

Women Victims of Domestic Violence: How to be Safe after Separation?

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ISSN: 2577-2007



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Submission: 📅 October 17, 2019

Published: 📅 October 30, 2019

Volume 5 - Issue 4

How to cite this article: Rosana Morgado. Women Victims of Domestic Violence: How to be Safe after Separation?. COJ Nurse Healthcare.5(4). COJNH.000618.2019. DOI: [10.31031/COJNH.2019.05.000618](https://doi.org/10.31031/COJNH.2019.05.000618).

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Abstract

This review is part of a postdoctoral research entitled: "Separation, risks and femicide: challenges of protecting women from intimate former partner in Brazil and England", developed at King's College University, under the supervision of Prof. Cathy MCILWAINE, with CNPQ/Brazil funding.

The seriousness of the gender-based violence - domestic abuse against women - and their recognition at the national and International levels, indicate the relevance of the theme and the potential contributions from a comparative study between Brazil/England on existing social policies/programs of protection, in post separations situations.

Not recognizing the existence of violence against women by their former partners, nor recording them, results in the absence of medium- and long-term strategies for their protection. The knowledge about this particular period of women's life is not very well-known. This review aims to present the discussion about the hidden dimension of domestic abuse after separation: is it safe/better to stay home? Is it safe/better to look for another place to rebuild life?

Keywords: Gender-based violence; Domestic abuse; Former partner

Introduction

It is important to highlight that domestic violence against women [1], in different and many ways, does not end after separation. One of these dimensions is where women and their children will live after they decide to separate. Is it safe/better to stay home? Is it safe/better to look for another place to rebuild life? The knowledge about this particular period of women's life is not very well-known. Bowstead [3] (2017:109) says: "Tens of thousands of women and children within the UK are forced to relocate due to domestic violence every year, (...) The specific role of domestic violence in residential mobility and internal migration has been underexplored in the UK (...)".

Bowstead [3] puts lights in what she calls: forced exile, forced away from their homes, forced relocate and forced mobility. During this process Bowstead [3] emphasizes the complex journeys women have to be/feel safe. In hers research with 20 women the numbers of moves, the distance and the time it took for them to feel secure need to be known and analyzed, so protection strategies can be better developed.

"The interviewed women had made up to 10 moves. Their journeys included considerable stays in interim places - from months to over a year - as well as considerable travelling; and the total time from first leaving the abuser to relatively settled rehousing ranged from 7 months to 5 years, with an average of two years and two months." Bowstead [3] (2017:115)

Bowstead [3] (2015: 335-336) also highlights the journeys and lack of network

"Overall, there were around 10,000 migration journeys a year (n=10,161 in 2008-2009) to access services in England owing to domestic violence.(...) They are travelling because of their individual need for safety, not because they would have otherwise wanted to move at all; and they therefore try to reduce the dislocation by going to the type of place they are familiar with. Women therefore leave all types of places, but also go to all types of places. Women leave everywhere due to domestic violence. Women are recorded as travelling from every

English local authority, and from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and abroad, to access formal support services in England.

They also go to every type of area, tending - as discussed above - to go to similar types of places to the ones they left. As a result, most local authorities have around the same number of women leaving and arriving per year. Therefore, despite around 10,000 migration journeys a year to access formal services in England, there is a lack of net effect at the local authority level.(...) The major city of Birmingham has over 200 women a year arriving in its services, and over 200 leaving to access services elsewhere (as well as over 350 relocating within the city)"

Humphreys [2] (2016: 3-5) developed a research in Australia and analysed the possibilities for women to stay at home after separation as "A Right". In this perspective is important to know what should be done to offer women all protection they need.

"The 'safe at home' strategy is not without its problems and critics. It is clearly not an option for all women and their children. For many women it will be too dangerous. Separating is the point of increased danger (Bennett Cattaneo, & Goodman, 2005) and ousting the man from his home may provide an excuse for further escalation of his violence (McFerran 2007). The 'safe at home' principle is well founded within the human rights discourse (Crinall & Hurley, 2009). It supports the entitlement of women and children to live free from violence and due diligence of governments to protect and uphold this right, as per the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW 1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Logar 2003). The strategy recognises that it is the victim, not the abuser who should be entitled to stay in their home should they choose to do so, and is an effective way of avoiding the social and economic consequences of escaping domestic violence, such as homelessness, disconnection from community, unemployment, and disruption to children's schooling (Edwards, 2004, 2011; Murray, 2008)." (Humphreys 2016: 3) [2].

As Humphreys [2] (2016: 4) Describes it is Necessary a Very Complex Models to Garantue that Women will be Safe at Home

"Features of 'safe at home' models include: enhanced

family violence crisis and outreach support; the development of partnerships and protocols between services; intensive coordination of police and specialist service responses; installation of security and alarm systems; provision of dedicated emergency mobile phones; and the securing of a safe room in the house with connection to police emergency services. Programmes may involve one or a number of these services, in combination with a protection order that has conditions to exclude the violent partner [4]. The literature shows that there is no single approach to 'Safe at Home' interventions, rather services have developed programs to meet the specific needs of their client group, their agency context and available resources (Crinall & Hurley, 2009)"

Questions for Debate

The different ways that violent man develops to keep control, including using children/adolescents after separation, replaces the importance of different services work together. It also replaces the question about the role of education and health in protecting children and women from domestic violence and abuse. How refuges could improve their protection? Are protection orders supporting women's decisions? According to the women's reports they were more likely to be subject to further abuse and harassment when staying in their home, as protective orders were more often breached.

References

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