

What is the impact of sexual orientation in the vision and legitimization in intimate partners' violence?

Abstract

World Health Organization defines violence between intimate partners (VPI) as any conduct between two people within a relationship of intimacy that generates psychological, physical or sexual damage.

Keywords: psychology, heterosexuality, community, violence

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Stefanie Gomes Matos,¹ Maria Madalena Santos Torres Veiga de Carvalho²

¹University of Coimbra, Portugal

²University of Coimbra; Sociedade Portuguesa de Terapia Familiar, Portugal

Correspondence: Stefanie Gomes Matos, University of Coimbra, Portugal, Email stefaniamatosps@gmail.com

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Introduction

VPI is a continued abuse against an individual with whom a subject has or had an intimate relationship regardless the context of when it happens such as in a date, a relationship or a marriage between homo or heterosexual people.¹ However, it is necessary to appeal to the differences between VPI and domestic violence (WHO, 2012), because some authors define domestic violence as the violence between intimate partners,² including the abuse of any element of the family that shares the same living space (such as elderly people or children),³ thus including a wider range of contexts than VPI.⁴

Most of the studies related to VPI are based on presuppositions of heterosexuality, favoring the hiding of VPI in intimate relationships between people of the same sex.⁵ It was only in the 80's, that the homosexual community started to reveal some of the violence episodes experienced in their relationships.⁶ According to Santos et al.,⁶ society looks to homosexual relationships as if there is no violence, only equality. But, when we look to VPI between same sex people, we still recognize the impact, pattern, motivation, frequency and severity just the same as within an heterosexual relationship.⁷ Just like in heterosexual couples, emotional abuse, social isolation, insults, physical abuse and/or sexual violence⁸ also rarely occur just as a one episode only in homosexual couples.⁹ This can be understood as a way of control and/or as power of the aggressor over the victim, the same way that happens in heterosexual relationships,¹⁰ such as the responsibility and blame of the victim and the denial of the aggressor of the violence conducted against the victim.¹¹ Vickers et al.,¹² says that homosexual people that suffer VPI find themselves in a "second closet", since the aggressor profits from the embarrassment of the explanation of the sexual orientation of the victim, making the victim satisfying all their desires and rules.

Objective

The present study as the goal of analyzing Social Representations (SR) around Violence between intimate partners and the conflict solving techniques, taking into account sexual orientation.

Methods

The investigation protocol was ordered and presented to the participants in the following way: Informed consent, Sociodemographic and Complemented Data Questionnaire, Conjugal Violence - Reasons,

Maintenance and Resolution (QVC-CMR), the Portuguese version of the Revised Conflict Tactics (CTS-2) by Murray Straus et al. Conjugal Violence Questionnaire - Stories (QRVC-HIS), and finally the Portuguese version of the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid - KSOG. Through descriptive analysis of QVC-CMR, QRVC-HIS and CTS-2, we tried to understand the SR of VPI and the conflict resolution techniques. Later, we compared the total mean of every instrument, between the subsamples, using an ANOVA-One-Way. In a second moment, using the Kruskal-Wallis test, we look into differences between the three subsamples (heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual) in relation to the SR of VPI. Finally, we analyze the influence of the interaction between sex and sexual orientation in SR of VPI, using an ANOVA-Two-Way.

Results

The results of this study show that there are no statistical significant differences regarding the sexual orientation of the individuals for the following factors: cause, maintenance and resolution ($p > .05$), such as in the legitimization of violence between intimate partners ($p > .05$) and the conflict resolution techniques ($p > .05$). At a significance level of .05, there is no statistical evidence that legitimization of VPI and sexual orientation are associated ($p > .05$). When the interactions of the variables Sexual Orientation and Sex within Stories 1, 3 and Total Story was verified, no statistical significant differences were found ($p > .05$), whereas with Story 2 an interaction effect between this two variables was statistically significant ($p < .05$). We analyze the principal effects to Story 2, and observe the existence of statistical significant differences ($p < .05$) between men and women in the heterosexual subsample. In conclusion, heterosexual men ($M = 18.42$; $DP = 5.70$) legitimate more VPI in Story 2 than women ($M = 13.19$; $DP = 4.31$).

With the analysis of the interaction between the variables Sexual Orientation and Sex with the different factors of cause, maintenance and resolution, no statistical significant differences were found in any of the factors ($p > .05$).

The results of this study show a low degree in legitimization of violence between intimate partners in the total sample and in the three subsamples, as well as that the most used abusive Conflict Resolution Technique from the total sample and the three subsamples is a slight psychological aggression.

Conclusion

Violence in LGBTQIA+ couples has been covered up for a long time⁶ by the gay community and by the different investigators of this area.¹³ However, the results of our study, with CTS-2, show the prevalence of abusive behavior in the total sample and in the three subsamples. This prevalence indicates the existence of this phenomenon, not only in heterosexual couples but also between LGBTQIA+ couples, also found in previous studies.⁹ It is hard to continue hiding this phenomenon, so it is essential that changes in the social roles of women and men, as victim and perpetrator, occur¹⁴ and the demystification of the beliefs that homosexual relationships are equal and free of violence (Santos, 2012). The stigma, discrimination and homophobia that are experienced in our society regards to LGBTQIA+ community is a consent, from all of us, to the maintenance of VPI in this population.^{6,9} It is essential to alert people to the existence of this phenomenon in every intimate relationships, so that we can create a society without prejudice and discrimination, offering proper attendance services to all population regardless the Sex or Sexual Orientation.¹⁵

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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