

## **Non-physical (psychological and emotional) abuse in intimate partner relationships**

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After a wave of interest in physical violence between intimate partners, non-physical (psychological, emotional) abuse also became the focus of research at the beginning of the nineties. The paper addresses this much more sensitive form of abuse in intimate partner relationships, for which it has been established that it is even more harmful for a victim than physical abuse. Psychological abuse appears in many forms – from verbal abuse, the isolation or domination of one partner, to emotional extortion. It is possible that only one partner in any relationship is violent, but it is also possible for both partners to be abusive in different ways, which lead to various sorts of relationships in which psychological abuse is likely to take place.

The author analyses the dynamics of psychological abuse and the repetitive patterns of 'loving repentance' that often make a victim persist in such a relationship. The paper also presents various mechanisms and strategies used by abusive persons. Since the dynamics and pathological persistence in such an abusive relationship cannot be understood without an analysis of the psychological characteristics of the abusive partner and his victim, the paper examines in detail the following factors: abuse in childhood, low self-concept, a strong defence mechanism of denial, self-incrimination etc. At the end, the paper presents some difficulties related to the study of psychological abuse. It does not address all factors related to the abuse but the major problems include difficulties with a clear definition of this notion, difficulties in the methods of research and excessive consideration of a victim.

**Key words:** partner relationships, non-physical abuse, psychological abuse, emotional extortion, cycle of violence

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