Understanding domestic violence from the categories gender and generation

Compreendendo a violência doméstica a partir das categorias gênero e geração

Comprendiendo la violencia doméstica a partir de las categorías género y generación

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ABSTRACT

This article is a literature review of 20 bibliographic sources, among them articles, books and thesis from 1996 to 2007. Regarding articles, Scielo represented the database consulted most often. The objective consisted of understanding how the categories 'gender' and 'generation' influence the occurrence of domestic violence against women. Two categories had been established about the topic: gender-based violence and intergenerational-based violence. The study showed that the familiar nucleus, in the patriarchal view, is configured as a space prone to occurrences of gender-based violence and intergenerational-based violence. Therefore, it is necessary to reorganize the family, based on more symmetrical relations between men and women, parents and children.
Keywords: Domestic violence; Violence against   women; Gender identity; Familiar relations

RESUMO

Trata-se de uma revisão de literatura realizada a partir de 20 textos, entre artigos, livros, dissertações e teses entre 1996 a 2007 com o objetivo de compreender como as categorias gênero e geração influenciam na construção da violência doméstica contra a mulher. Foram estabelecidas duas categorias: violência de gênero e violência intergeracional. A análise dos textos indicou que o núcleo familiar, permeado pela visão patriarcal, configura-se enquanto um espaço de construção da violência de gênero e da violência intergeracional. Faz-se, portanto, necessária a re-estruturação da família com base em relações mais simétricas entre homens e mulheres e entre pais e filhos.
Descritores: Violência doméstica; Violência contra a mulher; Identidade de gênero; Relações familiares

RESUMEN

El presente estudio trata de una revisión de literatura realizada a partir de 20 textos, entre artículos, libros, tesis de Maestria y de Doctorado existentes entre 1996 al 2007 con el objetivo de comprender cómo las categorías género y generación influyen en la construcción de la violencia doméstica contra la mujer. Fueron establecidas dos categorías: violencia de género y violencia intergeneracional. El análisis de los textos permitió concluir que el núcleo familiar, impregnado por una visión patriarcal, se configura como un espacio de construcción de la violencia de género y de la violencia intergeneracional. Se hace, por tanto, necesaria la reestructuración de la familia teniendo como base relaciones más simétricas entre hombres y mujeres y entre padres e hijos.
Descriptores: Violencia doméstica; Violencia contra la mujer; Identidad de género; Relaciones familiares

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INTRODUCTION

Violence, in its destructive forms, aims to destroy another person, but it affects humanity as a whole[1]. That phenomenon is a heritage which is historically common to all social classes, cultures and societies, and, therefore, it is inherent to civilization; it is a structural element that participates in the organization of society in different ways[2-3].

Violence towards women is every violent act that causes physical, sexual, or psychological action, including the act of threatening[4]. Among different kinds of violence against women, domestic violence can be found.

As for the definitions of domestic violence and family violence, the law Maria da Penha, in its 5th clause, defines domestic violence as violence that happens at a "place where people live permanently together, with or without family bonds, including those who join together sporadically"; and family violence as violence occurring in a "community of individuals who are, or consider themselves, relatives by natural bonds, by affinity, or by expressed will". It considers marital violence as violence that takes place in "any intimate affective relationship, where the aggressor lives or has already lived together with the offended person, whether in the same house or not"[5].

The family is a micro-system where every member has a position and a specific social role reflecting its structural and functional organization, because it is the first system where individuals interact.

The idea of family is one of affection, harmony, and protection of its members. However, this study shows that men who rape their mates have been experiencing violence since their childhood, being witnesses of aggression between their parents and even sustaining physical violence, which characterizes intergenerational violence. The real family, differently from an idealized family, has turned into scenarios of violent interactions. Experiences with family violence interfere with the building of a masculine identity, because men tend to reproduce those in their social relations, especially in their relationships with partners and children[6].

The goal of this study was to understand how gender and generation influence in the occurrences of such phenomenon, considering that the family core is pervaded with unequal power relationships.

METHODS

Texts about domestic violence against the woman in relation to gender and/or generation were used. The following key words were considered: domestic violence, violence against women, gender and family relationship.

Articles, books, theses and dissertations between 1996 and 2007 were selected in 20 references. The articles were selected from classified magazines. Scielo was the database more often referred to.

The texts were selected after reading the abstracts. All material was thoroughly read. The texts were classified into two categories: gender and generation. Two categories about the topic were created: Gender Violence and Intergenerational Violence.

GENDER VIOLENCE

Gender is a theoretical reference adopted by Social Science for the analysis and comprehension of the inequality between women's and men's roles. Thus, gender roles are taught as related to being a man or a woman, creating an ideal image of masculine and feminine, in a way that their social production and reproduction is not realized[7].

Modern families reproduce social inequalities regarding expectations towards men's and women's behavior. Women are expected to be delicate, sensitive, passive, subordinate, and obedient. Besides, due to their biological condition, women are expected to get pregnant, have babies and breast feed, as well as to take care of their husbands, homes and children, and are considered as being responsible for anything that goes wrong with them[7].

Several studies confirm such perception, considering the woman-mother not only as responsible for the upbringing and feeding, but also for the violence suffered by their children[8-9]. Men are related to public spaces, to roles such as provider and head of the family, and also to virility, courage and aggressiveness[7-10].

However, it is important to understand that domestic violence has no relation to biological differences between men and women. Those social roles are reinforced by patriarchal cultures reproduced in the family[11].

In that family pattern, gender attributes and roles value men and diminish women, justifying men's domination and women's inferiority. From this perspective, a woman is not independent and does not have the right to decide, including what regards her own body[12, 14].

It was necessary to establish the gender category to perceive violent relationships at home, because that category helps us understand roles that had been socially pre-defined for men and women as perpetuators of unequal hierarchical relationships.

It was only at the end of the 1960s, after studies about family relationships and the traditional role played by women in the family and society, that domestic violence started to be seen as a social and health problem, becoming a political category of feminist claims, not limited to gender, age, social class, race, religion, or education.

Women started to question their roles, most of the time disqualified, oppressive, lacking status, and

responsible for their home cloistering. That female political organization demanded equality of rights between men and women and it was established through the Women's Lib Movement beginning in the 1970s.

Nowadays, it is possible to notice that the opinion of society in relation to the participation of women in the job market has evolved. Women have been in social positions that belonged exclusively to men. However, even though they hold positions in the public world, they still have the responsibilities for the domestic chores at home, thus taking on a double shift[15].

Women have entered the job market not because they are trying to be equal to men, but because of political-economical issues[16]. The female workforce was widely available, and therefore cheaper, meeting profit-driven interests of the capitalist industrialization process.

Although a woman's position in the public space was not a matter of gender, it was an economical empowerment factor. As such, it can be seen that this situation, by itself, is not enough to establish equality between men and women.

Gender discussion introduced by studies conducted by feminists made the multifaceted phenomenon of domestic violence visible, requiring political responses for the problem. Among important benefits for women in relation to domestic violence, there is establishment of institutions for specific attention, Women's Protection Police Stations (DPMs), home-shelters and reference centers providing attention to women who experience violence.

Transversal public policies are still necessary, focusing on gender, and the Ministries of Justice, Education, Health and Planning should orchestrate such measures. Those policies must transform relations by incorporating the idea that Women's Rights are Human Rights[17]. Besides, the gender dimension should be included in social environments such as families, schools, churches etc.

Women are increasingly politically engaged to face this problem and are searching for spaces where they can concert actions in defense of their rights and towards more social commitment and improvement of public policies regarding gender.

INTERGENERATIONAL VIOLENCE

Family relationships are surrounded by power relationships where women and children obey the man, considered the highest authority in the family core. So, the man's power is socially vindicated, whether as a husband or father.

That normative imposition surrounds family relationships with fear, in a way that any change in the naturalized family standards can cause conflicts[8]. Most violence cases against children and adolescents are marked

by asymmetrical and hierarchical interpersonal relationships[18]. Physical victimization happens during the disciplinary process[19]. However, parents who use punishment as a disciplinary method show to their children that violence is an appropriate way to solve conflicts[20].

Therefore, it is possible to talk about intergenerational violence, for, being other standards of family relationships inexistent, men and women tend to reproduce the violence experienced when they were children or adolescents.

Family, as a basic social institution that determines individual development, can be either a protective or a risky factor, depending on the way it organizes the socialization and educational processes[21].

Although interpersonal violent relationships have been present in family routines, violence has always been socially invisible due to the authority of the man, long established in the family structure.

Even though the family was not sociable and affective, the naturalization of the right of punishing wife and children, both eternally considered a man's property, eliminated any possibility of power interventions by other authority figures[8, 12, 16]. That way, family was considered a holy space, beyond the power of the State and detached from political and economical transformations.

However, parents who abuse disciplinary and coercive power violate essential children's rights, since domestic violence experiences represent transgressions of the adult's power of protection and transform a child into a "thing". That way, the right acquired in 1988 is denied, when children and adolescents were declared subjects who have rights, which is also in the Children and Adolescents Statute of 1990. According to the Statute, the child is identified as possible victim of domestic violence and must be protected by the State[9, 22-23].

In studies about family topics, the intergenerational character of domestic violence is revealed and recognized as a morally condemnable act, thus justifying the intervention of the state.

Violence is a process of domination and power demonstration that stems from family dynamics, reflecting in all the family members that share it.

CONCLUSION

This research showed that the family core is a space for the generation of gender violence and intergenerational violence. Therefore, domestic violence against women starts with the unequal relationships between men and women, is naturalized in the subjects' process of socialization and reproduced from generation

to generation.

Therefore, it is necessary to re-structure the family, based on more symmetric relationships between men and women and between parents and children, so that social behavior changes may be possible. For that, it is necessary to be aware of a family's violence background, and that people who stand out as role models provide new interaction and inter-relationship standards, based on more symmetric relationships between men and women, parents and children. Such new standards should be able to destroy representations based on the power of one and submission of others, as a way to allow for the creation of respectful and healthier family relations[10, 24-25].

Over the years, violence in interpersonal and institutional relations has been given more attention and mobilization by public policies, which has an important role facing domestic violence against women. However, although policies regarding women experiencing home violence are organized by quoting the gender category, said category is not actually incorporated in daily assistance or teaching, especially from the generational perspective.

A relative lack of studies that associate categories gender and generation to public policies that have been created and implemented was a limitation for this study. Therefore, more research that will better clarify the relations between public policies and the gender and generation dimensions are necessary, especially in the healthcare area, due to the consequences involving women and the entire family. As a result, nursing professionals will be able to promote better assistance to people as a whole.

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