



ANALYSIS OF THE FIELDWORK REPORT

CATALONIA
Spanish State



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Introduction

The proposal of GVEI project is to design social indicators to measure gender violence (GV) effects on women's life. It starts from the hypothesis that the existing systems of indicators of gender violence do not pay attention to the specific and multidimensional effects that violence against women causes on women's life¹.

Previous research projects have shown that the fact of suffering GV has a holistic effect in the sense that becomes a transversal factor affecting women in all spheres of life². However, the existing indicators on this field mainly focus on rather legal matters (which only inform about reports, imprisoned males, deaths... and, therefore, do not enlighten about how this experience affects women) or health issues (which are, obviously, very important and do give information about women experiences) and, consequently, keep invisible these diverse and multiple consequences that the fact of suffering such a brutal phenomenon has for women in their life.

Thus, GVEI aims at making visible how violence against women (VAW) affects women in their life as a whole, that's it, in the diverse spheres of their life such as health, employment, housing, economy/income, legal field, children, social relationships and relations with men. GVEI has focused on two kinds of GV, the one that takes place within the partner context and the one suffered in the labour sphere.

The work method for shedding light on these effects has been to recover, by means of the fieldwork, women's voices. In this sense, the methodological approach for GVEI has been based on qualitative and participative research methods because these can capture the subjective experiences of the women who have suffered GV. Thus, women have explained their own perceptions and experiences of suffering GV in relation with the effects that it has had on themselves and their lives. The fieldwork has allowed us to capture these consequences and has provided information on the factors that we need to consider in the design of social indicators to measure GV effects. This report contains the analysis of the fieldwork carried out, with a view to become the main tool in the following phase of the project, the definition of qualitative variables to be translated into quantitative indicators.

1. Method and data

The qualitative research techniques being used for developing the GVEI fieldwork in Catalonia are the following:

- A. 15 in-depth interviews with women who have suffered GV; in particular, 8 women who suffered it in the partner context and 7 at the workplace sphere.
- B. 2 focus groups with experts plus two personal interviews to professionals;

A. In-depth interviews

The key factor used to select the sample was *to be a woman suffering or having suffered GV*, either in the partner context or in the labour sphere. An essential condition was that all women recognised that they had suffered GV. Furthermore, the criteria for women's selection defined in the document *GVEI. Theoretical and methodological framework* (Camarasa and Heim, 2007) were also followed.

¹ SURT, Camarasa, M. and Heim, D. (2007) *GVEI. Theoretical and methodological framework*. In the project GVEI, European Commission's Daphne II Programme to combat violence against children, young people and women (2004 - 2008). Available at www.surt.org/gvei

² Idem.

14 out of 15 women were approached by means of women's associations, migrants associations, shelter houses, Specialised Intervention Centres (public centres for women who have suffered GV) and mobbing/labour harassment associations. The agents of these organisations were informed about the project and sent a letter. They informed the women and asked for their willingness to collaborate and provided us with the contacts of the women. In one case, the woman was contacted through interviewer's network of acquaintances.

It should be stressed that a crucial element in the sample selection was the safety and quietness of the women, which affected in a certain way the development of the fieldwork. In this sense, some women who initially had accepted to participate in the interview, when the appointment approached, either themselves did not feel capable of doing the interview, or the psychologists of the centres where they received therapeutic support asked us to not interview them because they were not at the right emotional moment to talk about their experiences. This fact shows the difficulty and ups and downs of the processes of recuperation of women after having suffered GV. Thus, these unexpected changes in women's situations have made complicated the search for interviewees and forced us to start new searches and contact new agents and potential interviewees. Due to that, the interviewing phase lasted a bit longer than foreseen.

The interviews were carried out by two expert interviewers between October 2007 and early January 2008, and they took place either in SURT's offices, in the intermediary association's offices or in one case in interviewee's home, depending on women's choice. All interviews lasted around two hours. Interviews were afterwards fully transcribed and the most significant parts were put in a matrix for further analysis. This report includes quotations from all interviewees; interviewees having suffered GV in intimate partner context are referred as Paula and the ones having suffered GV at the workplace are named Violeta.

The sample of women who had suffered GV in the partner context was constituted by women of 6 different nationalities, 4 ethnic groups, who had experienced all kinds of violence (physical, psychological, economic and sexual) and from 30 to 59 years old³. From the 8 women, at the moment of the interview, 6 of them were not living with their partner (the time passed since they are separated ranges between one month and 2 years), and 2 women were still cohabiting with the perpetrator partner. One weakness of the sample regarding the representation of ethnic groups is that it has been impossible to have access to any Roma woman, which is an important ethnic group in Spain. It has been due to both the fact that reaching Roma women who have suffered GV is very difficult if you do not belong to the Roma community (this issue is usually dealt within their community rather than accessing to support resources not specifically for Roma), and that Roma women would not talk about this issue with a non-Roma woman. Thus, for further research it is recommended to include a Roma mediator to reach this target group.

The sample of women who had suffered GV in the labour sphere was integrated by women of 2 nationalities, one ethnic group, who had experienced psychological, physical and/or sexual violence at the workplace, from 29 to 56 years old and who worked either in the service sector or in the industry⁴. Once again, it has not been possible to reach a Roma woman who has suffered GV at the workplace. We are aware that Roma women are also exposed to this kind of violence but they usually do not access to services like trade unions or other ways of defending collective rights but deal with the issue at a communitarian (Roma) level.

With relation to the age criteria, it has not been possible to include 5 women of the youngest group, the one with women up to 30 years old. What we have found in our search is that the support organisations contacted had as clients mainly older women. Thus, finally only 3

³ A more detailed description of the sample can be found in Table 1 in the Annex.

⁴ Table 1 in Annex provides the profile of the interviewees.

women under 31 years old were included and, in the older group (+45 years old) 7 women were included.

The technique being used has been in-depth interviews, with a view to capture the experiences of women voiced by themselves without asking direct questions but general ones. In this sense, the interviewer had in mind the script covering the 6 dimensions agreed by the partners to explore within GVEI fieldwork, in order to rise any of them in case it/them did not come up spontaneously.

B. Focus groups

SURT team carried out:

- one focus group with experts of GV within the partner context, with professionals with the following profiles: one psychologist and one jurist from university/research centres, 3 psychologists working with women who have suffered gender violence; one social worker and one social educator supporting battered women in their processes of labour insertion.
- one focus group with experts of GV within the labour sphere, with professionals from the office for victims' attention, who work attending women and supporting them during the legal procedure, and a social worker from an anti-mobbing association;
- two interviews to professionals working on the issue of violence at the workplace, one from the Women's Secretary from an important trade union in Spain; and one psychologist plus a mentor from an association against labour harassment.

2. Violence in intimate partnership – women's perspective

In this section, the analysis of the results of the interviews carried out with women who have suffered GV in intimate partnerships will be done. It will be presented following the 6 dimensions identified in the previous stage of the project, in the definition of the theoretical framework and the process of conceptualisation.

2.1. Understanding gender violence in intimate partnership

All the quotes exposed in the following sections are illustrative enough to explain what violence in the partner context means to all of the interviewees. Women describe how they suffer due to physical aggressions, including sexual relations against their will; to economical violence, as the control of economic sources that partners exercise; to psychological aggressions, as insults, threatens, control over their movements and relationships, by hindering women to do things they want to do, as studying, working or going out from home.

The following quotes are some examples of what women understand as GV in the partner context (including examples of physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence):

"My daughter was born and ten days after I still had the stitches of the Caesarea, and he took me by my hair and dragged me from the main door to the bedroom". (Paula6,43)

"Lately we were living in a hostel (...) and as he went out, he locked me inside (...). He always was asking me for the money and if I didn't give it to him, he hit me (...). One day he gave me a stab". (Paula1,49)

"It is very difficult because you live with someone who is always telling you, since you get up until you go to bed, that you are useless, that you are nobody". (Paula6,43)

"The last two months he began to tell me that I should go back to my country or wherever I wanted but the child was staying with him, because I didn't have documents and nobody wanted to be with me and all of that". (Paula8,30)

"My husband always has humiliated me, insulted me (...) And he used to tell me that he was going to take the children away from me because I was a foreigner and I was going to end in the streets, that I was going to be a servant (...) That I was not useful at all, that I was a sack of potatoes, a piece of meat with eyes...." (Paula2,58)

"He hit me a lot, he hit me with anger and then he took me and then I had to go to the hospital (...) And he turned to the same, to followed me, and he made me pregnant". (Paula5,38)

2.2. Gender violence effects

2.2.1 Health

On the health dimension, the effects that the interviewees outline are of three main types, physical, psychological and to a lesser extent, sexual/reproductive.

Physical health

At the physical level, we can identify two main types of effects; on the one hand, the physical injuries that are direct consequence of the GV, which many times are very serious and require hospital treatment. And, on the other hand, other physical effects that women suffer during the period that GV takes place but which are not a direct consequence of a physical aggression. Firstly, with relation to the lesions derived from physical violence, interviewees point out injuries such as fractures, bruises, blows, wounds due to a knife, broken teeth and unconsciousness, requiring some of them medical attention or even hospitalisation due to the hard injuries:

"A blow here in my leg that caused me a bruise (...) I stayed 15 days with my leg that I could not... I hardly could walk" (Paula3,40)

"He broke my teeth, I have false teeth. (...) He cut me with the knives (...) and forced me to eat the blood (...) and one day he wounded me with a stab" (Paula1,49)

"He broke 3 fingers of my hand (...) the face fractured, blows and blows"(Paula5,38)

"Lesions in my wrist. I had many bruises because he threw me things" (Paula7,37)

Secondly, interviewees stress several physical effects that cannot be attributed to physical aggressions but that women relate to the situation of violence being suffered (either physical or psychological, economic or sexual). It is noticeable that even chronic illnesses can be aggravated due to violence.

"I had the blood pressure very high, I always have it high and now, thanks God I am stabilized again" (Paula1,49)

"Lately I have been sick, because if you think of it, it [the situation of violence] comes out from any part of your body" (Paula2,58)

In this sense, women also outline a wide range of physical effects such as headaches, muscular pains, urine infections, sickness, tiredness, increase of weight,...

"I have increased in weight as an animal because now I weight the double of what I used to weight. I weighted 54 and now 100 Kg" (Paula2,58)

"I increased in weight a lot, I looked like an old woman" (Paula4,39)

"A very hard muscular contraction in my back. Every time I argued with him I had a terrible pain in this part of my back, and it lasted, lasted until one day when I wanted to get up in the morning, I felt down to the floor and... and I vomited (...) I tried to stand up and I could not (...) and, well, since I left him I do not have more pain" (Paula3,40)

"I never had urine infections; and when I was with him I had them, and now I do not have them anymore" (Paula1,49)

"I look like an 80 years-old woman. I had pain in my legs, in my muscles, in the nerves of my hand... everything. (...) Tired, very tired" (Paula6,43)

"Many [headaches] until the extreme that I said I could not stay at home anymore" (Paula3,40)

Psychological health

When women describe how violence affects or has affected their psychological health, many of them still present a very weak and affected psychological condition, which shows how devastating is, for any woman, to be exposed to a continuous experience of violence; this vulnerable state in many cases lasts for several years even after finishing the relationship with the perpetrator of the battering. Psychological violence (solely or jointly with other forms of violence) is very painful for women, since it affects them in a broad sense, from their feelings of self-esteem or identity to their attitudes, activities or family and social relations. The psychological effects of GV are extent and diverse, and as we will see, leave women in a very vulnerable situation, which affects all spheres of their lives.

Women present a state of a deep emotional weakness, experiencing feelings of sadness, auto-blaming, distrust or apathy; sensations of fears and anxiety, or event thoughts of suicide, being all of them included in the symptomatology of a depression.

Women themselves use the terms "depression" or "depressive" to describe their emotional state, voicing states of sadness and the need to cry:

"I have felt very badly, and always with depressions (...) I have fallen down in huge depressions, but huge ones" (Paula2,58)

"Much, much, much, much depressed, I did not feel like doing anything, I cried at every moment" (...) I only wanted to stay at bed and spend the whole day crying, crying" (Paula1,49)

"I felt very bad, I had a very badly depression, I went through many problems and I felt I did not go back on my feet and every time I felt worse, morally I was very bad" (Paula5,38)

"Very bad, very bad, very bad (...) I do not feel like doing anything (...) Every evening I say: I hope it takes so long to get light, that night lasts for so long, long" (Paula6,43)

"I cried a lot, you do not stop crying... you are always sad" (Paula7,37)

They also voice a state of unease that influences their mood for carrying out activities, feeling unwillingness and listlessness:

"I had periods when I could not raise my spirit because I felt bad, but bad, bad... I did not feel like painting, mopping, sewing, nothing... (...) Then I came to that point that nothing matters to me..." (Paula2,58)

"My daughter tells me why I do not get out, why I do not make-up, but I do not feel like, I do not feel capable of doing things that for everybody are normal, ordinary life, but not for myself..." (Paula6,43)

They stress other specific feelings that describe how the violence perpetrated against them hurts their self-esteem and affects the own image they have from themselves:

"I have always felt like an ant, I have felt very badly (...) because these are moments when you see yourself such a little thing, so insignificant..." (Paula2,58)

"I did not feel valued; I felt like a shit, a shit, a shit (...) I felt very useless" (Paula1,49)

"Psychologically, he makes you feel you are useless" (Paula7,37)

"I have felt myself such a little thing" (Paula3,40)

And feeling themselves annulated, useless, destroyed, with no life...

"I feel offended, I feel as he has stolen many things of my life, things that..." (Paula3,40)

"I was an annulated person, annulated" (Paula1,49)

"It destroys yourself as a person" (Paula5,38)

"I do not have an own life, do not have it..." (Paula6,43)

Interviewees also have feelings of becoming crazy and loosing their capacity to concentrate or fulfil any activity, because the GV situation captures all their thoughts:

" You are silly, like crazy, as if you were in another world" (Paula4,39)

"In this situation you cannot think properly, you cannot act right. For instance, I am at a point when I cannot take any decision for the simplest things, my mind is blank, I can't think, I can't take any decision, anything. Every time I think, more and more and more, but I don't see any ending, I don't know what to do..." (Paula6,43)

"It is such an important situation, which absorbers all your thoughts, you can't think of anything else" (Paula5,38)

Women express a general state of despair and defencelessness due to the fact that they find themselves immersed in a situation of desperation, constant and endless suffering, from which they do not feel capable to escape. The following quote, voiced by one of the interviewees illustrates quite well such a tough and global condition:

"Do you know the hell? The hell, I felt myself in the hell". (Paula7,37)

Some of them openly voice feelings of committing suicide due to this despair:

"I wanted to kill myself, I wanted to go under the train, to kill my children.... but all of these were just thoughts, huh, thoughts, I have never ended up trying it, neither with my children nor with myself, (...). Once I was so desperate that I said, look, I throw myself to the underground and everything ends up" (Paula2,58)

"The only thing I wanted was to die, to bury myself alive (...) I took medicines for the depression, a lot. And sometimes I thought in taking all of them... I have tried three times to commit suicide" (Paula5,38)

"Very bad, very bad, very bad (...) I do not feel like doing anything, even living... I swear that if now someone would take care of my children, I... [tears]" (Paula6,43)

In many cases, they feel guilty in relation to their violent experience, as if they had any part of responsibility, and as if they wanted to find an explanation and justification to a situation they do not understand. Thus, they show auto-blaming:

"Sometimes I felt guilty, but not now, not now" (Paula1,49)

"Yes, yes, I think I am guilty (...) I thought he was right, that I was useless" (Paula6,43)

"I had not done anything wrong but I do not know, I felt it was my fault (...) When he shouted at me or insulted me, I told myself: what have I done wrong now? I felt guilty, yes (Paula8,30)

"Not so long ago, I blamed myself, until I started to see all of this for the diffusion it has had, I felt myself guilty..." (Paula2,58)

The situation of violence provokes embarrassment to women not only towards people who know their situation but to anybody outside their confidant's circle. It is like an internal embarrassment, in the sense that their low self-esteem and their auto-blaming feelings make them feel embarrassed of being mistreated.

"And you start isolating yourself, you do not want to participate in group because you feel ashamed, because maybe your experience is embarrassing, because if you tell something they will laugh at you. And you feel embarrassed" (Paula5,38)

"and then you feel yourself as if you were an ant, you feel that you have to cower because you feel embarrassed to be with people" (Paula2,58)

Interviewees refer to their loneliness, and it is perceptible that even in cases when they can voice the situation of violence, they still feel alone in the experience they are going through:

"I felt lonely because I felt empty, empty, very empty" (Paula1,49)

"When you have so many problems that you feel so lonely and you cannot talk with anyone and you have to put up with it, step by step you become unwilling to do everything" (Paula6,43)

The violence also causes women fears of their partners, specially when they are still with them, but also when they leave the partners. It is noticeable that interviewees also suffer much fears with relation to their children, being afraid that their partners cause harm to them. One interviewee, apart from these fears, also refers to fears associated with the fact of communicating the violence experience:

"And I remained at bed, I wet my bed, I remained urinated at bed the whole night, due to the fright and the fear I had, and I stayed there" (Paula2,58)

"Fears went on in the sense that he could harm myself, anytime.... many times he threatened me to death (...). And also with the fear of leaving him [the son] alone with him" (Paula3,40)

"Then you have such a huge fear... I looked at him and I shivered, entirely, I was frightened... (...) I had such a huge fear to him that I did everything that he wanted, everything... (...) When I just arrived, I looked everywhere, the trees, the branches, behind the walls, because right now I can live a bit quiet, but always with certain anxiety..." (Paula5,38)

"They [men] are causing so much harm to us, and we are very afraid of revealing this harm. We are afraid of them" (Paula3,40)

Nevertheless, they also voice feelings of hatred and anger towards their aggressor:

"It comes a moment when you despise him, you hate him, you say: I wish he was not alive, because he hurts you so much, so much" (Paula2,58)

"It was just to look at me and I looked down because... I couldn't... it was hatred... I feel hatred,... I feel that if he talks to me I cannot look at him, I can't" (Paula3,40)

"I feel much anger, I can't do anything, I don't know what to do, I don't know..." (Paula6,43)

"I have gone through all the phases: indifference, to want to find a dead man at bed, to wish he had a heart attack, hatred,... " (Paula2,58)

GV in intimate partner context also affects women in their sleep, by causing them insomnia:

"I suffered a lot, I could not either eat or sleep" (Paula7,37)

"It was 2, 3, 5 o'clock at night and I could not sleep" (Paula3,40)

"I have anxiety, I cannot sleep, I suffer so much, so much, so much..." (Paula6,43)

Due to the GV experience, 5 out of 8 interviewees had the need of taking medication (anti-depressive and tranquillisers):

"I am taking medicines, pills for the depression and afterwards to sleep"
(Paula1,49)

"It is a long period, years that I am taking medicines. I am with Prozac"
(Paula4,39)

"I am full of prescriptions, like tranquillisers (...) my whole life, and I still take them, I am having sessions with the psychiatric. Yes, Prozac" (Paula2,58)

And 6 out of 8 women had the need of psychological/psychiatric attention:

"And the psychologist told me that I was so bad, so bad that she sent me to a psychiatric" (Paula5,38)

"I have passed through many psychiatrics, private and public ones. And the psychologist has helped me a lot as well, she has helped me to get this out of me and I have cried a lot as well" (Paula2,58)

"I go to the psychologist here, in a therapeutic group for mistreated women" (Paula6,43)

Sexual/reproductive health

Sexual violence is still a taboo for many women and, although some interviewees have implicitly accepted that they have suffered sexual violence perpetrated by their partners, they have not talked about it in a direct way. Consequently, the effects at sexual and/or reproductive level of this violence have been voiced by few interviewees.

On the basis of these, the main sexual/reproductive effects identified are the transmission of sexual diseases and pregnancies due to violations.

"He transmitted to me a venereal disease (...) they [doctors] made me a cytology test and I had a sexual transmission infection" (Paula1,49)

"violations... (...) He hit me a lot, he beat with anger and afterwards he mounted me by force ... (...) and after one month and a half more or less I realised that I was pregnant... and the only one thing I wanted then was to die" (Paula5,38)

2.2.2 Relationships and social life

This dimension refers to the analyses of the effects that GV has, on the one hand, on the relationships women have with their family or relatives, friends and colleagues, neighbours and men in general, and, on the other hand, on their implication in social, cultural and leisure activities. Taking into account the enormous impact that GV has on the psychological state of women while suffering such experience and even after it finishes, it is not surprising that their relationships with the others and their willingness to participate in social activities are also deeply affected.

Children

All women of the sample are mothers and due to the violence experience, the relations with their children are very affected. Although many of the women voice issues concerning the effects that GV have on children themselves, we only focus on the effects that GV has on women regarding their relationship with them. Depending on their age and, linked to this, on whether they live or not with the mother, the consequences may be a bit different.

Some women outline that due to GV the relationship with their children (specially the adult ones) is being affected because they miss their support:

*"When I was with him, the relationship with my children was very difficult, they couldn't even see him".
(Paula1,49)*

"And my children got used to believe that I was mad (...) and they also mistreated me, especially one of them, he also made me feel isolated until he realized that I am not mad at all". (Paula2,58)

"My son was talking to me like his father did (...) At the end, because I was hiding all that from the child, I was damaging myself, I almost lose my son because of that". (Paula3,40)

Other times, women experience the opposite, that is, they feel they have the support, affect and understanding of their children and voice how they are or were worried for the well-being of their mothers:

"Not while I was with him [the partner], but since I was not more with him, they have stayed by me, when I have needed them, they have given support to me". (Paula1,49)

*"And my children used to tell me that they loved me so much, that it was a terrible decision [to go out from the country], but that they always were going to be on my side, and then, they started to give me support and affection, and they told me that the only thing they wanted was to see me all right".
(Paula5,38)*

"My son tells me that when I leave home, he will come with me". (Paula6,43)

"My sons have been lovely (...). They remember many of the things their father did, they don't like me to talk about him (...) For me, the best is the family, because there you have affection, love, and it is the most important, the calm, the games, the support among each other, it is wonderful". (Paula7,37)

All women in the sample, as mothers, have developed strategies to protect their children, guarantee their safety and avoid their suffering, which turns out to have the priority over their own safety. Most of the interviewees express concern about the well-being of their children and try to hide their own suffering and appear calm in front of them. Thus, it is remarkable that despite the vulnerable situation and poor psychological state of women during this period, they put their best efforts in protecting their children, pretending to be alright. In these moments, children become essential, not only because women are devoted to their protection but also because they get the strength to resist and fight from them; their children give them a reason to live and to confront all the difficulties they find during the violent period but also afterwards, as women being the lone responsible of their children:

"What I was worry about was that my children had peace and calm (...) I moved away so that I didn't cry in front of them". (Paula2,58)

"That's why I got the urge to go out from home... so that he couldn't see anymore, or hear shouting, so that he didn't hear treating a woman scornfully". (Paula3,40)

"Then I started working, always thinking on my children (...) And I fight for her and for my other two children, but the truth is that, all that I make, the effort, is because of my children (...) I cannot break down anymore, I have three children and I have to live for them". (Paula5,38)

"I was afraid for my children because as he[the partner] took drugs and drank, it was impossible to be there (...) And that affects you, if you are not calmed, you cannot give calm to your children (...) they have to see that you feel confident. You have to show that you have not fear, although you feel terrible(...) I am a woman who wants to protect her family". (Paula7,37)

Nevertheless, for one interviewee, to resist and keep on cohabiting with her partner (and, therefore, keep on suffering GV), is the only option to protect their still young children, due to her situation as migrant without work permit and without labour perspectives:

"I think of my children (...) if it only would depend on me, I would live even under a bridge, in a park, but with the children (...) If I leave, he is going to get angry and they will pay for it. So that's it, although they are not blame for anything (...) To finish that, I have to look for a job, to solve that with my documents, because of the well-being of my children". (Paula6,43)

On the basis of the previous quotes, we can see that children are a core element in the lives of these women; considering the hardness of the GV experiences, the fact of having children even makes the experience more tough because women doubly suffer, for themselves and for their children, and any decision they take must take into account their children. Within this context, children give strength to women but also may limit them (e.g. (Paula6,43)).

Other family members/relatives

Concerning the relationships with other family members apart from their children, some of the interviewed women, as they do with their children, hide to their parents or other relatives the problem they are suffering, in order to avoid them any concern. This decision, however, sometimes causes them loneliness:

"No, I did not explain anything to the family; every time they saw me with a black eye, I told them I have fallen down". (Paula1,49)

"My mother was very ill and I couldn't tell her that, I didn't want to cause her a worry, because she was ill with heart troubles and I had to keep silent". (Paula6,43)

"I didn't tell anything to my mother, only when I separated (...) but I didn't explain to her the reason, because I thought she was going to be worried". (Paula8,30)

Other times, women who trust their relatives and tell them what they are suffering, find the support and the affect they need, which is highly valued for them:

"My siblings were calling me constantly, telling me to go to their place if I was alone, and not to stay alone in the flat. My mother moved near me and she was constantly worried, going from her flat to mine so that not to leave me alone". (Paula5,38)

"My family helped me a lot, my siblings told me to go out from home (...) And my mother and my sister gave me support and paid there (in Morocco) a lawyer for the issue of the divorce. My sister sent me money for the rent of the first flat". (Paula7,37)

There was only one interviewee who, in spite of trusting her situation to her family, did not find any support and felt alone because of their reaction:

"I felt very lonely because neither my own family believe me" (Paula4,39)

Men

Concerning relationships with men, women who are separated and living alone, deny, in a short and mid-term, to have wishes of having any other intimate relationship with a man. They state to feel distrust, fears of finding a man like their former partner or fears of failing as woman, because of the low self-esteem caused by the GV experience. Thus, women clearly express that at present they do not think about having another partner.

"I don't think about it [to be with another man], because I don't feel like doing that, I don't miss sex, not a bit of it. I suppose that it is due to fears (...) I am ready but I don't have the will. I don't want to be mistaken". (Paula1,49)

"And even sex...no, I don't feel like it at all (...) I feel bad because... I cannot now... I cannot return... to feel myself a woman, to feel ... The idea of being with another man, that he watches my body, that he sees all that the other always said about me (...) so many times that he told me that I am useless (...) A fear of failing to another person... to be with another person. ¿Do you think I will be able to feel like being with someone?, ¿That I can trust in another man?" (Paula3,40)

"I am alone since years, in fact I don't have even a partner, I cannot settle down with no one because I feel extreme frightened, because I have distrust (...) I feel panic of being alone with any man". (Paula5,38)

"You cannot go out with a man when you just have finished a hard experience (...) Of course it affects you, you don't accept anyone. You don't believe in men, I don't trust in men". (Paula7,37)

"After this experience... all that of building a family, what for? Better without them". (Paula8,30)

However, some of these women when thinking about the future they show less intransigence regarding this issue, not dismissing the possibility of having new relationships in the future, of having sex with a man or accepting that men's glances make them feel good. In addition, some women state that they do not consider that all men are the same, which is a positive thing.

"Now I am at a moment that if I fancy some one, and if a chance presents to have one-night stand, with preservative... then well...". (Paula1,49)

"Well, in this moment, as I feel... I don't, but the few times I have gone out, I feel men looking at me, and I feel alright, it has raised my spirit a lot". (Paula3,40)

"I do not want to generalise all men, but it has also changed me (...) I want a calmer family with my children, yes, I want calm. And if any man appears, well, but if not, also well". (Paula7,37)

"I don't think all men are the same, but to find a man who I like, I think it is very difficult(...) Now I don't want to be with a man, in the future I don't know". (Paula8,30)

Friends

Due to GV, women experience consequences regarding their relationships with friends. These consequences take place both during the violence experience and afterwards. During the violence period, many women suffer the loss of friends due to their partners; women whose partners used to control and threaten them if they had contact with friends –another way of psychological abuse that sometimes is perpetrated- voice that it provoked a rift between them and their friends, losing some of them, and feeling loneliness because of that:

"I have lost many friends because of him (...). My friends, [name of two friends] annulled, it changed the relationship I had with them". (Paula1,49)

"Losing friends (...) because he always found them defects, to everybody (...) he throw out a friend from home (...) he wanted me alone at home". (Paula3,40)

"And then, everybody was afraid of being with me because my husband threatened everyone he saw with me...I was remaining alone". (Paula5,38)

"I have no friends, he tells me to look for friends but if he doesn't like them, he tells me they are bitches (...) I am afraid of inviting someone home, because I am afraid that, one day, he is going to say something he doesn't have to say, I am afraid of all (...) I have nothing, since I married him I have no social life, no friends". (Paula6,43)

When women have the possibility to meet their friends, free from the control of their partners, or in spite of it, friends, as many times relatives, are a strong source of support:

"I had friends, I told that to my friends (...) and they have always believed me (...) although he was jealous of them and tried to separate me from them". (Paula2,58)

"I had told that to people close to me, for example to a friend, and she used to tell me that I should leave him". (Paula7,37)

"Yes, I do have friends here (...) I called my friends and I told them what was happening and they told me it was quite right that I left him at last, because all of them knew how we were living and none of them liked him (...) They told me to go with them, when I could not stand up anymore (...) they helped me a lot". (Paula8,30).

Only one of the interviewees state that she does not find support from the side of their friends, she feels distrust of telling them about it:

"I cannot tell any friend that I am battered because they do not understand you (...) It is very difficult that they believe you at first, and the society pushes you away". (Paula4,39)

Once the violence experience finishes, and after resettlement to the new phase of their life, some women recuperate lost friends and/or gain new ones. However, in general, women having suffered GV in the partner context do not have big social circles. It can be explained by the fact that the process of recuperation and the re-start of a new life is a long way and, therefore, rebuilding or establishing social nets may also take some time.

Colleagues

The support during the GV experience sometimes also comes from colleagues from work if women trust them and tell them about the situation they are living at home. It is remarkable that for women whose partners control and limit their contact to other people, colleagues from work may be the only kind of social relationship they have access to:

"When I run away from home I didn't go to the social services, I called a colleague from work and he came to pick me up (...). The friends I was working with, colleagues from work, helped me quite a lot". (Paula7,37)

"My boss and my partners always saw me crying and they used to ask me... and one day I told them what was happening and that I was extremely sad (...) They wanted to help me but they didn't know how". (Paula5,38)

This woman ended up losing also the support of their colleagues because the violence and threatens of her husband even reached them. The following quote illustrates once again how GV in the partner context affects at the same time different aspects in women's lives:

"My colleagues at work accepted me but they took distance from me because of fears of him (...) One day, as I was with one of my colleagues, I met my husband and he almost hit her, and after that, everyone was afraid of being with me". (Paula5,38)

Neighbours

Neighbours are usually the first persons who realise a battering situation at home, and some of the interviewees find support from them. In many occasions they are also the first ones to call the police when hearing or seeing an episode of violence:

"My neighbours do know it because they have helped me many times". (Paula2,58)

"I had a neighbour who used to help me, they cannot testify, but my neighbours called once the police". (Paula7,37)

Nevertheless, not all women trust their neighbours to tell them about their experience because of shame or distrust of their reactions:

"He used to hit me a lot and on top of that, the neighbours defended him". (Paula4,39)

"As he hit me, I didn't scream so that the others [the neighbours] didn't notice". (Paula8,30)

Social/cultural/leisure activities

Taking into account all what we have seen so far, it is not surprising that most of the interviewees have a poorly, or even inexistent participation in any social, cultural or leisure

activity. Sometimes it is, as previous mentioned, because of the control that their partners exert on all the aspects related to the contact women have with the others:

“And sometimes I went to somewhere and when I came back he started to kick the shit out of me (...) I could not go out because every time I wanted to, he forbid me”. (Paula1,49)

“Because he knows I like all of that but I cannot access to because he has limited me a lot. And before, I used to go to museums, to the library, and lately I am like left behind”. (Paula2,58)

“But he hinders me everything, not only to look for a job, everything, everything ...”. (Paula6,43)

And sometimes it is owing to apathy (due to their emotional state) or feelings of shame and distrust:

“I was a cheerful girl, I liked to o out with my friends, or shopping, go partying but not now. I loved dancing, going to the cinema, parties but not now...” (Paula6,43)

“All years shut at home, I started to go out 3 or 4 years ago”. (Paula2,58)

“And you start isolating yourself, you do not want to participate in group because you feel ashamed, because maybe your experience is embarrassing, because if you tell something they will laugh at you. And you feel embarrassed (...) You don’t feel like doing anything, you are alone, shut it with your family, your self-esteem lows, you have lots of fears, you are fear and distrust of everybody”. (Paula5,38)

Once GV experience finishes, it is noticeable that some women start to participate in social and cultural activities, which is very positive after long periods of isolation and suffering. Women highly value it since they feel that once again they have decision power, feel free and can control, at a certain point, their life.

“I am going to another association where you collaborate with things you know how to do” [network of activities exchange] (Paula3,40)

“Now I am doing what I want, I signed on a sport course and world dances”. (Paula1,49)

2.2.3 Economic

The economic status of a woman is deeply affected because of GV in the intimate partner context. Thus, in general terms, the situation of violence encompasses economic effects for women not only during the violent relationship, but also after finishing it. This economic impact can also be aggravated by situations that increase women’s vulnerability, such as having children, being elder and being migrant. Therefore, the economic effects caused by the fact of suffering GV in the partner context have to be analyzed taking into account not only the situation that women are living (still cohabiting with their partners or being separated) but also the specific factors of vulnerability mentioned earlier.

With relation to the economic effects of GV for women still living together with their partners, several interviewees outline that they suffer economic dependence and precariousness due to the fact that their partners exert an intentional deprivation of economical resources as a manner of abuse against them. In these cases, violence itself causes economic deprivation. This economic deprivation takes place not only in situations where the man is the only responsible for the household income, but also in circumstances where women contribute or even are the main contributors of the house.

In the first case, when men are the “breadwinners”, women depend on their income (which men control):

“We maybe had 5€ per week for everything, for the meal, for everything (...) When he worked, he had money for him, for example, if he had 25€ he kept money for him (...) but I don’t know very well because I don’t know exactly how much money he used to earn”. (Paula8,30)

"I depend on him economically (...) Now he gives me a small pocket money, but I have to buy soap, eggs, meal...It's not only me, my children also have to eat". (Paula2,58)

In the second situation, despite the fact that the woman is the "breadwinner" or, together with her partner, is co-responsible for the household incomes, the man also carries out an intentional control of the whole resources, which causes economic hardship to her:

"They gave me 60€ per week, they gave it to us in an envelope. They gave us 60€ for me and 60€ for him, I gave him the 120€ and he gave me 20€ back, the swine". (Paula1,49)

"Without money, all that I work, nothing...I was sleeping and he took me away my credit card, if I gave money to the children to pay something, he took it away (...) and at last he even took away the money for the food". (Paula7,37)

There are three interviewees who do not suffer economic violence, but have (or have had in the past) economical dependence on their partners due to the fact that they do not work; these interviewees find that they do not have any other option than staying by them and they feel that they cannot change this situation. In all cases this is much influenced for their situation as migrants, since they do not have a regularized situation with right to work, and the legal situation influences their possibilities of escaping from a violent partner, mainly due to economic issues:

"To arrive here...I couldn't start working due to my documents, I could not pay the rent, and then it was as he was the one who had to bring the money at home and it was me the one who had to stay at home. And he could go out because he was the one who was bossing (...) I could report it [to the police], a restraining order, but I didn't want to do it because, where would I go? Because, how was I going to pay the rent?... I couldn't meet ends, I was not able". (Paula3,40)

But not only migrant women find strong economical reasons that condition their decision to split up, also women in advanced years without work or with unstable jobs, might also find themselves bearing violence at home because they do not see any other option.

"I depend on him economically (...) I don't see myself earning a good salary to survive, to live alone, to live as I am living now, well". (Paula2,58)

As mentioned in the beginning, the decision of breaking up a violent relationship and the consequent separation from the partner can also imply economic precariousness for women. This is specially serious if they are mothers and solely responsible for taking care of their children. For all the interviewees that decide to separate from their partners and live alone, it is very difficult to survive without financial aid. Thus, women have to ask for economic help, which comes from relatives and friends, or from the State:

"There was a month that my sister sent me money". (Paula7,37)

"[-At an economic level?]

-Terrible, they pay me a non contributory pension of 350€

[-Have you ever had to ask for help?]

-Yes, to ask for help. They give me something to eat (...) And now I called X (a friend), who always, when I need something, well... he gives it to me". (Paula1,49)

"I have a PIRMI⁵ (...) I am always afraid that they take the PIRMI out (...) Either one thing or the other: or I practise the prostitution and I earn a lot of money to pay the mortgage and someone to look after or my daughter, or I go back with that man, with a perpetrator of violence". (Paula4,39)

Despite the economic help they get from their relatives or the State (which is, anyway, very low), they live in a situation of hardship. In this way, interviewees voice an urgent need to find

⁵ PIRMI is a non contributory pension in Spain around 400€.

a job (or to keep it) as the key to face their economic expenses and the ones of their children on their own:

"You have to die for saving money and then be able to pay the rent, the electricity bill, the town gas bill, the children's clothes... the whole responsibility on me". (Paula7,37)

*"-Do you have difficulties to meet ends?]
-Yes, a lot, a lot... a job, I need a job". (Paula1,49))*

Finally, another consequence in the economic context for women suffering GV is material losses due to their partners:

*"Because it infuriates me...I was a good mother, I did what I could, , the house in good care, the children in good care, we bought a flat, we furnished it, cars... and he came and spoilt everything".
(Paula7,37)*

"I have very few things, he, for example, had a TV, his DVD, and when he came[to the house] to pick up his clothes, he took everything". (Paula8,30)

"Because he got into drugs, I lost almost everything of my house, everything, everything, the whole of the material things". (Paula5,38)

All in all, suffering GV in the intimate partner context brings about situations of impoverishment for women. As seen, the decision of leaving the partner sometimes is very much conditioned for economic issues and if eventually they split up, women suffer hardship to some extent, above all at the beginning, which affects the other spheres of their lives (housing, children, legal,...).

2.2.4 Housing

GV in the intimate partner context has an enormous impact in housing, because the violence experience can force women to run away from home, to lose the house, to need to move to a shelter house or to another place, to go through difficulties to find a new home, and struggle with the payment of the rent or mortgage. These facts imply changes in women's life, affecting them at short, mid and long-term, because for most of the interviewees, leaving the house they shared with their partners (as the way to survive) means the beginning of a period of successive changes of accommodation, from one place to another one, from living together with relatives and/or cohabitating with other women in shelter houses, while looking for a new place to settle down, when the circumstances do not permit them to live at the house where they used to cohabit with their partners.

Running away from home is a distressing moment for women, since it encompasses not only the difficulties associated with any move, but also fears, insecurity, loneliness, etc. All of a sudden they have to face significant changes in their lives such as having to live provisionally in different places, sometimes far away from their family and friends (if living in a shelter house), which influences their emotional state. Therefore, this is a very tough period for women, as most of the interviewees describe, which can be aggravated by situations of unemployment and hardship at the moment they leave their home. The change of residence is usually the only choice women have to escape from the violence experience and it implies sometimes, that those women who have a job, lose it. Thus, the decision of running away from home as a way to end violence is not an isolated choice but one that encompasses new circumstances and has consequences at different spheres of their lives.

The experienced circumstances of violence drove 5 of the interviewed women to escape from home in order to save their lives and their children's lives. To run away from home was not an act previously planned by them, specially because their economical conditions were precarious, but it was the only option they could take at that moment:

"Because, when he gave me that blow, I took my son and I went out, I was 6 months far away from him, although I never had support, I did not have documents". (Paula3,40)

"We stayed the night at a front door, the children wearing pyjamas, and I only had a scarf and put it to the younger (...) As I run away from the house, I carried the shoes on my hands, at last I put them on, on the bus". (Paula7,37)

"I had to run away from home and due to that, I could not take my children with me (...) if I had gone out through the door with my children, then he would have killed me". (Paula5,38)

For some of the interviewees, the first option when they decide to leave home is to ask for help to relatives or friends, having the possibility to stay by them for some time:

*"[When you decided to separate from him ¿Where did you go?]
-To my parents (...) because it was impossible to pay a rent". (Paula1,49)*

"When I separated from my husband I had to go to live with my sister, she took me in her house (...) Then I went to live with my mum". (Paula5,38)

"The day after I picked up all my things and went to the house of this friend (...) I am sleeping in her bedroom, on a double bed, with my son. The three of us sleep at the same bedroom". (Paula3,40)

Another option for these women is to move to a shelter house, which was an option used by half of the interviewees. For some of them this is the next step after a period of living together with relatives. For others, going to a shelter house is the first and only option, not only because of security or economical reasons, but also because they are migrant and have neither relatives nor friends to whom they can ask for help:

*"[- You went to the house of your parents but, after that, did you also go to a shelter house?]
-Yes, yes, to several, to several". (Paula1,49)*

"Not long ago I was living in a shelter house, I was 8 months there with my daughter (...) Afterwards I went to live alone". (Paula5,38)

"Five months in a shelter house (...) I was a month at the first shelter (...) and four at the other one". (Paula7,37)

"At first I lived alone, at the room we had rented, until the end of that month (...) After that I came to live here, to this shelter house". (Paula8,30)

Living in a shelter house implies special conditions of cohabitation that not all women value in the same way. For instance, in Spain the maximal period to stay at a shelter house is 6 months, which puts pressure to many women to find in this short period of time, a place to live, a job,.... There are two women of the sample who experienced as positive their stay at the shelter house, both of them migrant.

"Not long ago I was living in a shelter house, I was there 8 months with my daughter, I don't tell you it was wonderful but they got me out of a mess, there I used to feel I was super accepted". (Paula5,38)

"At the end of that month the social worker called me and she talked to me about the shelter (...) she told me that there was a vacancy in Barcelona (...) for me it was perfect because here I have a few friends and this is very important for me because I can speak in my language". (Paula8,30)

The other two interviewees who lived in a shelter house had a deep emotional impact because they felt they were suddenly obliged to live at places or to cohabite with other people they do not like. They felt also obliged to renounce to certain habits and/or comfort and to accomplish rules regarding the timetables, conditions that one of them thinks that had also repercussions on the well-being of her children. Besides, both of them had to move to several

shelter houses due to security reasons, adding more inconveniences to the process of settle in to a new environment:

“Firstly I was at an emergency shelter house, there I felt alright (...) then it happened that there was also a woman I knew (...) and one day she went to X and told everybody I was at that shelter (...) they had to change me to another shelter (...) And then they took me to that shelter house. It was also well (...) but there came a woman who was a thief, who began to steal and it was me the one she most stole (...) I didn’t feel there at will, I was very alone, alone...”. (Paula1,49)

“At the first shelter house they told me that as I was at the same village, I could not go out, it was near the house where I lived with my husband, and that’s why I couldn’t go out, it was like a prison (...) and I stayed there until they moved me to another house at a village I didn’t know where it was”. (Paula7,37)

“The shelter houses are big, the shopping is common, eating is common, cooking for everybody (...) the cohabitation is hard (...) there is a timetable for the household, they kill you with the household (...) they close the gate at 20 p.m. (...) It is a house you don’t live in, you think you are in another world, you wake up after a month. You don’t like it but you have to fight...I suffered a lot for my children, that’s why I had so much anger...I didn’t like some of the rules [of the house] for the children”. (Paula7,37)

To move to a shelter house is in no way an option for two of the interviewees, due to emotional reasons in one case, and to the important changes it would mean to her children’s lives, in the other case:

“They offered me a shelter house but I don’t want (...) I prefer them to pay me a flight ticket, I would go, I would go to my parents’ to start again”. (Paula3,40)

“The other day I talked to my daughter about the shelter house for women but she doesn’t want, and I agree, she is right, because now she has her circle of friends and she would lose all of that (...)” (Paula6,43)

As the quotes show, for all of the interviewees who are living separated from their partners (6 out of 8) the decision of separating from them implied several changes of housing; they had to move to relatives’, friends’ or shelter houses not only once but several times. They found themselves moving to different places again and again, looking for security, running away from the perpetrator of violence or looking for better conditions to live. One of these women even moved to another country, running away from her ex-husband:

“My sister told me about my cousin who was here (in Spain), she told me to go where he was, because my husband was going to be always my shadow (...) My children told me it was a deplorable decision, but that they always were going to be on my side (...) And they helped me to buy the fly ticket”. (Paula5,38)

All of these situations that women have to face, happen at the same time, and it is important not to forget that also simultaneously they continue suffering the psychological effects of the violence; that is, women are under a deep depressive emotional condition but simultaneously have to confront other difficult situations like change of housing or legal processes.

2.2.5 Labour

Suffering GV in the partner context has consequences at the labour sphere provoking absences to work, sick-leaves, job changes and loss, periods of unemployment, etc. These effects can be caused by diverse reasons, from the perpetrator himself, the emotional state of the women or the change of residence, among others.

In order to frame the analysis, it is important to state that in our sample, 7 out of 8 women were working when they were suffering GV. However, only three of them had formal labour contracts. The other four, therefore, had precarious labour situations.

One of the most recurrent effects in the work dimension is the need to be absent from work due to physical aggressions. 5 out of 7 working women did not go working at some point due to their physical state. Although these absences should be considered sick-leaves, since, except one of these women, the others work in the irregular economy, formally they were not on sick-leave and did not get any social security benefit.

"And I couldn't go to work because during the whole week the blow was lowering" (Paula3,40)

"I had to stay two weeks without working because all my body was bruises". (Paula1,49)

"I was in the Hospital, because I had a black eye..." (Paula5,38)

It is remarkable the fact that two interviewees, even when suffering physical violence, were not absent from work because they were strongly dependent on their wages and also were afraid of reprisals.

"I had bruises but I had to hide them because I had to work (...) I had to go working because if I do not work, I have to ask for a sick leave, If I am sick off, I don't have money, If I do not have money I cannot call my mother to ask for help, neither buy a yoghurt to my children" (Paula7,37)

"Though I could not go, I had to go anyway because we could not eat. I had to lie, that I had fallen of the bicycle and that..." (Paula3,40)

It is noteworthy to look at whether the interviewees voice the violence situation they are living to their employers. Only two women explain to their employers their situation. In one case, the employer supports the woman and, therefore, she highly value it. In the other case, the woman does not receive support from the employer, due to threats of the perpetrator

"My boss and my partners always saw me crying and they used to ask me... and one day I told them what was happening and that I was extremely sad (...) and then I told my boss, that apart from that I did not have anything, the only thing I needed was to work, and work to forget, and well, my employers told me it was not the adequate, to work so many hours but it would help me economically". (Paula5,38)

"My boss didn't give any support because he was afraid, because he [her partner] had threatened him also". (Paula1,49)

Other interviewees do not dare to explain it, because they feel embarrassed.

"I did not talk about it because of shame (...) I do not want either to cause pain, I did not want". (Paula2,58)

Due to the GV experience, interviewees have to face and struggle with diverse situations that eventually lead them to lose or change their jobs. Some times it is due to security reasons, as it is the case of one interviewee who had to change her job because of fears, since the perpetrator continued harassing her after she had left him, even following her to her workplace.

"He follows you and he appears at everywhere, then I said to myself, better to change of job... and I went to work in another place. Even my family did not know where I worked". (Paula5,38)

Other times, women have to quit their jobs when they are still living with their partners, forced by them:

"they dismissed him and I had to leave the job because he didn't want that I work..." (Paula1,49)

"and when he saw that I felt well in a job, is when more he ill-treated me in order that I did not continue working". (Paula4,39)

As previously seen, the violence experience has a deep impact in the psychological state of women, which in a way influences all the activities that women develop and, therefore, also their work. Thus, three interviewees point out that their psychological state influences their attitude, relationships and performance at work. One of them even was fired of several jobs, and consequently changed several times of workplace, due to the emotional effects of the GV:

"I was very nervous, because I argued... (...). You do not feel good, you do not treat your colleagues as before, or you do not shut up and this should not be done at work (...)" "They dismissed me [from two jobs], because I was becoming very nervous and I argued a lot". (Paula4,39)

"The unease you feel always comes out in any way. And I, for instance, become very nervous". (Paula2,58)

"I could work perfectly but maybe suddenly I felt down and started to cry, and cry" (Paula5,38)

Due to the work change or loss, women face periods of unemployment, mainly without unemployment benefits, if they were working in the irregular economy. The women who spend some time in a shelter house also face a period of unemployment, which is longer or shorter depending on each woman's situation. It is due to security reasons that women who live in a shelter house are advised by professionals not to go to their workplaces, to avoid any dangerous encounter with their ex-partners; but also due to their emotional conditions.

"During the period that I was living in shelter houses I found some jobs but educators tell you that you have to recover and stay at home (...) It helped me a lot to have unemployment benefits (...) it is not very much but at least if the children need something you can pay it, clothes, the cinema,...". (Paula7,37)

However, it is important to highlight that women may also be unemployed because their partners forbid them to have a job or try to avoid them to look for one, by the way of threatens:

"He used to threaten me many times to make something to my face... so that no one could look at me and I wouldn't be able to find a job". (Paula7,37)

"When I told him that I would like to work he asked me that what for did I want to go to work? (...) that he did not want that their children went to a kindergarten while they were young, but now, he keeps on telling me not, and this is not due to the well-being of the children but because he wants me to be in his hands". (Paula6,43)

Finally, it is important to remark the impact that GV has on women's labour situation, not only at the time they are still living with their partners but also after finishing the relationship with them. When partners force women to quit the job or hinder them to look for one implies that at the moment women leave their partners, they are unemployed. Others who are working while cohabiting with their partners have to quit the job at the moment they leave their houses, due to security reasons or changes of residence. Thus, escaping from violence seriously damages the labour situation of women. For these reasons, all the interviewees, after separating from their partners, had to pass a period of unemployment, a period that was longer or shorter depending on women's circumstances at emotional, legal, economic or labour level. At the moment of the interviews, only 3 of the 7 women who used to work while living with their partners were, once again, working.

2.2.6 Legal

Dealing with legal processes is another consequence associated to GV in the intimate partner context. When describing their personal experiences, 7 out of 8 interviewed women explain that, at a certain moment, they had to report the fact to the police, present formal accusation at the Court, ask for legal assistance and, in some cases, bring the case to trial. For all these women, going through legal processes implies many things such as feelings of trust or distrust in the legal system, and feelings of lack of safety and protection during the proceeding,

depending on the partners compliance of the sentence. Once again, women find themselves suddenly immersed in a situation that requires important decision-makings, affecting their security and their day-to-day life during the period they are dealing with the legal processes and, in some cases, even for a long time after.

Reporting the facts to the police is for most of the interviewees the first step to take when trying to escape from the perpetrator of the batter; they ask for immediate help to the police, in order to save their lives because they are in a serious danger due to physical attacks or threatens:

"He came home and... blows, he broke 3 fingers of my hand, the face fractured (...) But at the time I called the police he run away". (Paula5,38)

"He tried to strangle me, I had a shock and I called the police". (Paula8,30)

"It was more than a year ago that we separated in a friendly tone, but he started to do silly things (...) one day he came to my house and told my mother and me that he was going to cut our throats". (Paula1,49)

Other women take the decision to report to the police while they are still living with the perpetrator, due to fears of suffering new episodes of violence:

" When all was finished I remained at bed, I wet my bed, due to the fright and the fear I had (...) And the day after I went to present a formal accusation". (Paula2,58)

"After he hit me so hard at my leg (...) I went to present a formal accusation". (Paula3,40)

It is noticeable that some of the interviewees are forced to ask for help to the police in several occasions, due to oft-repeated chase perpetrated by their partners, even after living separately, because they systematically break the restraining order they were sentenced to obey:

"Because, after so many legal actions, he had a restraining order but he didn't care about that, not at all (...). The most he had were formal accusations (...). I made about 16 formal complaints and he was even twice in prison". (Paula5,38)

"Then, one day (...) I got off the bus and I met him again (...) I took the telephone of assistance and I called the police and they came" [he had a distant warrant] (Paula1,49)

With regards to the support and the protection measures they received by the side of the police when they reported their partners, 4 out of 7 women state they felt safe, protected and well received:

"nowadays with the police I am delighted... we've got this safety in Catalonia, you've safety for the women victims of gender violence..." (Paula1,49)

"I called [the police] and the police came very fast, very fast. I didn't have to explain anything (...) they told me that firstly they would take me to the hospital and later they would take me to report him ". (Paula8,30)

Some interviewees, however, do not have a positive opinion about the support they received during the legal process, stating distrust in the legal system:

"My sister told me to report him once more, but for what? if I had already presented lots of accusations for the same reason and no one paid attention to me (...) In 2003 I presented the last accusation, but until today I never knew, they never told me". (Paula5,38)

"I reported him for violence but after the report, the police missed him in Barcelona, they found him later, it is horrible. The mechanism, the bureaucracy it's horrible, it's complicated, long, there's no real support". (Paula7,37)

"I told it to the psychiatrist and she did not believe me. The police neither... then I don't feel that you give us helps, the system, neither the police, nor social workers, or psychiatrists" (Paula4,39)

All of the interviewees who reported to the police received legal assistance, so that they could decide if they wanted to present formal accusation at the Court, and bring the case to trial. 5 out of the 7 who reported their partners brought the case to trial, but the verdict results were not the same for all of them. For three of these women the judge imposed their partners a restraining order, which the partners did not always obeyed, as mentioned before:

"A young man assisted me at the office of attention to the Victim (...) and I was delighted (...) After that, there was the first oral trial... and they imposed him a restraining order (...) And then it took place the other trial – because he broke the restraining order- and he had a prison sentence". (Paula1,49)

*"Just at that moment it was the trial, but a criminal trial (...) They imposed him a restraining order, he cannot approach me a thousand metres, in one year and nine months, and he cannot carry weapons. [-And in those lasts days or weeks, has he fulfilled the order?]
-No, no." (Paula3,40)*

For the other two interviewees who brought the case to trial, such an experience had different consequences. For one of them, her partner remained free of accusation, causing her distrust in the legal system:

"There was only one formal accusation, there was a quick trial (...) But the judge said all that was like a film (...) and they released him (...) So there are things that also by the side of the justice harm you, you have to be very strong to be able to get out of it (...) Then I asked for the divorce". (Paula7,37)

The other interviewee renounced to ask for a divorce or to accept a restraining order for her partner, because, as an old woman and unemployed, it would mean hard economical consequences to herself:

"When I presented the formal accusation, I had a lawyer who had arranged the divorce, she was going too quick and I told her to stop (...) because the judge would agree with me, and perhaps I can keep the flat or receive an allowance. Maybe I can pay the flat but not maintain myself (...) and that's why I stopped the lawyer (...) and all that was against me in the trial". (Paula2,58)

At this point it is necessary to remark that reporting to the police and afterwards presenting a formal accusation at the Court, and even bringing the case to trial, is not an option for all women. As already seen, the situation of women in the Economic and Labour fields determined to a big extent the decisions they take in the diverse spheres. Old women unemployed or without work experience at all and migrant women in irregular situation if they run away from home must face enormous changes in their lives that they are not sure to be able to confront. In this sense, they are specially vulnerable, and this vulnerability hinders them the possibility to finish with the terrible experience they are living at home.

"They told me to ask for a restraining order but I didn't want to do it because, it is so, where could I go? Because, how was I going to pay the rent? how was I going to do that?". (Paula3,40)

"To run away took time because I had residence permit but not work permit (...) to the migrant woman regrouped by her husband, the government allows residence but not work permit, you are like an object (...) I regret I didn't run away before... but, of course, the situation with the documents...". (Paula7,37)

The next quote is from a migrant woman in an irregular situation; her words illustrate the defencelessness and vulnerability in what a battered woman in her conditions lives:

"They tell me why I don't report him. I report, and afterwards, do I go to live in the same house with him? This can't be like this (...). I talked to a lawyer of the centre for women. I asked her and she told me that firstly I have to have my documents in order and then, the divorce (...). For some women to

the separation is not so difficult, but for me it is like a dream (...). They have to help women, for example, to find a job, they have to make it easier for women to go out of this". (Paula6,43)

There is another important element that emerges when talking about women's experiences referring to the legal dimension. At the moment women decide to initiate a legal process against their partners, they emotionally suffer due to a general state of stress and nervousness if they bring the case to trial and if they have to be present at that moment in front of the perpetrator of the batter. Furthermore, they might be continually exposed to dangerous situations if their partners take reprisals against them due to the fact that women brought them to trial. The whole legal process supposes a deep emotional impact for women, arising feelings of fears, anxiety and anguish, specially when their partners ignore the restraining orders or remain free.

"[At court] very tough. The first time I got discouraged (...) and the sentence states that I got really low because I started to cry (...) Last year the trial for his imprisonment took place. As I didn't have any witness, at the end I lost the trial, he was set free, the mister. Then, as he was set free, I started to have such a fear..." (Paula1,49))

"But when I went to report him I didn't have fear, in that moment, I had fear afterwards. Because they told me, ok, your husband now knows about the accusation, because they are going to tell him immediately, he will take you and he will stick you a beating and will send you against the wall". (Paula2,58)

"I made the decision and I separated from him. But it was not a moment of calm, no... (...) being persecuted by him, he appeared at everywhere, he followed me everywhere (...) The police came but he was immune to that and I feared him quite a lot, because it is all the same for him". (Paula5,38)

3. Violence at the workplace – women's perspective

3.1. Understanding gender violence at the workplace

When voicing their experiences with GV at the workplace, women themselves explain and recognise several situations as violence and they offer very illustrative examples about their understanding of violence. They describe attitudes their bosses and/or colleagues take against them, as discrimination, intimidation, coactions or even physical aggressions; and mention literally words that they perceived and experienced as insulting or denigrating, to explain what was happening and why they were suffering.

"For me, the fact that they told me: 'you are useless', 'you never know what's going on, you are silly' (...). They even told me that I was mentally handicapped, in that way, literally (...) Even my colleagues treated me as I was a slave, with all the negativity that it involves (...). Shouting, bad manners, defiant gazes..." (Violeta1,56)

"I was a person who received lot of mailing, and I stopped receiving it, the post disappeared, I don't know where (...). They took me the post away, they didn't put me through the telephone calls. I had less and less work everyday". (Violeta2,56)

"And there was once I was alone with him at the office, and as you can imagine, he tried to embarrass me, he tried to kiss me (...) He used to call me home, he persecuted me through the streets, a terrible harassment". (Violeta3,54)

"I think that what most affected me is that they try that you refuse yourself as a person, that you become nobody and you just devote to work. And that is when I think that the violence is more psychological". (Violeta4,30)

"At the end I was isolated, even my colleagues didn't talk to me, they became also accomplices, I was isolated. Isolated and humiliated because later he started to give me less work and give it to my colleague, who passed through in front of me and didn't talk to me, as if there was a wall (...) And my boss used to mock me when I was hoarse, he used to mimic me making gestures and laughing".
(Violeta5,52)

"They called me, they shut me up in a room and told me that I was no one important at the enterprise, that I didn't have work category there, etc". (Violeta6,53)

"He left me bruises on my thighs, with two punches that he gave me when I was seated" (Violeta7,29)

3.2. Gender violence effects

3.2.1 Health

On the basis of our research, the main effects that GV at the workplace has on women's health are physical and psychological. None of the women of our sample manifested to have experienced any effect on sexual and reproductive health.

Physical health

Women express a wide range of consequences in the physical health, such as headache, tiredness, palpitations, trembling, pain in the articulations, arterial tension rise, lose of weight, vomits, intestinal disorders, chronic diarrhoea, muscle pain and tension, infections, dizziness, ...:

"I had gastric problems and intestine pains,... Not to mention the headaches! ... gastritis, swollen and, in fact, I am still taking drugs for my stomach because I am not recovered yet (...) Apart from a mental tiredness, it was also physical (...) vomits and nauseas, sicknesses." (Violeta1,56)

"I was 2 years with diarrhoea... doctors did not find to what it was due, headache, lack of appetite,..."
(Violeta3,54)

"Pains? Many... because this affects your whole organism,... headaches, muscle pains,..."
(Violeta5,52)

"I lost weight, 6 Kg (...) I was talking and all of a sudden my hands started to shake, or the legs, as if I had Parkinson (...). Asthma, and the blood pressure also raised" (Violeta6,53)

Most of these physical pains can be considered as psychosomatic since they do not have a physical cause (e.g. a flu) but a psychological origin, due to the violent situation they faced or are facing at the workplace. In one case, it is noticeable the fact of an interviewee who suffered a succession of physical injuries during several years:

"I had the ligaments of my knee broken, since 10 years ago, and suddenly my knee swelled up (...) without doing anything. Some time it had swelled up because I had made an effort or I played tennis but in this case it swelled up without doing anything at all. And then I was operated (...). And when I was almost recovered (...) in the rehabilitation service, I had a tendonitis in the right arm." (Violeta2,56)
"And then I came back to work and one week after, I touch my breast and I perceived a lump. I went to the doctor, they did me a mammography and... cancer (...). And the process lasted,... chemotherapy, radiotherapy and all (...) I stayed one year or so on sick leave (...) and when I come back to work, after 3 or 4 months, I started to have infections in the right arm, because they cut my lymph node and I have a linfedema. (Violeta2,56)

As we will see in the following section, the fact of suffering all these physical effects lead many women to visit the doctor, take medication, be on sick leave and even to get the invalidity.

Psychological Health

The psychological dimension is one of the spheres that most clearly shows how devastating is for a woman to suffer GV at the labour sphere. In this sense, women describe different

symptomatology regarding their psychological state, which strongly affect their performance at work and, in parallel, their personal and private spheres. The psychological effects suffered by women have an impact in the rest of the spheres of their life, showing once more that the psychological health is essential for dealing with any dimension of life and affects how you develop any activity or mix with people. Therefore, in the following description of the psychological effects suffered by women there are many references to other dimensions of life, and specifically to work, which is not by chance because it is the sphere where the GV took place.

Interviewees describe feelings of insecurity, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence, feelings of auto-blaming, sadness, loneliness or weariness; fear, anguish, attacks of anxiety and sleep disorders; lack of perception, concentration and lack of memory. All of these effects have repercussions on the way they carry out their tasks at their workplaces but also have effects in other dimensions of their lives as women themselves express. Women experience some emotions affecting them at the moment they are being object of harassment at work, but not only for a short or mid-term, but also for a long-term. It is important to point it out because women state that even a long time after the harassment situation finished, the feelings of insecurity, low-self-esteem, low self-confidence, lack of memory or sleep disorders persist. It may affect them at their new workplaces –in those cases they changed their workplaces- and at others facets of their lives, specially those relating to social relationships. Some of the interviewees also state that they feel a change in their character, a different way to perceive or to face some situations, as a consequence of the GV experience. It is also important to notice that in most of the cases, at a certain time, women were on sick leave; some of them have to ask not only for a medical attention but also for other specialist's counselling, such as psychological and psychiatric. And as we will see, the need of professional help is another long-term effect caused by the GV at labour, because for all the interviewed women, to overcome such an experience, once it was identified, it is a question of months, years or the whole life.

While suffering GV at work, women feel insecurity, low self-esteem, anguish and are afraid of doing anything wrong at the workplace. Thus, they lose self-confidence not only at their efficiency and professionalism⁶, but also when facing other situations outside the labour sphere:

"It caused me a lot of insecurity and anguish because, of course, at that point, all that I did, I did it frightened." (Violeta5,52)

"If I had complained or said something, they would have buried me. I was afraid. (...) I lost a bit of my self-esteem because as I had never experienced such a situation, I didn't know how to react" (Violeta3,54)

"... After the work I only wanted to go home to stay there, shut, because I felt myself such a little thing... I did nothing at all. I didn't have life". (Violeta1,56)

Together with the feelings of insecurity, women sometimes also express guilty feelings with regard to the situation at work. They blame themselves, they think they are the only ones who are responsible of that problem at work, because of their behaviour:

"I felt very guilty (...) I felt contradictory (...) I was not either self-confident". (Violeta3,54)

"I still think that I am guilty of part of what happened to me, because I gave way, because I didn't realised it, because of my education or what else". (Violeta6,53)

"During most of the time, for years, I didn't notice what was happening to me, I thought, in a way, it was me who was asking for the troubles, it is a very strong manipulation". (Violeta7,29)

⁶ Further quotes about this effect at the workplace will be shown at the Labour Dimension

Another effect identified is that sometimes women imagine that this situation is not real, that it is only happening on their minds, as a try to deny the reality, because they cannot find an explanation for such a situation:

"I came up to a point that I didn't ask anything, I didn't think, you are so demoralized that you don't react. You start doubting of yourself, if it is really happening. You think it might be you that you might be silly". (Violeta5,52)

"You also think you are imagining everything, they cannot be doing that. You deny yourself what you are seeing, as if it could not be possible". (Violeta2,56)

Women usually experience a lower capacity of perception, attention and concentration; a lower capacity to retain or to remember simple tasks that they normally carry out on the day-to-day at work, feeling that their performance at work is not at the level it used to be.

"I had concentration problems and sometimes I used to think that if anyone asked me for my name, I wouldn't know the answer". (Violeta5,52)

"And what I most notice about my level of perception, is that, at that time, if anyone told me anything, it seemed as I were in another galaxy". (Violeta1,56)

Concentration problems not only happen at the work sphere, but also at the spare time; some activities as reading or following an ordinary conversation are difficult to achieve; or even normal day-to-day activities as crossing the street:

"I came up to a point that I didn't know how to write or to read, neither to interpret what the others told me. I thought I had Alzheimer. It was not only a loss of memory but that I didn't know either to interpret basic things, as for example, to go out and to switch off a light, or to cross the street if the traffic light was green or red, I doubted about it." (Violeta6,53)

Some of the women show anxiety in different ways; at the workplace, in front of any person or places relating to the workplace, when having to go to work, ... It is remarkable that some women even after leaving the job where the GV took place, still are afraid of meeting their former boss.

"I saw my boss and I started to tremble, I was suffering anxiety attacks as I was at work, and I thought, if I have to die here, then I better go." (Violeta5,52)

"Also, for a long time [after leaving the job], every time I saw my boss or any person who looked like him, I frightened". (Violeta5,52)

"I had such a strong panic attack... (...) I was speaking and suddenly my hands started to tremble, or my legs, as if I had Parkinson, all that was a consequence of the depression". (Violeta6,53)

Some of the women also describe a general state of alert together with a feeling of being aggressive and being on defensive at the workplace:

"What I had was so brutal that I didn't retain, it seems that I was so extremely on the alert ..."
(Violeta1,56)

"But I imagine that we are on the alert to prevent us psychologically, in defence, because we see that our integrity...."(Violeta2,56)

"It also makes you as aggressive, you quickly blow up at everything". (Violeta5,52)

Women constantly remember the situation at the workplace at any time of the day, they cannot stop thinking about their problem, and have sleep disorders and nightmares:

"I didn't sleep (...) the whole night unable to get to sleep". (Violeta3,54)

"Sleeping? I couldn't, I couldn't, nothing, nothing, thinking a matter over that, what is happening, what am I doing wrong?" (Violeta5,52)

"You don't sleep, you have headache, tiredness, you are sad, anguished". (Violeta2,56)

"You are obsessed, it is such a distress that you only live in alert for that" (Violeta7,29)

In some cases women also describe alimentary disorders as loss of appetite:

"I used to arrive home and I didn't have lunch, I didn't have dinner...". (Violeta3,54)

Some of the interviewed women had to ask at a certain time for medical attention and/or psychological counselling:

"All that comes out and I was very depressed so that I asked for a psychological counselling..." (Violeta4,30)

"I went to visit all the doctors I have never visited in my whole life: I went to the neurologist, to the psychologist and the psychiatric ...". (Violeta6,53)

"I had to go twice to the emergency services due to nerve attacks". (Violeta6,53)

Most of those women are having or had to have medicines, generally by medical prescription (family doctors, psychiatrics or any other specialist doctor):

"I take medicines for the anxiety and to sleep". (Violeta5,52)

"They prescribed to me medication... I took quite enough medication (...) antidepressants and sedatives ". (Violeta6,53)

"I suffered very strong depressions so that I had to take pills to sleep, I have stifling sensations, tachycardia, anxiety, and I have to take pills...". (Violeta4,30)

GV at the workplace has also effects at a consumption level. In this sense, the situation of GV may help to increase the level of consumption or re-start a consumption habit:

"I gave up smoking, five years without smoking and once again I started with the cigarettes". (Violeta4,30)

"I didn't sleep...I daily smoked two packets of cigarettes, the whole night unable to get to sleep". (Violeta3,54)

Crying, loneliness, sadness and weariness are also feelings shared by interviewees; some of them describe the feeling of not recognising themselves, due to a feeling of listlessness.

"I began crying one day, I don't know why (...) crying, the whole day literally (...) very sad, the whole sadness of the world". (Violeta6,53)

"It was so that I showed it physically, I am a person who has a lively character, I am not a person... I was listless (...) And I noticed that I was... I was telling myself: "Violeta1, that's not you" (...) unwillingly, I didn't feel like going out, speaking, shut at home all day. I did absolutely nothing". (Violeta1,56)

"I arrived home and I shut myself up in my room to cry. (...) And I always had considered myself as a strong woman. But two years ago I reached a very important slump, of loneliness". (Violeta3,54)

"I get very depressed, because I don't know what happens, I talk to the people and I am not so, I am a woman who does not get scared in front of the first obstacle. But here in Spain, everything moves me, turns me down, makes me cry, you change completely and not in a good way (...) You become more sensitive, weaker, and more prone to be depressed...". (Violeta4,30)

A change of character is also described by some of the women, who find that after the GV experience at work, they have another way to face new situations, not only at their workplaces:

"I was a confident, cheerful person and I became shy, reserved, I mistrusted people (...) Your character changes. You become more suspicious, more evil-minded, distrust of people(...), your character becomes harder, obviously, sometimes curter. You are on the alert". (Violeta3,54)

"I thought I was a strong person, that I put up with everything. But then you realised that you are weak or that they have found a weak point on you, and although you want to be the same once again, you will never be... (...) My attitude to people has changed. I suppose it is for fear, now I am more cautious". (Violeta6,53)

The descriptions that those women make of the psychological consequences that GV at their workplaces caused them, not only affected them at the moment they were suffering the violence, but also afterwards, since most of them still live with some of those psychological consequences:

"And things are there, are closed but not forgotten, and sometimes, one of those painful dreams (...) Things come to your head and you remember those situations. You never end up forgetting them". (Violeta3,54)

"Even when you think you are alright, you explain it again and all removes again, I think I will never overcome it". (Violeta5,52)

"And in spite of the fact that it happened 4 years ago, I still think that I am guilty of part of what happened to me, because I gave way, because I didn't realised it, because of my education or what else". (Violeta6,53)

On the basis of the psychological effects described by women, together with other physical effects (mentioned on the Physical Health section), we can infer that women present the typical symptomatology of a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The PTSD is a psychological disorder that affects a person psychosomatically, being the principal symptoms, among others, the following: a persistent re-experienced by thoughts, images or recurrent dreams of a traumatic event (in this case, the GV at work); the person tries to avoid places and people related to that event; the interest in participating in social activities diminishes and the person may refuse to leave the house at all, suffering significant impairment in social, occupational and other important areas of functioning, as falling or staying asleep, irritability or outburst of anger, hyper vigilance or lack of concentration. A person under PTSD symptoms also suffers physical symptoms as respiratory distress and respiratory insufficiency encompassing anxiety attacks, and other physical disorders as eating disorders, muscles pains or headaches⁷.

3.2.2 Relationships and social life

The relationships and social life dimension needs to be analysed from a double angle, since it is relevant in two senses: on the one hand, it is determinant to take into account if women suffering GV at the workplace have got social and family nets, if women use and explain the situation to them and how these react to the issue of GV; and, on the other hand, it is

⁷ DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders); Futterlieb, M. Hillinger, I. *Psychological effects of sexualized violence-how to deal with trauma*.

essential to look at how the emotional situation of the women (deeply explained in the previous section) affects their involvement in social and family life.

Children

With regards to children, interviewees outline certain difficulties of relation and communication with them, above all in the initial phase of the violence experience, when many women still are not even conscious of the violence. When women become aware of the violence they are suffering, most of our interviewees do not explain it to their sons and daughters, regardless their age. Only one woman with adult sons explained it to them and got their support.

"I had communication problems with them, and of relation due to my nerve state. They have been the ones who helped me most, but they paid for it as well (...). The support I got was the one of my sons, my sons have been always next to me (...). I am lucky for them". (Violeta1,56)

"I have my 2 children in Colombia (...). It is almost 2 months that I do not talk with them,(...) I do not know what to say". (Violeta4,30)

*[- ¿And in that moment did your sons know anything about what was happening to you?]
- No, no, I thought it was better to keep them apart from it. (Violeta5,52)*

Partner and other family members

From those interviewees with partner at the moment of the violent experience, two women out of four explained the situation to their partners, and got their support. However, one of them voices that the relationship was a bit affected in the beginning, due to her mood.

"My husband told me that I was in an impossible mood, upset.. (...) but was very respectful and a very understanding person." (Violeta6,53)

The other two did not explain anything to their partners, keeping it in silence.

*[- Did you not explain it to anyone?]
To nobody.... I was completely closed". (Violeta2,56)*

"I kept it to myself, because if I had told it to my husband he would have pushed him [the boss]. Neither to my mum... to nobody". (Violeta3,54)

The support of other family members is mentioned by one of the interviewees, who has the emotional and economic support of her parents:

"My parents, thanks god, have helped and supported me a lot (...) My father had an asthmatic crisis because he was very affected and worried about me, and due to the action on court against me and so, he had a crisis". (Violeta7,29)

Friends

With relation to friends, women who tell their friends what they are suffering, in general claim that they question them and do not understand or support them. Only one interviewee states that most of her friends respect and help her.

*"I did not have friends, I had nothing, I ended up feeling very lonely." (Violeta3,54)
"Terrible (...). I want to go for a walk and I have no one to go with (...) I have not found till now a single person that could help me, accompany me or listen to me in all aspects". (Violeta4,30)
"Some time I tried it [to tell it to the friends] but they did not understand it (...) they had troubles in believing it". (Violeta5,52)*

"People that I have had next to me have supported me". (Violeta6,53)

Friendship shows to be a significant aspect not only in terms of understanding (or not) of the violence experience, but also in connection with the possibility of enjoying social activities or

not. In this sense, some interviewees mention friends (or the lack of friends) in connection with the possibility of going out. However, many interviewees at the same time reveal that they are not prepared and do not feel like going out. Therefore, there is combination of contradictory feelings.

"This leaves you in a mood for not going out, you end up quite ill... and afterwards you finds that they do not understand you (...) They drift you apart and you drift yourself apart". (Violeta5,52)

"Lately this situation worries me because it is quite a long time that I am here and if I have just gone out once, it is already too much,... I always search for an excuse (...) I want to be quiet, not to listen to anything (...). I want to go for a walk and I have no one to go with". (Violeta4,30)

"Neither I went out with no one, nor I could have friends (...) I drifted myself apart from friends". (Violeta3,54)

Colleagues

Another sphere being highlighted by most interviewees is the work one, constituted by colleagues. In general, the relationships at work are affected by the violence experience; interviewees state that they lose colleagues, feel non-understood, lonely and disappointed.

"At work I had friends, after 20 years there, but then I did not want to keep them or I lost them (...). I understand they want to keep their workplace but I do not understand that they do not support me for fear of losing the job. I did not want to keep the colleagues because (...) I saw that for them, the first thing was to keep the job". (Violeta6,53)

"No friendship at all. This is very demoralising because you see colleagues that you have had for 30 years and you were fine with them and when you have a problem (..) they leave you apart, nobody comes to you as if you had the pest...". (Violeta4,30)

"The people from my labour environment during all these months have not called me to ask how I was. I cannot count on them, on my colleagues". (Violeta7,29)

Social relationships and life

The experience of violence also has consequences in the ordinary relationships with other people. Interviewees claim that their personality changes and they feel distrust, shame and fears when mixing with people.

"I distrusted people, I had communication problems with them" (Violeta1,56)

"I was a confident, cheerful person and I became shy, reserved, I mistrusted people (...), your character changes. You become more suspicious, evil-minded, thinking the worst of people (...). You have the alert on". (Violeta3,54)

"I was ashamed of saying to somebody what was happening, I felt embarrassed to admit it, it took me so long to admit that I allowed them to hit me... " (Violeta7,29)

The interviewee having suffered sexual harassment also stresses mistrust with regards to men:

"Now I am more quiet but if I were [at work] in contact with men, I would mistrust" (Violeta3,54)

Finally, the psychological state of women has an impact in social life as well. In this sense, all of them stress that they do not feel like going out when suffering or having suffered GV at the workplace:

"I did not have social life, I did not get out. And I am a very active person, but I stop doing things. I was alone, isolated... after work I just wanted to go home and stay there (...) I did not have life". (Violeta1,56)

"With friends I did not go out. I stayed at home. Friends called me to go out and I said, no, no, I can't! You make up excuses". (Violeta2,56)

"I had diverse periods. At the beginning I only felt like lying down and sleeping. Afterwards I felt like doing more things, but did not want to go out from home". (Violeta6,53)

"I didn't have social life before, only working, working, working and I seldom had friends". (Violeta7,29)

3.2.3 Economic

Suffering GV at the workplace has an undoubted economic impact on women. However, the extent of this impact will depend, on the one hand, on the personal situation of each woman and, on the other hand, on the different aspects (legal, labour, health,...) she will deal with throughout the whole violence experience.

In this sense, the personal situation of the woman, such as the fact of having children, being a lone mother with family responsibilities (widowed, divorced,...), being migrant, an old woman, etc. is very relevant when determining the economic effects that suffering GV has for them. Thus, for women who depend on their jobs for maintaining their children because they are alone, who are migrants and also depend on their salary to sustain their family in their countries of origin, who are migrants working in the irregular economy with no rights being recognised, or who are old women and with less opportunities in the labour market, the fact of suffering GV in the labour sphere usually has a considerable economic impact in their lives. This is because their income decreases due to sick leaves, unemployment (sometimes without unemployment benefits), invalidity pension, etc. In this way, women who find themselves in the vulnerable situations mentioned earlier have to struggle when facing these situations derived from the violent experience. It is important to stress that for these women, the decision of changing or quitting the job is not easy, since they strongly depend on their wage and sometimes it implies that they keep the job, despite being suffering GV, due to economic dependence.

"I had a daughter and a mother that I had to look after. I had to bring a plate in the table, ... I mean,... I could not afford anything,...". (Violeta3,54)

"The first I did when I came here was to pay the debt he had with the bank and pay him the studies (...). And here with difficulties to pay the housing (...). I am in hardship, I have a huge debt." (Violeta4,30)

It is noteworthy highlighting the economic impact of the interviewees who took legal action for the violent experience:

"At an economic level, I had to ask for help to my sons because I could not afford to pay the lawyer. I am alone with my sons and I have to pay everything, the house, the bills and the lawyer". (Violeta1,56)

"My lawyer didn't receive yet any money, because I don't have money to pay him, he is pressing me more and more every time, but I don't know how to do it (...) I have economic support from my parents but they cannot go on supporting me the whole time this is going to take". (Violeta7,29)

Those interviewees cohabiting with employed partners do not expressly highlight this dimension but when ask about it, they recognise that the collateral effects of suffering GV (such as sick-leaves and unemployment benefits) have some impact in their economy, but this is lessened thanks to their partners' economic contributions. Even one interviewee stresses that she is privileged in this sense, but that it would be terrible if she did not find herself in this privileged situation.

"[-At an economic level, did it cause any change?]

- Yes, obviously (...), but my husband has a permanent job in a big enterprise, with benefits, so that I feel privileged (...) but there are people who cannot afford being on sick leave or unemployed because need the money,... and it is hard, terrible". (Violeta6,53)

3.2.4 Housing

Housing has not appeared as a relevant dimension when talking about the effects of GV occurred at the workplace. In this sense, the interviewees do not point out that the fact of

suffering GV in the labour sphere has any effect on housing. However, they mention housing issues when talking about income, referring to either their dependence on their job to pay the rent or mortgage, or the difficulty of paying it.

*"I am alone with my sons and I have to pay everything, the house, the bills and the lawyer".
(Violeta1,56)*

"And here with difficulties to pay the housing". (Violeta4,30)

In the case of the migrant woman, the situation of exploitation lived at the workplace (which is the employer's home where the interviewee also lives) leads the woman to change of accommodation.

"I had told my boss that I needed money because every month I had bills, and then in August my boss told me to go with him and his family to his house (...), and that I could stay with them and find a room calmly. I was delighted, but I started to realise that (...) they did not appreciate my extra hours and I noticed I was wearing out, I had no resting time, timetables were extending and I said that I left. And then I found a little room, with a Bolivian couple (...). It is one month now that I am there and they know that I am in hardship, I have a huge debt. I asked them to reduce the rent 50€ one month (...). They discussed it and yesterday told me that they also needed the money for the bills. What can I do? It is like a chain." (Violeta4,30)

Except in this last case in which the violent experience directly provoked a change of accommodation, the effects of GV in housing should be interpreted as follows: for the interviewees with certain economic well-being, the GV experience at the workplace does not have any effect at housing. For those interviewees in vulnerable situations (e.g. mothers being lone responsible of the family, migrants), the violence experience increases their vulnerability at all levels, and also in the housing one, due to the economic impact that it may have (sick-leaves, unemployment...).

3.2.5 Labour

As seen so far, suffering GV at the workplace means, unquestionably, a series of linked consequences affecting women in various spheres of their lives. The analysis of labour as a dimension will quite elucidate how most of these dimensions are interconnected. Furthermore, the labour dimension becomes an essential one when talking about effects because it is the sphere where GV takes place and, consequently, one of the dimensions that gathers most of these effects.

On the basis of the interviewees, the most claimed effects of GV at the workplace are related to absences to work, to the performance at work and to processes that imply important changes in women's life as to resign the job and to be unemployed.

Sick-leaves

Most of the interviewees, 6 out of 7, had at least one sick-leave, due to a health problem, either physical or psychical. In three cases the situation suffered at the workplace was clearly the triggered of the crisis, which caused serious emotional and physical damage for their health. For those women, going back to work after a sick-leave was such a strong emotional impact that in a short time they felt ill again in a consecutive way:

"I was only once on sick leave, for 2 months, because from the trade union they advised me to ask for it and when the doctor saw me, he quickly gave it to me". (Violeta1,56)

*"I had the ligaments of my knee broken, since 10 years ago, and suddenly my knee swelled up and I was on sick leave. I went to an orthopaedic surgery and he asked me: 'do you want to be operated?' And I told him, 'yes, yes I do'. For me, as long as I did not have to go to work, anything was right (...)
And between the operation and the rehabilitation, maybe it was 6 months off sick. And then I recovered and when I was almost ready to be discharged, at the rehabilitation service I had a tendonitis on the right arm. Another week, 15 more days off sick. But I was delighted. I stayed one year or so on*

sick leave (...) and when I came back to work, after 3 or 4 months, I started to have infections in the right arm". (Violeta2,56)

"I first was 3 months on sick leave, then I worked 4 months and was again on sick leave 30 months. I went back to work and I did not stay there for a week". (Violeta5,52) [The three sick leaves were because of attacks of anxiety at the work place].

"I asked for a sick leave due to a depression (...) It was the only sick leave (...) what's more, I have got 39 of temperature and I have gone to work". (Violeta7,29)

Sanctions

Besides the harassment itself, in the multiple ways it may be practised, women have sometimes to face embarrassing situations as threats or coercions, if they happen to inform about their problem to a relevant person or department at work, or if they are on sick-leaves several times. Enterprises or bosses sanction employed women who have been on sick-leaves several times, knowing sometimes fairly well that the reason of their illness is due to the harassment. These sanctions sometimes have to do with coercions that aim to force women to sign up or to accept certain work conditions - which are not always legally proper-, and threatening with firing them.

"They threatened me to be fired, to lose my job (...) For the contract I had, I surely should still be working there (...) but they fixed a date to finalise it (...) It was a total imposition, they told me: "or you sign, or you don't go back to work anymore". (Violeta1,56)

"The boss I had, told me that had several influences, that knew a lot of people (...) also told me that if I went around to tell that had been a bad boss to me, I would have to take the consequences. Then, it frightened me a lot (...) because maybe I could be expelled". (Violeta4,30)

"When I told him about that, he told me that if I did not agree, I already knew where the door was (...) They told me that or I accepted what they were telling me or they would go for me (...) And they were forcing me to sign up a document that stated that I committed myself in not asking for anything, neither demanding anything". (Violeta5,52)

"They were trying to force me to quit the job". (Violeta7,29)

Job change

A job change is, on no account, an easy option for a woman who is suffering GV at her workplace, mainly due to economical or psychological reasons. Nevertheless, most of the women of our sample went through a job change because they saw, in a certain way, that it was the best manner to escape from the violence experience they were suffering. It should be pointed out, however, that generally a job change is not an option at first place, but a consequence after a period of sick-leave, unemployment or a job loss. In fact, only one of the interviewees changed her job as a personal decision, the other interviewees who changed their jobs, did it due to other circumstances.

We find differences in this sense among those women working on Public Administration and those working in private sectors. In this way, women working as civil servants or in organisations rendering services for the Public Administration (2 interviewees), when voicing the situation to any official statement, they are suggested or forced to ask for a transfer to another centre. Both women valued this option as a positive one, because it was not really a change of job itself – with all the difficulties that it might imply- but it was a change of context, which could mean to be far away from the person and other colleagues who were causing them the suffering:

"And what happened, that I went out of there, and they gave me a vacancy, they transferred me to another centre". (Violeta1,56)

"And then they tell you, change of workplace, ask for a transfer (...) I asked for it, eh. I asked for it because at that moment I didn't know... and then, so you ask for the transfer (...), which I thought it was the easy way". (Violeta2,56)

It is important to remark that this change of job/centre results to be a good solution only in appearance. A change of the physical place of work and of the colleagues does not mean that the bad emotional conditions women are suffering will improve automatically. As in general terms the health of the women is deeply affected, when changing of job place they still will be suffering most of the symptoms of the PTSD (low self-confidence, insecurity and distrust, anguish, etc) because overcoming the traumatic experience of suffering GV at the workplace, takes a long period of time, even if the woman is not more exposed to the event that provoked the trigger and even if she is receiving medical and/or psychological support:

"Regarding the transfer... I was not replacing anyone, I was a ... ghost (...) and so the people is keeping an eye on that, "let's see what she comes for" (...) I was not alright, I didn't mix with the colleagues at work. I kept on feeling bad, I kept on feeling bad". (Violeta2,56)

All interviewees working in the private sector, except two, also faced a job change as a consequence of the violence experience. Thus, in two cases, women changed of work after a period of sick-leave followed by unemployment. One of them explains how she changed 7 times of jobs after quitting the one where she had suffered the GV, due to her insecurity feelings and her problems to settle in at a new workplace, even after being a period unemployed.

"I started a job (...) went back to unemployment (...) Since I started to look for a job until now, I have changed 7 times (...) Up to now it didn't happen, but this is the sensation, that I am not capable". (Violeta6,53)

Another interviewee quit the job after being aware of the violence experience and got another one in the same sector, domestic service, under the same bad conditions as the previous one and, currently, she is suffering GV again. The vulnerability of this interviewee is strengthened by the fact that she is a migrant woman, in economic deprivation, responsible of her children and living in an irregular situation (which implies that she has no rights to unemployment benefits).

"A month later my boss called me, and told me that needed to know if I was already going back to work (...) And I said not to count on me anymore (...). Then they got me this other job (...) Because you start to work in this sector and the exploitation you suffer is total, you don't have time to rest, you don't have time for anything, there is not time for myself... (...). They precisely make the most of it, because they know you don't have rights, you don't have rights to claim...". (Violeta4,30)

Job loss

Another of the consequences of suffering GV at the workplace is that some women lose their jobs because they see that quitting the job is the last option they have to stop the GV. They resign jobs where they used to feel quite qualified and recognised until the moment the harassment started:

"So I wanted to leave that job... and I lost a very important, very important job. It was an enterprise where I felt very good, I was highly valued (...). I had a high status there and that man ruined it". (Violeta3,54)

However, there are also cases of women who lose their jobs due to their bad health conditions, which lead them to a situation of labour invalidity.

"Until one of the times that I was on sick leave, and I was quite often like this because I didn't recover from my arm, they called me from the Labour Inspection (...) and told me that as I was on sick leaves for such a long time I should have to ask for an invalidity, earning the 55% [from the salary] (...) Well, it was not also the best solution, but it is the only one they give to you". (Violeta2,56)

"I didn't reincorporate at work after this third sick leave because being still ill, I started the process for the invalidity being advised by a lawyer". (Violeta5,52) [On a check- up at work they detected a respiratory illness due to chemical products wrongfully used at her workplace]

It is remarkable that both of these women state that even before the suggestion of asking for an invalidity, they felt they could not work anymore at the same sector, since they had lost the willingness to keep on working:

"I am administrative, I have always worked as accountant and I don't want to know anymore about accountancy, because they make you feel so useless that you fail the wish to go to work". (Violeta5,52)

One of the interviewees lost her job as she was on sick leave because they fired her at that time.

"I asked for the sick leave on the 10th of September and they fired me on the 18th of October (...) unfair dismissal". (Violeta7,29)

Unemployment

As mentioned earlier, another effect of suffering GV at the workplace is to face a period of unemployment, although not always with employment benefit. For these women the unemployment period is described as a time to regain their physical and emotional health:

"And... I stayed calm at home 3 years without working until it was all over, but it was very hard for me to return to the labour world (...) When I left that job, I felt liberated, you bet I do!". (Violeta3,54)

"Since I was on sick leave I didn't go back to work, I came to an agreement about my dismiss when I was on sick leave (...) And then I was unemployed for a time... as I had unemployment benefit for 2 years, I thought the best was to calm down, to practise yoga, etc, to have a nice time... one year unemployed and then I started to look for a job". (Violeta6,53)

Both women recognise that going back to the labour market was very difficult, not only because returning to work after a long unemployment period is a hard task itself, but also because after this period they still suffer at emotional level some of the consequences of the GV experienced at their former job, as low self-confidence, auto-blaming, insecurity or distrust:

"And what's more, it was very hard to re-start with a new job, to be self-confident, etc". (Violeta3,54)

"Up to now, which is the seventh job - and I see that I go out to look for a job, they believe me and I get the job- I think that the day they realise that I am not useful anymore, I will be sacked". (Violeta6,53)

For the interviewee who was dismissed, a young woman who lives alone and therefore, the only one responsible for her incomes, the fact of being unemployed does not mean in any way a time to rest or to regain her health, but a time of economic worries, worsened by the emotional state of confusion and insecurity she is suffering after the GV experience, and by the legal processes she is dealing with against the enterprise she was working. This circumstances hinder her to take any action to look for a new job:

*"[-Do you feel capable to look for another job after that?]
-No (...) more than 4 years telling you that you are useless is a lot of time, you believe it (...) And the pressure is very strong (...) because you are obsessed, it is such a stress that you only live to keep an eye on that". (Violeta7,29)*

Performance at work

Suffering GV at the workplace also has consequences for women in the development of their work, in how they feel at the workplace, in life-long learning, etc.

Interviewees mostly refer to feelings of insecurity, low self-confidence and to a lower capacity of attention, concentration and perception. As a result, they feel that their performance at work is not at the level it used to be and they start losing their self-confidence and security as efficient and competent employees:

"There are moments when I lose my concentration and you start having mistakes in your work (...). It is horrible, my memory is failing quite a lot..." (Violeta4,30)

"And it also comes up a moment when you are blocked and you don't know what you are doing. When I left my job, for me, doing things like filing any paper, I had to consult how to do it, because I didn't know anymore how" (Violeta5,52)

"I had concentration problems, I was not achieving much, if I was told to do something I did not notice. I was tense and worried." (Violeta1,56)

"Due to the harassment our memory gets damaged (...), memory and concentration. (Violeta2,56)

Interviewees also refer to fears with relation to the fact of having to go to work or come back to work after the weekend or a sick-leave:

"Such an anguish, a panic to have to go back to work... (...) When I had to go to the doctor to pick up the medical report, already at the weekend I felt anguish, thinking that he was going to give me the certificate of discharge and that I had to go back to the job. I had an awful time (...) It caused me a lot of insecurity and anguish because, of course, at that point, all that I did, I did it frightened". (Violeta5,52)

"Many times you think of calling and telling you are ill, but I do not feel capable because I do not how to lie. Mondays.... on Sunday evening I am already on alert and tension". (Violeta4,30)

"It is very serious because psychologically you feel devastated, because it is the day-to-day. You do not know what will happen when you arrive to work, you don't know what they will tell you, will not tell you,..." (Violeta3,54)

"My whole body telling me that I couldn't see them, I couldn't bear any other shout telling me once again that I was useless, I couldn't bear it anymore. It was a pressure, I couldn't bear it any more..." (Violeta7,29)

One interviewee also voices an effect to her employability in the sense that, even being a very active person in terms of life-long learning, during the violence experience, she could not go on studying:

"I am a person that never has stopped studying, taking courses, but I gave up, because these three years have been very hard" (Violeta1,56)

3.2.6 Legal

The effects of GV at the workplace in the legal dimension cannot be examined without giving an important role to the fears that women face when initiating any procedure at this level. In this sense, most of the interviewees, at a certain moment during the period they are suffering the harassment, take the decision to ask for legal help, but they seldom appeal against their employers to the court, due to fears.

Legal advice

Some of the interviewees ask for legal advice, either to trade unions or to labour lawyers; however, their opinions are not very positive as only two of them state that they obtained satisfactory results; for the others it seems it was a bit frustrating since the legal advice was not useful at all:

"Then we talked to a lawyer (...) and he told me we were going to report about it (...) The trade union also helped me a lot and they had a lot of meetings with the responsible people and advised me (...). I had the support of the lawyer during the whole legal process and I felt myself safe and good accompanied". (Violeta1,56)

"I went to my lawyer and told him that I wanted to quit that job, that they owed me money and that they were trying to force me to quit (...) And then my lawyer, when I explained to him what was happening to me, he told me that what they were doing to me was mobbing". (Violeta7,29)

"I went to the trade union, to be advised by a lawyer, but his answer was very funny because he told me that I had two ways: to quit the job or to stay, and if I would stay, I would get sicker". (Violeta6,53)

In the cases of migrant women in an irregular situation, to be good informed or advised may not mean a solution but frustration, since they are unprotected by the legal system and subsequently in a vulnerable situation, with access only to jobs in irregular economy, exposed to any kind of abuse at the labour market and with no chance to report it to any authority.

There are women who do not ask for legal advice due to ignorance, because they do not know to whom ask for help.

"I didn't know what to do, where to go, to whom consult (...) With no one to give you advise". (Violeta2,56)

*"[Did you think at any time to go to the trade union or any association?]
- I didn't think of those things because I ignored that". (Violeta3,54)*

And sometimes, although they know there are organizations providing legal support to face the problem, women's emotional situation is so precarious (as already seen in the health dimension), that they do not have enough strength to take a decision such as to consult a legal specialist:

"And it is true that they guide you a little (in an association against mobbing) about what you can do, but when you are ready to do that is when you are getting better, because at first you are not in the substance to go to a lawyer or to anyway". (Violeta5,52)

Reporting to official authorities

In two cases, women report the situation of violence at workplace to official authorities but, as stated in the case of the legal advice, they do not always voice the process in a positive way:

"I went to the labour inspection but it is basically impossible, because they ask you to prove it, but how to prove it, how do you prove what they are telling you? (...) Then this inspection was precisely unfavourable, because it was impossible to prove what he was telling me". (Violeta5,52)

In other cases, women do not report the situation to any official authority because they are frightened with the possibilities of reprisals:

"If I had complained or said something, they would had buried me. I was frightened (...). I was frightened, so I never thought about reporting or asking for help". (Violeta3,54)

Court case

If women do not value as positive the advices that lawyers or trade unions give them, therefore it is not surprising that they do not present a formal accusation to the court. One of the two women who was satisfied with the legal advice she received, did not want to go to the court due to fears to lose her job. The other one, who was dismissed, brought the case to trial because of that reason but the enterprise reacted to that initiating a legal action against her:

“There was not a trial because I didn’t want. It is so that, on the one hand, I did not have any problem to do it, but comparing the situation, I told myself, that if I do report for such a question and if it comes up, more or less, to another level, I can already forget about keeping on working for this official institution for the rest of my life”. (Violeta1,56)

“They fired me when I was on sick and now I have the trial (...) They bring an action against me telling that I opened an account to charge the money of the enterprise in my account”. (Violeta7,29)

4. Gender violence from experts’ perspective

4.1. GV from expert’s perspective in the partner context

Professionals working in the support for women suffering GV in the partner context provide complementary information to the one gathered by means of the interviewed women. Thus, the experience of professionals in this field is useful to clarify the complexity of some of the processes women have to go through as consequence of GV.

When asking about the effects of GV on women’s life, the experts consulted agree on the enormous impact that this experience causes in the 6 dimensions here analysed. One of these experts states that the fact of being battered exposes women to such different and complex situations that, altogether, work like an explosive cocktail. This statement exemplifies quite clearly the vision that the professionals have relating to the effects of GV in partner context.

Physical and psychological health

Some experts point out that chronic illnesses as, for instance, hypertension or diabetes get worse during the period women are exposed to the battering, causing an increase in the intake of prescribed medicine. Nevertheless, women may take medicines even if they do not have any medical prescription when they try to treat themselves, specially the psychological effects they suffer as sleep and eating disorders, and take analgesic and other medicines.

Their physical and psychological health is also affected when they are obliged to have sexual relationships with their partners against their will and without option to use contraceptive methods.

Taking into account all of this, experts describe women to be in a general state of confusion and weakness, even if they do not have a concrete illness, due to the emotional conditions they suffer, as low-self confidence, feelings of guilt, fears or loneliness. All of them are effects of the suffering they are exposed to.

Relationships and social life

Children

Professionals observe that GV in the partner context sometimes causes to women feelings of incomprehension, and the loss of the support of their sons and daughters. This situation specially takes place when their partners exert over women psychological or economic abuse, limiting women in the economic sphere. This is a very subtle manner of violence that children do not always perceive, and even less if women try to manage the situation hiding them the reality in order to protect them and to avoid them any suffering. In this case, therefore, women feel very lonely.

Men

With regard to women’s relationships with men, experts state that women face the situation of being with another man depending on the emotional stage they find themselves. Women who have just finished a relationship with a perpetrator of violence do not feel like having relationships with other men, describing feelings of fears and distrust. But women who already

have reached an emotional stability, and after being without partner for a while, they generally show more positive reactions to the fact of sharing their lives once again with a man.

Other Family members or relatives

Professionals also remark that not every women trust in parents or siblings to ask for support due to feelings of shame, and sometimes of incomprehension, if they voice their situation but do not find the support expected.

Friends

According to the professionals, the violence exert by their partners in order to avoid women contacting with their friends, causes women feelings of loneliness. Therefore, women sometimes also renounce to share their problem with friends, due to feelings of shame.

It is also observed by the professionals that some women feel distrust in neighbours if they do not perceive any will to help them.

Social, cultural, leisure activities

The consulted experts find important to know if women used to be active in this field before their experience of violence, to be able to set comparisons. They also question if it is possible for these women, in means of energy and time, even after finishing the relationship with their partners, to improve this sphere, their participation in social and leisure activities, if they have to confront the search of a new home and a job, and take care of their own children as lonely responsible for them.

Economic

The economic state of women turns out to be very precarious while and after suffering GV at home. Experts state that, on the one hand, sometimes the violence men perpetrate implies the control of the money that women have access to, even their salaries if they are employed women. Professionals consider this control on women's economy as an important indicator of a manner to exert GV in partner context and the effects caused in woman's life. On the other hand, after finishing the relationship with their partners, women have to face extreme changes in their lives as looking for a job, - if they were not working at the moment they split up-, to be capable to pay alone the rent or mortgage of their house and all the costs they have to face if they are also lone responsible for the care of their children. Furthermore, experts indicate that the economic difficulties are even harder if women are migrant in irregular situation without any chance to enter the formal labour market. A difficulty that older women also have to face, specially if they were never employed before.

Nevertheless, professionals also highlight that there are situations when a battered woman feels she is capable to confront alone her economy and decides to separate from her partner. Such a moment turns out to be a very dangerous one for this woman, because it may start critic circles of violence since her partner realises he is loosing the control he has on his woman.

Housing

All the professionals also agree with the difficulties women find when leaving a partner who was perpetrator of battering. Both, if women stay at the same residence they used to share with their partners or if they move to another house or flat, it implies economical changes in their lives, that they may not be able to confront alone.

Employment

Experts indicate that men also might exert violence against their partners by impeding them to have a job. To prohibit women to work is deeply interconnected with the control of their economy and therefore with women's impoverishment. This situation has many consequences when a battered woman decides to leave her partner, since she is unemployed (maybe also without any work experience) and in a very critical economic position. This circumstance causes to the woman an enormous vulnerability when facing her labour insertion, forcing her,

in many occasions, to accept unstable and precarious jobs. Likewise, professionals remark once again that the difficulties and vulnerability increase for women who are migrant and in irregular situation, or older women without work experience. These women find extremely difficult to escape from the battered situation they are suffering.

Nevertheless, experts also indicate that the state of confusion and defencelessness in what a battered woman finds herself, even after finishing her relationship with the partner, can also be a reason for her unemployment, because she is not in an appropriate emotional stage to look for a job or to keep on working if she already has a job.

When the case is that women are employed while living with their partners and suffering battering, professionals state that some women see their jobs as a kind of social recognition, being the colleagues the closest persons they have to trust and to look for support, specially when their partners exert control on their relationships with friends as another manner of abuse.

To be absent from work is sometimes an usual circumstance for many employed women who suffer battering at home. Due to physical violence they have to stay at home, to hide bruises for example, in order to avoid any explanation to their bosses or colleagues, because women sometimes feel ashamed of their situation. Other times women have to ask for a sick leave if the violence episode is so strong that they even have to go to the hospital. Nevertheless, successive absenteeism and successive sick leaves cause to women fears of losing their jobs, and sometimes they even go to work in bad healthy conditions, lying about the reasons of their bruises, because they feel ashamed or feel fear of losing their status at work if their colleagues or employers know their real situation.

Legal

According to the professionals, women feel frustration and, consequently, distrust in the legal system when they realise that starting a legal process against their partners implies time and for some of them, even important losses, as economic incomes. Migrant women, unemployed due to their irregular condition, or older and unemployed women, suddenly realise that a legal process implies to lose their only source of income, that is, their partners. In these cases, women decide not to carry on with the started legal process.

Employed women have to absent from work if they have to go to a trial, with all the disadvantages it brings them at their workplaces; and unemployed women, if they are mothers and without a family or a social network support, have to deal with their children timetables at school and the timetables of other services they have access to, as social workers or psychological support, normally situated in different places or even far away from their homes.

Some women, stress the experts, also feel that the legal system victimizes them when they ask for help because some professionals in the legal context question the responsibility of women in the battering.

Conclusions

According to the contributions given by the experts, all of them agree with the necessity of a comprehensive service that supplies women support at different levels: In a first stage, this service has to give women information about all the steps they have to make when they decide to leave a perpetrator, including the advantages and disadvantages it implies, depending on every personal case. Legal assistance, legal accompaniment and support should be guaranteed during the whole legal process if a woman decides to start it, as well as police protection in order to protect them from any new aggression of their partners. Jointly with the legal assistance it should be guaranteed emotional support from professionals as psychologists or psychiatrics, and even medical support to attend their situations of stress, confusion and physical weakness. All of these supports could lead women to cope with the enormous changes they will experience in their lives once they decide to leave their partners, and facilitate them to confront the changes in their economy, housing and labour situation.

Professionals admit that some of these services are already giving support to battered women, but not in a comprehensive way. All of these supports should be offered at a same

place, to avoid women unnecessary journeys from one place to another, reducing their inversion on time and energy, something that most of them do not have in such circumstances. Finally, all the professionals working in this service should receive a special training to attend women with empathy and understanding, in order to give them all the safety, protection and guidance they need in that moment.

4.2. Gender Violence from experts' perspective in the work context

Physical and Psychological Health

According to professionals, the physical and psychological health of women suffering violence at the workplace is strongly determined by successive phases of stress that at a first moment affect them somatically, with backaches, loss of hair, colon irritability, hyperactivity leading to physical exhaustion, fatigue, tiredness, etc. Most of these physical effects are accompanied by deep depressive symptoms as loss of self-confidence, auto blaming, anguish, insecurity, defencelessness and attacks of anxiety, among others. The continued exposition to the GV at the workplace during a period of months leads women to develop a major disorder called PTSD (Posttraumatic Stress Disorder). In this phase women suffer sleep disorders, recurrent nightmares and thoughts, irritability, difficulties in basic cognitive processes, avoidance of any element associated to the job, etc. In a following phase, all of these symptoms affect women in all their lives' spheres, from their performance at work to their personal relationships with partners, family or friends, being emotively very sensitive, what in extreme cases ends up in suicide attempts.

Professionals outline, furthermore, that GV against women at the workplace begins, in many occasions, as a sexual harassment and that the abusers, after failing with their attempts, change their actions and turn to denigrate women at the workplace in other ways. As a consequence, these women experience successive traumatic situations, causing accumulative effects in their health's conditions.

Medical and/or psychological support are needed by most of these women, specially to confront the symptoms of depressions.

Relationships and social life

Family

The GV suffered at work also affects women with regard to their relationships with their nearest persons outside the work context.

Professionals state that the stress situation suffered at work affects the harmony in the women's family relationships. For some women the cohabitation with their partners and children turns out to be difficult, due to their emotional weakness.

Women who suffer sexual harassment at the workplace even may have sexual problems with their partners, due to feelings of shame or to the incomprehension of their partners. Otherwise, women's partners are sometimes the only ones who provide women with understanding and support.

In their relationships with their children, these women frequently feel auto-blaming concerning their role as mothers; due to the low capacity to concentrate and to perform ordinary day-to-day activities, they feel they do not pay attention enough to their children. If their children are young, women tend to hide them the problem they are suffering at work. If their children are older, women may also feel incomprehension.

Friends

With regard to their relationships with friends, experts describe two different reactions on women's side: On the one side, women may avoid any social contact due to their depressive states, and consequently, feeling themselves alone and isolated. On the other side, women may search for the understanding and support of their friends. Nevertheless, women do not

always receive the support they expect, feeling also loneliness, distrust and incomprehension when friends turn out to be distant.

In general, professionals explain that regarding the relationships, the main feeling women experience is distrust and loneliness, because they do not find easily the support from partners, friends or colleagues.

Economic

Professionals state that the economy of women who suffer GV at the workplace is also affected. At the moment women need legal assistance, as consulting a lawyer, for instance, they have to face economic costs on their own. Even if they need psychological support they usually have to pay this service, because most of the teams of professionals women have to consult are not free of charge.

Furthermore, experts also observe that there are women who are specially vulnerable to suffer GV at the workplace; this is the case of divorced or separated women, widows and migrant women working in the irregular economy, with children or any other family responsibilities. These women do not have an easy economic situation and therefore depend, to a big extent, on their jobs. For these women, asking for a professional support suppose a huge economic effort and, due to this reason, they may suffer a situation of GV at work indefinitely.

Employment

Experts state that to be on sick leave at a certain moment is inevitable for women who suffer GV at work and, in most of the cases, the reason for the sick leave is the diagnosis of a depression. For some women, the physical and emotional repercussions of the violence are so hard that they are successively on sick leave and, eventually, a medical board declares they have a permanent invalidity.

Being in a depressive state does not make very realistic for women to change the job. Professionals remark that women do not feel capable to look for another job because of fears and distrust to other work contexts and because of their feelings of low self-confidence and defencelessness.

There are factors as the personality of every woman or the length they were exposed to the violence at their workplaces that influence their capacity to overcome the emotional effects caused by this experience. Nevertheless, for most of the women, the chances of overcoming these hard emotional effects are very scarce without a psychological or psychiatric support.

The position that colleagues take in front of this situation has also influence on the emotional response of women. If they do not feel understood but feel ignored and isolated by their colleagues, or even ashamed to trust them, women's reactions turn to be of distrust and fear. Furthermore, colleagues reaction in most of the cases is to take distance from the harassed woman, in order to avoid reprisals to themselves.

According to all of that, experts indicate that the tendency of women is to renounce their jobs, even if they have a good position, more than to change to another one. Women end up leaving their jobs because they do not see another possible option when they have lost entirely their capacity of resistance to the situation at work, and due to the emotional disturbs the violence causes in their personal and private lives.

Legal

Women who suffer GV at the workplace try to avoid any legal action against their aggressor. They wish to finish with the situation they are suffering without exposing it in a public way, specially if the harassment was sexual, to be able to continue their normal lives. Nevertheless, if they consult any legal professional, as a lawyer, it is possible that they finally start a legal process against their employer.

Once again professionals refer to the emotional state of these women to explain how difficult is for them to confront a legal process and attend to trials, because legal processes for GV at the workplace usually are long in time, and because being present at a trial and declaring against their aggressor is also a very hard emotional impact for women.

Professionals state that women who suffer GV at the workplace ignore, at a first moment, where to assist to ask for help, increasing this fact their stress and defencelessness feelings. If women consult firstly to Trade Unions, they normally do not receive the support they expect, and they usually have to ask for other professionals whose services must be paid by themselves, as previously mentioned.

Conclusions:

On the one hand, women who suffer GV at the workplace need the support of different professionals in order to overcome this experience. Most of these women ignore, at a first moment, that what they are suffering at work is a harassment, and it is after months or even years when they realise what is happening, and start to take measures to get rid of and overcome this situation. Taking into account that the length that women are exposed to the harassment is an important factor that influences in the possibility to overcome their experiences, professionals remark the necessity to inform the society and the enterprises about this problem, with a view to develop measures to respond quickly to a situation of GV at the workplace.

On the other hand, the Legal system in Spain does not contemplate the GV at work as an offence itself, what makes difficult for women who suffer it to find a proper treatment and an adequate professional legal service with a special professional training.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

GV in intimate partner context

The fieldwork carried out with women having suffered GV in the partner context confirms our initial hypothesis that VAW has multidimensional effects on women's lives. Women's tough experiences illustrate the enormous impact that violence has had on their life and how this violence encompasses changes and effects in their health, housing, economic situation, social relationships, labour, etc. Suffering GV in the intimate partner context and, above all, finishing the violent relationship with the male perpetrator becomes a trigger of a series of chained events for women, which take place in parallel and have to be confronted by women who find themselves in very vulnerable situations.

At a health level, women suffer physical damages as a direct consequence of the physical aggressions perpetrated by their partners, but they also suffer physically even when the violence their partners exert against them is only psychological. Therefore, women's physical health is closely interconnected to their emotions, which are seriously damaged due to violence. Whatever the violence their partners perpetrate against them, the emotional state of the women is always affected; women suffer, without exceptions, deep states of depressions and this weak emotional state affects and place them in a special situation of vulnerability that influences how they confront with the diverse spheres of their lives.

Many of these spheres experience changes due to the violence being suffered. In this sense, apart from their psychological state, their labour situations may have been affected (sick-leaves, difficulties in the performance of the work, job loss, prohibition of working by the partner,...), their economy may be also conditioned (lack of control of family income, material losses, ...), their social life and relationships may be reduced (isolation, lack of social and family nets, ...), etc.

However, these changes become more visible and are emphasised when women decide to separate from their partners in order to finish the violent relationship. At this moment, the changes in women's life are hastened and women find themselves facing multiple new situations that take place in parallel and when women's emotional state is very much damaged due to the violence suffered.

An immediate consequence of ending up a violent relationship is to move to another place, since for many women the only way to finish it is to run away from their partner and, therefore, from their home. All of a sudden, women find themselves with no place to live, having to develop strategies to deal with this situation, like asking for help to relatives, friends or the State. They need to move to someone's places or to shelter houses, while searching for a permanent place to live. However, getting a place to live is not possible without economic resources and, therefore, having a new home is usually conditioned to the need to find a job in order to be able to assume all the living expenses of themselves and their children, as well as the payment of a rent or a mortgage. Even women who had previously a job may be forced to quit it due to security reasons and changes of residence.

Thus, women find themselves trapped in a very vulnerable situation: they need money to get a house and maintain themselves and their children, and to get money they need a job; however, their emotional state is not at the best moment, their personal competences and resources to cover their needs of well-being and safety, and face all the simultaneous events taking place (ending-up a relationship, changes of residence and precarious housing, legal processes, managing with the care and living of the children, unemployment, ...) are affected and thus, limited, and, on top of that, they need to deal with a process of labour insertion which, in any case, will take some time.

Therefore, on the basis of the fieldwork, in general, finishing a violent relationship implies situations of precariousness and impoverishment for women; the separation from their partners encompass circumstances that place women in a very vulnerable position that can lead them to social exclusion processes. We perceive social exclusion as a multidimensional and dynamic process, understood as *"the obstacles that certain persons find to fully participate in social life, thus being deprived from one or several options considered being fundamental for their human development"*⁸. As the European Commission stated in its Background Report *Social Exclusion-Poverty and Other Social Problems in the European Community ISEC/B/11/93*, "poverty is one of the most obvious factors, but social exclusion also refers to inadequate rights in housing, education, health and access to services". Thus, when talking about social exclusion we refer to the conditions that impede a person to enjoy of individual autonomy and rights to participate fully to social, communitarian, economic, educative,... spheres of life.

Taking into account the situation of interviewed women after separation in terms of health (in a global sense), housing, economy, employment, family responsibilities, etc. we can affirm that most of these women are in risk positions to fall into processes of social exclusion. This affirmation goes in line with the research carried out by Espinar⁹, which concludes that separation can mean an starting point for impoverishment processes for women. This author claims that the combination of the precarious physical and psychological state of women suffering gender violence, their vulnerability after the separation, the need to start from zero and the need to develop strategies of survival taking into account their usual situation of economic shortage, family responsibilities, deficiencies in the social services, labour difficulties may lead to a situation of impoverishment (that we understand as social exclusion, since this situation goes beyond economic deprivation).

⁸ MARTÍNEZ ROMÁN, A. "Género, pobreza y exclusión: diferentes conceptualizaciones y políticas públicas (Gender, poverty and exclusion: different conceptualizations and public policies)", in TORTOSA, J.M., cited in SURT, *Poverty, Gender and Social Exclusion*, DG 5, Occupation, Work Relations and Social Matters, European Commission (2000-2002).

⁹ Espinar Ruiz, E. (2006) *Violencia de género y procesos de empobrecimiento*. Córdoba. Servicios de publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba.

Furthermore, as mentioned previously in the report, many women suffering GV accumulate other factors of vulnerability such as being migrants and living in an irregular situation (encompassing lack of social, civic, politic rights, precariousness in the labour sphere, discrimination,...), being old women (less opportunities in the labour market, discrimination, ...), being the lone responsible for their children with lack of family or social nets to support them (hardship, more difficulties for labour insertion, more complexity when balancing labour and family lives,...). This vulnerability factors place women in a position of lack of opportunities for fully participating in social life and where, due to the lack of comprehensive public policies and services tackling all these issues, they are forced to develop survival strategies. One of the interviewees even mentioned that she only had two options to face the difficult situation she was living after the separation, alone with her daughter, paying a mortgage, receiving a low State pension and having no job: either to go back with his perpetrator partner, or to work as a prostitute.

All in all, suffering GV means an inflection point in women's life; such a brutal phenomenon leaves them in a very vulnerable and risk situation in all senses, which puts on the table the need for public comprehensive support services, at a legal, psychological, labour, economic and housing level.

GV at the workplace context

Women who suffer GV at the workplace experience a deep psychological impact that affects several spheres of their lives, not only triggers events related to their jobs but also to their private lives. As GV perpetrated at the workplace is not an isolated episode of one day but a continuous and prolonged exercise of denigration and humiliation in different ways, it causes women intense feelings of insecurity, incapacity, uselessness, helplessness, low self-confidence, anger, distrust, and/or serious physical damages. The emotional impact of suffering this violence is very intense, whatever the kind of violence perpetrated against women. In this way, even for the two women of our sample who suffered physical or sexual violence (apart from psychological one) at the workplace, the emotional consequences of these experiences were stronger in intensity and length than the physical damages themselves. Nevertheless, physical health is also affected due to GV, since women sometimes develop physical illnesses as a result of the emotionally traumatic experience they suffer at the workplace.

Furthermore, the consequences of this experience (which leads to suffer a PTSD) are long in time since after finishing the violence many women claim to still suffer due to the past experience for months and years.

At the workplace, the weak emotional and sometimes also physical state of the women have repercussions in their capacity of memory and concentration, reducing their performance at work, among others. Furthermore, their bad health conditions cause that, sooner or later, they are on sick leaves due to depressions or physical disorders. Some women even end up with an invalidity to work, due to successive illnesses and sick leaves.

Finishing the situation of GV means, for all the women in our sample, to keep themselves away from the workplace, by means of sick-leaves, changes of job or abandonment of the job. Thus, it has an undoubtful effect in labour terms. However, the possibilities available and the consequences of any of these solutions are not the same for all women, since it will depend on many factors such as their economic position, their emotional state for facing a process of labour re-insertion, the fact of being the lone responsible for the children, being migrant, etc. In this sense, whereas women who have economic support from their partners can easily decide to quit their jobs even if they cannot receive unemployment benefits, women who are in more vulnerable situations may be forced to put up with violence at the workplace for a long

time because they have limited options to end up with this situation; to be unemployed without any economic aid is in no way an option for women who are the lonely responsible for the incomes of their family, or migrant women in economic deprivation and also responsible for the sustain of their families, or old women, etc. Due to these factors of vulnerability affecting women, which need to be understood for the gender inequalities of our society, women find themselves in an unfavourable position that forces them to bear violence at the workplace. Having to withstand such a painful situation has consequences for the well-being of women because the longer the exposition to the harassment, the stronger the consequences of the harm. And, as a result, it is more difficult for women to overcome it.

The fact of suffering GV at the workplace also affects the activities and relationships women carry out in their private lives. In this sense, sometimes the intimate relationships with their partners are affected, as well as their relationships with their children due to states of sadness, nervousness and general physical distresses. For this reason, women sometimes refuse any contact with other people as relatives and friends, also avoiding any social activity and feeling consequently alone and isolated.

In another sense, the economic situation of women is also conditioned by GV, not only regarding the already mentioned possibilities of escaping from the situation of violence, but also concerning their decision to ask for legal or psychological support, because women themselves have to pay for these services on their own. For women alone and in precarious economic conditions, the opportunities to access to a professional support are very scarce. This is also the case if women decide to start legal processes. However, due to the Spanish legal framework regarding violence at the workplace jointly with the feelings of fears, shame, a general state of weakness, and the threatens they receive from the aggressor, women usually are discouraged to present formal accusations against their employers.

Women who are in a situation of economic deprivation cannot afford the economic costs that both legal and psychological support implies, which places them in a situation of vulnerability, impeding them to take the adequate measures and decisions to finish with their suffering. In this sense, women are forced to put up with violence at work due to economic reasons and without being able to receive the adequate support needed to treat the consequences of the GV experience, to overcome them and to be able to continue their professional project.

On the basis of this situation and on the effects that GV at the workplace has for women in terms of health, labour, economy or social relationships, it is necessary to develop raising-awareness actions targeting both general society and enterprises, informing about the characteristics and consequences of GV at the workplace for women and also enterprises, as well as to supply support services free of charge in order to permit that every women has the same possibilities to access to them and receive the appropriated support and counselling.

6. Annex

Table 1. Sample description

Country	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Have been divorced, separated formerly (yes-Y, no-N)	Current marital status	Living together with a partner (yes-Y, no-N)	Number and age of children	Education (basic-B, secondary-M, tertiary-H)	Employment status (unemployed-UE, full timer-FT, part timer-PT, leave-L)	Living in urban or rural area (over 100000 inhab-C; 10001-100000-T; under 10000-U)
Spain	PAULA1	49	White	Separated	Single	N	3 (28,25,21)	B	UE	C
Uruguay	PAULA2	58	White	N	Married	Y	2 (27,26)	B	PT*	C
Chile	PAULA3	40	Amerindian	N	Separated	N	2 (19,6)	M	PT*	C
Spain	PAULA4	39	White	N	Separated	N	1 (8)	B	PT*	U
Chile	PAULA5	38	White	N	Divorced	N	3 (20,19, 2)	M	FT*	C
Iran	PAULA6	43	Iran – Farsi	N	Married	Y	2 (15,8)	M	UE	T
Morocco	PAULA7	37	Arab-Berber	N	Divorced	N	2 (11,7)	H	FT	T
Ukraine	PAULA8	30	White	N	Single	N	1 (21 months)	H	UE	T
Spain	VIOLETA1	56	White	N	Separated	N	2 (26,33)	M	PT	T
Spain	VIOLETA2	56	White	N	Married	Y	2 (19,27)	H	L**	U
Spain	VIOLETA3	54	White	N	Widowed	N	1 (30)	M	FT	C
Colombia	VIOLETA4	30	White	N	Married	N	2(11,12)	H	FT*	C
Spain	VIOLETA5	52	White	N	Married	Y	2 (25,20)	M	L**	C
Spain	VIOLETA6	53	White	N	Married	Y	2 (26, 27)	M	FT	U
Spain	VIOLETA7	29	White	N	Single	N	0	H	UE	C

* Irregular economy

** Permanent Invalidity