

Dating and Dating Violence: Social Representations of School Adolescents

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the Social Representations of adolescents on dating and dating violence from their social anchors. This is a quantitative-qualitative, descriptive-exploratory study, involving 215 adolescents from public schools located in the city of João Pessoa – Paraíba, aged between 14 and 18 (M=16.16; SD=1.26), predominantly female (60.5%). Participants answered the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT); the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationship Inventory (CADRI); and, a sociodemographic questionnaire. Data from the CADRI and sociodemographic characterization were submitted to descriptive analysis, while those from the FWAT to the Correspondence Factor Analysis. Results anchored social objects in the affective, behavioral, psycho-affective, psycho-organic and valorative spheres. Dating was objectified as complicity, fidelity, respect, love, commitment, deception, betrayal, kiss, and fight. While dating violence was objectified as jealousy, disrespect, sadness, quarrel, cowardice, rape, wrong, hate, death and verbal.

Keywords: Dating; Violence; Social representations.

Namoro e violência no namoro: Representações Sociais de Adolescentes Escolares

Resumo

Objetivou-se, neste estudo, analisar as Representações Sociais de adolescentes acerca do namoro e violência no namoro (VN) a partir de suas ancoragens sociais. Trata-se de uma pesquisa quanti-qualitativa, descritiva-exploratória, que contou com 215 adolescentes de escolas públicas da cidade de João Pessoa-Paraíba, com idades entre 14 e 18 anos (M=16,16; DP=1,26), prevalentemente do sexo feminino (60,5%). Os participantes responderam à Técnica de Associação Livre de Palavras (TALP); o *Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationship Inventory* (CADRI); e um questionário sociodemográfico. Dados do CADRI e de caracterização sociodemográfica foram submetidos a análises descritivas, enquanto os da TALP a uma Análise Fatorial de Correspondência. Os resultados ancoraram os objetos sociais nas esferas afetiva, comportamental, psicoafetiva, psico-orgânica e valorativa. O namoro foi objetivado como complicidade, fidelidade, respeito, amor, compromisso, decepção, traição, beijo e briga. Enquanto a VN foi objetivada como ciúmes, desrespeito, tristeza, briga, covardia, estupro, errado, ódio, morte e verbal.

Palavras-chave: Namoro; Violência; Representações sociais.

Noviazgo y Violencia en el Noviazgo: Representaciones Sociales de Alumnos Adolescentes

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las Representaciones Sociales de los adolescentes sobre la violencia en el noviazgo (VN) desde sus anclajes sociales. Se trata de una investigación cuantitativa-cualitativa, descriptiva-exploratoria, que contó con 215 adolescentes de la ciudad de João Pessoa-Paraíba, con edades entre 14 y 18 años (M=16,16; DP=1,26), prevalentemente del sexo femenino (60,5%). Los participantes respondieron a la Técnica de Asociación Libre de Palabras (TALP); *Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationship Inventory* (CADRI); y un cuestionario sociodemográfico. Datos del CADRI y de caracterización sociodemográfica se sometieron a análisis descriptivos, mientras que los de la TALP a través de la Análisis Fatorial de Correspondencia. Resultados anclaron los objetos sociales en esferas afectivas, conductuales, psicoafetivas, psicoorgánicas y valorativas. El noviazgo fue *objetivado* como complicidad, fidelidad, respeto, amor, compromiso, decepción, traición, beso y pelea. El VN fue *objetivado* como celos, falta de respeto, tristeza, pelea, cobardía, violación, mal, odio, muerte y verbal.

Palabras clave: Noviazgo; la violencia; Representaciones sociales.

Among the various ways to emotionally connect with a person, dating is conceptualized as a considerably stable affective relationship, based on love, partnership, and a serious commitment between the

participants; including or not cohabitation, as long as both parties take no part in aspects regarding marriage or the constitution of a family. It differs from a stable union as the latter is a legal commitment characterized

by the *mos uxorios*, i.e., the habitation that mirrors marriage (Levy, 2009). Moreover, it is a type of relationship between two people that may supply emotional stability and appear as one of the criteria for mental health and interpersonal satisfaction, affecting the self-conceptualization and self-esteem of the individuals (Bertoldo & Barbará, 2006; Custódio et al., 2010).

It is common that dating be experienced throughout the adolescence, as it is the moment to construct the psychosocial identity; which refers to the formation of new affective bonds, the intensification of gender roles differentiation, and where new ways to experiment thoughts and actions in intimate relationships are motivated (Lundgren & Amin, 2015; Nelas et al., 2010). During a study carried out by Bertoldo and Barbará (2006) with university students, it was identified that this type of relationship is linked to love, care, partnership, friendship, commitment, trust, affection, as well as sex. The participants that were dating at the moment that the research was conducted represented dating as a relationship of friendship and acceptance; and the ones who had already dated in the past, highlight the fidelity and the commitment as the main elements for this kind of relationship.

Even though the aforementioned study evinces positive aspects on the way to comprehend dating by youths, it is known that it is commonplace, in affective interactions, the occurrence of conflicts that, in many cases, lead to different expressions of violence. Violence in this context is conceptualized as any expression that takes place between the romantically involved partners that spend a substantial amount of time together (Ahonen & Loeber, 2016), having many forms of manifestations, such as psychological, verbal, relational, physical, and/or sexual. (Cutter-Wilson & Richmond, 2011; Rey-Anacona, 2013).

Studies developed in a national and international context ratify the existence of dating violence (Cecchetto et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2016; Pimentel et al., 2017; Reidy et al., 2016; Rezende, 2017). Additionally, among these studies that mostly utilize strategies to capture the phenomenon through scales and inventories, only two of them sought the contribution of the Social Representation Theory (SR) to profusely comprehend the social mind-set on the phenomenon (Cecchetto et al., 2016; Rezende, 2017). It is known that the Social Representations (SR) are a set of values, beliefs, perceptions, opinions, ideas, and attitudes that are forged through the social relations of the subjects when given different objects. These representations directly intermediate the

cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the individuals who are present in a society and a group, thus, possessing functionality when it comes to the behavioral and communicative regulation of a population in their social, cultural, and historical environment (Álvaro & Garrido, 2016; Moscovici, 2017).

It is comprehended that the SR possess socially shared practical characteristics, distinguished by internal structures that change with the passage of time, as they are more flexible to social changes according to the age in which they are inserted. Therefore, the study of SR puts the individual as an active subject to further comprehend it, due to its main objective being common sense; which contributes to the construction of social reality (Jodelet, 1985; Sá, 1996; Spink, 1993). It is important to note that common sense is described by Moscovici (1981, p. 77) as the “consensual universe, a subjective and changing reality, constructed by means of communication and interaction between individuals, in contrast to the reified universe which is solid and immutable, it being typical of the sciences.” Such forms of knowledge, albeit having diverse purposes, are effective and essential to human life (Chaves & Silva, 2016). Considering this, the common sense knowledge stops being considered “disarticulated” and gains some sense (Nóbrega, 2001). Thus, it can be seen that the SR are not only made from scientific theories (derived from the reified universe), but also from experiences, communications, and the daily facts of the great cultural axes (Vala, 2000). Therefore, the knowledge of common sense should not be comprehended as a synonym of ignorance, but as the logic by which each individual – erudite and unlearned, scientists or laypeople – constructs the knowledge on their relationships and actions in their daily lives (Araújo, 2017).

From a procedural perspective, it must be highlighted that the construction of the SR involves two processes from a cognitive and social nature that are constantly providing feedback to each other. The first one is the anchorage; which consists of a mechanism to internalize the object on a signification net. Thus, it allows the comparison between the object and its previously known repertoire, acknowledging it, naming it, and interpreting it to make it into a familiar object. The second one concerns the objectification; which consists of the transformation of the object into a visible and tangible concept that pertains to a concrete reality (Chaves & Silva, 2016; Jodelet, 1985; Moscovici, 2017).

Alternatively, in one of the researches developed from the SR perspective on dating violence, it was

identified that violence against women in affective relationships was objectified as a daily fact; which occurs in the society, and also in the families of the participants of the study. These results also revealed the wide and complex SR on violence in intimate relationships that were anchored in critical stances on the phenomenon, as well as on gender and patriarchy ideologies (Rezende, 2017). Moving over to the study developed by Cecchetto et al. (2016), it demonstrated that the significations attributed to the phenomenon are molded by strict representations of gender roles, corresponding to the expectations regarding the performance of men and women on emotional-sexual relationships. Moreover, it was verified that the participants associated factors such as betrayal, jealousy, use of alcoholic beverages and other drugs to the occurrence of dating violence. These studies were relevant, as they allowed the articulation of the cognitive and psychological dynamics of the teenagers, as well as their social and interactional dynamics to comprehend dating violence. However, it is observed that they do not indicate how the group allegiances of the adolescents act on the representations that were identified.

Based on what was exposed, considering that adolescence is commonly the starting point for affective relationships, also, that many youths deal with dating violence (Lundgren & Amin, 2015; Nelas et al., 2010; Oliveira et al., 2016); and still, understanding that the representational field of a given phenomenon is built on interactions of different social anchorages of the population (group allegiances) (Doise, 2001); this current study intends to contribute by filling the gaps of the studies that were previously developed in the field. We started from the hypothesis that these anchorages work as ideas of strength on the construction of the social mind-set on the phenomena at hand. Then, the appraisal of the main forms of dating violence lived by adolescents who live in the metropolitan region of João Pessoa – Paraíba was sought, as there are no studies that carried out the screening in this context.

It is important to highlight that the development of this study, from a descriptive and exploratory approach, based on the theoretical support of the SR on dating and also dating violence, allows the comprehension of how such experiences are lived during this life phase, as well as the way that the mind-set and actions are constructed towards this phenomenon. Therefore, it is believed that new studies in the field may ease the implementation of interventional measures that are

capable of refuting the beliefs, opinions and attitudes that keep violence a part of intimate relationships.

Method

Participants

In this study, a non-probabilistic and convenient sample was used, composed of 215 adolescents, aged between 14 and 18 years ($M=16.16$; $SD=1.26$), mainly females (60.5%), registered for middle (20.5%) and high (75.5%) school from public schools in the city of João Pessoa – Paraíba. Among them, the majority affirmed having family income between one and two minimum wages (55.3%).

As inclusion criteria to the sample, only the teenagers who had already dated at least once were considered, being between the ages of 14 and 18 years old (based on the age threshold established by Wolfe et al., 2001), as well as being willing to participate in the study. Those who did not sign the Informed Consent Form were excluded, as well as those who were minors and did not submit the Participant Agreement Form and the Informed Consent Form signed by their legal guardians.

Instruments

To data collection, it was utilized a questionnaire that had been divided into three parts. In the first part, the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT) was utilized to apprehend the participants' evocations when facing the inductive stimuli (*dating and dating violence*). The second part was composed by the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationship Inventory (CADRI). For the last part, a sociodemographic questionnaire was used aiming to map out the profile of the participants in this research.

It is noteworthy that FWAT is a projective technique that allows the identification of the latent dimensions of the social representations, through elements that constitute an associative network of evoked contents in response to the inductive stimulus (Di Giacomo, 1981). In order to administer it, it is asked that the participants, from an inductive term presented by the researcher, write words or expressions that have immediately crossed their minds. Considering such aspect, in this current study, the inductive stimuli *dating* and *dating violence* were presented. Still on this technique, it is highlighted that it was originally developed by Carl Jung in 1905 in the context of Clinic Psychology (Coutinho et al., 2011). However, it was only from 1980 on that

the manner and objectives of its application were adapted to respond to questions posed by Di Giacomo in researches in the field of Social Psychology. From then on, FWAT has been widely utilized in studies that seek to comprehend Social Representations of social objects. In general terms, the technique allows to access elements that constitute the “semantic universe” (Abric, 1994) of the social object being studied. Thus, the projective dimension of this technique permits the update of the social representations implicit elements; which would have been lost or masked on discursive productions (Coutinho & Do Bú, 2017; Di Giacomo, 1981).

Moving over to the application of CADRI, it can be highlighted that its objective is to identify the five main forms of dating violence among teenagers in this study, i.e.: physical, sexual, verbal/emotional, relational; and/or through threats of any nature. This instrument was elaborated for an international context (Wolfe et al., 2001) and went through a transcultural adaptation to be used in the Portuguese language (Minayo et al., 2011). It is composed of 70 items; from which, 25 assess the dating violence perpetrated by the participants, 25 measure the victimization or violence that was suffered, and 20 are considered as items to distract the participants. It is important to note that this instrument featured sound psychometric parameters during its development and validation (adequate adjustment values, meaningful saturations, and nice internal consistency indices: physical abuse ($\alpha = 0.83$); sexual abuse ($\alpha = 0.51$); verbal/emotional abuse ($\alpha = 0.82$); relational abuse ($\alpha = 0.52$); and threats ($\alpha = 0.66$) (Wolfe et al., 2001). Recent studies that investigate the psychometric adequacy of the construct also demonstrated that the scale is useful in the evaluation of dating violence (Bordin, 2019; Minayo et al., 2011; Santos, 2016). In this study, the precision indices that were found were: physical ($\alpha = 0.60$); sexual abuse ($\alpha = 0.54$); verbal/emotional abuse ($\alpha = 0.79$); relational abuse ($\alpha = 0.68$); and threats ($\alpha = 0.65$).

Finally, it was utilized a sociodemographic questionnaire aiming to gather information on the participants' profile and, thus, to establish their social anchorages. Such anchorages work as fixed variables that, when associated with inductive stimuli, paved the way to the analyses in this study. Therefore, the questionnaire was composed of questions regarding sex, age, education, and income of the participants.

Procedures

This research safeguarded the ethical principles recommended by the Resolutions 466/2012 and

510/2016 that go over research on human beings. It was approved by the Committee for Ethics in Research on Human Beings, located in the Health Sciences Center in the Federal University of Paraíba, with the report number: 2.350.510.

After the authorization was given by the Committee for Ethics in Research on Human Beings, the Bureau of Education was contacted as well as the public school administrations from the city of João Pessoa – Paraíba, in order to obtain authorizations for the procedures for data collection. Upon contact, the objectives of the study were detailed, also the anonymity of the answers given by the participants was guaranteed.

After their approval, the research was collectively conducted in middle and high schools of the aforementioned city. It is noteworthy that the administration of the instruments followed this order: FWAT, CALDRI, and sociodemographic questionnaire, upon the enlightenment of the participants on the matter and their submission of the Informed Consent Form. For the case of students who were minors, it was previously asked the submission of the Participant Agreement Form and the Informed Consent Form signed by their legal guardian.

Data Analysis

The data regarding CADRI, as well as those concerning the sociodemographic characterization of the participants, were all put through descriptive statistical analyses (averages, frequencies, and standard deviation) with the help of the *Statistical Package for Social Science for Windows* (SPSS version 25.0) software; whereas the data from FWAT were processed with the aid of the *Tri-Deux-Mots* (version 5.1) software to create a Factorial Correspondence Analysis (FCA).

The FCA allowed the link, through a factorial plan, between the evoked terms in face of the inductive stimuli (*dating* and *dating violence*) and the social anchorages of the participants, i.e., their sex, age, education, and income variables. This kind of link permitted the creation of groups of participants with common and non-consonant SR of dating and dating violence. It is important to point out that the link between the evoked words by the participants of the study and their social anchorages (fixed variables) comes from the frequencies. Meanwhile, it is known that a great number of studies that turn to the FCA have utilized a minimum number of four repetitions of evocations to compose the final factorial plan of the analysis (Araújo, et al., 2012; Coutinho & Do Bú, 2017; Do Bú & Coutinho,

2018; Monteiro et al., 2007). This number is also the pre-established value on the *Tri-Deux-Mots* software to develop the FCA (Coutinho & Do Bú, 2017). So, in this study, to create the final factorial plan, only words that were evoked at least four times were considered.

It is also worth mentioning that after the analyses, the social groups and their evocations were disposed on two axes of the factorial plan: factor 1 (F1) – which demonstrates what is more consensual in the SR; and factor 2 (F2) – which evinces the idiosyncrasies that exist in these representations. The semantic clouds that come from these groups were interpreted qualitatively. Therefore, the analysis sought to point etymological aspects of the evoked words by the participants and relate them to what the literature states about it, also the contextual aspects of Brazil were considered, in such a way to make clear and comprehend senses and meanings that are created and shared by the participants of this study concerning dating and dating violence.

Results

With the aim to identify the main forms of dating violence among teenagers in this study, CADRI was administered. Its results demonstrated that, from the total of the participants in this research, 70% affirmed having perpetrated verbal/emotional violence; 48.5% reported having committed relational violence; 38.5% affirmed that they had committed physical violence; 34% had committed sexual violence; and 26.5% were the perpetrators of threats. When it comes to victimization, i.e., those adolescents who have declared themselves as the victims, 67% affirmed that they had suffered verbal/emotional violence; 49.5% acknowledged that they had been victims of relational violence; 39.5% had suffered sexual violence; 28% confirmed having suffered from physical violence; and, finally, 17% of the students indicated having been threatened.

Moving over to the data obtained from FWAT (utilized to apprehend the teenagers' SR), after running them over the FCA, it was identified a summation of 1.575 words that were registered, connected to the inductive stimuli (*dating* and *dating violence*), from which 506 were different (i.e., showed up at least once). And, from those, only 59 were repeated at least four times, hence, contributing to the formation of the factorial plan; which is represented in Figure 1.

The summation of the two axes on the plane explained 64.7% of the data variance (Factor 1 explained 46.9%; Factor 2 was responsible for 20.5%).

The average factorial load of contribution for each word in this analysis was equal to 16.95, based on the summation of the loads (1000) divided by the total number of words (59) (Coutinho & Do Bú, 2017). Aiming to promote a didactic reading of the FCA, as Figure 1 does not clearly explain what the contribution per factor (CPF) is of each one of the evoked terms, i.e., how much each word contributed to the factor with which it is associated; Tables 1 and 2 will be presented. Table 1 displays the words that were evoked by the participants concerning the inductive stimulus *dating* and its respective factorial loads.

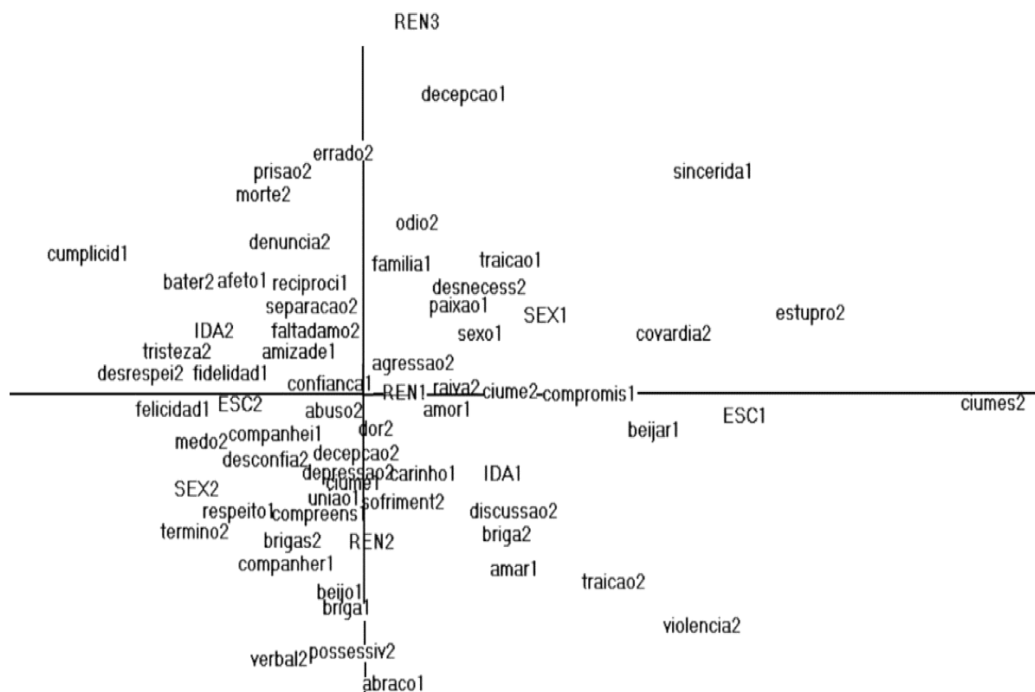
On the other hand, in Table 2, the terms or words that were evoked by the participants of this research are found regarding the inductive stimulus *dating violence*. These words are accompanied by their respective factorial loads.

The factorial plan generated by the FCA shows that the first axis (F1) – comprehended as the one that evinces what created the most consensus in the SR – which is disposed on the horizontal line of Figure 1, concentrates on its left side the answers of the participants aged between 17 and 18 years, who were female, and who were registered for high school. To these participants, the stimulus *dating* was objectified by the elements: *complicity, fidelity, trust, respect, partner*, permeated by *happiness*, in which there are *friendship* and *comprehension* bonds between two people. In turn, these same adolescents objectified dating violence by the elements: *disrespect, abuse, sadness, fear, and mistrust*.

In contrast, still regarding the F1 factor, on the right side of the plane, the male participants' SR are located; those who are registered for middle school and between the ages of 14 and 16. These participants socially represent dating by the elements: *kissing, love, and commitment*. This same group represented dating violence by the terms: *violence, quarrel, cowardice, jealousy, and rape*.

Moving over to the second axis (F2) on the factorial plan – in which the idiosyncrasies that are present in the SR of the social objects are found, disposed on the vertical line – the evocations of the adolescents according to the income were placed. On the superior part of F2, the evocations of the teenagers who have an income greater than three salaries are present. *Dating*, according to these youths, is represented as a synonym of *disappointment, betrayal, family, and passion*. Also, *dating violence* was characterized by the elements: *wrong and unnecessary, hate, death, denounce, and aggression*.

In turn, on the bottom of the F2, there was the distribution of the objectification of the group who



Note. Fixed variables (written in capital letters): SEX1 (males); SEX2 (females); IDA1 (14 to 16 years); IDA2 (17 to 18 years); ESC1 (middle school); ESC2 (high school); REN1 (family income up to one minimum wage); REN2 (family income between one and two minimum wages); REN3 (family income greater than three minimum wages). On the other hand, in lowercase, the variables portraying the participants' opinions can be seen. The final number for each variable that is fixed or based on an opinion means its association to: 1 = dating; or 2 = dating violence.

Figure 1. Factorial Analysis of Correspondence of the Social Representations of adolescents on dating and dating violence.

has a family income between one and two salaries. This group objectified dating by the affective manifestations: *kiss, hug, companionship, and care*, as well as the element *fight*. When it comes to how *dating violence* was represented by these same participants, the terms: *verbal, possessive, suffering, and pain* were used. According to what was shown, it is noteworthy that the “family income up to one minimum salary” variable did not significantly saturate to either of the two factors. In general terms, the evoked element concentration for the respective factors may indicate that, for this specific context in which this present study was carried out, the income variable did not display meaningful importance when it came to consensus, i.e., what the SR bear as a consensus, but this was fundamental to define what there is as dissension in the SR of the social objects that have been studied. The sex and education variables were important social anchorages/markers of the consensuses in the social representations of the analyzed phenomena.

Discussion

The results that were presented indicate that dating violence is a phenomenon lived or perpetrated by the participants in this study. Besides, they clarify that the approach on comprehending dating and violence in this context are multifaceted, as the evocations and the distinct social anchorages of the adolescents showed that the ways to represent these phenomena differ.

When it comes to the data obtained through CADRI, it is verified that they corroborate previous studies on the prevalence of violence that is lived by adolescents in intimate relationships in Brazil; which varied from 82.8% to 83.9% (Barreira et al., 2013; Barreira et al., 2014). Therefore, such findings indicate that the phenomenon is also reoccurring in relationships among teenagers in the context of Paraíba, while also highlighting the importance to conduct more thorough investigations on the subject, also seeking the promotion of interventions geared towards this population.

Table 1.
Evocations associated to the stimulus dating and their contributions by factor

Inductive stimulus	Evocation	CPF 1	CPF 2
	kissing	53	-
	complicity	40	-
	fidelity	32	-
	love	26	-
	trust	23	-
	respect	21	-
	happiness	16	-
	friendship	14	-
	commitment	10	-
	partner	7	-
	kiss	-	115
	disappointment	-	82
	fight	-	50
Dating	hug	-	40
	betrayal	-	41
	companionship	-	31
	care	-	26
	family	-	17
	passion	-	10
	sincerity	52	59
	sex	20	18
	jealousy	2	7
	comprehension	8	9
	affection	8	8
	reciprocity	8	7
	loving	6	7
	union	2	3

Note. CPF (contribution per factor).

When it was verified the predominance of the violence types, be it on the way to perpetrate or victimize these adolescents, these findings also corroborate the studies that were developed by Fernández-Fuertes et al. (2015), as well as the one by Barreira et al. (2014). So, it is ratified that, with the aforementioned data, dating and dating violence pervade the participants' daily lives; hence their characterization as SR-generating objects; which may produce senses and, consecutively, interfere with their behaviors.

Table 2.
Evocations associated to the stimulus dating violence and their contributions by factor

Inductive stimulus	Evocation	CPF 1	CPF 2
	jealousy	168	-
	rape	69	-
	quarrel	51	-
	cowardice	35	-
	violence	35	-
	disrespect	26	-
	sadness	25	-
	jealousy	20	-
	fear	16	-
	distrust	9	-
	abuse	5	-
	wrong	-	57
	hate	-	39
	verbal	-	35
	death	-	33
Dating violence	possessive	-	26
	unnecessary	-	17
	denouncing	-	13
	suffering	-	8
	aggression	-	6
	pain	-	1
	betrayal	39	38
	hitting	21	17
	breakup	9	7
	argument	8	5
	separation	6	3
	lack of love	6	3
	fight	5	7
	anger	3	1
	depression	2	1
	disappointment	1	1

Note. CPF (contribution per factor).

When considering the FCA, it is possible to verify that the representational elements of *dating* that were evoked by the adolescents with social anchorages as females and aged between 17 and 18 years, possibly evinced the functions of dating, as mentioned in the literature as a criterion for emotional safety and

interpersonal satisfaction (Custódio, et al., 2010). This way to comprehend dating points to a possible anchorage of the phenomenon in the affective dimension of social representation (Álvaro & Garrido, 2016; Moscovici, 2017), as the elements that were mentioned by the participants refer to affective exchanges that may occur in a relationship of reciprocity; in which feelings such as commitment and involvement are present.

Also, the words here are in accordance with those that were mentioned in the study by Bertoldo and Barbará (2006), who identified the social representation of dating among youths as a synonym of love, care, companionship, friendship, commitment, trust, affection, and sex. Additionally, along with these, there were three terms in this study that have amplified the way to comprehend dating (*complicity, happiness, and partner*), therefore, these are elements that also pervade the SR of the social object on focus. This amplification of the representation of dating is possibly associated with the SR's dynamic character; which is in constant change, in accordance with the social changes of the time in which they are situated (Moscovici, 2017).

The representational element of *dating violence* mentioned by the participants evinces that this object is a phenomenon that hurts the dignity and the integrity of a human being, constituting a violation of one's rights; which is established by an uneven power relationship (*abuse*) and generates damage to the development of the person's psycho-affective character. Consonantly, as the literature understands and points to violence being a violation of human rights (Guimarães & Pedroza, 2015; Pequeno, 2019), it is suggested that the elements found are anchored on the reified knowledge which is known as the psycho-affective sphere of violence, and on the field of human rights.

These results are also in consonance with other studies that have been developed; which point to dating violence as associated with long-term psychological effects, such as fear and post-traumatic stress disorder (Brooks-Russel et al., 2013; Reidy et al., 2016; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008). So, in this current study, some of the evoked words by the female participants refer to psychological damage. Such data is important, as it is known that the damage caused on the victim extrapolate the physical aspect and is even more significant as they cause psychological damage long-term wise (Carrascosa et al., 2016; Santos & Murta, 2016; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017). Also, this can indicate that the dating violence SR, for this group of adolescents with specific social anchorages, contemplate an amplified

vision on violence when compared to the other participants, considering not only the physical damage but also its manifestation and consequences on mental health. This vision may be related to higher education from the female group, this aspect contributes for these adolescents to possess a wider, previously-known repertoire to anchor the social representations in the social representations that are being studied (Carrascosa et al., 2016; Santos & Murta, 2016; Van Ouytsel et al., 2017).

Another possible explanation for this amplified vision on dating violence by the group of women refers to the fact that women report greater victimization on dating violence, as indicated by the literature (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013). Thus, it is considered that the social representation that is constructed in relationships and daily actions (Araújo, 2017), being victimized, or knowing couples who have gone through the experience may contribute to a wider comprehension of the representational object. Additionally, studies point to the fact that women are more prone to showing psychological consequences, such as depressive symptomatology, when compared to the reports of victimization made by their counterparts (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode & Rothman, 2013; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008). In the case of this study, previous experiences might supply elements to make the female participants mention psychological damage to socially represent the object.

Considering the social representations on *dating* elaborated by the adolescents with social anchorages as males who were in middle school and aged between 14 and 16 years, it was possible to identify that the elements that were mentioned by this group seem to be mainly anchored in the affective dimension (*love and commitment*), but also in the behavioral dimension (*kissing*) (Álvaro & Garrido, 2016; Moscovici, 2017). Upon these statements, it is verified that the way how men socially represent the object diverges from what was discovered in the study by Bertoldo and Barbará (2006), which identified that girls evoke elements that refer to trust and affection, boys, on the other hand, to sex. In this current study, it is possible that the evoked elements are setting up changes on the way that men socially represent *dating*, taking into consideration that elements of the affective dimension were not reported on the previous study.

When considering the social representations on *dating violence* generated by the male adolescents, in middle school and aged between 14 and 16, they seem to be anchored in elements of the behavioral dimension (*violence, quarrel, cowardice, jealousy, and rape*) of the social

representations (Álvaro & Garrido, 2016; Moscovici, 2017). It can be inferred that the teenagers used the knowledge that is socially shared, be it on their daily experiences or in cases that are shown by the Brazilian media on a daily basis, to explain or justify the existence of *dating violence*. Such a hypothesis is supported by the idea that social representations come to be through communication, individual stances, values, norms, and social allegiances (Flament & Rouquette, 2003).

On the same topic, the research by Cecchetto et al. (2016) is noteworthy as the participants indicated *jealousy* as the mobilizer or prompter of dating violence. Such finding strengthens the evidence that this is an important element in the construction of socially shared knowledge on dating violence, hence its need to be the target of future researches that aim to identify to which point jealousy is associated with dating violence.

It is also important to highlight the appearance of the word *rape* amongst male students, as the female participants of this research did not evoke terms that refer to sexual violence. These data contrast with the reports from the adolescents on CADRI; which pointed that 39% of them declared that they had been victims of sexual violence while dating and 34% affirmed that they had been the perpetrators of it. Such aspect possibly indicates that the female participants struggle with exposing sexual violence by their partner as a form of violence (Caridade & Machado, 2008). It is inferred that this result is associated with an acceptance of sexual violence while dating. In this regard, a study carried out with Mexican adolescents indicated that high levels of acceptance of violent behaviors while dating are a risk factor for these conducts to be considered commonplace in a relationship, stimulating the involvement in abusive relationships (Ayala, et al., 2016). Furthermore, the fact that the word *rape* is mentioned by the male participants possibly demonstrates that these adolescents consider sexual violence as one of the manifestations of *dating violence*. Such evidence allows the questioning of the idea that sexual violence while dating is considered, according to Caridade and Machado (2008), a marginalized topic on social and educational talks, being otherwise, increasingly shared.

When it comes to the relative social anchorage of the participants, it is verified that those who have an income greater than three minimum wages represent *dating* as important for family constitution, as it is based on the element, passion. On this element, this representation is supposed to be substantiated on the notion of romantic love; which refers to the establishment of

a long-lasting emotional bond exclusively connected to the constitution of a traditional family, as it still permeates the current affective relationships in spite of the changes on the way society comprehends affective bonds (Giddens, 2003).

These same participants anchored dating violence in cases of physical violence that are commonly shown by the news; besides, it is possible that the adolescents have turned to the valorative sphere, manifesting attitudes that go against the phenomenon. Such hypothesis is in accordance with the fact that violence has been increasingly comprehended as an important public health problem, gathering visibility on the means of communication and social media (Oliveira et al., 2018), overall because of the more extreme cases that are circulated, such as homicide attempts and murder. Added to that, the literature indicates that the social representations comprehend, among other elements, opinions and attitudes that are forged by the social relationships of the subject with the representational object (Álvaro & Garrido, 2016; Moscovici, 2017).

The group of adolescents who have family income between one and two salaries represented dating utilizing elements that, as they are innate manifestations of affective interpersonal relationships, are possibly anchored in the subjective experiences of these adolescents in their relationships and may concern their expectations on the ideal relationship. Still regarding this group, for the social representation of dating violence, the terms *suffering* and *pain* stand out; which are elements that are anchored in the psycho-organic dimension, they may refer to the sensations that are experimented by the adolescents when in a violent situation or to what they imagine the victims have gone through. On this aspect, dating violence is reported in the literature as associated with symptoms of internalization and depressive symptomology (Carrascosa et al., 2016; Van Ouytsel, et al., 2017).

It is also worth mentioning that the adolescents who have an income greater than three minimum wages utilized the word *betrayal* to objectify dating and dating violence. Additionally, associations are found in the literature that link dating violence to high levels of jealousy, verbal conflict and infidelity (Giordano et al., 2010). Such representations also seem to work as a justifying element of violence in this kind of relationship (Cecchetto et al., 2016).

From the analyzed data in this study, either as a consensus for both male and female participants or in the particular representations of the income variable;

dating violence was not objectified only as physical, but also as verbal-emotional, relational, and sexual; which agrees with the classification proposed by Fernández-Fuertes et al. (2015). Therefore, the youths in this study, with the aforementioned anchorages, demonstrated a comprehension of dating violence as a wide, complex, and multifaceted phenomenon.

Final Considerations

The results revealed that, in general terms, the SR of the adolescents play important roles in the communicative exchanges on the social objects that were studied. Thus, it is ratified that when turning to the daily experiences (which are permeated by experiences of others and cases shown by the media) to talk about dating and justify violent behaviors in this kind of relationship, the adolescents make use of elements such as mistrust, jealousy, and betrayal. Consonantly, from the analyzed data, it is suggested the creation of public policies to sensitize the population being studied, to validate behaviors that aim to denounce violence and direct people seek help in violent situations. Such aspects also highlight the relevance of the Social Representations Theory to comprehend social phenomena. Therefore, this study, besides corroborating researches that have already been developed in Brazil, also presented theoretical advances on the theme, as it points to the importance that studies on this field overcome the illustrative description of representative contents, investigating how the social anchorages act on the construction of ways to represent dating and dating violence.

It is known that this study has its limitations. However, even though the data that was discussed are of an exploratory character and differs when it comes to the percentage of sex that was accessed (as the sample was majorly composed of female participants), as well as the level of education of the participants of the study (mostly from high school), it is still a beam to guide new researches on the topic. Such researches may consider, for instance, the sexual orientation of the participants, as well as the different links to the education system (public vs. private), also accessing the more explicit differences in the per capita income of the students in these systems; or even if different sexual orientations influence on the way to represent dating and dating violence. Moreover, in this study, the representational elements of dating by the female teenagers contemplate probable expectations that they themselves demand from their partners. Continuing on this point, future

studies to investigate if such aspects are indeed experimented by women in their relationships are befitting, or if they refer to the expectations that they demand from their partners.

Moreover, it is important to note that it is necessary the utilization of multifaceted theoretical and methodological inputs to apprehend the phenomenon, due to its complexity. Hence the recommendation of the central core theory for the SR as a strategy to perceive the phenomenon, due to its comprehension that every SR is organized around a central core, thus, determining its internal organization, its order, and consecutive comprehension of the reality that is lived by individuals in face of a given social object (Abric, 1994, 2003).

It is widely expected that this study conveys contributions to the apprehension of how adolescents comprehend dating and the types of violence that may occur in it, enabling a further theoretical-conceptual look on the matter, as well as inciting the planning of intervening practices geared towards this population. Practices that extend to the university would figure, thus, as an alternative to limited interventions, mainly in the school context, as it is in this environment that the population that was studied here spends most of their days. These extensions may turn to the theoretical framework of the Social and Community Psychology, easing the empowerment of adolescents that live with or may come to experience violence, from any nature, in the context of dating.

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Recebido em: 09/07/2019
Reformulado em: 23/09/2020
Aprovado em: 15/12/2020

Acknowledgments:

To CAPES and CNPQ, which provided funding for the development of this research.

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