CURRICULUM AND PREVENTING DATING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a discuss between the findings from a two-fold national study on the acceptance of violence and the prevalence of victimization in intimate relationships among Portuguese adolescents and the possibility for integrating these themes in school curriculum. The survey includes a questionnaire (4562 participants) and focus groups with girls and boys from 4 different cities. Findings presented in this paper are crosscut with the three dimensions found as pertinent and relevant in the focus groups: masculinities and femininities, romantic love and adolescence sexualization and jealousy and control. Based on these findings, this article argues for the urgency of introducing intimate partner violence in the formal curriculum as part of citizen education.

Palavras-chave: curriculum; teen dating violence; citizen education.

Introdução

The well-being of students is an important goal in education for their learning and development. Several studies have evidenced the consequences of intimate partner violence for young people, namely, health and cognitive consequences that negatively affect their academic achievement. This article aims to reflect upon the need of introducing themes around intimate relationships in school curriculum due to the prevalence of victimization and tolerance to violence evidenced by a quantitative and qualitative study on dating violence, among

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adolescents in Portugal. We highlight the importance of further understanding intimate violence to develop effective interventions in school to end violence against women and girls and gender violence.

A violence-prevention curriculum has been object of research on curriculum studies since several decades (Bergsgaard, 1997), but gender violence prevention had not yet received so much attention from this field of studies. In some countries, gender-based violence prevention is included in education for citizenship, in a wider view of education against gender stereotypes and prejudices (Andersson, 2012; Salcedo Barrientos *et al.*, 2012).

Furthermore, several studies have provided evidence about the role of schools in (re)producing masculinities and femininities as a cultural ground for gender and domestic violence. The role of school education as regulatory or emancipatory has also been discussed since the implementation of compulsory schooling when educators believed school education would liberate oppressed social groups (Ledwith, 2007; Sala, 2012).

Adolescence and youth are recent social categories covering an age range between 10 and 19 years old and have been studied as a particular phase in lifespan, characterized by different and complex transitions: biological, social, economic, personal, intimate, sexual (WHO, 2018). This transitional feature is named by several authors (Minayo, 2011) as a moratorium and contradictory period, while adult concerns on teenagers and youngsters involve threefold and dialectic dimensions: they are seen as disrupting current social norms, as being the future of the society and, at the same time, reflecting current norms and values. This is also a time when sexuality and identity become important (Erickson, 1968). Hence, the relevance of studying intimate partner violence in this early age is to further understand how the reflection of the culture associated to violence against women and gender violence is still present in teens' relationships as well as where and how are these values and norms being reinforced, challenged and or reproduced (White 2009). In this research, dating is conceptualized as a specific social interaction, usually dyadic, that provides opportunity for sexual and/or romantic interactions (White, 2009).

Although under great controversy, several studies and authors have been recognizing the relevance of power and abuse of power as an explanation for violence in intimate relationships, where gender, among other social markers of inequality, plays an important role in the social structure (Anderson, 2005).

Since the 1970's and the first women shelters, four decades of research on violence against women in intimate relationships have evidenced patterns and cycles of violence (Walker, 1984), and the continuum of violence (Kelly, 1987). The nature of this type of violence made (and still makes) it difficult for the victim to acknowledge it and leads to feeling trapped when the acts of violence are severer and with shorter periods in between (LaViolette &

Barnett, 2000). These findings prompted researchers to pay attention to acts of violence in dating relationships to understand the problem from its beginnings.

The initial "discovery", in the early 1970's, of the consistency of intimate violence against women within marriage, regardless of social, economic or ethnic status, gave path for other observations of the intimate partner violence, like for instance in same sex couples (Halpern, Young, Waller, Martin & Kupper, 2004) and in other stages of the affective relationships. The concept of gender was then being introduced (Scott, 1986; Connell, 2002) although controversial, in academic research as well as in intervention and activism. With the development of research and epistemological debates, this violence has been named as gender-based violence or gender violence.

Gender violence consist in the use of the power against, mainly, female persons and against some male persons, when they challenge the stereotypes and gender roles present in society (Magalhães, Pontedeira, Guerreiro & Ribeiro, 2016). It is a type of violence which comes from the socialization procedure since the childhood until the adulthood.

In the Western world, romantic love and dating relationships make their way through the end of the nineteenth century and along the twentieth, expanding to all social classes what was the model of the romance between masculine members of the noblesse and young women from middle and working classes (Ariès, 1981; Bloch, 1991). This model became popularized by literature, advertising and, more recently, mass media, turning into a hegemonic model for intimate relationships, not only in Western world. Distinctively from other historical periods, love as feeling and passion prevails in the hegemonic discourse around intimate relationships side by side with dating, construed as a phase to know and experiment intimacy/sex with a partner. As a time of promise and ideal love, it came as a surprise when researchers and professionals found the first signs of domestic violence in the very early stage of dating relationships. From this moment, the studies toward dating violence among young people begun to receive more attention by the academic community (Jennings, Okeem, Piquero, Sellers, Teobald & Farrington, 2017).

Dating relationships play a significant role in adolescents lives and are present in the major part of their lives (Chung, 2005). These personal and intimate experiences are considered a moment of love and freedom for the partners, but it is in reality, an experience of power, mainly men power against women power. The emergence of the studies on this topic show us a hard reality concerning the prevalence of dating violence (Gómez, Delgado & Gómez, 2014). Some studies refer that between 20 and 50% of the adolescents already experienced some type of violence during the relationship (Martsolf, Colbert & Draucker, 2012). White (2009) mention that dating violence data are similar to adult domestic violence. Differently, Smith, White and Holland (2003) reported that around 80% of girls between 14 and 23 years old already experienced, at least, physical or sexual aggression.

The literature on this subject point out some difficulties about researching the prevalence of dating violence. One of the obstacles is the fact that youngsters do not recognize some behaviors as violence and therefore, they do not recognize themselves as victims. Another difficulty is that young people consider violent acts to express concern and love for the intimate partner (Gómez, Delgado & Gómez, 2014). Taking these difficulties in consideration, our study includes the conceptions of violence to assert how and which behaviors they accept as normal, both in the quantitative and in the qualitative component of our research.

Academic research has been reinforcing the importance of primary prevention on gender and domestic violence prevention to deconstruct the gender-based myths and reconstruct gender relations in a more equative way. Furthermore, the European legislation, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (known as Istanbul Convention, see Council of Europe, 2011), has been pointing out the need of legal and social policies to eradicate this form of violence (Magalhães, Teixeira, Dias, Cordeiro, Silva & Mendes, 2017). The construction of a society free of violence begins with the implementation of an intervention program with young people in an early age, based on a holistic approach and with a continuous evaluation for the necessary rehabilitation (Fagan & Mihalic, 2003).

Gender-based violence is set on a power issue, linked to the hegemonic masculinity. The concept of ´hegemonic masculinity' was developed in the 1980's (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005 & Hearn, 2004) and has been a form of masculinity or configuration of gender that contrasts with the other subordinated forms of masculinity. This term "recognized the political importance of difference among men in gender terms as well as in terms of class and race" (Connell, 2002: 90). Men and women are socialized in a hegemonic gender role (Hearn, 2004) where the models of masculine conduct include control of the other person (Connell, 2002). Furthermore, jealousy and control are a common theme in many discourses such as literature, theatre, music and cinema. When debating about love and romance there are inevitable connections with jealousy (Baroncelli, 2011). In terms of conceptualization, jealousy is an attempt to control and to exercise power over someone else and demonstrates gender and power inequalities. As Foucault (1984) mentioned, even in terms of emotions, men and women are seen differently by the society. It is the fear of losing or not possessing someone (Almeida, Rodrigues & Silva, 2008).

While jealousy is normalized through discourses and even legislations, adolescents are not spared from this socialization and tend to accept gender differences, jealousy and control. A qualitative study developed through interviews with 40 students, to understand their conceptions about what is acceptable or unacceptable in dating relationships, reinforced the influence of the patriarchal system in the dynamics of abuse, contributing for the devaluation of dating violence and for the minimization of the consequences (Chung, 2005).

Other studies with adolescents show that some boys think that jealousy can lead to violence, and that this behavior is completely uncontrollable, it just happens. It is further discussed that sometimes violence is used with a specific intention to increase jealously (Sanhueza & Lessard, 2018).

Towns and Scott (2013) suggest that there is an 'ownership' practice in young people's intimate heterosexual relationships that could be precursor to the development of domestic violence though the adulthood. This concept can be related with 'sexual proprietariness', as developed by Wilson and Daly (1998). As such, Miller and White (2003: 1244) argue that these practices are "embedded within the fabric of gendered power and inequality within our society more broadly".

In this paper we present the prevalence of teen dating violence among Portuguese young people and the conceptions of students about this type of gender-based violence, and relate these findings with the relevance of introducing these themes in school curriculum.

1. Method

In the academic year of 2016/2017, UMAR conducted a national survey about teen dating violence, with representation of all districts and islands of Portugal and findings are important to improve primary prevention in schools (Magalhães, Teixeira, Dias, Cordeiro, Silva & Mendes, 2017).

For this national survey on teen dating violence a mixed method was chosen, using both a questionnaire and focus group. Linking qualitative and quantitative data is a challenge but a valuable endeavor (Mason, 1994) and helpful to reflect upon these matters for curriculum from an educational point of view.

For the quantitative data it was distributed a questionnaire of 15 simple questions, written in a comprehensive and simple language, easy and quick to fill considering the cognitive and socioemotional development of the participants. On average, students needed 20 minutes to fill the instrument. It is a self-report questionnaire about victimization and their beliefs on teen dating violence. Each of the 15 questions are analyzed regarding victimization (if that behavior ever occurred to him/her) and beliefs (if student perceive that behavior as teen dating violence or not). Responses were grouped into 6 broad categories: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, stalking, control and violence using the social media. Physical violence includes conducts that intended to harm the other physically whether leaving visible injuries or not; sexual violence includes sexualized behaviors either in public or intimacy spaces; psychological violence comprehends a set of behaviors that include insults and humiliations; stalking is considered the persistent following through social media or in person; control behaviors are those which involve restrictions, surveillance or prohibitions of some form; and finally violence through social media is considered the sharing of contents with the intention to

harm the other. In each school, classes were chosen according their availability on the dates and times selected for the data collection. National representativity was ensured having schools from different contexts, as for example schools of the interior, coastline, North, South and Portuguese Islands. The total sample was of 4652 students between 12 and 22 years old (mean: 14.8, SD=1.80).

The quantitative analysis of the questionnaires was descriptive and inferential using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). Each of the 15 questions on the questionnaire were considered dependent variables and our independent variables were age and sex.

For the qualitative data an open script was used during the focus groups to provide a space for students' debate, discourses and representations as such as explained in Kitzinger (1995). These spaces of debate and reflection create opportunities to share opinions and are fundamental for research to deeper understand their beliefs and representations about dating violence. The sharing of different points of view helps to reveal participants' perceptions about the problem and to better understand the results of the questionnaire. Qualitative data, namely the focus groups, were verbatim transcribed for the analysis and reflection on the ideas and representations shared by students. For this analysis we decided to perform content analysis from the specific perspectives of adolescents' discourses. Our concern was to acknowledge their opinions, representations and terms, and at the same time, to further understand their perspectives and in which dimensions do they agree or disagree. As an interpretive methodology for understanding the contents we focused in hermeneutic approaches that, as Prasad (2002) explains, it helps with better interpretations of the perspectives of that specific group or specific student. Dating violence, as every social phenomenon, is intrinsically meaningful to participants and these meanings are constituted by the meanings that social actors give to them, as explained by Martin and McIntire (1994). Our interpretation of the participants' own words considered their cultural and contextual backgrounds to understand dating violence from his/her point of view. Content analysis was performed using a semi-inductive interpretation from the respondents' own words and expressions. Besides the effort to pay attention to the young people own terms, the analysis of these focus was semi-inductive because, their speeches were triggered by a script designed by the research investigators and the coding process and interpretation was also conducted by the same research team. Therefore, the results might somehow be deductive, having in consideration the theoretical lens of the researchers (Forman & Darmschroeder, 2008).

A coding agreement or triangulation (as identified by Denzin, 1978) was established after the pre-coding (Forman & Darmschroeder, 2008). If the analysis between coders were not consensual, topics were left outside the coding. The third step of this analysis was to reorganize

data and group themes into the categories and subcategories as following: a) masculinities and femininities; b) romantic love and adolescence sexualization; c) jealousy and control.

Ethic issues were a concern in this study because it involved children and adolescents. Given that this was a national study, authorizations from the Ministry of Education and Portuguese Data Protection Authority were obtained. Parents and legal representatives of children also received a written explanation of the research and gave their informed consents to the participation of the adolescent. During the implementation of the questionnaires and focus groups, anonymity, confidentiality and respect for children's rights were fully respected. The data was collected anonymously, without any type of identification of the school, class, or student's name. In this study we did not include any question about class, sexual orientation or ethnicity to guarantee confidentiality and anonymity. Age and sex were the only sociodemographic questions included in the questionnaire. Data was collected directly from the students by investigators of the organization trained for this research and intervention. Confidentiality was ensured to the schools participating in the survey through the commitment of non-disclosure of participating schools or classes.

2. Results

We will present an overall view of the quantitative and qualitative findings and then we will discuss with further detail the specific results regarding the three more prevalent dimensions - masculinities and femininities, romantic love and adolescence sexualization and jealousy and control.

Concerning the quantitative mains results, 68% (n=3163) had a previous intimate relationship and from these, 56.1% (n=1773) experienced at least one form of teen dating violence from the behaviors included in the questionnaire. The more common type of victimization in adolescent dating violence was the physical violence (18.2%) and the least common was the psychological violence (5.8%) (see table I). Regarding specific behaviors, insults during discussions were the most commonly reported (29.0%), followed by restrictions to hanging out and/or talk with friends (21.1%), grabbing phone or logging into the Facebook account without permission (19.7%) and being stalked (16.3%).

Table I. Victimization and acceptance of dating violence by Portuguese students.

Forms of violence	Victimization Sample (n=3163)	Acceptance of violence Sample (N=4652)
Physical violence	5.8%	7.8%
Sexual violence	6.6%	24.8%
Control	10.6%	29.2%
Violence through social media	11.5%	24.4%
Stalking	16.3%	26.5%
Psychological violence	18.2%	16.3%

In terms of recognizing certain behaviors as teen dating violence is a worrying result of this study. From the overall sample (N=4652), 68.5% (n=3186) accepts at least one behavior of dating violence. This indicates that the most part of participants does not clearly recognize violence in intimate relationships. Perceiving violence as a normal behavior has greater incidence in boys and girls who report having suffered from at least one form of violence in this questionnaire (76.9%, n=1364), than in those who do not recognize themselves as victims of any behavior of this instrument (61.2%, n=850).

The behaviors that are more frequently perceived as normal are controlling behaviors such as for example to forbid a partner to dress something they like (40% of the total sample, n=1860, does not perceive this as dating violence). The overall result for controlling behaviors is that 29,2% of Portuguese students does not consider them as violent attitudes. Physical violence is the form of violence that most of students see as dating violence (7.8% do not recognize it, which despite being a low percentage is still significant).

The majority of the respondents who accept violent behaviors as normal are the same who reported having been victim of those behaviors. For example, in the case of restrictions to hanging out and/or talk with friends, 30.3% of the students do not recognize it as violence and 38.6% do not consider grabbing ones' mobile phone or logging into the Facebook account without permission as violence. A final significant result on this study is that 36.1% of students accept pressure to kiss his/her boyfriend/girlfriend in front of others.

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Regarding the differences and similarities between boys and girls we can say that victimization is very different. While for the most part of the categories girls is the most victimized, there are some statistically significative results that need further attention. The most significant findings of the inferential tests performed on victimization are related to restrictions on clothing (χ2(1)= 57.57, p = .000) and diminishing and humiliating the other (χ2(1)= 49.29, p = .000). Girls are significantly more victimized than boys. Other results came out from the association test, but for the purpose of this paper only two others will be highlighted. On one hand we notice that pressure for sexual relationships is significantly more associated with victimizing girls than boys (χ2(1)= 6.01, p = .014). On the other hand, the only behavior found significantly more associated with boys as victims is physical violence without leaving visible injuries (χ2(1)= 5.89, p = .015). In this study, violence through social media is not significantly associated with gender.

Social conceptions of violence are clearly associated with gender. The studied show a significant difference between boys and girls: boys are clearly the ones who accept and do not recognized most of the situations as violence as shown in table II.

Table II- Victimization and social conceptions of boys and girls.

Forms of violence	Victimization		Acceptance of violence Social conceptions	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Physical violence	5.2%	6.3%	5.0%	11.1%
Psychological violence	20.7%	15.6%	11.9%	21.7%
Control	12.2%	8.7%	23.4%	36.9%
Stalking	16.6%	16.0%	18.7%	36.1%
Sexual violence	7.1%	6.1%	16.6%	34.8%
Violence through social media	11.1%	11.9%	20.3%	30.0%

Regarding the qualitative study, the main results were clustered in three dimensions: masculinities and femininities, jealousy and control, and romantic love and sexualization of adolescence (please see table III, below).

Young people's perspectives are not unanimous and during the focus groups there was some polemic and controversy; gender differences, although present, were not consensual between girls and boys. Overall, boys were more in agreement with women's subordination and male's initiative and protagonist, but this idea was not shared by all of them. Similarly, girls' discourses evidenced the assumption of female 'roles', but there were also discourses of awareness and resistance.

Table III: Categories and subcategories from youth perceptions

Categories	Subcategories
Masculinities and femininities	Discourses on boys' and girls' behaviors in the intimate relationship Power-submission and Rational-emotion dichotomy Reactive violence Acceptance of violence perpetrated by girls Minimization of violence Types of perpetrators
Romantic love and adolescence sexualization	A different love Public demonstrations of love Please the other Intensity of love / Absolute love Love as condition for happiness Love as painful and renunciation Passion and love Sexual Violence
Jealousy and control	Power and control on the relationship Dating and commitment Respect in the intimate relationship Jealousy as a component of love Jealousy as uncontrollable Healthy jealousy versus excessive jealousy Jealousy as an excuse for control and violence

In the sections below, we present the results of the two-fold researches and debate them using the categories we found more significant from the focus group content analysis. We divided each category into sub-categories to better organize the topics that the participants mentioned in their discourses.

3. Masculinities and femininities: a contested field

The most frequent topics in the focus group discussions, both single-sex and mixed groups, were issues around being a woman/girl, and being a man/boy. This is related to their age, when identity and sexuality are in rapid construction. Traditional representations on masculinities and femininities were predominant, although, some participants shared divergences, contradictions and dialectics to social dominant norms. In spite of being in minority, there were frequent opinions of resistance and questioning of the stereotyped ideas of what it is to be a boy and a girl.

Conceptions of masculinities and femininities are present in the discourses of the students, related with gender roles of girls and boys and with their position in an intimate relationship. At the same time, conceptions about what should be considered violence or not are equally related with juvenile assumptions of masculinities and femininities.

Both boys and girls argue that usually girls are more sensitive than boys, while boys have difficulties in showing their emotions. Nevertheless, these (traditional ideas) seem to be under some contestation, or at least with some interrogation: "I'm not saying all women, there are also very sensitive men, but women are more sensitive" (FC).

In their own questioning, they recognized that this difference in behavior has to do with the different socialization of boys and girls. They explain that these conceptions, which are based on the dichotomy of reason-emotion, separating men and women respectively, are accepted because they are the result of society and education. The girls themselves state that they are socialized since their childhood to be more emotional than boys.

> Maybe… we are more…. accustomed… Exactly. Since our childhood we are taught to be more sentimental and the boys to be tough (FB).

> "But this is also the society concept of the woman... we hear, at the end of a relationship the woman is the one who is going to suffer, and the man will not suffer! He will suffer but will not demonstrate this because he is a man" (MP).

Along with social representations about gender roles, they also mentioned there are certain characteristics and actions associated either to boys or girls. In general, both groups agree that boys should be the ones who take the initiative to start an intimate relationship.

Boys associate love and public demonstration of love with kissing, gestures and words. On this matter, what girls value the most are demonstrations of affection in private context.

> "It's a demonstration of affection, in this case in public; I think it is one of the factors for love, not feeling ashamed of showing public affection for another person" (MP).

The idea that boys and girls are different is also present in the dichotomy power-

submission. Boys and girls agree that it is normal to have someone who commands in a dating relationship and that usually men are the ones with that power: "I think so, there is always a person who 'wears the pants' [a traditional Portuguese expression] in the relationship" (FMXP).

The participants argue that it is not only the socialization that maintains men power but also personal characteristics, supporting that those who have more power in the relationship are the people with higher self-esteem: "Take advantage of the other person [the girl] who is weaker" (FB).

There are several boys and girls who disagree with the existence of power in a romantic relationship saying that "No one owns anyone" (FP).

These boys' and girls' perspectives on power relations in dating couples can be related with quantitative data: victimization in dating violence is higher among girls and acceptance is greater among boys. Physical violence is more accepted by boys (11%) than girls (5%). However, in the victimization, the difference between boys and girls is only of 1%, with 5% of girls and 6% of boys victims of physical violence.

A group of boys defines social gender roles in the exercise of violent behavior, relating masculinity with physical violence and femininity with psychological violence. They base this assertion on the belief that men are physically stronger than women:

> "Boys, I guess, tend to engage in more physical violence, while girls tend to engage in more psychological violence because statistically boys tend to be stronger than girls. But there are exceptions, for sure" (MP).

In the girls' opinion, boys are the ones who initiate violence and the girls use it as a self-defense behavior. Among several statements on this matter a girl said: "If a man lifted a hand to me I would throw a jar to his head" (FP).

We can interpret these assertions about reactive violence as a route to equality with the hegemonic standard of masculinity and equality. Having masculine role as a model of power, without educational guidance, maybe girls found a way to achieve equality by imitating boys.

Boys mention that violence depends on the intent. They differentiate violence with and without intent and argue that when violence is unintentional, it might actually be healthy. Boys refer that violence can occur in the wake of accidental episodes, thereby spreading out the acceptance of this kind of behavior(s): "But healthy violence, are jokes, it's different" (MP).

Violence with intent is often easily perceived as a type of teen dating violence. This is the case of psychological violence, for example, in which acceptance of violence is not as high as other forms of violence (16.3% accepts this behavior as normal). In our study, psychological violence is not the most frequent form of victimization of boys, as it might be commonly assumed, but rather stalking is the most frequent (16.0%).

Violent behaviors are minimized, especially by boys, who only consider violence if the offender does not care about the person who is suffering. The boys mention that there are three types of perpetrators: those who regret their acts and never beat again; those who never regret and those who regret but continue to aggress because they do not control their behavior: "There are people that are, maybe, a little violent and then in the heat of the moment they cannot control themselves" (MP).

4. Romantic love and adolescence sexualization

In our study the concept of romantic love, as well as the sexualization of adolescence emerged in the young people's discourses during the focus group and in the quantitative analysis. Boys emphasize a 'physical dimension' of love, what they called passion, that can be inferred as more sexual. Most of the girls seems to put more emphasis on feelings linked to irrationality and in the belief that love is blind.

For the boys, the public demonstration of affection is important: "is one of the love factors..." (MP), namely by kissing in public. This can contribute to forcing intimate behaviors in public as a need to turn the relationship public. This can also be seen in the quantitative data, in which 24.8% of the young people thinks that sexual violence is normal. 36.1% of the whole sample think that it is acceptable to force a girlfriend/boyfriend to kiss in front of friends. In the boys' case, 47.7% think this is an acceptable behavior. A much lower, but also important percentage of girls (27.1%) do not recognize this as a violent behavior.

The concepts linked to romantic love were very frequent, as for example the fact that love overcomes everything, that love is to please the partner of the relationship. Although this concept arose in both groups, it came up with some differences between boys and girls:

> "we unconsciously try to do everything in a way that pleases the other", "to satisfy", "to give them a specific kind of care" (MP),

> "we want to please, we want them to like us... " (FMXL).

In this sense, love emerges as a complementarity between two people, in which the couple becomes a single person, giving up part of their individuality, definition presented especially by girls. For them, the purpose of a relationship is to:

> "It's to belong to one another... I think it's to put a part of ourselves in the hands of the other" (FMXP).

Another behavior considered by some adolescents as normal (39%), is grabbing the others' mobile phone without permission. We also found that 20% of the students had their

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mobile phone checked without permission.

As a justification for this attitude, young people refer that as a couple, and if they really love the partner, they have to share everything with him/her:

> "Facilitator: Can we share everything? Should we trust in that person to share everything?", "I think so" (FP).

Nevertheless, and despite stated by a minority of boys, there are still some who challenge this conception of symbiotic love.

> "[they, the couple] are different people, a couple is not a single hermaphrodite organism. No, they are two separate people with distinct personalities" (MP).

Another concept linked to romantic love that emerges in these focus group is the absolute love, so absolute that it is everything and does not have an explanation:

> "I do not think there is a proper definition for love ..." (FB).

> "Love is everything … [love] puts everything together" (MB).

These romantic conceptions of love that young people mentioned throughout the focus group can show that this feeling encompasses everything. It includes redemption through love and the belief that love solves everything.

Some of the discourses, particularly from girls, were about the idea that love leads to blindness: "Love is not being able to see the other person well" (FB).

In young people's perceptions, love is clearly linked to suffering and pain, being considered as a growth factor. This was especially mentioned by girls: "But pain is a good thing sometimes; but for you to be mature you have to suffer first" (FC). This conceptualization of love is problematic because it can justify and lead to the acceptance of violent behaviors as normal or as a sign of love.

We can then verify that young people' conception of love is of a romantic love that beats everything and that the possession, the giveaway of an individuality and sometimes the pain and suffering (most of times linked to violence), are normalized and might even be understood as signs of love.

5. Jealousy and control

Jealousy and control conceptions in teen dating relationships are present both in qualitative and quantitative data. In the focus group discussions jealousy and control relate to

the commitment that teens conceptualize when they start dating. In their opinions, intimate relationships are commitments that imply some changes, particularly concessions and restrictions on what they should or should not do: "… we don't talk so much with other boys" (FMXL); "[if we date] we need to have our eyes closed [to other girls], we can't look at girls anyone…", "certain jokes we used to had, we can't have them" (MMXL).

Overall, jealousy is perceived as a component of love, a necessary part of the relationship to demonstrate that they love their partner: "jealousy is love" (MP). Both groups conceptualize jealousy as a condition for love and describe that with these attitudes they feel desired by their partner:

"I like the fact that he feels jealous because I feel that he likes me, I feel desired" (FP).

"It is normal to be jealous of a person we love" (MB).

These jealousies are frequently described by the groups, female, male and mixed, as uncontrollable, as instinctive, related with an irrational fear of losing the beloved person: "I think you can't control, if a person loves… You can't control" (FMXP).

All participants agree that jealousy can be distinguished into two distinct types. On the one hand there is healthy jealousy as a demonstration of love and care, "We feel good about knowing the other person is jealous, it is really a statement that the other person likes us" (FMXP); on the other hand, there is the unreasonable jealousy described as: "when you are possessive, when there is no freedom in the relationship" (MP).

Jealousy was sometimes connected with the appearance of girls. Restrictions on clothing were also mentioned by the boys as a form of control and bad jealousy: "There is those bad [jealous] that sometimes we start to forbid to do some things… wearing certain clothes." (MB). This was also very clear in the quantitative findings where girls were the most victimized (11.3% versus 4.0% of the boys). The restriction on the partner's clothing was the most acceptable attitude among boys in the entire questionnaire: half of the sample (49.5%) does not recognize this is a violent behavior.

In general, girls agree that in a relationship, respect and trust should be fundamental rights to be held: "If the person loves us he/she will demonstrate it in several aspects. With respect for our space, respecting our position" (FC).

Simultaneously, and in contradiction with previous statement, some girls use this argument of trust to reaffirm the need to control the partner and in some cases, to control other girls who are considered as a threat:

"I trust, but I also have to check him to see the things…" (FP).

"I trust, but nowadays there are only sluts, always sending text messages and a guy is not made of iron… And can fall into their ideas, and we must be attentive, always with an eye on him" (FP).

In contrast with the opinions above mentioned, some girls perceive jealousy and control as precursors of violence, and they agree that control happens when the partner does not trust them: "Violence is being exaggeratedly jealous. Forbid too many things" (FP).

These restrictions to socializing with whom they want are also very clear in the results of victimization respecting limitations and prohibitions on who they talk to or go out with. In In this study 22.6% of girls and 19.4% of boys refers that this behavior happened to them previously. A great part of the boys thinks there is nothing wrong in such restrictions in a dating relationship (36.3%). While girls are less tolerant to this behavior, the number of girls who accept it is still high (26.1%).

In the mixed group, girls mentioned that these issues are also cultural, and that sometimes restrictions came with criteria, as for example if a girl wants to go out, she must take her/his partner with her. These behaviors imposed in pleasurable activities were also clear in the questionnaire in which 6.1% of girls and 4.2% were forbidden of going out without his/her partner at least once in an intimate relationship. This behavior is not considered violence for 40.0% of young boys and 25.5% of young girls.

Some girls identified that jealousy relates to the sense of possession and control from one of the parts: "Jealousy relates with the idea that there is a feeling of possession about the other person, and wanting the other person only for himself/herself" (FB).

The use of social media to perpetrate violence has recently been emerging as a problem in dating violence. It is normal for adolescents to share their social media passwords with their partners as a proof of loyalty and faithfulness. For most of these students this is a question of openness and transparency in the relation and not about the right to privacy. Few voices of disagreement emerge in this argument. But some girls mentioned the importance of trust: "I think we should have our privacy and above all we must trust in our partner, isn't it?" (FMXP).

As a result of these conceptions of jealous attitudes and controlling behaviors as demonstrations of love and care, most boys and girls highly accept these behaviors.

6. Jealousy and control

Young people's perspectives evidenced by focus group analysis are heterogeneous, although dominant and traditional conceptions are more prevalent. Overall, girls when compared to boys, present a wider range of divergent perspectives.

The general acceptance of violence found in this study by both boys and girls, but particularly by the boys, is problematic. These assumptions are clearly linked to the boys' conception of

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violence, in which they argue that behaviors are only considered violence when intentional and if they regret it or feel sorry for it they do not recognize it as violence. According to Leonore Walker (1984) explanations of the cycle of violence, being sorry for violent actions and asking for forgiveness are common attitudes in the honeymoon stage.

Sexual violence prevalence (6.6%) and its acceptance as a normal behavior (24.8%) are clearly warning results of this study. This is not only due to the participants youthful age, but also because it has embedded conceptions of ownership and sexual proprietaries of girls by boys. The acceptance of forced sexual intercourse in the intimate relationship is over three times higher in boys (21.9%) than in girls (6.1%). In their discourses neither boys or girls clearly mention this, but they refer that it is expected that boys take the initiative in the relationship, and therefore this might also include their intimacy. Bartoli and Clark (2006) found equivalent results regarding the social representation of boys and girls: boys are the ones who need to have initiative and to be dominant in the relationships. Social representations of masculinities and femininities as defined by Connell (2002) are also present here when women are considered to have a passive attitude and men being more in control. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that there are some voices of disagreement that affirm the importance of equal power relationships.

Almost half of the boys (47.7%) do not perceive forcing the partner to kiss in front of others as dating violence. They mention it as an important part of demonstrations of love which Towns and Scott (2013) explained as 'materially and discursively demonstrate to the observing world that she was his sexual property: that he had license to engage in intimate contact with her…' (p. 542). Sexual ownership is also discussed by Wilson and Daly (1998) as encompassing episodes of jealous and as presumptions to exercise control over the partner.

Control and jealousy are dimensions we found significant both in questionnaire and in adolescents' discourses. It was the most accepted form of violence by boys and girls (29.2%). Some youngsters describe control and jealousy as a sign of his/her love. Chung (2005) had similar findings and explains that romantic love is used to divert attention from the violent behaviors and to interpret these as sings of love and commitment. Along with this critical reflection, Towns and Scott (2013) argue that this 'ownership' is present in daily actions such as restrictions on clothing. These authors argue that control of clothing, leads to a great loss of autonomy on girls that often causes them a tiring self-surveillance attitude. In our study this is also worrying: it was the most common type of violence mentioned by the girls with a victimization of 11.3% and with almost half of boys considering it as normal (49.5%).

Digital violence has been mentioned in some studies (see for example Hellevik & Øverlien, 2016) as the most prevalent form of violence. In our study, this had 11.5% of prevalence which is significantly lower than those 29.1% found by the mentioned authors. Another difference is that in the Norwegian study girls are described as having increase risk of being victims of digital

violence, but in our study both boys and girls show a victimization percentage of around 11%.

From this study, we conclude that girls are also perpetrators of violence, in a very different way and usually as response to certain behaviors - as reactive violence.

The importance of love for young and not so young people is unquestionable, particularly to girls, that mention to "suffer more with relationships". Intimate relationships nowadays start increasingly at younger ages as well as the conceptions of romantic love, that too often implies the submission of girls. This was clear from the students' discourses when they mention they have to 'please the other'. But a new finding we must highlight is that these discourses of pleasing the other are referred by both girls and boys.

Conclusion: reflecting about curriculum

Teen dating violence studies have been showing that the prevalence of violence among young people and in adolescent intimate relationships is relevant and concerning (see for example, Hellevik & Øverlien, 2016).

This study enhances some of those findings and brings new perspectives on youth social representations of violence to the research. Efforts to prevent gender violence through campaigns, prevention programs and social politics, are undoubted. In Europe, Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2011) was the most recent commitment by the European policies to end violence against women. In Portugal, this commitment and dedication is formally present since 1999, when the law RCM 55/99 (1999) approved the National Plan against Domestic Violence. Despite these efforts, teen dating violence remains a social problem.

Despite the seriousness of the problem, family and gender violence are often misrecognized and misrepresented. An important but often unrecognized aspect of family and gender violence is, as above mentioned, that children's and young people's exposure to family violence, both directly and indirectly, has negative effects on their emotional and physical well-being, development and educational attainment. In their role as statutory and universal providers, schools represent a key site for awareness raising, preventing family and gender violence and supporting children and parents affected by family and gender violence (Mills, 2001).

There is already relevant literature that accounts for prevention programmes in formal education (Cox et al., 2010; Thompson & Trice-Black, 2012; Whitaker, 2006). However, the evaluations of those programmes usually rely on quantitative or experimental designs (see, for instance, Taylor, et al., 2008).

Democratic citizenship includes the right to live without violence and curriculum studies need to integrate the education for human rights in broad sense and also expliciting social norms, however in a pedagogical way, to prevent the forms of violence that can affect children and adolescents.

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PREVENÇÃO DA VIOLÊNCIA NO NAMORO E CURRÍCULO

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma reflexão em torno dos resultados de um estudo nacional sobre a perceção e prevalência da vitimização das relações de intimidade em adolescentes portuguesas/es e da possibilidade da integração destes conteúdos no currículo. O estufo desenvolveu uma metodologia mista, incluindo a administração de um questionário (4562 participantes) e a realização de grupos de discussão focalizada em 4 diferentes cidades de Portugal, no Norte, Centro e Sul do país. Os resultados obtidos foram analisados em três dimensões que emergiram como pertinentes e relevantes nos grupos de discussão focalizada: masculinidades e feminilidades; amor romântico e a sexualização da adolescência; e ciúme e controlo. Com base nos resultados da análise, neste artigo, argumenta-se a necessidade de introduzir a violência nas relações de intimidade no currículo formal como parte da educação cidadã.

Keywords ou Palabras Clave: Currículo; violência no namoro; adolescência; educação cidadã.