

Beyond Invisible Scars: Addressing Violence Against Women In Its Multiple Dimensions

Mario Angelo Cenedesi Júnior¹, Dirce Rodrigues Vitorio Pacheco¹,
Priscila Castro Cordeiro Fernandes¹, Rosangela Ferreira Ribeiro¹,
Marcelo Bernardes², Paulo Rogério Ferreira Pinto¹,
Joana Darc Ferreira Da Silva¹, Vanete Ramos Horacio¹,
Nagma Nascimento Prado³, Kenya Costa Rodrigues Da Silva¹

¹ Universidad De Ciencias Empresariales Y Sociales, Argentina

² Universidade Feevale, Brazil

³ Universidade Federal De Uberlândia, Brazil

Abstract:

This academic essay offers a comprehensive and holistic analysis of gender-based violence, going beyond physical manifestations to explore its deep psychological, emotional, social, and economic ramifications. Recognizing that violence against women is a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in structural inequalities, cultural norms, and harmful behaviors, the essay highlights the importance of an integrated approach to addressing this issue. Providing an overview of various forms of violence, from physical and sexual violence to psychological, economic, and verbal abuse, the essay underscores the intersectionality of these forms of violence and their widespread prevalence across diverse communities. Additionally, it addresses women's financial dependency on perpetrators and the lack of family and community support networks as factors perpetuating the cycle of violence. The analysis also highlights perpetrators' impunity as a significant barrier to justice and victim protection, pointing to the need to strengthen the legal system and promote a culture of accountability. Furthermore, it emphasizes the crucial role of health education in violence prevention, with a focus on programs such as the School Health Program. Finally, the essay underscores the importance of addressing all these dimensions of violence against women to create a fairer and more equal society, where all women can live free from fear and oppression. It emphasizes that this is an ongoing journey that requires the commitment of all sectors of society but is essential for building a fairer and more equal future for all.

Keyword: Public Health; Violence Against Women; Physical Violence; Psychological Violence

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I. Introduction

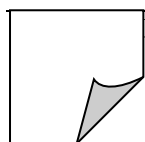
Violence against women is a multifaceted issue that transcends physical and visible dimensions, penetrating deeply into psychological, emotional, and social aspects. Addressing this problem requires a holistic approach that recognizes and addresses the various dimensions of this violence, going beyond physical scars to address the invisible scars that leave lasting marks on women's lives.

One of the most impactful dimensions of violence against women is the psychological and emotional trauma it causes. Women who are victims of abuse often face mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem. These traumas can persist for years, even after the abuse ends, negatively affecting women's well-being and quality of life.

Furthermore, violence against women has significant social implications, including social isolation, loss of trust in interpersonal relationships, and social stigma. Many women feel ashamed or guilty about the abuse they have suffered, which prevents them from seeking help and support. Fear of retaliation from the perpetrator can also lead women to remain in violent situations, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

Another important dimension is the economic impact of violence against women. Many women face financial difficulties due to abuse, including job loss, inability to work due to physical injuries, and coercive control of financial resources by the perpetrator. This can make it harder for women to leave an abusive relationship and rebuild their lives after abuse.

To effectively address violence against women in all its dimensions, it is essential to adopt an integrated approach that involves not only short-term interventions to ensure women's safety but also long-term



efforts to address the underlying causes of violence and provide comprehensive support to survivors. This includes access to mental health services and emotional support, economic empowerment programs, policies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and a cultural shift that challenges gender norms and acceptance of violence.

By recognizing and addressing the invisible scars left by violence against women, we can work to create a society where all women can live free from fear and oppression, and where their voices are heard and valued.

II. Method

This academic essay will explore the multiple forms of violence suffered by women, focusing on the specificities of the Brazilian context. Challenges faced, policies and interventions implemented, and opportunities to improve the health and well-being of this population will be analyzed. Precisely because it is an academic essay, and due to the fluidity of the text, the authors chose to place the bibliographic references (which were obviously extremely important for elucidating the topic) at the end of it.

III. Results And Discussion

Violence Against Women In Its Multifaceted Nature

The definition of violence against women encompasses a broad range of harmful behaviors aimed at controlling, coercing, or causing harm to women based on their gender identity. This includes not only physical violence, such as assaults and beatings, but also psychological violence, such as threats, humiliations, and emotional manipulations. Sexual violence, ranging from harassment to rape, and economic violence, involving coercive control of women's financial resources, are also significant forms of violence against women.

In addition to the mentioned forms, it is important to address verbal violence, often less evident but equally harmful. This includes insults, humiliations, constant criticisms, and abusive language from the perpetrator, aimed at undermining the woman's self-esteem and confidence. Verbal violence can be a tool of control and domination, contributing to an emotionally hostile and harmful environment for the victim. It is essential to recognize and denounce this form of violence, as it can have a significant impact on women's mental and emotional health, undermining their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Furthermore, the introduction to violence against women should highlight the intersectionality of this issue, namely, how violence disproportionately affects women from different backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, socioeconomic statuses, and other characteristics. Women belonging to marginalized groups, such as Black women, indigenous women, LGBTQ+ individuals, women with disabilities, and immigrants, face multiple forms of discrimination and violence, further amplifying their vulnerability to gender-based violence.

The magnitude of the problem of violence against women is alarming, with statistics showing that millions of women worldwide are victims of this type of violence every year. This violence not only causes immediate physical harm but also has a profound impact on women's long-term health and well-being. Women who experience violence often endure lasting psychological trauma, such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem. Additionally, violence can lead to severe physical consequences, physical injuries, reproductive health issues, and even death.

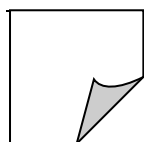
Therefore, it is fundamental to highlight the urgency of addressing this public health problem and promoting awareness of its different forms and impacts. The introduction to violence against women should serve as a call to action to combat this global epidemic, ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of women in all spheres of society.

Thus, when addressing violence against women in the introduction of an article, it is crucial to recognize the complexity and diversity of this phenomenon, as well as its interconnectedness with other systems of oppression and injustice. This contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and helps guide effective interventions and policies aimed at eradicating gender-based violence and promoting equality and respect for the human rights of all women.

Sociocultural Factors Linked To The Issue Of Violence Against Women

Gender inequality, as one of the main factors, creates an environment conducive to violence by granting disproportionate power to men over women, thus perpetuating relations of domination and submission. Cultural and social norms also play a significant role, as socially accepted patterns of behavior often perpetuate harmful stereotypes and rigid gender role expectations, which can justify or even legitimize violence against women.

Discrimination, both structural and interpersonal, also contributes to women's vulnerability to violence, especially those belonging to minority or marginalized groups. Women facing multiple forms of discrimination,



such as race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, or gender identity, are at greater risk of being targeted for violence due to the intersection of these oppressive factors.

Machismo, which is the belief in the superiority of men over women, is deeply rooted in many societies and cultures and is a significant catalyst for gender-based violence. Patriarchy, in turn, is a social and political system that gives men power and authority over women, thus legitimizing male domination and female subordination, which can manifest in various forms of violence, from physical violence to psychological and economic violence.

All these factors are interconnected and create an environment that tolerates and perpetuates violence against women. Therefore, it is essential to address not only the visible symptoms of violence but also its underlying causes to implement effective prevention and intervention strategies. This requires not only individual changes but also profound transformations at structural and cultural levels to promote gender equality and eliminate violence against women.

The Unfortunate, Yet Real, Financial Dependence Of The Abused Woman On The Aggressor

The economic impact of violence against women is a crucial dimension that often goes unnoticed. The financial consequences of abuse can be devastating, leading many women to face significant difficulties in ensuring their safety and financial independence. Job loss is a common reality for many victims of violence, whether due to constant absences from work due to abuse or due to lack of focus and compromised performance due to emotional stress. This loss of income can put women in even more vulnerable situations, making them dependent on the aggressor for financial support.

Furthermore, the physical injuries resulting from violence often prevent women from working, at least temporarily, which can result in loss of wages and promotion opportunities. Even when women manage to keep their jobs, emotional trauma can impair their work performance, affecting their ability to advance in their careers. Coercive control of financial resources by the aggressor is also a common form of abuse, leaving women without access to money for basic needs such as food, housing, and healthcare.

This economic dependence on the aggressor can make it incredibly difficult for women to leave an abusive relationship. They often find themselves trapped in a cycle of violence, without the necessary resources to escape the oppressive situation. Additionally, fear of the economic consequences of leaving the aggressor may deter women from seeking help or reporting the abuse to authorities. As a result, many women remain in dangerous situations out of fear of losing their financial security and not being able to support themselves or their children after leaving the relationship.

It is crucial to recognize and address the economic impact of violence against women as an integral part of the response to the problem. This includes providing women with access to financial resources and support to help them become economically independent, as well as policies and programs aimed at protecting women's economic rights and ensuring their financial security after leaving abusive situations. Additionally, it is essential to promote a culture of gender equality and economic empowerment of women to help prevent violence and create safer and more resilient communities for all women.

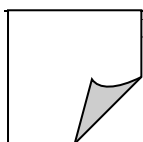
The existence of women's support agencies should play a crucial role in promoting the economic independence of victims of domestic violence. Institutions such as the Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS) and the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS) are examples of organizations that can offer support and essential resources to women seeking to break free from the cycle of violence.

These agencies should perform various functions, from providing guidance and counseling to offering practical and financial assistance. In the case of CRAS, for example, professionals can help women access social programs, such as the Bolsa Família, which provide financial support to families in vulnerable situations. Additionally, CRAS can offer training courses and job placement, contributing to women's economic autonomy.

On the other hand, CREAS can provide specialized assistance to victims of violence, including psychosocial support, legal guidance, and referral to health and safety services. These institutions should play a fundamental role in providing a safe and welcoming environment where women can seek support to overcome the economic challenges associated with domestic violence.

In addition to CRAS and CREAS, other non-governmental organizations and civil society groups can also play an important role in supporting women in situations of violence. Women's shelters, support groups, and volunteer networks can offer practical assistance, such as temporary shelter, transportation, and meals, while women seek to rebuild their lives away from the aggressor.

Women's support agencies play an essential role in promoting the economic independence of victims of domestic violence, providing resources, emotional support, and guidance needed to help them break free from the cycle of abuse and build a life free from violence. These institutions play a fundamental role in ensuring that women have access to the necessary resources and opportunities to rebuild their lives and achieve economic autonomy.



Family And Community Support Network For Women Experiencing Violence

The reality of support networks for women experiencing violence varies according to various factors, including available resources, government policies, public awareness, and local culture. In some places, support networks may be well-developed, with a wide range of services available, while in other locations, they may be scarce or nonexistent.

In areas where support networks are more robust, women may have access to a variety of resources, including temporary shelters, hotline services, counseling, legal and financial assistance, and vocational training programs. These networks often involve collaboration among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, healthcare professionals, security institutions, and the community at large.

However, even in areas where support networks are more developed, significant challenges may still exist. For example, lack of funding may limit organizations' ability to provide comprehensive and high-quality services. Additionally, social stigma and fear of retaliation from the aggressor may prevent some women from seeking help.

In many cases, women may face long waiting lists to access support services due to high demand and inadequate resources. This can be especially problematic in emergency situations, where rapid access to safe shelters and immediate support is essential to ensure victims' safety.

Another significant challenge is the lack of awareness and education about domestic violence in many communities. This can lead to underreporting of violence cases and lack of support for victims. Public education and awareness campaigns play a crucial role in changing attitudes and behaviors regarding violence against women and in promoting support and solidarity with victims.

In addition to the challenges faced by women experiencing violence, the absence of a family support network can further exacerbate their situation. For some women, family is a crucial source of emotional, financial, and practical support in times of crisis. However, when they lack this support, they may feel even more isolated and helpless.

The lack of family support can result from various factors, such as emotional distance, abusive relationships within the family, migration, or the breakdown of family ties due to abuse. In these circumstances, the woman may find herself without a safe haven to seek help or refuge.

Without a family support network, the options available to women experiencing violence may be limited. They may hesitate to seek help from friends or neighbors due to fear of judgment or retaliation. Additionally, the lack of support can affect their ability to deal with practical issues, such as caring for children, finding safe housing, or accessing financial resources.

For women who lack family support, it is crucial that other support networks are available, such as community services, non-governmental organizations, and support groups. These networks can offer a safe and welcoming environment where women can find emotional support, practical guidance, and resources to help them rebuild their lives away from abuse.

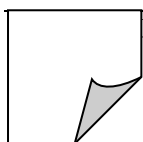
Furthermore, it is important for government policies and programs to recognize and address the reality of women who lack family support. This may include increasing funding for community support services, implementing more comprehensive social protection policies, and developing strategies to promote inclusion and solidarity in communities where family support is scarce.

Although support networks for women experiencing violence play a vital role in protecting and supporting victims, there are still many challenges to be faced to ensure that all women have access to appropriate and effective support services. Collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, and the community at large is essential to address these challenges and create an environment where all women can live free from violence and abuse.

Mental Health Of Women Experiencing Violence

The dimension of psychological and emotional trauma caused by violence against women is one of the deepest and most enduring. The impact of these abuses can be devastating, leading women to face a range of mental health problems that directly affect their quality of life. Anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and low self-esteem are just some of the manifestations of this trauma, which can persist for years even after the abuse has ended. These conditions not only cause immediate suffering but also have long-term effects, impairing women's ability to function in daily life, establish healthy relationships, and pursue opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Additionally, psychological and emotional trauma can manifest in subtle and complex ways, affecting all aspects of women's lives. It can undermine self-confidence and self-esteem, making victims feel undervalued and hopeless about a better future. This impact can be especially profound in cases of ongoing and repeated abuse, where women find themselves trapped in a cycle of violence that is difficult to break. Trauma can also affect women's ability to establish healthy boundaries, making them more vulnerable to abusive relationships in the future.



In addition to individual consequences, the psychological and emotional trauma of violence against women also has a broader impact on society as a whole. Women who suffer from mental health problems due to abuse often face difficulties in their professional and personal lives, which can lead to a loss of productivity and increased reliance on health and social services. This places an additional burden on existing support systems and can contribute to the perpetuation of the cycle of violence in vulnerable communities.

It is crucial that responses to violence against women address not only the immediate physical consequences of abuse but also the psychological and emotional trauma it causes. This requires access to high-quality, gender-sensitive mental health services that recognize and respond to the specific needs of survivors of violence. Additionally, investment in prevention programs that promote gender equality and educate about healthy relationships is needed to break the cycle of violence and create safer and more supportive communities for all women.

The Impunity Of Aggressors Against Women In Brazil

The impunity of aggressors who commit violence against women is a serious and recurring issue in Brazil. Many aggressors are not held accountable for the violent acts they commit, perpetuating a cycle of violence and helplessness for the victims. There are several reasons for this impunity, including failures in the legal system, lack of adequate resources to handle cases of domestic violence, and culturally ingrained tolerance of gender-based violence.

One of the main reasons for impunity is underreporting and lack of reports by the victims. Many women fear retaliation, social judgment, lack of support from authorities, or even more violence if they report their aggressors. Additionally, the legal process can be lengthy, complicated, and often retraumatizing for the victims, further discouraging the pursuit of justice.

Even when cases of violence against women are reported, the response from the legal system often falls short. There are frequent reports of negligence by law enforcement authorities, lack of adequate investigation, slow judicial processes, and low conviction rates. This is partly due to the lack of sensitivity of some justice professionals in dealing with cases of gender-based violence and the absence of effective policies to combat violence against women.

Furthermore, the culture of impunity is fueled by the perception that violence against women is a private matter and not a matter of public interest. This viewpoint is reinforced by entrenched gender stereotypes and deeply rooted misogyny in society, which often minimize or even justify violence against women.

To combat impunity for aggressors, it is essential to implement effective public policies that strengthen the justice system, provide adequate support to victims, and promote a cultural shift to reject gender-based violence in all its forms. This includes strengthening the network of protection for women, training justice professionals on gender issues, educating society about women's rights, and rigorously enforcing existing legislation to combat violence against women. Only with a comprehensive and coordinated approach will it be possible to effectively address impunity and protect the rights and safety of women in Brazil.

Health Education As A Tool To Mitigate Violence Against Women

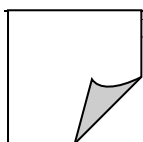
Educational practices play a crucial role in preventing violence against women, as they aim to promote awareness, change attitudes and behaviors, and empower individuals to recognize, report, and interrupt instances of violence. In the school context, the Health in Schools Program (in Portuguese, PSE) plays an important role in integrating health promotion and violence prevention actions, including violence against women.

The PSE is an intersectoral initiative involving the health and education sectors and seeks to promote students' health and well-being by incorporating the theme of violence prevention against women into the school environment. Within this program, educational activities are developed that address issues related to women's rights, gender equality, mutual respect, and violence prevention.

Moreover, the PSE may include training for teachers and other education professionals to identify signs of violence against women among students, provide appropriate support, and refer them to specialized services. This is essential for creating a safe and supportive school environment where students feel comfortable seeking help in cases of violence.

Another important educational practice is the promotion of debates, lectures, and extracurricular activities addressing topics such as gender equality, mutual respect, consent, and violence prevention. These initiatives help raise awareness among students about the seriousness of violence against women and encourage critical reflection on their own attitudes and behaviors.

In addition to the PSE, other educational strategies can be implemented in different contexts, such as awareness campaigns, discussion groups, training of community leaders, and partnerships with civil society organizations. The goal is to create a culture of respect, equality, and non-violence from childhood, contributing to the construction of a more just society free from violence against women.



IV. Conclusion

Addressing violence against women in its various dimensions is essential for promoting a more just and equitable society. Gender-based violence goes beyond physical scars, leaving deep emotional, social, and economic marks on women's lives. It is a complex problem rooted in structural inequalities, cultural norms, and harmful behaviors.

The impunity of perpetrators is an alarming reality, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen the legal system and promote a culture of accountability. Additionally, educational practices, such as the Health in Schools Program, play a vital role in violence prevention, empowering individuals from an early age to recognize and reject abusive behaviors.

The financial dependence of women on perpetrators must also be addressed, ensuring that they have access to resources and support to achieve economic independence. And it is essential to strengthen family and community support networks, providing holistic support to victims and promoting a culture of solidarity and protection.

Lastly, the mental health of abused women should be a priority, with gender-sensitive services that recognize and address the specific needs of survivors of violence.

By acknowledging and addressing all these dimensions of violence against women, we can work towards creating a society where all women can live free from fear, oppression, and violence, and where their voices are heard and valued. This is an ongoing journey that requires the commitment of all sectors of society, but it is essential for building a fairer and more equitable future for everyone.

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