



## GENDER VIOLENCE IN THE PERCEPTION FROM THE MANAGERS OF SERVICES TO SUPPORT WOMEN

### VIOÊNCIA DE GÊNERO NA PERCEPÇÃO DAS GESTORAS DOS SERVIÇOS DE APOIO À MULHER

### VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO EN PERCEPCIÓN DE LAS GESTORAS DE SERVICIOS DE APOYO PARA LAS MUJERES

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** describe and analyze the perception of gender violence from the managers of support services to women in Piauí. **Method:** descriptive study with qualitative approach realized in government agencies to support the woman in the city of Teresina-PI with nine managers of these bodies. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and interpreted by the technique of content analysis. The study was approved by the Ethics Research Committee from the *Universidade Federal University do Piauí* - UFPI, by means of CAAE nº 0228.0.045.000-08. **Results:** gender violence is a complex problem that involves social and cultural inequalities between men and women constructed throughout the mankind history, being necessary public policies for the prevention and suppression of this violence. **Conclusion:** the results showed that gender violence involves a multidimensional aspect, in which nursing takes place in the support network for women victims of violence. There was also a need for cultural change in society, with the commitment of all in protecting and promoting women's rights. **Descriptors:** perception; gender violence; nursing.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** descrever e analisar a percepção das gestoras dos serviços de apoio às mulheres no Piauí acerca da violência de gênero. **Método:** estudo descritivo de abordagem qualitativa realizado nos órgãos públicos de apoio à mulher da cidade de Teresina-PI com nove gestoras desses órgãos. Os dados foram coletados com roteiro de entrevista semiestruturada e interpretados por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo. A pesquisa foi aprovada pelo Comitê de Ética e Pesquisa da Universidade Federal do Piauí - UFPI, mediante o CAAE nº 0228.0.045.000-08. **Resultados:** a violência de gênero é um problema complexo que envolve desigualdades socioculturais existentes entre homens e mulheres construídos ao longo da história, sendo necessárias políticas públicas voltadas para a prevenção e repressão a este tipo de violência. **Conclusão:** os resultados evidenciaram que a violência de gênero envolve um aspecto multidimensional, no qual a Enfermagem ocupa lugar de destaque na rede de apoio à mulher vítima de violência. Verificou-se também a necessidade de uma mudança cultural da sociedade, com o compromisso de todos na proteção e promoção dos direitos da mulher. **Descritores:** percepção; violência de gênero; enfermagem.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** describir y analizar la percepción de la violencia de género de las gestoras de servicios de apoyo a las mujeres en Piauí. **Método:** estudio cualitativo descriptivo, realizado en los organismos gubernamentales para apoyar a la mujer en la ciudad de Teresina-PI con nueve gestoras de estos órganos. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de una entrevista semi-estructurada e interpretada por la técnica de análisis de contenido. El estudio fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética y la Universidad Federal de Piauí, por CAAE nº 0228.0.045.000-08. **Resultados:** la violencia de género es un problema complejo que involucra a las desigualdades sociales y culturales entre hombres y mujeres que construyeron a lo largo de la historia, y las políticas públicas necesarias para la prevención y represión de este tipo de violencia. **Conclusión:** los resultados mostraron que la violencia de género implica un aspecto multidimensional, en el que la enfermería se lleva a cabo en la red de apoyo para mujeres víctimas de violencia. También hubo una necesidad de un cambio cultural en la sociedad, con el compromiso de todos en la protección y promoción de los derechos de las mujeres. **Descritores:** percepción; violencia de género; enfermería.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the definition of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará/Brazil), the violence against women is any act or conduct based on gender, which causes death, injury, or physical suffering, sexual or psychological to women, both in public as in private sphere.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, to analyze violence against women is fundamental to understand the concept of gender. This term refers to a system of relations between women and men, determined by specific political contexts, economic, cultural and social rather than a natural or biological determination. Gender relations are constructed through a process in which individuals are born biologically male or female and are transformed within society, passing through the social categories of male and female.

Gender violence is one of the main forms of violations of human rights, presenting itself as a serious social and public health problem that is affecting women, regardless of social class, age, race, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation, which causes serious consequences for victims, such as physical and / or moral damages, insecurity, fear, loss of self-esteem and depression.

Due to the breadth and complexity surrounding the issue of gender violence, this is no longer a problem to be solved in the context of interpersonal relationships and is now treated as a social issue, requiring from the State public policies in order to prevent and combat this type of violence. Among public actions, there is the establishment of a network of support services to women victims of violence, to deal with the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon, related to various areas, such as health, education, public safety, welfare, justice and culture.

In this perspective, the interest in knowing the understanding of gender violence in the perception of people responsible for the management of support services to women victims of such violence, as these people contribute in the planning and execution of public policies for this problem.

Thus, the starting point for this research was the following question: what is the perception on gender violence from the managers of support services to women victims of violence in Piauí/ (Brazilian State)? Therefore, this questioning was the problem

that led to the achievement of this study aimed to describe and analyze the perception of gender violence from the managers of support services to women victims of violence in Piauí/Brazil.

This article is organized so as to initially approach a theoretical discussion on gender violence, placing it as the result of relationships between women and men, determined by specific political contexts, economic, cultural and social, and the importance and the role of Nursing in this theme. Next, we shall describe the methodological aspects of research. Subsequently, we shall present the results based on the testimony of managers of support services to women victims of violence in the Piauí/PI- Brazil, concluding with the final considerations of the study.

It starts with the recognition that it is not possible to address all aspects involved in this issue, however, it is hoped that this Research Paper will contribute to the debate on the issue of violence against women, and provide better understanding of the issues on gender.

## OBJECTIVE

- Analyze the perception from the managers of support services to women in Piauí about gender violence.

## METHOD

This is the clipping of a descriptive research with qualitative approach entitled "Gender and domestic violence: the perception from the managers of support services." This type of study is applied to searches of the representations, perceptions and opinions, originated from different ways from the human beings conceiving and deal with the reality, which allows describing and understanding the complexity of the problem in greater depth, and understand the peculiarities of the behavior of individuals.<sup>2</sup>

The population of this research was comprised of managers from the following institutions: Center for the Defense of Women Victims of Violence, Reference Center for Women Victims of Violence *Francisca Trindade*, Service for Assistance to Women Victims of Sexual Violence - *Serviço de Atenção às Mulheres Vítimas de Violência Sexual (SAMVVIS)*, State Council of Rights to Women, The Specialized Police Departments for attending the Women, Shelter House and Board of Directors of Public Policy for Women. We chose these institutions, because they are

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public bodies to support women in the city of Teresina-PI.

The subjects were selected intentionally, with the inclusion criteria to be manager of such institutions to support women. Thus, we relied on nine subjects, all female and knowledgeable of the reality of each one of these institutions. We conducted the data collection from March to April 2009, using the technique of semi-structured interview. This type of interview enables a flexible approach, without stiffness in the formulation of questions, which gives participants a free expression of thought and opinion related to the theme proposed, as well as an interaction between those who question and those who answer.<sup>2</sup>

With the consent of participants the interviews were recorded into MP4 and later transcribed. The data were organized and treated through the content analysis, which identified the significance present in the speech of subjects. Thus, it was proceeded the reading and rereading of the material in the light of the theoretical background of authors that work with this theme. After this step, there was the selection of units of analysis and, then, we performed the rank of the constituent elements of a set for the formation of categories. When it forms categories, the elements or ideas grouped according to their similar characters, or that have some relation to each other.<sup>3</sup>

This present study complied with the requirements of the guidelines and rules for research involving human beings governed by Resolution 196/96 of the Brazilian National Health Council. The subjects were informed about the objectives of the research, and invited to participate, by agreeing, signed the Free and Informed Consent Form, preserving the secrecy of the identity and the right to leave the study at any time if so desired. For the participants remain anonymous, fictitious names of goddesses were assigned to them.

The research project was approved on February 10, 2009, the Ethics Research Committee of the *Universidade Federal of Piauí / UFPI* by CAAE n. ° 0228.0.045.000-08. In the case of SAMVVIS, it was necessary the approval of the Ethics Committee of the Maternity Hospital *Evangelina Rosa*, where the service works. Regarding other services, not to rely on commission or committee on research, we sent a circular letter requesting permission to conduct the study, being granted the respective authorizations.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the analysis of the interviews performed, it emerged analytical categories based on similarity of content of speeches. Among them, in this study is focused on the gender violence. This category refers to the way like managers understand gender violence, the emergence of public policies to prevent and suppress this type of violence and the importance of women's movements in the achievements of these policies.

The men tend to be victims of violence occurred in public spaces, usually being practiced by other men, women are victims in private ambit, within their own homes, being the aggressor in most cases, their husbands or partners.<sup>4</sup> It is precisely because of this violence occurs with greater intensity in the domestic and family that involves the affective aspects and, thus, it represents a more complex phenomenon, as the following report:

*Gender violence in the domestic space, I think it is a very complex problem, because is the space of the family, the space of the home, where there is that affection, where the person expects to have quietness, expects to have peace, hopes to have comprehension, comfort (Demeter).*

The family is traditionally considered the mother cell of society, being identified as one of the oldest providers of welfare. There is in the family, usually, a spontaneous desire to protect and care among its members. However, "the family nucleus is not an island of virtues and consensus in a raging sea of permanent tensions and divisions."<sup>5:36</sup> Thus, we emphasize the contradictory nature of the family, representing a unit that is simultaneously strong and weak. Strong, because it is in fact a privileged locus of solidarity, in which individuals can find refuge against the helplessness and insecurity of existence; fragile, because it is not free from despotism, feedlots, disagreements and disruptions, which may constitute a scenario of violence.

Women who experience domestic and family violence pass through difficult times and often cannot get out of this situation. One of the most evil faces of violence against women is the silence, which is configured as an "outlet valve" and places the victim in a web of guilt and anxiety that can provoke physical and psychological sequel. Thus, fear is one reason for the silence of women in situations of violence and makes up a path of denial of the own situation experienced.<sup>6</sup>The

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fear represents the support for the silence, makes that crimes remain suppressed within four walls. This silence is usually a result of the relationship of submission of women, which places it in a position of inferiority and dependence of men, forming the duo "male domination x female subordination." This is portrayed in the testimonies of Athena and Hebe:

*We live in a state where the rate of violence against women is still very large [...] are crimes that are muted, even though we having locals of protection for women seeking (Athena).*

*From this own comprehension of how men and women are constituted, that man is the being who has to hold the power, the command, then he in relations with the domestic world is who determines, is who is the owner, it includes property, including, women. Then, women in this relationship are understood as being of submission (Hebe).*

Based on these reports, we can verify that the relationship of submission of women is a social and historical construction, legitimized and perpetuated by society, based on asymmetrical relations of power between men and women. The roles designated either for men and women, over the years, were culturally and socially constructed and naturalized, give to the woman the function to be a caretaker of the house and children, and must obey her father in childhood and later, the partner, featuring a patriarchal family organization.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the centralized and authoritarian attitudes of men are understood as inherent to the male figure and the subordination to this authority was given the female figure. From the need to reinforce that male power, might arise the violence against women.<sup>8</sup>

In this perspective, gender violence represents a historical construction, cultural, relational and dynamic to the male and the female, whose representations end up naturalizing sexual and social roles. These representations played in patriarchal culture contributed to the exclusion of women in public spaces and legitimized the oppression and violence against women.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the origin of this problem can be found in the family education, in which hierarchical relationships are perpetuated by being passed from generation to generation.<sup>7</sup> This situation is verified through the following statements:

*[...] Was educated by the own women that is the man who held the power, and the power is male, and if the power is male, of*

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*course, will have a submission and this submission was given to the woman (Hestia).*

*Gender violence can be seen, because, as it is culturally constructed, it is rooted in behavior and is reproduced by education (Artemis).*

*So, this violence arises precisely from this position that was created about the man be superior [...] the question of gender, which was created over time by the differences between men and women, come to serve as a justification for some forms of domination, as the issue of violence (Hera).*

Hestia and Artemis emphasize that education is directed to convey the superiority of man in the face of the submission of the woman, while Hera points out that violence against women stems from the gender issue, placing it as a historical construction.

Given the gravity of this situation, violence against women is no longer an issue addressed in the private sphere or interpersonal relationships, and can be placed to society and, thus, it requires from the State public policies of prevention and repression of violence against women. Among the public policies for the eradication of violence, networks of support to women victims were created, like Aphrodite makes reference:

*A little seed was planted; we are now waiting to be collected good fruits that this is a more consolidation within the network. Need to have all the connections between all the services that exist in the city, particularly with respect to justice (Aphrodite).*

The manager says in her report that there is a support network, however, there is a need of articulation and consolidation within this network to obtain the desired results and for that the changes are achieved. In this perspective, it is then necessary the developing of public policies aimed at the formation of a network of assistance to women in situation of violence, communicating the services from different government sectors, civil society and social movements of women.<sup>10</sup>

In Brazil, the creation of public policies of confrontation to the violence has recent history. Only in the 80's, the public policies were implemented in view of the gender, because of the feminist movement and the international conferences on women.<sup>11</sup> In 1985, with the culmination of the Decade for Women, declared by the United Nations (UN), the first Police Stations for Defense of Women, in São Paulo, and the National

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Council of Women's Rights were established. In the following year, the first House-Shelter for women at risk of death in the country was established by the Secretary of Public Security of São Paulo / Brazil.<sup>12</sup> These three important achievements of the struggle of the feminist movement in Brazil were, for a long time, the main actions of the State aimed at promoting women's rights in combating the violence.

With the creation of the Secretariat of Policies for Women, in 2003, the policy of combating violence against women was expanded, in the sense to promote the implementation of new services and to propose the construction of networks of assistance for women victims of violence. With the realization of the I and the II Brazilian National Conference on Policies for Women and the collective construction of two National Plans of Policies for Women (2004 and 2008), the combat to the violence against women is established as an inter-sectorial and priority axis in the field of policies for women. Thus, actions to combat violence against women are no longer restricted to the areas of security and social assistance, but seek to involve different sectors of the State.

In both National Plans of Policies for Women, it was dedicated a specific chapter on combating violence against women, it has established concepts, principles, guidelines and actions to prevent and combat gender violence, as well as assistance and warranty of rights for women in situations of violence.<sup>10</sup> It highlighted the need to develop a network of assistance to women victims of violence made by a multidisciplinary team, being essential the interdependence of action professional specialized in cares of full nature.<sup>13</sup>

In this multi-professional team, the Nursing takes a strategic position in the identification of victims; therefore women in situations of violence seek more frequently the health services, this search is often masked by other symptoms. Another key role of nurse (male or female) is the welcoming for the victims, because this is a profession committed to the health and quality of life, nurses must be prepared to provide a service throughout the human dimension based on actions of respect, promoting the welfare for the person who is receiving care. In addition, the nurse professional is an educator agent in health and opinion former, who should, therefore, integrate its activities to the socio-cultural reality and incorporate aspects inherent to society in a process aimed at social changes.

It is worthy of note that nurses, like all

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professionals which attend women victims of violence, must acquire information and knowledge about this issue to expand their training in this area.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, it is necessary that these agents are trained to identify, accept and record properly all the treated cases.<sup>16</sup>

It is also worth emphasizing that the recognition, from the State, on the specificity of the female condition and the need for public policies for gender equality is directly linked to the strengthening of women's organizations. Thus, the feminist movement is inserted in the process for construction of the citizenship. If changes were achieved, they happened because women are organizing themselves and becoming aware of their role as citizens. This is what was evidenced in the speech of Hestia:

*Women organized themselves and went to fight, all that was achieved until now, at all angles of the social context, it was because women were organized, speaking a single and proper language in the defense of wanting to be a citizen. [...] Today, there is awareness from the women, especially in regard to their active participation in the social, political world (Hestia).*

This statement exposes the awareness of women as citizens, which are reaching the spaces that had previously been denied, realizing that they do not need suffer any form of violence. And all the achievements occurred by means of the organization and struggle of women. Thus, from the moment that women organize themselves, pursue their rights, assuming that position; there is a redefinition of their role in society.

The social perception of violence against women is historic and, over the years, has undergone changes in function of the struggle and political movement of women.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, increasingly, these women's movements had guided to new achievements aimed at ending discrimination and marginalization of women, and furthermore providing reports of violence against women. This fight denaturalized this kind of violence, making it apparent now, qualifying it as a kind of violation of human rights and criminal behavior liable to punishment.

However, despite advances achieved throughout the mankind history, the violence against women still has universal scope, and how is long the way to go until it reaches the extinction of this act. About it, the below deponent expressed:

*My perception is that we're so far from not suffering this gender violence (Ariadne).*

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Ariadne calls attention to the fact of woman is still suffering with this type of violence, even with the implementation and execution of public policies to combat gender violence. This situation is directly linked to the fact that there is not erased of the collective imagination, the social construction of gender, that is to say, the inferiority and subordination of women.<sup>7</sup>

The managers said that the end of violence depends on a change in thinking of society. It is not enough the existence of laws for punishment of offenders and a support network for victims, if there is not a prevention of violence through education. Then, the public policies should be applied in terms of education, training and qualification of the people. This affirmation is confirmed in the following report:

*Train teachers to give courses at the school to show children that have to be equals, then they are created within those same vices, in the family, society, and up front they will be future perpetrators. The medium and long term, I think that public policies must be implemented to prevent this violence, especially in schools, the educational point of view (Ariadne).*

Thus, education has a great transforming power, to educate is to intervene in the world. So, when you want to promote changes in society, it should need to promote changes in people, and this process can be performed by the education. For this purpose, this education must be "citizen", transformative and inclusive.

Therefore, we should see that gender violence in the domestic space is a complex problem, because this is a socio-cultural question and, it involves the family space, also hinders its complaint, since there are emotional bonds, and despite there is a network of support available to victims in the State. The managers emphasize the importance of this network and the need to be articulated and consolidated between the bodies that compose it. In addition, they highlight the contribution of women's movements in creating this network of support, women that organized and aware themselves of their role as citizens. However, even with the advances obtained, gender inequalities remain and situations of violence continue, and how is long the way for making and change this reality.

In this perspective, it is necessary to deconstruct the models of social and cultural conduct that naturalize and reproduce situations of gender violence and construct

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new perspectives in order to reshape the relationships between men and women and ways of understanding them.

## CONCLUSION

The violence against women with regard to gender, practiced against female person, just and simply for its womanhood, an act that reveals the socio-cultural inequalities between men and women constructed throughout the mankind history, creating a relationship based on inequality, in discrimination, subordination and abuse of power. This is a serious social problem because it is a universal phenomenon, democratic in its reach, very complex, which causes negative impact on women's health, requiring a multidisciplinary work in its confrontation and effective mobilization of sectors involved in supporting victims.

Therefore, to speak on gender violence, in social construction, requires from the State and other agents a multidimensional approach. It is still necessary a joint action to confront (prevent, combat, support, and warranty of rights) the problem by the different sectors involved, such as: health, education, social assistance, public safety, culture, justice, among others, to deal with the complexity of violence against women and ensure a full assistance to women, forming a network of support for that woman in situations of violence.<sup>10</sup>

In the health ambit, the Nursing is a category that has much to contribute to improving the quality of assistance to women victims of violence, from its practices and its body of scientific and theoretical knowledge, since it is a profession that is fully inserted in the current programs of assistance to women's health. Moreover, as a profession of female hegemony, it should be, in the realization of care, through a solidarity attitude, to assist the victim to free herself of feelings such as fear, shame and guilt.

Thus, it is important to know and reflect on the concept from the managers of these services in relation to gender violence, since they are the people who think and directly carry out the policies and actions for women victims of such violence. They understand the gender issue as a historical, cultural construction, relational and dynamic about the male and the female, whose representations end up naturalizing sexual and social roles. Consequently, these representations reproduced in patriarchal culture contributed to the exclusion of women

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in public spaces and legitimized the oppression and violence against women.

Therefore, to consolidate public actions on gender area involves challenges to overcome some internalized resistances. Action is needed to minimize this resistance and that work as corrections to the existing distortions, equating the rights of men and women. Thus, these services should be directed to overcoming or at least alleviate the inequalities, defending human rights in their integrality and watching out for the peculiarities of female gender.

Finally, we emphasize that the existence of services aimed at the suppression and prevention of gender inequality does not automatically imply cultural change in society. It is necessary to promote and stimulate the construction of a new culture of thinking about the question, where the respect and commitment to women's human rights are values incorporated into the daily life of all Brazilians.

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