

Men's Perceptions of Domestic Violence Against Women: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: Domestic violence against women is a serious social problem that requires male's perspective understanding to be prevented. This study aimed to understand the perceptions of adult men, with higher education degree or higher education students, on this type of violence. Using Bandura's social learning theory, a qualitative study was developed with 13 men. The data were collected using remote semi-structured interviews. The analytical process used thematic analysis presuppositions. It was found that men do not agree with sexist ideals that can increase the rates of violence against women. However, participants oscillate between understanding women as victim and as guilty. The data may be a reflection of the current greater debate on issues related to gender equality. We conclude that it is important to invest in the multidimensional training of men to break with hegemonic masculinity, which can foster the struggle against gender-based violence.

Keywords: violence against women, masculinity, marital conflict

Percepções de Homens Sobre Violência Doméstica Contra Mulheres: Estudo Qualitativo

Resumo: A violência doméstica contra mulheres é grave problema psicossocial que, para ser prevenido, requer compreender como homens o explicam. Este estudo teve como objetivo conhecer as percepções de homens adultos escolarizados sobre esse tipo de violência. Utilizando o referencial teórico da aprendizagem social, foi desenvolvido um estudo qualitativo que contou com a participação de 13 homens. Entrevistas semiestruturadas foram realizadas remotamente na coleta de dados. O processo analítico seguiu os pressupostos da análise temática. Verificou-se que os homens não concordam com ideais machistas que podem aumentar os índices de violência contra as mulheres. Contudo, os participantes oscilam entre entender as mulheres como vítimas e também culpadas. Os dados podem ser reflexo do maior debate na atualidade sobre questões relacionadas à igualdade de gênero. Conclui-se ser importante investir na formação multidimensional dos homens para romper com a masculinidade hegemônica, o que pode ser salutar no enfrentamento da violência contra mulheres.

Palavras-chave: violência contra mulher, masculinidade, conflito conjugal

Percepciones de los Hombres Sobre Violencia Doméstica Contra la Mujer: Un Estudio Cualitativo

Resumen: La violencia doméstica contra la mujer es un grave problema psicossocial que requiere de la perspectiva masculina para ser prevenida. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo conocer las percepciones de hombres adultos con formación en torno a este tipo de violencia. Utilizando el marco teórico del aprendizaje social, se desarrolló un estudio cualitativo con la participación de 13 hombres. Se realizaron entrevistas semiestruturadas remotas para la recolección de datos. El proceso analítico siguió los presupuestos del análisis temático. Los hombres no están de acuerdo con los ideales machistas que pueden aumentar los índices de violencia contra las mujeres. Los participantes oscilan entre entender a las mujeres como víctimas y también como culpables. Los datos pueden ser un reflejo del gran debate actual sobre la igualdad de género. Se concluye que es importante invertir en la formación multidimensional de los hombres para romper con la masculinidad hegemónica, lo que puede ser beneficioso para combatir la violencia contra las mujeres.

Palabras clave: violencia contra la mujer, masculinidad, conflicto marital

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Domestic violence against women is considered a widespread public health problem (Fapohunda, Masiagwala, Stiegler, & Bouchard, 2021). Considering the different nuances that compose the term 'domestic violence,' this study addresses the type perpetrated against women and that may be defined, according to its manifestations, as a physical and/or psychological aggression, perpetrated by a current or former partner (Davison, Frizzell, & Chien,

2021). It is any and all violent action that is gender-based and can result in suffering and harm in various dimensions of a person's life (Amarijo, Figueira, Ramos, & Minasi, 2020). The abuses perpetrated involve issues of social inequality and gender, highlighting the socially constructed power of men over women (Amarijo et al., 2020). In addition, despite the domestic environment is referred as a safe place, aggression often occurs in women's homes and can be incorporated into relationships (Saadi Tosi, 2017).

According to Stöckl et al. (2013), globally, one out of three women at reproductive age has experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their intimate partner. Male intimate partners are the most identified agents of aggression, and psychological violence is the most prevalent, followed by physical violence (Santos, Leite, Amorim, Maciel, & Gigante, 2020). A Brazilian study involving 302 puerperal women, for example, revealed that 43% had experienced abuse by their partners throughout their lives, 7.6% had suffered physical violence in the year preceding data collection and 4.6% reported this type of violence during pregnancy (Fiorotti et al., 2018). Another study conducted in the state of Maranhão, Brazil, with 233 pregnant women found psychological violence (18.9%) as predominant (Conceição, Coelho, & Madeiro, 2021).

Studies document the consequences of such phenomenon. Psychological disorders, cognitive, emotional and behavioral problems, as well as physical injuries are the most deleterious effects reported by the scientific literature (Souza & Silva, 2019). Moreover, many cases end in femicide, which is the murder of women justified or explained because they are female (Silva & Schermann, 2021). In 2019, 35% of female homicides in Brazil were classified as femicides, of which 88.8% were committed by partners or former partners (Vieira, Garcia, & Maciel, 2020). It is noteworthy that the occurrence of femicide and its characteristics broaden the understanding of domestic violence against women and point to the need to address gender issues, but this aspect was not covered in this study.

The scientific literature shows that the most important aspect regarding the profile of aggressors is to have some kind of relationship with the woman. However, in an interview conducted during the research that based this study, it was found that different types of characteristics, such as individual ones (impulsivity, low self-esteem, insecurity), behavioral ones (use of alcohol and other drugs) and contextual (patriarchal society), may explain the perpetration of domestic violence. On the other hand, a documentary analysis of the profile of male perpetrators of domestic violence against women revealed that the phenomenon is associated with the poorest population, which denounces criminal selectivity related to social classes (Scott & Oliveira, 2018). This study also verified a movement of blaming/responsibilizing the person in situation of violence. It is also worth noting that positive cognitions such as self-confidence and optimism may favor aggressive behavior in men (Centurion-Cabral, Corrêa, Neves, Dias, & Almeida, 2019).

To some extent, phenomenon can also be explained by the assumptions of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2016). It is inferred that aggressive behavior is transmitted intergenerationally, at the same time that witnessing and/or experiencing violence in critical moments of development (such as childhood or adolescence) model abusive behavior in other moments of the life cycle (Telzer, Van Hoorn, Rogers, & Do, 2018). Aggressive models in the family favor learning to use aggressive behavior as a way to resolve conflicts or internal issues (Huesmann, 2018). This theory also allows understanding risk behaviors for involvement in situations of violence (such as alcohol abuse and financial problems) (Huesmann, 2018). Also, the propositions of the Social Learning Theory can also be applied to think about positive social behaviors that can break cycles of violence (Telzer et al., 2018).

However, there are few studies with men discussing perceptions, beliefs or opinions about domestic violence. Most studies on the subject are conducted with women in situations of violence, an aspect that limits the understanding of the phenomenon and its complexities (Silva, Coelho, & Moretti-Pires, 2014). Thus, the importance of a structural change is highlighted and for this to happen, it is necessary to know the opinion of men – who are usually the agents of violence – on the subject. In addition to recognizing how they explain violence, it is necessary to involve them in discussions on this phenomenon, in order to identify possible gaps in knowledge regarding the causes, justifications and motivations of violence, as well as ways to prevent or minimize it. Thus, this study aimed to know the perceptions of educated adult men about this type of violence. The study also sought to analyze men's attitudes and responses to witnessed or known incidents of violence.

Method

This study is characterized as qualitative, descriptive and exploratory. The COREQ (Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research) criteria were followed to report the investigation.

Participants

A total of 13 men aged from 20 to 46 years old participated in the investigation, the majority (eight) were higher education students, and five had complete higher education. The following inclusion criteria were adopted: self-declared men; age equal to or greater than 18 years old; and access to smartphone or computer with internet. The exclusion criteria were: having close contact with the author and not being available to participate in the interview. Having a history of violence against women was not an inclusion or exclusion criterion. The sample was defined by convenience and, for recruitment purposes, a questionnaire was posted on social networks (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter) and messaging application groups (WhatsApp), as the research

was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of the questionnaire there was space for contact data and the respondents who volunteered were invited to participate in the study. A total of 170 men answered the questionnaire, of which 41 provided contact information for participation in the study. Out of the 41 volunteers, 28 were excluded, seven for having some degree of proximity to one of the researchers and 21 men for unavailability for the interviews or not answering email contact to carry out the interview.

Instrument

Script for semi-structured interviews. In the data collection, a script was prepared based on the scientific literature. Some examples of the script questions are: What is domestic violence against women in your opinion? What do you think justifies aggression in an intimate relationship? Have you ever witnessed a situation of domestic violence? What is your opinion about a relationship between two people in which aggression occurs?

Procedures

Data collection. The semi-structured interviews were carried out by the researcher JCM in the first half of 2021, remotely, via the Skype platform, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The average duration of the interviews was 41 minutes and the transcription totaled 257 pages.

Data analysis. The thematic analysis proposed by Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2019) was used to analyze the data. Six stages were followed: (1) Familiarization – reading and rereading the corpus; (2) Coding – 26 initial codes were built; (3) Search for themes; (4) Review of topics; (5) Definition and naming of themes – in which three themes emerged; and (6) Presentation of results (Clarke et al., 2019). The data were also analyzed in the light of Social Learning.

Ethical Considerations

At all stages of the study, the recommendations of Resolution 510/2016 of the National Health Council were observed. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas (CAAE number 43126721.8.0000.5481). Participants were volunteers and received all information related to the research and expressed informed consent on the home page of the online form applied in the recruitment process.

Results

Theme 1: Male narratives on domestic violence

The first theme that emerged from the data analysis was composed of 14 initial codes. The issue of physical aggression was among the first to be mentioned. Participants narrated that,

when they thought about domestic violence against women, they did not separate it from physical aggression, such as pushing, slapping, punching, pulling, and similar actions. Some participants stated that all physical violence begins with other types of violence, such as psychological violence.

Psychological violence was defined by the participants as an invisible violence, difficult to identify. The participants mentioned threats, shouting, swearing, belittlement, exercise of control, minimization and devaluation as psychological aggressions. However, participants' opinions were different regarding the seriousness of this type of violence.

I believe that psychological violence affects much more than physical violence, because it is a violence that nobody sees (...) Psychological violence is stronger than physical violence, people give less importance, and affects people much more, as it is silent, and people suffer without knowing they are suffering (Participant 4, 29 years old).

Participants also mentioned abusive or toxic relationship. They characterized this type of relationship and witnessed situations, both in their own experiences and in those of close people.

It was a totally abusive relationship, in which I didn't trust her and she didn't trust me, so if she went to a party I couldn't sleep, if I went to a party without her or did anything, she couldn't sleep either. We fought a lot, there was no trust in each other, in which one cursed the other (Participant 12, 21 years old).

On the motivations for aggression, narratives on betrayal were the main factor for aggressions. The betrayed man would feel humiliated and would attack his partner as punishment or to defend his honor.

Let's imagine a situation where the guy cheated on the woman, he's totally wrong. The woman beats him and then he beats her back, you know? I imagine a situation in which this could happen, but this is awfully wrong (...) The guy thinks, 'oh, if you hurt me [emotionally], I have the right to beat you up' (Participant 7, 22 years old).

The violent upbringing and the misogynist culture were also mentioned by the interviewees as risk factors, in which the subject would use violence as means to communicate or to relate. In the same sense, the cultural history was also considered a risk factor, as a 'permission to attack,' since the man would be protected by a system that have always favored him, as it was created and maintained by men.

It comes from the biology of human beings, who are animals like any other (...) I think human beings are still trying to understand the difference between social and biological power (...) In most civilizations,

the societies were built based on a system where men prevails, and protect them from doing anything, because men built the world for themselves, therefore they can do what they want because nothing will bring consequences (Participant 5, 20 years old).

In addition to these factors, impunity appeared several times in the narratives of these men, who discussed how the Brazilian justice system fails to protect female victims and punish male aggressors, even after the creation of the Maria da Penha Law (Lei No. 11.340, 2006).

I feel anger at impunity because we know that, unfortunately, despite laws in Brazil being very good, they are not applied, it is difficult to apply them (...) the Maria da Penha Law, for example, is among the best laws in the world, we hear this frequently, but its application is not that good (...). The feeling of anger and impunity remains, knowing that if a situation of violence occurs, the aggressor will probably not pay for his actions, no serious consequences, but the victim will continue to be attacked and violated, she will suffer much more than the person who aggressed her (Participant 2, 27 years old).

The lack of dialogue was also raised by the participants as a possible risk factor for aggression. For these interviewees, dialogue is crucial for change, as it fosters the promotion of critical thinking in people who have never questioned the deeper aspects of domestic violence against women.

If we talked more about it, with more openness and collaboration, most of these situations could have been avoided from the beginning (...) and hence the importance of really opening spaces for this type of discussion, not just talking how not to attack, but how to stop attacking. I think that [violence] will remain, but through dialogue and conversation it will be identified, making it possible to make changes, looking for healthier manners (Participant 2, 27 years old).

Finally, the use of substances, which is suggested in the specialized literature as one of the main risk factors for domestic violence, also appeared in the narratives of two participants, who described the use of alcohol and other drugs as aggravating risk situations. In addition, Participants 9 and 10 brought personal examples of their fathers being aggressive when drunk, both against themselves and against their mothers.

There are things that go beyond consciousness, such as drug use, alcohol intake, which can make this scenario a bit worse (...) there was the issue of alcoholism, so my father would come home wasted, and then there was always discussions, never physical violence, but many fights with words (Participant 9, 46 years old).

I have flashes of my father drunk trying to hit my mother, but I never witnessed nothing beyond this (...) I have a flash of my father running after her, she jumping out the window, but I don't remember the sensation (Participant 10, 41 years).

Likewise, some men narrated how watching their parents' fights influenced their later relationships, when they were children or adolescents, such as Participant 7, who reported problems in romantic relationships because he witnessed the constant fights of his parents: "I always had a lot of problems with relationships, I never really wanted them so close, because I think my parents always fought a lot at home and that bothered me" (Participant 7, 22 years old). Participant 2, in turn, described how he adopted violent practices at the beginning of his sexual life, as he followed the examples of his friends and colleagues, even questioning whether it was right.

I questioned myself, 'man, isn't it cool to do that,' but since I didn't have other examples, I ended up reproducing and doing it, because my friends did it, that's how I had learned it, I could see no other way of doing it (Participant 2, 27 years).

Conversely, aspects that naturalize and trivialize situations of violence also appeared in the participants' narratives. They mentioned that situations of violence are common and widely reported in the media, which may favor a movement towards the trivialization of such situations. Therefore, Participant 5 mentioned that violence "happens so much that became banal and I don't even remember a specific case anymore" (Participant 5, 20 years old). Similarly, Participant 13 stated that he currently feels "colder" about it: "I believe that now I'm a little bit colder, for that's what we read every day, so it would be just another piece of news, 'oh, another person died,' about a femicide" (Participant 13, 30 years old).

The emphasis is about being just "one more" (sic) case among many others that happen every day, not making it possible to even remember a specific reported case. Thus, participant 10 showed the naturalization of actions such as swearing, persecutions and offensive messages in his statements, not recognizing them as violence..

I feel aggrieved in this, as I was subjected to a restraining order because of messages I sent and didn't want to let go, but it wasn't... it was an emotional persistence (...) I had an abusive father, but I'm not an aggressor, at least not physically. I've cursed at women a lot (Participant 10, 41 years old).

Following the analysis of men's opinions on domestic violence against women, speeches that encourage it, maintaining its cyclical aspect is highlighted, in which participants defended that aggressors should suffer violence in the same way as they cause it, as in the case of Participant 5,

who described a “cathartic feeling” (sic) in watching women retaliating against violence: “There is a catharsis when we see in the media the woman fighting back” (Participant 5, 20 years old); and of Participant 1, who advocated that these men should suffer physical aggression.

I'm not saying not to punch him in the face, oh no, you must do it, and harder if you can! (...) [violence is justifiable] since the other attacked you! Law of action and reaction: If the other attacks me... (Participant 1, 25 years old).

Regarding feelings aroused when talking about domestic violence against women, the subjects reported anger, hatred, sadness, pity, agony, sorrow, revolt, impotence and ‘negative feelings.’ “I feel sorry for her, I feel sad, I feel a little distressed” (Participant 3, 24 years old). “First of all there’s a bit of a pity, you know? To see the person having to go through this kind of thing... and obviously, a lot of anger” (Participant 5, 20 years old). However, some participants described becoming apathetic when witnessing situations of violence. “Look, I saw my friend harassing, but I kept quiet. Sometimes men are aware, but do nothing to change it” (Participant 12, 21 years old).

As this study was developed during the COVID-19 pandemic and, although it was not the direct target of the investigation, it was found that some participants made connections between the period of the pandemic and the theme of domestic violence. They mainly raised questions about the increase in cases resulting from social isolation.

One of the things I thought about the most at the beginning of the pandemic, and of course, it wasn't just me, but many people... that there could be a great increase in domestic violence because of people staying at home (Participant 7, 22 years).

Theme 2: Definitions about being a man and masculinities

This analytical theme was composed of nine initial codes. Specifically, in the reflection on what it means to be a man, the participants described aspects related to their proximal processes and how they developed their concepts about masculinity based on their social interactions with school, friends and family.

My father has a lot of macho traits in him and this becomes clear if you know the relationship between him and his brothers. I see that it comes from the family, kind of a tradition that has been passed from person to person, from generation to generation (Participant 6, 21 years old).

I believe it's cultural, I mean, it's not only in Brazilian culture, it is cultural like... the father didn't have much of this information, and the son will not have access to it either, an idea of perpetuation (Participant 7, 22 years)

Men's social roles was also a topic addressed by participants who argued that a posture of strength and courage is imposed on the ‘male subject,’ not allowing weaknesses. In the same sense, toxic masculinity was widely mentioned by the participants of this study, who described it as violent and harmful in their life experiences. Participant 8 mentioned a moment when he suffered aggression from his father who, frustrated at being unemployed, perceived himself as incapable of maintaining his social role as provider of the house. Participant 3, in turn, mentioned how some aggressions are used as a means of expression, being externalized by some and both internalized and repressed by others. In this sense, Participant 4 narrated how men are taught to hit and speak louder: “I think that the issue of the macho culture has a lot in common, because men are always taught to hit, hit and hit, always be aggressive, fight back, don't let it go, always speak louder” (Participant 4, 29 years old).

I got beaten once by my father, it was a moment when he was completely frustrated with his unemployment, not feeling like the man of the house as he should be, and then he compared himself with everything that he should be and what he couldn't do for his family (Participant 8, 31 years old).

The narratives reveal that men often only manage to express themselves through anger and strength, also finding it difficult to deal with frustrations, concepts that are violent for themselves. Participant 2 observed that man himself created and maintains the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, which turns out to be self-destructive.

I think that men have put themselves in a position that is not healthy, for example, this hypermasculinity (...) this toxic masculinity, which is currently being worked on, studied and recognized. So I see that it's an extremely self-destructive hierarchy and social contract if it's not changed, but I think we're making progress as a society to improve this kind of thing. (Participant 2, 27 years old).

Another concept presented by the participants in their narratives was machismo. Some participants exposed situations in which they were sexist or witnessed sexist attitudes from other men.

We've been speaking of treating others as equals for a long time, in short, respect and basic things, but if you ask the guy who beat his wife, if he would do the same thing with his buddy, or his father, he wouldn't even think about it. (Participant 7, 22 years old).

A relevant point raised was the view of the participants that men who attack are psychologically ill and should be isolated, as they would not have the ability to live in society. Participant 11 described male aggressors as abnormal, arguing that they should be isolated from society and only

return when re-socialized. Thus, Participants 1 and 10 considered aggressors as having some ‘psychic problem’ and of being ‘dysfunctional, maladjusted.’

Some participants also recognized that they had already been perpetrators of violence in their intimate relationships. They acknowledged responsibility for the aggressions they performed at certain periods in their lives, as well as moments of awareness that led them to change the way they thought about the issue.

I had some behaviors that were violent and aggressive during the relationship (...) I screamed and I think I slapped or punched a wall (...) Obviously I still do many things wrong, I may still do many things wrong in the future, but it’s a search, a daily deconstruction to try to reproduce healthier modes, so I’m much more communicative and more open, I listen more and I ask more (...) I can’t erase the past, but I can improve my present and my future (Participant 2, 27 years old).

Theme 3: The victim/guilty dichotomy regarding women

This theme was composed of only 3 initial codes. Thus, in its analysis, the question that prevailed was: Is the woman who suffers violence in a relationship guilty or a victim? For the participants of this investigation the answer navigates between the two extremes.

There is also aggression on her part, which does not contribute to, how can I say? Women aggressions don’t help men to stop abusing women, only make things worse (...) many times we don’t know if the woman contributed... this is not in the sense of going out with short clothes, or going out with friends, such sexist things, but really aggression, for we know that there are many jealous women, as much as men (Participant 1, 25 years old).

The man sees the woman as an object and sometimes takes out his anger on her, as this object does not respond the way he would like, he gets angry with the object, but this is totally wrong (Participant 9, 46 years old).

Another issue related to women in situations of violence was the issue of acceptance of violence and permanence in the relationship. Participants 7, 8, and 12 questioned why women often continue with their aggressors, even though they have access to information and can ask for help. On the other hand, Participants 4, 6, 9, and 13 brought up factors for which many women remain in their relationships, such as fear of suffering reprisals, hope that their partner will change and improve, emotional and/or financial dependence, socioeconomic context, and social inequality. These individuals argued that, due to so many possible factors for a person to remain in an abusive relationship, she possibly cannot break free and

cannot be blamed for the situation. “There are cases in which the victim returns to live with the aggressor, because she has no other condition” (Participant 2, 27 years old).

Two participants highlighted the issue of femicide. They narrated knowing women who were killed by their partners and shared feelings about these experiences. “There was a girl who studied with me, whose case had a bit of national repercussion a few years ago. She had twins, and the father of the boys killed her and the children (...) It was a huge shock.” (Participant 4, 29 years old). “There was a medicine student who died because she was asphyxiated by her boyfriend, her father is one of my father’s best college friends (...) the first feeling that comes is of revolt” (Participant 12, 21 years).

Discussion

This study aimed at knowing the perceptions of adult men on domestic violence against women. It was highlighted how domestic violence against women is both normalized and part of everyday life. It was also possible to address how adult men with a high education level identify, narrate, and interpret such violence. The data analysis specifically revealed that most participants tended to break with the norms of a structurally male-dominated society and exposed the need for a change in perspective on domestic violence against women. Participants showed knowledge about the meaning and what is included in the phenomenon addressed in this study, including individual and, to some extent, macrosystemic issues.

However, it was noted that the expansion of awareness has not yet been able to establish a culture of total intolerance towards violence practiced against women, who are understood, dichotomously, either as guilty, or as victims. There is still a logic of exemption or sharing of men’s responsibility. Often, men do not recognize their guilt and/or transfer it to a person or event, for example the woman’s attitudes or a possible mental disorder of the aggressor (Amarijo et al., 2020; Meluzzi, Pinelli, Valvason, & Zanchi, 2021). Thus, by placing the aggressor as abnormal and pathological, he is removed from collective male responsibility, ignoring all the contexts that influence the occurrence of violence.

In another direction, through differential reinforcement (balance of past, present and future rewards and punishments related to a certain behavior), individuals are conditioned to internalize social norms valued by the group (Telzer et al., 2018). In this sense, men see themselves as hostages of toxic masculinity, which refers to behaviors that reinforce male hegemony and that negatively impact men’s lives, influencing their well-being and preventing them from freely experiencing their affections or emotions (Mesquita & Corrêa, 2021; Paula & Rocha, 2019). This is also related to the social roles of men, in which ‘being a man’ means showing virility and aggressiveness, using violence in the development of their socialization, which became part of the identity of these subjects who may not know other forms

of expression than those violent or aggressive (Mesquita & Corrêa, 2021; Paula & Rocha, 2019).

These concepts are intrinsically connected to the logic of reproduction of violence, as men develop according to the idea that aggression is a valid resource to be used in their relationships (Lírio et al., 2018). Since they have difficulty recognizing other forms of relationships, they end up reproducing violent practices they grew up experiencing and observing, unable to, on their own, to behave differently. However, considering the profile of the participants and the data on how they perceive masculinity, there is a movement of differential association as they express norms, values and, to some extent, attitudes that differ from the logic of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, attitudinal and relational changes may be related to access to more schooling, as assumed by the theory of social learning (Telzer et al., 2018).

When explaining the phenomenon, the participants also evoked ideas on the development of boys and made reflections on how family care or experiences with caregivers can be decisive for presenting aggressive behavior. In this sense, a study involving 304 heterosexual couples, over 18 years old, officially married or in a stable relationship for at least six months, aimed to verify the relationship between events experienced in the family of origin and marital violence (Razera, Bedin, Oliveira, Mosmann, & Falcke, 2021). It was discovered that family experiences in childhood can predict behavioral models that are repeated in adult life and for men some experiences (such as negligence, physical abuse, for example) influence the perpetration of violence. That is, behaviors, including aggressive ones, are shaped through individual interaction with the environment and dysfunctional practices are shaped through successive generations of children (Telzer et al., 2018). In addition, men tend to be punished in childhood for not showing their masculinity and this has repercussions in adult life.

On definitions (attitudes, rationalizations or meanings attributed to a certain behavior) about domestic violence against women and being a man, it was observed that they were based on the evaluative logic of good or bad, right or wrong, justified or unwarranted and appropriate or inappropriate. It is worth noting that the more people learn that specific attitudes or behaviors are good or desirable in relation to those undesirable, the more likely they are to engage in this type of behavior (Bandura, 2016; Telzer et al., 2018). In a study with men who are agents of violence against women, this aspect seems even more relevant, as there is a tendency for cases to decrease as the phenomenon is evaluated as bad or wrong.

Regarding social learning, the groups and the social context of the participants can favor this change or expansion in the level of awareness of their own place in the world and, specifically, the debate on the issue of violence practiced by men (Telzer et al., 2018). Thus, men's low educational level and challenging financial situation may be factors that contribute to the perpetration of violence. On the other hand, according to findings by Santos et al. (2020), women

with greater access to education tend to be less tolerant of aggression, which expresses a relationship between socioeconomic level and the occurrence of violence. It denotes the importance of investing in scientific studies that promote the production of knowledge on this subject, as well as the construction of public policies, aiming to contribute to the reduction and prevention of violence through dialogue and awareness. Using dialogue, it is possible to show and teach models of non-violent relationships to men, which can be favorable to them and women, exposing the existence of the possibility of creating healthier scenarios. The creation of public policies and promotion of dialogue also contribute to empowering women to face situations of violence.

It also denotes the importance of opening spaces for men to express their feelings. Considering that the male subject is not allowed to experience affections inherent to the human being and that affections considered negative, such as fear and anger, have direct effects on the aggressiveness of individuals (Centurion-Cabral et al., 2019), with the naturalization of male aggressiveness, men find it difficult to get rid of these concepts rooted since the beginning of their development, not finding gaps to fully express themselves. In addition to the difficulty in expressing their feelings, men also end up not recognizing their own violent actions, as they are naturalized, consequently they are seen as common actions of the male being.

It is still important to highlight that the participants of this recognized the violence reproduced inside and outside their affective relationships and, when dialoguing on the subject, they ended up talking about themselves, bringing personal experiences and emotions experienced. Thus, the participants expressed feelings of sadness, anger, impotence and pity in relation to domestic violence against women, being sadness and pity for women in a situation of violence, and anger in relation to aggressors. In addition, all agreed with the feeling of impotence in relation to the phenomenon itself, which can expose a willingness to break paradigms and search for sociocultural changes (Brito, Pereira, & Coelho, 2021).

Safeguarding the strong points of this study, it is necessary to consider that the investigation had the participation of only 13 men, and it is not possible to extrapolate the interpretations to other contexts or to the male profile. As a limitation, it can be mentioned the lack of inclusion of questions on racial inequality, an important variable in the debate on domestic violence against women, according to other studies. Other limitations are related to the not very diverse profile of the participants and the difficulty in reaching men with low education, which resulted from methodological decisions. Finally, the main difficulties encountered in structuring this study were related to the search for bibliographic references in relation to men's feelings on domestic violence against women. Thus, there is a need to deepen the issues related to the male perspective on the phenomenon, considering gender violence, patriarchy and the support of violence, masculinity scripts and social inequalities, among others.

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