

University Students In Southern Mexico In The Spiral of Gender Violence

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ABSTRACT: *The objective of this work is the identification and characterization of gender violence in the family space and in the relationship of courtship or marriage experienced by the undergraduate students of public universities in Southern Mexico, specifically the Autonomous University of Guerrero, the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca and the Autonomous University of Chiapas, which characterizes the intrafamily context where a culture of naturalization of violence is instituted and the vulnerability of women is generated with serious repercussions on their quality of life and especially on reproduction of violence in their relationships of courtship or couple.*

KEYWORDS: *gender, violence, university*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The present study identifies and characterizes gender violence in the family space and in the relationship of courtship or marriage experienced by the undergraduate students of the public universities of Southern Mexico, specifically the federal entities of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas: the Autonomous University of Guerrero, the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca and the Autonomous University of Chiapas, respectively. This has allowed us to characterize the intrafamilial context where a culture of naturalization of violence is instituted and the vulnerability of women is generated with serious repercussions on their quality of life and especially in the reproduction of violence in their relationships of courtship or couple.

Contemporary societies today express the difficulty of the subjects to create and maintain a social bond constituted by solid, lasting, healthy and affective relationships, what Sandoval and Garro-Gil (2017) call "social precariousness"; conditions from which different conflicts and social pathologies such as violence derive. Worldwide, 1.4 million people die violently every year due to factors such as alcohol, firearms, economic inequalities and gender violence (OMS, 2017).

Located in a dynamic, complex and violent reality, in this study we will focus on the violence that is produced, incarnated and reproduced in institutions, in particular the gender violence experienced by university girls in the family, which constitutes a problem of public health and human rights, as well as violence in relationships of courtship or couple, a problem that is aggravated by the conditions of violence in the contexts where they live.

According to the United Nations (UN) (1994), gender violence encompasses various acts, although it does not limit others, such as physical, sexual and psychological violence produced and perpetrated in the family, the community, in the middle labor, educational institutions and those exercised or tolerated by the State. This broad perspective includes the intimate, private and social spheres, placing gender-based violence, particularly against women as more frequent, as a violation of human rights and a public health problem and priority (World Health Organization, 1997).

Gender violence constitutes a complex, multidimensional and multi-causal sociocultural phenomenon, generated mainly in the learning of a socialization process based on gender difference, which produces social representations that guide practices crossed by power relations and reproduce "violence of hierarchical sociocultural models of power that are learned, transmitted and internalized" (García, Moreno & Silva, 2003, p.69). Gender violence is a phenomenon of serious relevance where democracy and the fundamental rights of citizens are involved, such as the right to respect for life, freedom, physical, emotional and material security; the right to justice and to live a life free of violence.

Understood as a social phenomenon, gender violence refers to the aggressions suffered by women or men due to the fact that they are, although the most frequent violence is that which is exercised against women and should not be attributed to a genetic aspect, but rather it must be understood as a social construct, as a result of a social process that overcomes cultural stereotypes and social classes (Burgués, Oliver, Redondo & Serrano, 2006). According to Banchs (1996), gender violence is constituted in a single body together with structural injustices and nourishes the predominant logic of a violent culture where the domination of one another is naturalized as a normal way of life and ideological sustenance of a subordination society.

The most common form of violence against women is domestic violence or violence against women in families. In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO, 1997), notes that a woman is more likely to be hurt, raped or killed by a current ex-partner than by anyone else. Violence against women in families is so serious that it has come to be compared with torture.

The Pan American Health Organization (1995, cited by Aliaga, Ahumada&Marfull, 2003) defines intrafamily violence as "any act or omission committed by any member of the family in relation to power, regardless of the physical space where it occurs, which harm the well-being, physical integrity, psychological or freedom and the right to the full development of another member of the family".

The family can be understood as a group organization whose coexistence is based "on kinship, filiation and alliance; its members are linked by blood or affinity, which creates a series of relationships, obligations and emotions"(Martínez, Ochoa &Viveros, 2016, pp. 352,353). The family constitutes a space where the socialization of the individual is developed, affections are generated, social, economic, emotional and sexual needs are met, and it is considered "the first transmitting agent of norms, values, symbols, ideology and identity, where they are focused the actions of the other institutions "(p.353).

In the last decades the family nucleus has had changes that express a deterioration in their living conditions and in the quality of the relationships between their members. Globalization and the increase of poverty and socioeconomic inequalities have led to an increase in violence, insecurity both outside and inside the family space. This situation is exacerbated by the degradation of moral values (Cabajal, Copto, López & Reynés, 2006) and the persistence and reproduction of a sexist culture mainly androcentric that leads to various forms and scales of aggression that constitute intrafamily, family or domestic.

Violence exercised in any of its forms against women not only affects their well-being, but also that of their families and communities, and covers the physical, psychological, sexual, economic and political levels. Aliaga, Ahumada&Marfull (2003) point out that the main consequences of gender violence in physical health are gynecological diseases; abuse and dependence on alcohol and substances; sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS; bodily injury (stab wounds) and more permanent damage such as burns, bites or bruises; poorly defined somatic complaints (chronic headache, abdominal, pelvic and muscular pain, chronic fatigue); sudden changes in weight; during pregnancy: increased smoking, miscarriage, late prenatal control, growth retardation, hemorrhages of the fetus, fetal death and maternal death. Also, within the psychological consequences are mental health problems: mood disorders, severe depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders, conversion disorders, panic disorders, eating disorders, sleep disorders, psychotic episodes, among others; post-traumatic stress syndrome; fear and anxiety; feelings of shame; extremely dependent behavior; enuresis and encopresis; suicide.

Regarding the consequences in the sexual plane, Aliaga, Ahumada&Marfull (2003), consider unwanted pregnancies, sexual dysfunctions, obligation exercised by the male of the practice of abortion, prohibition of the use of contraceptives, physical and psychological damage specifically on the sexual level; abuse, harassment and violations; sexual phobias and sexuality in general.

The problem of gender violence is of such magnitude and of such serious consequences, due to the level and complexity of the effects that it causes to women directly and indirectly to the rest of society, that research is needed to deepen knowledge about the particular ways in which this violence is practiced and the studies are expanded to the different contexts where these practices are expressed, such as the space of higher education institutions, which allow for the elimination of asymmetric power relations between women and men , which determine the condition of subordination and vulnerability of women.

This work contributes to the knowledge about the conditions of gender violence that young university students face and in particular of entities from the South of Mexico, the poorest and most marginalized region of Mexico, in the family and dating environment or couple. It is important to point out that dating violence or intimate partner relationship, also known as intimate violence or dating violence (Póo&Vizcarra, 2008), has become a serious social problem worldwide in the last decades and in particular in the group of young people, derived from the expressions of aggressive behavior during childhood and adolescence that constitute a "strong predictor of later violence".

Intimate violence can be understood as violent actions or threats of these, exercised by one or both partners on the other without being married but maintaining a sentimental relationship. These violent actions on the physical plane can materialize in blows, pushes, violent caresses; in the psychological or emotional plane they are considered insults, humiliations, negation of the relationship and control of the couple in their family

and social relationships; in sexual terms, sexual contacts are considered against the will, prevent the use of contraceptive methods and force to perform or have unwanted sexual acts (P6o&Vizcarra, 2008).

In Mexico, the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence (LGAMVLV) (2007) classifies gender-based violence in several types: physical, patrimonial, economic, psychological and sexual. Also, these violence can occur in different forms such as: family violence, workplace violence, school violence, community violence and femicide violence.

According to data from the National Survey on the Dynamics of Relationships in Households (ENDIREH) 2016 (INEGI, 2017), in Mexico 66% of women aged 15 and over have suffered at least one incident of emotional and economic violence, physical, sexual or discrimination throughout their lives in at least one area and exercised by any aggressor: 49% have suffered emotional violence, 41% sexual violence, 34% physical violence and 29% economic or patrimonial violence or discrimination in the workplace.

In Mexico, there is an increase in violence against women, compared to data from 2011 to 2016, in 3%; highlights the increase of women physically violated by 17%; they also increased women sexually abused by 6%; emotionally violated women increased 5% and there was a decrease of 6% of economically and patrimonially violated women (INEGI, 2017).

Among the five main federal entities that register the highest proportion of women victims of violence are: Mexico City, State of Mexico, Jalisco, Aguascalientes and Querétaro. With regard to the entities that treat the investigation, the state of Oaxaca registered 64% of women who were victims of violence, the state of Guerrero 58% and the state of Chiapas 52%.

With regard to violence in the family environment (violence by the husband or partner is not considered), 10% of women aged 15 and over who reported having suffered violence by a family member: 8% suffered emotional violence, 3% economic or patrimonial violence, 3% physical violence and 1% sexual violence. Among the main aggressors, the brother is considered by 25% of the women, the father by the 16% and the mother by the 14%. The main sexual aggressors are the uncles and the cousins.

Regarding women, aged 15 and over, who reported having suffered violence throughout their relationship with their current or last partner, they amount to 44% nationwide: 40% suffered emotional violence, 21% economic or patrimonial violence, 18% physical violence and 7% suffered sexual violence. Of the women who suffered physical and / or sexual violence from their current or last partner, 79% did not request support and did not file a complaint. Only 21% of the violated women report and the main reason they indicate why they do not report is because they consider that the violence suffered is something unimportant that did not affect them.

The main states that registered the highest proportion of women violated by their current or last partners were: State of Mexico, Mexico City, Aguascalientes, Jalisco and Oaxaca. In the case of Oaxaca, it registered 46% of women who were violated (more than the national average), Guerrero 44% and Chiapas 35%.

Gender-based violence, and especially violence against women, forms a social phenomenon as a result of a process that begins in the family nucleus, where identity referents are constituted and adjudicated, gender-oriented roles, which structure a hierarchy of functions, of valuations between being a man or a woman, and establishing rights, obligations and opportunities, generally unequal in the development of people. This generates the roles and stereotypes that define what it is to be a woman and a man, under conditions characterized by social inequality.

II. METHODOLOGY

The data presented here correspond to the quantitative research process that was carried out, and it was considered university students at the undergraduate level of public universities in Southern Mexico, specifically the Autonomous University of Chiapas (UNACH), the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca (UABJO) and the Autonomous University of Guerrero (UAGRO); university students enrolled in academic units located in the capital cities of the entities of Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero: Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Oaxaca and Chilpancingo, respectively.

The sample design was probabilistic, multistage and stratified. To ensure that the estimates obtained were of acceptable quality, it was necessary that the sample size defined for each parameter of interest be sufficient. The calculation of this size was related to the parameters to be estimated, the confidence level and the maximum acceptable relative error. Considering a 95% confidence ($Z = 1.96$), a maximum relative error of 5% and a proportion of 0.5, it was determined that the overall sample size was 1,121 undergraduate university students from UNACH, UABJO and UAGRO: Chilpancingo, Guerrero of 461; for Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas for 360 and for Oaxaca, Oaxaca for 300 students. The affixation of the sample was made within each city, between the sizes of the different universities in a proportional manner and, in the second step, within each university in each one (if another partition is going to be considered).

A survey was applied to students selected in a group manner by the academic authorities of each visited Bachelor's Degree and by the research team, which were preferably the last semester of the professional career,

with the consent of the students; likewise, the survey was applied to randomly selected students who were outside the classroom no matter what semester they took. Which would allow the enrichment of the information obtained. The information provided by the university students in the surveys was processed with the SPSS Statistics 20 and Excel program.

The sample of students was concentrated as follows: Chiapas 32.1%, Guerrero 41.1% and Oaxaca 26.8%. The bachelor's degrees that students surveyed are: Business Administration, Public Accounting, English Teaching, Mathematics, Philosophy, Librarianship, Communication, Language and Literature, Pedagogy, Computer Systems, Civil Engineering, Architecture, Human Medicine, Veterinary, Topography, Engineer Builder, Economic Sciences, Sociology, History, Education Sciences, Law, Nursing, Chemical Drugs Biologist, Dentistry, Tourism and Sustainable Development.

III. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Of the female students surveyed, approximately ten out of every hundred students are indigenous. Most of them profess the Catholic religion (72%), followed by Protestants by 12%, it is also worth mentioning that a minority, 8%, do not consider themselves ascribed to any religion.

The majority of university students participating in the research, 90%, said they were single; a minority, 8%, are married or in free union with their partners; likewise, less than 1% are separated or widowed, respectively.

The majority of university students participating in the research, 61%, expressed that they live with their parents and in smaller proportion with siblings, relatives, couple, friends, other people or alone.

Regarding their economic situation, the minority of university students, 18%, said that while they study, they perform a job; the largest proportion of these, 38%, work in the informal sector; likewise, just over one third, 34%, work in a private company; 14% work in public institutions and the minority, 4%, work in their own company.

According to the information provided by the university students, most of them, 79%, depend totally on the resources of their parents to be able to subsist; 15% only depends on school scholarships provided by government institutions; 13% indicated that it depends only on their work to survive; a minimum part of students, 4%, depends exclusively on their partners or other relatives, respectively.

The information provided by the university students expresses a condition of high dependence on the resources of their parents to survive and study; a situation of "familismo" that Ariño (cited by Ibáñez, 2016) considers as a factor that can lead to the reproduction of social inequalities. This condition is exacerbated by the contexts of high marginalization, poverty and structural violence in which university students live, coupled with the precarious scholarship system that does not help enough nor has greater coverage and there is no funding system for female students in these educational institutions either; the university curricula are not flexible enough so that they can work and at the same time carry out higher level studies.

Characteristics of intrafamilial relationships: Most of the university students participating in the research, 85%, consider that their family environment is good and for 15% of the university students in their family there is some type of violence. However, this last information changes when they are asked specific questions of lived violence; Valdemarca and Bonavitta (2011) consider that intrafamily violence as cultural patterns learned are justified by society and generally make up a mechanism used by men to ensure the maintenance of power and enjoy privileges.

According to information provided later by the university students in relation to having suffered some type of violence by a member of their family, we can point out that more than a third of the students, 37%, said they have suffered domestic violence. This in relation to the average number of women violated in the family environment at the national level, university students are approximately four times more. If we consider the initial response of the university students in which 15% recognize the violence lived in the family, compared to more than a third of them who said they had suffered one or several acts of violence by a relative, we can argue that the university students express a naturalization of the violence lived; In this regard, Pinheiro (2006) points out that violence is hidden, invisible or normalized, when social acceptance of violence occurs and both victims and aggressors assume physical, sexual or psychological violence as inevitable or normal, especially when the violence suffered or exercised does not produce "visible" or "lasting" physical affectations, since it usually exerts in different subtle ways, it is carried out daily and practiced by uses and customs.

Families are a space where a patriarchal culture is internalized constituted by beliefs, values, norms and practices of inequality between men and women, which includes all members of the family and it is generally the adult man who exercises power, authority and domination towards girls, boys and women, adolescents and adults, older adults and other members with physical or mental disabilities, who are usually represented as inferior and weak. There is within the dynamics of families a naturalization of power, usually of the "head of the family" who can decide and control the rest of the members and generates violence towards the most vulnerable members (Secretaría de Salud, 2012).

The severity of intrafamily violence, according to Carbajal, Copto, López & Reynés (2006), lies in the fact that people who suffer from it lose the power of real appreciation of themselves, lose their capacity for self-esteem, they usually generate thoughts of handicap that weakens the potential for human development and in extreme situations can lead to suicide and femicide.

Regarding the relative who has exercised violence against the university students who declared having experienced intrafamily violence, it is important to mention that a little more than a third (31%) of these indicated the father and the mother, the grandfather (22%), the brother (20%) and to a lesser extent the sister (13%), aunt and uncle (6%), grandmother (5%), etc.

Psychological violence stands out among the main types of violence that university students suffer: more than half are treated with shouting and insults; approximately a third are treated with ridicule; a quarter of university students suffer physical violence; approximately three out of every hundred students suffer sexual harassment and two out of every hundred have been raped by a family member, among other types of violence. In such a way that the violence exerted against the university students by their relatives constitute aggressive acts, of inequity, of domination and / or abuse, that generate to the members of the family serious affectations to their physical and psychological integrity that limit their development (Martínez, Ochoa & Viveros, 2016). (See Table 1).

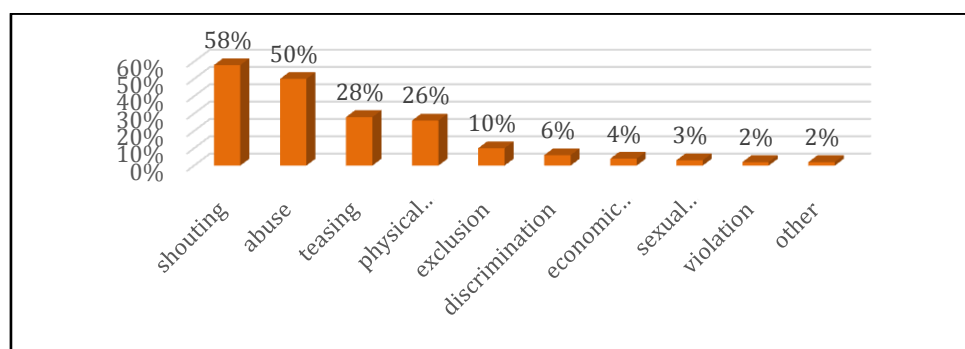


Table 1: Types of violence exercised by family members

The reasons that the university students attribute to the mistreatment exercised by their relatives are mainly due to their way of thinking and acting, to bother them, because they do not understand them, they provoked it, they are weaker, among other reasons and it is worth mentioning that only five out of every hundred University students attribute the violence suffered by family members to being women.

The foregoing reveals how in the family a learning space of traditional gender roles is formed through a violent socialization where men "would learn inadequate strategies to express anger and inhibit the pain [...] to use aggression and force as a way to resolve conflicts "(P60 & Vizcarra, 2008, p.82); while women are reinforced feelings of helplessness, of grief, of victims and even of guilt of generating violent acts against them.

The largest proportion of university students, 41%, said that in order to solve the violence experienced within their family, they have tried to establish better communication with their families; 16% have sought psychological support and a minority has gone to legal and medical support, but also highlights that 40% of university students have not had or sought any support to resolve the violence experienced.

Characteristics of dating relationships: Of the university women surveyed, slightly more than half, 56%, stated that they currently have a relationship with their boyfriend or partner. Of these, a fifth said they felt controlled by their boyfriend or partner, and not precisely this control of their actions is recognized as an act of violence by the boyfriend or partner.

Also, about how college students feel in their dating relationship; According to the data obtained, we can point out that the majority of the students who are in a relationship stated that they feel supported (69%) and respected (69%); the minority feels pressured (10%), harassed (4%), mistreated (3%); in danger, only 0.3% was declared and it does not know 3%.

Of the university students who declared to be in a relationship of courtship or couple, and according to the information provided about having suffered some type of violence by the boyfriend or partner, we can point out that more than a third of the university students, 36%, is violated by the boyfriend or partner.

It is relevant to point out that of the university students who have experienced violence within the family, 33.5% of them have suffered violence in their current relationship.

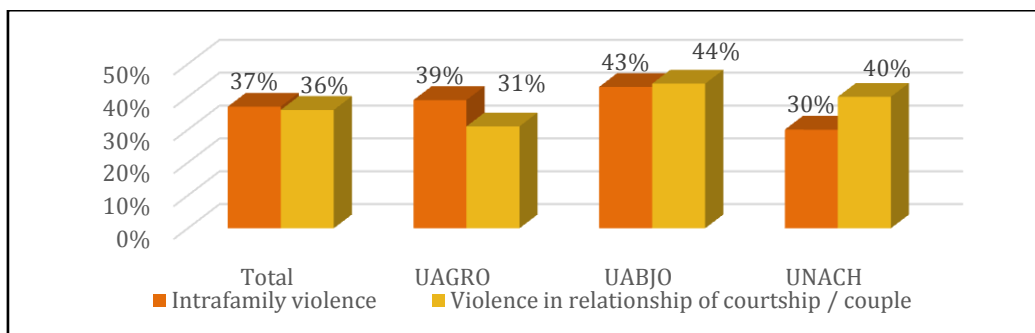


Table 2: University students who have experienced violence in the family and in their relationship of courtship / couple

At the level of public universities in the southern region of Mexico, the violence in the family space and in the current sentimental relationship of the university students, exceeds more than a third of university students, 37% and 36% respectively, who have experienced and / or live current violence. Several international studies suggest that the prevalence of intimate violence in young people ranges between 9 and 46%, this difference can be defined by the diverse definitions that young people have of violent behavior, oriented according to the contexts where they are located; also, due to the particularities of the research method and the period of time reported. In this regard, the research shows the increase in exposure to violence as the age advances, especially among women (Póo & Vizcarra, 2008) (see Table 2). Among the main types of violence suffered by university students by their boyfriend or partner, highlights psychological violence (indifference and verbal), followed by physical violence, economic and sexual violence, it should be mentioned that only three out of every hundred university students violated consider experiencing gender violence and less than 1 percent feel threatened in their dating relationship or partner (see Table 3).

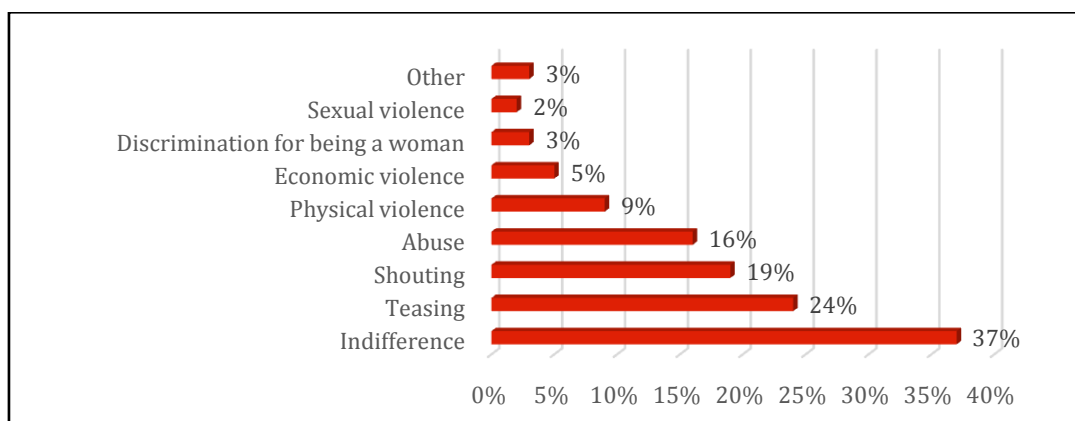


Table 3: Types of violence exercised by boyfriend or partner

A relevant aspect of the problem of gender violence against female students is the threat of death in their relationship. If we treat this problem in relation to the university students who expressed suffering some type of violence from their boyfriend or partner, 7% of them have been threatened with death by them.

As for the frequency with which the university students feel violated, according to the data obtained, we can mention that just over one third, 34%, stated that sometimes it has been violated by their boyfriend or partner; just over a quarter of them, 27%, said that she has been violated only once and a minimum proportion of them, 1%, stated that she is always violated by her boyfriend or partner.

According to the data obtained from the university students participating in the investigation, approximately one third of them, 28%, said they had suffered violence from the boyfriend or partner, in some of their sentimental relationships that they have established.

Likewise, it emphasizes in the research that most of the university students (70%) have not entrusted to someone the gender violence they have suffered.

The intimate violence faced by the university students in their dating relationship can lead to serious physical, sexual, psychological and social consequences, threatening their safety and integrity in the present and kidnapping their future. According to Póo and Vizcarra (2008) these consequences could be depressive disorders, deterioration of self-esteem, insecurity, feelings of guilt, isolation, poor academic performance,

increased risk of substance abuse. But violence also involves the perpetrator and often suffer afflictions such as the breakdown of their sentimental relationships, feelings of shame, rejection and social condemnation, and the risk of repeating the pattern of violent interactions in their future relationships.

IV. CONCLUSION

The research carried out shows that female university students from public universities in southern Mexico, taking as a reference those surveyed, present an economic condition of high dependence on the support of parents in order to survive. Considering that youth is a stage of biographical experience whose vital transitions condition the future to a great extent, education and work can constitute means of social reproduction or transformation (Yaschine, 2015).

The data of the investigation show that the family institution stands as a space where a serious violence against the university students is produced and reproduced; it is in this space where social groups are reproduced, that in symbolic terms it is about the reproduction of values, beliefs, knowledge that generates, in this case, gender inequality (Román, Romero & Zaldívar, 2014), expressed in processes of violent socialization with complex physical and psychosocial implications. People who suffer intrafamily violence do not have a real power to value themselves, they lose their capacity for self-esteem, they have thoughts of disability, which weakens the potential for human development and can lead to suicide and femicide (Carbajal, Copto, López & Reynés, 2006).

According to the data obtained and the correlation of variables, we can point out that more than a third of the university students who expressed experiencing intrafamily violence also experience violent sentimental relationships. Likewise, violence in relationships of courtship or couple of university students registers a high frequency and constitutes a high risk in the face of the seriousness of the death threats that are exerted in them.

The research results show how families and the relationship of courtship or couple, notwithstanding the professional level of women's studies, constitute spaces where young women live, experience and suffer the violence of hierarchical socio-cultural models of sexist power, which tend to be internalized, transmitted, learned and reproduced. This poses a serious problem of public health and human rights for a representative number of women and in this case of university students, which merits further studies on the various forms of violence suffered by higher level students and their implications, for generate basic knowledge to design strategies for recognition, analysis, attention and intervention to influence the elimination of this problem of discrimination and violence, which generate conditions of vulnerability, subordination and risk for female students.

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