FUNDACIÓNINDERA

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

A THEORICAL FRAMEWORK

love&respect
Preventing Teen Dating Violence

Erasmus+

INDEX

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as any "act of gender based violence that result in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public life or in private life." This is one of the most accepted international definitions and it's taken by many governments to implement their policies.

The present investigation will be focused on the study of violence among adolescent couples in the Spanish context. This type of violence deserves to be treated separately since it can imply the beginning of a cycle of victimization for the adolescent, getting to influence the rest of the affective relationships in which they are involved.

The conceptual framework of violence will be presented, as well as what exactly is understood by gender violence in general, what are its causes, what process it follows and the typologies of violence. This will allow us to investigate more about violence among teenagers, exposing a whole theoretical framework of socialization in adolescence, the social construction of love, the influence of new technologies in teenage love relationships and the physical and psychological consequences of violence in these relationships.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF GENDER VIOLENCE

2.1 What is gender violence?

The approach of gender violence is recent. Even the use of the term "gender violence" is as recent as the acknowledgment of the reality of mistreatment of women (Macqueda, 2006).

Once the issue begins to become aware and regulated, violence against women is recognized as one of the most widespread social practices, promoted and reproduced within communities, being lived on a daily basis by women, attacking directly their fundamental rights.

As it has already been explained in our introduction, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as any "act of violence based on the belonging of the female sex that has or may have as a result, physical, sexual or psychological damage or suffering for women, as well as threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether they occur in public life or in private life. "

In the case of Spain, in accordance with the Organic Law on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence in 2004, in its article 1.1., it defines gender violence as "manifestation of discrimination, the situation of inequality and power relations of men over women, is exercised over them by those who are or

have been their husbands or who are or have been linked to them by similar relationships of affectivity, even without coexistence", and" includes any act of physical and psychological violence, including assaults on sexual freedom, threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty. "

Although this law talks about gender violence, it does not cover all the cases of violence against women, because as it is observed, it reduces it to the unique and exclusive sphere of the couple. This identifies gender-based violence with only one type of violence against women and makes the definition that exists on the international level invisible.

However, there is no doubt that this type of violence in couples is one of the most studied, as it is even contemplated in the Spanish legal framework, so it is appropriate to characterize it. Following Nogueiras (2005), this type of gender violence is determined by:

- Being exercised by the man with whom the woman has or has had an affective-sexual bond.
- Not being an isolated event, it is a medium to long-term process that gradually weakens the women who suffer it.
- It usually occurs in spaces or areas of privacy, so they are often invisible to people around the couple.
- It tends to hide, both for the offender and the person who suffers violence.
- The man who exercises violence usually has an adequate public image, he is valued socially.
- Women who suffer from it feel shame and guilt, which stops them from telling it.

- The discriminatory socialization of gender empowers women values and attitudes such as understanding and empathy, which later turn against them and even justify gender violence.
- Its reinforcement through the myths of romantic love.
- Its limited recognition as a social problem of extreme gravity.
- The difficulty to recognize: that behind the violence are men socialized in a type of masculinity that encourages these aggressions, that the men who exercise it are not different from the rest, neither in age, ethnic origin, social class, nor in any other feature.

2.2 The causes of gender violence

Gender violence is related to sexist stereotypes, which can justify the violence of man instead of condemning it, by associating it with masculine attributes based on the predominance of the man over the woman, around which some men build their identity (Lawson et al, 2010; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward & Tritt, 2004). This violence is often used to maintain the inequality of power between men and women and decrease, therefore, as progress is made in the construction of equality.

While it is based on unequal power relations, this violence can increase as women's power increases, in order to maintain inequality and superiority on men's side, who can use a type of abusive control (Martín and Martín, 1999), especially when they experience difficulties in meeting the expectations associated with the traditional masculine role, which has been termed as role stress (Jakupcak, Lisak, and Roemer, 2002).

Sexist discrimination and domination over women is expressed in the distribution of roles on which patriarchy is based, in which the male has all the responsibility and authority (Sánchez, 2016).

According to the study made by Pérez (2011), patriarchy is "a form of political, economic, religious and social organization based on the idea of male authority and leadership, in which there is a predominance of men over women. (...) Patriarchy has emerged from a historical seizure of power by men, who appropriated the sexuality and reproduction of women and their product, children, while creating a symbolic order through myths and the religion that perpetuates it as the only possible structure. "

This form of organization is constantly evolving to keep up with social changes, with a great capacity for adaptation that is clearly manifested through gender violence.

It is important to take into consideration that it is called gender violence because it implies hierarchical relationships and inequality, understanding that it is not biological sex that conditions women, but rather it has to do with the way in which culture builds them, with models where women have specific roles, differentiated from those of men.

Female roles are always stereotyped. For example, women are or should be passive, tender, submissive, obedient, vulnerable and dedicated to the care of others; while the male role is associated with aggressive, competitive, high degree of demand for success, wisdom, leadership, courage and knowledge. Therefore, in the gender construction and in the processes of socialization, family is the reference with which the new members are going to identify themselves, as well as their environment and the expectations people have of them and within their

communities and societies. Adults will be the ones who influence the identity processes, both of the boy and the girl, as from a very young age gender patterns are transmitted to them.

This is an indication that it is the current society itself that extends the stereotypes of inequality, submission and domination between the sexes, in the words of Barberá and Martínez (2004), "it does so through a sexist education transmitted from the different agencies of socialization". Thus, it is essential to keep young people in mind, since from early ages the manifestations of gender violence will become behavioral patterns, which will become a clear indicator of gender violence in the future adult life (Sánchez, 2016).

2.3 The gender violence process

Gender violence within the couple manifests itself through a cyclical process and it becomes difficult for women to become aware of it. This process was described by Leonore Walker (1979) as the cycle of violence, a process of cyclic mistreatment of three phases:

Graphic 01. Cyclical process of violence
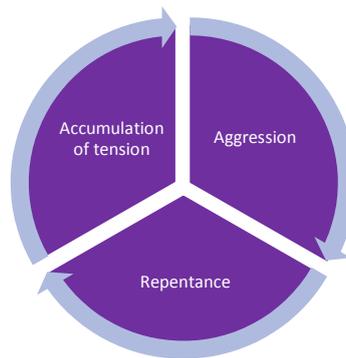
Source: Made by the author with information from Walker (1979)

1. Phase of tension accumulation, tensions are created. These tensions are established from small incidents and conflicts. The aggressor becomes more aggressive, finding reasons for conflict in each situation.

2. Phase of aggression, with acute episodes, the explosion. The aggressor takes action, verbal and psychological violence are present, threats arise and the act of physical aggression takes place for any minor incident. It is usually at this stage when women who suffer violence seek help.

3. Phase of repentance or honeymoon. The aggressor's repentance is expressed through reconciliation behaviors. This apparent repentance gives women the hope that it won't happen again, that he won't do it again if she agrees to their demands. After this stage, the conflicts will return and the cycle begins again.
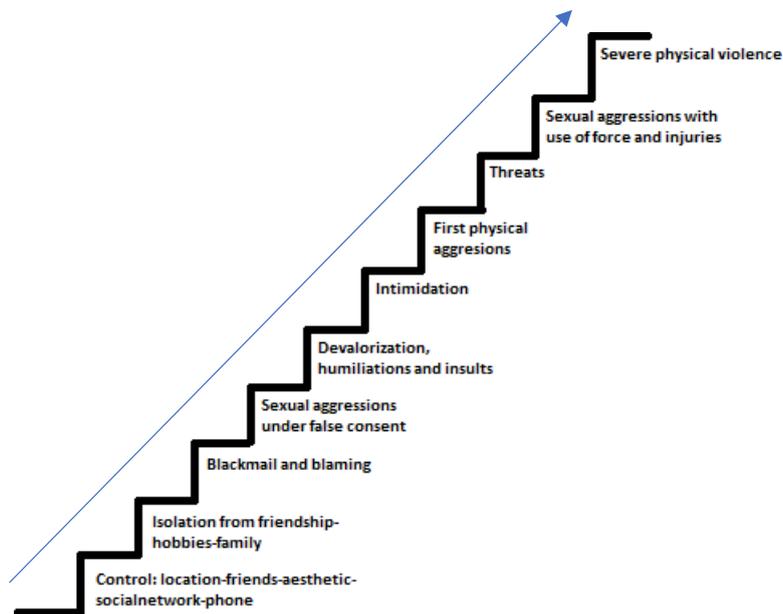
The cycles occur in increasingly shorter periods of time as violent behaviors are repeated, the attacks are increasingly frequent, intense and dangerous, the cycle of violence is unstoppable. Some authors even believe that over time the last phase is disappearing and only the first two are given (Cerezo, 2000, Ruiz-Jarabo and Blanco, 2005).

When analyzing the cycle it is seen that it can be difficult for the abused women to leave the man and when they finally try to seek protection, in many cases, they can go back to the aggressor or withdraw the accusation. After many occasions of re-starting, women will decide to break the violent relationship. Each one has their moment, depending on their situation and circumstances (Ruiz, 2016).

According to the results of a qualitative study on gender violence in adolescence developed by Carmen Ruiz Repullo (2016), it was possible to identify that, after the stories provided by the interviewees, it is reflected that gender violence in adolescence is symbolized in a cyclic ladder that everyone rise at different rates.

According to Ruiz, the first steps disguise the violence of "love", where the girl gets used to the mandates of the boy. However, at each time the rise is less diffuse and the violence that suffers becomes more evident. It is a cyclical ladder since in each step the spiral of violence, tension, explosion and repentance take place. In each of them the girl is required to get used to this type of relationship of domination. As more steps are climbed, more difficult the descent is going to be. However, there is always an exit.

Graphic 02. Ladder of violence in adolescent couples

Severe physical violence

Sexual aggressions with use of force and injuries

Threats

First physical aggresions

Intimidation

Devalorization, humiliations and insults

Sexual aggressions under false consent

Blackmail and blaming

Isolation from friendship-hobbies-family

Control: location-friends-aesthetic-socialnetwork-phone

Source: Extracted from Ruíz's study (2016)

3.4 Typology of violence

In the "Study on all Forms of Violence against Women", the Report of the General Secretary of the General Assembly of the United Nations, dated July 6, 2006, spells out the different forms of violence that women may suffer, and in the specific case of violence against women in the context of the couple, it can consist of:

- **Physical violence**, which is the intentional use of this force, being able to use weapons, in order to harm the woman.

- **Psychological violence**, in which women are being controlled, isolated and humiliated.

To complement this definition, within the study of Cantera, Estébanez and Vázquez (2009) and after an extensive review of the literature on this area, the following behaviors or indicators are classified in relation to psychological violence: control, jealousy, isolation, harassment, disqualification, humiliation, emotional manipulation, affective indifference, threats, pressure and sexual negligence.

- **Sexual violence**, which is the conduct by which the woman is forced to participate in a non-consensual sexual act; perform it with a woman incapacitated, or under the effects of substances.

Urruzola (2003) points out a series of indicators to clarify some situations in which sexual aggressions occur, for example, when a person touches your body without your consent or a person converts a relationship into aggression, by intentionality, tone, power or force; if they imply or relate to you through gestures that you do not want, if someone interprets that a game of seduction is a justification to get to your body without you wanting to or also when you have accepted a relationship with another person but they exceed the degree of relationship that you want to have.

3.5 Socialization in adolescence

Adolescence can be defined as "a period of physical, psychological and resituation changes of the individual in the social context" (Bernárdez, 2006), and understanding that adolescence is a vital stage of great relevance in the construction of the gender identity, since in it takes place much of the physical, mental and social or relational changes of people, it becomes essential to promote this construction in a framework of equality and respect.

Recent research reveals how gender socialization has permeated the attitudes and behavior of adolescents, especially marking the relationships they establish with their peers, which reproduce interactive imbalances according to whether they are girls or boys, and risk practices such as sexist attitudes in the creation of bonds (Torres, 2010). It does not only give rise to sexist attitudes, but also aggressive ones related to gender violence among peers.

According to the theory of differential socialization of gender, boys and girls in their process of initiation into social and cultural life, and from the influence of socialization agents, acquire a gender identity that entails, among other things, attitudes, codes and norms of conduct assigned to each gender (Ferrer and Bosch, 2013). A process that also socializes in couple relationships, in love and in sexuality. However, "although socialization is a process that lasts throughout life and internalizes the values and norms of the culture that we live in, it does not determine behaviors because the subject always has the last word" (Gómez , 2004: 18).

Among the agents that contribute to this socialization are mainly the family, the school, the media and the peers:

- Within the family, many of the educational guidelines are mostly related to sexist roles and stereotypes they see at home in which women and men continue to unequally occupy spaces. In this sense, girls and boys, through models, norms and guidelines, are shaping what it means to be a woman and to be a man within socially "accepted and developed" ideals in their environment (Ferrer and Bosch, 2013).

- The school also becomes an agent of socialization equally decisive in the formation of gender identities, both within the visible curricula, understood

as the set of "contents that are transmitted to the students according to educational legislation" (López, 2007), as of the hidden curricula, the one that "runs parallel to the previous one", conformed by norms and implicit values that are not questioned, so it is very difficult to make a change (López, 2007).

- The media are also presented as a reference in the construction of gender stereotypes, based on the sample of images and interpretations of femininity and masculinity. The images of women and men in the media not only reproduce inequality in terms of the presence of some and the absence of others, but they also continue to show roles and stereotypes that encourage female subordination (Locertales, 2008).

- Lastly, the peer group as a reference group becomes a socialization agent that incorporates what has been learned by the rest of the agents to strengthen it in the group. This way, the boys must demonstrate their "masculinity" based mainly on success and competition, to be validated by the group, especially by the rest of the boys, while the girls must manifest their "femininity" through affection and empathy, among other qualities (Ruiz et al., 2013).

3.6 Social construction of love in adolescence

The social construction of love, through the agents of socialization, especially the media, leads to processes of attraction and choice not exempt from power asymmetries and hegemonic models of being a girl or boy (Gómez, 2004).

The process of attraction is understood as the socially constructed mechanism based on the model of hegemonic desire. It is the process that builds the desirable

identities, both for women and for men. Reinforced by the socialization agents, especially the media, the model of "bad boy" emerges as sexy and the "good boy" as a friend (Gómez, 2004; Amurrio, 2008).

The election process is an individual act, although not exempt from social influence, since generally the chosen models are the ones that society reinforces and considers desirable: "... people we consider attractive and not attractive are internalized through socialization and the interaction with other people, but not only the physical attractiveness, but the behaviors that are attractive and those that are not" (Duque, 2006: 79).

Venegas (2013) argues that the attraction-choice process is composed of four phases, in which we find a clear gender differential in its ordering:

In boys, the sequence of the attraction-choice process would be developed in the following way: first we find physical attraction, closely related to the dominant bodily and aesthetic schemes, especially those reflected in the media. Secondly, we find personal attraction, centered more on affective relationships. In the third place, we have the infatuation, which would be the result of the intimacy achieved in the affective relationships between two people and which is closely related to passion. And lastly, there would be the formation of the couple, which would consolidate the affective-sexual relationship. In girls, the order of this process is modified by inverting the first two elements: first there would be personal attraction and then physical attraction.

What would be behind the social construction of love in adolescent relationships is the so-called romantic love. In the words of Esteban, Medina and Távora (2005), romantic love: "... is one of the forms of love that involves the presence of sexual desire and that is perceived as singular and distinctive with respect to other forms

of love, whether due to the intimacy it produces, the commitment it can remit to or the perceptions it generates".

It is necessary to contextualize romantic love, since it is in continuous relation with different elements of society such as political, economic, cultural organization, mass media, socialization process, gender stereotypes, among others (Herrera, 2011).

Taking into consideration these premises, the analysis of romantic love must be placed on a social and cultural level that is built according to each historical context. Thus we find that love is a construction that has its roots in the prevailing forms of thought and ideologies.

Some of the reviewed works on romantic love refer to the existence of myths about romantic love and how to live it. By myth we can understand a preconception of ideas that, referred to romantic love, show a kind of "shared truths" that perpetuate the unequal roles and power asymmetries of boys towards girls and that are assumed in courtships as part of the relationship (Ruiz, 2016).

There are false beliefs that "tend to have a great emotional charge, concentrate many feelings, and often contribute to create and maintain the ideology of the group and, therefore, are often resistant to change and reasoning" (Ferrer et al., 2010). In the realm of romantic love these myths produce shared beliefs about "true love", the true nature of love. However, the existence of myths that support the ideal of romantic love can be considered as a risk factor in adolescent love relationships (Luzón, 2011).

Graphic 03. Myths of romantic love

- **The myth of the better half:** it is based on the belief of the predestination of the couple as the only possible choice, the union of two twin souls, as if Cupid knew in advance who should shoot the arrows to. This false belief is based on the ideal of complement by which we think that our lives are not complete until we find the other half. Sinks roots in Classical Greece with courtly love and romance. Their acceptance may lead to the risk of being disappointed in the "chosen couple" or on the contrary to think that being the one that is predestined we must "accept" what we do not like.
- **Pairing myth**: idea that holds that the couple, as well as monogamy, are something universal and natural in all cultures. This belief leaves out of the "normative" to those people who do not meet the "expected end" of having a partner.
- **Myth of jealousy:** a belief that relates jealousy with true love and even as an essential ingredient, the lack of them would be related to non-love. A myth that can lead to selfish, repressive and even violent behavior. This myth is a real problem in relation to gender violence because it refers to the love field something that is no more than a form of domination and power. A myth introduced by Christianity as guarantor of exclusivity and fidelity.
- **Fallacy of change for love:** an idea that justified in love makes believe in a possible change of the person. A myth that is usually aimed at girls turning love into a struggle to save men, making them the saviors of their boyfriends. Through this myth women are placed in a continuous sense of hope (Lagarde, 2005).
- **Myth of the compatibility of love and abuse:** it is the consideration that in love it is compatible to harm the other person, following the phrases "those who fight are those who love each other", "if they love you they will make you cry". A myth that legitimizes any harmful or violent behavior in the name of love.
- **True love forgives / endures everything:** related to the previous myth, we find this idea that in love everything is forgivable, an argument based on blackmail that aims to manipulate the will of the person by imposing the criteria themselves. It is reflected a lot in phrases like "if you really loved me you would do it", "if you do not forgive me".
- **Love is a process of depersonalization:** the previous belief leads to a forgetting of the self to identify with the other person. The renunciation of the personal self would be lived as a show of selfishness.
- **If you love me you must renounce intimacy:** and therefore, if we are one for another, there should be no secrets, each person should know everything about the other.
- **The myth of the red thread**: it comes from the Japanese culture and is based on the belief that people predestined to know each other are joined by a red thread tied to their little fingers.

Source: Own elaboration with information from Ruíz (2016)

The strength of these myths lies in how adolescents interpret and share them. In this case, some of the studies that have worked on adolescent relationships and gender violence coincide in the high presence of these at younger ages (Díaz-Aguado and Carvajal, 2011).

3.7 Technology and gender violence

The use of technologies (ICT) by teenagers is currently being studied, not only to know the frequency and the reason of its use, but to analyze possible forms of violence that are generated through them. One of the latest studies on cyberbullying and youth, directed by Torres (2013), states that this type of crime is

mostly carried out by children and that gender violence based on technology is a phenomenon that is increasingly present in adolescence.

Even though these technologies can offer important advantages, they also increase certain risks, such as cyberbullying, sexting (dissemination of images or other sexual or erotic content through mobile phones or internet) or grooming (sexual abuse of minors carried out by adults coercing with the information and images obtained through the internet). In addition, the use of these technologies in a couple relationship makes it much more difficult to close it and considerably increases the possibility of control and pressure, as well as the severity of the consequences that harassment can have (Aguado, 2013).

To work with gender-based violence in adolescent ages, we must take ICTs into account as everyday spaces of interaction, especially in affective relationships (Aguado, 2013). Much of the development of couple relationships in adolescents occurs in the network, where they post photos, chat, publish signs of love, etc. And, as shown in the study conducted by Estébanez and Vázquez (2013) with adolescent population and young population, girls and boys make a different use of these networks, based on stereotypes and sexist attitudes that come to provoke forms of gender violence in these ages. The control exercised by couples, jealousy, the prohibition of being in social networks, the prohibition of having certain friends in social networks, as well as the transfer of passwords as a sign of love and trust, are some examples of abuse.

Thus, we see how gender socialization also takes place in social networks, as the main means of communication among their peer group, they are not alien to gender roles and their perpetuations, but are accomplices and influencers of this social scourge (Blanco, 2014).

It is important to analyze the image that adolescents show and consume in social networks, since corporality, image, models of presentation and representation in social networks and mobile applications are not exempt from gender asymmetries.

While girls use strategies to look more attractive, boys do it to look more "macho", reinforcing the reproduction of a femininity and masculinity model very anchored in sexist patterns, provoking with it a reification of the body of women, more valued by their physical aspect than by other values. For this reason, girls suffer more insults on their physical appearance than boys, an issue that causes greater concern as these insults are being said in spaces where most of the people can see and can intervene in the conflict (Estébanez and Vázquez, 2013).

According to the research carried out by Blanco (2014) "Implications of the use of social networks in the increase of gender violence in adolescents", practically half of the boys and girls who participated in the study had a discussion about the content of publications on social networks, in which there are often third parties that are not trusted or liked by the other member of the couple involved. This brings us back to the problem of jealousy, the first phase of an unhealthy relationship that can lead to others much more problematic. And this is still normalized in our society and justified as a sign of love, especially among the youngest. Thus, for example, in the mentioned study 7 out of 10 boys and girls surveyed between 13 and 16 years old believed that jealousy is a test of the other person's love for them.

Regarding control, despite the fact that the study shows that there are dynamics of "I control you, you control me", there are differences between the proportions of boys and girls who suffer this control; 33% of the girls surveyed compared to 23% of the boys declared that their partner had access to the chats and 23% of the

girls compared to 10% of the boys declared that their partner had their passwords (Blanco, 2014).

PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTIMIZATION		PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL VICTIMIZATION	
GIRLS	**BOYS**	**GIRLS**	**BOYS**
Greater probability of: - Episodes of alcoholism - Revictimization in adulthood	Greater probability of: - Antisocial behaviour - Idealization of suicide - Use of marijuana - Revictimization in adulthood	Greater probability of: - Depressive symptomatology - Idealization of suicide - Smoking - Revictimization in adulthood	Greater probability of: - Revictimization in adulthood

Source: Own elaboration based on data from the research carried out by Exner-Cortens et al. (2012)

3.8 Consequences of victimization by violence in adolescent

The following table shows the possible psychological and physical consequences that victims of gender violence may suffer in adolescent couples:

Table 01. Consequence of victimization by violence in adolescent

As it can be seen in the table, the consequence that is repeated for all types of victimization, regardless the sex of the victim, is revictimization in adulthood.

The study conducted by Jouriles et al. (2017), does nothing more than confirm the existence of this risk through a relationship mediated by the psychological trauma that results from being a victim of this type of violence in adolescence. As noted by Callahan et al. (2003), post-traumatic stress (PTSD) is a particularly persistent consequence among women and men who have experienced very high and acute levels of TDV (Teen Dating Violence), as well as episodes of dissociation, anxiety and depression, all related to the presence of PTSD.

The encounter of this relationship mediated by the trauma throws a little hope in the possibility of breaking the cycle of violence and avoiding future victimizations through a good program of treatment and prevention of psychological sequels in young people.

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