

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST THE MAN: THE STRUCTURE OF EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

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## **Abstract**

The article presents problems of domestic violence in the context of women violence against the man. Domestic violence became one of the dominating and most controversially valued conceptual areas in the scientific discourse. The qualitative study aimed to disclose emotional experiences of the man who has experienced violence in the closest environment. The study disclosed broad and exhaustive spectrum of emotional experiences of the man who has experienced woman's violence. Applying content analysis method, five categories describing the structure of the man's emotional experiences and reflecting emotional experiences to be related to the very self, wife, stepmother, environment and mother-in-law were identified.

***Key words:** domestic violence, emotional experience, women violence against the man.*

## **Introduction**

Researches on gender-based interpersonal violence in the family and social acknowledgement of this problem are related to revival of women's movement in the 6 decade of the 20 century and the second wave of feminism in Western culture (Reingardienė, 2004). During this period the focus of the society and politics on the analysis of inequality, conflict, violence and shift processes increases (Mažeikis, 1999). Family sociologists started to progressively deepen their knowledge of what is hidden behind static norms of family relationships and roles. Family phenomena that make us worry most are domestic violence and sexual violence against children (Giddens, 2005). Domestic violence became one of the dominating and most controversially valued conceptual areas in the scientific discourse. According to Giddens (2005), home becomes one of the most dangerous places of the modern society. According to statistics, is it much more likely that a person of any age (particularly children) or gender will become the subject of physical violence at home than on the street at night. In 2012, 18268 calls due to violence in the closest environment were registered in the registry of incidents at Lithuanian Police (6472 of them were violence cases against women, 625, against children and 693, against men)<sup>1</sup>.

The problem of domestic violence is most often presented in descriptive works, analysing cases of violence and abuse against children and women (Purvaneckienė, 1998). However, these researches are most often based on gender stereotypes, whilst one more type of domestic

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bukstipri.lt/lt/statistika>

violence – male victimisation – does not receive bigger attention in scientific practice. One of the possible explanations of such tendency is masculine manifestations in multi-layered postmodernist culture space (Tereškinas, 2003). In Western societies systematic researches on this issue (including aspects of male victimisation in the family) were started to be performed and presented for public discussion only around seventies (Hines, Brown, & Dunning, 2007). However, the biggest share of domestic violence cases recorded and raised for discussion is violence against women and children (Giddens, 2005; Hines & Saudino, 2003). Only about 5 per cent of cases were women physical violence against men (Giddens, 2005), and researches conducted by Hines, Brown, & Dunning (2007) demonstrated (N=246 were men calling the “hot” line) that 43.7% of them were struck by their wives, 41.8% were shoved, 39.2% were kicked and 24.7% experienced punching. However, many authors notice that women violence against men should be analysed in the context of women self-defence, fear (Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Suliwan, & Snow, 2008) and personal freedom (Kernsmith, 2005; Giddens, 2005). Researches performed by Caldwell, Swan, Allen, Sullivan, & Snow (2009) confirmed the fact that main motives of violence against men are related to expression of negative emotions, self-defence, control, jealousy, and tough guise.

Thus, it is acknowledged that domestic violence in principal is gender-based problem, violating the individual's right to freedom, secure life and self-realisation. In scientific literature the problem of defining violence against men is encountered. As it has already been mentioned, the domestic violence phenomenon is mostly analysed in the feminist and child violence aspects. Men victimisation is mostly analysed in the discourse on sexual violence in various social spaces. Normative concepts of masculinity, which so far have been firmly entrenched in the patriarchal Lithuanian society, hinder development of progressive gender relations and at the same time social analysis of the man as a likely victim of violence because masculinity as a cultural form represents political, moral, physical and sexual power. There is a tendency that violence should be treated not through the sexuality prism but as a large-scale human problem. In spite of that, the scientific discourse on domestic violence also starts pointing out sub-feminist domestic violence aspects when a man becomes the victim of violence. Seeking to perceive all aspects of domestic interpersonal violence, it is purposeful to analyse experiences and emotional feelings of the man experiencing domestic violence.

Scientific and practical relevance of the topic presupposes the following problem questions: *How could emotional experiences of the man experiencing domestic violence be described? What are essential components of emotional experience in the violence situation?*

**Research subject:** emotional experiences of men who have experienced domestic violence.

**Research aim:** to disclose emotional experiences of the man who has experienced domestic violence.

**Research methods.** Seeking to disclose and present as broad holistic description of domestic violence as possible, qualitative research approach was chosen. This study was conducted employing **semi-standardised interview**. It is convenient because the conversation is not strictly standardised, there is a possibility for interpretation, conversation takes place in a more liberal atmosphere. The structure of the semi-standardised interview was drawn up after operationalization, distinguishing groups of questions about implied categories, making up the scale of emotional experiences of the man who has experienced domestic violence. During two meetings with the respondent conversations were recorded on dictaphone, later the recording was stenographed and coded. Empirical data are processed using the **content analysis** method.

### Structure of Emotional Experiences: Data Analysis of the Empirical Study

Informant N, aged 59. Was born and grew in the village, was the second child in the family. Father used to drink. N's mother was an unyielding woman and used to show the man his place. When N was 12, his mother died. Step-mother in the family was fond of drink. After a drink there were rows, the step-mother would teach the husband by words, screams and fists. Father would never raise a hand on a woman. When N married, he settled in the house of parents-in-law, where authority was in the hands of the mother-in-law and the father-in-law was calm but greedy for honours. In this family N was only a worker who has never had the right of opinion or word.

Having analysed the empirical materials, the informant's personal experience, the following main categories can be named, related to the informant's emotional experiences as a consequence of experienced domestic violence (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Structure of Experiences of the Man Experiencing Domestic Violence

No	Categories	Subcategories	N <sup>2</sup>	N <sup>3</sup>	
1.	Emotional experiences related to the person	The feeling of worthlessness	23	110	
		Positive self-image	20		
		Shame	19		
		Reconciliation	19		
		Anger	11		
		Loneliness	11		
		Guilt	7		
2.	Emotional experiences related to the wife	Demonstration of arrogance	13	55	
		Demonstration of powers (manifestation of verbal aggression)	10		
		Usage of physical violence	7		
		Ambivalent emotions	6		
		Manifestation of positive emotions related to love, warmth	5		
		“Ostentatious” positive emotions, their demonstration	5		
		Dissatisfaction with surrounding people, distrustfulness	5		
		Strictness, demands of the wife	4		
3.	Emotional experiences related to the environment	Work and relations with co-workers	Shame	10	32
			Feeling of affinity	5	
		Relations with neighbours	Respect	7	
			Shame	7	
		Relations with other surrounding people	Shame	3	
4.	Emotional experiences related to the step-mother	Demonstration of step-mother's authority, degrading of others	9	30	
		Acceptance of the step-mother, reconciliation	6		
		Constant reproaches, humiliation	6		
		Highlighting of difference from the mother	5		
		Experiences of insecurity, guilt feelings	4		
5.	Emotional experiences related to the mother-in-law	Humiliation	6	20	
		Worthlessness	6		
		Anger	5		
		Guilt	3		

<sup>2</sup> N (Frequencies) – number of statements making up subcategories.

<sup>3</sup> N (Frequencies) – number of statements making up the category.

These categories influenced the content of the informant's emotional experiences depending on time and situation. They also had impact on emotions of different purposefulness but negative emotional experiences were prevailing.

Analysing interview materials, most frequently occurring empirical indicators were added: the informant mentioned himself and his emotions 110 times; this should be treated as a central category surrounded by other significant categories: emotional experiences related to the wife (N=55), to the environment (N=32), to the step-mother (N=30), and to the mother-in-law (N=20).

**Emotional experiences related to the person.** The very respondent evaluates himself controversially. On the one hand, he feels being a good man, on the other, he humiliates himself, despises for lack of autonomy, obedience, surrender to his wife. Speaking about himself, the respondent is trying to present himself as a slow and good person, who is sociable and liked by surrounding people, neighbours, co-workers. However, in reality, having analysed research materials, it becomes clear that his good qualities are disclosed only outside the walls of his home. Communicating at work or anywhere else, this man as if changes, discloses himself, opens up. Then his real personal traits show up. However, this is only subjective self-assessment, partially based on neighbours' and co-workers' opinion about him (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Structure of the Category "Emotional Experiences Related to the Person"

No	Subcategories	Examples of empirical indicators (statements)	Frequencies
1.	The feeling of worthlessness	"As people say, small and black"; "...when you don't have cash, you are like a donkey"; "...why should she discuss with me, according to her, can I know anything..."; "...I was called a calf, absent-minded"; "...I was like a hireling..."; "...am I a man if I am under the woman's thumb"; etc.	23
2.	Positive self-image	"...I am calm..."; "tender"; "I don't raise voice or hand against my wife or children"; "I am not feuding, I adjust to the conditions of the environment"; "...I am not violent and I won't; father valued well"; etc.	20
3.	Shame	"Somehow I am ashamed for my wife's whims"; "who likes to be under your wife's thumb"; "...if they knew everything, I wouldn't know where to drop my eyes, then perhaps only the loop of rope remains"; "...it is important that not in the presence of my co-workers..."; etc.	19
4.	Reconciliation	"...it is better to keep silent and wink"; "...it is better sometimes to keep silent than to be struck with some broom"; "I have already got used to her shouting and complaints"; "... you get drunk and then let her say what she wants, let her do what she wants"; "... it is not only me alone who is under the wife's thumb"; etc.	19
5.	Anger	"... sometimes I get angry, then I go off the deep end and say that she is not right"; "...quite many times in my mind I thought that when I get home, I'll show her"; "...sometimes you get angry on yourself and the whole life"; etc.	11
6.	Loneliness/reticence	"...we live in our own world..."; "I stayed alone with my opinions and ideas, they were not interesting to anyone"; "...I used to be reserved; not everyone is brave enough to speak about one's problems..."; etc.	11
7.	Guilt	"...you say something in response, then you regret.."; "you only feel guilty"; "...I felt as if I were guilty"; etc.	7

One of the strongest emotions experienced due to violence in spite of the feeling of worthlessness is shame (N=19). The respondent is ashamed of his maltreatment, he is worried what co-workers, neighbours speak about him. He is also ashamed that he is under his wife's thumb, that she uses violence against him and that others will learn about it. This witnesses the respondent's self-worth. The respondent is more inclined to experience his trouble alone, not to share his emotions with anybody. Due to the intensive feeling of shame there are less communication possibilities, which even more encourage loneliness (N=11).

**Emotional experiences related to the wife.** Emotions to be related to the wife are distributed into 8 subcategories (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Structure of the category "Wife Related Emotional Experiences"

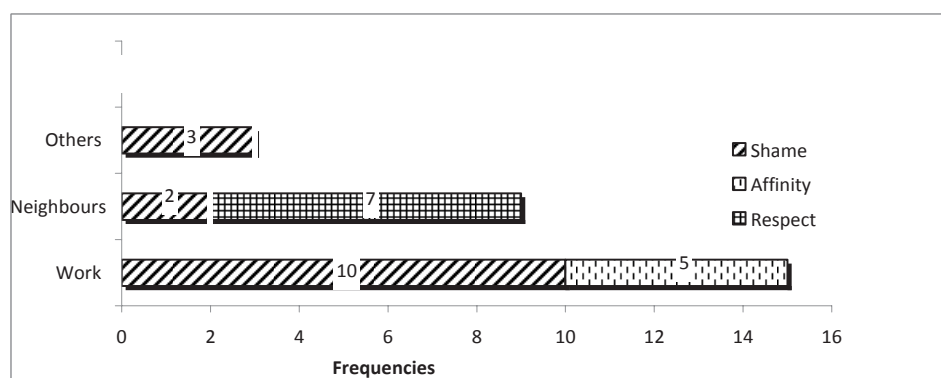
No	Subcategory	Examples of empirical indicators (statements)	Frequencies
1.	Demonstration of Arrogance	"arrogant"; "...cocksure"; "stuck-up..."; "she is wayward..."; "if she is at some party, she doesn't want to talk to neighbours"; etc.	13
2.	Demonstration of powers (manifestation of verbal aggression)	"and my wife would attack me..."; "whatever I did without her knowledge was often wrong"; "she shows everyone's place"; "when we came she made quite a storm, you can say that co-workers remembered its consequences for quite long"; etc.	10
3.	Usage of physical violence	"... she throws the plate too"; "she slaps on the face"; "sometimes throws some stick at you"; "but if somebody made her angry that day, then she will be with a broom in the hand..."; etc.	7
4.	Ambivalent emotions	"I find it difficult to judge how they would describe her"; "I value my wife as a wife"; etc.	6
5.	Manifestation of positive emotions related to love, warmth	"If she is in a good mood, then you speak..."; "...tender"; "let me think; tolerance"; etc.	5
6.	"Ostentatious" positive emotions, their demonstration	"she doesn't have to attempt, she is used to look polite, simple"; "many wouldn't say that she can be so strong when she is angry"; etc.	5
7.	Dissatisfaction with surrounding people, distrustfulness	"she maintains that they gossip about her"; "all the time she finds everything wrong"; "... when neighbours succeed, she doesn't like it"; etc.	5
8.	Strictness, demands of the wife	"Strict..."; "...demanding..."; "...wild"; etc.	4

There are least emotions to be related to the wife's positive traits (*manifestation of positive emotions related to love, warmth*, N=5), and most, to negative (e.g. demonstration of arrogance (N=12); demonstration of powers, manifestation of verbal aggression (N=10), etc.). Having been asked to name the wife's good traits, he had to stop to think. Sometimes he feels respect to his wife because she seeks an aim, wants to distinguish herself from others. In public his wife can behave politely and nicely, create the impression of a well-brought up woman and the respondent notices it. However, most often his wife's behaviour causes only negative emotions to the respondent. The informant is dissatisfied with his wife's behaviour with neighbours, his co-workers and most of all, with himself. The man most suffers due to wife's bad behaviour in public; e.g., *when she destroys men's company and makes him go home*. It is evident that the fact that surrounding people to a greater or lesser degree know about the wife's behaviour with him damages the respondent's male ego. Physical or moral

suffering is not that important for him compared to publicising this to surrounding people (e.g., economic sanctions, particularly publicized (e.g., in the shop, at work) arouse more inconveniences and negative emotions that bigger or smaller physical suffering after the wife's slap in the face or hit).

Caldwell et al. (2009) disclosed in the research that one of the strongest motives of violence against men is related to the control factor. The control motive factor was an interesting combination of items relating to women's efforts to control their partners' behaviour (e.g., "to make him do the things you wanted him to do"). The positive relationship between control motives and physical, psychological, and coercive control aggression suggests that at times women used aggression in a calculated attempt to get their partners to behave in a particular way (Caldwell et al., 2009).

**Emotional experiences related to the environment.** Emotional experiences related to the environment are distributed into three subcategories: work and co-workers, neighbours, other surrounding people. The subcategory of work and co-workers in turn is broken down still in greater detail: emotions of shame and affinity are distinguished. 10 empirical indicators are attributed to the emotion of *shame* (e.g., "... if they knew everything, I wouldn't know where to drop my eyes"; "...I was time and again asked what kind of man I was if I was under the woman's thumb"), of *affinity*– 5 (e.g., "... if the co-worker is ashamed, I'll always help him..."). The subcategory of neighbours is distributed into experiencing of the emotions of shame and respect. 7 empirical indicators are attributed to respect (e.g., "... I value my neighbours well...", etc.), to shame – 2 (e.g., "Shame, so that neighbours should not know what is going on in our family", etc.). 3 empirical indicators representing the feeling of shame are attributed to other surrounding people (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Structure of the Category "Emotions to Be Related to the Environment"

These facts enable to state that the respondent is not indifferent to approaches and attitudes of surrounding people to him and to what he is experiencing at home, his relationships with his wife. Most often he feels shame due to experienced violence. He feels shame with regard to co-workers who time and again have been witnesses of violence and compulsion, to neighbours who live in the neighbourhood and know everything (often see as well), to other surrounding persons (e.g., people met in the shop, friends). In addition to other feelings, the respondent experiences respect to surrounding people for their silent support. He appreciates other people, which is not the case with him. It is evident that the environment is very significant for the respondent's emotions: if surrounding people's attitude is favourable, he experiences positive emotions, but if they see violence against him, he experiences shame.



**Emotional experiences to be related to the step-mother.** It is easy to see several feelings differing in their content in the respondent's emotional experiences related to the step-mother. On the one hand this is acceptance of her as a family member, on the other, highlighting of her bossiness, experienced insecurity, her difference from his mother (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Structure of the Category “Emotional Experiences Related to the Step-Mother”

No	Subcategories	Examples of empirical indicators (statements)	Frequencies
1.	Demonstration of step-mother's authority, degrading of others	“... knew how to show herself and her character”; “...the final word was after the step-mother”; “... when she gave money for me, hers was the decisive word”; etc.	9
2.	Acceptance, reconciliation with the step-mother	“Who else will you love? If the real mother is no longer here”; “...as she said, children need mother and she will act for her”; etc.	6
3.	Constant reproaches, humiliation	“... step-mother would always reproach that I don't help her to do the chores, that I am busy with myself”; “...that I forgot that she did me much good”; etc.	6
4.	Highlighting of difference from the mother	“I did not feel real love as for mother”; “...I often thought that it wouldn't be so if my mother were here”; etc.	5
5.	Experiences of insecurity, feelings of guilt	“There were no very warm relationships”; “...It used to be insecure, I felt not at ease...”; “...”I felt as if it were my fault...”; etc.	4

It is evident that emotions related to the step-mother were changing while the respondent was growing. In the beginning he accepted her favourably. Only as time was passing he noticed step-mother's differences from the real mother (N=5) and started to understand that he felt different feelings to that woman, which differed from those he felt to the dead mother. Partially this is related to step-mother's bossiness, autocracy (N=9), which is likely to be related to the informant's experienced humiliation, worthlessness (N=6) (he felt poor and insecure when there were rows at home, when the step-mother alone managed money, keeping the father under her thumb; being an adolescent, he often had to suffer step-mother's reproaches regarding ingratitude, taking care only of himself, youthful egoism, which was not pleasant (illustrating example: “*black and small*”). It can be assumed that the step-mother's behaviour with the informant was a prelude of long and intensively experienced violence.

Emotional experiences to be related to the mother-in-law. The study has disclosed that the mother-in-law has always exerted emotional and psychological violence against him and in certain cases, economic violence. The respondent felt humiliated, poor, he was always reproached for lower social status and other similar things. The following emotional experiences to be related to the mother-in-law were distinguished: humiliation, worthlessness, anger, guilt (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Structure of the Category “Emotional Experiences to Be Related to the Mother-in-Law”

No	Subcategories	Examples of empirical indicators (statements)	Frequencies
1.	Humiliation	“... I was a houseboy who follows <...> instructions at home and doesn't know anything...”; “...this is how I felt, being humiliated, under the thumb”; etc.	6
2.	Worthlessness	“...no one listened to me, did the way they found it useful”; “...used to call a donkey, drunkard, beggar”; etc.	6

Continued Table 5

3.	Anger	“...it used to be annoying that I was so degraded...”; “in principal we had arguments about work”; etc.	5
4.	Guilt	“Then you regret”; “... only you yourself feel guilty”; etc.	3

Expressing of negative emotions is clearly an important motive for women’s perpetration of domestic violence (Caldwell at al, 2009). It is noticed in the study that participants who scored highly on the expressing negative emotions factor committed more frequent physical and psychological aggression, even when controlling for victimization and social desirability (Caldwell at al, 2009). It is noticed in the qualitative study that the mother-in-law is inclined to humiliate, degrade (e.g., “*used to call a donkey, drunkard, beggar*”), express negative feelings, and her violence used to arouse feelings of worthlessness (N=6) and humiliation (N=6) for the informant. Namely due to this he started to experience anger (N=5) and sometimes guilt (N=3) due to inability to oppose psychological and emotional violence. Complexity of experiences is partially related to inability to oppose: he was both economically and financially dependent on parents-in-law, lived in their home.

### Conclusions

- In research literature Lithuania is quite often presented as a modernising state but the society in which interpersonal relationships develop not so quickly as theoreticians and practitioners would like is still strongly dominated by patriarchal traditions. Thus, according to scientists, normative masculinity, characterised by such traits as bravery, intellect, physical power, does not correspond to expectations of the society. The attitude to men’s domination in important social life areas is in principle changing: increasingly more women participate in science, politics and business. The man is traditionally perceived as the “head” of the family but having lost the most important “wage-earner’s” functions, he experiences strong psychological pressure in the society and even aggression and violence in the family.
- Statistical and scientific research data demonstrate that in violence situations the weak (children, women) suffer most often. However, women also exert domestic violence and here not the gender of the violent person but the interaction (strong and weak) and the kind of used violence are important. Research data show that women, who are weaker, more often use emotional, economic violence and neglect, and prevailing violence is emotional.
- Due to prevailing and still tenacious patriarchal stereotypes (“men do not cry”), present men who want to meet expectations of the society, family and their own expectations are lost in multi-layered requirements. They find it difficult to perceive and acknowledge their weakness, limitation, difficulties, they are not inclined to share this with close family and specialists, and moreover that social connotation of this phenomenon is exceptionally negative. If such stereotypical attitude is formed from childhood, later men find it difficult to learn to speak about their feelings and experiences, address professionals for support.
- The results of the conducted study enable to state that the social image of the man who has experienced women violence is negative, has degrading, stigmatising meaning and is to be valued as manifestation of social stereotypes in the sexuality aspect. Men particularly suffer due to public humiliation and violence against them. It has been identified that the man who has experienced women violence in public would be sneered at and lose the image of masculinity but the woman would not be condemned for that while the man would almost not be supported and sympathised. It should be noted that violence situations take place both in asocial and prosocial families, in which violence against women is perceived as abuse, while violence against men, as protection.



- The study disclosed a broad spectrum of emotional experiences of the man who has experienced women violence: such man feels negative and ambivalent feelings and emotions, which often affect simultaneously and arouse confusion of feelings. Such man feels lonely, embarrassed and humiliated; besides, he experiences shame due to experienced violence act and worthlessness as a consequence of all of it. Due to such confusion of feelings men find it difficult to address for help, despite equal opportunity policy implemented in Lithuania.

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### Summary

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Problems of domestic violence in the context of women violence against the man are analyzed in the paper. Domestic violence became one of the dominating and most controversially valued conceptual areas in the scientific discourse. In 2012, 18268 calls due to violence in the closest environment were registered in the registry of incidents at Lithuanian Police (6472 of them were violence cases against women, 625, against children and 693, against men). However, many authors notice that women violence against men should be analysed in the context of women self-defence, fear (Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Suliwan & Snow, 2008) and personal freedom (Kernsmith, 2005; Giddens, 2005). Researches performed by Caldwell, Swan, Allen, Sullivan, & Snow (2009) confirmed the fact that main motives of violence

against men are related to expression of negative emotions, self-defence, control, jealousy, and tough guise. Thus, it is acknowledged that domestic violence in principal is gender-based problem, violating the individual's right to freedom, secure life and self-realisation. In scientific literature the problem of defining violence against men is encountered. As it has already been mentioned, the domestic violence phenomenon is mostly analysed in the feminist and child violence aspects. Men victimisation is mostly analysed in the discourse on sexual violence in various social spaces. However, many authors notice that women violence against men should be analysed in the context of women self-defence, fear (Swan, Gambone, Caldwell, Suliwan, & Snow, 2008) and personal freedom (Kernsmith, 2005; Giddens, 2005). Seeking to perceive all aspects of domestic interpersonal violence, it is purposeful to analyse experiences and emotional feelings of the man experiencing domestic violence.

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The qualitative study aimed to disclose emotional experiences of the man who has experienced violence in the closest environment. Applying *content analysis method*, five categories describing the structure of the man's emotional experiences and reflecting emotional experiences to be related to the very self, wife, stepmother, environment and mother-in-law were identified. The study disclosed broad and exhaustive spectrum of emotional experiences of the man who has experienced woman's violence: such man feels negative and ambivalent feelings and emotions, which often affect simultaneously and arouse confusion of feelings. Such man feels lonely, embarrassed and humiliated; besides, he experiences shame due to experienced violence act and worthlessness as a consequence of all of it. Due to such confusion of feelings men find it difficult to address for help, despite equal opportunity policy implemented in Lithuania.