

Domestic Violence, Well-Being and Women's Inclusion: Evidence from Northern Ireland

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Abstract : In recent years there has been increasing academic and policy interest in domestic violence (DV) and in the implications of DV for the physical and psychological well-being of those who experience it. Yet, despite this interest, very few detailed empirical explorations of these issues have been conducted to date. Of the detailed empirical work that does exist, most studies have focused narrowly on physical violence and the impact of physical violence on rates of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use. This has often been to the exclusion of wider experiences of DV in relation to psychological, sexual and financial abuse, and of broader victim self-perceptions of psychological well-being that include self-esteem, social participation and quality of life as core components. This paper contributes towards filling this gap by examining these issues on the basis of comprehensive empirical evidence from the Northern Ireland context. Using qualitative methods, the paper presents the findings from 63 semi-structured interviews with women victims of DV from across Northern Ireland. The findings discuss the varied types of violence (physical, psychological, sexual, and financial) that women experience, how these experiences shape their broad physical and psychological well-being and capacity to live active and fulfilling lives and the processes of recovery from IPV. The implications of these findings for research and policy are then discussed.

Keywords : domestic violence, gender equality, intimate partner violence, violence against women, well-being

Conference Title : ICWS 2018 : International Conference on Women's Studies

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : September 20-21, 2018