

THE VIOLENCE BETWEEN INTIMATE PARTNERS IN THE CITY OF PRAIA: REPORT OF THE VICTIMS OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF SANTO ANTÓNIO AND TERRA BRANCA

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ABSTRACT

For a long time, intimate partner violence was considered strictly of private nature, belonging to a household environment. However, this theme is gradually gaining notoriety in society and becoming more and more a matter of public and current importance. Marital violence translates the violence strictly based on the gender perspective, supported by the patriarchal and dichotomous differences that exists between men and women. Within this theme, the present paper aims to address the perception of victims of gender-based violence committed by their intimate partners in the neighborhoods of Achada de Santo António and Terra Branca, in the city of Praia, Cabo Verde. The research used qualitative and descriptive study and semi-structured interviews as an instrument for data collection from August 2015 to December 2016. Two women and two men were interviewed. For the analysis of the data, we opted for the Content Analysis technique, with the help of Nvivo 10 software. Among the main results, it was possible to verify that both women and men experienced violence at some point of the affective coexistence, on a physical, psychological and patrimonial level, showing their tendency to ignore minor daily conflicts and resorting to police records in cases of extreme violence and drastic measures. The discussion about marital violence becomes fundamental to understand the dynamics that gives visibility to the issue, as well as to support and help the public institutions and the society as a whole to come up with new policies for prevention, coping and combat of this type of violence.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a study of the statistical data on the phenomenon of intimate partner violence, concerning the cases occurred in the neighborhoods of Achada de Santo António and Terra Branca, in the city of Praia, Cape Verde. The analysis of the data refers to the intersection of speeches of both men and women victims of domestic violence who were attended at the Praia Regional Command (CRP), more precisely in the Department of Gender-Based Violence (GBV),

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from February to June 2016. The relationship between human beings within a given society is the result of a social construction that, in a way, is conditioned to the gender. According to the cultural, family and community relations, the idea of what it is to be a man or a woman changes with the passage of time. Even with evident gender inequality, social relations are conditioned by a set of beliefs on characteristics or roles considered appropriate for each sex. The phenomenon of violence is considered to be a complex and dynamic one, resulting from the interaction of the individuals in society and the conflicting situations. For others, like Michaud (1989), *conflict* is a form of interaction between individuals that may occur in the physical, moral, patrimonial or cultural sphere of a person. With regard to the family context, four categories of violence are exposed – physical, psychological, by negligence

and sexual violence – and it is considered a violation of dignity, ethics and respect for human rights of citizens (DAY *et al.*, 2003). Considering the different denominations of violence, mainly those resulting from affective relationships, such as domestic violence, gender-based violence and intimate partner violence, the latter denomination was better adapted to the present study, since it is a form of violence present in the intimate relations of affection, that is, in marital relationships in which the partners can perform the roles of both aggressor and offended, allowing a reflection of reciprocity and raising the issue of mutuality, interaction and exchange between individuals (SIMMEL, 1983). For a long time this type of violence was considered strictly of private nature, belonging to a household environment. However, this theme is gradually gaining notoriety in society and becoming more and more a matter of public and current importance. Due to various acts and movements that reflect the struggles against impunity in cases of violence against women and men in 2011, the Gender-Based Violence Law (*Lei da Violência Baseada no Gênero*) – Law No. 84/VII (CAPE VERDE, 2011) – came into force. It defines in section 3 the *gender-based violence* as "all acts of physical and psychological violence, whether resulting in offenses to physical integrity, sexual freedom, coercion, threat, deprivation of liberty or harassment, based on the construction of an unequal relation of power, namely by the economic, social, cultural or any other ascendant of the aggressor towards the offended."

Silva and Fortes (2011) consider that gender-based violence is the result of unbalanced power relations, manifested in both private and public spaces. According to them, gender violence does not arise only as violence committed by men against women as individual people, since it exists in the society as a whole and has multiple facets. The results of studies on this issue show that most cases of intimate partner violence occur with women, according to Cook (1997), who analyzed more than 6,000 cases of marital violence in Detroit, and found that the record of men beaten by their female companions covers 6% of the total number of reports, a result consistent with data collected in Canada and other US cities, accounting for up to 10% of the records. Thus, the present study aims at analyzing the possible causes that are in the origin of the violence between intimate partners, as well as its consequences, from the cases occurred in the neighborhoods of Achada Santo António and Terra Branca. The aim of this study was to understand the occurrence of this problem from the reports of the victims who made a formal complaint at the Praia Regional Command (CRP), and to identify the focus of the tension that leads to the passage of verbal to physical violence between the partners, in order to find the best strategy and to propose some suggestions and solutions to minimize or neutralize this phenomenon in the city of Praia, Cape Verde.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study consists of a qualitative research of exploratory and descriptive nature, aiming at a closer view, characterization and description of the problems related to intimate partner violence. According to Minayo (2007), the qualitative method responds to particular questions and addresses the reality of meanings, beliefs, values and attitudes, corresponding to a deeper level of human relations that can not be quantified. In addition, for Gil (2011), exploratory research has the premise of explaining, developing and exploring new ideas, and descriptive research aims to describe the

characteristics of a given phenomenon. Two men and two women victims of violence committed by their intimate partners were interviewed for this study. In order to preserve the identity of the participants, fictitious names were attributed to each one of them. The research had as investigation field the cases occurred in the neighborhoods of Achada de Santo António and Terra Branca Praia, Cape Verde.

Data collection was performed between February and June 2016, in a total of two visits to the Praia Regional Command (CRP). The choice of participants was based on the following criteria: (a) victim and aggressor had to be intimate partners; (b) the charges had to be related to domestic violence; (c) the cases should have occurred in the neighborhoods of Achada Santo António and Terra Branca; (d) the participants had to be lucid and capable of responding to the instruments of data production; (e) the participants had to consent to participate in the research. The interviews were recorded by phone recording (voice only) and transcribed in full. Before starting the interviews, the participants were informed about the research objectives, and they were provided a Term of Free and Informed Consent which they read and signed. Since the present research involves human beings, it requires special attention on ethical issues. Thus, it is relevant to clarify that: 1) The subjects of the research were not identified by their real names, as their information was kept in full secrecy, considering that their reports only make sense as part of the overall set of information; 2) All data collected were previously authorized by the competent authorities; and 3) The researchers assume all responsibility for the information disclosed by the research.

Analysis Procedure

On the application of the Content Analysis (CA) in the corpus of the research, in relation to the qualitative data, two techniques were used, namely: (1) frequency of words; (2) semantic groupings by categorial index. It should be noted that, although it is a qualitative analysis technique, CA also allows quantitative outputs (BARDIN, 2010). The NVIVO 10 software was used for the development of all analyzes. Initially we sought to identify the terms (words) that were most frequent in 4 cases: Arminda, Victória, Vicente and José. In each case, conflict and/or family violence events were described, being the subjects two women and two men. As a result of the exploratory frequency analysis, the *Word Cloud* output was generated (Figure 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Word Cloud was constituted from the cut-off of the 50 most frequent terms in the 4 cases investigated in this study. We considered only words with characters = or > 6. Such criterion was necessary to exclude connective terms such as *how, where, is, until*, etc. We emphasize that, in this technique, the larger the word size in the cloud is, the greater its importance in the database (Figure 1). From the Word Cloud disposition, we sought to identify the frequencies and percentages of the most incident terms (Table 1). It is important to explain that, since the corpus of the research in relation to the qualitative data was composed of only 4 excerpts of speech, the frequency of the terms was relatively low.

Verbal aggression is the one that most affects the victims in this study and it is understood as any conduct that may cause emotional damage, decrease of self-esteem, disturbance in their development as a person, control of their actions, behaviors and decisions, through acts of threat, embarrassment, humiliation, manipulation, constant vigilance, persecution, insult, blackmail, and limitation of the right to come and go or any other means that may cause psychological damage or is prejudicial to self-determination (COELHO et al., 2014). In addition, Marinheiro et al. (2006) state that gender violence is influenced by social factors, such as the use of alcohol. As it can be noticed in the following speech, the presence of verbal aggression and alcoholism are intertwined:

He calls me "bitch, cheeky", and continues to drink, to come home too late, and the smell of liquor won't let me sleep. (Victória)

In one of the reports of verbal aggression, it can be observed the abusive acts that occur in the relationship, with a series of threats whose purpose is to intimidate and force the victim to remain in the abusive relationship:

When he arrives at the house, the conflict begins, without reason. For two years this situation has become unbearable because he becomes physically aggressive in the presence of the children. He threatens me, saying that if I press charges, he will kill me. (Arminda).

In the specific case of marital violence, a common word in the testimonies is *conflict* with $f = 2$. It is important to emphasize that violence usually comes with daily conflicts, less aggressive expressions and less serious consequences, which over time start being perceived as normal, becoming rooted and a part of the couple's routine:

From the time she found a job, she started telling me that the house belonged to her and her children, always looking for conflict. (...) About 11 p.m., I went back to the house and tried to open the door with my key, but I couldn't go in because it was locked from the inside with a big iron. So I climbed the terrace and entered through the stairwell. Since I don't want trouble, I have come to press charges against her to make it stop. (Vicente)

Physical aggression is considered all type of violence that causes some physical damage to the victim, such as kicking, punching, beating, bruising, mutilation, burns, and use of weapon or firearm (ACOSTA et al., 2018). This type of violence is a problem that evolves from the constant conflicts and is aggravated by physical violence, which starts with offenses to the physical integrity of the victim, such as blackmail, humiliation, emotional damage, unequal power relations, deprivation of liberty and loss of self-esteem, passing through contempt, pushing, and pulling of the hair. Later, it is projected towards increasingly aggressive attitudes, such as punching, kicking, etc., which can lead to the incapacitation of the woman, and maybe even cause her death (CAPE VERDE, 2011). The following speech by one of the victims shows an example of such acts:

When I advised him not to drink, he would say to me: "I won't take orders from no woman". He calls me a whore and keeps drinking (...). [Once] he came home and didn't speak to me; he took me by the hair, punched me in the head, kicked me and

then told me: "you fucking bitch, you go out to parties without telling me and then come home holding a beer even with people looking at you. Get out of my house before I kill you." (Victória)

We also sought to verify the qualitative relationship between the categorical index, identifying the similarity of codification, that is, the approximation by joint occurrence. In order to do so, we used cluster analysis with the Jarcard algorithm, and the similarity score for the groupings was 1 (Figure 4).

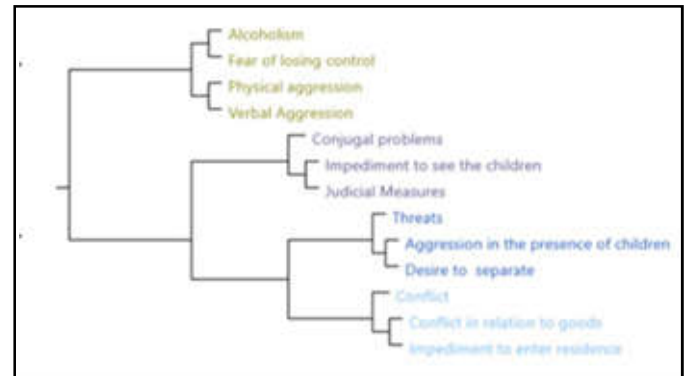


Figure 4. Cluster analysis applied to the categorical index

It was observed with the application of this technique the formation of four (4) groupings of sentences per equivalent frequency. Groups 1 to 4 present different stages or contexts of the marital relationship.

- In group 1 the words present a situation of the aggressions where there is only the participation of the two individuals;
- Group 2 presents the scenario of recognition of the problem, involvement of the children and beginning of judicial involvement;
- In group 3 there is the establishment of the conflicting environment involving dispute and patrimonial aggression;
- And in group 4 there is a need for separation with the exposure of children to acts of aggression and the use of threats.

It is important to emphasize in Group 1 that victims of psychological violence, such as verbal abuses and threats, often think that what happens to them is not serious or important enough to press charges against the aggressor to the competent organs. Often the situation aggravate and sometimes even cause their death. In other cases, the victims remain in the abusive relationship for the sake of their children or to guarantee rights acquired from marriage. In addition, the use and dependence of alcoholic substances cause loss of control, behavioral change despite the consequences, and especially promises of changes that sometimes convince the victims to remain in the situation without pressing charges, believing in the possibility of a change in the partner's behaviour. In relation to groups 2 and 4, it shows that marital violence not only causes physical, psychological, and patrimonial damage to the victims, but also implies consequences for their children, who are exposed to violence within the family sphere, which makes it possible for them to suffer of depression, anxiety, behavioral disorders and delays in their cognitive development, as well as the risk of becoming, in turn, victims of abuse or future aggressors (SCOTT, 1988). In addition, the

victims of the situations in the reports expressed their desire for freedom and a life without violence, resorting to legal measures to ensure that their abusers were punished for the violence they had practiced.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to present the perception of victims of gender-based violence, that is, the marital violence, committed in the neighborhoods of Achada de Santo António and Terra Branca, in the city of Praia, Cape Verde. Despite the fact that most of the recorded cases of violence occur with female victims, the cases with male victims have been growing, due to all the support that women have been gaining in society and from female activists that fight for the empowerment of women, which helps to reproduce self-confidence and balance in the marital relationship.

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