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According To A Study, Change In Social Roles Of Men And Women May Increase Gender Violence

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Changes in social roles of men and women may cause the increase of gender violence. When sexist men feel their power threatened within their relationship, they may use violence as a way to restore their lost power.

Thus, violence becomes either an instrument to control their threatened power and a way to restore it. Currently, many men "feel threatened by the change that their relationship with women has undergone. They are unable to understand their relationship with women in terms of equality despite the prevailing social rules".

Such conclusions were drawn from a research conducted by Prof. M^a Carmen Herrera Enríquez, from the Department of Social Psychology and Methodology of Behavioural Science of the University of Granada, coordinated by Prof. Francisca Expósito Jiménez and Miguel C. Moya Morales. This study was undertaken to obtain an answer to the following question: "Why do certain men batter certain women?"

The research conducted in the University of Granada employed a psycho-social perspective based on two factors: sexism and power imbalance in marriage. Concretely, the author's purpose was to get a more thorough perspective and so she tried to investigate to what extent men's perception of losing power may be a cause of gender violence. As M^a Carmen Herrera states: "it is not only the person's behaviour what causes violence, but also the social context and its influence on men's behaviour".

Women forgo their ambitions

According to the University of Granada, our society has a problem: women accept benevolent sexism which is defined by the author as "sexism with positive connotations, care to and paternalism towards women" may lead them to forego their ambitions to avoid conflicts with their partners. In other words: Women who are afraid that their husbands will react violently against them if they do not stick to their traditional role opt for forgoing equality in exchange for security.

Benevolent sexism "can be deemed as a lens that distorts reality due to its positive tone that weakens women's will in situations of inequality, discrimination or violence against them. This behaviour makes individuals accept this type of situation.

This research confirms the relevance of ideological factors in gender-based violence. It emphasizes the importance of power in sentimental relationships and its influence on men's reactions in an effort to maintain or restore their lost/threatened power.

The results obtained from this study may be essential in the prevention of and action against gender violence. The author has not only revealed the importance to the aggressor of ideological factors, but she has also highlighted the role of benevolent sexism in making women become potential victims.

Source: University of Granada

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