



Research Article

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A Narrative Review of Scientific Evidences Regarding Characteristics of Gender-Based Violence in Intimate Partners

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Abstract

Gender violence is a problem that has been increasing in recent years as a consequence of intolerance and cultural diversity in personal and social relationships. The aim of this study was to describe the scientific evidence on gender violence between intimate partners. The methodology used was the narrative review and analysis of articles published between 2019 and 2022 in the Scopus, EBSCO and Jane's databases, obtaining a total of 21 articles. The findings show that the existence of gender violence is a social problem that causes frustrations transferred to the partner, most of whom are women who report the various types of violence: physical, economic, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse. The main characteristics of violence are related to male dominance in the relationship, social isolation and subjugation of power due to economic, educational and cultural deficiencies, among others. It is concluded that exposure to violence requires timely psychological interventions that can mitigate the impact on mental health, which is why a comprehensive policy response is needed to benefit vulnerable populations.

Keywords: gender violence, types of violence, characteristics

1. Introduction

Nowadays, violence is a global health problem because it is a clear violation of human rights. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that one out of three women in the world has suffered some form of violence. Likewise, according to statistical reports, almost one third (27%) of women between 15 and 49 years old are exposed to physical harm. The prevalence of physical abuse of women is around 20% in Western Pacific countries, 22% in Europe, 25% in the Americas, 33% in

African regions, 31% in the Eastern Mediterranean and 33% in Southeast Asian countries. These figures have been increasing, since violence has social, economic, cultural and other costs for society (World Health Organization, 2021), (Garcia-Moreno, 2013).

Within this context, there are several factors associated with violence, including: low educational level, domestic violence, stress in the aggressor, mental health problems, excessive consumption of psychotropic substances, economic problems and macho behavior, where the male assumes a dominant position over the partner, exhibiting this gender inequality (López-Hernández & Rubio-Amores, 2020). Considering the above, it is evident that different forms of intimate partner violence can cause femicide, stress, and increase the occurrence of psychological disorders that affect mental health (Vargas, 2017).

In this sense, gender violence is exercised to a greater extent by former intimate partners and is presented in different categories: psychological, physical, sexual, economic and patrimonial. The consequences of gender violence at the legal level still present evident gaps, which is called normative blindness, specifying the scarcity of an updated normative framework for the interpretation and analysis of acts involving gender violence in society (Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2019).

Due to the presence of COVID-19 globally, contagion forced confinement within the home, causing increased exposure to abusive behaviors and risk factors for violence against women by their partners (Mateos Casado, 2021). On the other hand, crises, catastrophes and times of upheaval are aggravating factors in the mistreatment and abuse of female intimate partners, and it is undeniable that these situations have a social, cultural and economic cost in the family environment, especially for couples. As a consequence, the woman feels vulnerable, incapacitated and isolated to act against her aggressor, which reduces her motivation to look for immediate help (Ruiz-Pérez & Pastor-Moreno, 2021).

Finally, this problem is latent and brings with it serious consequences in various human spheres, including health (increased morbidity and mortality), economic, social and legal aspects, among others. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze gender violence to learn about this phenomenon (Rivas-Rivero & Bonilla-Algovia, 2022), (Thulin et al., 2022), in order to propose strategies for psychological interventions early and prevent mental health problems in the future (Adejumo et al., 2022), (Wight et al., 2022), not only of the woman but also of the family.

2. Methodology

The study is a narrative review (Moreno et al., 2018); three specialized databases were searched: Scopus, EBSCO and Jane's, in which full-access texts corresponding to the years 2019 to 2022 were collected, since the pandemic has been present in that period of time. Only scientific articles were selected, opting for the term gender-based and using the Booleans "and", "or", adding the term intimate partner violence or domestic violence to exclude some other studies. Finally, an exhaustive review of the topic and content of each article was carried out, leaving 21 suitable for the study, and research from different countries was considered, working only with English and Spanish. Within the databases, articles were also excluded for duplicity and others for not having any link with the topic to be investigated.

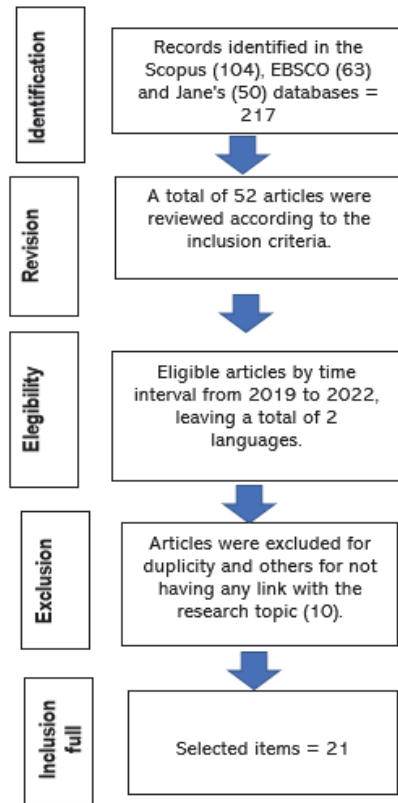


Figure 1. Prism diagram

3. Results

Table 1. Gender-based violence and its characteristics

| Author | Journal | Methodology (Approach) | Results |
|---|--|------------------------|---|
| Averis, (2021) Ni una menos: Colombia's Crisis of Gendered Violence during the COVID-19 Pandemic. | Portal (Australia) | Qualitative | The environment has led to incidents of women living in precarious and dangerous conditions. It is characterized by the presence of sexual abuse, intimidation and aggression, including femicide. Physical and/or sexual violence has been the most frequent. |
| Espinoza, (2020) COVID-19 and the Limitations of Official Responses to Gender-Based Violence in Latin America: Evidence from Ecuador. | Bulletin Of Latin American Research | Qualitative | Isolation by COVID 19 was an obstacle to the implementation of actions to address gender-based violence, especially in Latin American countries, in response to increased reports of domestic violence and even the risk of femicide. Physical, psychological and sexual violence has predominated. |
| Dlamini, (2021) Gender-Based Violence, Twin Pandemic to COVID-19. | Critical Sociology | Qualitative | Gender-based violence includes acts of emotional, physical, mental or sexual harm, increasing the insinuations of such acts, coercion and deprivation of liberty. Psychological, physical and/or sexual violence has been the most frequent. |
| Frieslaar & Masango,(2021) Blessings or curses? The contribution of the blessing phenomenon to gender-based violence and intimate partner violence. | HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies | Qualitative | The most common characteristics are rape, abuse, dowry-related violence, genital mutilation and harmful practices, including exploitation. Physical, sexual and psychological violence against women have been more frequent. |
| Ince, (2020) The COVID-19 pandemic and the struggle to tackle gender-based violence. | Journal of Adult Protection | Qualitative | Abuse characterized by severe violence against women, sexual harassment, femicide, high levels of mental stress and/or mental trauma increased. Physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence has been highlighted. |

| Author | Journal | Methodology (Approach) | Results |
|--|---|------------------------|---|
| Raj et al., (2020) Time from COVID-19 sh(utdown, gender-based violence exposure, and mental health outcomes among a state representative sample of California residents. | EClinicalMedicine | Qualitative | Women were victims of increased episodes of depression and anxiety, sexual violence, nervousness, with significant and severe mental health symptoms predominating. Sexual and psychological violence have been highlighted. |
| Donato, (2020) Gender-Based Violence against Women in Intimate and Couple Relationships. The Case of Spain and Italy during the COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown. | Italian Sociological Review | Qualitative | Gender violence during the current pandemic situation has a strong emphasis on intimate partner violence. In countries such as Spain and Italy this problem has increased significantly; to improve this situation the author considers that there must be a cultural evolution. It was verified that violence was an "invisible" phenomenon represented by inequality, subordination to the partner, dominant male power relations, attacks on sexual freedom, intimidation, coercion and deprivation of liberty. Physical and sexual violence has been more frequent. |
| Londoño, (2020) Expressions of gender-based violence in the context of confinement by COVID-19. | NOVA: Publicación Científica En Ciencias Biomédicas | Qualitative | The isolation of women from their support networks, constant emotions of loneliness, feminicides, lack of willingness to report, loss of personal autonomy, subjugation of the partner, overload of domestic work, and unequal dynamics at home have increased. The most relevant types of violence are sexual, physical, psychological, economic, patrimonial, intra-family, symbolic and institutional. |
| Fawole et al., (2021) Home was not a safe haven: women's experiences of intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 lockdown in Nigeria. | BMC Women's Health | Qualitative | The woman was the victim of constant threats, of being expelled from the home by her partner, little or no access to informal social support mechanisms, and the aggressor reduced her partner's access to family and close friends. Physical, economic, psychological and sexual violence was the most frequent. |
| Gebrewahd et al., (2020) Intimate partner violence against reproductive age women during COVID-19 pandemic in northern Ethiopia 2020: a community-based cross-sectional study. | Reproductive Health | Qualitative | Staying at home for quarantine has led to an increase in cases of domestic violence, since conditions such as stress, financial uncertainty and the desire to control the disaster can increase the incidences and risks of violence against women; predominating actions such as slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, choking, dragging the partner, burns, threats with knives or firearms, forcing the woman to have sex against her will and sexually degrading her. Psychological, physical and sexual violence have been highlighted. |
| Leslie & Wilson, (2020) Sheltering in place and domestic violence: Evidence from calls for service during COVID-19. | Journal Of Public Economics | Quantitative | The aggressor generates far-reaching impacts on the woman's physical and/or mental health, as well as in the economic sphere through control of income. Physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence have been highlighted. |
| Lyons & Brewer, (2021) Experiences of intimate partner violence during lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. | Journal Of Family Violence | Qualitative | The COVID-19 pandemic has caused an unprecedented negative impact on global health and a financial tragedy. Increased surveillance and control of partner behavior, sexual, psychological and financial abuse, isolation of the victim from her support networks, oppressive behavior characterized by physical abuse and sexual coercion were verified. Physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence was more frequent. |
| Mahmood et al., (2021) The impact of COVID-19 related lockdown on the prevalence of spousal violence against women in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. | Journal Of Interpersonal Violence | Quantitative | Aggressors humiliate, frighten, intimidate, hit, twist arms, pull hair and may force their partners to have sexual relations. In the home, there are gender patterns and unbalanced power relations; physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence was demonstrated. |
| Nnawulezi & HacsKaylo, (2021) Identifying and responding to the complex needs of domestic violence housing practitioners at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. | Journal Of Family Violence | Qualitative | In general, men seek to maintain power and control through the perpetration of violent tactics. Physical and psychological violence have predominated. |
| Sabri et al., (2021) Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on women's health and safety: A study of immigrant survivors of intimate partner violence. | Health Care For Women International | Qualitative | There is violence especially among immigrant women, who are more vulnerable during this pandemic; with marked control of the aggressor over the woman, depression, increased harassment by the partner, inability to seek help or get out of the problematic situation and difficulties in accessing community support. More physical and psychological violence was demonstrated. |
| Sediri et al., (2020) Women's mental health: acute impact of COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence. | Archives of Women's Mental Health | Quantitative | There is anxiety, stress, depression, suicide attempts, risk of physical conditions such as physical trauma, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancies. Therefore, there is physical, emotional, sexual and economic violence. |
| Tadesse et al., (2020) Prevalence and associated factors of intimate partner violence among married women during COVID-19 pandemic restrictions: a community-based study. | Journal of Interpersonal Violence | Quantitative | The man makes decisions about family planning, household affairs and financial control. He also shakes, throws objects at his partner and hits her. There is denial of the woman's personal needs, threats to harm her family members. The man forces his partner to have sexual intercourse, humiliates and degrades her sexually. There is evidence of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic violence. |
| (Rivas-rivero, 2022) Role of sexism, romantic myths, and adverse life events in gender-based violence: A study with intimate partner aggressors. | Revista Iberoamericana de Psicología y Salud | Quantitative | There are 4 types of violence in intimate partners (physical, sexual, psychological control and emotional psychological). In this sense, sexism has an impact and is made visible through physical and sexual abuse. |

| Author | Journal | Methodology (Approach) | Results |
|---|--|------------------------|--|
| (Beyene et al., 2022) Factors Associated with Gender-Based Violence Perpetration by Male High School Students in Eastern Ethiopia | Journal of Interpersonal Violence | Quantitative | The various types of gender-based violence (emotional, sexual or physical) are related to individual and relationship factors. |
| (Pérez-Sánchez et al., 2022) Determinants of Genderbased Violence Against Women in Spain: An Asymmetric Bayesian Model | Journal of Interpersonal Violence | Qualitative | The educational factor of the woman is not relevant to the physical, sexual or psychological abuse suffered. |
| (Montserrat et al., 2022). Children's understandings of gender-based violence at home: The role school can play in child disclosure | Journal Children and Youth Services Review | Qualitative | Gender-based violence occurs in different environments in social relationships. |

4. Discussion

The findings in the review of scientific articles make the problem of gender-based violence visible. It is, nowadays a new global social and economic pandemic (Averis, 2021), (Velzeboer et al., 2021), which has increased dramatically during the presence of COVID 19, as shown by morbidity and mortality statistics (López-Hernández & Rubio-Amores, 2020). In this sense, COVID - 19 has highlighted the fragility of health systems worldwide in the face of the other pandemic of violence (Chandan, 2020).

4.1 Types of violence in intimate partners

It is important to highlight that social isolation forced women to spend more time with the aggressor, increasing tensions and abuse at home permanently (Hsu & Henke, 2021), (Ferrer-Pérez & Bosch-Fiol, 2019). These events of domination and fear provoked by gender violence are a huge obstacle for women to report abuse or violence perpetuated by their partners, this being a potential risk factor for cases of femicide (Espinoza Carvajal, 2020). Fear caused most women to be disconnected from support networks to report attacks by their partners, which put their safety and well-being at risk (Bouillon-Minois et al., 2020),(Ruiz-Pérez & Pastor -Moreno, 2021).

The presence of COVID 19 turned homes into unsafe places for women and children (Leburu-Masigo & Phuti Kgadima, 2020), as all types of violence are generated here, for example, physical, sexual, psychological, interpersonal and emotional abuse (Ruiz-Pérez & Pastor-Moreno, 2021), and even intimidation, coercion, trauma and deprivation of freedom occur, especially among women in precarious economic and working conditions (Bellizzi et al., 2020), generating a negative impact on their mental and psychological health and their domestic environment (Raj et al., 2020),(Buttall & Ferreira, 2020).

Regarding the types of violence, economic and patrimonial violence have been highlighted due to excessive domestic work without any type of retribution; symbolic and institutional violence has been represented in governmental and institutional responses; in intrafamily or domestic violence, the unfair power dynamics have been highlighted, which has allowed a lower aptitude in women to face violence, putting their children and themselves at risk (Londoño Bernal, 2020). On the other hand, the culture of violence has been related to lack of gender identity, inappropriate sexual behavior, lack of communication skills and values (Rollston et al., 2020).

4.2 Characteristics of Violence in the family environment

In the family environment, women are responsible for the care of their children, and when they are victims or survivors of violence, they become vulnerable and fragile in the social environment, with

low self-esteem (Chaparro Moreno & Alfonso, 2020). This problem has emerged in both rural and urban areas (Moffitt et al., 2020), as well as in immigrant women (Sabri et al., 2021), (Ruiz-Pérez & Pastor-Moreno, 2021).

The violence added to the effects of the pandemic, such as unemployment and poverty, generated economic stress and financial uncertainty in the poorest households. International studies indicate that the characteristics of violence during the quarantine period were physical and sexual abuse, rape and intimidation of the woman by the aggressor for not being reported. However, economic, social, patrimonial, verbal, symbolic and institutional violence have also been considered relevant (Gebrewahd et al., 2020).

Likewise, submission to power has increased the possibility of traumatic experiences that lead to situations of illness due to blows, punches, shoves, kicks, burns, threats with sharp weapons that can even lead to femicide (Manrique De Lara & Medina Arellano, 2020). Conflicts are related to arguments due to lack of economic resources to meet basic household needs. Likewise, this situation has notably damaged mental health through anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, feelings of loneliness, sadness, low self-esteem, anger, exhaustion, suicidal ideation due to the restriction imposed on the partner to maintain social contact, weakening support networks (Jiménez-Rodríguez et al., 2020).

In this sense, in order to provide viable solutions against any act or type of aggression against women, it is evident the need to work and implement actions, strategies and policies of cultural evolution for the benefit of reducing violence against them (Donato, 2020), or changing the patriarchal society and gender inequality (Silveira Campos et al., 2020), (Roesch et al., 2020). Given the above, violence is a public health problem that has evolved over time and has a negative impact on the mental, physical and sexual health of women, causing an internal and/or external imbalance that leads to a deterioration in the quality of life and personal development in the family environment (Beyene et al., 2022).

Gender roles in relationships within couples may have opposing ideas or ways of thinking due to behaviors, cultural patterns, customs, among others, causing these differences in some form of physical and sexual violence (Rodney et al., 2022), (Rivas-Rivero & Bonilla-Algovia, 2022), (Gamarel et al., 2022). In addition, violence occurs in various scenarios where social relationships are promoted (Taha-Thomure et al., 2022) and is prevalent in immigrant and impoverished women (Scheer et al., 2022), (Sabri et al., 2021).

Finally, gender violence is a serious problem faced by most women, which unfortunately is inherited from generation to generation and seriously affects their personal and integral development, due to the close presence of the aggressor and the dominance he exercises over their actions. There is also evidence of economic deprivation, negative feelings and emotions of frustration that are transferred to the partner through physical, economic, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse.

According to scientific evidence, the most prevalent types of violence are: physical, psychological and sexual, since these are the cases, most reported by women. Likewise, the characteristics of gender violence in the family environment are mostly related to the aggressor's dominance in the relationship, social isolation and subjugation of power due to economic, educational and cultural deficiencies, among others, which have widely increased as a consequence of the pandemic and its aftermath. This is confirmed by information gathered by various professionals and research. It is suggested that more research be conducted on the phenomenon of gender violence in order to expand knowledge for timely psychological interventions for the benefit of society.

5. Conclusions

It is concluded that intimate partner violence is a multidimensional phenomenon that involves power and control dynamics based on the concept of gender and its roles, with constant patterns of increasing tension, states of violence and reconciliation. It is a situation that has serious

consequences for the health and well-being of the victims, who often face obstacles in seeking help. In this regard, it is necessary to consider a comprehensive approach from the prevention of the victim, in order to provide an immediate response to this social problem, to promote gender equality at all levels, a culture of respect in the couple and in society, and to ensure that victims have access to support services and justice.

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