EC Project: Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender-based Violence through Peer Education

Attitudes on Gender Stereotypes and Gender-based Violence among Youth

Country report: Cyprus

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Table of Contents

Introduction

"Women continue to earn less, decide less, and count less than men. There is one area where women count more than men: in the records of victims of violence".

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Despite the continuously developing legislative framework for the protection of women against gender-based violence within and beyond the European context, the persisting high percentages of violence against women (VAW) in Europe show that this phenomenon cannot be addressed solely through normative action. According to the Council of Europe's Task Force to Combat VAW recent activity report (2008), studies across European countries show that 'one-fifth to one quarter of all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force. Figures for all forms of violence, including stalking, are as high as 45%. About 12%-15% of all women have been in a relationship of domestic abuse after the age of 16, and many more continue to suffer physical and sexual violence once they are separated from the perpetrator'. Based on these figures it is becoming increasingly evident that prevention strategies need to address the root causes of violence as early as possible as emerging evidence suggests that patterns of violence and victimization may develop in early adolescence. During this stage youth develop their identities of what being male and female should mean and how this is translated in their everyday behaviour and peer relationships.

Beyond the vast number of studies that illustrate the toll that gender-based violence (GBV) has on women and men's lives, there is also an increasing body of evidence internationally that

supports the idea that there are strong links between patriarchal attitudes and values and tolerance, and even acceptance, of GBV (Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Murner et al., 2002; WHO, 2005; Santana and et al., 2006). For the purposes of this study, GBV was understood as an umbrella term for any kind of discrimination or harmful behaviour which is directed against a person on the basis of their gender and/or (real or perceived) sexual orientation. Its root causes lie in unequal hierarchical power structures and relationships that persist between women and men but also among men and among women. GBV may be physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, economic or socio-cultural. Although it affects both women and men, women and girls are disproportionately victimized by this form of violence a fact that reflects their subordinate status in society (Definition adapted from the UN Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Ward, 2002).

Despite the recognition that inequality between women and men and negative gender stereotypes are inextricably linked to GBV, studies examining violent attitudes/behaviours among adolescents and youth relating to GBV remain scarce, while those that do exist many times do not consider the gender dimension while examining such attitudes (Reed et al., 2010; Klein, 2006). Similarly, studies on dating violence which tend to focus on younger age groups often ignore the gender dimension of such violence. However, studies that do examine the gender aspects of violence in relationships clearly indicate that violence experienced by girls and boys, women and men within dating and inter-personal relationships is substantially different, as girls/women tend to face more severe forms of violence within relationships as well as consistent forms of abuse rather than one-off incidences. (Walby and Allen, 2004; CoE 2008).

In relation to Cyprus, Cypriot society remains highly patriarchal as identified by number of studies that point to the subordinate status of both Cypriot women and women of migrant background as well as to the prevalence of rigid gender roles which contribute to maintaining this conservative gender order (Vasiliadou, 2004; React, 2011, Female Immigrants, Cyprus Gender Research Centre, 2010). The repercussions of this subordination are evident in all areas of life including in the severe underrepresentation of women in political and public life and the wide gender pay gap as well as in the persistence of all forms of violence against women including domestic violence, rape and sexual assault. Reports of violence against women have risen dramatically in recent years. According to police statistics there were 6,161 reported incidents of domestic violence in the period 2004-2010, out of which 5054 were reported by women/girls[1]. The call centre of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family (APHVF) has answered 10,076 incidents of domestic violence during the years 2000-2011 of which 80% of victims were women or 92.5% were women and children. The rise in incidents of violence against women recorded by the APHVF during this period is 120%. Incidents of sexual violence have also risen with 101 reported rapes between the years 2009-2011[2].

Discriminatory attitudes and treatment of women and girls of migrant background are also widespread in Cyprus. A recent study on the integration of young migrant female students in Cypriot schools pointed out to the different forms of racial and gendered categorization that migrant girls are subjected to by their Cypriot and non-Cypriot peers, and the indirect violence that this maintains (Gregoriou and Christou, MIGS 2011). Furthermore, a study on Cypriot

[1] For more information visit www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20120127/1327678127-23793.pdf.

[2] For more information visit www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/All/93254FC38F3C8CA1C22579F40021BEFD/$file/sovaroeglimagr.pdf.

adolescents' understanding and experience of GBV demonstrated that many teenagers, the majority of which were girls, do not recognize psychological forms of violence within their intimate relationships (such as controlling behaviours or pressure to consummate a relationship) and consider these behaviours as 'normal' (MIGS, 2008; Christou forthcoming 2013).

Also important for understanding GBV among youth in Cyprus is a study by the Cyprus Youth Board and the Cyprus Institute of Reproductive Medicine (2006) conducted with 1668 adolescents in Cyprus. The study indicated that a quarter of participants face psychological problems in relation to their intimate/sexual relationships, the majority of whom are girls. Many stated that they do not enjoy sexual intercourse. Another study undertaken with 1000 Cypriot young adults (18-25 years old) exploring interpersonal relationships and violence found that 70% of the participants had opinions and attitudes that are conducive to violence such as 'victim blaming', the belief that violence in relationships is a 'private' matter, and the belief that the use of violence is acceptable under certain circumstances, such as to 'correct' certain behaviours (Andronikou, Erotokritou, Hadjiharalambous, 2012).

Despite the importance of the abovementioned studies for understanding the level and forms of GBV affecting teenagers in Cyprus, no previous study has been undertaken within the Cypriot context so far which examines the links between patriarchal gender attitudes and toleration/acceptance of GBV within teenage relationships. The research study presented here, conducted within the framework of the Youth4Youth project aims to contribute to bridging this gap by exploring young people's attitudes towards GBV, as well as the links between gender stereotypes and GBV. Furthermore, the study aimed to expose tolerant attitudes among adolescents towards GBV and analyze them in light of the dominant socio-cultural context.

Finally, the study provides a number of critical recommendations for the development of a coherent policy on gender equality education in Cyprus which will be substantiated by the research outcomes outlined in the pages that follow.

Method

Questionnaire Study

Participants. Four hundred and fifty three high school students (277, 61% were girls), ages 15-18 (Mage = 15.86, S.D. = 0.69) completed questionnaires for this study. Participants were from five high schools (two private, three public), in the two major districts in the government-administered area of Cyprus (Nicosia and Limassol), and were mostly urban in terms of area of residence (318, 70% lived in urban areas, and 130, 30% in rural areas).

Measures. A self-report questionnaire was compiled by the research team, in order to tap attitudes toward gender among the students, attitudes toward violence, justifications or explanations endorsed for violence, and myths/knowledge regarding relationship violence. Specifically, attitudes toward gender were assessed using and adapted version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA, Galambos, Petersen, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985). The questionnaire consists of 12 statements, where respondents rate agreement using a four point Likert scale. For the purpose of our study, four additional statements were added by the research team (shown on Table 1.1). These consisted of statements expressing beliefs about gender roles which had emerged from previous qualitative work conducted by the research team (Fourth report: Secondary education schools and education in values project, MIGS 2008). Attitudes toward violence were assessed using a series of 22 statements compiled by the research team, describing different types of behaviors by boys or girls in a relationship. Participants were asked to indicate whether they thought each behavior could be ok “always”, “often”,

"sometimes", or "never" (four point scale). Next, participants were asked to rate how frequently they believed 22 listed "reasons" explaining why men may be violent toward women applied. Participants' knowledge or misconceptions regarding gender based violence was assessed through a scale asking participants to indicate agreement (using a four point scale ranging from Completely Agree to Completely Disagree), with 19 statements of "myths". These statements were compiled by the researchers based on previous qualitative studies and intervention programs with the target population (Report on peer education trainings: Project Perspective, 2010), and on the international literature and intervention programs regarding common myths or misconceptions about violence (Burton and Kitzinger, 1998). Instruments were adapted into Greek, using the method of front and back translation, from social science researchers bilingual in Greek and English. All questionnaires had adequate internal reliability indices for our sample (all Cronbach alphas > .70). A final set of questions collected demographic and relationship information from participants. To ensure that wording was clear and appropriate for the target age group, the questionnaire was first administered to five volunteers on a pilot basis, and adjustments were made following feedback.

Procedure. Questionnaires were administered to students after written consent was obtained initially from the competent authority at the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture (Middle and High School Education Directorate), and subsequently from school principals and students' parents or guardians. The questionnaire was administered to all students in each class who had parental consent. Sessions for questionnaire administration were scheduled following coordination with teachers- in- charge, and were administered in-class time, in the presence of a trained researcher only, who clarified any student queries regarding the questionnaire. Teachers were asked to wait outside the classroom. Questionnaires were completed in Greek for public

school students, and English for private school students, whose primary language of study is English (N= 102). The procedure took about 30 minutes. Following completion of the questionnaires, students were given a debriefing form that provided contact information (telephone number, website, and emails) for the research institute (MIGS), for a helpline on relationship/sexuality issues (Cyprus Family Planning Association), and on relationship violence (the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family).

Focus Groups

Participants. Participants in focus Group 1 were six adolescent students (three girls, three boys), from a private, English speaking urban school in the capital of Cyprus, Nicosia. Participants in Focus Group 2 were six adolescent students (four girls, two boys) from a suburban public high school in the district of Nicosia, Cyprus (second grade of high school). The students were recruited with the help of their teachers. The second group were identified through a class which they were taking as an elective at the time of the study. All participants were 17 years old, and were Greek Cypriot. Consent for participation was secured in writing by the students' parents or guardians. Focus Group 1 was conducted in a local university, moderated by the two key researchers (MK and GC), and in the presence of a research assistant. Focus Group 2 was conducted in a school room reserved specifically for this purpose, and moderated by the first researcher (MK), in the presence of their teacher as an observer. Both focus groups were conducted in Greek, following a semi-structured focus group guide prepared by the researchers.

Coding & Analysis. Focus groups were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and then transcribed by research assistants. Coding and analysis was based on verbatim statements in transcripts. Data lost due to noise contamination was supplemented, where possible, with notes

taken by the researcher. 'Preliminary coding and analysis was conducted by the first researcher (MK) while a second reading and analysis of the results was conducted by both researchers (MK and GC). Coding followed a combination of open and focused coding strategies, aiming both to "uncover" emerging patterns in the views expressed by the students, as well as at identifying recurrent patterns in the responses, in relation to predetermined questions of interest. Additional themes that emerged were analyzed in a subsequent step. The main identified patterns, and emerging themes resulting from the coding and analysis process are discussed in the following sections. Some discrepancies identified between the two focus groups are also presented and discussed.

Research Findings

Questionnaire Study

Descriptive results. In an effort to investigate which types of violence are more commonly condoned, which explanations for violence, and which myths about violence are more prevalent, agreement with each of the statements in the Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA) and the Knowledge and Myths scale was calculated for the overall sample, and separately for boys and girls. Tables 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.5 present agreement with statements for each scale, starting with the statements with highest agreement, separately for the boys and girls, and overall. Table 1.4 presents additional "explanations" for violence of men toward women provided by the participants, grouped by common underlying theme, separately for boys and girls.

Table 1.1: *Attitudes toward Women Scale for adolescents, descriptive results per item (Means, Standard Deviations, & % agreement).*

Statement/Explanation	**Overall**		**Boys**		**Girls**	
	M (S.D.)	*"strongly agree" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"strongly agree" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"strongly agree" % (N)*
13. Most girls like to show off their bodies[a]	**2.96 (0.74)**	**22 (98)**	**3.15 (0.78)**	**36 (61)**	**2.83 (0.69)**	**14 (37)**
1. Swearing is worse for a girl than for a boy	**2.80 (0.93)**	**23 (104)**	**3.01 (0.96)**	**35 (62)**	**2.67 (0.88)**	**15 (42)**
14. Most boys like to go out with girls just for sex[a]	**2.78 (0.85)**	**20 (89)**	**2.75 (0.93)**	**24 (41)**	**2.79 (0.79)**	**17 (48)**
2. On a date, the boy should be expected to pay all expenses	**2.55 (0.89)**	**16 (73)**	2.68 (0.88)	18 (31)	**2.46 (0.89)**	**15 (42)**
16. It is more acceptable for a boy to have many sexual partners than for a girl[a]	**2.46 (1.05)**	**18 (80)**	**2.69 (1.06)**	**27 (48)**	2.31 (1.01)	12 (32)
15. Most girls can't be trusted[a]	2.22 (0.91)	10 (45)	2.59 (0.87)	18 (32)	1.99 (0.85)	5 (13)
10. Boys are better leaders than girls	2.18 (1.04)	15 (67)	**2.93 (0.91)**	**32 (56)**	1.71 (0.82)	4 (11)
7. It is all right for a girl to ask a boy out on a date. (R)	2.16 (0.80)	7 (31)	1.89 (0.75)	5 (8)	**2.34 (0.78)**	**8 (23)**
3. On the average, girls are as smart as boys (R)	2.14 (0.97)	11 (50)	2.42 (1.03)	19 (33)	1.97 (0.89)	6 (17)
9. If both husband and wife have jobs, the husband should do a share of the housework such as washing dishes and doing the laundry. (R)	2.06 (0.89)	8 (37)	2.53 (0.91)	17 (30)	1.76 (0.73)	3 (7)
11. Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers rather than desiring a professional or business career.	1.99 (0.93)	7 (32)	2.39 (0.90)	11 (19)	1.73 (0.85)	5 (13)
6. In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in making family decisions.	1.98 (0.90)	7 (30)	2.39 (0.93)	13 (23)	1.71 (0.82)	3 (7)
5. It is all right for a girl to want to play 'rough' sports like football. (R)	1.97 (0.79)	5 (23)	2.24 (0.83)	9 (15)	1.79 (0.72)	3 (8)
8. It is more important for boys than girls to do well in school.	1.64 (0.74)	2 (11)	1.83 (0.75)	4 (7)	1.52 (0.66)	2 (4)
12. Girls should have the same freedom as boys (R)	1.60 (0.87)	5 (24)	2.02 (0.99)	10 (18)	1.33 (0.67)	2 (6)
4. More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college.	1.49 (0.77)	3 (13)	1.78 (0.89)	5 (9)	1.31 (0.63)	1 (4)
Total (Valid N listwise)		***453***		***176***		***277***

Notes. Five responses with highest agreement marked in **bold**; (R) indicates items with reverse scoring; for all items higher scores indicate more conservative attitudes toward gender , min =1 (strongly disagree), max = 4 (strongly agree); [a]items not in original AWSA scale (added by researchers).

Table 1.2: *Attitudes toward Violence by participants (Means, Standard Deviations, & % agreement).*

Statement/Explanation	**Overall**		**Boys**		**Girls**	
	M (S.D.)	*"always OK" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"always OK" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"always OK" % (N)*
15. It is ok for a girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is constantly nagging/arguing	**2.06 (0.77)**	5 (23)	1.88 (0.74)	2 (4)	**2.17 (0.78)**	**7 (19)**
18. It is ok for a girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is not treating her with respect	**2.06 (0.88)**	**9 (38)**	1.91 (0.83)	5 (9)	**2.16 (0.90)**	**11 (29)**
4. It is ok for a girl to hit her boyfriend if he is not treating her with respect	**2.05 (0.99)**	**12 (56)**	1.91 (0.99)	**9 (16)**	**2.16 (0.99)**	**15 (40)**
9. It is ok for a girl to set limits to where her boyfriend goes	**2.05 (0.93)**	**10 (44)**	1.83 (0.89)	6 (11)	**2.19 (0.93)**	**12 (33)**
19. It is ok for a boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/arguing	**1.99 (0.83)**	**7 (29)**	**2.06 (0.86)**	8 (14)	**1.95 (0.80)**	**6 (15)**
17. It is ok for a boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is not treating him with respect	1.98 (0.84)	6 (26)	**2.09 (0.90)**	8 (14)	1.92 (0.79)	4 (12)
12. It is ok for a boy to set limits on how his girlfriend dresses	1.94 (0.85)	6 (28)	**2.27 (1.00)**	**15 (26)**	1.74 (0.65)	1 (2)
21. It is ok for a boy to set limits on where his girlfriend goes.	1.93 (0.83)	6 (28)	**2.09 (0.94)**	**10 (18)**	1.83 (0.73)	4 (10)
3. It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if she has been flirting with him all night	1.78 (0.95)	**9 (39)**	**2.21 (1.05)**	**17 (30)**	1.51 (0.76)	3 (9)
11. It is ok for a girl to set limits on how a boy dresses	1.66 (0.69)	1 (6)	1.62 (0.73)	1 (2)	1.69 (0.65)	2 (4)
13. It is ok for a girl to spy on the mobile phone of her boyfriend	1.61 (0.78)	4 (18)	1.53 (0.76)	3 (5)	1.67 (0.80)	5 (13)
6. It is ok for a boy to spy on the mobile phone of his partner	1.60 (0.80)	4 (20)	1.79 (0.94)	8 (14)	1.47 (0.68)	2 (6)
1. It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if they have been dating.	1.44 (0.77)	4 (17)	1.83 (0.93)	8 (14)	1.20 (0.51)	1 (3)
16. It is ok for a girl to hit her boyfriend if he is constantly nagging/arguing	1.38 (0.67)	2 (10)	1.42 (0.66)	2 (4)	1.36 (0.62)	2 (6)
7. It is ok to threaten to leave a partner in order to achieve something you want	1.38 (0.63)	2 (8)	1.40 (0.65)	2 (5)	1.37 (0.62)	2 (5)
2. It is ok for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she has been unfaithful	1.37 (0.74)	4 (18)	1.61 (0.95)	8 (14)	1.21 (0.52)	1 (2)
22. Threatening to hit a partner is ok as long as you don't actually hit him/her	1.32 (0.68)	3 (13)	1.23 (0.79)	2 (5)	1.26 (0.59)	2 (5)
20. It is ok for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/arguing	1.30 (0.68)	3 (13)	1.41 (0.74)	3 (5)	1.24 (0.63)	2 (6)
8. It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if he has spent a lot of money on her	1.28 (0.69)	4 (16)	1.54 (0.89)	2 (3)	1.12 (0.45)	2 (4)
14. It is ok for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she is not treating him with respect	1.25 (0.59)	2 (8)	1.36 (0.70)	3 (5)	1.19 (0.51)	1 (3)
10. It is ok for a girl to insult her boyfriend in front of others	1.20 (0.57)	2 (7)	1.16 (0.51)	1 (2)	1.22 (0.60)	2 (5)
5. It is ok for a boy to insult his girlfriend in front of others	1.14 (0.51)	2 (8)	1.21 (0.51)	2 (4)	1.10 (0.44)	2 (4)
Total	***1.63 (0.38)***	***453***	***1.71 (0.40)***	***176***	***1.58 (0.35)***	***277***

Notes. Five responses with highest agreement marked in **bold**; min=1 (never OK), max = 4 (always OK).

Table 1.3: *Agreement with Explanations for Violence (Mean scores for agreement, in descending order).*

Statement/Explanation	**Overall**	**Boys**	**Girls**
Some men are violent toward women because….	*M (S.D.)*	*M (S.D.)*	*M (S.D.)*
12. …they are jealous	**2.71 (0.82)**	**2.56(0.87)**	**2.80 (0.77)**
15. …they cannot control their anger	**2.68 (0.80)**	**2.60 (0.91)**	**2.73 (0.73)**
14. …they consider themselves superior to women	**2.64 (0.86)**	**2.55 (0.90)**	**2.70 (0.83)**
1. …of alcohol or drug use	**2.64 (0.78)**	**2.63 (0.83)**	**2.65 (0.75)**
7. … they want to control women	**2.63 (0.85)**	**2.51 (0.84)**	**2.71 (0.85)**
3. …they can't control their sexual urges	2.51 (0.77)	2.43 (0.75)	2.56 (0.78)
6. …they are physically stronger than women	2.48 (1.02)	2.38 (1.11)	2.55 (0.96)
4. …women provoke them	2.35 (0.72)	2.44 (0.78)	2.29 (0.68)
2. …they misunderstand women	2.34 (0.73)	2.29 (0.74)	2.38 (0.73)
13. …they have mental problems	2.30 (0.81)	2.29 (0.84)	2.31 (0.79)
9. …they were abused as children	2.28 (0.80)	2.25 (0.85)	2.30 (0.76)
11. …they are naturally aggressive	2.24 (0.84)	2.25 (0.84)	2.23 (0.85)
20. …they can't take no for an answer	2.23 (0.88)	2.21 (0.91)	2.24 (0.87)
10. …no one stops them	2.20 (0.90)	2.16 (0.95)	2.23 (0.86)
8. …they are under stress	2.17 (0.72)	2.17 (0.77)	2.17 (0.69)
5. …women are not patient enough with them	2.08 (0.74)	2.23 (0.77)	1.99 (0.69)
5b. …women are not sensitive/tender enough with them	1.91 (0.72)	2.10 (0.78)	1.79 (0.66)
16. …society expects them to	1.57 (0.77)	1.55 (0.71)	1.59 (0.81)
18. …that makes them attractive to women	1.56 (0.74)	1.83 (0.83)	1.40 (0.62)
17. … women like it	1.56 (0.80)	1.82 (0.93)	1.40 (0.66)
19. … it is necessary	1.36 (0.68)	1.57 (0.82)	1.24 (0.54)

Notes. Five responses with highest agreement marked in **bold**; min=1 (Never), max = 4 (Always).

Table 1.4: “Other” explanations for violence of men toward women by participants (by sex)

Reasons	Boys	Girls
Infidelity	“λόγω απάτης” (“because of infidelity”) “λόγω απιστίας” (“because of infidelity”) “τους απατούν” (“they cheat on them”) “τους απειλούν” (“they threaten them”) “boyfriend”	“η γυναίκα τους τους απατάει” (“their wife is cheating on them”) “οι γυναίκες είναι άπιστες” (“women are unfaithful”) “cheating him”
Men’s Control/ hegemony		“όταν θέλουν πάντα να γίνεται το δικό τους” (“when they always want to have it their way”) “θέλουν να έχουν την εξουσία” (“they want to have authority”) “θέλουν να φαίνονται ανώτεροι” (“they want to appear superior”) “θέλουν να γίνει το δικό τους” (“they want to have it their way”) “θέλουν να περάσει το δικό τους” (“they want to get their way”)
Sex	“δεν θέλουν να κάνουν σεξ” (“they don’t want to have sex”) “δεν τους ικανοποιούν” (“they don’t satisfy them”) “όχι σεξ” (“no sex”) “want sex”	“δεν τους κάθονται” (“they don’t …”)
Emotional Reasons	“Anxious due to their job” “νιώθουν παραμελημένοι” (“they feel neglected”)	“they are afraid of losing them” “they feel useless” “they fill if they do it” “they find it amusing” “επειδή δεν τις αγαπούν” (“because they don’t love them [the women]”)
Women’s behaviors		“αυτές τους απειλούν πως θα φύγουν” (“they [the women] threaten them that they will leave”) “Επειδή οι γυναίκες μπορεί να φλερτάρουν” (“because women may flirt”) “Οι γυναίκες τους φωνάζουν/αντιμιλούν” (“women shout at them/talk back to them”)
Other	“δεν είναι καλοί σύντροφοι” (“they are not good partners”) “Όταν παίζει την καβλάντισσα” (“When she is being cocky”)	“of stereotypes” “όταν ζητούν από αυτές πράγματα που δεν μπορούν να…” (“when they ask from them [the women] things they can’t…”

Notes. Responses provided in English as in original. For responses originally provided in Greek, translation by the authors. Reasons category grouped by the authors.

Table 1.5: Myths about violence (agreement in descending order)

Statement	**Overall**		**Boys**		**Girls**	
	M (S.D.)	*"strongly agree" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"strongly agree" % (N)*	*M (S.D.)*	*"strongly agree" % (N)*
18. Most women are concerned about whether men like them	**3.05 (0.70)**	**25 (109)**	**2.95 (0.77)**	**23 (39)**	**3.13 (0.65)**	**26 (70)**
11. If a person is being abused, they could just exit the relationship	**3.03 (0.86)**	**32 (144)**	**2.95 (0.89)**	**29 (50)**	**3.08 (0.85)**	**34 (94)**
13. Sometimes girls provoke sexual aggression by boys because of the way they are dressed	**2.81 (0.79)**	**17 (76)**	**2.83 (0.87)**	**24 (42)**	**2.80 (0.73)**	**12 (34)**
10. Women are most likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than someone they know	**2.64 (0.78)**	**13 (56)**	**2.73 (0.81)**	**16 (27)**	**2.60 (0.77)**	**11 (29)**
2. If boy gets really jealous about his girlfriend it proves that he really cares for her	**2.64 (0.77)**	**12 (55)**	**2.73 (0.80)**	**16 (28)**	**2.59 (0.75)**	10 (27)
9. Financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships	2.49 (0.72)	6 (27)	2.42 (0.77)	7 (12)	2.54 (0.69)	6 (15)
3. Sometimes it helps a relationship if partners make each other jealous on purpose	2.40 (0.75)	5 (22)	2.38 (0.76)	5 (9)	2.41 (0.75)	5 (13)
1. Most of the time hitting and shouting happen in grown-up relationships and rarely in adolescent relationships	2.35 (0.75)	4 (18)	2.44 (0.80)	8 (14)	2.30 (0.69)	1 (4)
12. Sometimes girls are to blame when their partners hit them	2.32 (0.83)	6 (25)	2.50 (0.84)	10 (17)	2.20 (0.80)	3 (8)
5. Women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men	2.30 (0.78)	5 (24)	2.25 (0.82)	7 (12)	2.34 (0.75)	4 (12)
19. A girl who has had many sexual partners deserves to be gossiped about	2.19 (0.96)	11 (51)	2.32 (0.94)	12 (21)	2.11 (0.96)	**11 (30)**
6. Whatever happens between married couples is a personal matter and other people should not interfere even if hitting or threatening is involved	2.18 (0.91)	11 (47)	2.33 (0.97)	15 (26)	2.09 (0.78)	8 (21)
15. Just slapping or pushing your partner isn't a form violence	2.17 (0.86)	5 (24)	2.24 (0.90)	9 (15)	2.13 (0.84)	3 (9)
8. Violence in relationships (e.g., hitting, pushing, and constant shouting) rarely happens among highly educated people	2.15 (0.84)	6 (28)	2.27 (0.90)	10 (17)	2.08 (0.78)	4 (11)
7. Whatever happens between dating partners is a personal matter and other people should not interfere even if hitting or threatening is involved	2.12 (0.87)	8 (36)	2.23 (0.90)	10 (18)	2.04 (0.84)	4 (12)
17. Women name things as "sexual harassment" when in reality they are only simple jokes	2.08 (0.82)	3 (13)	2.35 (0.97)	4 (7)	1.90 (0.79)	2 (6)
14. Violence in relationships (e.g. hitting, pushing, and constant shouting) most commonly happens among immigrant communities	2.08 (0.82)	5 (24)	2.19 (0.87)	9 (15)	2.01 (0.77)	3 (9)
4. When a girl says 'no' to her partner's sexual advances this often means 'yes'	1.89 (0.75)	2 (9)	2.14 (0.78)	4 (7)	1.73 (0.68)	1 (2)
16. Men hit women simply because they love them	1.51 (0.72)	3 (11)	1.79 (0.83)	6 (10)	1.33 (0.58)	0.5 (1)
Total	***2.34 (0.32)***	***453***	***2.42 (0.30)***	***176***	***2.29 (0.31)***	***277***

Notes. Five responses with highest agreement marked in **bold**; min=1 (Strongly Disagree), max = 4 (Strongly Agree).

Exploratory Factor Analyses. For the AWSA scale, the original authors (Golombok et al., 1985) do not propose any subscales or factors, but use the scale to yield a total score. For the remaining scales, most of which used were compiled or adapted by the researchers for the purposes of the present study, it was considered necessary to examine scale structure and reliability indicators. The statistical method of factor analysis was used to identify unobserved ('latent') variables (called 'factors'), and reduce data into a smaller number of 'factors' where items are grouped, rather than examining each item separately. Factor analysis is a process of data reduction which simplifies the statistical process, as it enables the researcher to examine relationships among fewer, broader dimensions between scales containing several items. As a result of the factor analysis procedure (for readers interested in the steps of the statistical process, the procedure followed is described in detail in the Appendix), composite variables were computed based on the results of the factor analysis, by estimating the means of all items which were grouped within each derived 'factor'. Internal reliability for these composite variables was estimated using the Cronbach's alpha statistic (α). This statistic can range from 0-1, with values >.8 generally considered good, and values >.7 considered acceptable (e.g. Bland & Altman, 1997). Items that were not included on any reliable factors were examined individually. The composite factors that emerged from the factor analysis for the first two scales (Attitudes toward Violence, separately for statements referring violence by boys toward girls, and statements referring to violence by girls toward boys, and Explanations for Violence), and were thus calculated are presented in Table 1.6. For the final scale, exploring Myths and Knowledge about gender based violence, no reliable factors emerged, and therefore a single scale score was used.

Comparisons for gender and demographic characteristics. Because we were specifically interested in gender differences in attitudes toward violence and related factors, Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVAs) was used to investigate whether boys and girls, and urban

and rural students, had significantly different scores on the Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA), the Attitudes toward Violence (ATV), and the scale on Knowledge/Myths about violence (KM). As shown on Table 1.7, responses of boys and girls were significantly different for all scales and factors, except for ´Mental Health´ as an explanation for violence. Boys condoned ´physical and sexual violence´, and ´control´ behaviors from boys directed toward girls significantly more than girls, and girls condoned ´control' behaviors and ´shouting´ directed from girls toward boys more than boys. Compared to girls in the sample, boys expressed significantly more conservative attitudes toward women (AWSA scores), expressed more agreement with various myths regarding GBV, and were more likely to explain violence by men toward women in terms of its ´positive outcomes´ and as ´women's fault´. There were also significant differences in responses of students living in urban versus rural environments (see Table 1.7), such that children from rural background tended to give more "conservative" responses (more conservative attitudes toward women, higher agreement with ´positive outcomes´ explanations, higher tolerance for certain forms of violence), but there were no significant interactions between student's sex and place of residence.

Correlations and Regressions. Next, bivariate correlations were used to examine which variables significantly correlated with Attitudes toward Violence (see Table 1.8), and could therefore be tested as potential predictors for attitudes toward Gender-based Violence (GBV). Student's age, reported religiosity, and maternal education did not significantly correlate with any form of attitudes toward violence. Higher educational aspirations by students correlated with lower tolerance for all forms of violence, and higher paternal education correlated with lower tolerance of physical and sexual violence directed from boys toward girls. Attitudinal and knowledge factors correlated significantly with attitudes toward violence, such that more conservative attitudes toward women (higher AWSA scores) and higher prevalence of myths about violence

correlated with more tolerance for most forms of violence. In relation to sociodemographic/personal factors and attitudinal factors, it was found that students with higher educational aspirations were less likely to agree with "explanations" of violence that corresponded to "positive outcomes" (see Table 1.9). Students with more educated mothers were less likely to agree with explanations of gender based violence based on "male hegemony", and on "positive outcomes" of violence. Paternal education, age, and religiosity, were not related in any way to explanations given for violence by men toward women.

In order to identify which variables effectively predicted more "tolerant" attitudes towards different forms of violence, a series of regression analyses were conducted, separately for violence directed from boys toward girls and violence directed from girls toward boys. More conservative Attitudes Toward Women was a significant predictor of tolerance for all forms of violence. In addition, explaining violence as having 'positive outcomes' and as being ´women's fault´, and lower educational aspirations predicted higher tolerance of physical and sexual violence by boys toward girls; being male also predicted more tolerant attitudes toward ´control´ behaviors directed by boys toward girls; explaining violence in terms of ´mental health´ of perpetrators, and lower educational aspirations also predicted more tolerant attitudes toward ´shouting´ directed by boys toward girls. For ´control´ behaviors directed by girls towards boys, being female, reporting more conservative Attitudes Toward Women, having rural upbringing, and explaining violence in terms of 'male hegemony' predicted more tolerant attitudes toward such behaviors. For attitudes toward ´shouting´ behavior by girls toward boys, the only significant predictor identified was female sex. (For a full description of the regression procedure and findings, including percentage of the variance explained by the predictors in each case, see Appendix).

Table 1.7: Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA), comparing attitudes toward of violence by gender and place of residence.

	overall	**boys**	**girls**	**F (1, 449)**	**η^2**	**overall**	**urban**	**rural**	**F (1, 449)**	**η^2**
	M(S.D.)	*M(S.D.)*	*M(S.D.)*			*M(S.D.)*	*M(S.D.)*	*M(S.D.)*		
AWSA[a]	2.19 (0.46)	2.46 (0.47)	2.01 (0.37)	105.90***	.19	2.19 (0.46)	2.15 (0.44)	2.28 (0.51)	6.74*	.02
Explanations for Violence[b]										
Factor 1: male hegemony	2.45 (0.55)	2.38 (0.59)	2.49 (0.52)	4.40*	.01	2.45 (0.55)	2.43 (0.55)	2.49 (0.57)	0.74	.002
Factor 2: "positive outcomes" of violence	1.63 (0.65)	1.74 (0.69)	1.34 (0.51)	36.98***	.08	1.50 (0.62)	1.44 (0.59)	1.64 (0.65)	8.24**	.02
Factor 3: women's fault	2.12 (0.57)	2.24 (0.61)	2.04 (0.54)	10.47**	.02	2.12 (0.57)	2.10 (0.59)	2.18 (0.52)	1.33	.003
Factor 4: mental health	2.41 (0.58)	2.39 (0.64)	2.42 (0.55)	.04	.00	2.41 (0.58)	2.45 (0.59)	2.29 (0.56)	6.17*	.01
Knowledge/Myths about Violence	2.34 (0.31)	2.42 (0.30)	2.29 (0.30)	13.77***	.03	2.34 (0.31)	2.34 (0.32)	2.33 (0.31)	0.49	.001
Attitudes Toward Violence[c]										
Subscale 1: Violence by boys toward girls										
Factor 1: Physical & Sexual Violence	1.37 (0.51)	1.60 (0.61)	1.22 (0.38)	67.26***	.13	1.37 (0.51)	1.32 (0.44)	1.50 (0.66)	14.60***	.03
Factor 2: Control	1.82 (0.63)	2.05 (0.75)	1.68 (0.49)	38.57***	.08	1.82 (0.63)	1.74 (0.58)	2.04 (0.71)	21.71***	.05
Factor 3: Shouting	1.99 (0.75)	2.09 (0.79)	1.93 (0.72)	4.11*	.01	1.99 (0.75)	1.98 (0.74)	2.04 (0.78)	0.52	.001
Subscale 2: Violence by girls toward boys										
Factor 1: Control	1.66 (0.48)	1.58 (0.46)	1.71 (0.49)	8.52**	.02	1.66 (0.48)	1.62 (0.45)	1.77 (0.55)	9.02**	.02
Factor 2: Shouting	2.08 (0.70)	1.90 (0.66)	2.16 (0.74)	12.32***	.03	2.06 (0.72)	2.05 (0.73)	2.08 (0.70)	1.33	.003

Notes. [a] Higher means indicate more conservative attitudes toward women (min = 1, max = 4); [b] higher means indicate more agreement with explanation for violence (min = 1, max = 4); [c] higher means indicate more conservative attitudes/more tolerance of violence (min = 1, max = 4); AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; *p > .05, **p > .01, ***p > .001.

Table 1.8: Correlations between Attitudes toward Violence and demographic and attitude factors.

	Attitudes Toward Violence overall	Subscale 1: Violence by boys toward girls			Subscale 2: Violence by girls toward boys	
		Factor 1: Physical & Sexual Violence	Factor 2: Control	Factor 3: Shouting	Factor 1: Control	Factor 2: Shouting
Demographic/Personal Factors						
Age	.00	.02	.03	.04	-.04	.05
Educational Aspirations	-.31***	-.33**	-.24***	-.14**	-.02	-.16**
Mother's education	-.06	-.08	-.05	.04	.05	-.03
Father's education	-.05	-.10*	-.04	.01	.03	-.002
Religiosity	-.02	-.08	-.002	-.03	.06	-.01
AWSA	.46***	.60***	.47***	.18***	.13**	-.08
Knowledge/Myths about Violence	.32***	.35***	.27***	.13***	.15**	.02
Explanations for Violence						
Factor 1: male hegemony	.22***	.17***	.10*	.12**	.20***	.10*
Factor 2: "positive outcomes" of violence	.39***	.55***	.32***	.11*	.12*	.45***
Factor 3: women's fault	.30***	.35***	.25***	.19**	.05	.31**
Factor 4: mental health	.10*	.06	.03	.16***	.03	-.05

Notes. AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; *p > .05, **p > .01, ***p > .001.

Table 1.9: Correlations between Attitudes toward Violence and demographic and attitude factors.

	Explanations for violence			
	´Male hegemony´	´Positive Outcomes´	´Women's' fault´	´Mental Health´
Demographic/Personal Factors				
Age	.08	.07	.03	.04
Educational Aspirations	-.07	-.33***	-.12*	.08
Mother's education	-.10*	-.10*	-.08	-.01
Father's education	-.06	-.08	-.04	.01
Religiosity	-.04	-.01	-.03	.03
AWSA	.10*	.45***	.34***	-.05
Knowledge/Myths about Violence	.17***	.32***	.32***	.07

Notes. AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; *p > .05, **p > .01, ***p > .001.

Focus Group Findings

What constitutes violence in relationships?

Participants identified several types of behaviours that are considered to constitute violence, and gave specific examples of such behaviours, from their own experience or through friends, or vicariously, such as through books and stories they have heard. Of the behaviours mentioned, both in direct response to the question of what constitutes violence, as well as through the examples participants brought into the discussion throughout the conversation, some were perceived as clear and unquestionable instances of violence, and some were challenged by other focus group participants, or qualified through later statements.

When asked to identify behaviours that they clearly and unequivocally perceive as constituting violence, participants identified several instances, and presented examples[3] from their own experience, through friends, or vicariously (cases they encountered through non-fiction books or television). Most of these examples illustrated behaviour that could be described as types of "control" or "restraint", but instances of physical, sexual, and verbal assault were also mentioned. These behaviours and examples are presented on Table 2.1. (on page 28).

During the discussions that followed, some of these behaviours, as well as other behaviours that were initially identified as clear forms of violence were subsequently challenged or qualified with exceptions, and participants presented their rationale for challenging whether they constitute violence, or whether they consider them "acceptable". Specifically, behaviours such as

[3] Occasionally, examples of violence in families in general, such as violence from parents to children and vice versa were also brought up, but since the study is interested specifically on GBV in the context of relationships, these were not coded or analysed.

"shouting" were considered as "acceptable" on some occasions, such as when someone's voice is "raised" during a fight, or when he says "something bad" when he's angry, and when it is not a regular occurrence:

> "..when a boy's voice gets raised a lot, maybe for some girl this will be a type of violence, but for me it's not, when you are arguing even if he raises his voice a bit, big deal". (girl, Group1)
>
> "we are human, we get angry, so…" (boy, Group 1)
>
> "it's different if someone says something bad when they're angry, and it's different if it's done all the time" (girl, Group 1)

"Control" was also qualified, and condoned or even described as necessary. A participant in Group 1 (girl) mentioned that some behaviours that could constitute control, such as telling someone what to do or what to wear, could be acceptable if the couple were married ("if you are married you could tell them…"), though not in a teenage relationship. This was, however, challenged by other participants. A participant in Group 2 pointed out that some level of "control" is actually necessary in a relationship. Her explanation indicates that control and concern or taking other's wishes into account may be perceived as being linked. She argued:

> "control in a relationship sometimes should happen… when you are in a relationship, you cannot consider that you are completely free and not take into account what the other person might feel… so some control should be there…" (girl, Group 2)

During the course of discussions concerning the "limits" to when behaviour crosses the line from "acceptable" to "unacceptable" and thus constitutes violence, criteria and parameters that were discussed or raised by the participants included frequency of occurrence, severity, and recipient's perception and impact. Occurrence related to whether incidents were repeated or circumstantial for certain behaviours, especially shouting. It was also argued that a single incident of violence usually indicates that it is highly likely that it will be repeated. For instance, participants stated:

> "when he raises his voice daily, it's a daily phenomenon, then at some point it will be considered violence" (boy, Group 1).

> "… if you have outbreaks, it means it will happen all the time because it's in … […], if the reason is that you don't have self control, you will not be able to control actions" (girl, Group 1).

Generally, however, it was acknowledged that repeated occurrence was not necessary for a behaviour to be considered violence, but whether a single incident could be classified as such was contingent upon severity or impact. Participants argued that single instances could be considered violence if words were "very strong" (boy, Group 2), if behaviour led "someone to go to the hospital, to a large degree…" (girl, Group 1), or "from the moment it is considered too much…" (boy, Group 1), and causes the recipient to feel uncomfortable:

> "I don't think we can set limits that from here on, if I don't feel comfortable around him, then there it's violence" (girl, Group 1).

The impact on the recipient was related to notions of "strength", and "weakness", and explained as being contingent upon how "strong" or "sensitive" a person is, and thus how they will be affected by someone else's behaviour. This was a recurring idea throughout the discussions, when the topics of a person's options to exit a relationship, and consequences of experiences of violence on the individual were discussed (see Consequences). Intention of the perpetrator was also touched upon as a parameter – participants mentioned "shouting and cursing with no reason whatsoever" (boy, Group 2), and "trying to impose what you want to another person" (boy, Group 1) as examples of a behaviour that constitutes violence. Intention was not however, explicitly considered as a criterion for whether a behaviour constitutes violence. Even when performed with lack of conscious intention, participants still considered that the behaviours mentioned do constitute violence (see Explanations).

Participants tried to resolve the problem of identifying when a behaviour crosses the thin lines of what constitutes violence by appealing to 'normal' or 'natural' aspects of behaviour (versus 'abnormal' or 'unnatural'). For example, they readily clarified that "if a couple argues, this is

very natural in human relationships", but it crosses the line "from the moment you are trying to impose what you want on the other person" (boy, Group 1). Similarly, it was considered that "when in some family, a child does stupid things and gets a slap from mom or dad so that they don't go too far, that's more natural" (girl, Group 2). Such statements indicate that adolescents perceive that there is a certain threshold where certain behaviors or conflict situations are acceptable, and beyond which this can be considered 'violence'. Similar views were expressed for behaviors that were perceived to be causes or 'provocations' for violent behavior, such as dressing provocatively beyond what is 'normal' (see Explanations).

To some extent, participants acknowledged perceptions of 'normality' as being norm-dependent. Participants in Group 1, argued that certain behaviours that are now considered violent are condoned in specific cultural contexts (e.g. "in Arabic countries") or historical periods (e.g. in the past it was considered "completely natural" for a man to beat up his wife). Even in contemporary examples, 'normality' was evaluated as relative, as it may become blurred in cases of ongoing violence, and, can function as a mechanism that triggers, maintains, or contributes to replicating violent incidents: "in the end he [the victim] considered it natural that this is how it should be" (girl, Group 1, referring to an example of controlling behaviour by a girl toward her boyfriend). Some participants also argued that this 'normalization' can act as a barrier for the victim's ability to exit the relationship (see sections on Explanations and Consequences).

Table 2.1: Behaviours that may constitute violence and examples

Behaviours identified as violence[1]	**Example**
'Shouting', 'cursing'	
'hitting', 'beating'	"and I know a boy who hit his girlfriend […] because she had a different opinion to his" (girl, Group 2)
'threats'	"I, again, know a case where he himself wanted to break up, and then he would chase after her, he threatened her, he would go to her house and would ask from her mother, and would talk with her father… it was a tragic situation" "I knew of a friend who had a relationship with a girl and she was telling him that she was ill and that she had leukaemia and that she was going to die, and it we are talking about a psycho situation […] and at the end he learned it was all lies what she was telling him, and the story went on for years…" (girl, Group 1).
'pathological jealousy'	"… a 20 year old girl, or 19, whose boyfriend would break her mobile phone, would be jealous of her and would break her mobile phone and change the gears in the car; she told him something and he broke the car" (girl, Group 1)
'sexual pressure', 'forcing', 'rape',	"I know a boy who had his friends do things to his girlfriend…" (boy, Group 2) "I know a girl who was raped […]" (boy, Group 2)
'racism' , 'mocking', 'insults'	
'controlling' – 'restraining' – 'stalking' 'psychological warfare',	"I know a girl who had a relationship and because she did not feel comfortable afterwards, he asked from her boyfriend to break up, and then he made noise, wherever she went he went after her…" (girl, Group 2) "… I will give an example I saw on TV, there was a young couple and the girl liked to wear minis, every girl her age likes to wear nice clothes, but her boyfriend would hit and shout at her [...] and he would lock her in the house and terrorize her…" (girl, Group 1) "I know a boy who does not let his girlfriend go out…" (boy, Group 2) "… I know a girl who… her boyfriend did not respect her, he had more relationships… and he made her believe that it was not the way she would see it…" (girl, Group 2) "… an American woman who wrote a book to help women of the world, which said that she got married, she was a flight attendant, and she met her husband who was a pilot, who was an Arab, and by the way he was very kind and nice, […]Anyway, they had a girl, and he insisted that they wanted to go and see his parents in his country, and as soon as he saw his country, his parents, his culture, his psychology changed completely, because he took her passport, he closed her in a room and hit her, his mother the same because he also did this to her [showing his hand to beat her], I assume the dad and girl were there, and it made an impression on me…" (girl, Group 1).
'isolation'	
'bullying'	
'constant nagging'	

Note: [1]wording to describe behaviours as expressed by the participants (translated from Greek by the authors).

Frequency of violence

Divergent opinions were expressed regarding changes in the frequency of violence between the past and present, and regarding frequency of violence between different age groups. In their age group, participants generally considered psychological forms of violence as more frequent than physical forms. Students said:

> "I think violence in terms of hitting the other person is not so prevalent in our age group, because – for goodness sake- but I think psychological violence exists, it's what we said before, there's jealousy, pressure, these exist, someone forcing you, behaving in a way trying to change you" (girl, Group 1).
>
> "… not so much in physical violence… then again I don't know… I don't know any example of a boy beating a girl..." (boy, Group 1).

Violence in teenage relationships was largely attributed to superficiality and immaturity:

> "Many times relationships at our age are somewhat superficial..." (girl, Group 1)
>
> "I believe that because individuals at our age, it's mostly enthusiasm this thing with relationships, that there's violence, because individuals are not so mature, they are not in position to understand what's going on… I mean there is…" (girl, Group 2)

Frequency compared to the past

Participants' opinions regarding how the frequency of violence has changed compared to the past were mixed. Whereas participants in Group 1 overall conceded that violence is *less* frequent than it was in the past, and "maybe in our age group, violence in relationships does not exist" (girl, Group 1), participants in Group 2 argued the contrary, that violence is *increased* compared to the past. In one exception to this trend, a participant in Group 1 clarified that he believes that psychological (but not physical) violence exercised from women toward men and vice versa has been increased, due to the change in gender roles. What was, nevertheless, common in both cases, was a consensus that instances of violence are no longer evaded as in the past, but brought into the public eye and discussed, as well as that, due to the change in gender roles and greater

equality for women and men, women now have more options for leaving an abusing relationship compared to the past. Participants who expressed strong opinions regarding an increase in violence compared to the past, frequently qualified their statements that there is more violence by adding that incidents now go public and women have more options. For instance, they said:

> "I again, believe that, yes, it [violence) has increased, but because woman has more freedom, she is more independent now, she can get a divorce or leave a relationship…" (girl, Group 2) "

> "… but in the past maybe there also was [violence], but the means weren't there to enable them to go public…" (girl, Group 2)

The possibility that rates of violence may have been as common in the past as now was raised and discussed in this group, as one participant shared the following thought:

> "Okay, so maybe there were forms of the violence in the past too, but because things now are so liberal, they because more easily known… it's somewhat different than in the past… maybe they were let's say, forms of violence at the same level, but now, let's say, because things… and media and in general because people have become very independent…" (boy, Group 2).

But when asked directly whether they thought it was a mere matter of public attention rather than a change in actual rates of violence, participants maintained the position that frequency of violence compared to the past has increased. One participant replied:

> "That now there are more [incidents of violence] is for sure… but in the past they were happening quite a bit but they would not find out…" (boy, Group 2).

The arguments provided for the two different sides expressed for the positions that frequency of violence has increased versus decreased, are presented on Table 2.2. Close scrutiny of these arguments reveals a basic difference in the underlying evaluation toward social developments and liberalization, expressed by the two groups of participants; participants in the two groups expressed divergent opinions on how progress toward more liberal practices and norms and mores, compared to the conservative/traditional values of the past has affected people, relationships, and expressions of violence. The position that violence has increased (dominant in

Group 2), was primarily based on a negative evaluation of the shift in norms from the past, whereas the position that violence has decreased compared to the past (dominant in Group 1), was representative of a more favourable evaluation of the shift in social norms. Participants who argued for the former position expressed a disapproval of modern lifestyles, arguing that, compared to the past, people have lost respect, parenting has deteriorated as parents are failing to set limits to their children, and people have lost their commitment to relationships because they have more options to exit. Participants who adopted the latter position (violence decreased compared to the past) presumed that changes in mentality are actually positive, and argued that norms, gender roles, and social expectations have changed toward equality such that a man beating his wife is no longer normative or condoned as in the past, and that parenting has actually improved, as parents talk to their children more openly and prepare them about relationships. These participants also explained their position through arguments based not only on norms, but also concrete developments such as changes in legislation ("the law now is direct and strict"), and social stakeholders, such as that there are "organisations" (referring to NGOs) that now deal with the issue. Participants in Group 2 also made sure to clarify that their opinions were based on speculation, as they had "no statistics to know for sure" (girl, Group 1).

Table 2.2: Arguments presented for two contrary positions expressed by participants: Frequency of violence, compared to the past, has decreased versus increased.

Reason for presumed change in frequency	**Position 1:** **violence has increased (dominant in Group 2)**	**Position 2:** **violence has decreased (dominant in Group 1)**
Changes in Gender roles	"… but it's mostly psychological violence that increases, from girls to men, but also the other way now, but simply now women think it's their right. But violence by women has increased because of this…" (boy, Group 1)	"it is more limited now, at least in developed countries, in the European Union, because in the past the woman was inferior…" (girl, Group 1) ".. woman's position in society has changed. Violence by men was reduced compared in the past that was so much in the past years…" (boy, Group 1)
Changes in Norms & Social Expectations	"Society has changed… in the past you would marry a girl, there was no chance to find another one, or the girl to find another guy… now this happened too… in the past it wasn't like this… in the past they would not go out as much… that's why…" (boy, Group 2).	Group 1 girl: "…because in the past the man would hit her and maybe they considered it…" boy: "It was natural…" "for instance, to give an example with myself, now I could not hit a woman, in general I can't […] But I don't know how I would be 50 or 60 years ago if I were the same person again, maybe I wouldn't be the same person, maybe I would have different behaviour and not care so much to hit a woman […] I think the way of thinking has changed and people don't do it". (boy, Group 1)
Changes in Legislation		"That is, in the past when there was a case of physical violence, the one who committed it had nothing to fear, but now the law is direct and strict. That is, if there is physical violence, the perpetrator will go to court and undergo trial and go to jail, so there is the feeling of fear" (girl, Group 1)
Social actors		"…generally in the world there are organisations against family violence and violence…" (boy, Group 1).
Change in Traditional values	"I think now incidents are more because in the past there was more respect, people were more conservative, there wasn't all this development that urges you to exercise violence… it was… now we are more liberal so…" (girl, Group 2) "… they were more cautious; they would wait for Sunday to go to church…" (boy, Group 2)	

	"..it was more… there was more control… they [people] wouldn't go out as much" (girl, Group 2) "… now as the world has become, there isn't as much respect… I believe it's more…" (girl, Group 2)	
Parenting	"now there are no limits… let's say, parents don't set so many limits on their children and they learn either to mock or to pressure… it's more… people believe that now they are more independent and there are more fights, more violence…" (girl, Group 2).	"… with the knowledge the older generations have, the previous ones and the ones before them, they advise us, parents their children before their children have a relationship, and they feel more comfortable to talk to their children about relationships, and maybe they prepare them before a relationship, on how to deal with their partner and how to discuss, they set solid foundations" (boy, Group 1). "… parents are more liberated to talk" (girl, Group 1).

Populations, Profile & Context

The discussion probed participants to identify what they believe to be likely populations (groups) where gender-based violence occurs most frequently, and contexts or settings where it may occur. These were coded and analyzed separately.

Gender Based Violence in "outgroups"

Regarding populations where GBV is most likely to occur, participants' responses included broader level factors, such as cultural, religious, financial and educational background, and age group, as well as personal characteristics of both the victim and the perpetrator. Specifically, participants cited the stereotypical example of Arab countries, to express the position that violence is more likely to take place in cultures where it is condoned ("not frowned upon, so they feel more adult when they do this…" girl, Group 1) and is even normative, and where gender inequality is prevalent:

> "Okay, in Arab countries it is considered very natural for a man to hit his wife, even if someone rapes a girl, it's the girl's fault because they believe she provoked him, so it depends from where you are" (girl, Group 1).

> "… in Arab countries, where they have many children and many wives… they consider it right, by their society…" (girl, Group 2).

Religion was also cited, but as interlinked with culture rather than a standalone factor, with Islam as an example of a religion that may be linked with gender based violence:

> "let's say Muslims have this, to undermine their wives by forcing them to wear the burqa with their religion, but whatever, its part of their culture" (girl, Group 1).

The latter statement seems especially pronounced as a stereotyped Western view of violence resulting from religious views relevant to 'other' cultures. It involves the assumption that forcing

occurs (that a woman is forced to wear a burqa contrary to her free will) as this is perceived and evaluated from a Western perspective. Nevertheless, despite the stereotypical nature of such examples, the two former responses cited above (which relate more directly to culture rather than religion) also illustrated two trends that indicate a level of awareness about the actual mechanisms implicated in gender based violence, and its universality. Firstly, the above quotes indicate that to some extent, societal and cultural limits are acknowledged as relevant in the normalization of female suppression and consequently implicated as a factor in the processes leading up to gender based violence. Second, although most examples cited were 'foreign', and could be perceived to imply that it is mostly an issue of out-group populations, one participant (boy, Group 1) seems to acknowledge that patriarchal attitudes can also be an issue closer to home (although still construed as an 'out-group'), and that they are a force behind gender based violence universally, including at home:

> "Not to take it outside Cyprus, there are areas even outside Nicosia, big cities like Limassol, where boys are more violent, that is it's their personality that develops. And in other areas of Cyprus […] there are some who believe, in theory, that that I am better and the woman is in the kitchen washing dishes"

Nevertheless, positions expressed by the participants were also indicative of several prevalent myths about gender based violence, such that financial reasons and educational level are linked to violence. For instance, one participant (girl, Group 2), considered violence to be more likely in countries "that are not financially developed, like Eastern [countries]", and another (boy, Group 1), considered that educated persons are better off: "the more educated people are, the better they know how to handle violent situations, more self-confidence". Interestingly, "people who have lots of money [...]" were also cited as a group more likely to *exercise* violence, because "they feel more powerful" (girl, Group 2).

Personal characteristics of persons who are likely to be victims, or perpetrators of violence, were treated separately, but some common patterns emerge throughout the discussion referring to both, with the most pronounced common theme being that of strength versus weakness. Perpetrators were stereotyped as more likely to be persons who use drugs (because they "…evade control and thus exercise violence", girl Group 2), people who have prior history of abuse or mental illness, and people who have "repressed" issues.

'Strength' versus 'weakness' or 'sensitivity'

Less was said about the profile of victims, but the issue of strength (vs. weakness), and behavior that does not set limits or tackle violence (linked to the theme of responsibility by victims), were raised:

> "if a person is low profile, does not easily express themselves… they will hold something inside… the other person, when they exercise violence, seeing that the other does not react or does not do anything to stop it, will continue.." (girl, Group 2)

The strength (vs. weakness), and power of the people implicated in cases of violence was, in both groups, a recurrent theme throughout the discussions, and was also mentioned in describing the profiles of victims especially, but also of perpetrators of violence, and the mechanisms contributing to the maintenance of violence:

> "it depends on the assertiveness of the person in several issues… either their personality or their outer appearance… it depends on what strength they have inside…" (boy, Group 2)

> "Eh, it also depends though how… if he is strong, not the one exercising the violence, the other one… […] how he will deal with it as a person let's say… maybe he will appear strong and say 'ok, boy, it's over' " (boy, Group 2).

Similar assumptions about 'strength' of individuals (especially victims of violence) are also reflected in the reasons or explanations given for why violence occurs, as discussed more thoroughly in the next

section. Implications regarding the presumed responsibility of victims were not only raised in this section of the discussion, but were recurrent throughout the discussions.

The Gender Dimension

Regarding directions of violence (one gender toward another), the overall idea was that certain forms of violence, especially sexual pressure, were more likely to be directed by boys toward girls, whereas girls were more likely to use psychological and verbal pressure, than physical or sexual. These observations were attributed to physical power, socially constructed roles, but also changes in gender roles (see section 'Gender Roles').

Age

Most views expressed seemed to support that violence is of concern to relatively young ages (most relevant to children, adolescents, and young adults). Children were considered to be more prone to bullying, "because after that you mature and you learn how to behave properly" (girl, Group 1). Two participants (a girl and a boy, Group 1) argued that violence is likely to occur between the ages of 20-30; the boy argued that this is because "they are both adults, and not under the control of the family, and they think they have more power, and so you have more complexes to show your power". Another boy in the same group clarified that the age may be a bit later, in the 30s, because this is when people get married nowadays. The underlying assumption here seems to be that marriage is a dominant setting where violence occurs, a view echoed by other statements throughout the conversation. The rationale for this was that there is more commitment in a relationship, and it is therefore harder to exit a bad relationship:

> "It's in marriage that it will come out, rather than in relationships, in just a relationship with a woman… to have… because ok, we have reached an easy era where I don't get a lot – I split up, so it's over, you have another relationship, yes, but in marriage where there are also children, you'll say I don't won't to hurt my children, if I separate…" (boy, Group 1)

These statements also express a more profound observation: In either age when it may occur (whether it takes place in the 20s or early 30s), marriage is construed as a milestone, a 'rite of passage' that marks transition into adulthood. As in any transitional period, people may be faced with the need to renegotiate and reconstruct their identities as 'married adults', a process that can generate stress that may ultimately lead to conflict and violence. Interestingly, whatever happens after marriage, or later on in adult married life, was not addressed by participants in the discussions. At this age, this period may seem distant or not relevant.

When talking about people their age, participants expressed the belief that gender inequalities are reduced compared to older generations, and that serious forms of physical violence were less prevalent, although jealousy and control behaviors were considered common and illustrated with examples. The issue of age difference ("when a guy is 20 and the girl is 15") was also cited by a boy in Group 2 as a parameter, whereby the boy may exercise sexual pressure, or pressure to go out, toward a girl.

Context

When the question of "where violence takes place" was prompted, Group 2 participants strongly expressed the idea that unknown, 'foreign' settings, away from home and family are 'unsafe'. The examples they gave were "when you are isolated, let's say in the forest at night" (girl), "going to walk" away from the house, and when abroad or away from home. The main justification for this was lack of protection and support. For example, three girls in the group made the following statements:

> "… for example, if a woman lives abroad, is married, and is subjected to violence, you can't easily help her if you are not there… there isn't anything you can do over the phone"
>
> "when you go to study… because we are in a foreign country, we don't know anybody, so the dangers are major"
>
> "Or even not in another country, but away from your hometown, and having no one close to you where you go, people will see that there is no one to support you or anything, so they won't think twice to exercise violence toward you… they won't feel that someone is there to support you…"

From the above statements, participants, especially some girls in Group 2, seem to consider that violence is most likely perpetrated in 'strange' or 'unfamiliar' settings' (settings where one is away from a supportive network), or by 'strangers'.

When they referred to contexts, Group 1 participants, on the contrary, did not raise the issue of 'unsafe settings', but focused on the notion of 'private' versus 'public' space. They argued that violence is more likely to occur in a private space, where there are no eyes watching:

> "at home it's more likely […] for someone to exercise violence on their partner. Because it's a private space, nobody will see him and he feels more comfortable" (girl)
>
> "and maybe if someone sees him in a public space hitting his wife, maybe they will immediately report it" (boy)

Explanations for violence

The most dominant explanations for why violence occurs in relationships offered spontaneously by the participants clustered around *social learning* themes, especially gender roles and social expectations, role models and prior history of abuse (explaining violence it terms of a learned behaviour that is transmitted intergeneration ally), but also jealousy. Other explanations about why violence occurs referred to factors that clustered around the *relationship* (infidelity, jealousy, inadequate communication, unrealistic expectations about relationships, lack of trust, gender and developmental differences, or not "matching" within the couple); *situational* factors

(financial, stress, lack of protection), and *person* factors (insecurity and low self esteem, selfishness, fear, anger and lack of self-control, substance use, and lack of response by the victim). These are illustrated with examples on Figure 2.1 (for example statements for these factors, see Appendix). Power and control appeared as an issue relevant across all levels.

Gender, stereotypes and social roles

Within responses under the broader theme of 'gender roles and social expectations', at least two distinct ideas were apparent. The first idea was that gender inequality and stereotypes are deeply ingrained and persist, leading to violence towards women:

> "Maybe stereotypes as well… […], maybe the boy, the man… based on the stereotypes that exist, the man is in charge, the woman is inferior, so I am allowed to exercise violence, and to check, while this I don't think anymore…" (girl, Group 2).

According to the participants, this can lead men to consider violence as an acceptable strategy, especially for control, as "some boys consider that it is right, what they do to their girlfriend" (referring to control, girl, Group 2). An interesting thought was that such deeply ingrained stereotypes become activated and lead to violence in some instances, such as when angry, even when the person does not share them in daily life:

> "maybe someone feels it, but does not believe it, but when a time comes when he's about to burst, it will come to him that I am a man, I am stronger, whereas for others it will be ok" (girl, Group 1)
>
> "girl: I believe we develop a thought pattern from the time they are…
>
> boy: babies
>
> girl: Yes, especially in our adolescence, in our age, if a little boy starts to believe that I am superior but subconsciously, I don't show it, gradually it's the thought pattern that he will project outside. It will become experience, eventually" (Group 2)

The idea that social constructions of gender and inequality and male superiority become deeply ingrained in both men and women was expressed. This appeared to remove responsibility from the male individual and place it on society in general:

> "… but he [the man] always has inside him that the woman is inferior because it's not really the person's fault, it's just how he learned, how he saw things" (girl, Group 2, referring to violence in Arab cultures)

Interestingly, although the same observation was noted for both men and women, integrating stereotypes did not seem to remove responsibility from women, but was even seen as a fault of theirs, as it was argued that this may lead women to become victims "by choice":

> "Based on the gender, let's say the women that in history, the past is that women were inferior, maybe a woman unconsciously to have in mind… to believe it, and so her behaviour may be affected and she feels uncomfortable that she can't express her opinion on something, to express herself, and sometimes women become victims *by choice* because the allow the stereotype to pass that women are inferior and that they should obey their husbands" (girl, Group 1; emphasis added)

The idea of gender and social norms that condone violence becoming internalized and automatic also seems related to the idea that perpetrators often lack intention, and lack awareness that their behaviour actually violates norms and is detrimental to the other person. Participants said that people may perform violence "unwittingly" (boy, Group 2), and they may even think they are justified in acting as such, because they "don't consider it bad" (girl, Group 1) or "they [boys] consider it is appropriate, what they are doing to their girlfriend" (girl, Group 2, referring to ´control´ behaviours). On the contrary, when it comes to how *women* are affected by stereotypes, a double standard ensues: if women become victims "by choice" this assumes that they are, or are expected to be, aware of the stereotypes, and could insinuate responsibility for them in adopting such stereotypes.

The second, less clearly expressed idea, interpreted shifts in gender roles, and balance of power of the sexes, as a mechanism behind violence, by claiming that more rights and increased power for women may sometimes also lead them to be violent, to engage in "abuse of power of this right", which was otherwise assessed as very "just", as a boy in Group 1 said. For participants in the second group, shifts in social norms and mores in general, "all this development" as one girl

expressed, were evaluated negatively and were thought to contribute to increased violence. Although this did not explicitly involve negative assessment of increased gender equality, it often echoed patriarchal ideas regarding parenting and setting limits:

> "…parents don't set limits to their children so much so they learn either to mock or to exercise pressure… it's more… now people believe that now they are more independent and there are more fights, more violence…" (girl, Group 2).

'It's all in the family'

Perhaps the most popular explanation for violence appealed to social learning, and attributed violence to role models, especially within the family, and intergenerational transmission. It was assumed that people who exercise violence "may not think it's bad because this is how they see things in their home, in their daily life" (girl, Group 1), or they don't know how to act otherwise. They think that "since this is how my father, my mother have raised me, this is what I will do because it was my model, this is what I know how to do" (girl, Group 1), and according to the experiences the person has had, "accordingly, this is how they will also act in their life" (girl, Group 2). One participant (girl, Group 2) even argued that "if someone grew up in family where he watched violence, where his father would hit his mother or even himself, it is *natural* for them to exercise violence" (emphasis added). The belief that it all "starts in the family" was expressed repeatedly in both groups, including the view that this is also true for "most criminals" (boy, Group 1).

Again, such beliefs seem to imply lack of intention or responsibility on behalf of the perpetrators of violence, as the underlying assumption seems to be that people are passive recipients of their environmental experiences, which will inevitably shape their own behaviours. This was qualified, as at least once it was acknowledged that some people may challenge and reject these

patterns, “who can fight it and say my dad, you don’t act right, I have to change my way of thinking and acting, don’t do whatever my dad does myself” (girl, Group 1), but remained the dominant response regarding what causes violence throughout the discussions.

Justifications: Unfortunate ‘provocations’ and ‘necessary’ jealousy.

Transcripts were also analyzed to identify explicit or implied justifications of behaviours that could constitute violence. Participants in Group 1 clarified that some behaviours could be “understood but not justified”, or, as one participant (girl, Group 1) explained: “the action is not justified, but you understood the reasons [he] did it”. Participants in Group 2 also conceded that violence is “never justified”, reacted to the notion of “justified violence” as a contradiction, and were quick to clarify, when justifying behaviours or attitudes, that “discussion” should always be the way to resolve problems or disagreement. Nevertheless, close scrutiny of transcripts identified statements that could be interpreted as “justifications” or factors that could mitigate the seriousness of violence, with a recurring focus being the responsibility by the person themselves, and a recurring idea being that of “provocation”. Provocation could involve how one dresses and attitude (Group 1 participants talked about “how she moves in the mini” rather than mini dress itself) as well as behaviour: “the way she will talk to the other, the words she will use… it’s not just their appearance” (girl, Group 2). Participants also considered that people (who may be victims) are also responsible for taking caution regarding where one navigates, in order not to “provoke”:

> “That is, since I know that drug users hang around on that street and things like that or that some place is not for my age, why would I go there and note go from somewhere else…?” (girl, Group 2).

Considering that 'jealousy' was frequently cited as an explanation or motive for violence, opinions about the justification or even usefulness of 'jealousy' itself, as well as 'suspicion', were rather mixed. Although students considered jealousy to be a major contributor to violence in relationships, saying that, "most cases [of violence], at least those we hear about, are from jealousy", and linked jealousy to "insecurity" (girl, Group 1), it was strongly expressed in both groups that some level of jealousy could be "rational" or "acceptable" and universal ("everyone feels a little jealousy inside", boy, Group 1), and that jealousy is problematic when it is 'pathological'. Some participants in Group 2 took this idea a bit further, arguing that, although there are harmful forms of jealousy, "jealousy is not necessarily on the bad side" (boy), but that it could be "a sign of love" (girl), or interest, it could occur because one person "loves his girlfriend that much" (boy), and "sometimes it is *necessary* to show to the other person that you are interested…" (girl, emphasis added). This opinion did not appear to be shared by all, since one participant (girl, Group 1) actually described it (commenting on the statement that "If a boy is jealous it shows that he truly cares") as "foolish". 'Bad' jealousy, on the other hand, was seen as a result of 'provocation', so in a sense, responsibility is again attributed to the party doing the 'provocation' than the party exhibiting 'jealousy' itself:

> "I firstly believe that jealousy is a sign of love in a relationship, and this that they say that jealousy will ruin a relationship, I believe if there are no acts to provoke, there won't be jealousy… I believe the other person has to provoke for you to get jealous…" (girl, Group 2)

A ramification of the idea that partners may be justified in *being* jealous to some extent, was the idea that partners may also be justified, or that it is even 'necessary' for them to exercise some forms of 'control' on each other:

> "control in the relationship sometimes should happen… when you are in a relationship, you cannot consider that you are completely free, and not take into account what the other person could feel with your actions… so some control should be there…" (girl, Group 2).

More specifically, some control on the part of the boy was considered appropriate for cases when a girl wears something that's "completely extreme" (e.g. "extremely short skirt" or "very short blouse"), but not when "within normal levels", because there you "trust the other person so you shouldn't make a remark" (girl, Group 2).

Power, Control, and Self-Control

Personal characteristics or behaviours on the part of victims and perpetrator were also put forth as explanations for why violence occurs. 'Anger' and 'lack of self-control' on the part of the perpetrator were mentioned, an explanation which also appeared to be one of the most popular in our quantitative study. Once more, this seems to remove some responsibility from the perpetrator, as this behaviour may be something over which they have no control, or is not deliberate. Victims, on the other hand, may have a role in instigate violence towards them by being 'passive':

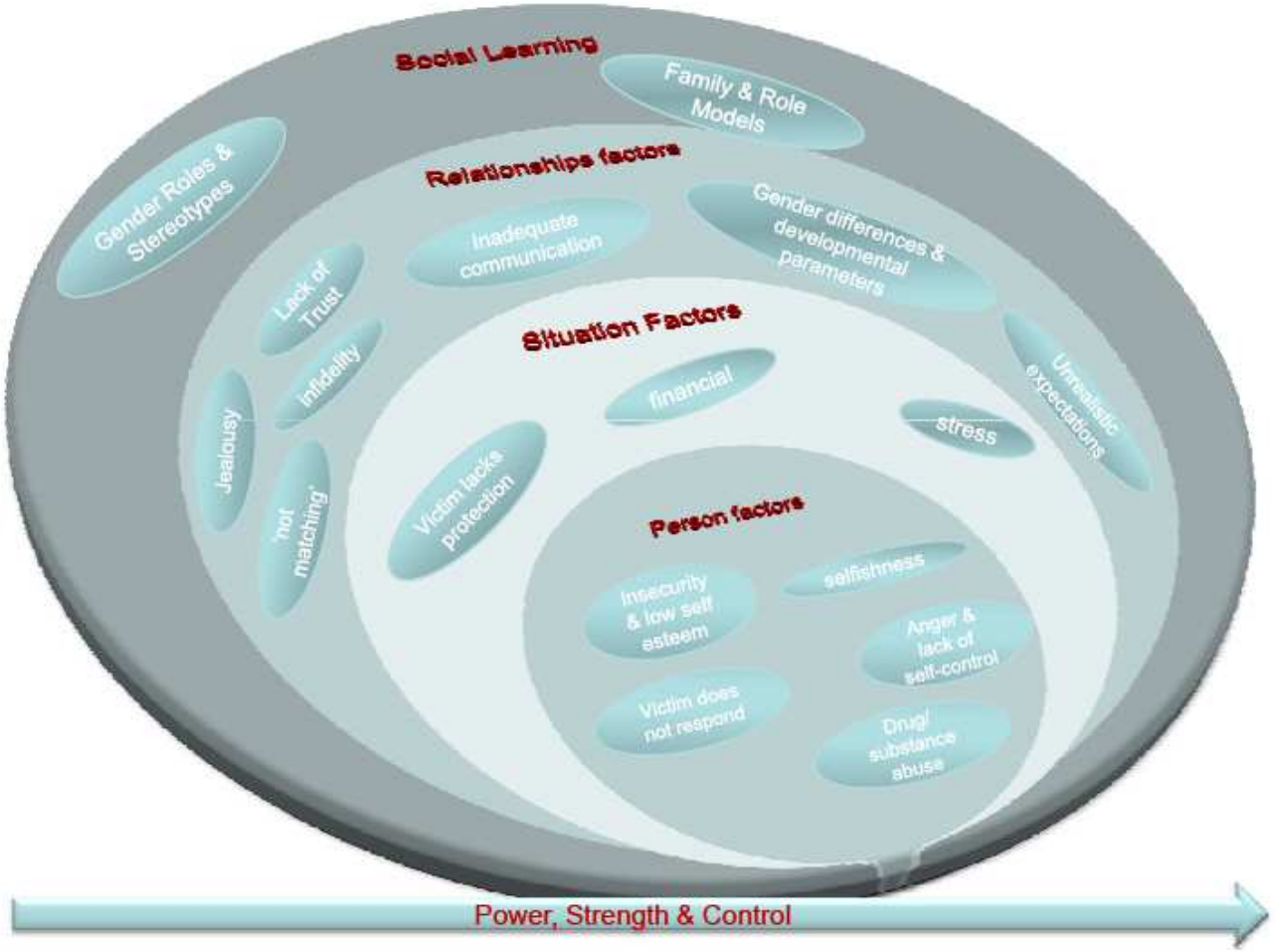
> "…if a person is low profile, does not easily express themselves… they will hold something inside… the other person, when they exercise violence, seeing that the other does not react or does not do anything to stop it, will continue.." (girl, Group 2)

Power and control within the relationship were also discussed as an underlying motive that transcended all levels. Control, or an "illusion" of control is conceived as motive, stemming from low self-confidence and insecurity, but also as a mechanism that rewards, and thus sustains violent behaviour. Consistent with trends identified in our quantitative study, social approval of violence (by friends) is understood as one such reward that may make perpetrators feel 'strong', and thus likely to repeat the behaviour (see Table 2.3).

Protective factors

Participants also discussed factors that could function in a protective way, preventing violence, rather than merely the ones that caused them. A recurring assumption was that absence of these protective factors (e.g. trust, efficient communication) could be understood as a mechanism leading to violence. The role of protective figure or figures was also stressed, by participants in both groups, as crucial in both preventing, and in addressing violence. In the former instance, the assumption was that persons are actually in need of (a) 'protector(s)', and the presence of these 'protector(s)' should be salient, in order to inhibit potential perpetrators ("if you don't have someone who's yours, people will see that you have no one to support you, so they won't think twice about exercising violence to you… they won't feel that there is someone to support you", girl, Group 2). In the latter case, the arguments was mostly based on disempowering of the victim, who may be caught up in a circle of violence and "end up having no self-confidence, and they think it's their fault", and will need external intervention to break it: "so someone from her environment, her mother, her father, her uncle, or, I don't know, someone, to call to see if there is violence on the given person" (boy, Group 1).

Figure 2.1 Explanations for violence: Levels and themes.



Note: For example statements for each level/factor, see Appendix.

Consequences

Consequences of violence were discussed on several levels. On the level of individuals, they mostly focused on the victim, but were also discussed for the perpetrator, and others involved (e.g. children and family members). In terms of the impact of the victim, consequences cited were psychological (emotional and cognitive), such as feelings of inferiority, loss of self-esteem, self-blame, dependence on the perpetrator, loss of trust, and normalization of violence but also more concrete consequences, such as impact on future relationships and moving on with other aspects of life (work, love, social life). For the perpetrator, participants considered that consequences could reward and further reinforce violence, as it resulted in them feeling 'strong' and 'gaining power', even in approval and reinforcement by their friends. Moreover, children could be traumatized, or copy violent behaviours themselves, contributing to the transmission of violence. The ramifications could also extent to the family, who seemed to become involved or called to intervene in some of the case examples cited by the participants.

Consequences were also discussed on the level of the relationship ('dependence' was one aspect, 'breaking up' was another), as well as on society in general. The latter focused mainly on the intergenerational transmission of violence, but participants in Group 2 especially, also seemed concerned with the impact of violence on the institution of marriage. They felt that it contributes to increased divorce rates, and that with this trend people would be afraid of marriage, not want to marry, and the 'seriousness' of marriage as an institution would be undermined.

These emerging themes from the participant's responses are presented on Table 2.3.

An important emerging observation was that the consequences of violence were largely perceived to be contingent upon a variety of factors of the individuals, the relationship, and the context, such as the strength vs. weakness of the persons being affected, their gender, their background or prior experience, presence of others, and type of relationship.

The strongest idea here was that how and to what extent a person who undergoes violence will be affected by it, is contingent upon their own sensitivity and strength (vs. 'sensitivity'):

> "it depends also how sensitive the person is, because sometimes you see them enduring it and being strong, but there are persons who are, especially when it comes from someone they love and feel attached to, when they are offending them, they cannot endure it" (girl, Group 1)
>
> "If they are a sensitive person, it might stay with them…" (girl, Group 2)

This 'strength' or personal 'endurance' was considered more important than gender itself in its impact ("… so it depends from the person, not so much on gender", boy, Group 1), although it was pointed out that gender could also matter. The main view was that men may be vulnerable for several reasons; firstly as a result of gender differences (one boy noted that women can talk to their girlfriends about their problems but men feel more stress to find immediate solutions) secondly, men may feel more pressure or have less opportunity to express themselves, especially considering the social expectations relating to gender, whereas women may be more likely to be helped, since they are not the ones 'expected' to take initiative:

> "…men may get more pressure as a stereotype, and they may not be able to express themselves as they want and feel more pressure" (girl, Group 1)
>
> "…if you think about it, the first step is the step that's the step he will do, when he is affected and feels inferior maybe he won't be able to do the first step but when the woman feels inferior, when a strong man comes and helps her she can easily get over her problem" (girl, Group 1)

It was also expressed that age or development period could also matter, as people may be affected more "if it happens in adolescence, [if] it's the first relationship" (girl, Group 1).

Table 2.3: Consequences of violence as perceived by the participants on the level of individuals, relationships, and society.

Level	**Consequence**	**Verbatim**
Individuals		
On the victim	Feeling inferior	"… you end up being dependent on the person and you believe you are not worth without him" (girl, Group 2)
	Self-esteem & doubts	" … that is, just this, that you are constantly cursing and belittling him, the other one pauses and says that one, maybe it's true… maybe" (boy, Group 1) "After the end of a relationship, you can have in mind, on the back of your mind, as a reminder that maybe you are not good enough after a relationship" (girl, Group 1) "…when the persons involved in relationships with violence always stay behind. They always feel a feeling of inferiority so their psychological state will never be good, when you know that when you go home there will be verbal or physical violence, it always pulls you back and in your work, your love life, your personal and social life" (girl, Group 1). "from the moment you hit him you will make him feel inferior… he won't feel good" (boy, Group 1) "And the other person gradually loses their respect, their self-esteem, so if you loose your self-esteem you stay behind" (girl, Group 1) "Beatings… it may happen once, but psychologically the person will feel pressure, will feel that they don't have any trust…." (girl… Group 2)
	Self-blame	"Usually victims end up, the victims, not to have any self-esteem and think it's their fault…" (boy, Group 1)
	Dependence	"It's dependence, in the end, it's not love" (girl, Group 1) "… or you loose your self-esteem in yourself, because if the other, depending on how sensitive the person is, feels I cannot feel without this person, I think I have the illusion that he loves me even though he beats me" (girl, Group 1) "or maybe you won't leave a relationship because you feel you have nowhere to hold on to" (girl, Group 1) "… or that you won't move on with your life, or that you won't find another protector" (girl, Group 1) "Maybe you are thinking where can find another man or woman now, and who will love *me*?" (boy, Group 1)

	Normalization of violence	"I saw such a case where the girl was excessively pushy with her boyfriend, but I don't know, maybe he himself was dumbed down [laughter], because in the end he though it was normal, that this is how it should happen" (girl, Group 1)
	Compromise personal freedom	"Yes, from the moment someone exercises violence on you they won't let you become of do what you want" (boy, Group 1). "Okay, excessive jealousy, makes the other choke…" (girl, Group 2)
	Fear & Restraint	"…or just when the other constantly shouts, from their fear, they will be cautious what to say because he will start shouting" (girl, Group 1) "They want to have control, just after the other, they have him restrained and he cannot sit as he wants" (girl, Group 1)
	Emotional stress	"using threats to end a relationship if you don't move on and then the other person is under psychological stress when you force them into something they are not ready for, that's psychological violence" (girl, Group 1, referring to pressure to have sex)
	Future relationships, Loss of Trust & Moving on	"…this stigmatizes others, they have difficulty moving on in their life" (Group 1) "…from the moment eh… that a girl or a boy does not have a good time in a relationship, they are stigmatized and then have difficulty trusting and…" (girl, Group 1) "There are cases of rape of women who hold it for their entire life, and remember it every time they make love this thing, and the feel horror inside" (boy, Group 1) "What do I have to improve in my relationship in order for this not to happen again, they are afraid and in future relationship they are more careful, so if he loves her or she loves him a lot, and this happens, they will say I will try not be so attached with a person in order to get hurt again so much…" (boy , Group 1) "Or even sexual violence, if girl is raped, then it's not so easy to come in contact with a man again…" (girl Group 2) "Or also in a relationship … let's say in our age, where a girl pressures the boy or the other way around, then the person may not feel so comfortable to have a relationship because they are afraid that the same thing will happen to them…" (girl, Group 2) "You may be afraid to trust a relationship again…" (girl, Group 1)
On the perpetrator	Gaining power	"That way the person exercising violence, especially at our age, may feel stronger afterwards… let's say he does something to a girl, and then goes to his friends and tells them 'this and that happened', they will tell him 'you are cool', and he will feel stronger…" (girl, Group 2)
On other	Children	"..if in a family where it happens there are children, those children will have psychological problems… and when

people		they grow up maybe they will also exercise violence" (girl, Group 2) "Or maybe the children will be led to drugs…" (girl, Group 2)
	Family members	"I know a girl who had a relationship, and because she did not feel comfortable afterwards, she asked her boyfriend to split, and then he caused problems, wherever she went he went after her… and this created a problem to her, let's say, in her family…" (girl, Group 2) "I know a girl whose brother would beat her because her boyfriend…" (boy, Group 2)
On the relationship	Break up of relationship	"…usually from the moment these things happen… eh… the relationship stops, the girl or the boy tries to avoid him as often as possible… and if he continues to bother… there are friends or parents or family who can push him back from coming as he comes into contact" (boy, Group 1) "I believe that if a guy beats up a girl, he won't see her again… she will tell her brother, her father, someone let's say, and then he won't be able to see her again…" (boy, Group 2)
On society	Institution of family – divorce	"Now with the divorces, you are afraid… because maybe I can also be led to divorce, so why not just cohabit with someone?" (girl, Group 2) "Basically, in society, the seriousness of marriage will be lost, let's say, people will not want to get married because with the incidents they see they will not be able to trust each other… and then this is a chain, and there won't be creation of descendants…" (boy, Group 2)
	Human rights issue	"It is, therefore, a human rights violation, what you'll do, where you'll go, and what you will wear" (girl, Group 1)
	Transmission of violence	"… it will urge children themselves to be led to commit violence either at school, or with their friends" (boy, Group 1) "…that gradually, when there are many couples who face the problem of violence, then with time it will spread maybe, and that specific couple has children and the children see the behaviour of the parents and then will copy it. It's a circle and it goes round" (girl, Group 1). "…that if there is violence in the family of a child, they will take it out on their classmates" (girl, Group 1)

Gender Roles

Participants were specifically asked to share their opinions regarding the relation between changing gender roles in the past decades and violence in relationships, but also expressed views and judgments about gender roles throughout the discussion. Views that emerged through the discussions were then examined on four main levels: views about gender differences (on a descriptive level), perceptions about gender roles and gender differences as socially constructed or learned, opinions about gender roles in relation to equality and power, and perceptions and judgment about shifts in gender roles in the past decades, especially in relation to GBV.

Gender differences & Social constructions

Gender differences were described on behavioral levels, and in terms of differences in profile, such as personality characteristics, coping, strength, and competence or skills. For example, participants in Group 2 argued that men are more likely to exercise violence because they are physically stronger:

> "I believe that it [violence] is mostly men toward women, because they are also physically more powerful and can exercise violence…. ok, the woman can also exercise psychological power on the man, or something, but the man can rape… because he is physically stronger, it is more likely that he will exercise violence" (girl)

> "Okay, usually it's the strong that exercises violence on the weak, therefore it's reasonable that it's the man, let's say… but there are exceptions, where, let's say, it's the opposite…" (boy)

In terms of roles, it was mentioned that when it comes to relationships, it is usually "the man who will do the first step" (girl, Group 1), and that "The woman will ask the man for permission to go out, the man won't" (girl, Group 2), suggesting that gender roles remain stratified and unequal. In response to a statement from our qualitative study, cited by the facilitators, that "Most women are concerned about whether men like them", participants in Group 2 particularly also discussed the

idea that women are more concerned or preoccupied than men with their appearance and grooming. One boy said:

> "I know girls who, as soon as they meet a guy, they start dressing themselves up… there are guys- most guys – wallet, a t-shirt, and out they go, they won't bother, not with their hair, nothing".

Others challenged this idea, saying that it mostly "depends on the person", or attributed these behaviours by women/girls not so much to their concern about being liked by men, but for feeling comfortable themselves, or to "compete" with each other.

In terms of differences in personality or traits, the view that men have less self-control and are more likely to "give in" when "a girl approaches him or provokes him" was endorsed, whereas women are more likely to "cut if off" (girl, Group 2). Women were also described as 'stronger' and having more 'endurance' because they give birth, whereas boys were described as more 'insecure' (girl, Group 2). One boy also expressed the view that men and women have different styles of coping: women talk more with their friends, men need 'immediate solutions', and this may cause more stress to them. In terms of status and equality, it was argued that men and women are "on the same level" when it comes to education and studies (girl, Group 2), and one boy (Group 2) even argued that they are equal except in 'laws' (referring to representation), as there are fewer women in "courts, in the parliament". It was also expressed, nevertheless, that some differences remain, such that men are stronger in 'muscle' (i.e. physically stronger), whereas the status of equality was challenged later in the discussion, especially in relation to ramifications for violence and shifts compared to previous decades.

Some of these stated gender differences were mentioned in a matter-of-fact manner, without further analysis, but some were further analyzed or challenged in the discussions, in terms of the extent to which they may be socially constructed or inherent, and in terms of how they relate to

gender equality and gender based violence. For instance, the idea that men are more 'insecure' was considered to be, to some extent derived from pressure on the male role which expects men to be strong:

> "Because I read somewhere that men are more insecure than women, because it's what I said before, he keeps hearing 'you are boy, you are strong', and this causes you… it causes insecurity in you." (girl, Group 2).

The analysis of gender roles and differences as socially constructed or learned was particularly dominant among participants in Group 1. Their critique included the understanding that social constructions of gender and messages begin being developed and transmitted at an early age, as "we develop a thought pattern" from an early age and this especially becomes pronounced in adolescence, where these may become expressed and become "experience" (girl, Group 1). The importance of the environment was considered critical, as one boy, referring to how these 'thought patterns' become part of experience and expressed, said that friends have an important role when it comes to helping you "control this, or encourage you to continue". Expectations about gender, such as double standards about sexuality, were also critiqued as socially constructed: "generally society says that more they want to… sexual relations for boys to have them quicker, the girls they want…eh… to know exactly when to move on, to be ready" (boy, Group 1).

Many stereotypes were also pointed out and challenged: that "men do not get hurt" (considered to be the opposite, as women were described as more 'enduring'), that "men don't cry" (which results in boys inhibiting expression of their emotions, whereas in fact 'we are all human'), that the man is the "protector" in a relationship, and that the man is "in charge". Most of these stereotypes identified were stereotypes about men, which was consistent with the remark made by participants that more pressure is actually exercised on men, to conform to stereotypes. Stereotypes identified about women had to do with as the idea that some boys or men were believed to have, that women

are ‘inferior’. Interestingly, one boy in the group responded to a girl’s comment about girls’ behavior when flirting with a man, as representative of ‘stereotypes’:

> “girl:eh it’s different how the girl will flirt when she wants to have a relationship with a boy, than if she just wants to go with him. And you can tell from miles away [laughing] I mean:
> boy: But these are stereotypes!”

Such stereotypes were considered related to inequality and violence, as believing that they are ‘in charge’ and that women are ‘inferior’ could mean for some men that “therefore I have the right both to exercise violence and to control” (girl, Group 2).

Shift in roles, (in)equalities, and power

Inequality, conflict, and gender roles were described to be linked to violence in complex ways, and resulted in some ambivalence in how participants discussed and evaluated changing roles. The general consensus was that there is more gender equality compared to the past, that men and women are equally educated, women financially independent, beliefs such that men are ‘stronger’ or ‘superior’, are ‘no longer valid’, and men and women are, for the most part, ‘equal between us’. This was, nevertheless, subsequently qualified, in that there are still places (‘even in Cyprus’), or people where stereotypes beliefs that men are ‘superior’ to women remain, or are deeply rooted (perhaps subconsciously), despite the changes:

> “I believe that yes, the women became more independent, but they still consider that ‘I am the man, so I can go out a bit more, and I can drink a bit more… but ok, compared to the past, she became more independent” (girl, Group 2).

Shifts in gender roles, toward more equality, were evaluated positively for the most part, in that they can protect women both proactively (“the woman let’s say, for example, who feel equal to the man, will not take it, she will react and therefore there won’t be so frequent incidents of violence”,

girl, Group 2), as well as in dealing with violence, as women now have more options, to talk to others, or to exit:

> "Yes, now society has learned to listen and to punish… while in the past, the woman would sit at home, her husband, both curses, would beat her up, she wouldn't say anything… not to her mother, to nobody… while now, people have learned to talk, to tell these things… and as [boy's name] said before, I think, they learned to leave… when she finds injustice, any injustice, she will leave from it… she won't sit there…" (girl, Group 2)

> "I basically believe that the difference with the past is that now the woman is financially independent, so in case she doesn't feel okay in a relationship or a marriage she will leave because she feels she can deal financially…" (girl, Group 2)

At the same time, this 'shaking' of traditional roles was considered to contribute to increased conflict, while these options to exit, especially divorce, were evaluated in a negative or ambivalent manner, since divorce was mostly framed as a 'problem':

> "I believe there is no longer equality, and there is conflict because we can see that from divorces […] That the man, he goes wherever he want, and that he is superior… and the woman reacts, and that's why there are divorces" (girl, Group 2).

It was also said that because women rightly have more rights, there may be times when there may be "abuse of power" of these rights (boy, Group 1), or where "she may provoke in the end", because she "is now more free, they don't control her so much, she goes out frequently…" (girl, Group 2).

One girl (Group 1) also proposed that these shifts, along with women feeling that they were being suppressed, may urge women to behave in ways that put pressure, or that may take forms of psychological violence:

> "Of course it's wrong to use psychological violence toward the other. But perhaps we can justify it because when someone is being suppressed for a long time, for centuries, like women, then it comes spontaneously. Maybe because they hear from their grandmothers, they hear the story, spontaneously, maybe they will put pressure, wrongly of course, on their partner, in a psychological manner".

Alternately, it was proposed that women may also carry deeply ingrained, or 'subconsciously' ideas of being 'inferior', which may impact her behavior, and result in victimization:

> "Based on gender, let's say, the woman who in history, in the past, women were inferior, maybe a woman unconsciously to have in mind, to believe it, and her behavior becomes affected in front of a person and feels uncomfortable that she cannot say her opinion on something or express herself, and some women become victims by choice because they let the stereotype pass that women are inferior and that they must obey their husband" (girl, Group 1).

These statements already raise some concerns about women being themselves responsible about their victimization. Another issue raised regarding the shift in gender roles, was that it may make men uncomfortable, and that women may have a responsibility to be careful and not 'provoke'. One boy (Group 2) commented that guys 'don't like this', when a girl is more educated than men, to which girls responded that is should not be a problem since it's not something done on purpose, although they did qualify that women could 'provoke' if they flaunted this too much:

> "…that is, if she herself provokes and may tell him that 'I make more money', or she will put him in difficult position… well, there, yes, the boy may feel bad… but from the moment she doesn't give him anything to bother him, there's no reason…"

Exiting a relationship

In the final part of the focus group, the facilitator selected some key findings from the quantitative study conducted with adolescent students in the context of this project, to be discussed with participants. Some of the statements in the questionnaire scales which received relatively high agreement were presented, and participants were asked to provide their comments. Assertions made throughout the course of the focus groups that related to these statements were also examined.

One important such topic discussed had to do with the process and feasibility of 'exiting' a relationship. The statement that "If a person is being abused, they could just exit the relationship" received relatively high agreement in the questionnaires (32% 'strongly agreed' with statement, Mean score = 3.03, S.D. = 0.86, on a scale 1-5 where higher scores indicate higher agreement). When called upon to comment, participants agreed that 'leaving' is the thing to do 'when possible'. Some participants expressed the belief that most women who experience violence nowadays actually do leave, and that this is normative. One participant (boy, Group 2) expressed the belief that "when a guy hits a girl, he won't see her again…" Other positions were less absolute, but the idea that people are more likely and more able to exit relationships compared to the past was common. This was argued to be the case because of norms, and because of changes in gender roles, as "nowadays people have learned to leave… when they find an injustice, any injustice, the leave from it… they won't sit there" (girl, Group 2). It was argued that leaving is now possible because a woman "is freer, she is more independent now, can get a divorce, or leave a relationship" (girl, Group 2), and because they are more financially independent compared to the past and therefore "in case she feels that she doesn't feel good in a relationship or a marriage she will leave because she feels she can make it financially" (girl, Group 2).

However, as the discussion progressed, participants became increasingly concerned about the feasibility of 'leaving', and raised or qualified obstacles to leaving, and some challenged each other's assumptions. When asked to what extent they believed it was up to the person's choice to leave, the main hesitation they recognized had to do with 'marriage' and 'children', especially when it comes to women:

> "No… in older ages, if there are children, I believe that especially on the part of the woman that she will think of her children and then she will think of herself… this is what happens in most cases" (girl, Group 2).

It was also acknowledged that people may stay because they 'love' the other person, which makes leaving "not so easy", as "in order to be in that relationship, it means that that person you are with, you love them or like them, whatever" (girl, Group 2), because they (the perpetrator) may promise not to repeat the incident, or because they may even threaten the victim:

> "Even in relationships our age, there may be threats… let's say maybe there was an incident in the relationship, and the other hold onto it and tells you 'if you leave the relationship I will tell on it'… so the person is afraid to leave…" (girl, Group 2)

In line with the recurrent theme of 'strength' (vs. 'weakness' or vs. 'sensitivity') of character, another view was that it takes a strong and assertive person to get up and leave, to stay "okay man, it's over" (boy, Group 2). Others appealed to more complex psychological processes, rather than concrete pragmatic obstacles, as obstacles to exiting. As illustrated in the below expert from a discussion in Group 1, these could include 'illusions of love', low self-esteem and feeling unable to 'move on:

> "girl: …maybe they are afraid, feel threatened that they are not superhuman… feels the emotion of fear, it becomes dependence…
>
> […]
>
> … to feel that I cannot leave without this person, I think, I have the illusion that they love me even though they hit me. And the other person gradually loses their self-esteem, and so if you loose your confidence, you stay behind
>
> girl: or you may not leave a relationship because you may that feel that you won't have anywhere to stand on…
>
> girl: that you won't be complete
>
> girl: or that you won't be able to move on with your life, or find another protector…
>
> boy: maybe you are thinking where will I find another man or woman now, and who will love me?"

Finally, some normative views on the issue of 'leaving' were identified, which expressed evaluative judgments on when it is appropriate to leave or stay. These views were rather mixed. Some participants in Group 1, considered leaving to be the "right choice after a relationship of abuse", not possible only in "extreme cases, that is, blackmail" (girl), and that you should leave with the "first sign" (girl), and "as soon as logic tells you that you must leave this relationship, you

follow logic" (boy). Alternate ideas deemed trying to stay and rectify the situation as desirable, and evaluated the 'proper' choice as contingent on your ability to 'forgive', or the person's receptiveness to change, as well as the frequency of violence itself (regular vs. occasional), or the type of violence (verbal violence was perceived as being more tolerated). These ideas are illustrated in the following experts:

> Forgiveness and receptivity to change: "When he does this to you and you can't forgive him, you get up and leave… when you can forgive him, you stay there and you try to change him… if he doesn't change, let it go…" (boy, Group 2).
>
> Frequency of violence: "I believe that when it happens frequently, violence, let's say on a daily basis, that at some point you must leave… while if it happens on very few occasions, and you will see that something happened and this thing took place, you will discuss it, you will stay… whereas when it happens daily, you will not endure it, you will leave…" (girl, Group 2).
>
> Type of violence: "If someone undergoes violence with speech, let's say, they will compromise to some point… eh, on the other hand, this thing is difficult – to compromise…" (boy, Group 2).

Overall, although exiting a relationship was initially evaluated as the proper option, following a discussion that emerged among participants, it was also acknowledged that exiting a relationship was a complex and difficult process. Its feasibility was perceived to be contingent upon characteristics of the situation or the person, and ability to leave was perceived as indicating 'strength', while, it may be implied from the views expressed, staying in an abusive relationship could, alternately, indicate some form of weakness.

Sources of information

Participants reported their main sources of information regarding relationships, gender and violence to be through their own experience and their friends, through parents (for some but not an option for all) and other family members (e.g. an older brother or cousin), television, and the internet. The school was notably absent as an existing source.

Regarding ensuring the accuracy of the information they do receive, responses varied. Some participants in Group 1 considered the most accurate information that they receive to come from parents (mothers) who are more 'experienced'. The most common strategy they reported employing was that they would cross-check many opinions, and then form their own opinions: ask many friends (the whole group), many websites and information and see the ones that 'match', use their 'own judgment', and be more convinced if "they tell you it's according to studies" (girl, Group 2).

Participant's suggestions for preventing GBV

Recommendations given by participants about preventing GBV mostly focused on the individual or family level. Through the participant's responses, responsibility appears to rest with individuals, who are responsible to set 'limits', such as to "clarify from the start that 'if you raise your hand on me, we are done'…" (boy, Group 2) and families:

> "After all, it starts in the family… if parents give the necessary education - not education… they teach their children to act in a proper way and express themselves without violence, with discussion… it starts from the individual him/herself, from their family…" (girl, Group 2).

School was also acknowledged as an actor that could contribute to prevention of violence, through classes:

> "… let's say, I think there could be some course that would be mandatory […] and that would be the class where we talk about family, ways of behaving…" (girl, Group 2).

This was also discussed in the context of the proposed workshops planned for the ongoing project. Participants strongly expressed that they would like these to be conducted in an interactive style using discussions and audiovisual means (images and videos) rather than mere lectures. They also

stressed that they wanted this to take place in small groups, preferably not larger in size than the focus group (which consisted of 6 participants).

On a broader societal level, the media ('social programs'), the internet and campaigns were mentioned as ways to 'sensitise' people:

> "I believe that they should, let's say, for example, show videos with reports of people who have lived violence… I believe people will be more sensitised…" (girl, Group 2).

The responsibility of the state, competent authorities and stakeholders, nevertheless, was completely absent in the participants' suggestions. Even on a school level, suggestions focused on how the issue could be incorporated through courses and discussions within class; the need for policies, or structures at a school level for preventing or handling cases of violence was not touched upon. Thus, the responses did not indicate awareness of a need for a comprehensive, multi-level approach to prevent and tackle complex and permeating matters such as GBV, but appeared rather reflective of the dominant individualistic and family-centered culture in Cyprus. The role and responsibility of actors in the broader societal level, such as state agencies or NGOs hardly seemed to be present. These observations indicate the need to highlight the nature and complexity of such wider social processes that embed, reinforce, and promulgate stereotypes and attitudes that reinforce and maintain violent patterns of behavior.

Discussion

The present study investigated attitudes toward women and attitudes toward violence among intimate partners, as well as perceptions about the causal factors and extent of intimate partner violence among a sample of Cypriot adolescents. A questionnaire-based study was initially conducted to document these attitudes and perceptions, and to identify correlates and predictors of attitudes appearing ´tolerant´ toward gender-based violence among intimate partners. This was subsequently supplemented by a qualitative approach, which involved two focus groups with six adolescent participants each (12 participants in total), to further explore adolescents' perceptions, constructs, and narratives regarding violence among intimate partners as a form of Gender Based Violence (GBV). Gender theory and evidence from studies internationally suggest links between more conservative/patriarchal attitudes and more tolerant attitudes toward gender-based violence (Burton and Kitzinger, 1998; Murner et al., 2002; WHO, 2005; Santana and et al., 2006). Also, previous studies in Cyprus demonstrate wide prevalence of patriarchal stereotyping within and beyond the school environment as well as the prevalent forms of GBV affecting teenagers (Vassiliadou, 2004; React to Domestic Violence, MIGS 2011; Female Immigrants, Cyprus Gender Research Centre 2010; Gregoriou and Christou, MIGS 2011; Fourth report: Secondary education schools and education in values project, MIGS 2008, Christou 2013 forthcoming), but the extent to which wider misconceptions about gender roles and patriarchal views were responsible for these findings had not previously been studied. This study was intended to examine the links between perceptions on gender roles and GBV among adolescents in Cyprus. This can contribute to our knowledge about the factors that are perceived to underlie gender based violence affecting Cypriot youth, and guide the design of targeted prevention programs for adolescents.

Our main initial hypothesis, that more conservative attitudes toward women would predict more tolerant attitudes toward GBV by boys toward girls, was supported by results of the quantitative study. The questionnaire's results also provide information regarding what opinions adolescents express regarding different manifestations of violence, how they account for gender-based violence, and to what extent they express accurate knowledge or myths around gender and violence. Through the focus groups discussions that followed, the students' understanding of the forces accounting for violence, preconceptions and assumptions about gender, roles and responsibilities in relationships, and responsible social actors were, among other topics further elaborated. These findings are discussed in terms of their implications for needs identified for gender education and violence prevention programs in schools.

Initial descriptive results provided information regarding statements describing myths about violence or prevalent explanations about the causes of GBV (directed by men toward women). Regarding Attitudes toward Women (AWSA scale), examination of responses by individual statement indicated that participants, both girls and boys, gave higher ratings which according to the scale's authors indicate more "conservative" responses (Golombok et al., 1985) when asked about attitudes pertaining to sex (see Table 1.1). Participants' attitudes were more "egalitarian" for statements concerning education and sports, and moderately egalitarian for career and family roles.

Overall, participants expressed low agreement with statements condoning violent behaviors (ATV scale), as means for all statements ranged between scores of 1 and 2, indicating that, on average, most behaviors were considered "Never OK" to "Sometimes OK", rather than "Often OK" or "Always OK" (see Table 1.2). Nevertheless, as also shown on Table 1.2, a considerable percentage of participants indicated maximum agreement ("always OK") for certain types of

violent behaviors, especially for behaviors involving ´shouting´ and ´setting limits´. On average, behaviors such as ´shouting´, ´setting limits´, ´spying´ (controlling) were generally more condoned than hitting and insulting, which were condoned the least. When individual statements in the scale were examined in descending order of mean agreement for boys and girls in the sample, a pattern was identified for boys and girls to condone violent behaviors when these were directed from members of their own gender toward a member of the other gender (boys considered as most frequently "OK" certain violent behaviors directed by boys toward girls, and girls considered as most frequently "OK" certain violent behaviors directed by girls toward boys).

Most frequently endorsed explanations for GBV (directed by boys toward girls) involved "jealousy", but also related to notions of male dominance and roles, such as anger, superiority, and control (see Table 1.3). Explanations "condoning" violence by placing blame on women were endorsed the least frequently by the participants among all the statements included in this scale. Statements attributing violence to mental problems or past abuse of perpetrators, which were moderately endorsed, could also be construed as attempts to indirectly absolve the perpetrators of responsibility for their actions, or could even be considered indicative of gender based violence being perceived as a symptom of other underlying problems, rather than a serious issue in itself. When asked to provide additional explanations (generated spontaneously), both boys and girls readily cited infidelity (defined as on the part of the woman, or not defined) as one; boys also cited sexual motives, whereas girls cited explanations indicating motives based on male hegemony, such as men wanting to appear superior (Table 1.4), and diverse emotional reasons such as men feeling "useless" or "afraid"; interestingly, girls occasionally also mentioned explanations putting the blame on women (see Table 1.4), even though they were less likely than boys to agree with such statements or explanations on previous scales.

The final scale was intended to identify the most widely prevalent "myths" surrounding GBV. Participants expressed highest agreement with the statement "Most women are concerned about whether men like them", followed by statements pertaining to myths about the responsibility of victims (that they could just leave, and that girls sometime provoke sexual aggression), sexual violence (that women are more likely to be assaulted by a stranger), and jealousy. This presents a recurring pattern, also identified through previous studies with this population as well as young Cypriot adults (Andronikou, Erotokritou, Hatjiharalambous, 2012; Fourth report: Secondary education schools and education in values project, MIGS 2008; Date Rape Cases among Young Women, MIGS 2008), which identify these "myths" as widely held beliefs, and is also reflected through the findings of the focus groups.

MANOVAs comparing boys and girls and participants coming from urban or rural regions in our sample identified significant gender differences in attitudes and knowledge for all, and significant differences among participants with urban versus rural upbringing for most of the above scales (Table 1.7), with boys and participants with rural upbringing appearing as more conservative compared to girls and participants with urban upbringing, respectively. Boys and students in rural areas generally are more conservative, in that they express more conservative attitudes toward women, more likely to condone various forms of violence, and higher agreement with Myths regarding GBV. Comparatively, boys and girls condoned 'violent' behaviours coming from their own sex toward the other more than vice versa. Although there were statistically significant demographic differences for age and place of upbringing (urban versus rural) for attitudes toward violence, other demographic parameters studies, such as reported religiosity and parental education were generally not related to ATV. Attributions of violence to male roles (´male hegemony´), interestingly, correlated with higher maternal education.

As hypothesized, more conservative attitudes toward women (gender attitudes on AWSA scale) also predicted more tolerance of violence directed by boys toward girls, and to a lesser extent, predict violence directed by girls toward boys, which thus remains more elusive. Some myths about GBV do appear to be prevalent, and correlate with ATV, but were not found to predict condoning violence toward girls. Male sex and rural upbringing also predicted higher levels of condoning of forms violence directed by boys toward girls. Moreover, higher ´educational aspirations´ consistently predicted lower levels of condoning for all forms of violence directed by boys toward girls. Explanations of violence that focused on ´positive outcomes´ of violence, or that placed the blame on women predicted more tolerant attitudes of physical and sexual violence directed by boys toward girls. The latter also predicted condoning ´shouting´ (boys toward girls), as did 'mental health´ explanations of violence towards women. Higher tolerance of control behaviour by girls toward boys was also predicted by higher prevalence of myths, and higher endorsement of explanations for violence by men toward women in terms of ´male hegemony´.

During the focus groups, students expressed various positions, assumptions, and qualifications regarding roles in relationships and violence, some of which are particularly worth noting. For instance, participants discussed criteria of what is more or less "acceptable" when it comes to GBV behaviours in terms of frequency of occurrence, severity, recipient's perception, and impact. For example, participants would more easily describe non-physical forms of violence (shouting or controlling) as "acceptable" behaviours (not a "big-deal"), especially if they are not repeated and if the recipient does not "mind". The latter point corresponds with the tendency identified throughout the focus groups' discussions to focus on the victim's responsibility for the violence she experienced or continues to experience rather than on the responsibility of perpetrators or the wider society for exercising/not preventing such violence. The context of marriage (vs. a

relationship) was critically evaluated in terms of how it determines whether a behaviour is likely, or acceptable. It was expressed, and subsequently challenged by other participants, that some level of "control" is more acceptable within marriage than in a teenage dating relationship. Marriage was also perceived by some as a context where violence is more likely to occur, especially in people's early transition from their families of origin to the responsibility of families of their own and married life. Adult married life in its later years was not discussed, perhaps not perceived as relevant, or considered too distant for the teenagers in their discussion.

The in-depth discussions that occurred during the focus groups also further highlighted and shed light into some of the myths identified through the quantitative study. At some points, participants focused on the "familiar vs. unfamiliar" divide, stressing that people (women) are more vulnerable to violence when they are 'away from home' (e.g. in another country, away from the family home, away from their "protective" families and support networks). This seems related to the assumption that violence is more likely to be perpetrated by strangers, a statement that was among the myths that received relatively high agreement (by both boys and girls) in our quantitative study. However, when explicitly asked to comment on the belief that "women are more likely to be sexually assaulted by a stranger than someone they know", this was not endorsed. They responded that it was "equally likely", and that there are instances where "[she] is abused by her own father". This is not necessarily a contradiction, as being away from the 'familiar' related to being away from a supportive (familial) network/context on which one can rely for protection and support. As girls in Group 2 stated this need for support can relate to cases of violence happening within the victim's new family (marriage) or conducted by strangers. It is worth noting that responses regarding 'foreign' contexts as 'unsafe' were mostly expressed by girls. This idea might stem from inherent patriarchal notions on the need for 'protection' and 'support' rather than, or as well as, the

idea that ‘strangers are dangerous’. The importance of a protective network, or allies, especially through the family, was also a concern raised by participants in Group 1. One boy, for instance, asserted that members of the close family “her mother, her father, or an uncle, or I don’t know who” should take action and call to report violence when the victim herself is helpless or “think it’s their fault”. Participants in Group 1 also stressed that violence is more likely to happen in a private space, indicating the family home, rather than in public spaces were one can be visible.

Attributions (explanations) of violence by participants were discussed on several levels, including constitutional (biological or physiological characteristics of individuals or based on sex), as well as social. Gender roles were discussed in some length; despite demonstrating the recognition of the importance of gender equality in principle, close examination of the adolescent participants’ narratives also contained gender-biased assumptions, most evident through a subtle imbalance in how men and women’s responsibility for (in)equality in relationships was construed. Whereas the participants demonstrated profound understanding of the gender dimension, through the observation that gender and social norms can become internalized and automatic, the gendered context in which men and women’s responsibility for passively “internalizing” as opposed to consciously “choosing” to adopt stereotypes, appears problematic. Whereas men were said to perform violence “unwittingly” (boy, Group 2) as a result of internalized gender norms, women were described as becoming victims “by choice”. Implicitly, the adolescents appeared to assume that women, but not men, are (or are expected to be) aware of the gender stereotypes relating to them, and therefore are responsible for adopting them and not reacting to their victimization. These observations raise further questions about how gender stereotypes are conceived and understood among adolescents, as another issue that could be tackled in the context of gender education.

Power emerged as an important force considered to be at work behind transactions involving violence and gender on many levels: through perceived relations between power, dominance, and violence, and more specifically, money as power. Participants linked shifts in gender roles to shifts in power balance that could bring about many positive outcomes such as obtaining "rights" that were "just", but that could also lead women to (perhaps consciously) "abuse" power coming from those rights, or flaunt their achievements if they are successful (e.g. if they make more money), or lead men to try to (re) establish dominance through control. Therefore, despite participants' recognition of the necessity for the current upgraded provision and implementation of gender equality norms, the idea of the latter as 'progress' is conditioned upon women's' potential demonstration of 'abuse' of such rights/power.

Poverty and wealth were both mentioned in the discussion as factors implicated in violence. 'Poorer' countries, and people with financial difficulties were considered to be vulnerable groups for violence, because they experience conflicts, where people "who have lots of money" were also cited as more likely to exercise violence, because they have more power. The underlying assumption in both cases may be a link between power imbalance (in either direction) and violence, where money and power are closely related. Income discrepancies in the couple, poverty and financial strain were considered as an additional stress that contributes to relationship conflict and violence, whereas people "who have lots of money" were also cited as more likely to exercise violence, because they have more power.

Responsibility by the person (woman) herself to keep "caution", avoid "provocation" and secure her "protection" was a recurring focus. Participants considered that potential victims are responsible for taking caution regarding the places they frequent or visit, in order not to

"provoke". In line with previous studies (Fourth report: Secondary education schools and education in values project, MIGS 2008), "provocations" were occasionally used to explain or even justify "control" behaviours within intimate relationships from the boy as appropriate (e.g. when the girl is dressed inappropriately, or exhibits too much power), and transferred responsibility to the victims themselves.

Individuals were also responsible to keep themselves safe, especially by keeping close to those who can "protect" them. The family is considered to be of pivotal importance in this role, as it is assumed that being at a distance from one's family automatically places someone (especially when having young women in mind) at a more vulnerable position. The belief in the role of families (the family unit) within Cypriot society is fundamental and was expressed in many additional ways. Pathology in the family upbringing appeared as a central cause for violence, where individuals, perhaps passively, are believed to absorb messages and recreate erratic behaviour through models and learning. Thus, discussions that took place seemed to allocate the responsibility for generating violence, preventing and protecting from violence, and redressing its effects, primarily with the family, with the wider social responsibility of the state and other institutions being largely absent.

Limitations

Some limitations in the participant profile and focus group process should be taken into account. First, it should be noted that the two groups may not necessarily be comparable. The first group were selected from a private English-speaking urban school, who are more likely to come from, highly educated, affluent families. They tend to come from backgrounds with higher socioeconomic and educational status, and usually have different educational experiences compared to other students, as private schools are more likely to involve students in debates and

discussions and encourage students to engage in extracurricular activities. Group 2 came from a public high school in a suburb, where norms generally tend to be more conservative compared to privileged urban areas, and the educational system is more likely to encourage conformity over debate compared to some private schools. Nevertheless, since they were identified through a home economics elective course, they may still have been more exposed to discussions relevant to gender and relationships compared to other students. These discrepancies in the background of the two groups are likely to be reflected in their responses and expressed views. For instance, participants in the two groups may have different perceptions about what is socially desirable, or expected from a discussion: compared to Group 2, participants in Group 1 were more likely to engage in spontaneous debate, to challenge or disagree with views expressed by other students, and appeared more prepared to explore deeper causes and insights into the phenomena discussed. The discussion in focus Group 2 at times was more likely to resemble a question and answer session, and participants appeared more willing to agree than to disagree with classmates.

Some parameters in the process may also have been responsible for differences noted in the dynamics and responses of the two groups. There was a likely confound in the comfort level in each case, as the two discussions took place in different settings. The first focus group was conducted in an extracurricular setting (a nearby university) after school hours, in the presence of two moderators and a research assistant. The second focus group discussion was conducted in a school setting, during school hours, moderated by the main researcher, with the teacher present to facilitate with time, as no research assistant was available at the time. Although the teacher was instructed to remain neutral and avoid giving feedback to the students, her presence is still likely to contribute to a different dynamic in this group compared to Group 1.

Implications for gender equality education

Findings from the two focus groups shed light into adolescent's perceptions about gender and violence in relationships, as well as gaps and prejudices in their knowledge and views. Such findings can be used to inform gender education programs for adolescents, but also to provide some suggestions about the educational system more broadly.

One finding worthy of further discussion concerned the different opinions that were expressed regarding the prevalence of violence compared to the past: Whereas, in Group 1, the dominant position was that gender based violence was more prevalent in the past than now, participants in Group 2 were in agreement that violence has increased compared to the past. These two somewhat contrary positions may reflect different perceptions regarding what narratives are deemed as socially desirable or condoned by the adolescents: romanticising the past, versus acknowledging gains made in the recent years toward the direction of greater gender equality, and modern advances in values. In many cases, adolescents strove to balance the two positions by acknowledging the changing norms toward increased equality as gains or 'solutions' (e.g. people now talk more openly about the issue, women now have options to exit), while still romanticizing the past as a time when violence was rare because norms were more conservative. Such opinions as expressed in the focus groups (especially in focus Group 2), suggest that messages received by adolescents regarding gender equality are often mixed. Consequently, gender education needs not only to sensitize students about current inequalities and gaps, but also encourage them to acknowledge the gains and progress achieved, to help address such mixed messages. This process can help dissolve myths that are still prevalent, and exonerate progress in modern 'liberal' values. Students can be encouraged, for example, to develop critical perspectives about whether 'conservative' values can be 'protective' or 'safe' (versus merely suppressing instances of violence

as private and taboo), tackle myths of an 'ideal' – sometimes even utopian - past, and celebrate modern advances in values, as gender equality increasingly becomes a dominant social value in the modern world.

Perceived relations between power, dominance, and violence, including money as power specifically are worth addressing. Indeed, gender studies often include profound discussions centered around notions of power, hegemonies, and violence; gender education for adolescents can build on these observations to help students develop critical perspectives about the links between power and violence, while at the same time addressing myths about violence as an 'exclusive' of 'special' problem of specific groups, and acknowledge that gender-based violence, and gender-based hegemonies that act as deep causes, are a wider social phenomenon transcending all socioeconomic strata.

When examining patterns across all topics of the discussions, a consistent trend that appears throughout is a predominant emphasis on personal responsibility (the main contingency being that of inner 'strength') and, to some extent, responsibility of persons close to the victim, especially family members, versus an overall absence of emphasis on wider social responsibility (i.e. of the community, or of the state) for preventing and addressing instances of violence. This is noted in how participants analyze profiles of people where violence occurs, explanations given of violence, but also in their suggestions for preventing violence. Whereas responsibility of perpetrators was often somewhat mitigated, because they were perceived to lack self-control, or because it was 'natural' for them to accept role models and stereotypes that perpetuated male dominance and violence, victims were often held accountable for failing to set limits, respond, or exit, and for 'choosing' to accept stereotypes. Wider social forces, such as social learning and gender stereotypes were acknowledged as factors contributing to gender-based violence, and the school

was mentioned as an actor that can contribute to prevention through education. However, when it comes to *dealing* with violence, responsibility did not appear to extend beyond the persons involved and the family; society-at-large, the state, or other authorities or third-parties, were not explicitly mentioned as having a role in addressing violence, perhaps because violence in relationships is still viewed, to a large extent, as a private matter. Thus, the responsibility of various actors in society, for prevention, for changing prevalent norms and preconceptions, but also for handling instances of violence, gender education could benefit by incorporating more explicit discussions about the roles and responsibilities of actors at all levels, including the role of the state, authorities, and NGOs.

Finally, some observations provide broader suggestions for the school system, beyond topics of gender equality and GBV. At the public school setting especially, few instances were noted where students in the group expressed disagreement with other participants, or challenged their own assumption. A more widely permeating need appears for teaching methodologies that encourage students to exercise critical thinking by constantly challenging assumptions, including their own assumptions, and views expressed by other adolescents or adults . This is mentioned as a goal of the recent educational reform in Cypriot schools, including school curricula covering education about gender and the self. Consequently, the design and evaluation of gender education programs in schools, through the formal curriculum, as well as through complementary courses as provided through this project, can utilize indicators of change in processes of thinking, as well as indicators of shifts in knowledge and attitudes.

Further research

This study produces valuable initial insights into the knowledge, attitudes, and understanding of gender equality and gender-based violence among Cypriot adolescents. However, some points of caution regarding interpretation of our results are in place. The sample of adolescents who participated in our study was not nationally representative, as recruitment was based on convenience sampling methods. Students were recruited from public and private schools, mostly located in major urban centers (Nicosia and Limassol), and on some occasions were recruited from home economics classes, resulting in an uneven gender ratio (more girls), and urban: rural ratio (most participants were from urban areas). It is likely that this distribution skews responses on a more egalitarian direction, as the present study has concluded that boys and youth in rural areas tend to have more conservative attitudes toward women. Our findings may thus be more reflective of the opinions of students in the major urban centers of Cyprus. Further research is extending on a nationally representative level would be valuable for documenting attitudes and values about gender and gender-based violence among young adolescents. Moreover, since the same questionnaire was also used in five different European countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, and Lithuania as well as Cyprus), comparative analysis between these countries where study would also be of interest as a future step.

On a methodological level, this study used a combination of adapted tools used in the international literature, and questionnaires that were developed by the researchers specifically for the purposes of this study. These questionnaires appear promising in their psychometric properties, and could be further refined for use in future studies with this population.

Our study was intended to provide information that can be used to inform the design of psychoeducational and primary prevention school-based programs intended to provide accurate

information and sensitise adolescents on the issue. Since this was an initial study aiming to identify the main correlates and predictors of attitudes toward gender based violence, we focused mostly on demographic and attitudinal factors as predictors of attitudes toward GBV. These findings could be put to use to guide tailored prevention/psychoeducational programs for adolescents, and can help formulate suggestions on how violence prevention and education can be framed through a perspective of gender equality, and how gender-based education and sensitization can contribute in violence prevention strategies.

The relevant literature also identifies other personal characteristics (e.g. personality, self-esteem, authoritarianism) as related to GBV, which may be of interest for the purposes of screening high risk groups, or providing intervention programs; these were not tapped in this study. In terms of outcome variables, we tapped attitudes, rather than behaviours or behavioural intentions. Attitudes are considered an important determinant of behaviour, but need to be examined alongside other personal and situation variables in the context of explanatory and predictive models for behaviour, that can form the basis of evidence-informed intervention programs. Thus, additional research is needed to further inform regarding the precise mechanisms linking gendered attitudes and attitudes toward GBV, as well as behaviours in this population. Supplementary qualitative findings, through focus groups or in-depth interviews, would be useful in order to examine various opinions and explanations for violence among adolescence in-depth, and provide future research directions regarding the areas where intervention programs should focus.

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APPENDIX

Exploratory Factor Analysis for Scales used in Quantitative Study

Initially, internal reliability indices were obtained for each scale, and item-total statistics were examined for each statement to identify any discrepant statements. Next, each scale was subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis, to derive meaningful and reliable factors for data reduction purposes. For the AWSA scale, since the original authors (Golombok et al., 1985) do not propose any subscales or factors, but use the scale to yield a total score, no factor analysis was conducted. Reliability was adequate for the 12 original items in the scale (Cronbach alpha = .81), and comparable for the scale including the four additional items added by the researchers (Cronbach alpha = .83). For the Attitudes toward Violence (ATV) scale, statements referring to violence by boys toward girls, and statements referring to violence by girls toward boys, were examined separately, since we were interested to examine attitudes toward violence from a gender perspective. The two statements regarding threats did not specify behaviors directed from one gender toward the other (ATV7, "It is ok to threaten to leave a partner in order to achieve something you want", and ATV22 "Threatening to hit a partner is ok as long as you don't actually hit him/her"), and were thus not included in either of the factor analyses. Results of all factor analyses are reported next.

For all four factor analyses, the principal component analysis method was used in the extractions, using, initially, a criterion of eigenvalues >1. Subsequently, the analyses were repeated to extract a specified number of factors determined according to the initial factor analyses results, inspection of scree plots and variance explained by derived factors, and the conceptual organization of each section. For all analyses, the Varimax rotation method, with maximum iterations for convergence set at 250, was employed. For items loading on more than one factor, both loading magnitude and

conceptual considerations were taken into account. Once the items within a questionnaire section were reduced to an acceptable number of theoretically coherent factors, reliability analyses were run to produce Cronbach alphas. Based on the reliability analyses, it was decided whether certain factors or items should be excluded. The minimum acceptable value for Cronbach alphas was set at .60, but conceptual criteria were also taken into consideration.

For all analyses, after excluding items on the basis of loadings, reliability, or on conceptual grounds, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was above 0.80 for all questionnaire scales (except for Myths and Knowledge about GBV, KMO = .70). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at the <.01 level. Derived factors for each scale and Cronbach alphas for all the scales and the factors derived through factor analyses are presented in Table 1.6.

Examination of the factor structure of our scales was an intermediate step before examining the demographic and knowledge/attitude factors that predict more tolerance of GBV. This step was necessary to reduce data by grouping items into broader dimensions, or 'factors', thus enabling us to study relations among these broader factors, rather than between individual items. The process is also useful for understanding how constructs of gender based violence, as perceived by the adolescents, are structured into 'factors'. Items that are grouped on the same factors are items that tend to share common variance, and are thus considered to indirectly measure a latent construct. Exploratory factor analyses conducted (described above) yielded reliable factors for two scales: Attitudes Toward Violence (separately for forms of violence perpetrated by boys towards girls and for forms of violence perpetrated by girls toward boys), and Explanations for Violence; these findings are discussed in terms of their relevance to scale factor structure and subsequent results.

In the exploratory factor analyses for both violence directed by boys toward girls, as well as vice versa, separate factors emerged for behaviors indicating ´control´ (e.g. setting limits on where the

other partner goes or how he/she dresses, and spying), and ´shouting´. Since the scale contained more items describing other types of violence (physical and sexual) directed by boys toward girls, but not vice versa, another factor emerged for violence directed by boys toward girls, which contained statements describing physical and sexual violent behaviors. These findings inform as to which types of violent behaviors are perceived as 'separate' factors (see Results section on Exploratory Factor Analysis) by the adolescent participants. For violence by boys toward girls, behaviors like control and shouting were perceived as distinct from other violent behaviors. Physical and sexual violence were not perceived as separate (as items describing both loaded on the same factor). For violence directed by girls toward boys, the scale contained two items describing physical violence (both items referred to hitting) which did not appear distinct form items describing ´control´ behaviors (both items describing hitting loaded on the factor containing other ´control´ behaviors). It is not clear however, whether this finding reflects actual differences in perception of violence based on the perpetrator's gender, or whether it is merely a result of psychometric differences in the boy/girl items (the scale contained more items describing physical/sexual violence by boys toward girls than vice versa).

For the Explanations scale, factor analysis yielded four factors (see Table 1.6), of which one contained "condoning" of violence (items describing violence as "necessary" or otherwise useful), and one referred to explanations which placed the blame on women (e.g., "women are not patient enough with them"). These were also the explanations endorsed the least frequently by the participants among all the statements included in this scale. The remaining two factors contained items that were mixed in terms of evaluation of "violent behavior" by men toward women. The first factor, ´male hegemony´, contained items that related to gender roles on the one hand, such as the "wish to control women", as well as items explaining men's violent behavior in terms of

constitutional idiosyncrasies[4] of men, which are often used in order to justify violent behaviors or even absolve men of responsibility for the exercise of violence. Examples of the latter were statements such as that "they cannot control their sexual urges" and that "they are naturally aggressive". This mixed evaluation might be an indication that adolescents make no clear distinction between notions about sex differences as inevitable or biological, and gender roles as socially constructed. The final factor contained explanations of violence that had to do with mental health, such as use of alcohol or drugs, history of child abuse, and mental problems.

Regressions

The factors that were calculated following the factor analysis procedure were then entered into hierarchical linear regressions (using the forced entry method) to identify whether they could predict attitudes toward the various types of violence tapped by the Attitudes toward Violence Scale. Separate regressions were run to identify potential predictors of violence directed from boys towards girls (three factors), and vice versa (two factors). For predicting attitudes toward violence directed from boys towards girls (´Physical & Sexual´, ´Control´, and ´Shouting´), a hierarchical linear regression was conducted for each of the types of violence on the ATV scale, with personal/demographic factors on Block 1 (sex and place of residence, dummy coded, educational aspirations, maternal and paternal education), and attitudinal factors (AWSA, Knowledge/Myths, and the four "explanation" factors), entered on Block 2. In each case, regression analyses were repeated after excluding variables identified as statistically redundant, to derive the final predictive model for attitudes toward each type of violence. Regression results are presented on Tables 1.10 – 1.13. For attitudes toward ´shouting´ behavior by girls toward boys, the only significant predictor

[4] Here the term 'constitutional idiosyncrasies' refers to the essential make-up of individuals, consisting mostly of biological or internal factors as opposed to socially contrasted ones as explanations for violent behaviors.

identified was female sex (predicted more 'tolerant' attitudes toward girls ´shouting´ at boys), b = .18, $t_{(450)} = 3.94$, $p < .001$, and explained a small but significant proportion of the variance in attitudes toward girls ´shouting´ at boys, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 450) = 15.53$, $p < .001$.

As hypothesized, more conservative attitudes toward women (gender attitudes on AWSA scale) also predicted more acceptance of violence directed by boys toward girls, accounting for a substantial part of the variance for attitudes toward violence directed by boys toward girls, and to a lesser extent, predict violence directed by girls toward boys. Therefore, although a significant percentage of the variance for ATV (boys toward girls) is explained by attitudes toward women, but ATV (girls toward boys) remain more elusive. Some myths about GBV do appear to be prevalent, and correlate with ATV, but were not identified as a predictor of condoning violence toward girls. Male sex and rural upbringing were also identified as predictors of higher levels of condoning of forms violence directed by boys toward girls. Moreover, higher ´educational aspirations´ emerged as a consistent predictor of lower levels of condoning for all forms of violence directed by boys toward girls. Explanations of violence that focused on ´positive outcomes´ of violence, or that placed the blame of women predicted more tolerant attitudes of physical and sexual violence directed by boys toward girls. The latter was also identified as a predictor of condoning ´shouting´ (boys toward girls), as were 'mental health´ explanations of violence towards women. Higher tolerance of control behaviour by girls toward boys was also predicted by higher prevalence of myths, and higher endorsement of explanations for violence by men toward women in terms of ´male hegemony´.

Table 1.10. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting attitudes toward physical & sexual violence (boys toward girls, N = 442)

					Confidence Intervals	
	Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Step 1						
	Constant	2.24	.13			
	Sex	-.34	.05	-.31***	-.43	-.25
	Urban/Rural	.13	.05	.11*	.03	.22
	Educational Aspirations	-.20	.04	-.25***	-.27	-.13
Step2						
	Constant	.13	.18			
	Sex	-.06	.04	-.06	-.14	.02
	Urban/Rural	.06	.04	.05	-.02	.14
	Educational Aspirations	-.07	.03	-.09*	-.13	-.01
	AWSA	.41	.05	.37***	.32	.51
	´Positive Outcomes´	.25	.03	.30***	.19	.32
	´Women's fault´	.10	.03	.12**	.04	.17

Note: R^2= .22, adjusted R^2 = .21, for Step1; ΔR^2 = .28 for Step2 (*ps* < .001); AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; * p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001

Table 1.11: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting attitudes toward ´control´ behaviors (boys toward girls, N = 444)

					Confidence Intervals	
	Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Step 1						
	Constant	2.50	.16			
	Sex	-.34	.06	-.26***	-.45	-.22
	Urban/Rural	.24	.06	.17***	.12	.37
	Educational Aspirations	-.15	.04	-.16**	-.24	-.06
Step2						
	Constant	.99	.25			
	Sex	-.12	.06	-.10*	-.24	-.004
	Urban/Rural	.21	.06	.15	.09	.33
	Educational Aspirations	-.08	.04	-.08	-.16	.01
	AWSA	.51	.07	.38***	.39	.65

Note: R^2= .15, adjusted R^2 = .14, for Step1; ΔR^2 = .10 for Step2 (*ps* < .001); AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; * p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001

Table 1.12: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting attitudes toward ´shouting´ behavior (boys toward girls, N = 443)

					Confidence Intervals	
	Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Step 1						
	Constant	2.57	.20			
	Educational Aspirations	-.16	.05	-.14**	-.27	-.05
Step2						
	Constant	1.22	.33			
	Educational Aspirations	-.12	.06	-.10*	-.23	-.01
	AWSA	.20	.08	.12*	.04	.36
	´Women's fault´	.14	.07	.11*	.01	.27
	´Mental health´	.19	.06	.15**	.07	.31

Note: R^2= .02, adjusted R^2 = .02 (p < .01), for Step1; ΔR^2 = .06 for Step2 (p < .001); AWSA = Attitudes toward Women Scale for Adolescents; * p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001

Table 1.13: Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for variables predicting attitudes toward ´control´ behavior (girls toward boys, N = 443)

					Confidence Intervals	
	Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*Lower*	*Upper*
Step 1						
	Constant	1.54	.04			
	Sex	.14	.05	.14**	-.05	.23
	Urban/Rural	.16	.05	.15**	.06	.26
Step2						
	Constant	.48	.20			
	Sex	.21	.05	.22***	.11	.31
	Urban/Rural	.14	.05	.13**	.04	.23
	AWSA	.15	.06	.15**	.04	.27
	Knowledge/Myths	.17	.08	.11*	.01	.32
	‘Male hegemony’	.12	.04	.14**	.04	.20

Note: R^2= .04, adjusted R^2 = .04, for Step1; ΔR^2 = .07 for Step2 (*ps* < .001);* p<.05, **p<.01, p<.001

Table 2.4: Explanations for violence: Levels and Themes.

Explanation (Theme)	**Verbatim**
Level: Social Learning	
Gender roles & stereotypes	"Maybe it's also stereotypes… that is, on what [name of student] said that the boy, the man, maybe… based on the stereotypes that exist, the man is in charge, the woman is inferior, so I am allowed to exercise violence and control…" (girl, Group 2)
Family & role models	"… most criminals start from their family, when they were in childhood, so for all there is a start, and maybe the start is the family in all forms of violence that will happen, to develop the person as the years go by…" (boy, Group 1).
Level: Relationship factors	
Jealousy	"That is when you bring him to a peak with your jealousy and with … [laughter] with how you behave, with how convincing you are… eh, well he will slap you! [laughter]» (girl, Group 1) "The boy may be jealous of the woman's behaviour and starts psychological warfare on her…" (boy, Group 1) "…maybe, let's say, a friend could tell you, I don't know, there's jealousy in the relationship, and you see your boyfriend flirting with others and your girlfriend comes and she tells you watch out for your boyfriend, eh, that's where curiosity starts and how the girl exercises violence. While if you think about it on your own, you wouldn't sit and think" (girl, Group 1)
Lack of trust	"…everything is trust, when you choose someone as a partners, it's very excruciating to be afraid that they do this and that to provoke, you need to show some trust" (girl, Group 1).
unrealistic expectations	"It could be attributed to the excessive… excessive expectations that you expect from someone to have too much, that the other person cannot give you" (girl, Group 1)
inadequate communication	"It could be considered lack of communication; maybe someone will do something in a relationship that annoys you. Gradually, if you don't how to express it, how to discuss, to have a discussion, it stays inside you. And this anger forms, these feelings that you can't express, and at the end you may end in violence as a last resort, so that you can burst" (girl, Group 1).
gender differences & developmental parameters (adolescence)	"I agree with all these, in adolescence you don't know what goes on with your period. You are trying to discover what you want, what you are, who want to be with, you are confused, so you are often in a relationship, it's not relationship you want, but you think it's so. This is dependence, and how he loves someone, he loves, it's a matter of response". (girl, Group 1) "But, for example, a 20 year old man and the woman 15, there may be more pressure… because he's older, he will want more things, he will want to go out more… he won't understand so much that she's a 15 year old…" (girl, Group 2) "The fact that girls mature quicker, and the boys… the boy's development delays more, the boy comes to mature in his 20s, after the army, the girls mature in their 15-16, this can create… they are together… The boy may be jealous of the woman's behaviour and starts psychological warfare on her…" (boy, Group 1).

infidelity	"girl: Unless he gives a good cause, I mean, I don't know, if you cheat on her let's say, there's some… Boy: ...mitigation [laughter]" (Group 1)
'not matching'	"To have a relationship you need to match… if you don't match, it's reasonable that violence will come to relationships… because there will be many conflicts" (boy, Group 2)
Level: Situation factors	
financial	"… you can't deal financially, especially due to the financial status, if the family is not going well it builds, it's the basis for other relationships to go well…" (boy, Group 1)
stress	"maybe someone has pressure at this job and comes home and with any petty thing he bursts … " (boy, Group 2)
Victim lacks protection	"...if where you go you don't have someone who's yours, people will see that you have no one to support you, so they won't think twice about exercising violence to you… they won't feel that there is someone to support you" (girl, Group 2)
Level: Person factors	
Insecurity – low self-esteem	"Maybe, as we said jealousy, insecurity that's coming from one of the persons, maybe they're insecure if they see fake, that their partner is cheating on them, or their imagination goes wild" (girl, Group 1) "I think insecurity in their own or friendly environment could lead to… create a complex and you could express this in the wrong way…" (girl, Group 1)
selfishness	"Because of personal interests of each person… sometimes there may be a self-centredness inside us, which does not let us, like, free up ourselves inside and show our real self" (boy, Group 2)
Anger – Lack of self-control	"Eh, because if you don't hold in your anger, you can't control yourself and it eludes you, man, you don't do it on purpose it just comes out" (girl, Group 1) "You can't control yourself, so you don't know how to react. Maybe it's something trivial and it will come to you to beat her or him up" (boy, Group 1). "Yes… because the person may lose control and may curse, may hit, and then regret and promise that 'I will control it', but if he doesn't look into it, I mean if he doesn't look into it himself- to sit and think, he won't improve…" … (girl, Group 2) "If there's no communication in a relationship, it's these feelings that I said before, it's anger, they hold it inside them and then they feel that it's the only way to burst, to take out their anger from inside" (girl, Group 1)
Victim does not respond	"…if a person is low profile, does not easily express themselves… they will hold something inside… the other person, when they exercise violence, seeing that the other does not react or does not do anything to stop it, will continue.." (girl, Group 2)
Drug/substance use	"I believe that a big reason is drugs and alcohol, I see especially in a relationship where they exceed, a love relationship with a woman. Let's say a boy takes drugs or alcohol, they can even beat up their mother" (boy, Group 1). "when you take drugs or alcohol and take a lot, your don't know what you are doing" (boy, Group 1) "persons who resort to addictive substances… I believe they lose control and that's

	how they exercise violence" (girl, Group 2).
Power/Control	"I agree that there's this illusion, I see when you exercise violence or prohibit the other person – you won't go there, you won't wear these clothes, you have this illusion that you can control them and stay in the relationship. This isn't true because if the other person wants to do something else, let's say, if they don't feel what you feel you can't stop them by setting limits that you won't go there, or even with physical violence" (girl , Group 1) "… it depends on when each person is raised, well afterwards if you don't have self-confidence, then he will see illusions that something bad happens, so I will hit her, immediately I get the control in the relationship, I am strong. I have the power, maybe this is where it comes from" (girl, Group 1) "…because maybe one of the two considers that in the relationship they have control, they predominate…" (girl, Group 2) "And that way, the person exercising violence, especially in our age, may feel stronger afterwards… let's say when he does something to a girl and then goes to his friends and says 'so and so happened' they will tell him 'you are cool' and he will feel stronger…" (girl, Group 2)