

INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: MOTHERS' REPORT

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ABSTRACT. The transgenerational transmission of violence represents an important field of research for the understanding and prevention of physical violence against children, since it is an important factor for the maintenance of abusive patterns in the family. However, the mechanisms responsible for this transmission are not yet fully understood. This study aimed to investigate the experience and the perception of mothers with and without a history of physical abuse against children regarding the practices of their caregivers in the family of origin and their practices in their own family. Participants were 12 mothers with children aged between 7 and 12 years, divided in three groups, considering their history of physical abuse, who answered a sociodemographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The participants of the three groups pointed out more differences than similarities between their family of origin and the current one, especially because they do not want the same suffering for their children. The results also indicated that receiving support during childhood and a negative perception about their own childhood experiences can contribute to change the parental practices. On the other hand, mothers who perceive the experience of physical violence as less serious may be more likely to reproduce such practices. We discuss the implications for intervention programs to families with a history of physical abuse against children and we also emphasize the need to stimulate research that investigates the factors and mechanisms related to the gender, in order to better understand this phenomenon.

Keywords: Family violence; transmission between generations; child abuse.

TRANSMISSÃO INTERGERACIONAL DA VIOLÊNCIA FÍSICA CONTRA A CRIANÇA: UM RELATO DE MÃES

RESUMO. A transgeracionalidade da violência representa importante campo de pesquisa para a compreensão e a prevenção da violência física contra a criança, pois constitui importante fator para a manutenção de padrões de abuso na família. Porém, os mecanismos responsáveis por essa transmissão ainda não estão plenamente esclarecidos. Este estudo teve como objetivo investigar a experiência e a percepção de mães com e sem histórico de violência física contra seus filhos quanto às práticas de seus cuidadores na família de origem e suas práticas na família atual. Participaram da pesquisa 12 mães com filhos entre 7 e 12 anos, subdivididas em três grupos, conforme o histórico de violência física, que responderam a um questionário sociodemográfico e a uma entrevista semiestruturada. As participantes dos três grupos apontaram mais diferenças do que semelhanças entre sua família de origem e a atual,

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sobretudo porque não querem para os filhos o mesmo sofrimento que viveram. Os resultados indicam, também, que a presença de uma figura de apoio e a percepção negativa quanto às próprias experiências da infância podem contribuir para a mudança de práticas adotadas com seus filhos. Por outro lado, as mães que percebem a experiência de violência física como menos grave podem ter mais chances de reproduzir essas práticas. As implicações para programas de intervenção direcionados a famílias com histórico de violência física contra os filhos são discutidas e ressalta-se a necessidade de estimular pesquisas que investiguem os fatores e os mecanismos relacionados ao gênero, visando a melhor compreensão deste fenômeno.

Palavras-chave: Violência na família; transmissão entre gerações; abuso de criança.

TRANSMISIÓN INTERGENERACIONAL DE LA VIOLENCIA FÍSICA CONTRA LOS NIÑOS: EL RELATO DE MADRES

RESUMEN. La transmisión inter generacional de la violencia representa un importante campo de investigación para la comprensión y la prevención de la violencia física contra el niño, pues constituye un factor importante para el mantenimiento de patrones de abuso en la familia. Sin embargo, los mecanismos responsables de esta transmisión aún no se entienden completamente. En este estudio se tuvo como objetivo investigar la experiencia y la percepción de madres con y sin antecedentes de violencia física contra sus hijos en cuanto a las prácticas de sus cuidadores en la familia de origen y sus prácticas en la familia actual. Las participantes fueron 12 madres con niños entre 7 y 12 años, divididos en tres grupos, de acuerdo a la historia de la violencia física, quienes respondieron un cuestionario sociodemográfico y una entrevista semiestructurada. Las participantes de los tres grupos apuntaron más diferencias que semejanzas entre su familia de origen y la actual, sobre todo porque no quieren para los hijos el mismo sufrimiento que vivieron. Los resultados indican, también, que la presencia de una figura de apoyo y la percepción negativa de las experiencias en la infancia pueden contribuir para el cambio de las prácticas adoptadas con sus hijos. Por otro lado, las madres que perciben la experiencia de violencia física como menos grave pueden tener más posibilidades de reproducir esas prácticas. El estudio discute las implicaciones para los programas de intervención dirigidos a las familias con una historia de violencia contra los niños y resalta la necesidad de estimular investigaciones sobre los factores y los mecanismos relacionados con el género, buscando una mejor comprensión de este fenómeno.

Palabras clave: Violencia doméstica; transmisión entre las generaciones; abuso de niños.

Introduction

Studies on experiences in the family of origin indicate that a history of physical punishment and victimization in childhood, in addition to contributing to greater acceptance of punishment (Clément & Chamberland, 2009), increases the chances of the individual becoming a perpetrator, collaborating to maintain this practice (Bérgamo & Bazon, 2011; Dottan & Harel, 2014; Milner et al., 2010; Romero-Martínez, Figueiredo, & Moya-Albiol, 2014). However, the risk that a victim of violence in childhood is likely to act in the same way with their own children varies greatly (Dottan, & Harel, 2014), and one of the researchers'

challenges is to understand the mechanisms that help explain the continuity and rupture of the cycle of violence throughout the generations (Berlin, Appleyard, & Dodge, 2011).

Much of what parents do in relation to their children comes from the models they had during their childhood and adolescence, as evidenced by empirical studies (Marin et al., 2013; Milner et al., 2010). In a survey with 5,394 military personnel and 716 graduate students, Milner et al. (2010) found that the chance of an adult committing an act of physical violence against a child was three times greater for those who experienced violence in childhood. Another aspect verified was that the magnitude of the relationship between the history of violence and the risk to adult life was similar, regardless of gender, ethnicity, age or marital status of the participants.

However, although previous experience is an important aspect, not all parents who were victims of physical violence commit the same type of violence against their children. A history of maltreatment in childhood contributes only in part to the occurrence of violence in the later family. The relationship between childhood experience and risk of violence is associated with a number of intervening factors, including social support (Berlin et al., 2011; Crouch et al., 2012; Thornberry et al., 2013), the quality of the parental relationship in the family of origin (Bérgamo & Bazon, 2011), trauma symptoms developed as a result of the abuse (Milner et al., 2010), the degree of severity of the violence suffered, according to the individual's perception (Gagné, Tourigny, Joly, & Pouliot-Lapointe, 2007) and knowledge about the harm of violence and attributions of guilt to the child (Clément & Chamberland, 2009). These factors interact with other variables (e.g., characteristics of the individual and period of abuse, as Romero-Martínez et al., 2014 points out), and may act as risk or protection factors for violence, contributing to the reproduction of experienced practices.

Regarding the transmission mechanisms, Capaldi, Pears, Patterson and Owen (2003) suggest that the practices of the first generation of parents can influence the practices of the second generation, since the children learn the strategies in their family of origin. In this context, the mediation exercised by the individual's ability to control their attention becomes an important variable to interrupt the cycle of violence subsequently and childhood care experience has a predominant role in the development of self-regulation (Margolin, Ramos, Timmons, Miller, & Han, 2016).

Fuchs, Mohler, Resch and Kaess (2015) also indicate that mothers with a history of abuse may also show less involvement and responsiveness to their children in the first years of life, indicating that the experience does not necessarily represent the replication of practices, but may interfere with other positive contexts. This perspective is validated by the study by Young and Widom (2014), which suggests more difficulties in this group to recognize positive emotions, and by the research of Gold et al., (2014), which reports more difficulties in processing emotions.

Among the protection factors, social support stands out, which seems to play a key role. The presence of a caring and supportive partner, for example, may reduce the chances of the victim of violence during childhood treating children in the same way (Conger, Schofield, Neppl, & Merrick, 2013; Jaffee et al., 2013). Support seems to be significant when considering support received both in adulthood and at the time of abuse. When the victim of violence in childhood perceives that they do not have support, this may make it difficult to identify sources of support in the future (Crouch et al., 2012).

In what concerns the role of beliefs as a result of a history of victimization, research on transgenerationality (Clément & Chamberland, 2009; Gagné et al., 2007; Rodriguez & Price, 2004) suggest that people who suffered the most punishment are the ones who most accept this form of discipline, which, in turn, increases the chances of adopting the practice.

However, exposure to models of violence does not always lead to greater acceptance of physical punishment. According to Gagné et al. (2007), adults exposed to more severe violence tend to be less supportive of the use of physical punishment as a form of discipline. They observed that, although people exposed to physical discipline are more conducive to practice than those who did not have this experience, the more participants felt threatened or humiliated in childhood, the less their agreement with the use of force.

Studies in this area, however, are still controversial. Rodriguez and Price (2004), for example, found that students who had more severe and abusive family experiences were also more amenable to using severe discipline with their children. More recently, in Brazil, Bérnago and Bazon (2011) found that parents with a history of violence against their children also perceived their punishments in childhood as more severe than parents of a control group. It is possible that the variability in the research results from differences in the samples, since some interviewed parents denounced (Bérnago & Bazon, 2011), others investigated students' perceptions (Rodriguez & Price, 2004), and others involved adults in the general population (Gagné et al., 2007).

Despite the fact that not all parents who were victims of violence in childhood become parents who commit violence against their children, the factors that contribute to perpetuating or breaking patterns of violence in the family are not yet fully understood. Transgenerationality, in this case, may represent a risk to family development, but, as such, is not a cause for maintaining family violence.

In this sense, this study aimed to explore the continuity and rupture of physical violence against the child in the family, analyzing the experience, in the family of origin, of mothers with and without a history of physical abuse against their children, their perception of practices of their caregivers and possible implications for their own adopted practices with their children in the current family.

Method

Participants

This study was conducted with a convenience sample of 12 mothers with similar sociodemographic characteristics, 4 with a history of physical abuse against their children and 8 with no history of violence. Mothers were subdivided into three groups (GA, GB1 and GB2). GA was formed by four mothers who had a history of violence against their children and who had experienced physical violence in the family of origin. GB1 and GB2 were composed of mothers who had no known history of violence against their children, although they reported in the course of the data collection interview that they sometimes resorted to 'mild physical punishment': in GB1, mothers ($n = 4$) had experienced physical violence frequently in childhood and in GB2, mothers ($n = 4$) did not report this type of experience in their childhood or reported that punishment of this nature occurred with low frequency.

Mothers had, on average, 34.4 years and schooling between incomplete elementary school and complete high school. Six mothers did not work and the other six worked as hourly housekeeper or waste picker. The average family income was approximately 1.5 minimum wages valid at the time and seven mothers received a government assistance, mainly Bolsa Família (Family Allowance Program) ($n = 6$). Seven mothers lived with the father or the stepfather of the child and the others raised the children without the presence of the spouse.

The mean number of children was 3.6, and the mean age of the target children considered in the study was 9.3 years, with ages ranging from 7 to 12 years. The majority were male ($n = 9$), and only GB1 mothers had girls as their target child. The majority of mothers ($n = 10$) reported that the children had not been desired children.

Instruments

Questionário de caracterização do sistema familiar (Dessen, 2009). This instrument contains information on sociodemographic characteristics and functioning of the family system and was adapted considering the objectives of this study. It is divided into five parts: (a) family identification and configuration; (b) sociodemographic data; (c) aspects of family routine and social support network; (d) family health; and (e) family history of reporting to child protection bodies.

'Semistructured interview script about education in the family of origin'. Elaborated by the authors, it contains nine questions, six of which were used for this study: (a) education in the family of origin, (b) evaluation of how they were educated, (c) if they were hit by the parent/guardian and what they did, (d) if the way they educate their child today reminds them of how they were educated and why, (e) if they do something different from the parents/guardians in their children's education and why. The other questions related to the evaluation of the education given to the children and the behavior of the children.

Procedure

Data collection

The selection of the participants of the GA was carried out in three units linked to the Social Assistance of the Federal District. We selected families forwarded by the Tutelary Council, which had at least one child aged 7 to 12 years and who were not suspected of sexual violence. GB1 and GB2 were selected from a civil society organization, located in the same region of GA, which provides social assistance to needy children and adolescents. For the composition of the groups, the experience in the families of origin and in the current one was evaluated based on the mothers' responses to the items of the physical abuse subscale of the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale – CTSPC (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998), adapted by Reichenheim and Moraes (2003). The mothers were interviewed in a reserved place in the institutions.

Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed in full and the questions related to the objectives of this study were subjected to qualitative analysis. After the initial categorization, themes and categories were subjected to a regrouping, generating an integrated system of synthesis categories, composed of three subsystems: (a) education in the family of origin, (b) education in the current family, and (c) similarities and differences between education in the family of origin and in the current one. The systems developed were reviewed on the basis of criteria of pertinence, homogeneity and completeness. Each system was then subjected to the evaluation of a judge, who verified the clarity and relevance of the contents. To identify the participants, the abbreviations GA, GB1 and GB2 were used to refer to the group, and

the letter M was used to identify the mothers. For example, the acronym GAM4 indicates the mother # 4 of GA.

Ethical considerations

The study was submitted and approved by a Research Ethics Committee (project 09-10/2011) and the participants signed a Free and Informed Consent Term.

Results

Education in the family of origin

In the three groups, childhood in the family of origin was marked by (a) difficulties in socioeconomic conditions; (b) predominantly negative family context; (c) an education considered rigid; and (d) very restricted social contacts, mainly imposed by mothers. Participants also reported that there was no dialogue in the relationship with parents/guardians, and in GA and GB1 there was also a reference to the lack of support and attention from the mothers: "In this case, she [the guardian] did not have... the affection I have today, concern about whether my son is sad, if he is happy" (GB1M5).

On the other hand, GB1 and GB2 participants reported that they could count on the support of the whole family group (GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$) or of the father and siblings (GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=1$): "But so, what I could thus receive from them all was a good deed [...] And I was well protected, right? And I even thank them" (GB2M10). Support from the father or siblings was cited as an attempt to protect the participant in situations involving her mother's aggressions: "He protected me from her, from her moments of anger, from drinking [...]. Then, I had support in him. [...] we were friends, right?" (GB1M5).

When considering the practices adopted by their parents or guardians, the participants described situations involving corporal punishment and maltreatment, psychological aggression and non-violent discipline. On corporal punishment and maltreatment, all mothers in the three groups reported that their parents hit, although, as previously mentioned, for GB2 mothers, such punishment was less frequent: "I was hit a little, thank God. [...] My mother has never been that way of hitting people very much" (GB2M9). Severe punishments were mentioned by GA mothers (e.g., "She [grandmother] hit a lot, hit hard" [GAM1]), and situations considered to be abuse with injuries were reported mainly by GB1 participants (e.g. "My mother even dislocated my arm by hitting me, stepped on my head" [GB1M7]). They also mentioned that they had them kneel on corn (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=1$) or they threw objects (GB1: $n=1$).

For participants in GB1 ($n=1$) and GB2 ($n=2$), their mothers showed regret after hitting their daughters: "Then we saw that she was sorry, but she did not flatter us either, for us not to think we were so full of ourselves" (GB2M9). Or seemed to try to compensate: "She was so sorry to see me hurt [...], I think her pain was much greater than mine. [...] I think she did not want to show much pity, but she treated me much better" (GB1M5). The parents hit for different reasons such as disobedience/misbehavior of the daughter (GA: $n=3$, GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=2$), mother's stress/frustrations (GB1: $n=3$, GB2: $n=2$) and by alcohol use (GB1: $n=2$).

In addition to physical punishment, participants also reported situations involving the use of psychological aggression. This type of aggression occurred through threats (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=1$), curses (GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=1$), screams (GB1: $n=2$) and fights (GA:

$n=1$, GB2: $n=1$). On the other hand, there were also reports that parents talked/taught (GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=2$) and grounding (GB2: $n=2$), indicating situations where nonviolent discipline was used. One mother pointed out, however, that the use of dialogue in education was not common.

Education in the family of origin and in the current family

'Similarities'. Regarding the similarities between their educational practices and those of parents/guardians, the participants indicated mainly coercive practices, use of corporal punishment and psychological aggression. Regarding the use of corporal punishment (GA: $n=2$, GB1: $n=1$), in GA there were similarities with regard to the context of education: "[...] I raise my children the way they [her parents] raised me, got it? [...] if he takes something from someone, I make him give back and hit him not to get accustomed" (GAM22). For a participant in GB1, the use of physical punishment was considered an inheritance of the mother: "[...] I even think I inherited some of it from her [...]. I think it's more in the way of hitting" (GB1M6).

The fact of acting like the mother in the use of psychological aggression was reported as something undesirable in two groups (GA: $n=2$, GB2: $n=2$): "I'm able to be similar to my mother. I yell [...]. I wish I did not need to yell, understand?" (GAM4). The use of psychological aggression was also considered something that should be modified by a GB2 participant: "One thing that [...] I have to correct in me is because I have a habit of talking loud, yeah, of screaming" (GB2M10). Only GB2 cited the drawing of lines through dialogue as a resemblance to the family of origin. "Because when they [children] want to do what they want, I do not let them. I say, 'Oh, R. [son], it is not so. It has to be like this.' My mother raised me like this, so we'll raise him like this" (GB2M11).

In addition to the practices, two aspects of general education were also pointed out as similarities with the family of origin. These aspects related to the values transmitted (GA: $n=2$, GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$), such as the value of work, respect and honesty, and the fact that the mother considers herself 'rude/tough' in dealing with children, which refers to the rigidity experienced (GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$). Being tough as the mother was identified in GB1 as something negative: "I think I inherited some of it from her. A little like that [...] tough with my children. [...] And sometimes [...] of judging and then I see that I was wrong" (GB1M6). Respect was the most emphasized value passed on to the children.

The participants mentioned some reasons that lead them to reproduce the strategies experienced in their families of origin, regardless of the perception of violence suffered. Among the reasons, the view that they had a good education, regarding the result achieved (GA: $n=2$, GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=2$). In this regard, a GB2 participant cited that acting like her mother was the right thing to do and, without it, she would not have educated her children: "I do, I copy my mother because it's the right thing to do. If I did not experience what my mother passed me, I do not know what my children would be" (GB2M11).

Another reason was the search for the child's recognition (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=1$). A GA mother pointed out that the children will "[...] thank me later" (GAM2); another GB1 participant considered that she could leave fond memories and help her children to become good parents: "For them to have a good memory of me when they grow up [...]. And when they have a child one day, knowing, remembering, trying to do the best, because I did with them when they were children" (GB1M8). For GA, the resemblance was also considered unintentional: "And I do not want to behave like my mother at all, but sometimes I do" (GAM4).

'Differences'. Mothers identified more differences than similarities in relation to the strategies used in their children's education. As for corporal punishment, not hitting their children in the same way as they did, or even not hitting at all, were the most quoted aspects besides the use of dialogue. Regarding not hitting their children, highlighted by GB1 ($n = 1$) and GB2 ($n = 2$), the participants reported intentionality in acting differently: "I also never wanted to hit. [...] I do not want to raise them the way I was, right? For example, my mother hit me a lot" (GB2M10).

The mothers of GA ($n = 3$), a group with a history of abuse against their children, said they did not want to hit for any reason, noting that they did not hit the same situations or circumstances in which they were hit: "I try not to spank, hit the boys the way my mother hit me [...] I do not hit for anything" (GAM4). Still on corporal punishment, it was mentioned the non-use of punishments like kneeling on corn or beans (GA: $n = 1$).

With respect to the use of non-physical punishment, two situations were identified. On the one hand, GB1 and GB2 participants said that instead of hitting, they use punishment more often: "Nowadays, I use more grounding" (GB2M10). On the other hand, also in GB2, a mother reported that she tries not to use this type of strategy very much: "My mother even grounded me a lot. [...] Today I do not do this" (GB2M11).

Considering differences in non-violent discipline, the use of dialogue was considered more frequent in all groups (GA: $n=3$, GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=2$), and non-physical punishment only in GB1 ($n = 2$) and GB2 ($n= 1$). Regarding the conversations, a GA mother commented: "What's different today is that we sit, talk and talk again with the son, right? [...] So I have another kind of dialogue that my parents would not have [...]" (GAM3). Another GB2 mother, mentioning the conversation as a form of discipline, stressed: "I am totally different. If they [children] do something that I don't like, I sit down and talk to them" (GB2M12). Finally, only one GA mother cited psychological aggression as more frequent in the current family than in the family of origin.

Besides the practices cited in the discipline context, the participants also reported differences in relation to education in general. Considering the history of rigidity, some affirmed giving children more freedom (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$) and showing interest and spend more time with children (GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$), as well as play with them (GB1: $n= 1$), which suggests attention to positive aspects of the relationship that are not restricted to discipline issues. In this way, one of the mothers mentioned that, unlike her own mother, she shows an interest in the feelings of the children, trying to know if the "[...] son is sad, if he is happy" (GB1M5). Another reported that playing with her daughter also results in greater closeness on the part of the child: "My mother did not play, joking, did not. At home, no, the boys play with me" (GB1M8).

Comparisons between their own characteristics and the characteristics of their parents were also made. Some considered themselves to be more rigid/nervous (GA: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$), others more patient/tolerant than them (GB1: $n=3$, GB2: $n=1$). Among the latter, a mother mentioned being more flexible, for example, when children no longer perform a domestic task. Due to the history of housework and financial difficulties in the families of origin, GB1 and GB2 participants do not allow their children to take on household tasks today (GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$). Others mentioned the desire to buy things for their children that they did not have, that the conditions of their family did not allow (GA: $n=2$, GB1: $n=1$).

The concern with the education of the children and the attempt to encourage further studies were also mentioned as differences between the family of origin and the current family (GB2: $n=2$). And, finally, the religion was recalled by a GA participant, who uses it to discipline the child in a threatening context: "Because I tell him [son] 'oh, if you do, heavenly

daddy does not like it, heavenly daddy does not love boy that does so, heavenly daddy will not prepare what you need'. [...] For them, then, to understand that what they are doing is wrong, both for me and for God, which is much worse" (GAM3).

Differences from the family of origin were justified on the basis of external and internal factors to the individual. As external factors were mentioned: changes in social context (GA: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$), lectures on education (GB1: $n=1$), spouse influence (GB2: $n=1$) and more opportunities/time available (GA: $n=1$, GB2: $n=2$). On the social context, the change occurred in relation to physical punishment as an educational practice was highlighted. One GA mother cited, for example, its ban in the school context: "Nowadays, if a teacher picks up a student and had him [...] kneel in front of the board, in front of all the classmates in the room, the teacher is fired with no right to anything" (GAM1). Another participant from GB1 referred to what she learned through lectures: "So we're going to take that experience for us, right? To know how to deal better [with the children]. And until I've tried several things as I've seen on television, I've heard in church lectures and they work" (GB1M6).

Factors related to the family context, involving their relationships and experiences, were also considered to justify the differences in the way of educating the children in relation to the family of origin. In this regard, a GB2 mother highlighted the influence of the spouse: "Because this thing of hitting, my husband no longer agrees, right?" (GB2M10). Another mother in the same group also mentioned that opportunities and available time also allowed her to pay more attention to the homework of the child.

With respect to the factors internal to the individual, related to feelings, emotions and beliefs, mothers of the three groups believe that they act differently because they do not want the same suffering for their children (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=1$, GB2: $n=2$) and because they have pity on the child (GA: $n=1$, GB2: $n=1$). They made reference to their experience: "I do not want for them what I have already had [...] because only I know what I have been through" (GB1M7). And they remembered the trauma associated with their upbringing: "Because I do not want my children to get the trauma I got from my mother. [...] By unnecessary ignorance" (GAM4).

In GB1 and GB2, participants also mentioned that parents' behavior was generally ineffective or inappropriate, which is why they rated it negatively (GB1: $n=2$, GB2: $n=1$): "Ah, because the way my mother [...] Actually, that to me was not education. It was just aggression" (GB1M8). Considering the report of severe punishments in GB1, one participant said to act differently to avoid negative memories of her life, "[...] due to hurts" (GB1M5).

Finally, the mothers pointed out that when acting different from their parent/guardians, they seek the happiness and love of their children (GA: $n=1$, GB1: $n=1$). In this case, a GA mother expects to have the child's support in the future: "Later, if I need to [...] they can receive me and say 'my mother did everything for me, she was a very good mother'" (GAM3); while another from GB1 expects children to have good memories: "And to try to pass on good things to them, good memories of childhood" (GB1M8).

In summary, considering the reports on the childhood and adolescence of the mothers of the three groups, it was observed that the participants pointed out more differences than similarities between their family of origin and the current one. It is possible to identify differences in the current family that are due to the difficulties that the mothers faced in childhood, such as the lack of dialogue and the performance of housework, judged negatively. GA was the group that most identified similarities, all related to the coercive practices used. These similarities were also viewed negatively, as something unwanted. As for the differences, the group said that it uses dialogue and grounding more and does not hit the children in the same situations as those of their guardians/parents.

GB1 pointed out few similarities between its behavior and that of their guardians/parents. As for the practices, as well as in GA, only the use of physical punishment and the fact that the mother was tough/rude were mentioned, something considered negatively. Regarding the differences, the group mentioned the use of non-violent discipline and the fact of not hitting, as well as positive interactions such as playing and showing more interest in the child's feelings. Participants also considered themselves more patient/tolerant with children. GB2, on the other hand, was the only group to mention the use of dialogue as a similarity between the family of origin and the current family, that is, the maintenance of non-violent practices. Moreover, it cited the use of threats, seen, however, as something to be modified, and the fact of being tough/rude, such as GB1. Among the differences indicated, this group also mentioned the concern to maintain more positive interactions with the children, seeking to spend more time with the child.

Discussion

Reports on education in the family of origin reinforce the importance of prior experience, the models to which mothers were exposed and the transmission of practices between generations for continuity or change in relation to the use of physical punishment and cases of violence in the family. The results point to the role of perception about violence, which is as relevant as the experience in the family of origin (Milner et al., 2010). This means that even if they have suffered severe punishment in the family of origin, as with the GA and GB1 groups, those who perceive the experience as less serious may be more likely to reproduce these practices.

In highlighting the differences, the mothers negatively judged their experience in the family of origin. In addition, they showed empathy for the child's situation by reporting that they put themselves in the children shoes, not wishing them the same experiences that brought them suffering. For Davis (1999), the parents' sense that their parents/guardians have gone too far in their educational practices may help them to regard their biography as a reason not to hit their children or, as in the case of GB1, do the same as their parents.

Although GB1 have reported having physically punished their children, mothers reported doing so less frequently and intensely than their mothers/guardians. In this group, the memories of their own suffering were not sufficient for the abandonment of the use of physical force in the education of the children; however, may have favored the positioning against the severity of the punishment, as well as the recognition of its losses. Further, the perception of their own education and the presence of a support figure may have acted as protective factors for the non-perpetuation of violence against children in GB1, as pointed out by Conger et al. (2013) and Rosa, Haack and Falcke (2015).

Additionally, as Bergamo and Bazon (2011) suggest, the ability to perceive the severity of violence can also act as an important protective factor so that the same practices are not reproduced. More severe experiences that result in injury would therefore be associated with a posture less favorable to physical punishment, which may occur because of the suffering that experience evokes (Gagné et al., 2007). Thus, the severity of the aggressions suffered may have led to the identification of the risks of the practice, as occurred with a GB1 mother. As suggested by Straus, Douglas and Medeiros (2014, p. 51), "[...] since punishments become very frequent and severe, their approval begins to decline".

The fact that the mothers of GB1 mentioned a support figure during their childhood and adolescence, someone who assumed the role of protecting them from aggression, warns about how important is a source of support in the denounced cases by mediating the

relationship between the history of violence in the family of origin and the current family (Conger et al., 2013; Kim & Maguire-Jack, 2014; Milner et al., 2010). Thus, perceived (and received) support by the mothers of the group may have been one of the factors that contributed to changes in the cycle of intrafamily violence in GB1.

Although corporal punishment and psychological aggression have been part of the education of almost all mothers, it is noted that non-violent discipline was most cited among GB2 mothers. That is, in comparison with other practices, models of education that dispensed with the use of physical force were more emphasized by these mothers in relation to other ways of educating, which reinforces the idea that the experience with alternatives to the use of physical punishment contributes to the use of more positive practices (Romano, Bell, & Norian, 2013; Rosa et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the lack of adequate models for the GA can help to understand the recurrence of the use of force to resolve conflicts with the children. One of the mothers reported, for example, that it is necessary to hit the child when it opposes an order to turn off the television, which denotes the use of punitive strategies without even using non-violent forms of discipline (Straus et al., 2014). The fact that GA mothers say they talk more to their children than their parents/guardians did in their childhood signals a change, but does not necessarily imply conflict resolution in the family in a nonviolent way. The conversations may contain psychological aggressions, maintaining the coercive character of the interactions, although involuntarily, as one participant pointed out.

Falcke and Wagner (2005) suggest that although there is evidence that previous experiences in the family of origin are present in people's lives, few individuals are aware of how these experiences interfere with their behavior. The perpetuation of certain practices over generations often happens unconsciously, and people are surprised when they realize that they are acting in the same way as their parents. This also seems to be the case in the three groups in this study that, despite negatively evaluating some practices of their mothers/guardians, recognized the unwanted repetition of these behaviors in the current family, which was also identified by Rosa et al. (2015).

Thus, breaking the cycle of violence and doing different from what one has learned in childhood may require more than acknowledging the influence of models passed on by their guardians/parents. The use of force and physical violence is part of a context in which relationships are more rigid and less affectionate, in which coercion is a constant. Severity regarding the use of physical force and the frequency with which the participants were subjected to this practice probably influenced their perception of physical punishment, contributing to the use and acceptance of this strategy in their current family. However, reports from GB1 suggest that very violent and frequent experiences could lead to a negative evaluation of education in the family of origin and less acceptance of punishment and violence. These findings, however, have limitations. We must consider the socioeconomic context of the participants, who came from a situation of poverty and with more restricted access to resources to support the family. It should also be mentioned that support in childhood and the perception of this support were not systematically investigated, which deserves attention in future studies.

Final considerations

It is considered that the issues raised in this study have relevant implications for educational programs directed at families in situations of violence. The results indicate the

importance of taking into account not only the experience with violence, but, above all, the perception of each individual regarding education in their families of origin, both in relation to physical punishment and in relation to education in a wider range. It is also necessary to know the beliefs and values of the parents, the opportunities to maintain positive interactions with the children and the access to other models of education.

It is also necessary to approach the perception of the victimized child as to the practices of the parents/guardians and identify a support figure, whether it is between family members, the community or between care professionals, when appropriate. The presence of a support figure not only can provide models considered more appropriate, but also increase the likelihood of a healthier emotional development.

Providing alternatives for parents to deal with children differently from their own parents/guardians, when in situations of violence, should be another target for interventions with families. It is not only a question of addressing alternatives to the use of force, but also of identifying and promoting the characteristics of interactions that favor the development of healthy relationships between parents and children, such as constructive dialogues, plays or other forms of positive interaction, as well as strategies for management of the child behavior (Santini & Williams, 2016). Focusing on positive interactions is especially relevant when considering that parents with a history of violence perceive situations of conflict with their children more frequently, often as a daily occurrence (De Antoni & Koller, 2012), and have more difficulty to recognize positive emotions (Young & Widom, 2014). In addition, interventions are important in helping parents to evoke emotions associated with trauma, as some mothers of this study did in recording their experience (Lafortune & Gilbert, 2016).

Professionals also need to sensitize parents for losses and risks related to violence. The use of non-punitive practices and the promotion of an environment of support and affection, which seems to be the main message of interventions (Romano et al., 2013), should be planned and implemented together with families. These authors suggest that presenting information about physical punishment is essential for changing beliefs about the right of parents to use it, drawing on their experience. Therefore, in order to address the issue of physical punishment and violence, it is important for professionals to be based on the parents' perception of their own experiences and the presentation of alternatives that can be tested by the family, ensuring professional support during this process.

Finally, it is suggested that future studies build and validate instruments whose objective is to evaluate the frequency and severity of the abuse suffered and the individual's perception of the situations experienced. In the search for more sensitive instruments to understand the transgenerationality of physical abuse, emphasis should be placed on the perception of parents and caregivers about their experiences. Considering that the impact of adverse experiences on the family of origin is greater in men than in women (Madalena, Carvalho, & Falcke, 2018), it is also necessary to stimulate research investigating factors and mechanisms related to gender, in order to understand better this phenomenon.

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