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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AMONG IMMIGRANT WOMEN: CHALLENGES, CAUSES AND WAYS TO OVERCOME

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**Abstract.** The article is dedicated to the critical examination of domestic violence among immigrant women, focusing on the identification of challenges, underlying causes, and the development of effective countermeasures to address and prevent such violence. The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence in the context of immigrant populations and to unearth the complex interplay of cultural, social, and legal factors that influence these dynamics. The tasks of the research include: assessing the extent and nature of domestic violence within immigrant communities; exploring the cultural, social, and legal contributors to such violence; and identifying the barriers that prevent affected women from seeking and obtaining help. The results of the study reveal a nuanced understanding of domestic violence in immigrant communities, highlighting the multifarious barriers that immigrant women face, from language and cultural differences to legal and systemic obstacles. The results of the analysis showed that the principal issues faced by immigrant women in the sphere of domestic violence include alarmingly high instances of intimate partner violence, with reports from specific ethnic demographics indicating that as many as 61% of individuals may experience such abuse within their lifetimes. Cultural stigmas and language barriers are significant impediments, often deterring immigrant women from seeking necessary help and from leveraging the support mechanisms that exist. Complexities in navigating the legal and healthcare systems of their host countries contribute to a sense of disorientation and lack of support among these women. The absence of confidential and culturally sensitive interpreters in healthcare settings further obstructs open communication about experiences of domestic abuse. The practical significance lies in the article's potential to inform policy-making, enhance service provision, and guide community interventions, aiming to improve the safety and well-being of immigrant women.

**Key words:** domestic violence, immigrant women, cultural challenges, legal barriers.

**Introduction.** Domestic violence represents a critical area of concern within public health and social welfare, particularly as it pertains to immigrant women. These demographic faces unique challenges that exacerbate their vulnerability to domestic abuse. The objective of this research is to methodically dissect the multifaceted nature of these challenges, identify the causal factors within these communities, and formulate effective strategies for intervention and prevention.

The prevalence and patterns of domestic violence in immigrant communities will be meticulously examined, drawing on statistical analysis to establish a clear picture of the current landscape. A thorough investigation into the cultural, social, and legal determinants that contribute to the incidence of domestic violence among immigrant women is imperative. This involves a detailed inquiry into normative behaviors, legal status, and social support structures that either serve as protective factors or barriers to seeking help.

A crucial aspect of this study is the evaluation of obstacles that impede immigrant women from accessing support services. This encompasses language barriers, lack of awareness about available resources, and fears tied to immigration status. The culmination of this research aims to contribute substantively to the body of knowledge on domestic violence and to provide a framework for actionable policies and programs designed to mitigate this global concern, ensuring that interventions are both culturally sensitive and legally sound. The overarching goal is to transform the findings into

pragmatic solutions that can be implemented to safeguard and empower immigrant women against domestic violence.

**Main part.** The purpose of research on domestic violence among immigrant women is to comprehensively understand the multifaceted challenges they face, identify the root causes of such violence within these communities, and develop effective ways to address and ultimately prevent it. To achieve the goal, the following tasks should be solved:

- to examine the prevalence and patterns of domestic violence in immigrant communities.
- to understand the cultural, social, and legal factors that contribute to domestic violence among immigrant women.
- to assess the barriers that prevent immigrant women from seeking and receiving help.

**Material and methods of research.** The literature on domestic violence among immigrant women sheds light on the myriad challenges they face, with studies by Dolan and Zimmerman (2023) providing comprehensive statistics that lay the foundation for understanding the scope of this issue. However, these figures only begin to tell the story. Fonteyne et al. (2023) delve deeper, revealing through qualitative analysis the lived experiences of immigrant women in Canada, underscoring the personal narratives that statistics can often obscure.

Ingram's work (2007) compares help-seeking behavior between Latino and non-Latino victims, uncovering the disparities in accessing support, which is a crucial factor in understanding the obstacles faced by immigrant communities. This is complemented by Ingram et al. (2010), who focus on the experiences of immigrant women self-petitioning under the Violence Against Women Act, highlighting the intersection of domestic violence with legal challenges.

Park et al. (2021) provide a poignant glimpse behind the "veiled door" of domestic violence in immigrant women's lives, emphasizing the veil of silence and invisibility that often surrounds their suffering. The cultural competence in services, as discussed by Rana (2012), is critical in addressing these issues, suggesting that service providers must adapt to the unique cultural needs of these populations.

Runner et al. (2009) offer a broader view of intimate partner violence within immigrant and refugee communities, suggesting promising practices and recommendations that acknowledge the diversity within these groups. Sullivan and Orloff (2013) provide a comprehensive guide to legal rights and resources, which is essential for empowering battered immigrants and navigating the complex legal landscape.

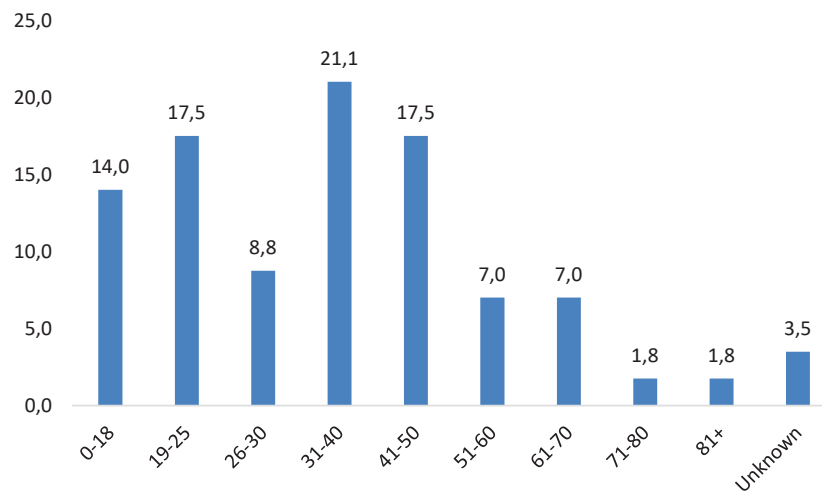
Yoshihama and Dabby (2009) contribute to the body of knowledge with specific statistics on domestic violence within Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander homes, offering insights into the prevalence and nature of violence in these communities.

In synthesizing these sources, it becomes clear that while there is a wealth of information available, much work remains to be done to translate this knowledge into action that meaningfully improves the lives of immigrant women facing domestic violence. The critical takeaway is the need for culturally sensitive, legally informed, and accessible support systems that can navigate the complex interplay of factors affecting immigrant women.

For the research, general scientific methods of cognition are utilized, including a critical analysis of literature to assimilate and evaluate existing knowledge on the subject. This encompasses a comprehensive review of academic journals, reports, and case studies relevant to domestic violence in immigrant communities. A systematic approach is applied to qualitative data through thematic analysis, which interprets individual experiences and social phenomena reflected in interviews and narratives. In parallel, quantitative data are scrutinized using statistical methods, where the line of trend is determined by analyzing past and current patterns of domestic violence instances. Such statistical scrutiny aids in forecasting potential trends for 2023, employing predictive models that consider various socio-economic and cultural variables that could influence future occurrences. This predictive

endeavor is vital for strategizing interventions and policies aimed at mitigating domestic violence among immigrant women.

**Research result.** The global state of violence against immigrant women is a critical issue that transcends national borders. This violence manifests in various forms, such as sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, often perpetrated by intimate partners. The World Health Organization's expanded definition of domestic violence (DV) underscores this, recognizing that such violence can involve not just intimate partners but also other household members. This is particularly relevant in societies with multigenerational living arrangements. Middle-aged women, aged 30 to 50, are more affected. It is confirmed by the statistics of domestic violence in the United States on the example of the state of Louisiana (Fig.1)



**Fig.1. Age range of domestic violence victims in the United States, % (Dolan and Zimmernam, 2023)**

The data shows that the prevalence of domestic violence fatalities varies across different age groups. The group of 31-40 years old has the highest number of victims, with 21% recorded fatalities, indicating that this age range is particularly affected by domestic violence. This is followed by the 19-25 and 41-50 age groups, each with 17,5% fatalities.

The 0-18 age group, while still vulnerable, has fewer reported fatalities at 14%, suggesting that children and teenagers are slightly less affected than some adult groups. The 26-30 age group has 8,8% fatalities, which is lower than the younger and slightly older cohorts.

For those in the 51-60 and 61-70 age ranges, there are 7% fatalities each, which shows a decrease in the number of fatalities compared to the younger age groups. The 71-80 and 81+ groups have the lowest number of fatalities, with only 2% in each category, indicating that domestic violence is less frequent among the elderly population. It is worth noting that similar statistics are recorded throughout the United States, indicating that violence has social and physiological causes (Dolan and Zimmernam, 2023).

Domestic violence among immigrant women is a multifaceted issue, with its roots stemming from both personal circumstances and broader social challenges. Understanding the primary causes of domestic violence in these communities is essential for developing effective prevention and support strategies. Primary causes of domestic violence in immigrant communities:

- cultural and societal norms that may implicitly condone or fail to address domestic violence, leading to its perpetuation (Dolan and Zimmerman, 2023).

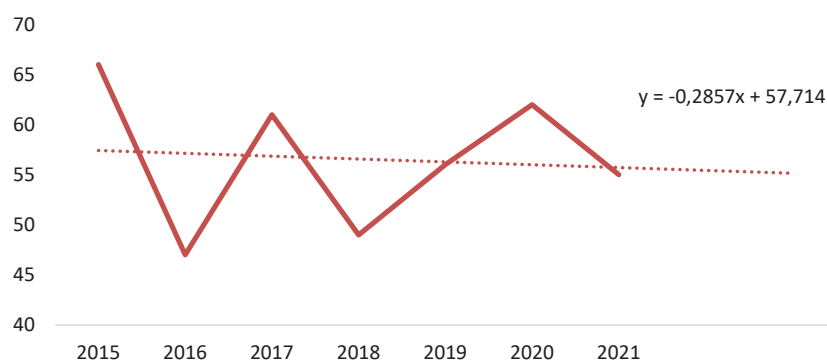
- language barriers that prevent immigrant women from accessing services, understanding their rights, or effectively communicating their needs (Fonteyne et al., 2023).
- fear of deportation or other legal consequences, which may discourage women from seeking help or reporting abuse (Ingram, 2007; USCIS, n.d.).
- isolation from social support networks due to migration, making it harder for women to reach out for help or find solace (Park et al., 2021).
- limited knowledge of available resources and rights, which can leave women unaware of the support systems in place to protect them (Sullivan & Orloff, 2013).
- economic dependency on the abuser, often exacerbated by limited employment opportunities for immigrants, which can trap women in abusive relationships (Ingram et al., 2010).

The stress of immigration and acculturation processes, which can exacerbate tensions within households and lead to violence (Runner et al., 2009).

The impact of DV extends beyond the individual victims, affecting the health and well-being of their children and the broader community. This has led to a global recognition of the need for more comprehensive and inclusive approaches to address and prevent violence against immigrant women, acknowledging the unique challenges they face (Park et al., 2021).

Based on the provided statistics for USA (Louisiana), it's evident that adults consistently bear the brunt of domestic violence cases (Dolan and Zimmermann, 2023). This persistent trend, with adult victim numbers significantly higher than those of children, fluctuates yearly but remains substantially elevated.

Over an eight-year span (Fig.2), the overall trend of domestic violence fatalities in Louisiana indicates a slight decline, yet the numbers largely remain stable. This subtle decrease could be attributed to a variety of factors. Increased awareness and education about domestic violence could contribute to the decline. As public awareness campaigns become more prevalent and discussions about domestic violence more open, victims might be more likely to seek help and report abuse. Improvements in support services and resources for victims, such as hotlines, shelters, and legal assistance, may provide more avenues for individuals to escape abusive situations. Law enforcement and legal system advancements, including more stringent laws and proactive policing strategies, could deter potential abusers and provide more protection for victims. Societal changes, such as shifts in attitudes towards domestic violence and the empowerment of victims through various social movements, could also play a role in the observed decrease.



**Fig.2. Domestic Violence Fatalities in USA by Age Group in USA**

Despite these positive influences, the relatively stable numbers suggest that there are still significant barriers to reducing domestic violence fatalities. These could include systemic issues like

socio-economic factors, cultural norms that may still tacitly condone or fail to recognize certain abusive behaviors, and the complex psychological factors that affect both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence.

It is difficult to statistically demonstrate that the overall trend of violence is on the rise. It can be argued that the statistics of violence has certain periods of growth and decline, as represented by the data for the United States.

Immigrant women are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence and may feel trapped in abusive relationships because of immigration laws, language barriers, social isolation, and lack of financial resources.

The statistical data underline the pivotal role the public health sector can play in assisting these women, particularly through reproductive health services, which are accessed by many women at some point. Health services, like those provided by nurses, become crucial touchpoints for immigrant women. These interactions are opportunities to enhance health literacy, address sexual and reproductive health, and importantly, to screen for signs of DV.

However, the engagement of healthcare providers, particularly nurses, in identifying and addressing DV comes with challenges. Nurses report constraints such as limited time, insufficient training, and challenges related to the behavior of women experiencing abuse. Furthermore, the presence of the partner and language or cultural differences exacerbate these difficulties. Nurses express the necessity for additional education to approach the topic of DV delicately and effectively, to navigate the conversation without causing offense, and to know the appropriate steps to take after a disclosure of abuse.

When abuse disclosures occur, healthcare providers may instinctively adopt a "rescue mentality," aiming to extricate the woman from the abusive environment immediately. However, this reaction may not align with the desires or the best interests of the woman. Many women may not be prepared or are unwilling to leave their partners, influenced by factors such as concerns over children's custody or financial security.

Immigrant women often perceive healthcare services as unsupportive in the context of DV. Research indicates that immigrant women tend to access healthcare, specifically mental health services, at lower rates. The hurdles these women face in accessing health services are substantial and varied. They include limited health literacy, communication obstacles, stigma, fear, and a lack of trust, which may deter them from revealing their afflictions. Additionally, when these women do choose to disclose DV, the healthcare setting often lacks confidential and culturally sensitive interpreters, further inhibiting open communication and support (Fonteyne et al., 2023).

Generally, the health status of immigrant women who endure violence is a multifaceted issue deeply rooted in the complexities of immigration stress and the traumatic effects of domestic violence (DV). The psychological impact is profound, with depression, anxiety, isolation, and suicidal thoughts being prevalent among these women. The trauma of abusive relationships is compounded by the challenges of adapting to a new country, often resulting in a significant toll on their mental health.

Domestic violence against immigrant women is a critical issue that stands out for its complex interplay of cultural, legal, and societal factors. These women encounter distinctive challenges that exacerbate their vulnerability and hinder their access to support.

Let's consider the key problems faced by immigrant women.

- high rates of intimate partner violence, with some ethnic groups reporting abuse rates as high as 61% during their lifetime, spotlight the pervasive nature of this issue within immigrant communities (Yoshihama & Dabby, 2009).
- cultural stigmas and language barriers often prevent immigrant women from seeking help, limiting their ability to utilize available resources (Ingram, 2007).
- fear of legal repercussions, including deportation, further discourages women from reaching out for help, leaving many to suffer in silence.



- navigational difficulties within the legal and healthcare systems of host countries can leave immigrant women feeling lost and unsupported (Fonteyne et al., 2023).
  - the lack of confidential and culturally sensitive interpreters in healthcare settings is a significant obstacle, as it impedes open discussion about domestic abuse experiences (Fonteyne et al., 2023).
- Let's take a look at the main ways of solving these problems used in different countries.

Table 1

### Ways to overcome the problems of domestic violence among immigrant women

Key Problems Including Health	Solutions to Problems Including Health
High rates of intimate partner violence and associated mental health issues	Develop community support programs and provide access to mental health services.
Cultural stigmas, language barriers, and impact on mental well-being	Offer cultural competency training for providers and psychological support services.
Fear of legal repercussions, including deportation, and the stress it induces	Provide legal aid and advocate for immigration laws that protect rather than penalize.
Difficulties navigating legal and healthcare systems and the resultant anxiety	Create guidance and support systems within legal and healthcare to reduce stress.
Lack of confidential interpreters in healthcare settings affecting psychological safety	Ensure the availability of confidential and culturally sensitive interpreters.

Developed countries are addressing these issues through culturally competent service provision that includes linguistic support and legal assistance. By fostering inter-agency collaboration and community resource mobilization, there is a concerted effort to inform and support immigrant women in distress (Ingram, 2007; Rana, 2012). Legal protections, like those under VAWA, play a crucial role in offering immigrant women a safe exit from abusive situations, ensuring their safety and that of their children without the threat of deportation (Ingram et al., 2010). Advocates and attorneys are urged to seek expertise from immigration legal professionals to provide the most effective aid to these victims (Sullivan & Orloff, 2013). Through these measures, a more supportive framework is being built to aid immigrant women facing domestic violence.

**Conclusions.** Domestic violence among immigrant women presents a constellation of challenges that demand a nuanced understanding and a targeted response. The causes are deeply rooted in the intersection of cultural norms, language barriers, legal fears, social isolation, economic dependency, and the stresses of immigration and acculturation. These factors converge to create an environment where abuse can occur and persist with devastating effects on immigrant women.

Efforts to overcome these challenges must be multifaceted. They should include culturally competent services that respect the diverse backgrounds of immigrant women, and the provision of resources in multiple languages to bridge communication gaps. Legal reforms and policies that protect immigrant women from deportation when they report abuse are crucial. Moreover, strengthening social support systems and increasing economic opportunities can empower women to leave abusive situations.

Ultimately, overcoming domestic violence in immigrant communities requires a collaborative approach that engages legal, social, health, and community services. Such an approach would not only support survivors but also work toward preventing violence by addressing its root causes. It's a path that requires persistence, cultural sensitivity, and a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of every individual.

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