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*Sevaste Chatzifotiou, George Filippidis, Eleni Fotou, Spiros Koutsoukis*

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# The use of internet and domestic violence offenders behaviours in Greece

Sevaste Chatzifotiou, *Democritus University of Thrace*

George Filippidis, *Democritus University of Thrace*

Eleni Fotou, *Democritus University of Thrace*

Spiros Koutsoukis, *Democritus University of Thrace*

## Χρήση του διαδικτύου και συμπεριφορές δραστών ενδοοικογενειακής βίας στην Ελλάδα

Σεβαστή Χατζηφωτίου, *Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης*

Γιώργος Φιλιππίδης, *Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης*

Ελένη Φώτου, *Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης*

Σπύρος Κουτσούκης, *Δημοκρίτειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θράκης*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to investigate the correlations between the use of communication technology and intimate partner violence, in terms of manifestations of aggressive behaviours, changes in modus operandi, stalking behaviours and the use of coercive control through communication technology. The subjects of the study are courtmandated offenders (n=21) who are enrolled in a therapeutic program specifically designed for domestic violence offenders. Finally, recommendations for future research and policy and practice are offered.

**KEY WORDS:** Domestic violence, offenders, new technologies, Internet, electronic violence.

### ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Το άρθρο αυτό προσπαθεί να αναζητήσει τις πιθανές συνδέσεις μεταξύ της χρήσης των νέων τεχνολογιών και της συντροφικής βίας, μέσα στο πλαίσιο καταγραφής των εκδηλώσεων των βίαιων συμπεριφορών, των αλλαγών στα συνηθισμένα μοτίβα των συμπεριφορών αυτών από την πλευρά των δραστών, στις συμπεριφορές καταδίωξης των θυμάτων, καθώς και στην άσκηση καταπιεστικού ελέγχου της ζωής των θυμάτων μέσω της χρήσης της τεχνολογίας. Το δείγμα της έρευνας αποτέλεσαν 21 δράστες οι οποίοι κατόπιν εισαγγελικής εντολής παρακολούθησαν θεραπευτικό πρόγραμμα ειδικά σχεδιασμένο για θύτες ενδοοικογενειακής βίας. Από τη μελέτη προέκυψαν ενδιαφέροντα αποτελέσματα και προτάσεις για μελλοντικές έρευνες και πρακτικές, όπως αναλύονται στο κείμενο παρακάτω.

**ΛΕΞΕΙΣ-ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:** Ενδοοικογενειακή βία, δράστες, νέες τεχνολογίες, Διαδίκτυο, ηλεκτρονική βία.

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## 1. Introduction

This study addresses the phenomenon of domestic violence and how it is being compounded by the widespread use of new technologies and the Internet. The purpose of the study is to show how perpetrators of domestic violence use modern electronic means to use violence and threats to their victims. This is a new form of electronic violence, which is being added to the forms we know so far, and in a particularly traumatic way for victims of domestic violence. The investigation conducted via in-depth interviews with 21 domestic violence perpetrators attending the Criminal Intervention Program at the Institute for the Prevention, Treatment of Violence and Gender Equality "BIA STOP", which is a non-profit and accepts victims and perpetrators of domestic violence from various parts of Northern Greece.

In the past two decades there have been numerous policies and legislations in Greece, attempting to address intimate partner and domestic violence. The first formal and comprehensive strategy to combat Domestic Violence in Greece was developed in 2006 (Law 3500/2006), with a series of legislative and policy reforms, as well as the establishment of a network of shelters and women's aid centers (Georgiakaki, 2007). The latest data points that 19% of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in Greece since the age of 15 (EIGE, 2012), with only a small number reaching out to the police (14%). However, for those women who do seek help, there is an organised network of shelters and women aid counselling centers, supported by local, national and international NGOs and public agencies (Safety Net, 2004). Although the legislation has considerations for offender accountability and treatment programs, the lack of formal governmental guidelines has resulted in the ineffective and fragmented application of this component of the law.

The Domestic Violence Amendment of Law N. 3500/06 came about in April 2018, with law N.4531/18. The following key amendments were included:

- The Accused will be prohibited from issuing a firearms permit (this includes hunting rifles and sporting guns)
- Domestic violence is broadened to include same-sex couples (actually the definition of gender is expunged completely, rather the law talks about partners) and former partners
- Marriage below the age of 18 is prohibited
- Customs and religious practices are not above the law, and cannot be used as an excuse to commit a crime
- Stalking is outlawed
- The Istanbul Convention is accepted and inducted in its entirety as part of the Greek Law.
- Protective measures in the form of Orders of Protection for the victims are more actively enforced.

Additionally to the above, the introduction of the Penal Mediation programme for the offenders was added into the Law. This clause in the Domestic Violence Law was innovative for the Greek legislative system. This specific clause offers mandatory specialized counselling for offenders in exchange for more severe measures for their offense, such as imprisonment.

There are three conditions that have to be agreed upon by both the victim and the offender: (i) the offender must move away from the family house for 'a reasonable time period'; (ii) he/she has to offer monetary and other restitution for the harm he/she has caused; and (iii) he/she has to follow a mandatory specialized counselling programme for a minimum of 3 years. In addition,

the offender must apologize for his/her behaviour to the victim and give an 'oath of honour' in front of a district attorney or judge that he/she will not repeat such actions in the future (Murrell, Christoff, Henning, 2007). The psychosocial implications of the law imply the attribution of blame from the offender, the risk minimization to the victim and the normalization of conflict resolution.

## 2. Literature Review

The violence that arises in the relationship of a couple, and it is primarily against the couple of women is a major social problem that is being explored globally, with a large number of surveys in recent years focusing in recognizing the root causes of domestic violence. On the other hand, the Internet intrusion into modern life has brought rapid changes in the way of communication. In the modern digital age, more and more citizens, irrespective of the educational, social, economic and age, they choose to use the Internet to meet their different needs, but many times also to develop divergent behaviors through it (Spitzberg & Hoobler 2002). Additionally, the large spread of the Internet over the last decade has led many users in pathological internet use. Often Internet users who spend many hours in front of the screen develop violent behaviors as well Internet is an inexhaustible source of intense experiences, many of which lead to adopt negative behaviors and standards (Weinstein and Lejoyeux, 2010). The study aims to investigate the violent behaviors manifested by Internet users to their partners as a result of long-term use of the Internet, or the behaviors adopted through it, but also of it nervousness that leads to the Internet's offenders through its long-term use or in from the involvement of users in fields of electronic crime (electronic gambling, cyberbullying, sending and receiving illegal online material, Sexting, etc.) (Fengqiang, Jie Yueqiang, Lei, 2016). It also examines whether the Internet with its negative influence contributes to the practice of any form of violence against victims of domestic violence (mainly in women and children), especially when the victim intervenes when he is staggering on the Internet and spending many hours in front of the screen neglecting other key obligations (Lucero, Weisz, Smith-Darden, Lucero, 2014).

Identifying forms of online violence against women and women girls there are various forms of online violence against women and from women among others, like online tracking, non-consensual pornography (or "Vengeful pornography"), defamation and harassment on grounds of sex, social stigma attributed to women because of their sexuality, unwanted pornography, sexual extortion, threats of rape and life personal information and data leakage, and electronically supported human trafficking (Woodlock, 2017).

The survey focuses on those forms of online violence being practiced in women's and girls' weight and are inextricably linked to violence from a strait partner; the reason is what we already know about the serious impact that violence from a close companion has to the victims. These styles are on-line persecution, internet harassment and non-consensual pornography. Like the violence of a close companion being exiled off the Internet, so does the online violence against women can be manifested by different forms of violence, which include sexual, physical and, as prompted by the growing trends, economic violence from which the present or future job position of the victim is at stake due to information published online. It should be considered that on-line violence might end up physical violence. However, further research into their experience needs to

be carried out about victims of online violence against women and girls, to better understand its impact. There are no common definitions for these forms of online violence women and girls at EU level and, for that reason (Lucero, Weisz, Smith-Darden, Lucero, 2014). The following explanations are based on a literature review. Online tracking or web tracking is tracking via mail, written (or web) messages or tracking through Internet. Tracking involves recurring incidents, which in individual cases could potentially be innocuous acts but will overall could undermine the victim's sense of security and cause it anxiety, fear or disruption. Such acts may include:

- Send emails, text messages (SMS) or instant messages that are offensive or threatening.
- Post offensive comments about the victim on the internet.
- Post personal photos or video of the victim online or through mobile phone. These acts must be committed repeatedly by the same person to be considered online tracking. Internet harassment Internet harassment can be manifested in a number of ways. In the framework of this publication may include:
  - Unwanted emails with sexual content, written (or online) messages.
  - Inappropriate or offensive suggestions on social networking sites or in online chat rooms.
  - Threats to physical and / or sexual violence through emails mail, written (or web) messages.
- Verbal hatred expressed in language that defames, offends, threatens or targeting a person based on their identity (gender) and other attributes (such as sexual orientation or disability). Non-consensual pornography also known as online exploitation or "vengeful pornography", the non consensual pornography includes the online distribution of photos or videos sexual content without the consent of the person who stars in them (Woodlock, 2017). The actor is often a former companion, who acquired pictures or videos at lasting relationship and aims at publicly humiliating the victim for to avenge the end of the relationship. Nevertheless, the perpetrators are not necessarily comrades or former comrades and motivation is not always revenge. The images can also be intercepted by the computer, social media accounts networking or the victim's phone and may be used with the purpose of causing actual damage to the actual life of the target (such as dismissal victim of his / her work) (Southworth, 2002). In recent years, many women's incidents have been reported through the press who have been victims of non - consensual pornography in EU Member States and on United States and several of these women committed suicide. According to research, up to 90% of the victims of venal pornography are women (18) and the number of incidents is increasing. Also, the number of sites associated with vindictive pornography is constantly increasing. To these sites users can post pictures that are accompanied by personal information such as the address of the victim, his employer and links that refer to his / her online profiles. Still another relative trend with equally devastating consequences for the victims is the live retransmission of incidents of sexual abuse and rape in the media of social network. Two projections have already been recorded in 2017 incidents: one in Sweden and one in the United States, according to which live online retransmission of victims' rape via of the "Facebook live" feature (Woodlock, 2017).

A systematic review of the bibliography was carried out within the project (electronic and manual search) in order to investigate the area during the issue which is on the agenda for research and development policy in Europe. The online investigation has been conducted from April 2018 to August 2018 in five databases: PUBMED, SCOPUS, WEB OF SCIENCE, EBSCO and HEINONLINE. The review included all publications issued: a) in English, b) as of January 2006 until

August 2017; (c) had summaries; and (d) focused on the Member States of the European Union. Also conducted by hand search in Greece, Cyprus, Sweden, Austria and Slovenia in 20 scientifically reputable journals of these countries in the fields of "Legal Science", "Social Sciences" and health". In the online search, 136 published studies were found and manually search for another 26, possibly related, publications. After in-depth study of these articles, identified 12 articles that responded to everything the eligibility criteria. On the basis of the analysis, four crucial issues were identified (a) conditions and relations; (b) regulation and access to the fundamental online rights, c) cultural standards and social attitude, d) h support the system. Gender inequality is labeled as basic a subordinate factor. What is clear from its results is that there is little evidence in Europe about the issues. OR setting up monitoring mechanisms could be effective prevention and intervention strategies. Support resources and resources for them directly involved are necessary to facilitate the reporting of abuse; effective victim support and the treatment of the victims. End, more efforts are needed to enhance its awareness problems of the internet users themselves and society (Spence-Diehl, 2003). As in most Member States, the various forms of online violence in the burden of women and girls is not prosecuted, data from police and the judicial authorities concerning the phenomenon are insignificant. Member States in which various forms of online violence against women and girls are being prosecuted criminal data, the data collected are not broken down by gender of the victim and the perpetrator, nor on the basis of the relationship between them, which limits her usefulness of the data. Due to this lack of data, it is difficult to analyze gender violence and to compare violence against women; girls on the internet with violence outside the internet. In the present study an attempt will be made to investigate their behavior perpetrators of domestic violence with regard to the use of the internet or other means communication.

### 3. Methodology of research

**F**or the purpose of this study, qualitative research was the one chosen, during which researchers seek the meaning as well as the way people experience events (Willing, 2001). Qualitative research proves itself useful, as it helps the researchers to develop a more elaborate and thorough account and understanding of the subject being studied, in addition to helping them develop theories especially when they lack full knowledge of the matter upon study. Knowledge in approach and understanding of experiences, tends to be unique (Isari-Pourkos, 2015). The researchers are aware in advance that every social phenomenon, requested to be studied, has already been given an explanation by the very same subjects who are experiencing said phenomenon. Nevertheless, they ought to understand the various ways people experience their social standing and whether they interpret their status in it (Tsiolis, 2015). Qualitative research is characterised from the researcher's pursue to search for and to fully comprehend each subjective insight, belief and experience of a target group related to a case, thus aiming for a deeper interpretation of each case study. The process being followed in accordance to qualitative research, consists of 6 steps: establishment of apparent outline, formation of research question, sample of the research, clarification of the method used for data gathering, presentation of method of data analysis and finally specification of the way being presented and written (Mantzoukas, 2007).

More specifically, researchers observe, analyse and describe phenomena plus reality, objectively. They examine evidence and try to collect as much data as possible, to help them with the

study of each subject. Having gathered the data, they analyse them and demystify them, linking them at the same time with the existing bibliography. It really must be noted that when qualitative research is concerned, portrayal of data is based upon subjective views, judgements and behaviours of the research sample (Eisner, 1991).

In this case, the technique being used was that of Content Analysis. Content analysis as a method of analysis of quality data is a systematic and objective way of describing and recording of the events. It is also known as a method of document analysis, while allowing the researchers to test theoretical matters leading to the best grasp of data. Through context analysis, sorting out the words in sub categories relating to the initial frame of reference, becomes conceivable. It is regarded that when listed in the same categories, words, phrases, etc, obtain the same meaning (Cavanagh, 1997). It is a way of research method for effective recursive and solid conclusions stemming from the original environment data, pointing thus, to the supply of knowledge, to the gaining of knowledge and to the representation of facts and practical manual of action (Krippendorff, 1980). The aim here is for a comprehensive and broad description of the phenomenon and for the analysis result to be meanings or categories capable of describing it.

Context analysis may be used twofold. By inquiry-based and deduction. In an inquiry-based method, researchers are mindful of the existing theories relating to the subject being examined. Data analysis is based on pre-existing theories and current connection with the collectible data, is the new purpose. On the other hand, the deductive method pays less attention to the theory and focuses instead on the data and its results. There, the theoretical background takes a back seat for the researchers, while data is what actually leads to the accounting of the results. In other words, when using the deductive method, researchers are rather focusing on the collection of data, its analysis, on the recording of the results coming from them, and finally they put their emphasis on whether there is or not a connecting link to the theory available. The purpose of such method is, to pinpoint prototype evidence that should stand to shape new, theoretical approaches (Galanis, 2018).

### ***3.1 Methods and research tool***

For this study, the depth interview was used as the primary research tool. It is the most popular form of data collection, in a qualitative research, and the most manageable, to boot. However, special preparation is required from the researchers, because it has to be based upon the very research questions and the scientific principles that they are carried on (Isari & Pourkos, 2015).

Specifically the tool used here, was that of semi-constructed interview. That kind of interview, refers to the presence of a preset set of questions that are construed by the researchers before the research process begins. Those are best be open-ended questions, so that the participant feels free to talk about the researched subject, without the researcher's own intervention and personal views or attitude. The questions, then are being recorded on the interview guide, which the researcher may go back to. During the interview, the researcher may leave something out, add or even change up the line of the questioning guide, in order to get the desired information and to adjust that way the interview to each participant's special requirements. Semi-constructed interview is celebrated for its vast flexibility, researcher and participant, both concerned (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). Choosing this particular tool for the current case, completely serves the relevant research needs. In effect, that means that the researcher was able to be already informed of the subjects needed to discuss with the participants beforehand, ensuring that the research objective be achieved. This style of interview is unique in helping the

participants since they can freely mention what they consider important without any restrictions, whatsoever (Rabionet,2011).

In this particular research an interview guideline was drafted, consisting of the following topic areas;

- Various forms of domestic violence exercised by the offenders
- Frequency of exercised domestic violence
- Importance of exercised domestic violence
- Different ways in which the offenders performed domestic violence
- Internet and its relation to domestic violence
- Ways in which the offenders exercised online violence
- Ways that the victims were abused through online violence
- Correlation of domestic and online violence
- Addictive online behaviours leading to domestic violence.

All interviews were conducted, in accordance to the interview guidelines, by the social worker and Phd holder of the Department of Social Administration and Political Science, who took part in the research team of the above project. The interviews took place in a specially designated area of the non-profit organisation "Violence Stop", ensuring that each and every rule of the Data Protection Act was in place for the utter protection of the offenders in addition to the ethics and methodology of social work governing the research interview, regarding qualitative research.

### ***3.2 Research Objective***

The subject objective here, is the study of the domestic violence phenomenon and how it is related to the offender's interaction with new technologies, more specifically the internet's effect on them. In particular, the reasons leading the domestic violence offenders to such extreme doings shall be analysed and how they are enabled in doing so, by the use of internet. Through the suggested research, will be attempted an outlined profile of the domestic violence offender's personality, and how such violence is amplified via the modern technologies.

Partial objectives of this research is to shed light on the diverse forms of domestic violence the offenders carry out, they way they abuse new technologies in order to threaten their victims, the online mediums used in accomplishing their violent acts, the various ways of accepted online abuse by the victims, the different forms of addictive online behaviours that may lead to domestic violence as well as, the existing correlation between the traditional form of domestic violence and the online one.

Internet is nothing more than a micro-world of modern society; through it's anonymity and vastness it so easily offers, shepherds the domestic violence offenders into adopting violent attitudes and eventually into online violence at the expense of spouses/significant others, by employing a number of ways, as we'll examine later on.

### ***3.3 Research Sample and participants***

Volunteers in the research were 21 domestic violence offenders, 20 men and 1 woman, all of whom participate in the criminal inter-mediation program of the non-profit organisation "Violence Stop". This particular organization specialises in the prevention and therapy of domestic violence and observes both aggressors and sufferers of violence, providing at the same time psychological and social support while offering one to one or group counselling.



The assailants age were between 25-65 years old; more notably, 6 offenders were between the ages of 25-35, 4 men and one woman were between the ages of 36-45, 6 of them were between the ages of 46-55 and finally, 4 of them were between 56-65 years old.

They all were from diverse work environments; 1 of them used to work as a civil worker, 8 were contractors, 6 men and 1 woman were in the private sector, 3 of them were farmers while 2 of them classified as unemployed. In regards to their educational background, 12 offenders claimed to have finished compulsory education, 6 men and 1 woman attended secondary school, while 2 of them were university graduates. Place of origin of the assailants were as follows; 7 of them were coming from a rural area, 7 were coming from a sub-urban area and 6 of the men and 1 woman were of an urban origin.

All of the participants were fully informed of the purpose of said research, of their volunteering, of confidentiality in relation to the interviews, of the guarding of their personal data and consented to the present findings. Furthermore, some of the subjects were in agreement for their interviews to be recorded; those who refused to do so, the notes were written down by the researcher. For the execution of this research, the final approval towards the research team was given by the board of the non-profit organisation "Violence Stop".

## 4. Data Analysis

### 4.1 *Forms of domestic violence carried out by the assailants*

During the interview analysis, becomes apparent that all 20 offenders both men and one woman, implemented a number of ways of domestic violence. To begin with, all of them agree that they exercised verbal violence, whether the victim was their spouse or children. The offenders showcased verbal violence by swearing at their victims, yelling at them, calling them all the names under the sun, judging them, fighting with them and/or slandering them to relatives and friends.

At the same time, along with verbal violence, 18 out of 21 offenders accepted exercising psychological violence while 14 out of 21, consider having displayed emotional violence, to boot. Relating to both those forms of violence, all men and one woman, reported incidents where emotional blackmail was frequent "I would often threaten to divulge the secret past of my spouse to the children". Another offender claimed that "I was indifferent towards E. and I rejected her, I was paying more attention to other women, now that I think about it I accept it and I am sorry about it". Another one reported that "when I got mad, I was giving her the silent treatment for up to three days, no matter how hard she tried to make up". Four of them said that they were pathologically jealous of their spouses, not having any kind of control over it. They were creating fights over non-matters that only now they can recognize were non-existent. We also got the following report out of an offender "I would always criticise her over her religious beliefs, I would just not accept that she'd rather spoil our Sundays by going to the church".

Another form of violence the offenders who participated in our research, reported was that of economic nature towards their victims. Expressly, 7 of the offenders reported having displayed monetary violence to their victims by having the budget management of the household even when the victim had its own salary. An assailant reported "i was never giving her any extra money other than what was needed for the day to day living of our household". Another reports "I already had two credit cards on both our names, but I was the only one who knew the pin

numbers. I could not trust her to shop on her own since she was reckless in the past...". Also, an offender claimed that "I was the only one working, so, it was only natural that I would be the one managing our budget. Whatever E. wanted I got it for her, anyway, I didn't think she needed to handle extra money herself, on top of that".

The most consequential form of violence, and the one that brought most of the offenders to the criminal intermediation programme, is physical violence. According to the data obtained through the interview process, 17 out of 21 offenders said to have shown physical violence. This time it was displayed, always correlating to what they admitted having done, by means of punching, kicking, hair pulling, slapping, pushing, squeezing/pinching, by putting pressure on the throat, attacking them with a heavy or sharp object and twisting of arms. An offender reported "as soon as I realised that she was having an affair, everything went blank. I stormed into the house and started pushing her and punching her, all over". Another stated that "...from time to time i would slap her and when she would get on my nerves, I would pull at her hair. When she reported me to the police, I sprained her hand accidentally, I was only trying to make her hurt". Furthermore, another claimed that "...she would keep on hitting the child, despite my always telling her not to. Last time she did so, I lost control and I shoved her hard. It was only that and she went and reported me for that". Another said "I attacked her whilst she was with her new partner. My mind went foggy when I saw they were having my child with them. I just went for it, and that's when a huge commotion started and the police came"

Finally, a number of the subjects being interviewed, mentioned having exhibited online violence towards their victims. 9 out of 21 domestic violence offenders, reported having threatened their victims using their mobile phone, through social media, through online chat rooms, and via e-mails. We will closely deal with the ways they acted upon those threats below, in another sub category. Our participants had to answer a separate question regarding online and mobile phone related domestic violence.

## ***4.2 Frequency, importance and means of domestic violence***

A separate group of questions given to the offenders was all about the frequency of displayed domestic violence upon their victims. According to their answers, 10 out of 21 offenders regard that they rarely had to use domestic violence or that it was a one off incident and the sole reason a report was filed. Those consider themselves to have been caught under extreme psychological pressure and intense anger and that is what led them to their actions. All 10 of them, exercised physical, verbal and psychological violence towards their victims, 6 out of 10 accepted to have emotionally abused their victims, while 4 of them used online violence as well. 4 out of 21 acknowledged to display recurring violence, meaning, from time to time. Those, stated to exercise violence under specific conditions and only after having been provoked by their victims. Those particular offenders admitted to having been warned by their victims that they would be reported to the authorities, if they continued to behave in any way violently against them, ever again. Out of those attackers, 4 of them demonstrated physical, online and verbal abuse; meanwhile 3 agreed to having displayed psychological, emotional and monetary violence against their prey. Chronic violence, translating to continuous and for a long period of time, 7 out of 21 oppressors admitted to. Those found it hard to believe that eventually they would be reported to the police. Out of those particular ones, 3 admitted to physical violence, 5 to psychological and emotional abuse, 4 agreed to monetary violence and 1 to online violence.

As far as the importance of the form of violence all 21 perpetrators effectuated, and according to their own beliefs relevant to their actions, 6 out of 21 believe to have acted violently upon their prey, 9 of them characterise their displayed form of violence as of moderate violence, whereas the remaining 6 of them believe the force they displayed was extremely light. It has to be noted that the above 6 ones, strongly believe that they were unlawfully and spitefully reported by their targets and they really should not be part of the programme as part of the penalty inflicted on them by the greekjustice. Despite that, they do consider it to be helpful to attend and do wish to fully complete it.

### ***4.3 Forms of in action online domestic violence***

All of the offenders interviewed, claimed to have exhibited domestic violence via the traditional means commonly known up till today. As far as online violence 9 out of 21 displayed, 8 out of 9 said they acted through mobile phones either by cursing or verbally threatening their victims by sending intimidating, extortionate and offensive texts from their mobile to that of their receiver. Those also admitted to making repeated and anonymous calls to their victims with the sole intention of terrifying them.

More specifically, 6 out of 9 oppressors owned up to social media trolling against their significant others. 4 out of 6 said they did so by blackmailing their victims that they would publish revealing photographs of them showcasing intimate moments of the couple (naked/half naked photographs, sexually explicit photographs, re-touched photographs). 2 out of 6 offenders, were also in possession of explicit videos exposing the victims and bullying them that they would leak said videos on social media or expose them to their immediate friends and family through social media again, in case their victims refused to attend to their wishes or in case they fled the abusive relationship. Moreover, 5 oppressors declared that they did publish to their victim's account (Facebook, Instagram) sickening messages about the victims bad mouthing them and offending their dignity and personalities. The reason for acting that way, was to spite the victims for failing to comply to their wants and wishes or to bully them.

Through online chat rooms 2 out of 9 offenders of online violence confessed to having demonstrated domestic violence targeted to their prey, by threatening them and using offensive and crude remarks aiming at their humiliation and disgrace. The same behaviour was cultivated by another of the participants; he was sending threatening emails to his partner along with rude photographic material. Once again, the mere target of the assailants was to make sure they terrify their victims so that they were easily manipulated. 2 out of 3 of them avowed to continue to send alarming and sinister messages to their victims, long after the lawsuit had been filed, resulting in interim measures as seen fit by the authorities.

### ***4.4 Domestic violence and the use of Internet***

As seen above, 9 domestic violence offenders continued to threaten their victims via the Internet or/and mobile phone. Although sticking to traditional forms of domestic violence is extremely harmful to the physical and psycho-emotional state of the victims, use of online violence has been proven to be awfully traumatic for the victims as it exposes them to an unfamiliar environment. Vulgar remarks, defamation, threats, exposure of personal data, smearing uploads, all create a sense of panic and tension to the victims, since exposing them to the enormity of the Internet, alongside the feeling that those evil acts may very well continue to exist online and are near im-

possible to forever delete, most often than not, cause the victims extreme anxiety, phobias, bouts of depression and there have even been reported phenomena of suicidal ideation; something that is rare to come by when dealing only with the traditional forms of domestic violence.

Also, during the current research another correlation between domestic violence and the Internet was unearthed. More specifically, 5 offenders alleged they performed violence against their partners because they were spending time online. The offenders maintained that engaging online caused their significant others to overlook the family affairs and obligations, while 3 out of 5 felt jealous as they believed, without having any indication or proof that their partners were chatting to or seeking another lover. Those feelings of anger and jealousy would often lead to family confrontations and fights as well as enforcement of physical, verbal and psychological abuse directed from the assailant towards the victim.

Lastly, 4 out of 21 perpetrators conceded that due to their excessive use of the Internet, regularly neglected their family and business obligations. Further to this, 2 of them displayed physical, verbal and psychological violence directed at their victims when those kept asking them to take a break and pay more attention to family matters. One of the offenders said "I was hooked on online gaming. Finishing work all I cared about was logging on and start playing, again. More often than not I would not care to even eat. I would play for hours on end until midnight stroke not paying any attention whatsoever to my wife and kids. When they would ask me to stop, huge rows would start. I couldn't control my anger, I thought that I wasn't being an annoyance to them so they ought to stop pestering me, too". The second one out of the two of them, was addicted to online gambling. He would gamble amounts of money vital for the everyday existence of his family. In his own words, "I always used to gamble. I would win and I would lose. When I figured how to play online from my own pc at home, not having to go to the bookers, I got obsessed. I would even get up at 2-3 am just to gamble. I was waiting with bated breath for a game to come up so that I could gamble away. I was no longer watching the games out of pure pleasure like I used to, but now with pure agony to win back my losses. I had secretly used up my family savings and I just kept on playing trying to win back the money so I could return it back and then, I would stop. I kept fighting with my wife as she would constantly tell me how irresponsible I was and how I had ruined them both financially and psychologically. We reached the point of no return due to my gambling passion".

In those last cases, we observe that the form of violence inflicted is not online violence, per se, however it is directly related to either the offender's use or the victim's use of the Internet. It is another parameter demanding special clarification as the dependable relationship of either the offender or the victim with the online world creates negative feelings often leading to, as we have already noted above, stressful circumstances of various forms of domestic violence.

## 5. Conclusions

**A**s the analysis of the data has shown, there is clearly an important correlation between domestic violence and electronic violence. In our modern age, the uncontrolled use of the new technologies and the internet cannot help but influencing greatly the social behaviours of the people and thus leading them to pathological situations and acts. Consequently, the phenomena that are created as a result of that, take huge problematic dimensions and need further research to be explored.

In the same vein, the phenomenon of domestic violence has been expanded from the usual, well known, traditional forms of violent acts to the modern new technology ones, which as the research among others, has shown, they are the same as violent and traumatic as the ones we knew so far. In other words, additionally to the physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal, and economic violence, it is electronic violence that has been added up, exercised through new technologies and the internet.

Electronic violence, may not involve physical pain, but it appears it leaves deeply marked signs to the victim making their lives seem humiliated and unbearable, as this form of violence involves the public advertisement of insulting and humiliated comments, pictures from victim's private life etc. As a result of those acts, victims very often feel overwhelmed by fear, shame, stress, depression, even feel suicidal. Additionally, victims are forced to stay in the violent relationships as they are threatened by the offender to publicize their personal data to the internet, rendering the threat of electronic violence a violent act itself. This approach gives food for thought regarding the conduct of further research of this phenomenon as it can be foreseen that it can be expanded to all age groups and settings such as the home, the work, the social gathering places etc via the cellphones that everyone carries with them 24 hours a day.

Furthermore, it seem to be a phenomenon that is progressing over time as more and more people of young ages are well knowledgeable about how to use new technologies, rendering them potential victim and/or offenders of electronic violence. This was also seen in the results of this study as younger offenders used new technology such as the cellphones or internet at a higher percentage than the elderly ones. Also, the educational level of the offenders seem to play an important role according to this study. Offenders with low educational level show low use of electronics and thus almost none exercise of domestic violence via those, as opposed with the offenders of higher educational backgrounds, who are more likely to exercise electronic violence as they acquire higher knowledge and applicability of new technologies and use of internet.

The research sample is obviously limited and accordingly this study, being a qualitative one, does not claim generability to the results. Still, the researchers claim that the phenomenon is progressing rapidly and suggest further studies to be planned and implemented by social disciplines such social work, psychology, sociology, law, etc., so that more data to be added to the understanding and combating of the issue and to new approaches to the criminality in domestic sphere worldwide

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## Biographical Notes

Dr **Sevaste Chatzifotiou** is an Associate Professor in Social Work at the department of Social Work in Democritus University of Thrace. She holds a degree in Social Work from Educational Institute of Patras, an M.A. in Social and Community Work Studies from University of Bradford-UK, an M.A. in Social Research Methodology from The University of Manchester-UK and a PhD on Domestic violence against women in Greece from the same University. She has published a number of papers in international journals on issues of domestic violence, special and general education, child protection, social work counseling, gender inequality etc. Also, she has written and published a book on domestic violence and social work by Tsiolas publishers, and edited two books one on ethics and values in social work from BASW, by Gutenberg publishers, and another on research methodology by Kritiki publishers. Her main research interests involve work with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, social work methodology and ethics, qualitative research methods, gender inequalities, social exclusion etc.

Dr **George Filippidis** currently works as a social worker at the Special Education High School in Northern Greece and an academic supervisor for Social Work students' practicum at the department of Social Work at the Democritus University of Thrace (DUTH). He holds a degree in Social Work from the department of Social Administration in DUTH, and two M.A.'s in Pedagogy from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and in Health Care Management from Hellenic Open University. He holds a PhD on Internet addiction and electronic juvenile delinquency in Greece awarded by the department of Social Administration and Political Science in DUTH. In the recent past he was the General Administrator of the General Public Hospital of Komotini-Northern Greece and Vice President of the Child Welfare Centre of the Prefecture of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. His main research interests involve issues in social work, addictions, electronic violence, child protection, special and general education.

**Eleni Fotou** is a psychologist and holds a psychology degree (BS' 02) from the University of Utah – USA, and an M.B.A. (in Marketing) from Coventry University-UK. She is a PhD candidate at the department of Social Work in Democritus University of Thrace on partner killing in Greece. She currently works voluntarily as a psychologist in NGO Via-Stop in Kavala-Northern Greece, and has been a volunteer at the psychiatric yard in General Public Hospital of the city. Her research interests are domestic and school violence. She speaks English, French and German.

**Spiros Koutsoukis** is a forensic doctor with a degree in Medicine from the department of Medicine at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He is a PhD candidate at the department of Medicine in Democritus University of Thrace on comparative study of fast diagnosis of recent myocardial infarction. He has worked as a forensic doctor at the forensic yard in General Public Hospital in Kavala-Northern Greece and is a member at the NGO Via-Stop in the same city. His research interests involve theories of crime and delinquency, domestic violence, etc.