

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: A SURVEY OF POLICE RECORDS IN A MUNICIPALITY OF MINAS GERAIS, BRAZIL¹

Telma Lucas Borges Franco*
Denismar Alves Nogueira**
Clícia Valim Côrtes Gradim***

ABSTRACT

Police report is an instrument of the Civil Police Station that records denunciation cases. This study identified the profile of women victims of violence, of their aggressors, and made considerations about such problem in the municipality of Guaxupé, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. It is a quantitative, descriptive, exploratory and cross sectional investigation. A total of 163 police reports were collected through simple and random sampling, which fitted into Maria da Penha Law, and whose victims were women. The confidence interval was set at 95%, and the margin of error at 4.4%. The Chi-square test was used to assess the relationship between the variables, with significance level of 5%. Most victims and aggressors were between 20 and 34 years old, with low educational level. The violence occurred most frequently on weekends (43%), at night. The aggressors were mostly partners (40,1%) or ex-partners (29.5%) and 33.3% of the cases showed the presence of physical injury. The results corroborate data of violence against women in the country: young and low-educated women, assaulted by their partners. Because these are the first database of violence in Guaxupé they will allow the municipality to create policies and to search for resources to implement them.

Keywords: Violence against women. Gender identity. Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is regarded as a social problem, since it is object of social movements and belongs to the sphere of justice and public safety. This phenomenon, therefore, is not exclusive to the health sector, but also to other articulated social sectors. Act of violence is implicitly related to the health-illness process that refers to any offense and threat to life, to labor conditions and interpersonal relationships⁽¹⁾.

Gender-based violence is understood as a power relationship in society between men and women and occurs by the acceptance of roles historically imposed on both of them, leading men to have a powerful, dominant, disciplinary role and, due to dissatisfactions for several reasons, to externalize their frustration by using violence against women inside their homes⁽²⁾.

In this context, violence against women is founded on possession and patriarchal-power

relationships, which especially involves men's exposition and power and, consequently, women's submissive behavior⁽³⁾.

Professionals who deal with the problem of violence need, therefore, to develop strategies that contemplate and respect the social context and the particularities of women. It is inferred, also, that it is important to bring these professionals close to the realities lived by the victims at a multidisciplinary level, besides proposing visibility to the cases⁽⁴⁾.

Daily social and health practices evidence, however, that multidisciplinary professionals do not know the specific instruments to be used towards a humanized and effective approach of the cases of violence against women⁽¹⁾.

It is understood that, to better recognize and deal with these cases, it is necessary that professionals linked to the assistance to these victims to have a quality communication, as well as multidisciplinary actions, and to develop strategies of prevention, because violence against women perpetrated by their intimate

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*Master in Nursing, Federal University of Alfenas / UNIFAL - MG and member of the Research Group The Nursing Care in Maternal and Child Health. Alfenas (MG), Brazil. Email: telminhafranco@hotmail.com

**PhD in Statistics and Experimentation at the Federal University of Lavras. Associate Professor III of the Institute of Exact Science - ICEX, UNIFAL - MG. Alfenas (MG), Brazil. Email: denisnog@yahoo.com.br

***PhD in Nursing from the University of São Paulo USP / RP. Associate Professor, School of Nursing, Professor of the Post-Graduation Program in Nursing, UNIFAL - MG. Leader of the research group The Nursing Care in Maternal and Child Health Alfenas (MG), Brazil. E-mail: @clicia.gradim UNIFAL - mg.edu.br

partners manifests physical, psychological, social and economic consequences to the victims, making symptoms of pain, depression, low immunity, among others, more frequent ⁽⁵⁻⁶⁾.

In the sphere of health services, the reflections caused by violence are clearly perceived both in financial expenses and in the complexity of the assistance to victims of violence. Prevention must be established; professionals cannot turn only to physical injuries, it is important and necessary to contextualize what is recommended by the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS) and their principles towards comprehensiveness in the actions of care for the health of the individual and try to equate existing inequalities, which are factors that have an emphasis on prevention actions to combat violence perpetrated against women ⁽⁷⁾.

With such a visibility and magnitude that violence has gained in the Brazilian scene, in 2006, the Law 11.340, better known as Maria da Penha Law, was created. This one, in turn, deals, broadly speaking, with the increase in the punishments to aggressions against women in domestic and family spheres. In addition, it establishes guidelines so that the State, in its diverse instances, organizes itself to change the situation of suffering, sickening and inequality to which victims of violence are subjected ⁽⁸⁾.

Just as health professionals face violence in a daily basis while working, something that is often invisible to them, the Civil Police uses instruments to detect, instruct or punish cases of domestic violence after the registration of a police report, an instrument for police inquiry that aims to gather elements about an offense in order to make an apparently criminal event known to authorities.

Even knowing that violence is a problem of public health, it was observed that the completion of the violence notification form in the services almost does not exist. Taking into account that the female users of the police station have a homogeneous profile – most of them are low educated, housewives or maidservants, belonging to the age group of young adults – professionals try not to get involved with the violence situations, ceasing to instruct the population to register the event in the station to generate the police report, promoting

the repetition of the cycle of violence and reinforcing the invisibility and fear.

From this perspective, this study took into consideration these important characteristics and chose to know the data registered in the police reports in order to delineate the profile of domestic violence and its challenges, seeking to improve the assistance to these women. The purpose of the present research was to identify the profile of women victims of violence, of their aggressors, and make considerations about such a problem. The present investigation was conducted in the municipality of Guaxupé, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, with women who, after suffering violence, reported it in the regional station of the Civil Police.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive and exploratory study, with quantitative methodological approach and cross-sectional design. After consent of the chief officer in charge of the 18th Regional Civil Police Station, in Guaxupé, Minas Gerais, Brazil, it was sent to the Ethics and Research Committee of the Federal University of Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG), following the Guidelines and Regulations for Research Involving Humans, resolution of the National Health Council (CNS) 466/2012 ⁽⁹⁾, being approved under the protocol 206/2011,

The data obtained in this study result from the master's degree dissertation on nursing entitled "Violence against women in the municipality of Guaxupé, MG, Brazil ⁽¹⁰⁾" and were collected from the police reports on violence against women, with denunciations that fitted into Maria da Penha Law. The police reports in which men were the victims were excluded, because the purpose of the study was to investigate violence against women. Due to the restricted and secretive nature of the documents, the data from the reports was surveyed in a private room through an instrument for data collection, from April to May, 2012.

A total of 163 police reports were analyzed, through simple random sampling, with confidence interval of 95%, and margin of error of 4.4%. The data were organized, validated and stored in a database structured in a spreadsheet.

Subsequently, these data were imported through the software SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science), version 17, for statistical and descriptive analysis. For the relations of the variables of the study the Chi-square test for homogeneity was used, with significance level of 5%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In recent decades, in various parts of the world, there have been manifestations leading the violence perpetrated against women to a place of greater visibility, and bringing this phenomenon from the domestic to the public sphere. In this context, the police stations specialized in assistance to women were created. Thus, women began to have legal support in the sector and the issue gained its real importance. So that the stations can operate efficiently, however, an integrated and qualified work is necessary, providing resolution to the system and importance to the first assistance to the woman carried out in the station, to prevent her from being a victim again, and making her feel safe when denouncing her aggressor⁽¹¹⁾.

In Brazil, as in several other countries, women do not feel safe to denounce their aggressors to the competent authorities or to look for help, which is stressed by the Special Secretariat for Policies for Women, which evidences that 20% of victims of violence do not search for existing support services, even though there are currently more than 350 police stations specialized in assistance to women, besides non-governmental organizations, hospitals and shelters. This fact occurs, probably, due to lack of effectiveness of specialized stations to support and follow up the victim, since this is a singular moment, as many women are not always ready to leave the violence situation⁽¹²⁾.

After the survey of the reports registered in Guaxupé's Civil Police Station, the results and discussions referring to the aggressions of domestic and family violence against women are presented. When women suffer aggressions, many of them do not call the police to file the report or to denounce their aggressors directly to the Public Ministry. We did not have access to the denunciations made directly with the Public

Ministry, only to the reports filed in the Civil Police station.

The age of the women victims of violence varied between 12 to 74 years old, with higher percentage among adult young women (20 to 34 years old), accounting for 48.1% of the sample. The same happened with the aggressors: the same age group corresponded to 39.9% of the sample.

According to the homogeneity test, a percentage of 20% was expected for the cases distributed among the age groups studied, being possible to observe, therefore, a high percentage of young adult victims and aggressors ($P < 0.001$). Violence against women is perpetrated from childhood to old age: 12.8% of the victims were between 12 and 19 years old and 4.5% were aged more than 60 years old. Regarding the aggressor, the same happens: 4.9% of them were between 12 and 19 years old, while 2.5% aged more than 60 years old perpetrated the violence.

These data corroborate a research conducted in the city of Porto Alegre, state of Rio Grande do Sul, where 351 records of victims of violence were verified in a local women's police station. This study observed that the women were between 12 and 78 years old and that most of them were aged between 24 and 45 years old⁽¹¹⁾. This age group is mentioned as the one with the highest risk for suffering violence, since it is associated with a period of intense sexual and reproductive activity and because the main aggressors are young adults too⁽¹³⁾.

Regarding the occupation, most of the victims are housewives, retired or unemployed (45.3%), while maidservants account for 28.2% of the sample. Among the aggressors, most of them are self-employed workers (27.7%) or sellers in shops and grocery stores (21.1%).

With respect to the social condition of the women who filed a police report, it is important to stress that many of them do not have a paid activity and that, when they work, they receive a smaller salary than men do. Earning less than men and/or depending financially on them increases, therefore, the fragility, vulnerability and women's devaluation, giving rising, thus, to a scenario favorable for violence to occur, since this situation leave women dependent on and submissive to men⁽¹⁴⁾.

As for education - of the victims and their aggressors -, unfortunately, data are not reliable, since most of the reports only informed if the subjects were alphabetized or not. Thus, 49% of the victims and 59% of the aggressors were alphabetized, but 16.1% of the victims and 19% of the aggressors did not have elementary education, while 14.1% of the women who made the denunciation have finished high school. Only 1.9% of the victims have concluded higher education, while none of the aggressors have.

Low education is pointed as one of the factors that lead to the perpetration of violence. The reduction in the tolerance to violence occurs when women are better educated, since they begin to be more independent, but it does not mean that the phenomenon of violence does not affect all social classes and that women with more years of study or more instructed do not face violence, but rather that these women have alternatives such as doctors, lawyers and psychologists; these data are notified and computed into the systems, creating a false representation of the denunciations and making violence be frequently associated with poverty⁽¹⁵⁾.

Among the police reports that contained information on the signs of toxic substances present in the bodies of the protagonists, 15.8% of the aggressors were under the effect of illicit substances, while 84.2% were not, something statistically significant ($P < 0.01$). Regarding the victims, none of them was under the effect of toxic substances. Among the records, 88.3% and 88.4% did not have such information about aggressors and victims, respectively.

It is suggested, therefore, that workers responsible for the completion of the form should receive training so that the fields are not left blank, improving the quality of the registration and, consequently, of the information. This is because it was observed in the fields used to describe the presence of signs of toxic substances and mental suffering, both regarding the victim and the aggressor, that, out of the 163 reports surveyed, about 90% did not bring this information.

The highest number of records is about people living in the urban area of the municipality, accounting for 95.1% of the sample. Among the victims, 52% were married,

46% single and 22% were divorced. As for color/race, 51.8% self-declared as being white, 40.9% as brown and 7.3% as black.

Weekends were the most favorable days for the occurrence of violence in comparison with other days of the week. According to the statistical test, a percentage of 16.6% was expected from the records of police reports distributed into the days of the week, thus, weekend (42.9%) ($P < 0.01$) presented a prevalence above the expectations.

The night, from 6pm to 11pm, was the period with the highest incidence of violence, accounting for 38.7% ($P < 0.01$) of the cases registered, while 27% occurred in the afternoon (from 12pm to 5pm), 23.3% occurred in the morning (from 6am to 11 am) and only 11% in the late night (from 12am to 5am), corresponding to the lowest index of registration of violence. According to the homogeneity test, a percentage of 25% was expected from the reports registered in each period, therefore, it was verified a value higher than the expectations for the night and a decrease in the late night.

During the weekends, the aggressor spends more time at home, especially at night. The aggression occurs at any time of the day or night, but the night becomes more favorable due to the characteristics of the moment and the surprise factor. In a study⁽¹⁶⁾ conducted in the city of Araçatuba, São Paulo, Brazil, there was a higher frequency of aggressions during the weekends and the day. This fact, according to the authors, is due mainly to the increase in the violence perpetrated by known people, which occurs inside the domestic environment, where the victim has bonds with her aggressor.

The presence of visible injuries suffered by the victims and classified in the police reports as light, serious or extremely serious, corresponded to 33.3% of the denunciations with light degree of injury, mostly. The question is, therefore, whether these data are reliable, because, in 66.7% of the cases surveyed in the reports, there was no record of any type of body injury, since only when the victim has a visible physical injury it is registered.

It is worthy emphasizing that it would be essential if all victims of violence involved in the denunciations underwent the corpus delicti examination, since it is performed by capable professionals, but this does not happen.

About the relationship of the victims with their aggressors, it was observed that 40.1% of the aggressions were perpetrated by the victims' spouses and 29.5% by their ex-spouses, while 26.8% by their relatives, such as son/daughter or grandson/granddaughter ($P < 0.01$). A percentage of 25% was expected for the aggression perpetrated by each type of aggressor, being possible to observe, thus, a high percentage of spouses and ex-spouses offending their partners.

The aggressors of these women, most of them partners and ex-partners, totaled a percentage of 69.6% of the aggressions perpetrated by intimate partners. This fact can be explained by the social role imposed on women and reinforced by the patriarchal culture, which lead them to obey their husbands even if they do not agree with them; also, many of them, even suffering violence, regard marriage as the most important status⁽¹⁵⁾.

For this reason, it is important to understand the changes that alcohol and drugs cause in somebody's personality, negatively affecting personal relationships, triggering conjugal conflicts and emotionally overburdening spouses of men who make use of such substances. Moreover, the family of the dependant subject is impacted and faced with serious losses in its structure such as depression, conjugal disharmony and lack of resolution for problems of the adult life⁽¹⁷⁾.

In this context, the users of the specialized police stations have a homogeneous profile, being considered women with low instructional level, of popular class and, most of the times, housewives or maidservants⁽¹¹⁾.

It is worth highlighting that the stations do not have services of excellence in the assistance to women victims of domestic violence, which leaves gaps in this assistance. The stations and services specialized in assistance to these women need, therefore, investments so that the phenomenon of violence can be faced and achieve the ideal situation, since women need to be heard and encouraged to leave the violence situation that surrounds them⁽¹¹⁾.

In face of this, it is inferred that professionals involved with this assistance in the stations should be qualified so that, thereby, more specific data can be collected from the victims of violence and the case of aggression better

investigated, providing support and making these women keep denouncing in accordance with the Law, thus preventing them from being victims again⁽¹¹⁾.

After the exposed, it becomes evident the associations of the variables related to violence against women and their risk factors. There is a need to intervene in the families in which the phenomenon occurs so that the cycle of violence ceases. It is important to create programs that seek the qualification of the professional who will be in charge of the assistance to the victims of violence, and strengthen the social networks that aim to care for the families of the women⁽¹¹⁾.

The professionals involved with the hospital or public health service should turn their eyes to the problem of violence against women, in order to promote actions that allow women to cope with the situation and to prevent health losses, since these losses constitute a violation of human rights, which should be approached by all health professionals⁽¹⁸⁾.

In the same way, public policies should be directed to these cases in order to bring about the comprehensiveness of the actions turned to the well-being and safety of the victims and their families, both in the legal and in the health sphere⁽¹¹⁾.

CONCLUSION

When entering a space other than health, but which is co-participant by providing data on violence, the possibility of discussing the format of data collection from other services arose.

The incomplete filling of the police reports led us to observe that education is visible, as well as social class, leaving us unable to, through data, strengthen the assumption that violence occurs regardless of places or social strata.

The data surveyed demonstrated that violence exists in the municipality and that they are not different from the data of the region and the rest of the country. However, there were data on the day and time when the violence is more frequently perpetrated, for instance. These pieces of information can allow for the development of public policies and distribution of policemen in certain areas and times in order to prevent

violence. As for the health services, data demonstrate that violence occurs when they do not operate and, therefore, professionals should approach their patients and notify when the formers see that there was a case of violence.

This research is the first work developed in Guaxupé. It observed that further studies are necessary to deepen questions such as the effective participation of policemen and health professionals regarding violence, as well as training for the completion of the forms and the approach of the victims.

VIOLÊNCIA CONTRA A MULHER: LEVANTAMENTO DOS REGISTROS POLICIAIS EM UM MUNICÍPIO DE MINAS GERAIS/BRASIL

RESUMO

O boletim de ocorrência (BO) é um instrumento da Delegacia da Polícia Civil que registra a denúncia de casos. Esse estudo identificou o perfil das mulheres vítimas de violência, dos agressores e considerações acerca de tal problemática no município de Guaxupé, Minas Gerais, Brasil. Estudo do tipo quantitativo, descritivo, exploratório e transversal. Utilizaram 163 BOs, por amostragem aleatória simples, que se enquadravam na Lei Maria da Penha, cujas vítimas eram mulheres. Estabeleceu-se 95% de confiança e 4,4% de margem de erro. Para verificar a relação existente entre as variáveis, utilizou-se o teste de Qui-quadrado com 5% de significância. As mulheres agredidas (48%) e os agressores (39,9) tinham entre 20 e 34 anos e baixo nível de escolaridade. A violência ocorreu com maior frequência nos finais de semana (43%), no período noturno. Os agressores foram companheiros (40,1%) ou ex-companheiros (29,5%) e 33,3% dos casos apresentaram presença de lesão física. Os resultados corroboram com dados de violência contra a mulher no país, mulheres jovens, com baixa escolaridade e agredidas por parceiros e por serem os primeiros dados de violência do município permitirão ao mesmo a criação de políticas e a busca por recursos para implementar as mesmas.

Palavras-chave: Violência contra a Mulher. Identidade de Gênero. Enfermagem.

VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS MUJERES: UN ESTUDIO DE LOS REGISTROS DE LA POLICÍA EN UN MUNICIPIO DE MINAS GERAIS/BRASIL

RESUMEN

El Parte Policial es un instrumento de la Comisaría de la Policía Civil que registra la denuncia de casos. Este estudio identificó el perfil de las mujeres víctimas de violencia; de los agresores; y de las consideraciones acerca de este problema en el municipio de Guaxupé, Minas Gerais, Brasil. Estudio del tipo cuantitativo, descriptivo, exploratorio y transversal. Se recogieron 163 partes policiales, por muestreo aleatorio simple, que se encajaron en la Ley *Maria da Penha*, cuyas víctimas eran mujeres. Se establecieron 95% de confianza y 4,4% de margen de error. Para verificar la relación existente entre las variables se utilizó la prueba de Chi-cuadrado con un 5% de significación. Las mujeres agredidas (48%) y los agresores (39,9) tenían entre 20 y 34 años y bajo nivel de escolaridad. La violencia ocurrió con mayor frecuencia en los fines de semana (43%), en el periodo nocturno. Los agresores fueron compañeros (40,1%) o ex-compañeros (29,5%) y en el 33,3 % de los casos se observó la presencia de lesión física. Los resultados corroboran con datos de violencia contra la mujer en el país; mujeres jóvenes, con baja escolaridad y agredidas por compañeros y por ser los primeros datos de violencia de la ciudad le permitirán la creación de políticas y la búsqueda de recursos para implementarlas.

Palabras clave: Violencia contra la Mujer. Identidad de Género. Enfermería.

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Corresponding author: Telma Lucas Borges Franco. UNIFAL. Nursing Department. Rua Gabriel Monteiro da Silva, 700, Centro. CEP: 37130-000, Alfenas (MG), Brasil.

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