

DATING VIOLENCE IN THE VIEW OF YOUNG COLLEGE STUDENTS

VIOLÊNCIA NO NAMORO NA VISÃO DE JOVENS UNIVERSITÁRIOS

VIOLENCIA DE PAREJA SEGÚN LA VISTA DE LOS JÓVENES UNIVERSITARIOS

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to analyze the knowledge of college students about situations of violence in dating relationships. Descriptive and cross-sectional research with a quantitative approach, carried out with 506 university students. Data collection was from May to June 2019 and analysis using descriptive statistics with frequency distribution in their absolute and relative values. It was observed that jealousy was identified as the main precursor of conflicts in relationships; and low school performance and unwanted pregnancy were seen as a possible consequence of violence in the relationship. Most participants had no evidence of depression on the Beck Score. Thus, it is concluded that some everyday situations experienced in relationships are not recognized as violence and, therefore, it is necessary to implement actions and policies to raise awareness and prevent affective violence in adolescence and youth.

KEYWORDS: Violence. Young adult. Adolescent.

RESUMO: Esta pesquisa objetiva analisar o conhecimento de jovens universitários sobre situações de violência nas relações de namoro. Trata-se de uma pesquisa descritiva e transversal de abordagem quantitativa, realizada com 506 jovens universitários. A coleta dos dados ocorreu entre maio e junho de 2019, recorrendo-se a análise por estatística descritiva com distribuição de frequência em seus valores absolutos e relativos. Observou-se que o ciúme foi apontado como o principal precursor dos conflitos nos relacionamentos; e o baixo rendimento escolar e a gravidez indesejada foram vistos como uma possível consequência da violência no relacionamento. A maioria dos participantes não apresentou nenhuma evidência de depressão pelo Escore de Beck. Assim, conclui-se que algumas situações cotidianas vivenciadas nos relacionamentos não são reconhecidas como violência e, dessa forma, é

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necessária a implementação de ações e políticas de conscientização e prevenção da violência afetiva na fase da adolescência e juventude.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Violência. Adulto jovem. Adolescente.*

RESUMEN: *Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el conocimiento de jóvenes universitarios sobre situaciones de violencia en las relaciones amorosas. Se trata de una investigación descriptiva y transversal de abordaje cuantitativo realizada con 506 estudiantes universitarios. La recolección de datos ocurrió entre mayo y junio de 2019, utilizando análisis estadístico descriptivo con distribución de frecuencias en sus valores absolutos y relativos. Se observó que los celos fueron identificados como el principal precursor de conflictos en las relaciones; y el bajo rendimiento escolar y los embarazos no deseados se vieron como una posible consecuencia de la violencia en la relación. La mayoría de los participantes no tenían evidencia de depresión en el puntaje de Beck. Así, se concluye que algunas situaciones cotidianas vividas en las relaciones no son reconocidas como violencia y, por lo tanto, es necesario implementar acciones y políticas de sensibilización y prevención de la violencia afectiva en la adolescencia y juventud.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Violencia. Adulto joven. Adolescente.*

Introduction

Dating violence is a serious phenomenon of high magnitude, with significant prevalence at national and international levels, as well as consequences on the physical and mental health of individuals (NELAS *et al.*, 2016). In this context, the abusive actions experienced in the intimate relationships of adolescents and young people are considered a worrying social problem (SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018).

According to the World Health Organization, dating violence can be defined as behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (WHO, 2009). Thus, dating violence is a strong predictor of marital violence, usually beginning in relationships in adolescence and early adulthood, and may intensify and become chronic in marital relationships (WHO, 2016; SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018).

The experience of violence in dating relationships stems from multiple causes of different natures, involving individual, social and cultural aspects, which require intersectoral actions for an effective approach (TAQUETTE; MONTEIRO, 2018). There are several explanatory models for the occurrence of violence in affective-sexual relationships among adolescents (BITTAR; NAKANO, 2017). Among them, one can highlight the

sociodemographic factors (gender, age, ethnicity, religion); environmental (observe violence in the community where they live); intrapersonal (depression, low self-esteem); contextual (consumption of alcohol and other drugs); and family (observe interparental violence, mistreating parenting practices, childhood sexual abuse), the latter being a basic predictor for its occurrence (TAQUETTE; MONTEIRO, 2018).

In the social field, policies to combat affective violence and the fight for equality between genders have become widespread in search of more egalitarian and symmetrical affective-sexual relationships. However, traditional values that endorse violence between intimate partners still persist and that adolescents and young people use as a premise to maintain aggression against their partners (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2016). All this is based on cultural machismo and symbolic power relations, which are still strongly present in contemporary times, and make gender violence perpetuated, and a reference to differentiate men and women (BITTAR; NAKANO, 2017).

One of the most aggravating factors of violence in dating relationships is the non-perception of what is configured as violence within the affective relationship and the naturalization with which they are perceived and reproduced in the daily lives of these adolescents and young people (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, the perpetuation of violence, especially in the early stages of life, has the potential to cause a significant impact, with physical, social, and emotional consequences in the lives of those involved (ANDRADE; LIMA, 2018). These consequences involve changes in sleep patterns; eating disorders; body image distortion, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, emotional dependence, and depressive behaviors, among others (ANDRADE; LIMA, 2018).

Moreover, in this context of affective relationships between younger individuals, victimization is bidirectional, i.e., both males and females perpetuate violence, with a difference only in the form and intensity of the violence spread against the partner (CONCEIÇÃO *et al.*, 2018). However, women are at greater risk of being victims in these relationships, suffering mainly sexual abuse by the intimate partner (WHO, 2016). It is noteworthy that many records on violence in dating relationships are incipient, due to the fact that many adolescents and young people hide these occurrences, out of fear, shame or difficulty in dialogue, especially among parents and family members who would be important references and support for their children (ANDRADE; LIMA, 2018; SIMÕES *et al.*, 2019).

Meanwhile, considering the information listed, and the scarcity of publications from the perspective of dating violence, especially when it comes to the identification of situations

of violence experienced and practiced against the intimate partner and coping with this phenomenon, the research started with the following question: how do young college students perceive the violence experienced in dating? Thus, the objective of the study was to analyze the knowledge of young college students about situations of violence in dating relationships.

Method

This is an analytical and descriptive research with a quantitative approach. The quantitative approach uses mathematical language to describe the causes of a phenomenon, the relationships between variables, among others. The analytical and descriptive research has as its main objective to describe characteristics of a given social reality (MINAYO *et al.*, 2009).

The research was developed between the months of May and June 2019, with 506 young university students enrolled in a federal public higher education institution and another private institution, both located in a municipality in the interior of northeastern Brazil. Inclusion criteria adopted were young people between 19 and 24 years old, duly enrolled in any of the Institutions' courses; being in an affective relationship currently or having already had at least one loving/affectionate relationship in the last three years. The exclusion criteria were young people who, even though they were enrolled in an undergraduate course at the researched institutions, had locked their enrollment or had a medical certificate during the research period.

The number of participants was established based on a sample calculation using the Sample Size Calculation for X-Sectional Surveys program, using a design of 1.5, considering the need to correct for imprecision due to the conglomerate sampling process. The calculation had a confidence level of 95% and sampling error of 5%.

The participants were recruited in the classroom, where the purpose of the research and its operation was explained to the class, and those who showed interest in participating could signal so that the researchers could approach them at a later time, in a way that was more convenient for those interested. The data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire designed by the researchers. The questionnaire had multiple choice questions, and was elaborated in three sections: 1) the first section had 19 questions referring to socio-demographic and economic data, with the following variables: age; sex; dating relationship; family income; parents' marital status; who lives with them; if they have ever suffered violence from their parents; 2) the second section had 28 specific questions referring to

intimate partner violence; 3) the third section included the Beck Depression Scale/Beck Depression Inventory, with 21 items (BECK *et al*, 1961). All the aforementioned items were self-applicable, so that the participant answered the questions that were most similar to his/her reality.

The data collected were analyzed from descriptive statistics through the distribution of their absolute and relative values. The 95% Confidence Intervals (95%CI) for the proportion were calculated, assuming the Binomial distribution.

The research followed all the ethical and legal precepts contained in resolution 466/2012, being approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Francisco Valley, under opinion number 2.936.52 and CAAE number 97242018.2.0000.5196. Initially, the participants were informed about the study objectives and, after due clarification, they were asked to sign the Informed Consent Form, making clear the researcher's commitment to the secrecy and confidentiality of information, and ensuring the participant's right to refuse to participate in the research and/or to withdraw from the study at any time.

Results

Analyzing the socio-demographic and economic profile of the study participants, we observed a higher proportion of young people between 20 and 24 years old (65.4%), women (74.1%), with income greater than one minimum wage (66.3%), living with father, mother, or both (58.1%), and being married or in a stable union (60.1%). Most of them do not have a boyfriend or were in a dating relationship at the time of the study (52.3%). There was also a predominance of those who did not perceive the neighborhood in which they lived as violent (82.0%), as well as those who did not suffer violence from their parents at any time in their lives (78.7%). Analyzing the level of depression according to Beck's score, it was observed that the majority (66.6%) did not show any depression (Table 1).

Table 1 – Sociodemographic and economic profile and risk stratification of depression, according to Beck's scale

	n	%	IC95%	
Age				
19 years old	175	34,6	30,6	38,9
20 to 24 years old	331	65,4	61,1	69,4
Gender				
Female	366	74,1	70,0	77,8

Male	128	25,9	22,2	30,0
Family income				
No fixed income or up to 1 minimum wage	169	33,7	29,7	38,0
More than 1 minimum wage	332	66,3	62,0	70,3
Parents' marital status				
Single/divorced/widow	202	39,9	35,7	44,3
Married/stable union	304	60,1	55,7	64,3
With whom one lives				
Alone	46	9,2	6,9	12,1
Father, mother or both	291	58,1	53,7	62,3
Relatives, friends or others	164	32,7	28,8	37,0
Has a boyfriend/girlfriend or is in a loving relationship				
Yes	236	47,7	43,3	52,1
No	259	52,3	47,9	56,7
Does one consider the neighborhood in which one lives violent?				
Yes	90	18,0	14,9	21,6
No	410	82,0	78,4	85,1
Has one ever suffered any violence from one's parents?				
Yes	107	21,3	17,9	25,1
No	396	78,7	74,9	82,1
Classification of depression by the Beck scale				
No depression	337	66,6	62,4	70,6
Mild depression	89	17,6	14,5	21,2
Moderate depression	52	10,3	7,9	13,3
Severe depression	28	5,5	3,8	7,9

Source: Prepared by the authors, based on survey data

Regarding the situations of violence perceived by young college students, it was observed that most of them agree that jealousy is one of the main causes of dating violence (92.3%), and that forcing the boyfriend/girlfriend to start sexual activity against their will is a form of violence (90.3%), while they agree with the existence of violence in dating relationships (96.8%). As for some attitudes practiced within the affective relationship, most disagree that when dating, one should always do what pleases the other (71.5%), a push is not a violent behavior (95.9%), and that boyfriends and girlfriends provoke violence by the way they dress (87.3%) (Table 2).

Most agree that low school performance (51.4%) and unwanted pregnancy (55.0%) can be consequences of dating violence, however, they disagree that uncommon friends harm the dating relationship (86.3%) and that they have the right to kiss their boyfriend/girlfriend whenever they want (84.3%). They also disagree that boyfriends and girlfriends can read each other's cell phone messages whenever they want (62.4%), and that boyfriends and girlfriends

should always tell their partners where they are (69.6%) or with whom they are (74.0%) (Table 2).

Table 2 – Situations of violence perceived by university students

	n	%	IC95%	
Jealousy is one of the main causes of dating violence				
Agree	466	92,3	89,6	94,3
Disagree	39	7,7	5,7	10,4
There is not such a thing as dating violence				
Agree	16	3,2	1,9	5,1
Disagree	490	96,8	94,9	98,1
When you are dating, you should always do what pleases the other person				
Agree	142	28,5	24,7	32,7
Disagree	356	71,5	67,3	75,3
A push is not a violent behavior				
Agree	21	4,2	2,7	6,3
Disagre	485	95,9	93,7	97,3
Boyfriends/girlfriends provoke violence by the way they dress				
Agree	64	12,7	10,1	15,9
Disagre	440	87,3	84,1	89,9
Low school performance can be a consequence of dating violence				
Agree	258	51,4	47,0	55,8
Disagre	244	48,6	44,2	53,0
Non-common friends harm the dating relationship				
Agree	69	13,7	10,9	17,0
Disagre	435	86,3	83,0	89,1
I have the right to kiss my boyfriend/girlfriend whenever I want				
Agree	79	15,7	12,8	19,2
Disagre	423	84,3	80,8	87,2
Unwanted pregnancy can be a consequence of dating violence				
Agree	277	55,0	50,6	59,3
Disagre	227	45,0	40,7	49,4
Boyfriends and girlfriends can read each other's cell phone messages whenever they want				
Agree	189	37,6	33,4	41,9
Disagre	314	62,4	58,1	66,6
Boyfriends and girlfriends should always tell their partners where they are				
Agree	153	30,4	26,5	34,6

Disagre	350	69,6	65,4	73,5
Boyfriends and girlfriends should always tell their partners who they are with				
Agree	131	26,0	22,4	30,1
Disagre	372	74,0	69,9	77,6
Forcing the boyfriend/girlfriend to initiate sexual intercourse is a form of violence				
Agree	456	90,3	87,4	92,6
Disagre	49	9,7	7,4	12,6

Source: Prepared by the authors from the research data

There was agreement from most young college students about the statement that dating violence occurs because couples think they have the right to impose themselves on each other (86%), while they disagree that a slap in the face is something normal in dating and does no harm (98.8%), or that dating violence is only a problem of the couple (97.4%). They also disagree that control over the other is justified by the feeling of liking a lot (98.2%), and that making fun of the boyfriend's opinions (80.8%) or exerting power over him/her is not violence (97.8%) (Table 3).

The participants do not agree that if their boyfriend/girlfriend feels unhappy, he/she has the right to yell at him/her, even if it is in public (95.5%), that boyfriend/girlfriend can only go out together (95.8%), or that they should dress to please each other (93.0%). They also do not agree that dating violence has no psychological consequences (95.5%) or that it only has physical consequences (96.8%) (Table 3).

Table 3 – Subtle situations of violence little noticed by university students.

	n	%	IC95%	
Dating violence occurs because couples think they have the right to impose themselves on each other				
Agree	434	86,5	83,2	89,2
Disagree	68	13,6	10,8	16,8
A slap in the face is a normal part of dating and is okay				
Agree	6	1,2	0,5	2,6
Disagree	497	98,8	97,4	99,5
Dating violence is a problem that only concerns the dating couple				
Agree	13	2,6	1,5	4,4
Disagree	493	97,4	95,6	98,5
The boyfriend/girlfriend only controls the other because he/she likes him/her so much)				
Agree	9	1,8	0,9	3,4
Disagree	497	98,2	96,6	99,1

Making fun of your partner's opinions is not violence

Agree	97	19,3	16,0	22,9
Disagree	407	80,8	77,1	84,0

Exerting power over your boyfriend/girlfriend is not violence

Agree	11	2,2	1,2	3,9
Disagree	494	97,8	96,1	98,8

If my boyfriend/girlfriend contradicts me, I have the right to yell at him/her, even if it is in public

Agree	23	4,6	3,0	6,8
Disagree	483	95,5	93,2	97,0

Couples can only go out if they go out together

Agree	21	4,2	2,7	6,3
Disagree	483	95,8	93,7	97,3

Boyfriends and girlfriends should dress to please each other

Agree	35	7,0	5,0	9,5
Disagree	468	93,0	90,5	95,0

Dating violence has no psychological consequences

Agree	23	4,6	3,0	6,8
Disagree	483	95,5	93,2	97,0

Dating violence has only physical consequences

Agree	16	3,2	1,9	5,1
Disagree	490	96,8	94,9	98,1

Source: Prepared by the authors from the research data

Discussion

The results of the study showed the predominance of female college students, with an income greater than one minimum wage and living with their parents, findings that corroborate a study conducted with college students from the Federal University of Paraná, in this same perspective (KREFER; VAYEGO, 2019). Most do not perceive the neighborhood in which they live as a violent place, are children of parents who are married or in a stable union, and reported never having suffered violence from their parents. It is known that exposure to violence at home is one of the precursors of risk for experiencing violence in dating relationships and, thus, adolescents and young people who have witnessed or witness marital violence for long or short periods tend to replicate the visualized abuses, acting aggressively in their relationships, by the tendency to naturalize violence in their daily lives (TAQUETTE; MONTEIRO,2018).



It was observed that the prevalence of depression among the participants was low, considering the application of the Beck Inventory Score, diverging from the result of a study conducted with nursing students from a federal public university, which showed a strong prevalence of moderate to severe depression, as well as anxiety symptoms, with women being those most affected (FERNANDES *et al.*, 2018). This seems to indicate that, in our model of society, the social role given to women, tied to the various cultural gender issues, has the potential to produce suffering and becomes a serious risk factor (KREFER; VAYEGO, 2019).

Another aspect that was identified in the results was the fact that the participants understood that jealousy is one of the main causes of dating violence. Despite being something considered common in love relationships, excessive jealousy can be a risk to the relationship and also to the mental health of those involved, becoming a problem in the relationship when the couple no longer has a healthy relationship and conflicts become harmful to the quality of the relationship (TURATTI; LUCAS, 2016).

From this perspective, a study conducted with 3,205 adolescents aged 15 to 19 years, students in the 2nd year of high school in public and private schools in 10 Brazilian capitals, showed that jealousy and infidelity have been factors that legitimize and justify physical aggression between boyfriends, both by boys and girls. Such legitimacy is supported by gender norms that are expressed in violence as a construction of masculinity, in the trivialization of female physical violence and in physical violence against girls perpetrated by both sexes (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2016).

Violence as a construction of masculinity is expressed when young men qualify physical aggression as something intrinsic to men and perceive it as something practiced more by boyfriends against their partners than the opposite. On the other hand, violence committed by girls is considered less harmful, and the perpetration of physical aggression is identified as a form of retaliation and self-defense against the aggression suffered by their partners (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2016).

As for forcing the boyfriend/girlfriend to initiate sexual activity against their own will, most of the participants surveyed recognize this context as dating violence, agreeing that unwanted pregnancy can be a consequence of this violent behavior within the relationship. In a research from the University of Goiás, the intimidation and/or induction to participate and/or perform sexual conducts in disagreement with them was identified as sexual violence. Although this type of abuse was recognized as violence by some participants, it was also quite

perpetuated, which demonstrates a certain trivialization (SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018).

Regarding some attitudes in a relationship, most disagree that one should always do what pleases the partner, that one should dress in a way that pleases the other, and that boyfriends and girlfriends provoke violence by the way they dress. In a research conducted with 30 young female college students, the profile of male domination was perceived in the way these individuals treated them as if they were objects, evident in the actions of determining how and with whom they should relate; the posture of social behavior; and the determination of how they should or should not dress (SIMÕES *et al.*, 2019). Aggression of psychological nature is commonly practiced in relationships, understood as a strategy used to supposedly avoid betrayal and control the behavior of the partner, and in many cases it is not recognized as violence itself (SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018).

Considering the fact that pushing another person is or is not seen as violence, for most participants in this study, this attitude was yes identified as a violent act against the partner. In this context, a survey conducted in Portugal, with students aged 16 to 24, attitudes such as "throwing objects at another person"; "kicking or head-butting"; and "violently pushing" were also perceived as violent attitudes, corroborating the study in question, and most of these acts were practiced by males towards girls (BESERRA *et al.*, 2016). The social scenario in which this violence erupts is characterized by the prevalence of macho ideology intermingling gender relations, resulting in the naturalization of male domination (BITTAR; NAKANO, 2017). Bourdieu also highlights the symbolic violence, soft, insensitive, invisible to its own victims, which is essentially exercised through purely symbolic ways of communication and knowledge. Symbolic violence is different from physical violence, but in some cases it can be expressed in this form. This social relationship offers a unique occasion to apprehend the logic of domination, exercised in the name of a symbolic principle known and recognized by both the dominant and the dominated, of a language (or a way of speaking) and/or of a lifestyle (or a way of thinking, speaking, or acting), and this type of aggression becomes much more damaging when situated in issues of race, gender, ethnicity, and social class (BOURDIEU, 2007).

Another important finding was the fact that the participants disagreed that the partner has the right to kiss the other whenever he/she wants, even if this is not the other's will at the moment. In the Lisbon School of Education, the research conducted with adolescents identified that 23.7% of them have already been kissed by their partner when they did not

want to, as well as have been touched sexually against their will, and threatened to have sexual intercourse with their partners also against their will (GAMA; VERÍSSIMO; TOMÁS, 2017). It is noteworthy that the context of dating violence contributes to decreased quality of life and psychological well-being of those involved in the situation of violence, as well as low academic performance and school dropout (BORGES, 2016).

The students, from their answers, disagree that boyfriends and girlfriends can read each other's cell phone messages whenever they want, even without authorization. These findings are consistent with the results of other research, in which intimate-affective relationships are characterized by abusive behaviors, with jealous and controlling partners, who tend to prohibit and/or determine with whom the partner should talk, the clothes they should wear, and control the password of the cell phone or messaging apps (SIMÕES *et al.*, 2019; SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018). It is known that the feeling of insecurity often results in the unbridled desire to control the actions and attitudes of the other, due to a persistent cultural conception, which can make these controlling attitudes be identified as acts of love and care (SIMÕES *et al.*, 2019). However, all these behaviors make up the characteristics of psychological violence (SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018).

It must be considered that there is a need for a more detailed look at the meanings attributed to the various situations of daily violence, taking into consideration the broader limits that this problem presents. Thus, the understanding of violence that is perpetuated within dating relationships needs to be seen beyond the understanding of care and love, because these relationships permeate situations of domination, through symbolic power. This social construction, based on the domination of the other, is addressed by Pierre Bourdieu, who also uses the concept of domination to analyze gender relations, where the masculine almost always dominates the feminine (BOURDIEU, 2007). The process of symbolic domination happens in a subtle and efficient way because most women are not aware of their condition of dominated (BITTAR; NAKANO, 2017).

As for the agreement of most young people on the fact that dating violence occurs because couples think they have the right to impose themselves on each other, and the disagreement that control over the other is justified by the feeling of liking a lot, it meets the male control permeated in affective relationships in a process of social cultural construction, where symbolic violence against women is identified, which is perpetuated throughout history (BITTAR; NAKANO, 2017). Although male domination is quite recognized even by male

individuals, it can also be a premise perceived and perpetrated by women, who may identify the love partner as an object of their belonging, generating the feeling of possession, which comes accompanied by jealousy and, subsequently, physical aggression (OLIVEIRA *et al.*, 2016).

The socially constructed division between the sexes is evident and thus acquires a whole recognition of legitimation, conforming it to the principles of a mythical worldview, rooted in the arbitrary relationship of domination of men over women. The social order works as an immense symbolic machine that tends to ratify the male domination on which it is based: it is the social division of labor, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each of the two sexes (BOURDIEU, 2007). Violence is the result of the complex interaction of individual, relational, social, cultural, and environmental factors. Understanding how these factors are related to violence is one of the important steps in the public health approach to violence prevention (DAHLBERG; KRUG, 2007).

Furthermore, there was disagreement among most participants that a slap in the face is something normal in dating; that dating violence is only a problem for the couple; and that making fun of the boyfriend/girlfriend's opinions or exerting power over him/her is not violence. These findings are in line with another research that pointed out issues about relational violence, in which 14% of the interviewed students have already been made fun of by their partner, who made fun of them in front of other people (GAMA; VERÍSSIMO; TOMÁS, 2017). It is considered that this dynamic involving mixture of love and violence, especially in the dating relationships of adolescents and young people, can be a predictor for future violence in the relationship, with an impact on the harmonious living of the couple and their children (BESERRA *et al.*, 2016).

Violence in intimate relationships is not an uncommon experience among young people, and is currently widely recognized as a problem of worrying dimensions and alarming effects, not only at the individual level, but throughout the social sphere. The younger age groups are not immune to this problem, suggesting both the existence of significant indicators of victimization and aggression, and the maintenance of discourses legitimizing this type of violence (CARIDADE; MACHADO, 2013).

In the results obtained, it was also observed that the subjects disagree that if one of the two feels angry with his/her partner, he/she has the right to yell at him/her, and that they can only go out if they go out together. A similar study showed that, among the behaviors suffered by the victims, insults, emotional blackmail, the fact that their partners yell at them with the

intention of intimidating them, such as preventing them from having friends, and from talking or going out with them, stand out (BORGES, 2016). It is noteworthy that situations that fall under prohibitions and intimidation in affective relationships are often not understood as violence, based on the myth of romantic love, which causes many couples not to stand up to these situations because they believe in an ideal of eternal happiness and that the aggressions will pass, not recognizing that this presents itself as a trigger for long-term situations of violence (FERRIANI *et al.*, 2019).

With regard to the consequences of dating violence, college students state that there are psychological and physical consequences. Physical violence is identified as the most recognized modality, however, psychological and moral aggression are more prevalent despite often not being perceived as abusive. Thus, psychological and moral violence may be more present in relationships (SOUZA; PASCOALETO; MENDONÇA, 2018). Dating violence during adolescence is a frequent event and is part of the reality of young people from different social classes; violence in intimate relationships is a multicultural phenomenon, possessing high extent and severity, and brings consequences to the physical and mental health of those involved, in the short and long term (SILVA *et al.*, 2019).

Caridade and Machado consider that understanding dating violence depends on an integrative model of the various comprehensive, complex and multidimensional factors, whether individual, interpersonal, structural and/or cultural, that mutually interact in dating violence behaviors (CARIDADE; MACHADO, 2013). Violence is not part of human nature, it is a complex and dynamic biopsychosocial phenomenon that forms and develops in the context of society. The interaction of these predispositions with family, cultural, community or other factors may give rise to violent situations (DAHLBERG; KRUG, 2007).

Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate the domineering and harmful character experienced in many dating relationships, especially in the youth phase, with most situations of abuse not recognized as violence, and naturalized within these affective relationships. Most of the participants recognize that there is violence in dating relationships, although they do not identify several daily situations as violence *per se*, and understand that jealousy is seen as a predisposing factor for the occurrence of violence in dating relationships.

Considering the beginning of dating relationships during adolescence and youth, and in order to avoid the experience of affective relationships with violence, it is necessary to

raise awareness already in these phases of life in order to prevent the occurrence of violence in long-term affective relationships. To this end, effective public policies are essential, aimed at enlightening adolescents and young people about the aspects involving this problem, and enabling the construction of strategies for promoting healthy intimate relationships from the deconstruction of myths of romantic love. Although it is a limited context, the results obtained contribute to the debate about the role that educational institutions, from schools to even universities, assume, or can assume, in the disclosure of the phenomenon and in the intervention of the problem.

The limitations of the study involve the fact that many participants refused to participate in the research, justifying not knowing what to say about the theme in question, showing the complexity of approaching the theme of violence, especially when it comes to that experienced in dating relationships.

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