

1 Title: **Negative attitudes related to violence against women: gender and ethnic differences**
2 **among youth living in Serbia**

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank UNICEF for the access to MICS4 database. This
work was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technological Development
of Serbia (Project No 175025).

1 **Title:** Negative attitudes related to violence against women: gender and ethnic differences
2 among youth living in Serbia

3

4 **Abstract**

5 **Objectives:** This study aimed to identify to what extent negative attitudes toward intimate
6 partner violence against women are present among young women and men living in Serbia,
7 in Roma and non-Roma settlements.

8 **Methods:** We used the data from the 2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in
9 Serbia, for the respondents who were 15-24 years old. Regression analyses were used to
10 examine the association between judgmental attitudes, socio-demographic factors and life
11 satisfaction.

12 **Results:** In Roma settlements, 34.8% of men and 23.6% of women believed that under
13 certain circumstances men are justified to be violent toward wives, while among non-Roma it
14 was 5.6% and 4.0%, respectively. These negative attitudes were significantly associated with
15 lower educational level, lower socio-economic status and being married. In multivariate
16 model, in both Roma and non-Roma population women who were not married were less
17 judgmental, while the richest Roma men were least judgmental (OR 0.40, 95% CI 0.18 –
18 0.87).

19 **Conclusion:** Violence prevention activities have to be focused on promoting gender equality
20 among youth in vulnerable population groups such as Roma, especially through social
21 support, strengthening their education and employment.

22

23 **Key words:** violence against women; attitudes; youth; violence prevention; gender; Serbia;
24 Roma; community

25 **Words count:** 3,535

1

2 **Abbreviations**

3 **VAW** Violence Against Women

4 **IPVAW** Intimate Partner Violence Against Women

5 **ULRA** Univariate Logistic Regression Analysis

6 **MLRA** Multivariate Logistic Regression Analysis

7 **MICS** Multi Indicator Cluster Survey

8 **WHO** World Health Organization

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4 **Introduction**

5 Intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is prevalent in almost all cultures around
6 the world (Krug 2002; Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006). Almost every third woman has
7 experienced IPVAW worldwide (Devries et al. 2013), and almost every fourth woman in
8 Serbia (Garcia-Moreno et al. 2006). In general population in Serbia, IPVAW might not be
9 recognized as a concern of criminal justice system, being ascribed to traditional gender roles
10 that tend to justify violence against women, although legislation has changed in 2002, which
11 clearly recognize IPVAW as a criminal act (Criminal Law, 2002).

12 IPVAW is even more frequent among women who are poor and living in deprived
13 socio-economic groups and neighborhoods (Vives-Cases et al. 2014). The greatest
14 underprivileged population group in Serbia is the Roma group, who account for 2.0%
15 (147,604) of the total Serbian population (Census 2012). Their education level, socio-
16 economic status and health status are lower than that of general population (Janevic et al,
17 2012). Roma population is a very young ethnic community, where the average age is 27
18 years, while it is 40.2 years in the general population (Vukmirovic et al. 2009). Recent survey
19 conducted in Roma settlements in Serbia indicated that at least every second Roma woman
20 (53.7%) got married before reaching the age of 18 (Republic Statistics Office 2012). This
21 leads to a large number of pregnancies, premature deliveries, but also induced abortions,
22 which altogether negatively affect health of Roma women. Roma communities are usually
23 poor and socially deprived areas, with very limited opportunities for personal and social
24 advancements of their members, which leads to their low life satisfaction (Hajioff and
25 McKee 2000; Janevic et al, 2012). Gender equality and women's rights in Roma

1 communities are largely compromised, and Roma women are often exposed to IPVAV
2 (Vives-Cases 2014).

3 There are a number of factors that can predict IPVAV, and they appear at the
4 individual, community and society level, according to the ecological framework (Heise 1999,
5 Djikanovic et al, 2010, Abramsky et al. 2011, Stith et al. 2004; Hindin et al. 2008). Some of
6 these factors are attitudes supportive of wife beating, i.e. gender stereotyping and
7 discriminative norms that justify IPVAV under certain circumstances (Garcia Moreno et al,
8 2006). Results from WHO multi-country study showed that percentage of women in general
9 population who justify wife beating varied from 6% in Serbia to over 68% in some other
10 countries where this study was conducted (WHO, 2005).

11 Women who are violence victims might experience the lack of social support and to
12 be more or less dissatisfied with various aspects of life, such as family life, friendship,
13 school, job, or a way people behave toward them (Zapor et al, 2015, McDonnell et al, 2011).
14 Recently, it was found that social support and empowerment directly correlated with life
15 satisfaction among women who experienced IPVAV (Song, 2012). However, there are not
16 many studies that explored the complex interplay between life satisfaction, as a proxy of
17 social support, and the presence of judgmental attitudes toward IPVAV.

18 Despite recent reports describing position of Roma women and domestic violence in
19 Europe (Vives-Cases 2014; Prava za sve 2012; MICS 2012), this topic is under-researched,
20 and empirical evidence is lacking. Also, little is known about the presence of judgmental
21 attitudes related to IPVAV, among both women and men in disadvantaged population groups
22 such as Roma. Gender differences in attitudes related to IPVAV are still unclear, as well as
23 factors associated with them.

24 Although an average age for the first marriage in general population of Serbia is 31
25 years for men and 28 years for women, certain percentage of women 20-24 years old had

1 been married before the age of 18 (8%), and even before the age of 15 (3%) (Statistical
2 Office of the Republic of Serbia). In Roma population, these percentages are far more higher:
3 50.5% of Roma women who are 20-24 years old have been married before the age of 18, and
4 13.2% before the age of 15 (Aleksic, 2015). It clearly indicates the need to investigate
5 attitudes related to violence against women in these age groups. Young adults (15-24 years
6 old), either married or not, might have the greatest potential to change, i.e. to adopt non-
7 discriminative gender-related attitudes and show zero tolerance for violence against women.
8 Reaching these subgroup is important for decreasing IPVAW and achieving higher levels of
9 health and life satisfaction in the long run. Therefore, this study aimed to examine attitudes
10 related to IPVAW among young women and men living in Serbia, and factors associated with
11 their judgmental attitudes. We hypothesized that negative, judgmental attitudes toward
12 IPVAW are more prevalent among young men than women, and more among less educated
13 youth who are living in socially deprived areas.

14

15 **Methods**

16 **Data**

17 This study used the data from the fourth Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS4)
18 that was conducted in Serbia in 2010, by the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia with
19 financial and technical support from UNICEF (Republic Institute for Statistics Serbia 2011).
20 The MICS4 was carried out on two distinctive nationally representative samples of a non-Roma
21 population and a Roma population living in Roma settlements in Serbia. A stratified, two-stage
22 random sampling was used. Stratification was done according to the type of settlement (rural
23 and urban), in all four regions (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Sumadija and Western Serbia, and
24 Southern and Eastern Serbia) that are divided in twenty-five counties. Sampling framework
25 was based on a data from Serbian Population Census 2002, and primarily sampling units

1 (clusters) were enumeration areas.

2 In each stratum, a specified number of clusters were selected systematically, with
3 probability proportional to size. Within selected clusters, an update of the household lists was
4 performed, in order to indicate any change that had happened in either the household or
5 facilities themselves. Another reason for updating household lists was to mark households with
6 children under the age of five, since MICS4 was designed to provide a large number of
7 indicators on the situation of children (but also women and young men). In the second stage,
8 listed households were divided into households with and without children under 5, and a
9 separate systematic sample of households was selected for each group (Statistical Office of the
10 Republic of Serbia 2011).

11 In Roma interviewed households, 1121 eligible men (aged 15-29) and 2234 eligible
12 women (aged 15-49) were identified, while 877 men and 2118 women completed the
13 interviews (response rate 78% and 95%, respectively). In non-Roma interviewed households,
14 1938 eligible men (aged 15-29) and 5797 eligible women (aged 15-49) were identified, while
15 1583 men and 5385 women completed the interviews (response rate 82% and 93%,
16 respectively). In this study we were interested in men and women 15-24 years old, so from
17 Roma sample we included 549 men and 812 women, and 790 and 1106 from non-Roma
18 sample.

19

20 Survey Instrument

21 Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of women were derived from the
22 household questionnaire described elsewhere, while information on respondents' attitudes
23 towards IPVAW was obtained through a face-to-face questionnaire conducted by trained
24 interviewers (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia 2011). Both questionnaires were
25 based on the standard questionnaires used in MICS surveys.

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Demographic and socio-economic variables

The demographic and socio-economic characteristics used in this analysis included age (categorized into two age groups: 15-19 and 20-24); marital/union status (currently or formerly married/in union, and never married/in union); education (no school at all, primary school, secondary school and university degree); type of settlement (urban/rural); region (Belgrade, Vojvodina, Sumadija, and Western Serbia, and Southern and Eastern Serbia) and wealth. Wealth was measured by Demographic and Health Survey Wealth Index based on respondent's assets, i.e. household facilities (Rutstein and Johnson 2004). According to the wealth index, respondents were classified into five equal quintiles: poorest, poor, middle class, rich and richest.

Life satisfaction, as a proxy of social support, was operationalized through several domains: satisfaction with family life; friendship; school (for those who are still in school); current job (for those employed); health; place of living; how people behave towards them; appearance; current income; as well as an overall satisfaction with life, and indicating how happy they are. The respondents' satisfaction with those domains was measured by the 5-point Likert scale (1 = not satisfied at all, 5 = very satisfied). Satisfaction was defined if respondents marked their answer as either 4 (somewhat satisfied) or 5 (very satisfied).

Measures

The outcome of interest was the negative, judgmental attitude towards intimate partner violence against women, i.e. that the husband is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances such as: (1) if she goes out without telling him; (2) if she neglects the children; (3) if she argues with him; (4) if she refuses sex with him, and (5) if she burns the food. If respondents positively responded to any of these five statements that are

1 reflecting circumstances in which violence happened, they were marked as holding
2 judgmental attitude in IPVAW.

3

4 Statistical analyses

5 Chi squared test was used to calculate statistical significance of differences between
6 women and men and (1) socioeconomic characteristics, (2) life satisfaction, and (3)
7 judgmental attitudes related to IPVAW. Internal consistency of scales for measuring
8 negative, judgmental attitudes and life satisfaction was measured by Cronbach's alpha
9 coefficient, separately in both samples. These coefficients were very good for both scales:
10 0.78 and 0.88 (for negative attitudes, in non-Roma and Roma population) and 0.71 and 0.90
11 for life satisfaction scale (in non-Roma, and Roma population, respectively)."

12 In both Roma and non-Roma population, univariate logistic regression analysis
13 (ULRA) was calculated separately for women and men, examining the association of
14 judgmental attitudes, socioeconomic factors and life satisfaction. The multivariate logistic
15 regression analysis (MLRA) model included variables if they were significantly associated
16 ($p < 0.05$) with the outcome variable. The results of regression analyses were presented as
17 odds ratios (OR) with 95% confidence interval (CI). Data were analysed using SPSS 20.0.

18

19

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21 **Results**

22 Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents in the sample are presented separately for
23 men and women in both populations in Table 1. Average age in non-Roma sample was 20.13
24 years (SD 2.93): women 20.26 years (SD 2.94) and men 19.94 years (SD 2.91), and similar was

1 in Roma sample: 19.76 (2.94): women 19.75 (2.93) and men 19.77 (SD 2.96) (not presented in
2 the table).

3 In Roma sample, men were more educated than women ($p < 0.001$), contrary to non-
4 Roma where women were more educated ($p < 0.01$). In both samples more women than men
5 were married or lived in a union ($p < 0.001$). When life satisfaction was concerned among
6 Roma, more men than women were satisfied with friendship ($p = 0.014$), health ($p = 0.006$), and
7 appearance ($p = 0.004$), while more women than men were satisfied with their current job, if
8 they had one ($p < 0.001$). Among non-Roma, satisfaction with different domains was equally
9 distributed among women and men except for the current income, where women were more
10 satisfied ($p = 0.046$).

11

12 [Table 1 about here]

13

14 The presence of attitudes related to the justification of IPVAV among women and
15 men 15-24 years old is presented in Table 2. Results showed that Roma men were more often
16 justifying intimate partner violence against women under certain circumstances than Roma
17 women (34.8% vs. 23.6%, $p < 0.001$), while it was far less often among non-Roma men and
18 women (5.6% vs. 4.0%), without statistically significant difference ($p = 0.130$).

19 In both populations men were more prone to justify violence in comparison to
20 women, but statistically significant difference was achieved just in Roma population sample.
21 Also, only in Roma sample, women were more judgmental than men when burning the food
22 was concerned (10.1% vs. 5.3%, $p = 0.002$).

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24 [Table 2 about here]

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In both populations, men’s tendency to justify violence showed almost the same pattern of crude associations with socio-economic variables (Table 3). Higher level of education and higher wealth status significantly decreased chances to justify violence among both Roma and non-Roma men and women. Men and women who have never been married or lived in union were also less prone to justify violence (Table 3). Only in Roma population, justification of violence for any of the reasons was associated with living in any other region than Belgrade (Table 3).

[Table 3 about here]

However, associations between judgmental attitudes and different domains of life satisfaction were not similar in these two populations. Roma men who felt happy, and both Roma and non-Roma men who were satisfied with school were less prone to justify violence (OR 0.60, 95% CI 0.37 – 0.95; OR 0.44, 95% CI 0.22 – 0.86; OR 0.17, 95% CI 0.04-0.83, respectively) (Table 4). Roma women who were satisfied with their friendships were also less judgmental (OR 0.54, 95% CI 0.36 - 0.81) (Table 4). Also, non-Roma women who were happy, satisfied with their health, and the place where they were living, had less chances to be judgmental (OR 0.41, 95% CI 0.18 - 0.95; OR 0.23, 95% CI 0.08 - 0.70; OR 0.50, 95% CI 0.26 - 0.97, respectively).

After adjustments, in MLRA model (Table 4), among non-Roma men all associations with judgmental attitudes disappeared, contrary to Roma men, where the directions of the associations remained the same, but confidence intervals became larger and some odds ratios lost their significance. However, the wealthiest Roma men remained to be those who were

1 least prone to hold judgmental attitudes (OR 0.40, 95% CI 0.18 – 0.87) (Table 4). Also, living
2 in any other region than Belgrade increased chances to justify violence in Roma population,
3 although slightly attenuated in comparison to ULRA.

4 While education of Roma men did not play a role in the multivariate model, the
5 association between the level of education in Roma women remained to protect them of being
6 judgmental (primary school OR 0.51, 95%CI 0.32-0.79, and secondary school OR 0.15, 95%
7 CI 0.06-0.38, in comparison to uneducated Roma women). Among both Roma and non-Roma
8 women, those who have never been married were more likely not to justify violence, in
9 comparison to married/in union women (OR 0.56, 95%CI 0.36-0.95, and OR 0.17, 95%CI
10 0.06-0.48) (Table 4). The significance of satisfaction with various domains of life
11 disappeared after controlling for the other variables, in both Roma and non-Roma population.

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[Table 4 about here]

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15

16 **Discussion**

17 We examined the prevalence of judgmental attitudes related to intimate partner violence
18 against women among young women and men living in Roma and non-Roma settlements in
19 Serbia. The major strength of our study is the fact that we used a randomized, national-wide
20 population based sample that allows generalization of findings, and that we compared two
21 distinctive population samples.

22 Our results revealed that almost 35% of young Roma men 15-24 years old believed that
23 beating wives/female intimate partners can be justified, which is the sharp opposite to less than
24 6% of men of the same age who are residing in non-Roma settlements. Identifying prevalence
25 of judgmental attitudes in disadvantaged neighborhoods is very informative for setting
26 priorities and creating an institutional response to violence against women at both community

1 and national level. Our findings also add to the knowledge that gender equity and women's
2 rights are very much challenged in poor communities, which makes Roma women among the
3 most underprivileged members in society, being discriminated at many levels (Vives-Cases et
4 al. 2014; WHO; Prava za sve 2011, Cook et al, 2013, Petrovic et al, 2016). These results are
5 in line with the results of similar studies that were conducted in the other environments and
6 societies worldwide, such as New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Lebanon and Pakistan (McLaren 2010;
7 Hindin 2003; Obeid et al. 2010; Zakar et al. 2013). In addition, they inform criminal

8 Furthermore, our results shown that in Roma neighborhoods great number of young
9 women (23.6%) were also prone to justify partner's violence against themselves, most often
10 in case when woman argues with her husband/partner (16%), or neglects the children
11 (19.3%). However, it is much more than among young women in general, non-Roma
12 settlements (1.6% and 2.7%, respectively), who seem to be aware of women's human' rights
13 and show zero tolerance to violence. This gives hope that the next generations of women
14 would not accept partner's violence as a mean of solving the disputes or conflicts, which is
15 contrary to Roma communities. However, this later hypothesis is to be confirmed and
16 quantified, since to our best knowledge, surveys related to the presence of IPV among Roma
17 women in Serbia are largely lacking. Data from a neighboring country Bosnia and
18 Herzegovina, indicate that 43.1% of Roma women stated that they were exposed to physical
19 violence by their partners (Prava za sve 2011).

20 While there were no statistically significant gender differences in attitudes toward
21 IPVAW among youth in non-Roma settlements, they were noted in Roma sample. Roma
22 women were significantly less judgmental than men for every reason but burning the food. We
23 were surprised by the finding that more women than men (10.1% vs. 5.3%) thought that
24 burning the food might justify violence, which might indicate that every tenth young women
25 do not just stick to the traditional role women have in society, but also being ready to judge,

1 physically punish and discipline their peers who are not fulfilling expected women's role in the
2 community. Even though the food might be scarce in these low-resources settlements, this
3 attitude unfortunately supports perpetuation of gender-based violence, gender inequity, and
4 undermining women's rights. This *circulous viciosus* is recognized in other countries as well,
5 among underprivileged population groups, mostly migrants, Roma, women living in poverty
6 and women living with disabilities (McLaren 2010; Hindin 2003; Obeid et al. 2010; Zakar et
7 al. 2013; Vive-Cases et al. 2014; WHO). In national policies they must not be ignored and
8 should be recognized as particularly vulnerable members of the community.

9 In both samples there were no significant gender differences in believes that husband is
10 justified to beat his wife in case of refusing having sex with him, although these proportions
11 are more than 20 times higher in Roma population (0.5% and 0.6% vs. 11.5% and 14.9%). It
12 might indicate that communities shape the importance and role of sex in intimate relationships,
13 much more than any other potential expectations in partnership, and both women and men
14 agrees in these roles. It is similar to findings of Vyas and Heise (2016), who emphasized the
15 role of community in gender-based violence.

16 Judgmental attitudes of young men and women living in Roma settlements are a serious
17 obstacle to reaching their full potential in life, and not surprisingly, they have been associated
18 with some aspects of life dissatisfaction. We found that women who are happy with their
19 friends less often hold judgmental attitudes, which indicates the importance of strong female
20 social network as a protective factor that keeps them safe, or at least aware that violence is
21 forbidden and that cannot be justified. In creating society with zero tolerance of intimate partner
22 violence both women and men have to be targets in educational programs and campaigns that
23 are addressing violence-related prejudices. These educational programs and campaigns have to
24 be carefully designed and structured, and based on multidisciplinary approach (Husso et al.
25 2012). By now, those programs have been implemented in various environments worldwide,

1 based on evidences, activities and principles that aimed to build life skills, i.e. positive behavior
2 that enable person to deal with gender-based prejudices (WHO 1997, 2010; Barker et al. 2007).

3 Some differences related to region of living have been noted as well. It seems that living
4 in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, is privileged and characterized by being more open-minded
5 and untraditional than living in the other, less developed regions. It might be explained by city's
6 dynamic environment and population fluctuation that creates environment that do not facilitate
7 trans-generational conduction of violence and discriminative gender roles. Women's rights are
8 more acknowledged in Roma settlements that are nested within the large town, the capital, even
9 in these pretty closed communities. We thought that perhaps more youth in Belgrade were
10 educated which positively influenced their believes related to intimate partner violence, but
11 associations with region remained stable even after control for the educational status as a
12 possible confounder.

13 Violence has a huge impact on women's health, and calls for international action to
14 prevent it, which would also contribute to sustainable development (Lee et al, 2016).
15 Violence prevention activities happen in all three levels of prevention: primary, secondary
16 and tertiary (Harvey et al. 2007). While secondary and tertiary prevention are responsibility
17 of institutions, such as healthcare, police, social work and specialized agencies and
18 organizations that are dealing with victims and/or perpetrators on a case-to-case basis,
19 primary prevention happens in the community and address all its members. Within primary
20 prevention, it is an imperative to raise awareness that IPVAW is absolutely unacceptable and
21 unjustifiable, and that it presents violation of the basic human rights of women. Primary
22 prevention of violence also means creating a society that has zero tolerance for violence
23 against women (Harvey et al. 2007), which might be particularly challenging in deprived
24 population groups and underprivileged communities where this phenomenon is prevalent
25 (Sorenson 1996; Locke and Richman 1999; Grossman and Lundy 2007; Sondon et al. 2011;

1 Cho 2012). Results of our study are sending a strong message to decision makers and
2 legislation, informing that certain proportion of young population is society will accept
3 violent behavior that leads to breaking the law. The response might be increased penalties for
4 IPVAW acts, and their public promotion in media, based on concrete cases. Some of the
5 changes in criminal justice legislation have already taken place in Serbia, but it is
6 questionable whether all segments of population reacted to them and decreased use of gender
7 based violence.

8 Social development programs that are focused on keeping youth within schools as long
9 as possible, completing at least secondary level of education, and teaching them positive gender
10 norms and values, should be priority for action (Dutton 2012; O’Leary and Smith 2012;
11 Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Turner 2012). Additional area of interest that indirectly might be
12 beneficial for Roma women is attending vocational trainings and engaging in paid-job activities
13 that would enable them to take control over their lives, to increase their self-respect and
14 assertive behavior associated with being bread winner (World Health Organization 1997,
15 Barker et al. 2007; Dutton 2012; O’Leary and Smith 2012; Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Turner
16 2012). These would be fundamentals in primary prevention of violence, whose benefits would
17 certainly exceed investments, with long-term positive effects on well being of women, men
18 and overall society. Further research is needed to see how these interventions would influence
19 gender norms related to violence and eventually an overall rate of violence against women in
20 these communities.

21

22 **Compliance with Ethnical Standards**

23

24 **Funding:** This work was supported by the Ministry of Science and Technological
25 Development of Serbia (Project No 175025).

1 **Ethical approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were
2 in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research
3 committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable
4 ethical standards.

5 **Informed consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included
6 in the study.

7

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