ORIGINAL ARTICLE

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE FOR TEENAGERS IN SOCIOEDUCATIONAL FORM OF HOSPITALIZATION

REPRESENTAÇÃO SOCIAL DE VIOLÊNCIA PARA ADOLESCENTES EM MEDIDA SOCIOEDUCATIVA DE INTERNAMENTO

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the context of teenager’s life in a socioeducational form of hospitalization and adolescents who are not safeguarded by comparing the social representation they have on violence. Method: a qualitative approach, by identifying social representations. We interviewed two groups of adolescents, and 11 of a socioeducational center in Minas Gerais and 11 at a school in the same city. The data were subjected to content analysis. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee under protocol 319/09. Results: school adolescents depict violence broadly, different types of violence. The adolescents of the Socioeducational Center made it clear that violence is related mainly to that of higher risk that death may be present. Conclusion: it may suggest that the context of violator adolescent’s life interferes in the social representation that he has about violence and his behavior. Descriptors: Adolescent; Institutionalized Adolescent; Violence.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar o contexto de vida de adolescentes em medida socioeducativa de internação e de adolescentes não acautelados, comparando a representação social que eles apresentam sobre violência. Método: estudo de abordagem qualitativa, por meio da identificação das representações sociais. Foram entrevistados dois grupos de adolescentes, sendo 11 de um Centro socioeducativo de Minas Gerais e 11 de uma escola do mesmo município. As informações foram submetidas à análise de conteúdo. A pesquisa teve o projeto aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa sob protocolo 319/09. Resultados: os adolescentes da escola retratam a violência de maneira ampla, abrangendo diferentes tipos de violência. Os adolescentes do Centro socioeducativo deixaram claro que a violência está relacionada, principalmente, aquela de maior risco em que a morte pode estar presente. Conclusão: pode-se sugerir que o contexto de vida do adolescente infrator interfere na representação social que ele tem da violência e de seu comportamento. Descriptors: Adolescente; Adolescente Institucionalizado; Violência.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar el contexto de vida de adolescentes bajo medidas socio-educativas de internamiento y de adolescentes no sometidos, comparando a representación social que presentan los mismos sobre la violencia. Método: estudio de abordaje cualitativo, por medio de la identificación de las representaciones sociales. Se entrevistó a dos grupos de adolescentes, siendo once de un Centro socio-educativo de Minas Gerais (Brasil) y once de una escuela del mismo municipio. Las informaciones se sometieron al análisis de contenido. La investigación tuvo su proyecto aprobado por el Comité de Ética en Investigación bajo protocolo 319/09. Resultados: los adolescentes de la escuela retratan la violencia de manera amplia, abarcando diferentes tipos de violencia. Los adolescentes del Centro socio-educativo dejaron claro que la violencia está relacionada principalmente a aquella de mayor riesgo en que la muerte puede estar presente. Conclusión: se puede sugerir que el contexto de vida del adolescente infractor interfere en la representación social que tiene de la violencia y de su comportamiento. Descriptors: Adolescente; Adolescente Institucionalizado; Violencia.

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In health practices, adolescence is understood beyond the temporal demarcation, it symbolizes the idea of the adolescent as the protagonist in the building process of their personal and collective life, which gives them a potential for emancipation, autonomy and social responsibility.¹

In a historical sense, studies about conceptions of adolescence claim that it is historically created by man, such as representation and as a social and psychological fact.² When we define adolescence, we are assigning meanings based on social realities that are references for the construction of these subjects. These social realities can be permeated by violence, which increases attention on adolescents and it is a concern for everyone, regardless of socioeconomic and ethnicity status.³ ⁴

Violence can be considered as any situation in which a social actor loses his status of subject against another person, being demoted to the status of object, when there’s the imposition of needs, expectations and desires of a social actor about the needs and desires of another actor.⁵

Violence can be polysemic, but to analyze this complex issue facing violence involving the teenagers, it is not enough to understand the concepts, but understanding what these individuals think and live, and in what contexts these phenomena manifest themselves.⁶

A way to understand the violent behavior of adolescents in conflict with the law is to study social representations, to understand the phenomenon of violence.⁷

The violence is not restricted to a set of practical objective, since it also includes personal representations that are complicating factors in understanding and understanding its consequences. These personal representations (individual and social perceptions) of violence are crucial links in understanding the genesis of the problem.⁸

In this context, in which the personal and collective perceptions of violence is discussed, it is important to understand what the representations are, that here we refer to as Social Representation, which is “a form of particular knowledge with the function to develop behavior and communication between individuals.”⁹ It is socially produced in everyday life and its function is to interpret and act upon reality.¹⁰

The purpose of the representations is to make familiar the unknown, and this relationship can mean the notion of common sense in this society.¹¹ Therefore, the Social Representation can be reworking of reality; representation shared by social actors may be able to make the abstract concrete, and, usually, the representation is something that had been thought, latent or manifest.

In this sense, the way a teenagers sees their values, their competence and the world around them can be affected by the degree of violence they are subjected throughout life. This can determine the representation that the adolescent has about violence. It is believed that the experience of violence has an important role in the adolescent's judgment about himself and others.⁷

Thus, investigating the social representations of adolescents in conflict with the law, about violence, may offer obtainment of systematic information to rethink the relations between family members, professionals who deal with this public, the judiciary and the adolescents.

With this premise, this study was focused in listening adolescents in socio-educational ways of hospitalization and also teenagers not cautioned comparing the social representation they have on violence.

### METHOD

Manuscript prepared from the dissertation "Social Representation of safeguarded and not cautioned Teenagers about Violence" presented to the Post-Graduate Program in Child and Adolescent, Faculty of Medicine, Federal University of Minas Gerais / UFMG, Belo Horizonte-MG, Brazil, 2010.

This is a qualitative study, by identifying social representations in order to advance the study of the phenomenon of violence from the perspective of adolescents in detention. The starting point for the identification of what is violence for the teenager was researching the concepts on the subject.

The research was conducted in a Socio Center (CSE) of Minas Gerais/MG/Brazil, managed by the State Department of Social Defense, responsible for the implementation of educational measures of Admission and Free range, determined by the Judiciary, the adolescents who have offense. This is a regionalized unit of state system dedicated to the treatment of male teenagers with a capacity of 48 inmates. For comparison, the survey also occurred in a school with the same profile of adolescents in educational measure of hospitalization in relation to gender, age and class, with both sites in the same town.
We interviewed 11 adolescents of CSE and 11 adolescents of school, between 13 and 17 years-old, identified by "A" teens of CSE and "E" adolescents of school. The interviews were conducted and stopped until the eleventh participant, because at this point we realized the saturation data. This saturation sampling "the researcher closes the group when, after the information collected from a number of participants, new interviews should depict a number of repetitions of content." 13-19

The interview encompassed questions about what was violence and how they were perceived in their life. In order to rescue the context of how the representations about violence are built, it became, as a starting point, the perception of teenagers on the expression violence in situations of everyday life. To carry out the construction of these representations a reference to an author observed that "social representations are not necessarily conscious. They permeate the whole of society or social group, as something prior and customary, which it is reproduced and manifested from the structures and collective relationships and groups.

It is important to note that social representations are formed by two processes which are: objectification and anchoring. The objectivity relates in changing an object which is shown, and to perform a selective construction of reality. The individual or social group has the ability to appropriate the knowledge involving particular object. This object can modify the original text, creating a new way to explain it from the beliefs, values, paradigms and prejudices experienced by the group in which it is inserted. In this sense, the transformation of abstract in concrete occurs and thoughts converted into figures are driven into the reality. Anchoring allows foreign object turns into something familiar. It directs the orientation of behaviors within a social group, as well as helping to express and constitute the social relations of this group.9

By continuing the methodological steps for the analysis of the interviews we used as a reference the Content Analysis in thematic analysis. This analysis is organized into three sequential steps. The first, pre-analysis is the process of organizing data in which systematic readings of the interviews are conducted and determine the units of analysis; the second one is the exploration of the material, which consists of the organization of these units in subjects with a view reach the core of understanding the text; and the third one is the time of interpretation when analyzes are made, relating them to the theoretical.13-14

To meet the ethical criteria we followed the recommendations of Resolution. 196/96, of the National Health Council, and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (319/09).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The discussion will be presented in order to describe and analyze the social representations of violence among adolescents in a comparative educational measure of hospital and adolescents who are not safeguarded. For this purpose we selected sheets of the teenagers’ speech that best illustrate the theme. Importantly, the link with the theory of social representations, already promotes itself, the explanation of the interpretations made possible by data analysis.

• What violence is: a comparison of perceptions

Perceptions attributed by adolescents in the CSE and the school about violence, if they were analyzed in isolation from their contexts of life, they may even be perceived with minimal difference. In the majority of the interviews, it is important to distinguish the subjects of school talk about something they have seen on television or in living environments such as the school, and also what they have heard from others, but they have rarely been the protagonists. The teenagers of CSE speak of something experienced as victims or actors:

Violence is killing [...] hit the person [...] what else [...] to shot at people [...] attacking the person with words [...] having a lot of things that begets violence [...] having a lot of things that a person gives to strike [...] (A1)

Violence to me is [...] it’s death [...] destruction [...] fight [...] these stuff [...] violence to me is that [...] (A5)

I will speak [...] violence is really [...] I think it’s killing [...] stealing is already a kind of violence [...] (A8)

The experiences of what they have done or suffered as violence describe the concepts of these adolescents above:

Then I began to steal along with them [...] I earned a lot of money [...] I put my hand on the gun and I started to steal [...] it was because of theft [...] the guy reacted [...] I shot him [...] then they caught me and I was arrested [...] (A1)

Cocaine made me too cracked [...] it made me want to kill the other people [...] just trafficking [...] theft [...] death [...] I was killing others [...] I went there and I kill one guy [...] because of traffic [...] choice of “drug den” [...] we was there and gave shot
in the face [...] it killed the guy [...] after this death I still stayed in the street [...] then I stopped here [...] (A5)

It is certain the police catch you and take you to jail [...] is not it? Here they catch you [...] hit you [...] take you to the hospital [...] you see how it is [...] take you to the hospital [...] give a little “lesson” [...] they say [...] make you lie to the doctor [...] that you felt somewhere [...] of a gazebo [...] … because if you don’t do this they give a scratch again [...] this always happened to me [...] the policeman told me to lie [...] (A8)

Studies about social representation of violence in adolescents also show that their subjects of study had close proximity with episodes of physical violence, including the use of firearms or sidearms and social relations generally permeated by conflict and violence.4,15

Living with aggressive acts, as quoted in the speech of adolescents of CSE, will be assimilated and becomes part of the social representation of violence. Teenagers build their concepts from the midst of which they are part.16

In school, in most of the interviews, the concept of violence is reported in a more comprehensive and perhaps more subtle than adolescents of CSE:

Violence [...] there isn’t only one type of violence, right? There’s the verbal violence [...] the physical [...] There are [...] a lot of kinds of violence, aren’t there? (E1)

Violence to me is [...] when a person kills someone [...] steals [...] attacks people [...] verbally [...] It is [...] I think that’s all [...] drugs use because ah [...] we are violating [...] ourselves right? (E3)

When school adolescents were asked about what violence they have done, they denied their involvement. Apparently, the concepts do not come from their experiences as protagonist. When there is some experience of violence or drug use, for example, it seems rites of passage from adolescence, but that need special attention so that they do not take in the offense process and become new victims or perpetrators of violence:

No [...] I’m calm [...] I try to do the best [...] I do not look for any trouble with the others [...] I try to live well [...] (E1)

I also stopped because of the effect of marijuana [...] I was bad [...] I started going to church [...] I thought what could happen to me [...] I stopped [...] my mother advised me [...] then I got a job and I stopped these things [...] (E3)

One of the obstacles to define violence is related to the fact that the order of a phenomenon of living and its repercussions generate or are generated by a strong emotional charge of who makes it, who suffers and who witnesses. Therefore, to understand its dynamics in the Brazilian context it is important to understand the vision that society projects on the topic, resorting to the popular philosophy.15

Resuming the adolescents’ speech of CSE, it is highlighted that in most cases physical violence, especially that one which generates risk to people’s lives, is the most identified. The verbal aggression, sometimes it is not considered an act of violence. This can be seen in the descriptions of two teenagers following:

When you kill someone [...] to knife [...] For me that is violence [...] you shoot but do not kill [...] you attack someone [...] blows [...] it’s alright [...] You took and he also took [...] It’s the same disadvantage [...] violence is killing [...] to knife there to steal his money to smoke [...] violence is not theft because [...] violence is attacking the person [...] (A2)

Huffing is not violence [...] You are only defying the person [...] no [...] because it is not I who offend them [...] the word that offends [...] you feel yourself offended [...] (A8)

When verbal aggression is considered an act of violence by adolescents of the CSE, one way to present it is the offense directed at closer people, especially their mothers. They defend the family at all costs, perhaps because they understand that it is the institution (family) that gives strength and reason for his recovery and exit from CSE:

The guy can say anything for me [...] in some points, right? Since he is only talking about me [...] not involving other people that I like [...] this is another thing [...] (A3)

One thing that intrigues the person is when they offend our mothers [...] in the place we are [...] you talk about our family [...] ourselves [...] girlfriend [...] about anyone you like it is a verbal violence [...] (A7)

In the reports of school adolescents, such specific consideration is not perceived; perhaps they live with their families in more stable relationships, considering not only verbal aggression to the mother or other loved one, but all verbal aggression as violence:

To talk back to the mother [...] to the neighbors [...] elderly people [...] I think this is a kind of violence [...] (E2)

The violence [...] is [...] also swearing [...] There’s also the violence of swearing [...] To speak bad words [...] At my home everyone swears [...] There is no one who slips from this [...] (E4)
The social representation of the group comes from the flexibility and speed of communication of knowledge and beliefs in society. Within the imagination of what violence is more severe and does not accepted, much publicized in the media, there is the sexual violence against women or children. The teenagers have reported this same representation and contempt, as described in the speech of adolescents:

The worst is sexual violence [...] (A3)
Jack (who rapes) also kills people [...] (A11)

School adolescents recognize sexual violence, but apparently as other types of violence:
Where I lived there’s a girl [...] that every day she [...] she went out to the street [...] nobody knew where this girl was going [...] then her mother discovered [...] she had an [...] the girl was ten years-old [...] She had an affair with an old man [...] there was the girl’s mother and the girl’s father [...] Wow [...] the girl got beaten [...] and also the old man was beaten up [...] Did you see? [...] That is violence [...] because he abused the girl’s body [...] giving money for girl [...] every day the girl came with something different [...] (E4)

The social determination of what is or what is considered as violence by groups that make up our society can vary according to context, structure, local culture and the institution involved. At the same time, the experiences of adolescents with violence may trivialize their practice and their results. The social representation of violence should not therefore be taken in isolation, but rather analyzed in their relation to the practices of everyday life.

Common sense, in contemporary consciousness, relates to violence as criminal and delinquent. The media, especially television, always shows in their newscasts what further enhances the audience, such as murder, kidnapping, robbery, trafficking, drug users, among other atrocities. If we notice in the speech of teenagers, they relate, mostly, to this kind of brutality more exposed, determining the construction of concepts of population.

If we ask teenagers about other types of violence as symbolic violence, psychological, against assets or properties and even verbal, some of them do not know, others do not remember and still others do not agree it is violence.

Possibility of "not being violent" for teenager

Another discussion inherent in the social representation of violence to teenager is on the aspects of the perception of what is not being violent. Some lines are permeated the differentiation they can do because they are absent from the crime for some time due to deprivation of liberty. It's like literally they had "taken a bath" of correct behavior, a more appropriate speech, in necessary limits for life in society and attitudes they need to acquire:

When you stop using drug gives you think better, your reasoning gets better, then you can see when something is wrong [...] you’re aware of what you are doing [...] nowadays is this way [...] because before I was only involved with drugs and nowadays I'm not [...] at present I work [...] (A1)
I'm Sober today [...] right [...] thanks to God and [...] I’m aware of what I do [...] here I [...] abide by the orders as if I mess things get worse for me [...] (A3)

In these statements it is clear that the drug "cover" their vision. After a time away from addiction and in contact with activities that do not allow idleness, like school, workshops, art education and sport at CSE they change their conceptions.

In general violence as a complex social phenomenon that raises representations must be understood from the human behaviors and practices that support them, together with the symbolic systems that give them meaning." So if the teenager does not have support to stay on offense, it loses the meaning and the social representation of violence can change:

I do not think about [...] violence [...] about death [...] these things [...] it does not exist anymore [...] ah [...] if you ask me and I had stoned in cocaine [...] Oh, my! [...] I had flown [...] I got crazy [...] any word that [...] me [...] I flipped out [...] (A5)
My mom found out I stole [...] she used to talk [...] gave advice to me [...] I do not care about that [...] as they say, right? For me it went in one ear and out the other [...] ah [...] Nowadays I [...] I stopped to think and I saw, right? That [...] the world of crime does not pay [...] it is like my mother said [...] right? I'm lucky I'm here and not inside a cof(ìn [...] right? (A9)

In the perception of some teenagers in school, not being violent is related to some fundamentals that they consider essential for a person to have a “correct path” throughout life. They can make a representation that can prevent that an individual has a route involved with violence:

My father [...] my mother right? they talk to me a lot [...] my grandfather [...] especially my grandfather who [...] my father used to travel [...] I lived almost my whole life with my grandfather [...] and he always say that
CONCLUSION

The social representation of violence constructed by the adolescents in this research presents minimal differences of characterization, but with certain differences of intensity. School adolescents depict violence more broadly, encompassing various types of violence. Teenagers of CSE transpire that violence is related mainly to that of greatest risk that death may be present. Perhaps these differences are represented by the path of life that each group presents.

For both the offender and the school teenager, the family plays a vital role in the lives of its members and may exercise emotional and social support, assisting in the healthy development of their components, but also provides risk, conflict and stress. When the family shows absence in the children and adolescents’ life, they may be influenced by friends, adults who run trafficking or just down the street, appearing as an invitation to a life theoretically easier. This is the possibility of anchoring the teenager can find to become “violent”.

The adolescents in conflict with the law, which is in hospitalization in a CSE, in presenting their representation of violence they can, in most cases, distinguish their behavior, especially for being in a place where the goal is to restructure life, drafting, maybe a different path coming touring. When he gets to release permanent home, they need a program of support and logistics and monitoring of this egress, for building future plans, involving family, what should happen from the beginning of the educational measure that can contribute to the development of learning experienced in CSE, it is continued externally, decreasing the chance of recurrence of the offense.

Regarding adolescents at risk and have not infringing, such as the school, you must be rethought early identification of families who show theoretically fragile. This tracking and perhaps interventions can also be made for services such as health and the school itself. The socialization of these teenagers and especially the prevention of offenses are issues that are urgent responses and efforts.

Importantly show the risk is easy compared to the pointing solutions to avoid violence. What needs to be revised is the social support so that the child does not become delinquent. Investment in occupation for the child and family employment, opportunities free of abandonment of addictions such as alcoholism, smoking and drug use, comprehensive school and involved with the family to determine limits, as well as some way to link families to not contradict all these issues can be output to help awaken a responsible development in children and adolescents.

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Social representation of violence for teenagers...

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