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Symbolic violence among adolescents in affective dating relationships*

Violência simbólica entre adolescentes nas relações afetivas do namoro

Violencia simbólica entre adolescentes en las relaciones afectivas entre novios

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² *In memoriam.*

ABSTRACT

Objective: Understanding how adolescents signify their affective relationships and situations of conflict/violence within the dating context. **Method:** A qualitative research with an empirical group comprised of adolescents from a state/public school, using focus group techniques and interviews. The analysis was performed through the interpretation of meanings method based on the hermeneutic-dialectical perspective. **Results:** A total of 19 adolescents participated in the study. Two central theme categories emerged: “Meanings of adolescents’ affective relationships” and “From the (de)construction of symbolic violence to the expression of other forms of violence”. **Conclusion:** The results show that it is possible to understand situations from affective adolescent relationships in which the legitimization of symbolic violence against women is identified. We believe that acting on the origin of violence at the beginning of adolescents’ relationships is the best way to fight or minimize it, aiming for democratizing gender relations and preventing conjugal violence.

DESCRIPTORS

Adolescent; Violence; Violence Against Women; Dominance-Subordination; Adolescent Health; Nursing.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence during dating relationships is not a rare problem. Despite it having great social relevance, gender violence among adolescents' intimate relationships is a recent topic in scientific literature. The lack of studies on this subject can be justified by the idea that dating is not a place of violence.

Among the hypotheses for such a dominant social representation there is the perception that gender violence is only found in more stable or more structured relationships, situations that exclude dating/casual relationships which are common among teenagers⁽¹⁾.

It is observed that the differences between the gender roles in adolescence can be exacerbated and consolidate the acceptance of violence as a version of love or as acceptable under certain circumstances⁽²⁾, and also as an especially conducive period to adherence to some dangerous myths about romantic relationships – unbreakable, the association of love with suffering. The social scene in which this violence erupts is characterized by the validity of the male chauvinistic ideology interlacing gender relationships, resulting in naturalizing male domination.

Similar to marital violence, dating violence can have a significant impact on the victim resulting in several short and long term consequences such as: emotional disturbances, low self-esteem, depression, anger, anxiety, suicidal ideation, school failure, substance abuse, eating behavior disorders, post-traumatic stress, or risky sexual behaviors⁽³⁻⁴⁾. In this context, we highlight the huge importance of studies on this form of social violence to improve affective-sexual experiences among adolescents and to prevent domestic violence⁽¹⁾.

One of the pioneering studies carried out in Brazil on violence in affective-sexual relations among 15 and 19-year-old adolescents from public and private schools in five different regions of the country found that approximately 87% of the approximately 4,000 surveyed adolescents suffered some kind of violence within the dating context. It was also observed that the various forms of violence in the affective-sexual relationships among adolescents usually originate from aggressive experiences between parents witnessed by these adolescents in a type of disrespectful, recidivist, naturalized communication that can affect the entire family network and be reflected in overall society⁽¹⁾.

In the international literature, Portuguese authors found that jealousy plays a role of demonstrating love within the dating context of affective relationships among adolescents, even in a confusing way, and it can justify violence. Violence is seen as a form of intimidation for women, and differently for men as a response to "female provocation"⁽⁴⁾.

It is noticed that adolescents involved in these contexts of affective-sexual violence, whether victims or perpetrators, usually do not seek professional help⁽⁵⁾. Given this fact, elaborating preventive measures and measures that will help to early identify the problem are challenges to qualify systemic action on these events. There are difficulties regarding the implementation of prevention and intervention programs, among which we can point out: the stigma associated with seeking help for personal problems; adolescents' concern about privacy and protection of their affective relationships;

their appreciation for self-sufficiency and adolescents' lack of information to evaluate the quality of their affective relationships.

In the area of health and especially for nursing, exploring issues involving dating violence among adolescents can provide subsidies for generating health care advances and implementing care actions to this group according to their unique demands. Understanding their relationships and the ways in which abusive relationships can harm adolescents' health and well-being are critical components in expanding nursing knowledge and the consequent development of effective approaches to care for adolescents⁽⁶⁾.

We recognize that we must go beyond understanding the meanings attributed to this violence which requires a broader perspective, transposing the limits that the problem seems to impose (the invisibility of violence), in other words seeking to understand the affective relations and situations of violence within the dating context taking into account the context and the situation in which they manifest themselves in the perspective of domination relations situated in the symbolic region. The process of symbolic domination takes place subtly and efficiently because most women are not aware of their submissive condition. They themselves participate in this process of domination, insofar as everything that is in the field of the symbolic has the power to mask the arbitrariness of inculcation and of that which is inculcated⁽⁷⁾.

Affective relationships and situations of conflict/violence within adolescents' dating context will be understood from the light of theorizing⁽⁷⁾ regarding power, violence and symbolic domination, as well as gender being a theoretical analytical category⁽⁸⁾.

The relevance of the present study consists in providing subsidies to develop strategies that consider the context of adolescents' socialization, opening space for deconstructing social prejudices, the *machismo* cultural heritage for new articulations in order to recreate the boundaries between roles, functions and qualities for each gender, capable of modifying the current ideologies. Acting on the violence origin at the beginning of adolescents' affective-sexual relationships may represent the best way to fight it or minimize it. Thus, the present study aims at understanding how adolescents signify their affective relationships and situations of conflict/violence within the dating context.

METHOD

We privilege the qualitative dimension of social research to understand the study object, whose approach seeks to deepen the complexity of phenomena and particular group processes⁽⁹⁾. In this study the phenomena are affective relations and conflicts/violence within adolescents' dating context, in which adolescents were considered to be individuals between 15 and 19 years of age⁽¹⁰⁾.

Regarding the methodological path followed, the researcher first immersed herself in the study field, approaching randomly selected adolescents who were in the established age group in the second year of High school (night term) of a state/public school in Ribeirão Preto/São Paulo, Brazil.

The empirical profile sample was defined through screening these students, inviting the adolescents from two classes to participate in the study and applying an instrument designed by the researcher. In this instrument, the adolescents stated whether they were willing to participate in the research, interested in the subject and admitted to having any affective relationships. Thus, the initial empirical profile sample was composed of 19 adolescents of both genders who fulfilled these inclusion criteria, regardless of their sexual orientation, regularly enrolled at the school in the academic year of 2014.

Among the techniques for data construction, Focus Groups (FG) and open/in-depth Individual Interviews (II) were used, which were scheduled by the researcher according to the availability of the study participants' (I – Interlocutors), authorization from teachers, school administrators and adolescents' tutors.

The FG technique contributed to unveil the opinions and perceptions of study participants on their affective relationships within the dating context, ways of negotiating conflicts and their family relationships. Images and questions provided by the researcher/moderator were used as initial motivation for conducting the groups and topics of discussion, addressing: the opinion of adolescents about the current dating context, situations of jealousy, images of couples in which the woman was wearing short clothes, images of psychological violence, images of sexual violence, family images in which parents' fights/arguments were witnessed by children, and images of alcohol and drug use in adolescence. It is important to note that the environment of the groups was welcoming and ensured privacy to facilitate debate and deepen discussions. In the same sense, the chairs were organized in a circle in order to promote participation and interaction of those involved.

We chose smaller groups with the intention to reach more openness/expressions from each participant. The first focus group consisted of nine participants (five male and four female participants), while the second focus group consisted of ten participants (six male and four female). Therefore, two focus groups with a duration of 1 hour and a half to 2 hours each were carried out, as established for developing this technique⁽¹¹⁾.

After first being encouraged to discuss the study theme in the focus groups, weekly and individual interviews with each adolescent were then scheduled in a private place so that the participants were free to talk about the proposed topic. A script was developed guiding the interview, which included the following information: identification of the adolescent and the members of their family, context and family relations; information related to apprehension of specific aspects about adolescents' experiences within their dating relationships and manifested forms of violence.

At this moment when sufficient and in-depth information was obtained to describe the phenomenon under study, the empirical profile sample size was established through data collection process and concomitant analysis⁽¹²⁾. Thus, the interviews were concluded with a total of 15 adolescents, with it not being necessary to interview all the focus group participants or carry out further screenings in other school classes.

For analysis of the constructed data, the interpretation of meanings method was used which is based on the hermeneutic-dialectical perspective and involves interpreting the context, the reasons and logic of speeches and actions, then correlating the data to the set of interrelationships and conjunctures, among other analytical bodies⁽⁹⁾.

The research was carried out respecting the ethical aspects for the development of research with human beings, and data construction only began after obtaining authorization from the cooperating institution and approval of the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Nursing of Ribeirão Preto/SP, under Opinion number 312/2013. The data construction stages were recorded and the assent terms were signed by adolescents under the age of 18. In addition, consent terms were signed by those responsible for adolescents under 18 years and by the adolescents who were older than 18 years.

RESULTS

SOCIOCULTURAL PROFILE OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

A total of 19 adolescents participated in the study; nine in the first focus group and ten in the second. In relation to gender, 11 were males and eight females. The mean age of the participants was 17 years, ranging from 16 to 18 years. All adolescents reported working and studying at night to balance work and school. The choice for this institution is justified due to its central location in the city of Ribeirão Preto, which would facilitate access to a population of adolescents from different regions of the city. It was verified that of the 19 adolescents participating in the study, 14 resided in different districts of the city.

By analyzing the speeches of the adolescents who participated in focus groups and interviews, the meanings attributed to their affective relationships and the situations of conflict/violence within the dating context were unveiled.

MEANINGS OF ADOLESCENTS' AFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

In this first central thematic category, two core meanings were identified. The first related to the meaning of "The meanings of steady and casual dating and their relationships with jealousy, gender and symbolic violence", articulates information about how adolescents perceive some dimensions of sexuality, the beginning of sexual life, affective-sexual interactions and the positioning of adolescents in relation to issues of gender and violence in the relationship.

Casual dating appears as an alternative form of dating, with aspects most emphasized by adolescents related to a relaxation of more complex arrangements, which are relevant in stable relationships:

It's that story that being single gives you freedom that you don't have while dating. I think it's one of those jealous relationships, those that trap one to one another (18 fem. – FG2).

The sexual relationship is present within the dating context, and it may also be present in the casual dating context. Gender diversity is still striking in the relationships, however they are already perceived as attenuated, as one of the teenagers expresses herself a little more sexually. Female behavior is often similar to male behaviors in the contemporary world:

Because both parties nowadays want 'to get it on' (have sex), but men are more open, like: they want it and they talk about it. In the past, you had to waste a couple of years of your life to have decent sex. Nowadays you come closer and you say, 'Hi, how are you?' And women say, 'Let's go do it!' (I3 male. – FG1).

Despite this apparent change, the social requirement for woman's virginity or them having as little sexual intercourse as possible is still present:

(...) my current date who is now my first (girlfriend), she called me, and then it happened (we had sex). It happened at the club, behind a waterslide. She was still a virgin, thank God! (I3 male. – FG1).

The speed with which relationships occurs is fast, as technology and the internet are present as tools of connection between peers. What it is observed is that the internet enables these relationships to develop in a quick and practical manner:

My girlfriend I met online in a chat, I was 15 years old. I saw a picture of a beautiful girl and started talking to her. She started to flirt back (...) I turned on the webcam and she was a beautiful woman! The next day I went to her friend's house. It took her about 2 hours to turn on the webcam! Then when I arrived at her friend's house (...) we talked for about 20 minutes, we hooked up, we went out and then we started dating. On the first day I met her, the next day I saw her in person and on the following day we were already dating (I3 male. –FG1).

The adolescent speeches also show that dating is related to feelings, affection, and that it demands appropriate behavior and clothing for the seriousness that the relationship requires, usually unilaterally on the part of the woman; as well as a place where "serious" people can attend:

It's not a serious relationship because she's wearing those clothes, in an inappropriate place... And he looks like a player, who wants her but does not feel anything for her (I8 fem. – FG2).

When you are dating steadily, I think it's more like couple dating, like going out to dinner with friends, the movie theater, the mall. It's not about going to the club alone (...) For me, this isn't dating (...) Yesterday my grandfather came to tell me that the boy who works with him took his girlfriend to the rodeo and when he went to the bathroom, the guys approached his girlfriend. And, as a little group they said: 'You brought her here, if she is dating she has no business coming here, now she is ours'. So you got a sense that that is not the place to go when you are dating someone (I5 fem. – FG1).

Jealousy comes across as a sign of love and care, and if absent, the woman just becomes an object of male desire and not his true girlfriend. In the speech that follows the participant affirms that if the man is not jealous, then he probably has no intention of respecting his girlfriend or to be in a steady relationship with her:

He is not jealous of her because she is naked. He just wants to take advantage of her, he does not want to date her seriously (I8 fem. – FG2).

Connections between jealousy and the myth of romantic love can be observed. Below one of the adolescents mentions that she misses the jealousy of the boyfriend, associating jealousy with love:

Sometimes I care a little, because it's not like I want him to be jealous, but sometimes he is too relaxed... and I am very jealous (I8 fem. – II).

By considering certain characteristics as unique to a specific gender, the speeches can be configured as facets of violence:

Her going out like that (wearing short clothes) when I'm not around, no way! (I4 male. – FG2).

Clothes are something else, it depends on the type of clothing, like this one he doesn't like, he thinks it's too revealing. He doesn't like me wearing shorts on the street (I5 fem. – II).

On the other hand, teenager I8 verbalizes the direct relationship between dating and violence:

If they were dating they probably would be arguing, because we just fight! (I8 fem. – FG2).

In the second core meaning, "Social isolation – 'if you can't, the other also can't', the meanings present in the dating relationships of adolescents are marked by the reciprocal control of the partner's life, in the sense of wanting to know everything that happens in their daily lives and moving away from their social circles due to being in a relationship and the jealousy that permanently surrounds the relationship, as we can observe from the following speeches:

What I care about is telling me everything. Because I tell her everything, so I want her to tell me everything. If she tells me things without details, I ask her why she didn't tell me everything. (I3 male. – FG1).

Because your boyfriend doesn't want you to have male friends, and we don't want them to have female friends. If you cannot the other also cannot... (I5 fem. – FG1).

In the following excerpt, other connections between jealousy, the myth of romantic love and symbolic violence in adolescent relationships can be observed:

I'm dating again, but she doesn't live here ... She's so jealous... She doesn't want to let me go to the gym, to do nothing (I17 male. – FG2).

She wanted me to only have male friends. I'm relaxed, I'm not jealous, but she, Oh my God! After ten days I could not take it anymore, because of her jealousy (I1 male. – II).

FROM THE (DE)CONSTRUCTION OF SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE TO THE EXPRESSION OF OTHER FORMS OF VIOLENCE

In the light of gender inequality, we analyze this second thematic category, which also consists of two core meanings. In relation to the first core meaning, "Positioning of women against male domination", we discuss male domination, which presents itself as a process of social construction, as a form of symbolic violence against women, reproducing itself throughout history.

The interviewed adolescents position themselves as reproducers of the gender ideology, contributing to male domination as a form of symbolic violence, which can be noticed from the following statements:

This girl takes a picture wearing these kind of clothes, she goes out to parties wearing this type of outfit, I don't think this is something a girl in a relationship should do (I7 fem. – FG1).

When you are in a relationship you have to respect yourself, you can't go out wearing these clothes, even if your boyfriend lets you (I10 fem. – FG2).

The adolescent speeches affirm that they comply, even in an unconscious way, with suffering insensitive, invisible, soft, naturalized violence, which makes them reaffirm a behavior like that of I3:

One day I took her to the mall, I bought rings to surprise her. I bought a necklace with the letter of my name, so everybody would know she is mine (I3 male. – FG1).

Contradicting relationships of inequality and redefining power in dating relationships, adolescents also stand against what is expected of them socially:

I believe that he has no say in my clothes, I cry but I don't change my outfit. Even my father doesn't tell me what to wear, a boyfriend even less. There is no way that I'd change (I7 fem. – II).

Not every woman who wears short clothes is a woman who devalues herself, but nowadays society and boys think she does (I10 fem. – FG2).

In the second core meaning, "Situations of physical, sexual and psychological violence within the dating context: who really is the aggressor?", among the forms of aggression, psychological violence – talking loudly, yelling at each other, threatening, controlling the partner's life, following/stalking them, among other examples – appears in a striking way in the daily life of adolescents' affective-sexual relationships in our study:

Because if one day, I don't know, it happens and I find out that she cheated on me, I have two reactions. If she is standing in front of me and I see it happening, it would be much worse. I think I'd hit the guy a lot, but I don't think I'd hit her with a punch, I don't see myself hitting her with a punch, but I'd squeeze her arm until it broke (I3 male. – II).

Regarding physical violence, I10 fem. – FG2, said:

But men are always more violent, in any fight men easily lose control and want to fight, women don't, they just talk and talk...

Opposing this feminine passivity, we have the following statements:

I say something, and she's already started cursing, hitting me. She hits and hits me (I3 male. – II).

She is the one who starts it, because she can't stand the words and she starts the aggression, because she knows I cannot hit her. She would slap me, punch me and throw things at me. She bites, scratches, pinches, kicks me (I3 male. – II).

DISCUSSION

Understanding the meanings that adolescents gave to their affective relationships and situations of conflict/violence within the dating context was provided through the interpretation of meanings method based on the hermeneutic-dialectical perspective⁽⁹⁾, in which several points can be highlighted.

We can observe that both steady and casual dating are forms of adolescents' affective-sexual interactions, an exercise of sexuality, socialization and identity construction. The obligation of fidelity is one of the difficulties minimized by casual dating, providing a greater flexibility of affective exchanges. This loosening provided by casual dating is highlighted by the fact that dating decreases the freedom to come and go and demands a lot of responsibility⁽¹³⁻¹⁴⁾.

Internet-mediated experiences as concrete forms of loving experiences endowed with specific characteristics have demonstrated a new form of interaction emerging in contemporary times. The influence of information technology has increasingly intertwined with love relationships, and has consequently altered them, considering that these were (at least previously) only possible in most occasions face-to-face. These are current love experiences that reveal new social practices and actions, and do not replace the interaction without technological mediations, but rather complement them, potentialising ways of creating affective ties⁽¹⁵⁾.

Gender issues were central to the choices that surrounded relationships. Regarding women who at the same time desire to discover oneself, there was also a need to 'preserve' themselves. From the speeches we can also verify the importance of a woman's virginity. The gender perspective recommends that differences between the sexes should not be naturalized, considering them as a consequence of a social and cultural construction of the meanings of what it is to be a man and what it is to be a woman, hierarchies and power relations in each time, space and social group⁽⁸⁾.

Circumventing such a perspective, jealousy appeared as a key component of the speeches constructed by adolescents as they approached and debated casual and steady dating relationships. Romantic jealousy is quite frequent in human relationships, and understood as any instinctive response of the person presented in several behavioral or cognitive situations, in fear of losing the partner and in the presence or not of a possible rival. Therefore, jealousy can be conceived as an emotion experienced by an individual who realizes that the partner's love, affection, and attention are being given to a third party, when they believe that these opportunities should be offered to themselves⁽¹⁶⁾. The thought of infidelity, even if unconfirmed, signals jealousy in a loving partnership.

The unveiled experiences and meanings firstly presented jealousy as an expression of love and care, meaning as a component that added an extra touch in loving relationships. However, there were also revelations about other meanings for jealousy: the adolescents related and approached it, albeit silently, as one of the significant aspects present in the process of creating gender violence, meaning that symbolic violence was present⁽¹⁷⁾. Although sometimes invisible in the eyes of the adolescents, jealousy as part of romantic relationships was also placed as a reason for social isolation, as presented in the literature⁽¹⁶⁾.

Thus, the speeches point to jealousy as a tool for control and domination in affective-sexual relationships, converging with the reflections produced by the feminist theory of gender, which draws our attention to critically analyze the situations in which jealousy emerges as a synonym of love, and also to identify possible connections between the myth of romantic love, jealousy and symbolic violence as part of the process of building gender violence. Male domination is exercised as a form of materialized violence in fights and symbolized by being the woman's fault. Women are inserted in a society historically marked by androcentric bias, the base of masculine domination, and are the main victims of symbolic violence.

In general terms, jealousy appears to be one of the most important elements in the affective-sexual bonding of adolescents; it is considered an expression of love and care, and is inscribed in a broader sense of romantic love. However, in the discursive game, it can be perceived that these senses are amplified, so they also express (although in an antagonistic and subtle way) that jealousy is a tool of power and control over the partner, a form of symbolic violence, capable of reflecting and (re)producing gender inequalities within the context of affection and disaffection between couples.

Our findings corroborate a study⁽¹⁸⁾ which refers to violence within the dating context as a repeating pattern, presenting a relational dynamic in which one of the elements of the couple, through violence, intends to control, dominate, and submit the other. It initially assumes forms of socially accepted domination that over time become more serious, frequent and destructive.

Due to a lack of knowledge and the masking in which social relations of inequality between the genders are founded, women "(...) submit themselves to the norms that define what the body should be, not only in its perceptible configuration, but also in its attitude, in its presentation"⁽¹⁹⁾. It is verified that women are seen as an object of male desire, which can be characterized as symbolic violence against women. It is important to highlight the need to move the debate on the reduction of women as an object of violence – expressed in exclusive victimization – for promoting a subject who experiences situations of violence – anchored in a relational perspective of gender⁽²⁰⁾.

Teenager I3 bought a chain for his girlfriend symbolizing his love, but his main intention is for everyone to know that she "belongs to him". Symbolic violence is at first defined as covert violence, which gives it particular powers and specific effectiveness. Such violence cannot be used independently, as it is not a distinct type of violence. It represents masked physical violence and is therefore invisible and forgotten. However, female adolescents also seek a fair position pertaining to men and a deconstruction of this almost imperceptible violence, which women constantly suffer.

Regarding the identified physical and psychological violence, our findings corroborated a relevant national study⁽¹⁾ in which both are present among the affective-sexual relationships of adolescents, in both genders. However, young women suffer more serious consequences when they are physically assaulted to the extent that they require more emergency care. Adolescents highlighted verbal assaults, the partner's attempts

to control their lives, emotional blackmail and pressures they underwent to perform certain acts or adopt behaviors as the most common types of psychological violence.

An analysis of the participants' speeches are also similar to those found in another study⁽²¹⁾ carried out in the public and private high schools of the city of Recife (Pernambuco state), in which the violence practiced within affective/ amorous relationships of adolescents presented a pattern: the partners attacked each other, both physically and psychologically, revealing that in order break these relational dynamics it is necessary to intervene with the couple, not only the adolescent man or woman. The reciprocity of violence within the dating context presupposes that the cultural patterns of male chauvinism are still not well structured in this phase of life, which makes this group a priority for intervention measures. Taking these dynamics into account in which there may be a mixture of love and violence means preventing future violence between partners in adulthood.

In the case of marital violence, statistics show that there is a greater incidence of violence of men against women, while in adolescence violence is committed and suffered by both genders. Moreover, there are particularities regarding the relationships of young people, since these are more fluid, less committed and there is less social pressure for the relationship to be maintained. There is no economic dependency, children or shared assets that could "justify" the continuity of the relationship with violence⁽¹⁾.

In view of the data, we emphasize the importance of assessing risk situations to which adolescents may be subjected, identifying signs in a relationship that is beginning and that could, in the very near future, be characterized as a violent relationship⁽²⁰⁾.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the meanings given by adolescents to their affective relationships and situations of violence within the dating context point to different facets of symbolic violence. Articulations between masculinity and violence notably present themselves with a very pronounced inflection, to the point that the second expression is understood as belonging to the former, in a manner that is almost naturalized.

In common sense, both attitudes that excuse or condone violent male behaviors as well as those that impose a certain degree of violence from male behavior still persist, so that the actors in these behaviors receive a "manly certificate". In this scenario of mechanical association between being male and being violent, gender relations are constructed and reproduced from the logic that violence would be a reference to differentiate men from women.

In the daily scenes portrayed by the adolescent participants in this study, the codes of conduct express themselves in what is defined as acceptable and desirable related to the clothing worn, sexual behavior, or places to go to when you are dating, among other examples. Theoretically, this refers to the social use of the body as a form of distinction between the genders, of conduct standardization and the use of signs/objects. In light of the concept of male domination, we can say that a position and legitimate attitudes within the dating context is not conferred to

women, as represented by attributes of delicacy and submission in their acts, which could harm those attributes; while a masculine position and power is conferred to men, clearly strong and present in the adolescents' affective-sexual relationship, in addition to being reaffirmed by both genders.

Considering the results, we can say that the explanatory models for the presence of violence in affective-sexual relationships among adolescents are diverse. This study aimed to analyze violence in affective-sexual relationships among

adolescents to offer supports that consider the cultural models of gender existing in our society for the possible formulation of intersectoral policies and programs, both in the areas of prevention and intervention as well as for the recovery of perpetrators and victims of this type of violence. In this sense, planning and execution actions that confront this phenomenon involve different areas – health, education, social assistance and justice – and require the participation of the adolescents themselves and their families.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Compreender como os adolescentes significam suas relações afetivas e situações de conflito/violência no namoro. **Método:** Pesquisa qualitativa, cujo recorte empírico foi constituído por adolescentes de uma escola estadual, sendo utilizadas técnicas de grupo focal e entrevista. A análise foi realizada por meio do método de interpretação de sentidos, baseado na perspectiva hermenêutico-dialética. **Resultados:** Participaram do estudo 19 adolescentes. Depreenderam-se duas categorias temáticas centrais: “Significados das relações afetivas dos adolescentes” e “Da (des)construção da violência simbólica à expressão de outras formas de violência”. **Conclusão:** Os resultados revelam que nas relações afetivas dos adolescentes é possível depreender situações em que se identifica a legitimação da violência simbólica contra a mulher. Entende-se que atuar sobre a origem da violência, já no início dos relacionamentos dos adolescentes, seja a melhor forma de combatê-la ou minimizá-la, visando à democratização das relações de gênero e à prevenção da violência conjugal.

DESCRIPTORES

Adolescente; Violência; Violência contra a Mulher; Dominação-Subordinação; Saúde do Adolescente; Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Comprender cómo los adolescentes extraen significado de sus relaciones afectivas y situaciones de conflicto/violencia entre novios. **Método:** Investigación cualitativa, cuyo recorte empírico estuvo constituido de adolescentes de una escuela estadual (pública), siendo utilizadas técnicas de grupo focal y entrevista. El análisis se llevó a cabo mediante el método de interpretación de sentidos, basado en la perspectiva hermenéutico-dialéctica. **Resultados:** Participaron en el estudio 19 adolescentes. Se desprendieron dos categorías temáticas centrales: “Significados de las relaciones afectivas de los adolescentes” y “De la (de)construcción de la violencia simbólica a la expresión de otras formas de violencia”. **Conclusión:** Los resultados desvelan que en las relaciones afectivas de los adolescentes es posible desprenderse situaciones en las que se identifica la legitimación de la violencia simbólica contra la mujer. Se entiende que actuar sobre el origen de la violencia, ya en el inicio de las relaciones de los adolescentes, sea la mejor manera de combatirla o minimizarla, con vistas a la democratización de las relaciones de género y la prevención de la violencia conyugal.

DESCRIPTORES

Adolescente; Violencia; Violencia contra la Mujer; Dominación-Subordinación; Salud del Adolescente; Enfermería.

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