



## THE ROLE OF COURT DECISIONS IN PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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### ABSTRACT

*This article examines the role of court decisions in preventing gender-based violence. It analyses the main concepts, types and causes of gender-based violence, as well as its impact on society. It examines preventive measures applied by the courts, such as protection orders and rehabilitation programs for offenders. Attention is paid to educational programs and work with offenders aimed at changing behavior and raising awareness about the problem of violence. Particular attention is paid to creating a safe environment for victims of violence through the interaction of judicial bodies with social services and non-governmental organizations. The article emphasizes that court decisions can serve as an effective tool in the fight against gender-based violence, forming precedents and changing public perception of this problem.*

### Introduction

Gender-based violence is one of the most serious and persistent social problems affecting human rights and freedoms. In recent years, society has become increasingly aware of the scale of this phenomenon, which manifests itself in various forms, including physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence. The relevance of the topic of gender-based violence is due not only to its high prevalence, but also to the serious consequences for the health, mental state and social status of victims. One of the most important tools in the fight against gender-based violence is the judicial system, which, with the appropriate powers, can not only punish offenders, but also act as a preventive mechanism, shaping law enforcement practices and public opinion.

The aims and objectives of this study are to analyze the role of court decisions in preventing gender-based violence. The main objective is to identify the mechanisms through which court decisions can influence society and reduce the level of gender-based violence. In addition, the study involves an analysis of existing judicial practices and legislative initiatives aimed at protecting victims of gender-based violence. An important aspect of the study is to assess the effectiveness of court decisions and their impact on violence prevention.

The research methodology includes a comprehensive approach based on the analysis

of theoretical and empirical data. The main method will be the analysis of court decisions on cases of gender-based violence, as well as a comparative analysis of various legal systems. The study will also rely on statistical data, the results of sociological surveys and scientific publications. The structure of the article includes several key sections covering the concept of gender-based violence, the significance of court decisions, analysis of judicial practice and preventive measures applied by the courts. Thus, the work is aimed at identifying the diversity of approaches to the problem of gender-based violence and the role of the judicial system in its solution, which, in turn, can contribute to more effective protection of the rights of victims and prevention of violence.

## **2. The concept of gender violence**

### **2.1 Definition and types of gender-based violence**

Gender-based violence is an act of violence committed on the basis of sex and gender, which can manifest itself in various forms, such as physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence. The definition of gender-based violence includes not only obvious acts of physical violence, but also more subtle forms, such as psychological pressure and control. These forms of violence are often used to maintain power and control over victims, which in most cases leads to long-term consequences for both individuals and society as a whole.

Physical abuse includes hitting, beating, force, causing injury, and other forms of physical abuse. Sexual abuse covers a wide range of actions, from harassment to rape. Emotional abuse, in turn, can manifest itself through manipulation, intimidation, humiliation, and other forms of control over the victim's mental state. Economic abuse includes control over the victim's finances, which can limit their opportunities for self-realization and independence.

It is important to note that gender violence can occur both in intimate relationships and in the public sphere. In the first case, we are talking about domestic violence, while in the second case, we are talking about violence that occurs in the workplace or in educational institutions. Each of these types of violence has its own specific manifestations and requires an individual approach to solving the problem.

### **2.2. Causes and consequences of gender-based violence**

The causes of gender-based violence are rooted in socio-cultural, economic and political factors. One of the main factors is the existence of patriarchal structures in which men occupy a dominant position in society and women are often discriminated against. These social attitudes contribute to the formation of stereotypes about "male strength" and "female weakness", which, in turn, creates the basis for justifying violence.

Women's economic dependence on men also plays a major role in gender-based violence. When women lack access to economic resources and opportunities, they are vulnerable and often unable to leave violent relationships. Thus, economic factors such as poverty and lack of education exacerbate the problem of violence.

Political factors also play a role. In countries where there is no effective legislation to protect women's rights and where institutions responsible for ensuring law and order are weak, gender-based violence becomes more widespread. Non-transparent judicial processes, lack of support for victims and ineffective law enforcement contribute to a climate of impunity for perpetrators.

The consequences of gender-based violence can be devastating for both victims and

society as a whole. At the individual level, victims may suffer from physical and mental health issues, including depression, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other problems. These consequences can limit victims' opportunities for employment, education, and social integration.

At the societal level, gender-based violence increases economic costs for health care, law enforcement, and social services. It also creates a climate of fear and mistrust that negatively impacts the quality of life in society and reduces social cohesion.

### ***2.3. The Impact of Gender-Based Violence on Society***

Gender-based violence has a profound impact on all areas of society. First, it affects the foundations of social justice and equality. Since gender-based violence is often driven and reinforced by stereotypes about the roles of men and women, it hinders the achievement of gender equality. This also limits women's opportunities in the professional sphere, education, and participation in public life.

Secondly, gender-based violence affects family structures and relationships. In families where violence becomes the norm, children often become witnesses or victims of violence, which can lead to the reproduction of violent behavior in the next generations. Such families may face mental health and social adaptation problems, which affects their overall dynamics and stability.

Gender-based violence also harms economic development. Increased incidences of violence lead to increased costs for health care, social services, and law enforcement. This, in turn, puts additional strain on public finances and reduces economic productivity, as victims of violence are often unable to participate fully in economic life.

At the societal level, gender-based violence influences public opinion and social norms. In societies where violence is perceived as normal, general trust in legal institutions decreases and impunity increases. This can lead to victims avoiding reporting cases, which only exacerbates the problem.

Gender-based violence thus has far-reaching consequences that affect all aspects of society. Understanding these consequences and their causes is an important step in combating this problem and developing effective judicial practice aimed at protecting victims and preventing violence.

## **3. The importance of court decisions in the justice system**

### ***3.1. The role of courts in protecting the rights of victims***

Courts play a key role in the justice system in protecting the rights of victims of gender-based violence. They not only hear cases of violence, but also serve as an important mechanism that can influence public attitudes towards this issue. Court decisions in such cases can set precedents that serve as a basis for further law enforcement. It is important that courts act in a manner that is sensitive to the specifics of gender-based violence cases and protect the rights of victims by ensuring their access to justice.

The procedures used by the courts must take into account the needs of victims, as well as their vulnerability. This includes the possibility of filing claims in conditions that minimize stress for victims, as well as providing necessary support, such as legal advice and psychological assistance. In addition, an important aspect of protecting the rights of victims is the possibility of applying for protection orders and other protective measures that can prevent further violence.

Courts should also be able to take specialized approaches to gender-based violence cases. This could include the creation of specialized courts or judicial panels with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle such cases. Specialized courts can improve the quality of law enforcement and speed up the case process, which in turn contributes to more effective protection of victims' rights.

### ***3.2. Principles of Law Enforcement in Gender-Based Violence Cases***

Law enforcement in gender-based violence cases must be based on several key principles that will help ensure justice and protection of victims' rights. One such principle is the principle of promptness. This means that gender-based violence cases should be dealt with as quickly as possible to prevent further trauma for victims and ensure justice.

Another important principle is the principle of non-discrimination. The justice system must be accessible to all victims, regardless of their gender, age, race or social status. This means that courts must actively work to remove barriers that may prevent victims of gender-based violence from seeking protection.

The principle of confidentiality also plays a significant role in law enforcement. Protecting victims' personal information is important for their safety and can encourage them to seek help more openly. Gender-based violence trials should be conducted with due regard for the need to protect victims' privacy and minimise their trauma.

It is also worth noting the principle of victim participation in the judicial process. Victims should be able to actively participate in the process and express their opinions regarding the decisions taken. This may include the right to representation through a lawyer or support from human rights organizations.

### ***3.3. The Impact of Court Decisions on Public Opinion and Law Enforcement***

Court decisions in gender-based violence cases have a significant impact on public opinion and law enforcement in general. First, they can send an important message to society about the unacceptability of gender-based violence and the need to protect the rights of victims. Positive decisions in favor of victims can help raise awareness of the problem of gender-based violence and encourage more people to seek help.

In addition, court decisions can set precedents that will be used in future similar cases. This can lead to improved law enforcement and a tougher stance against abusers. If courts consistently make decisions that protect victims and punish offenders, this can lead to changes in the behavior of both victims and offenders.

Public opinion can also be shaped by the media, which often covers court cases involving gender-based violence. Publicity about court cases can raise awareness of the issue and generate public outcry, which in turn can influence policy decisions and legislative initiatives.

However, it is important to note that negative or half-hearted court decisions can have the opposite effect. If the courts do not take serious action against violence, this can create the impression that gender-based violence is acceptable. This can reduce trust in the justice system and discourage victims from seeking help.

The role of courts in the justice system is therefore multifaceted and important. They not only protect the rights of victims, but also shape law enforcement practices and public opinion. Effective court decisions can lead to significant changes in the fight against gender-based violence and the creation of a fairer and safer society.

#### 4. Analysis of court decisions in cases of gender-based violence

##### 4.1. Examples of successful court decisions

Successful court decisions in gender-based violence cases play an important role in shaping law enforcement practices and can serve as precedents for future cases. Examples of such decisions include cases where courts fairly assessed evidence and took steps to protect victims, which in turn contributed to increased trust in the judicial system.

One such example is a case in which the court found the defendant guilty of committing violence against a woman based on video footage and eyewitness testimony. The court imposed harsh penalties, including imprisonment and rehabilitation programs. This decision not only ensured justice for the victim, but also sent an important message to society that violence will not go unpunished.

Another example of a successful court decision is when the court issued a protection order for a victim of violence. The court, taking into account the circumstances of the case and evidence of threats, provided protection to the victim, which allowed her to feel safe and avoid further attacks. Such decisions play a key role in preventing violence, as they provide victims with the protection and support they need.

In addition, some countries have adopted decisions aimed at reforming legislation related to gender-based violence. Judicial bodies can call for changes to existing laws or for the creation of new regulations aimed at protecting victims. This shows that judicial decisions can not only resolve specific cases, but also have an impact on the legal system as a whole.

##### 4.2. Problems and shortcomings in court decisions

Despite the existence of successful examples, judicial decisions in cases of gender-based violence also face many challenges and shortcomings. One of the most common problems is the lack of awareness among judges about the specifics of gender-based violence and its consequences. In some cases, judges may not take into account the context and dynamics of violence, which leads to incorrect interpretation of the facts and, as a result, to unfounded decisions.

Another problem is the existence of bias against victims. Negative stereotypes about women and their roles in society can influence court decisions. For example, victims may be questioned about their guilt or subjected to additional tests that may make it more difficult for them to access justice. This can lead to victims not filing claims for fear of not being heard or being blamed for causing the violence.

In addition, problems with access to justice also affect the effectiveness of judicial decisions. Many victims of gender-based violence cannot afford legal assistance or are unable to go to court due to fear of reprisals from the perpetrator. These factors create barriers that prevent victims from seeking protection and justice.

Another significant problem is the lack of coordination between different law enforcement agencies and the judicial system. For example, the lack of effective cooperation between the police and the judiciary can lead to cases of violence being investigated incorrectly or insufficiently documented. This makes the work of the courts difficult and reduces the quality of decisions.

##### 4.3. The influence of the specifics of the legal system on judicial decisions

The specifics of a country's legal system also have a significant impact on judicial decisions in cases of gender-based violence. In countries with developed legal systems, where

there is clear legislation aimed at protecting victims of violence, judicial decisions are often made more fairly and effectively. For example, having specialized courts or judges trained to handle cases of gender-based violence can improve the quality of law enforcement and the speed of case resolution.

At the same time, in countries with less developed legal systems or lack of clear laws on gender-based violence, victims may face difficulties in seeking protection. In such systems, courts may not have sufficient resources or knowledge to properly handle cases of violence, leading to lower quality decisions.

It is also worth noting that in some countries, gender stereotypes and cultural norms may influence law enforcement. Judges presiding over gender-based violence cases may not be aware of the depth of the problem and its impact on victims, which may lead to poor decisions or underestimation of the seriousness of the crime. For example, in some cases, judges may believe that conflicts between partners are “private matters” and do not require judicial intervention.

Therefore, judicial decisions on gender-based violence cases should be based on the principles of justice, equality and non-discrimination. The need to raise awareness among judges about the specifics of gender-based violence, as well as the need to reform the legal system, are important steps in combating this problem. Analysis of successful and unsuccessful judicial decisions will help to identify key factors influencing the quality of law enforcement and will ultimately lead to more effective protection of the rights of victims of gender-based violence.

## **5. Court decisions as a tool for preventing gender-based violence**

### **5.1 Preventive measures applied by the courts**

Court decisions can be an important tool in preventing gender-based violence. Preventive measures applied by courts are aimed at reducing the likelihood of reoffending and ensuring the safety of victims. One of the main preventive measures is the issuance of protection orders or temporary restrictions, which allow victims to remain safe and prevent further encounters with perpetrators.

Courts may also order mandatory participation of offenders in rehabilitation programs. These programs may include psychological help and training aimed at changing aggressive behavior and understanding the consequences of violence. In some cases, courts may order community service, which will help offenders understand their responsibility for their actions and change their behavior.

Another important preventive measure is the active cooperation of courts with law enforcement agencies and social services. This cooperation may include the exchange of information on cases of violence and victims, which allows for a more comprehensive approach to solving the problem. It is important for courts to work in conjunction with other institutions to create a comprehensive system for protecting victims' rights and preventing violence.

### **5.2. Educational programs and work with offenders**

Educational programmes aimed at changing public attitudes and behaviour play a key role in preventing gender-based violence. Judicial authorities can facilitate the development and implementation of such programmes, targeting both victims and perpetrators. These programmes may include training on violence prevention, awareness of the legal

consequences of aggressive behaviour, and constructive conflict resolution skills.

Working with offenders is also an important aspect of prevention. Justice systems can implement special rehabilitation programs for those convicted of violence. These programs can focus on changing destructive behavior patterns and developing the skills needed to maintain healthy relationships. It is important that such programs combine therapeutic approaches with punitive elements to ensure that reoffending is both prevented and that offenders understand the consequences of their actions.

Educational programmes can also aim to raise awareness among young people about the importance of gender equality and the unacceptability of violence. These initiatives can include school-based sessions, workshops and media campaigns aimed at creating a safer and more respectful environment for all.

### ***5.3. Creating a safe environment for victims of violence***

Creating a safe environment for victims of violence is a key aspect of preventing gender-based violence. Court decisions can play an important role in this process by protecting victims and providing them with access to necessary resources and services. One of the key roles of the courts is to ensure that victims can safely seek help and protection.

To achieve this goal, judicial authorities may cooperate with various social services and non-governmental organizations that provide assistance to victims of violence. This cooperation may include the establishment of victim assistance centers where they can receive legal, psychological and social support.

It is also important for courts to proactively inform victims of their rights and available resources. This may include providing information on how to file a claim, what protections are available, and what organizations can help. The more victims know about their rights and options, the easier it will be for them to seek help.

Creating a safe environment also means working to change public perceptions of gender-based violence. Court decisions that demonstrate zero tolerance for violence can help create a safer public climate. Public condemnation of violence and support for victims through law enforcement can significantly reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and create a space where victims can feel protected.

Thus, court decisions can be an effective tool in preventing gender-based violence. Preventive measures, educational programs and creating a safe environment for victims are key aspects of this work. Effective interaction of courts with other institutions and active participation in educational initiatives will help to create a safer and more respectful society free from violence.

### **Conclusion**

Court decisions play an important role in the prevention of gender-based violence, providing protection to victims and helping to change public perception of the problem. The use of preventive measures, such as protection orders and rehabilitation programs for offenders, not only prevents repeat offenses, but also creates a safer environment for victims. Judicial authorities, actively interacting with law enforcement agencies and social services, can create an effective support system that will help victims rebuild their lives and cope with the consequences of violence. Educational programs aimed at changing behavior and raising awareness of the problem of gender-based violence are also significant. They help to form a new generation that understands the inadmissibility of violence and is ready to support

victims. Court decisions not only resolve specific cases, but also influence public opinion, creating precedents that can change the approach to combating gender-based violence. It is important to continue working to improve judicial practice and the legal system as a whole, ensuring equality and justice for all. Effective judicial decisions can thus be a powerful tool in combating gender-based violence, helping to create a safer and more just society.

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