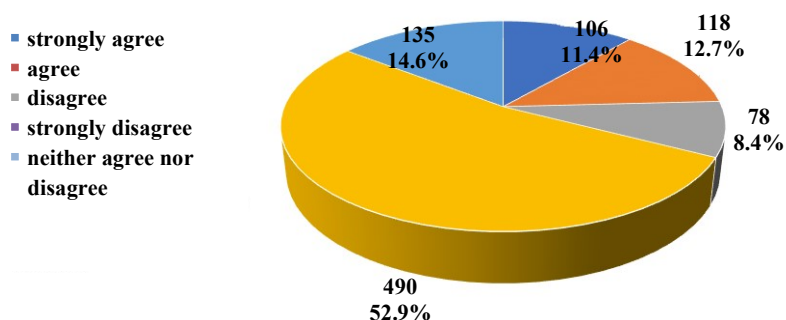


Chart 1. Perception of domestic violence as a significant social problem according to adult respondents [N = 927]

Source: *Diagnoza lokalnych potrzeb w obszarze przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie* (2021).

On the other hand, in the 2022 study, aimed at extending the results of the 2021 study, the respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement that domestic violence constituted a significant social problem. The Gmina residents who participated in the study cited homelessness, alcoholism, and poverty as the most urgent problems that need to be addressed, with one in six respondents believing that domestic violence was a problem that needed urgent intervention. According to approximately 45% of the respondents, domestic violence is a significant social problem.

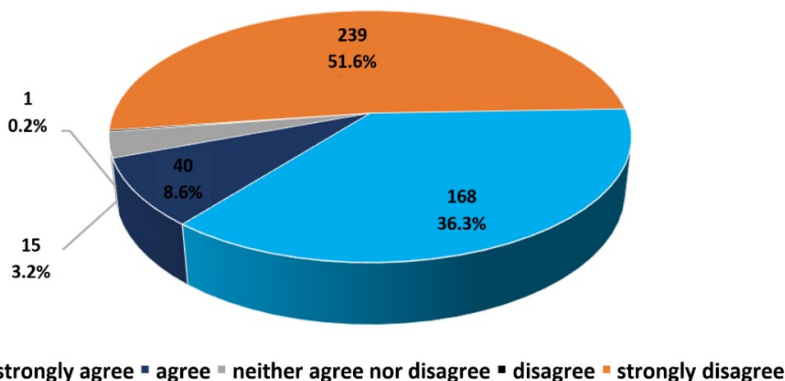


Chart 2. Perception of domestic violence as a significant social problem according to adult respondents [N = 463]

Source: *Pogłębiona diagnoza zjawiska w Gminie Skawina* (2022).

Most of the persons surveyed in 2021 do not consider behaviors commonly deemed violent to be negative i.e., behaviors aimed at causing harm to others. Also, the respondents do not notice or are not aware of the presence of violence in the immediate area. The survey shows that only one in five persons has met or knows a family in which domestic violence occurs (Chart 3).

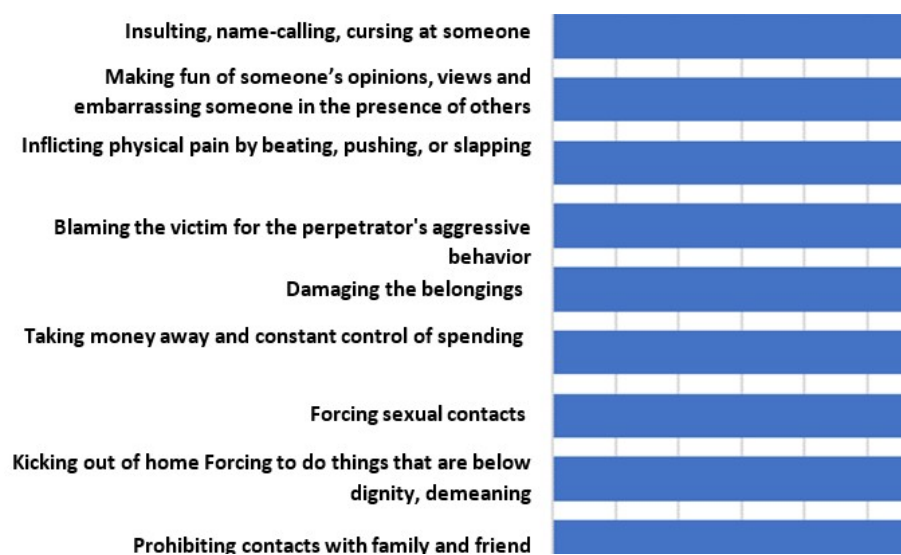


Chart 3. Behaviors considered violent: distribution of mean values among adult residents of Gmina Skawina participating in the study [N = 927]

Source: *Diagnoza lokalnych potrzeb w obszarze przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie* (2021).

On the other hand, almost half of the young respondents correctly identify the issue of domestic violence (Chart 3), whereas 40% of the respondents limited domestic violence to abusing a family member. Approximately 10% of the respondents cannot tell what domestic violence is. The young people's awareness of the issue of domestic violence is much higher than that of adults, including parents (Chart 4).

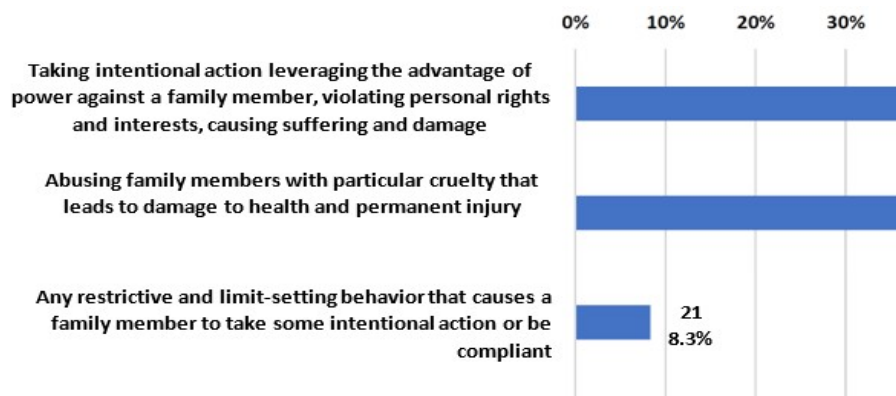


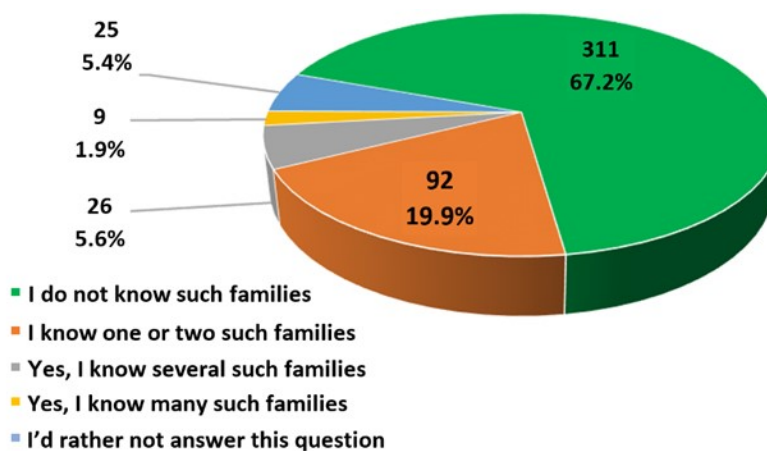
Chart 4. Definition of domestic violence according to adolescent respondents [N = 252]

Source: *Diagnoza lokalnych potrzeb w obszarze przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie* (October, 2021).

Teachers participating in the survey pointed out the presence of violence in school environments. They stressed that physical and psychological violence (including violence in virtual space and in social media) was the most prevalent type. The conclusions from the surveys of a group of students and teachers are consistent in this regard. Teachers also point to the difficulty of diagnosing domestic violence as contributing to the instances of domestic violence being revealed too late.

The inclusion of more social groups in the 2022 study revealed that it is very hard for the elderly to define and qualify violent behavior. They claimed to be barely affected by this issue. Faced with numerous hardships in their lives (health issues, loneliness, difficult financial situation), they do not perceive domestic violence as a major social problem. Rather, they are more likely to indicate the occurrence of conflicts, including intergenerational ones. In contrast, people with disabilities are significantly more likely to report experiencing violence, particularly physical and psychological. There are also cases of economic and sexual violence. At the same time, they report difficulties in identifying the issue and forms of domestic violence.

During the analysis of the 2021 results, adult respondents were asked whether they knew families affected by domestic violence. Most respondents (67.2%) did not know such families. On the other hand, 27.4% of surveyed adult residents of Gmina Skawina (more residents of rural areas than of the town of Skawina) know one or more families affected by domestic violence (Chart 5).



The general knowledge in the public of institutions and organizations the activities of which are related to preventing and combating domestic violence is also a measure of the effectiveness of combating domestic violence. The vast majority of the respondents know the institutions to which they can reach out for help. The problem is, however, that those institutions enjoy low trust. More than 60% of the respondents believe that those institutions cannot be relied on for help (Chart 6).

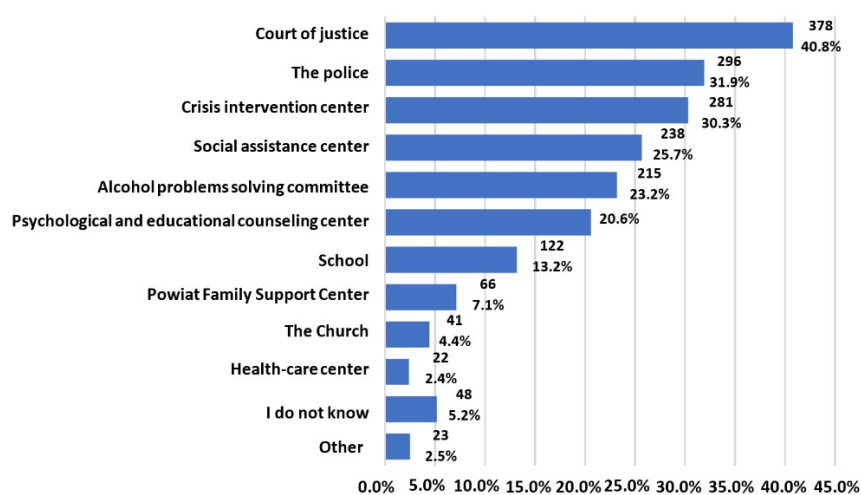


Chart 6. Institutions that can help victims of violence, according to adult respondents [N = 927]

Source: *Diagnoza lokalnych potrzeb w obszarze przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie* (2021).

The evaluation of the system for combating domestic violence also requires identifying the most effective action concerning victims of violence. The data in the chart show a range of measures that, according to the respondents, would provide the most effective assistance for those affected by domestic violence. Most respondents (36.5%) pointed to educational activities. Slightly fewer respondents (21.8%) pointed to increasing availability of legal, social, and therapeutic counseling. Another measure frequently indicated by the respondents (15.3%) was the isolation of the perpetrators (Chart 7).

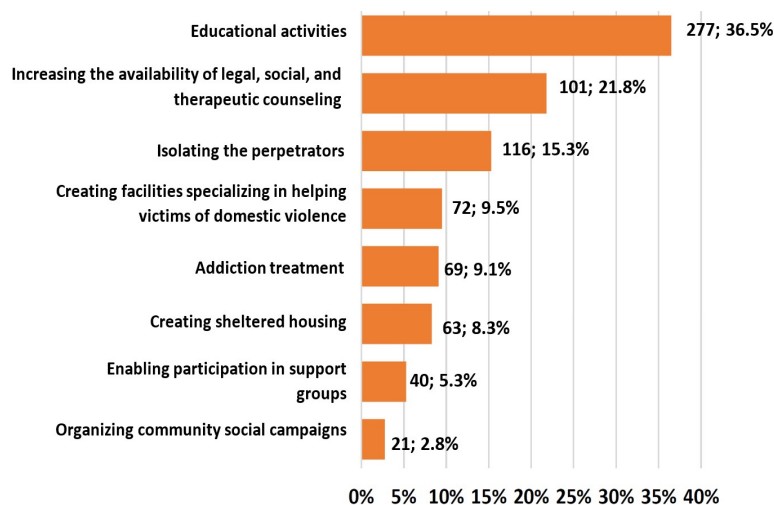


Chart 7. The most effective actions for victims of domestic violence according to adult respondents [N = 463]

Source: *Pogłębiona diagnoza zjawiska w Gminie Skawina* (2022).

Experts participating in the FGI assessed the system for combating domestic violence in Gmina Skawina to be well-coordinated and continuously developing. The respondents emphasized that the offer of assistance and support for families affected by violence and experiencing crises was being constantly expanded. However, the information of this expanded offer does not reach the specialists who come into contact with such families, and as a result it does not reach those families. Education is also needed to bolster cooperation. To maintain an appropriate level of knowledge of the issue of domestic violence, work methods and tools, and legal knowledge requires continuous improvement.

Statistics show that the number of Blue Card procedures initiated in Gmina Skawina is decreasing, which results in the decrease of the number of work

groups appointed. The main institutions initiating this procedure are the police and social welfare. The lack of action in this regard by the health care and education systems, and by the Gmina Alcohol Problems Solving Committee is becoming evident. Involving these services in the implementation of the procedure is particularly reasonable, because families for which the Blue Card procedure has been initiated are also affected by other problems. Alcohol addiction, mental health problems, and substance abuse have been reported in both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Specialists present varying levels of knowledge of and skills in dealing with the issue of domestic violence, which is a major barrier to the effective functioning of the system. An identified need for support in improving the competence of specialists working in the system is also an important factor.

#### CONCLUSIONS

This study presents selected results of a diagnostic study. The analysis as a whole provided a wide range of material which allowed to formulate conclusions and recommendations for the development of strategies of combating domestic violence and for the development of social services in Gmina Skawina.

Attention was drawn to the issue of systemic monitoring of social problems. The significant role of education was emphasized, including the continuation of various educational activities aimed at socially and culturally diverse groups of people, in order to raise public awareness of the issue of domestic violence. Launching social campaigns aimed directly at women and men at risk of domestic violence, arranging meetings with the local community, including systemic information and education activities on the forms of domestic violence used or signs that might indicate that domestic violence is being inflicted are shown as good examples of the practice. Additionally, educational activities were emphasized, especially those concerning the consequences of not reacting to domestic violence and the effectiveness of combating domestic violence in case of a rapid response. Additional bolstering of civic attitudes towards proper reaction to violence behaviors and dissemination of information on the Blue Card procedure and its essence are also enormously important. It is important to increase the availability of various kinds of specialists for those affected by domestic violence and to inform the public about legal solutions for the isolation of persons inflicting violence.



Leveraging the potential of non-governmental organizations for combating domestic violence is another important aspect of the functioning of local systems for combating domestic violence. At the same time, it seems to be justifiable to draw from local community integration to promote specific events on a gmina and neighborhood level, during which the issues of combating domestic violence will be raised.

In respect of interactions with specific groups of people threatened by violence in the domestic environment, it is worth enhancing the implementation of prevention programs (especially in the form of workshops) in the area of educating how to tackle domestic violence and about the consequences of suffering from and inflicting violence (including cyberbullying, especially in relation to children and adolescents). In the case of the elderly and persons with disabilities, education on how to report violent (intentional) behavior and aggressive (unintentional, e.g., due to intellectual or mental dysfunctions) and where to seek help is becoming increasingly important. It is also important to adjust the support offer accordingly. The support system for caregivers of persons with disabilities, including respite care, volunteering, and neighborhood assistance, also needs to be improved.

A well-designed and functioning system for combating domestic violence, backed with a diagnosis of the issue, makes it possible to mitigate and limit its effects. As a consequence, this leads to increased public awareness and a reduction in domestic violence.

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#### DIAGNOZA LOKALNEGO SYSTEMU PRZECIWDZIAŁANIA PRZEMOCY W RODZINIE NA PRZYKŁADZIE GMINY SKAWINA W POLSCE

##### Streszczenie

Prezentowany artykuł zawiera rozważania dotyczące diagnozowania lokalnego systemu przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie na przykładzie gminy Skawina. W części teoretycznej omówiono kwestie definicyjne związane ze zjawiskiem przemocy oraz przedstawiono charakterystykę systemu przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie w Polsce. W drugiej części zaprezentowano założenia metodologiczne procesu diagnozowania problemu przemocy w gminie Skawina, omówiono wybrane wyniki badań oraz wnioski z analiz empirycznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przemoc; rodzina; lokalny system przeciwdziałania przemocy w rodzinie; pomoc społeczna; przeciwdziałanie przemocy.