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## Marital Social Skills and Marital Satisfaction of Women in Situations of Violence

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### Abstract

Marital Social Skills (MSS) are related to Marital Satisfaction (MS). However, abusive relationships present a deficit in the use of health strategies for conflict management and damages to those involved. This study evaluated in 23 women, with an average age of 35 years, in situations of intimate partner violence, the MSS, MS and the forms of violence suffered. For this, it used the MSS Inventory, MS Scale and a Violence Questionnaire. The results showed a predominance of psychological violence, a high level of marital dissatisfaction and a deficient repertoire of MSS. Negative correlation was identified between MSS, Proactive Self-Control and Marital Dissatisfaction; positive correlation between Assertive Conversation and Marital Dissatisfaction (and Marital Interaction) and negative correlation between Self-Assertiveness, Proactive Self-Control and situations of violence. Thus, the importance of specific MSS training for this population and the understanding of the nature of assertive responses in the sociocultural context is noted.

**Keywords:** social skills; marital social skills; marital satisfaction; violence against women; intimate partner violence.

### Habilidades Sociais Conjugais e Satisfação Conjugal de Mulheres em Situação de Violência

#### Resumo

As Habilidades Sociais Conjugais (HSC) estão relacionadas à Satisfação Conjugal (SC). Contudo, relacionamentos abusivos apresentam déficit na utilização de estratégias saudáveis para manejo dos conflitos e prejuízos para os envolvidos. Este estudo avaliou, em 23 mulheres, com idade média de 35 anos, em situação de violência por parceiro íntimo, as HSC, a SC e as formas de violências sofridas. Para isso, utilizou o Inventário de HSC, a Escala de SC e um Questionário sobre Violência. Os resultados mostraram predominância de violência psicológica, alto nível de insatisfação conjugal e um repertório deficitário de HSC. Foi identificado correlação negativa entre HSC, Autocontrole Proativo e Insatisfação Conjugal; correlação positiva entre Conversação Assertiva e Insatisfação Conjugal (e Interação Conjugal) e correlação negativa entre Autoafirmação Assertiva, Autocontrole Proativo e situações de violência. Assim, nota-se a importância do treinamento de HSC específicas para essa população e da compreensão da natureza das respostas assertivas no contexto sociocultural.

**Palavras-chave:** habilidades sociais, habilidades sociais conjugais, satisfação conjugal, violência contra as mulheres, violência por parceiro íntimo

### Habilidades Sociales de Pareja y Satisfacción Conyugal de Mujeres en Situación de Violencia

#### Resumen

Las Habilidades Sociales de Pareja (HSP) están relacionadas a la Satisfacción Conyugal (SC). Sin embargo, las relaciones abusivas presentan déficit en la utilización de estrategias saludables para manejar conflictos y pérdidas entre los involucrados. Este estudio consistió en la evaluación de 23 mujeres, con edad promedio de 35 años en situación de violencia por parte de su pareja íntima, evaluó también las HSP, la SC y formas de violencia sufridas. Se utilizó el Inventario de HSP, la Escala de SC y un Cuestionario sobre Violencia. Los resultados mostraron predominio de violencia psicológica, alto nivel de insatisfacción conyugal y un repertorio deficitario de HSP. Se identificó correlación negativa entre HSP, Autocontrol Proactivo e Insatisfacción Conyugal; correlación positiva entre Conversación Asertiva e Insatisfacción Conyugal (e Interacción Conyugal) y correlación negativa entre Autoafirmación Asertiva, Autocontrol Proactivo y situaciones de violencia. De esta forma se nota la importancia del entrenamiento de HSP específicas para esa población y la comprensión de la naturaleza de las respuestas asertivas en el contexto socio-cultural.

**Palabras clave:** habilidades sociales; habilidades sociales conyugales; satisfacción conyugal; violencia contra las mujeres; violencia por parte de pareja íntima

The process of violence against women sometimes is receiving little attention in society (Cardoso & Costa, 2019). The verses taught to children, such as in the Brazilian popular song “the Clove (perpetrator) fought with the Rose (person assaulted)”, without any punitive/inhibitory consequence for the violent

behavior and with the social support (flowers) for the violent behavior, show how abusive relationships may cause prejudices in the quality of life and health of those ones involved (Shorey, Tirone, Nathanson, Handsel, & Rhatigan, 2012). This is one dilemma of the contemporary society. However, the legal

measures for punishment and/or advertency of the perpetrators have been ensured in Brazil by means of Law 11,340 from August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006 (BRAZIL, 2006), popularly known as “Lei Maria da Penha” and, in consequence, the “cloves” have been penalized by their violent actions against the “roses”.

Regardless of some “cloves” being punished or adverted by violent acts against women, the possible deficits in social skills of the “roses” in denouncing the abusive behaviors or even finishing relationships persisting with aggressions, may difficult the mapping of violent relations. This datum is characterized as a problem of public health, since the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2011) estimates that at every 15 seconds one woman is battered in Brazil and 70% of violent acts against women, resulting in death, were perpetrated by intimate partners (those with whom women have [or had] an affective-sexual relationship, e.g. boyfriends, fiancées, husbands).

Besides the already mentioned consequences, the violent behavior identified in many ways (e.g. physical, psychological; sexual; patrimonial; moral violence, acc. Brazil, 2006) also results in prejudices on interpersonal relationships and in the well being, both of the individual in situation of violence that has its social cycles reduced and controlled by the perpetrator, as well as in the whole family, which can be affected on its paternal, educational and labor competence (Dillon, Hussain, Loxton, & Rahman, 2013; Matheson, Daoud, Hamilton-Wright, Borenstein, Pedersen, & O’Campo, 2015; Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002; World Health Organization [WHO], 2012). One way of behaving different from the violent way, involves the use of marital social skills (Del Prette, Murta, Cangussú, & Del Prette, 2014). Those are named as a set of behaviors embracing the exchange of affection, search by approximation, problem solving, self-regulation, communication, emotional expression, responsiveness to the partner, sexual skills and others (Bolsoni-Silva, Nogueira, & Carvalho, 2015; Cardoso, 2018; Cardoso & Del Prette, 2017; Gottman & Rushe, 1995; Gottman & Silver, 2014; 2015; Plessis & Clarke, 2008; Villa & Del Prette, 2013).

Thus, it is assumed that the more marital social skills are used by partners, the greater is the satisfaction with the relationship in its different dimensions (Cardoso, 2018; Cardoso & Del Prette, 2017). Dela Coleta (1989), when defining the marital satisfaction, proposed three aspects that are interlinked in this process: (a) Marital Interaction, in other words, how much each

partner is close and looks for contact; (b) Emotional Aspects, regarding the way in which the partner handles the feelings in the relation; and (c) Structural Aspects of the relation, regarding the practicality in fostering rules, organization, agreements and strategies for solution of conflicts.

Some studies were developed aiming to verify the relation existing between constructs social/marital skills and marital satisfaction. Sardinha et al. (2009) investigated with 50 couples the relation between marital satisfaction and the social skills perceived by the spouses. The authors identified that the empathy of partners and the expression of feelings were related with all aspects of marital satisfaction indicated by Dela Coleta. Villa e Del Prette (2013) also evaluated the marital satisfaction and social (and marital) skills with a population of 188 men and 218 women. Data from this study allowed verifying that the more women had skills of proactive self-control, reactive self-control and expressiveness/empathy, the greater the level of marital satisfaction of the spouses. For female spouses, the more the husbands used skills of assertive conversation, assertive self-affirmation and expressiveness/empathy, the greater their satisfaction.

Thus, it is being understood that marital social skills are related with marital satisfaction. However, abusive relationships have a deficit in the use of healthy strategies for managing conflicts and prejudices to the ones involved (Cardoso & Costa, 2019). Considering those aspects, this study had the objective of analyzing marital social skills, marital (dis)satisfaction and degrees of violence against the women perpetrated by intimate partner. In order to do that it was searched to (a) identify the types and degrees of violence, (b) evaluate the level of marital (dis)satisfaction, (c) characterize a repertory of marital social skills, (d) correlate variables “marital (dis)satisfaction”, “marital social skills” and “type/degree of violence”.

## Method

This study is according to the assumptions of the National Health Council regarding the Guidelines and Standards Regulating Research involving Human Beings (Resolution number 466 from December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012) and was approved by the Committee of Ethics in Research from the Universidade Federal do Maranhão under protocol CAAE: 57294116.2.0000.5087 and opinion number 1.683.219.

### *Design of the research*

It is a study of collection and correlation, with quantitative nature, aiming to describe and predict the relation between variables. This type of study allows to understand the phenomena and uses numeric and percentage indicators about the researched variables (Dancey & Reidy, 2014).

### *Participants*

The population of this research was composed by 23 women from “Maranhão” who had record in the Reference Center for Care of Women in Situation of Violence – “Woman’s House” (CRAM), located in the city of São Luís-Maranhão. Women demonstrating

interest and availability to answer the instruments were selected, according to inclusion criteria: older than 18 years of age, having record in CRAM, suffering violence by intimate partner.

The age of women interviewed ranged from 23 to 55 years old, with mean of 35.74 (SD = 8.9). The sociodemographic data collected were extracted from the “Form of Woman Identification”, used in CRAM (see Table 1).

Most of the women in situation of violence were in stable unions, had complete high school, catholics and had no income or lived with less than one minimum salary. It is highlighted that, according to ethnicity, most of the women declared to be brown.

Table 1.  
*Socio-demographic profile of the Investigated Population*

	Variables	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency (%)
Marital Status	Married	1	4.3
	Divorced	2	8.7
	Dating	2	8.7
	Separation of bodies	5	21.7
	Separated judicially	1	4.3
	Stable union	12	52.2
Schooling	Fundamental Incomplete	7	30.4
	Fundamental	2	8.7
	High School Incomplete	3	13
	High School	8	34.8
	Superior Incomplete	2	8.7
	Superior	1	4.3
Religion	Catholic	13	56.5
	Evangelic	9	39.1
	No religion	1	4.3
Ethnicity	White	5	21.7
	Brunette	3	13
	Brown	12	52.2
	Black	3	13
Salary Range	Less than one minimum wage	6	26.1
	One minimum wage	5	21.7
	More than one minimum wage	5	21.7
	No income	7	30.4

### *Instruments and materials*

#### Questionnaire about type and degree of violence against woman practiced by intimate partner

This is an instrument of self-reporting, validated by Almeida (2013), investigating type and degree of violence against women practiced by intimate partner. The questionnaire has 36 items, divided into five factors with value *Cronbach's alpha* highly satisfactory: (a) Physical Violence ( $\alpha = 0.93$ , 8 items), (b) Psychological Violence ( $\alpha = 0.90$ , 8 items), (c) Sexual Violence ( $\alpha = 0.96$ , 7 items), (d) Violence involving Humiliation ( $\alpha = 0.94$ , 10 items) and (e) Violence involving Threats ( $\alpha = 0.89$ , 3 items), indicating precision by the internal consistence of the instrument. The questionnaire is composed by sentences describing types of violence in the context of relations between intimate partners and may be punctuated according to the frequency that situations of violence happen with the respondents. The point scales indicates (1) never, (2) rarely, (3) sometimes, (4) most of the times, (5) always. This way, the minimum score obtained in the instrument regards the number of items of the instrument (36, without occurrence of situations of violence) and the maximum score corresponding to the quantity of items multiplied by the maximum number of occurrences (180, high level of violence) and the central point corresponding to the number that is in the exact interval between the two axes (108, with occurrence of violence in intermediate stages). The same calculation was made to the factorial scores of the instrument, according to the amount of items per factor.

#### Marital Satisfaction Scale

The Marital Satisfaction Scale (Dela Coleta, 1989) was originally developed for the Spanish population by Weiss and Palos (1988), translated and validated to Brazil by Dela Coleta, in 1989. This instrument has 24 items, each one with three options of choice: "I like the way it has been" (1 point), "I would like it to be a little different" (2 points), and "I would like it to be very different" (03 points). The items of the instrument evaluated, inversely (in other words, the greater the punctuation is, the lower the level), the satisfaction with emotional aspects of the spouse (05 items), satisfaction with marital interaction (10 items) and satisfaction with the way of organizing, establishing and abiding to rules by the spouse (9 items). The version of the instrument for Portuguese had satisfactory *Cronbach's alpha* coefficient both on its totality ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), as well as on subscales of

evaluation of "Emotional Aspects" ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ), "Marital Interaction" ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ) and "Structural Aspects" ( $\alpha = 0.79$ ). Due to the instrument not having a manual for correction, the same method of evaluation used in the questionnaire presented before was used, including the factorial and total scores. The system of minimum punctuation corresponds to the number of items that the scale has (24, very satisfied with the relationship) and the maximum corresponds to the number of items multiplied by the maximum quantity of points (72, very dissatisfied with the relationship). The central point corresponds to 48, indicating the average obtained in the instrument.

#### Marital Social Skills Inventory

It is a self-reporting instrument developed by Villa and Del Prette (2012) that has satisfactory psychometric and temporal stability properties (Del Prette, Villa, Freitas, & Del Prette, 2008), and is composed by 32 items describing interpersonal situations involving the marital context by means of a *likert* scale of five points, where the respondent estimates the frequency in which the behaviors happen in each interpersonal situation in the couple. Results are obtained by means of five factors: (a) Expressiveness/Empathy ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ); (b) Self-assertiveness ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ); (c) Reactive Self-Control ( $\alpha = 0.59$ ); (d) Proactive Self-Control ( $\alpha = 0.56$ ); and (3) Assertive Conversation ( $\alpha = 0.57$ ). The analysis *alpha of Cronbach* for the set of those items is equal to 0.82, indicating internal consistency. The interpretation of the items of this instrument is made according to results from total and factorial scores evaluating the repertoire of marital social skills as deficit (percentage below 25), median of near the average (percentage over 25 and under 75), and very elaborated (percentage over 75). Results obtained in this instrument help the planning of focal interventions in the context of marital relations and in mapping existing resources by the spouses (Villa & Del Prette, 2012).

#### *Procedure of data collection*

The first author used the place selected to invite the potential participants identifying themselves and showing the objectives of the research and possible contributions that it could bring for understanding the theme. After invitation and acceptance of users to participate in the research, the Term of Free and Informed Agreement (TFIA) was presented, signed in two copies, one of them delivered to the participant and the other remaining with the responsible researcher. Ethical



aspects regarding secrecy and other information were mentioned and sheltered. Next, the first author made the collection, individually, with women. First was applied the Questionnaire about the type and degree of violence against women by intimate partner, then the Marital Satisfaction Scale and, finally, the Marital Social Skills Inventory. Questions were answered with the first author during the research. After application were identified on recorded documents of CRAM, the socio-demographic data of the participants, aiming to characterize the sample. The time used for each interview ranged between 25 and 50 minutes. At the end of the research, the first author thanked the participation and collected the instruments in a folder.

#### *Procedure of data analysis*

Answers were type in a spreadsheet in the *Statistical Package for Social Science* (version 20.0) program, where were made descriptive statistical analyzes by means of the calculation of means, standard deviation (SD), percentages, central points and presentation of frequencies of answers. Calculation of the Central Point (CP) was used as parameter for interpretation of the average of results of the “*Questionnaire about type and degree of violence against the woman practiced by intimate partner*” and of the “*Marital Satisfaction Scale*”, because it deals with instruments that still do not have a manual of correction and not using zero as the minimum value obtained in their scales of answers. This method attributes a central value for tracing a parameter between answers obtained by women. Inferential statistical analyzes were also made according to scores obtained in the instruments, in order to correlate variables “marital social skills”, “violence” and “marital (dis)satisfaction”. For this analysis was made a *Spearman's rank (p)* and adopted the size of effects of correlations according to Dancey and Reidy (2013): weak: 0.1 to 0.3, moderate = 0.4 to 0.6, strong = 0.7 to 0.9 and significance of correlations with  $p < 0.05$  (significant) and  $p < 0.01$  (highly significant). This type of analysis was selected because, according to those authors, it is the most indicated one for situations where data do not satisfy the conditions of parametric tests or when the number of participants in the research is small.

### **Results**

Data obtained in this research will be presented in six topics. Initially will be indicated the results of

characterizations of types, degree and type of violence suffered by intimate partner described by women. Next, will be characterized the level of marital (dis)satisfaction and the repertoire of marital social skills of those women. According to results will be presented the data of correlation coefficients  $\rho$  of *Spearman* for “marital social skills”, “violence against women by intimate partner” and “marital (dis)satisfaction”. Marital satisfaction will be presented according to the inverse score of the Scale of Marital Satisfaction (in other words, the greater the score, the greater the marital dissatisfaction), given that no one of the women investigated in this study had satisfaction with the relation.

#### *Descriptive Analysis of the type and degree of violence by intimate partner*

Characterization data obtained in the investigated population indicated the presence of violence in the affective-sexual relations of women interviewed. In the evaluation of the general construct, violence had mean of 83.04 (SD=19.77) and Central Point (CP)=108. The other data of the instrument, regarding the types of violence against women perpetrated by intimate partner, indicated means of 17.52 (SD=7.72) and CP=24 for Physical Violence; 23.56 (SD=5.79) and CP=24 for Psychological Violence; 11.26 (SD=5.57) and CP=21 to Sexual Violence; 24 (SD=7.17) and CP=30 for Violence involving Humiliation; and 6.69 (SD=3.49) and CP=9 for Violence involving Threats. From those data, Psychological Violence was closer to the standard established by means of the calculation of CP.

#### *Descriptive analysis of the level of marital (dis)satisfaction of women in situation of violence by intimate partner*

Regarding the total level of Marital (Dis)Satisfaction, women had average 59.83 (SD=8.47) and were over CP=48. Regarding the specific factors of the instrument, Marital Interaction had average 24.61 (SD=4.54) and CP=20; Emotional Aspects 12.09 (SD=1.95) and CP=10; Structural Aspects 23.13 (SD=3.05) and CP=18. All factors were above the standard established by means of calculation of central points, indicating Marital Dissatisfaction over the average.

#### *Descriptive analysis of the repertoire of marital social skills of women in situation of violence by intimate partner*

Women in situation of violence by intimate partner, in average 66.00 (SD=21.54), self-evaluated themselves with a total deficit of the repertoire of Marital Social Skills, corresponding to the fifth lower percentage of

the global normative sample of the manual of application of the Marital Social Skills Inventory (Villa & Del Prette, 2012). In this case, being indicated for training of marital social skills. Regarding factor scores, Factors: Expressivity/Empathy, mean 16.00 (SD=9.22), percentage 10; Self-Assertiveness, average 16.69 (SD=7.23), percentage 10; and Proactive Self-control, average 5.17 (SD=3.52) percentage 25, also have deficit of mean score. Factors: Reactive Self-control, average 8.34 (SD=3.19), percentage 30 and Assertive Conversation, average 11.56 (SD=3.24), percentage 40, have lower average scores of those skills.

*Correlational analysis between marital social skills and marital (dis)satisfaction of women in situation of violence practiced by intimate partner.*

Data obtained by means of Spearman's rank correlation evidence that Marital Dissatisfaction (total) correlated significantly with Expressivity/Empathy in a negative and moderate way ( $\rho=-0.46$ ;  $p=0.025$ ), indicating that the greater the level of Marital Dissatisfaction, the lower occurrence of skills of Expressivity/Empathy. In subscales of Marital Satisfaction, factors Marital Interaction ( $\rho=-0.45$ ;  $p=0.03$ ) and Emotional Aspects ( $\rho=-0.57$ ;  $p=0.004$ ), also correlated negatively and moderately with skills of Expressivity/Empathy. Those data show that the greater the Dissatisfaction with Emotional Aspects and Marital Interaction, the smaller the social skills of Expressivity/Empathy.

The total repertoire of Marital Social Skills ( $\rho=-0.46$ ;  $p=0.02$ ) and the class of Proactive Self-control ( $\rho=-0.52$ ;  $p=0.01$ ) correlated moderately and negatively with Emotional Aspects of Marital Dissatisfaction of women, indicating that the greater the occurrence of activities of Proactive Self-control, the smaller the level of Marital Dissatisfaction. Assertive Conversation had positive and strong correlation with factor Marital Interaction ( $\rho=0.72$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and moderate with Total Marital Dissatisfaction ( $\rho=0.59$ ;  $p=0.003$ ). Thus, the more Assertive Conversation, the greater the Marital Dissatisfaction with Marital Interaction and with Total Marital Dissatisfaction.

*Correlation analysis between marital dissatisfaction and situations of violence against the woman practiced by intimate partner*

The results of correlation between Marital Dissatisfaction and situations of violence indicated that Emotional Aspects and Physical Violence were correlated in a moderate and positive way ( $\rho=0.563$ ;  $p=0.005$ ).

Thus, the greater the level of Physical Violence, the greater the level of Total Marital Dissatisfaction.

On the same way, Emotional Aspects ( $\rho=0.51$ ;  $p=0.01$ ), Structural Aspects ( $\rho=0.53$ ;  $p=0.009$ ) and Total Marital Dissatisfaction ( $\rho=0.53$ ;  $p=0.009$ ) were correlated moderately and positively with Violence involving Threats. So, the greater the levels of Violence involving Threats, the greater the level of Total Marital Dissatisfaction and with Structural and Emotional Aspects. Marital Interaction ( $\rho=0.46$ ;  $p=0.026$ ), Emotional Aspects ( $\rho=0.66$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and Total Marital Dissatisfaction ( $\rho=0.52$ ;  $p=0.01$ ) were also moderately and positively correlated with General Situations of Violence. Violence involving humiliation was correlated positively and moderately with Marital Interaction ( $\rho=0.67$ ;  $p=0.001$ ), Emotional Aspects ( $\rho=0.51$ ;  $p=0.013$ ) and Total Marital Dissatisfaction ( $\rho=0.62$ ;  $p=0.001$ ). Data signaling that the greater the levels of violence by intimate partner, the smaller the levels of Dissatisfaction with Emotional Aspects and Marital Dissatisfaction.

*Correlation analysis between marital social skills and situations of violence against the women practiced by intimate partner*

Results of  $\rho$  of Spearman for Sexual Violence and Self-Assertiveness ( $\rho=-0.46$ ;  $p=0.027$ ) and General Situations of Violence and Proactive Self-Control ( $\rho=-0.47$ ;  $p=0.021$ ) were moderately and negatively correlated. Thus, the more General Situations of Violence happen, the smaller the occurrence of Marital Social Skills of Proactive Self-Control and, the more Sexual Violence happens, smaller are the skills of Self-Assertiveness of women.

On the other hand, it was found strong and positive correlation between Violence involving Humiliation and Assertive Conversation ( $\rho=0.86$ ;  $p=0.001$ ) and a moderate and positive correlation between General Situations of Violence and Assertive Conversation ( $\rho=0.58$ ;  $p=0.003$ ). In this respect, the greater the level of skills of Assertive Conversation, the greater the occurrence of Violence involving Humiliation and General Situations of Violence.

## Discussion

It was initially noted that the higher levels of situations of violence indicated by the interviewed women was of psychological nature. This type of violence encompasses, according to Law "Maria da Penha" (Brazil, 2006), factors Psychological Violence, Violence

involving Humiliation and Violence involving Threat that are contained in the questionnaire used in this research. This type of violence still is sub-notified when compared with physical violence. However, documental study made by Gadoni-Costa, Zucatti and Dell'aglio (2011) in a service of psychology of a police station "of the woman", identified that situations of psychological violence affect directly women and people living with them. Physical violence may trigger a series of losses, highlighting the cognitive ones (negative thoughts regarding itself, the others and the future), emotional ones (low self-esteem, depression, fear, shame) and interpersonal ones (social isolation) for the woman, preventing them of having a satisfactory quality of life (Matheson et al., 2015; Pinheiro & Williams, 2010). Besides, this type of violence may have greater incidence when associated with the use of psychoactive substances by the perpetrators, as found in study from Gadoni-Costa et al. (2011), where "aggressors using alcohol/drugs have 124.0% more chances to commit psychological violence against the woman when compared with non-users" (p. 225) – datum confirmed in the protocol of characterization of 11 women in CRAM.

Reports about sexual violence appear more frequently in results of the instrument, even when this type of aggression was the reason for complaint being in the protocol of identification of CRAM. For this datum, it is possible to suppose the shame of the woman in talking about this type of violence for another person. This type of feeling linked with fear and distorted beliefs also difficult the woman of searching for professional and specialized help, staying in the abusive relation (Murta, Ramos, Tavares, Cangussú, & Costa, 2014). According to several authors (Krug et al., 2002; Schraiber, D'oliveira, & França-Junior, 2008) this type of violence may be found hidden due to multiple cultural and family rules that make easy the shame of the woman in talking about the sexual violence. Some of those beliefs may be: "she was sexually abused because she teased!", "She is married with him, sure she must have sex with him!", "If they are married, why did she not want to have sex?", "She wished to marry him, so she must follow the 'rules of the marriage!'", "Thus the culpability of the woman by the violent act may aggravate feelings of shame of the women by means of sexist beliefs (Murta et al., 2013).

Physical violence is part of a considerable number of denounces, by means of the protocol of characterization of CRAM. According to data from the WHO (Krug et al., 2002), the woman normally denounces this violent act after two times in which a severe

mistreatment happens. Thus, during this interval, happens the culpability of the victim and the woman hopes that the perpetrator change or return to be the person that he was before the aggression (Sinclair, 2010). This way, it may be considered that the process of denouncing violent behaviors of the perpetrator does not happen immediately due to, basically, four types of creeds and feelings: (1) believing that the partner will change, (2) thinking that she is guilty for what happened, (3) fear of retaliation by the perpetrator (including other aggressions or emotional blackmail) and, (4) shame about what will the society think regarding this situation that she is living (Cardoso & Costa, 2019; Dattilio, 2009; Serra, 2011).

Regarding marital satisfaction, results from the research show that the level of marital dissatisfaction of women is high. This may happen due to the series of psychological and physical prejudices that the woman suffers in this situation (WHO, 2012). Other factors that may collaborate for those levels regard the behaviors that women expect from the partners in the relation. However, those actions do not occur or appear in a frequency under the expected one.

Besides those results, data from this research evidence that the general repertoire of marital social skills of women in situation of violence was classified as a deficit, needing intervention. This result corroborates with study of Murta et al. (2014) indicating that the permanence and acceptance in abusive relations are facilitated by the deficits of social skills which are reinforced by badly adaptive beliefs about the marital relation. Thus, the "bad treatments are seen as inherent to intimate relations and to have an abusive partner (male or female) is seen as being better than staying alone" (Murta et al., 2014, p. 14).

Besides those questions, deficits in marital social skills, jointly with financial and emotional difficulties, may contribute for the permanence of women in a violent relation (Canaan, 2015). The Marital Social Skills Training is an essential tool for the promotion of health, marital well being and coping with violence by intimate partners (Cardoso, 2018; Cardoso & Costa, 2019; Cardoso & Del Prette, 2017).

The analysis by factors reinforces that women in situation of violence by intimate partner also had a repertoire deficit in the marital social skills of Expressivity/Empathy, Self-Assertiveness and Proactive Self-control, evidencing difficulties regarding expressing feelings and thoughts in the marital relation, in order to warrant their rights to individuality in the relation, demonstrating



empathic comprehension, recognizing signals of physiological alteration in itself and in the other.

Those types of deficit corroborate for situations of conflict between partners, which do not use adequate strategies for solution of problems such as: recognizing places and time to discuss situations, demonstrating support, keeping control of emotions and others (Cardoso, 2018; Plessis & Clarke, 2008; Villa & Del Prette, 2013). Also, the deficit in metacognitive skills (regarding not thinking about one's own thoughts and behaviors in the relation), may favor the wearing of the marital relation (Dattilio, 2009).

On the other hand, the repertoire of marital social skills of Reactive Self-control and Assertive Conversation were classified, by results of normative sample, in medium. This result describes the emission of the ability, however it may signalize no proficiency in its emission, since during the application of instruments many women reported that they preferred not to talk with the partner anymore, because the partner always communicates by means of aggressions and verbal offenses. Del Prette e Del Prette (2013) signalize that deficits of fluency in social skills may be related to a series of environmental and personal factors hindering social interactions. This is the case of violent reactions between intimate partners, which have several losses due to the deficits in social skills specific to the marital context.

Deficits of social skills also contribute for high levels of marital dissatisfaction. The correlations found indicate that the social skills of Expressivity/Empathy are in opposite directions regarding Marital Dissatisfaction. Thus, the more skills of empathy, the greater the level of marital satisfaction with the interactive and emotional aspects of the relationship. Those results are in a similar direction with studies of Sardinha et al. (2009) and Villa and Del Prette (2013), signaling empathy as the primordial factor for marital satisfaction. In its cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2014), it may be considered that women in situation of violence may believe that the partners do not understand them (cognitive dimension), have no feelings by them (affective dimension) and do nothing to keep the relation (behavioral dimension).

The deficit level of marital social skills and of the class of Proactive Self-control correlated negatively with the increase of Marital Dissatisfaction. So, when the partners do not used skills to recognize the stages of physiological and emotional alterations on themselves and on the other, they process information in maladaptive forms and do not recognize the proper moment to

talk about the situation. Thus, there is a probability of a conflict with more magnitude happening (Cardoso, 2018; Gottman & Silver, 2014; Plessis & Clarke, 2008). Thus, skills of Proactive Self-control, Self-Assertiveness and Expressivity/Empathy may be considered protective classes for situations of violence. This is due to the fact that they are incompatible behaviors to the aggressive performance in the relation and contribute for the quality of the relation. Meanwhile, the difficulty in issuing those abilities and the occurrence of abilities incorrectly / erroneously may facilitate processes of marital conflicts, resulting in violence.

Results of this research indicate that the more abilities of Assertive Conversation, the greater the level of Total Marital Dissatisfaction and Dissatisfaction with Marital Interaction. This datum contrasts with study from Teixeira, Pinheiro, Lobato Gondim and Lima (2015), since the assertiveness was identified by those authors as a protective factor of violent relations and improvement in the marital relation. As a hypothesis to this result, it is raised the possibility of women having difficulties to understand items of this class of marital social skills. Another possibility comes from comments made during the application of the instrument, regarding the rude, menacing and humiliating behavior of the partner when talking with the woman, without using Assertive Communication (straight, without harming the partner and priming by the quality of the relation). Thus, many women reported that they preferred that the partners did not say anything or were not close to them. Those data are according to study of Cornelius, Shorey e Beebe (2010) showing that the inadequate form in keeping conversation eased the processes of marital conflict and amplified situations of violence. Another relevant factor passes through the comprehension of the nature of assertive, passive and aggressive answers. A behavior may be evaluated based on those standards by means of the cultural context in which people are inserted (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2014). In the scene of violence, the woman in this situation, by using responses of communication (assertive and direct), many times is punished by the perpetrator, keeping a standard of dissatisfactory relation, as signalized by the data of this research.

Violent situations, general, physical and involving threat, were related to high levels of marital dissatisfaction of women, on its emotional and interacting aspects. Thus, the more situations of violence to which women are submitted, the greater the level of marital dissatisfaction. This level of marital dissatisfaction may

be related with a series of prejudices than women suffer, among them the decrease of self-esteem, diverse psychological disorders, labor prejudices and others (Dillon et al., 2013; Murta et al., 2014; OMS, 2012; Shorey et al., 2012).

Contrary to violent and aggressive behaviors in the relation are the social skills (Del Prette et al., 2014). Results evidence that the more marital social skills of Self-Assertiveness and Proactive Self-Control, the smaller the occurrence of situations of violence (general and sexual). Thus, highlights the importance of expressing feelings directly, as well as of skills of problem solving and negotiation regarding sexual questions, so that there is a greater level of satisfaction with the relation (Cardoso, 2018, Cardoso & Del Prette, 2017; Del Prette et al., 2014).

Skills of Assertive Conversation point to a greater relationship with situations of general violence and violence involving humiliation. This datum differs from what is pointed by literature, since the social skills of assertiveness and communication are seen by several researchers as essential for a good marital relation and as a preventive factor of violent performances (Teixeira et al., 2015). However, besides aspects previously mentioned about inadequate communication in the marital relation (Gottman & Silver, 2014; Cornelius et al., 2010), it is possible that the partners do not identify places and/or moments adequate for conversation and resolution of social conflicts (Plessis & Clarke, 2008), resulting in an emotional uncontrolled period and consequent humiliation to the partner. This eases the maladaptive processes of communication between the couple and makes difficult the well-being in the relation.

Thus, it is possible to say that a good relation between partners is founded in the repertoire of marital social skills that each partner has for dealing with demands from the affective-sexual relation. A large repertoire of marital social skills may cooperate for developing socially competent marital relations (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2014; Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017) and ease the positive personal vision of each partner regarding the relation, which would cooperate for a greater level of marital satisfaction and less situations of violence by intimate partners.

### Final Considerations

Results from this study cooperate for filling a theoretical gap about the evaluation of the repertoire of marital social skills in women in situation of violence by

intimate partner. Considering that, by being a reasonably new field (marital social skills), literature about this theme is still scarce and a little or nothing was found. This research contributes for theoretical formulations and possible future problematization for other studies to be developed.

Regarding professional achievements, results of this study contribute for the understanding of the classes of abilities used by women in situation of violence and their relation with marital (dis)satisfaction. Thus, it provides to professionals, acting directly with this public, subsidies to promote intervention strategies based in specific social skills, and to base the processes of handling violent relations, with the skills that women have to end relations persisting in aggressions.

It is noted that, despite violence consisting in a complex phenomena involving a relation between at least two people, the decision taking and use of strategies for problem solving must be used by one of the parts. In this case, when the perpetrator persists in aggressions, it is due to the woman to identify and recognize the limits that must be place in a marital relationship, so that there is quality of life and preservation of the health of both.

Results of this study must also be considered with their limitations. Initially, the small number of women interviewed may provide a small representative result regarding a global phenomenon (violence). This happened due to the unstable flow of women in the specialized center, as well as to the limited time that women had to finish all the instruments, because they usually claimed to be in a hurry to execute other activities. It is suggested that new researches are made and/or replicated with a greater number of women.

It would also be relevant to apply studies with couples in situation of violence, thus evaluating both the perspective of the woman, as well as of the perpetrator. Those data could contribute to formulate specific interventions in the context of the relationship and to visualize which are the abilities currently in deficit (and used as solution of conflicts) by the perpetrator.

Another limitation found in this research regards the use of some instruments. (1) The application of the "Questionnaire about type and degree of violence against the woman by intimate partner" had some difficulties, due (a) to the high number of items, (b) presenting questions that could converge in one, (c) promoting the sensation in respondents of being answering the same thing in different moments, (d) presenting items about sexual violence consecutively

(which may have been uncomfortable for the respondents in talking about this theme for the first author of this study). A possibility of applying another questionnaire may be the instrument of the World Health Organization Violence Against Women (WHO VAW), validated by Schraiber, O'Latorre, França-Júnior, Segri and D'Oliveira (2010), by means of a trans-cultural study in several countries of the world, including Brazil. (2) The Marital Social Skills Inventory, applied to this research population also had some challenges, due to the (a) high number of questions and difficulty of comprehension of some items by the studied population, and the (b) inverse items making difficult the comprehension of women about how to score the items. Those limitations indicate opportunities of new studies to be developed. Among them, the possibility of new researches with the Marital Social Skills Inventory for the population of women (and couples) with low schooling level.

Finally, it is considered that the use of marital social skills opposes violent relations. In this sense, training those skills, not only for women, but for the couple, may be an essential tool for the development of socially competent relationships, based on the respect by the other and amplification of marital satisfaction. This research serves as a propeller for new studies that may be made in the field of marital social skills. Taking into consideration the deficit aspects of those skills that may cooperate for violent behaviors or, even, permanence in an abusive relation.

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