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Adult Partner Violence and Previous Violence Experiences: Retrospective Study with Women Victims of Gender-based Violence

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence or violence against women which takes place in the context of intimate partner relationships, despite stimulating social rejection, still persists. A psychosocial glance could provide a theoretical model which explained the phenomenon that, being multicausal, seems to be strongly influenced by the vicarious learning which occurs in different social settings and contexts in which affective intimate relationships are present. This study tries to compare the violence experiences that women registered as gender-based violence victims have had throughout their lives in comparison to those women who have not been abused. In addition, the study attempts to analyse the risk probability that the previous violence experiences in the different contents add to the psychological and physical gender-based violence. The present work consists on a retrospective study with a group of 80 women (Average Age= 47.61 years; $SD= 12.53$), half of whom were proven to be gender-based violence victims. The results showed significant differences in the exposure to previous violence contexts (childhood and adolescence) among women who were victims of gender-based violence and women who were not, being these experiences a decisive variable in the current abuse. In fact, the experience which seems to be more impressive is the adolescent violence experience within the framework of youth dating. We discuss the results regarding an ecological and developmental-psychology theoretical approach.

Key words: gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, lifespan, retrospective study.

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Novelty and Significance

What is already known about the topic?

- Gender-based violence has been already recognized as a social concern.
- Most of the studies have used a social and patriarchal point of view to analyse this phenomenon, with very descriptive results.

What this paper adds?

- From a psychosocial glance, vicarious learning is highlighted as a risk factor for gender-based violence; the previous dating experiences seem to be a key point.
- A decisional tree analysis offers an overview for different risks factor along the lifespan, and their impact on gender-based violence experience, thus the psycho-ecological theoretical approach is recommended.

It is socially accepted evidence the fact that some women are involved in violence phenomena due to their condition as women, that is, due to a cultural reason of gender. Nevertheless, the so-called gender-based violence and the violence against women mostly occurs in the partner context and in the framework of affective-sexual relationships which define the intimate life. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recognised gender-based violence as one of the main problems of public health and one of the violations of the human rights of women (García Moreno, Devries, Stockl,

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Watts, & Abrahams, 2013), but it is not until the 1980s that the scientific community starts to bear it in mind (Alhabib, Nur, & Jones, 2010), always in the framework of feminism and from the so-called gender perspective (Ferrer & Bosch, 2014). A gender perspective which covers every analysis of the phenomena which affect women in a sociocultural system crossed by sexism and social inequity (McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni, & Rice, 2007).

Labels such as *marital violence* (Gámez Guadix & Calvete, 2012), *couple violence* (Echeburúa, Amor, & De Corral, 2002) or *violence against women in the framework of couples* (Domínguez, García Leiva, & Cuberos, 2008; Ferrer & Bosch 2004) can be included in the concept of gender-based violence. The United Nations defines it as a violent behaviour resulting in physical, sexual or psychological suffering or damage for women, including threats of such behaviours, coercion and lack of freedom, in the public and private life. In this sense, gender-based violence in the context of couples shows four characteristics of every interpersonal violence process: a) intention or desire for harming; b) asymmetry or power abuse; c) repetition or continuous sequence of abuse, intimidation and prolonged violence; and d) immorality that the arbitrary use of control and power of a person (aggressor) towards another person (victim) entails, without the victim being able, by him/herself, to spontaneously escape of him/her (Krantz & García Moreno, 2005; Ortega Ruiz, 2010).

Some studies which have recently carried out a systematic revision indicate that violence against women has reached epidemic rates in a lot of societies, regardless of the race, ethnic group or socioeconomic class they belong to (Alhabib *et alii*, 2010). As a result of a study done in more than 10 countries, the WHO has pointed out that the prevalence of sexual violence and physical violence against women varies from 15 to 71% depending on the cultural acceptance or standardisation which comes from those behaviours, among other factors (WHO, 2013). In Spain, 24.2% of women older than 16 years old report to have suffered some episode of physical or sexual gender-based violence throughout their lives (Delegación de Gobierno para la Violencia de Género, 2015). Moreover, there is consensus regarding the impact these episodes have on the life of the women who suffer it, being significantly related to health problems (WHO, 2013) and, in the most serious cases, to death (MSSSI, 2017).

Given the importance of the problem, studies have tried to analyse the origins of this phenomenon approaching to it from different points of view: on the one hand, a psychosocial viewpoint, which consists on an approach to the phenomenon of violence against women integrating a sociocultural glance into the most widespread feminist viewpoint (McPhail *et alii*, 2007). A psychosocial viewpoint includes analysing both the complexity of partner relationships and the learning opportunities that the social ecosystems provide or not in this regard (Newman & Newman, 2003). For this purpose, the vicarious learning theory (Bandura, 1973) is particularly relevant since it allows to understand how complex behaviour models are implemented, by imitation, such as aggressive or submissive behaviours. On the other hand, the developmental-psychology viewpoint explains the phenomena of violence against women in the context of couples as a product of generalisation of violent relational patterns, common to different contexts throughout the lifespan (Campbell, Greeson, Bybee, & Raja, 2008; Lewis & Fremouw, 2001).

Different risk factors which increase the probability of gender-based violence have been identified in the framework that these approaches (vicarious learning theory and developmental-psychology theory) offer. These factors could be summarised into

three groups: (1) variables related to personal characteristics and demographic contextual variables of the couple members in which gender-based violence occurs; (2) variables related to learning, development and socialisation experiences and processes of each of the couple members; and (3) variables related to the current and historical relationship of the dyad constituted by the couple (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). The sociodemographic variables have mainly been identified as mediator or modulator items of the effect of other closer contextual variables (Capaldi *et alii*, 2012; Manchikanti, 2011). Among these contextual variables, we should consider from the family, as the first context for learning and development, which provides experiences related to the affective life -in this sense, the attachment styles constitute the basis for the formation of the social personality and the management of the intimate life (Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, & Tritt, 2004); to the school experiences as the setting in which friendships are built and so are new attachment and intimacy schemes. Moreover, the school experiences constitute the context in which the first dating experiences take place, precursors of the first youth couples and the first youth sentimental relationships. These three settings are relevant as development and previous learning contexts, which can be indicating attitudinal and behavioural patterns of boys and girls, which will be later transferred as relational schemes of life in adult couples (Benlloch, Sánchez, & Valencia, 2008; Stith *et alii*, 2004). Related to this theoretical basis, some works have been developed. These analyse the theory on violence cycle, pointing out that the violence suffered previously could increase the risk of copying violent patterns later in life (Wisdom, 1989).

From this viewpoint, family becomes the first context of socialisation, shaping and social behaviour reinforcement, as well as the first context of the management of the dominance-submission scheme. It is necessary to learn how to manage the conflict among assuming the other's desires, imposing ours or negotiating fair solutions and interest conflict resolutions. Therefore, family is the first socialising agent. Moreover, growing up in a violent familiar context promotes, among others, the learning of a series of ideas and beliefs which perpetuate the differences between men and women and the use of power and aggression as a way for conflict resolution (Campbell *et alii*, 2008; Simons, Wu, Johnson, & Conger, 1995; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). Suffering a negligent upbringing or experiencing abuse or maltreatment in childhood have been identified by several studies as a risk variable for the later involvement in partner violence (Manchikanti, 2011; Renner & Slack, 2004; White & Widom, 2003). Likewise, experiencing domestic violence in the family of origin has been highlighted as a factor which increases the likelihood to repeat this violent pattern within the own relationship (Linder & Collins, 2005; Roberts, Gilman, Fitzmaurice, Decker, & Koenen, 2010). In spite of the discrepancy among the studies in relation to the predictor effect of these variables, Capaldi *et alii* (2012) conclude in a meta-analysis that there is a medium-low relationship between these experiences and gender-based violence. Nevertheless, the effect might be mediated by other subsequent problems such as antisocial behaviours or excessive use of substances (White Raskin & Widom Spatz, 2003).

Similarly, the peer context, which is particularly relevant in the socialising process at the elemental schooling ages, acquires an increasing importance throughout the child maturity and especially in the adolescence years: school peers become a social ecosystem which modulates the behavioural patterns, especially the reactive and proactive aggression patterns (Jara, Casas, & Ortega Ruiz, 2017). This adjustment is fundamental since it is from the peer context where friendly intimate relationships occur, and it will be the framework for the youth dating and the beginning of the first sentimental relationships

which arise in adolescence (Dunphy, 1963). The variables of the peer context seem to have an association with violence in young couples (Garthe, Sullivan, & Mcdaniel, 2016). The relationship with peers who are aggressive or who normalise this type of behaviour has shown to be a risk factor for partner violence, whilst good quality and support link friendships result in protective factors (Lafuente & Cantero, 2010). Not much has been studied in relation to involvement in other violent phenomena at these children's ages such as bullying or sexual annoyances among peers, despite being phenomena which share many of the risk factors (Falb *et alii*, 2011).

Likewise, social learnings in the intimacy field which are developed in emerging adolescent couples will be modulator items of the later couple relationships and learnt aggressive patterns can possibly be repeated in them unless some educational process has mediated or unless they are aware of their violent character (Ortega Ruiz, 2010). According to this line, and despite the fact that the hypothesis which establishes violence in the first relationships as the beginning or antecedent of gender-based violence has not been proven unambiguously (O'Leary & Smith-Slep, 2003), some studies indicate that violence in adolescent sentimental relationships can act as a risk factor for violence in adult couples (Manchikanti, 2011).

In spite of the empirical evidence which relates violence experiences in different contexts as correlations of the violence suffered by women in couples (Kaukinen, Buchanan, & Gover, 2015; Latzman, Vivolo-Kantor, Holditch, & Ghazarian, 2015), there are few studies which address this problem from a global point of view. Therefore, it is necessary to analyse the path of violence in different contexts verifying the continuation of this phenomenon in the different settings of the affective and intimate life throughout the lifecycle (Abramsky *et alii*, 2011; Campbell *et alii*, 2008; Manchikanti, 2011). The present work consists on a retrospective study which analyses the violence experience in a group of adult women in different moments of their lifecycle (childhood, adolescence and adulthood) and in different settings of their affective life: family, school, first youth partners and adult partner. The work considers two objectives: on the one hand, determining whether there are differences regarding the violence experienced by those women reported as victims of gender-based violence throughout their life in relation to those women who have not been victims of any kind of abuse. On the other hand, it tries to explore the hypothesis of the possible continuation of violence experiences in different contexts and their transfer to the context of adult couples, analysing the risk probability that the violence experience adds in the different contexts.

METHOD

Participants

Eighty women from the provinces of Córdoba, Málaga and Sevilla, (España), participated in the study, forty of whom were identified as victims of gender-based violence. The sample was selected by availability, compensating for the condition of being identified or not by the *Servicios de Atención a la Mujer* (Women Assistance Services) as women with experience of abuse in their adult couples. Their ages were between 24 and 86 (average age= 47.61 years; SD= 12.53) and more of the half of them (59%) had a partner in the moment of participating in the study (see Table 1). Most of them had higher education or university studies (30% university studies, 22.5% educational cycles, and 10% Spanish Baccalaureate).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of Participants.

		AW (n= 40)	NAW (n= 40)	Total (N= 80)
Average age (SD)		45.49 (10.3)	49.68 (14.2)	47.61 (12.53)
Romantic status	Dating	5.1%	2.6%	3.8%
	In couple	25.6%	12.8%	19.2%
	Married	2.6%	69.2%	35.9%
	Single	46.2%	5.1%	25.6%
	Separated	7.7%	2.6%	5.1%
	Divorced	7.7%	0%	3.8%
	Widowed	0%	5.1%	2.6%
	Other	5.1%	2.6%	3.8%
Studies level	None	0%	2.5%	1.3%
	Elementary Education	30%	40%	35%
	High School	10%	10%	10%
	Technical Education	32.5%	12.5%	22.5%
	University	25%	35%	30%
	Other	2.5%	0%	1.3%

Notes: AW= Abused Women; NAW= Non Abused Women.

Instruments

For this study, we created a set of instruments which measured, apart from a number of sociodemographic variables, the violence experience in different moments and contexts throughout life: in childhood -exposure to parental violence and violence experience at school-, in adolescence -psychological and physical violence experience in dating relationships-, and in adulthood -psychological and physical victimisation within the couple. Also we used the following instruments of self-report that were adapted to the retrospective character of this work in those cases which required so:

Revised Modified Conflict Tactics States (M-CTS; Straus & Douglas, 2004): it was used to measure the violence within the couple in three different moments: in its retrospective version) to evaluate the exposure to violence between parents (with a retrospective version), dating violence experience, and violence in marital context. In the first case, with which the participants informed about the violence they had witnessed between their parents when they were around ten years old. It is composed by 4 items for the physical aggression ($\alpha_{\text{physical aggression}} = .73$) and other 4 items for the psychological aggression ($\alpha_{\text{psychological aggression}} = .78$), it measures with the 7-point Likert scale the frequency with which the different violent situations took place (0= never; 6= almost every week). Secondly, it was used to evaluate violence experience in dating relationships, so that we could measure the psychological violence experience ($\alpha_{\text{victimisation}} = .83$; $\alpha_{\text{aggression}} = .68$) and the physical violence experience ($\alpha_{\text{victimisation}} = .78$; $\alpha_{\text{aggression}} = .72$). Using a 5-point Likert scale (0= never; 4= always), we were informed about the frequency with which they performed or suffered different violent behaviours with their first partners. Finally, it was used to evaluate victimisation experience in adult couples. We used the Montes Berge's adaptation (2008) of the scale of physical abuse in order to measure the physical victimisation. It consisted on 13 items, measured in the 5-point Likert scale (0= never; 4= always), which informed about the frequency with which the participants were victims of violent situations in their relationships ($\alpha = .96$).

Subtle and Overt Psychological Abuse of Women Scale (SOPAS, Marshall, 1999) ratified by Jones, Davidson, Bogat, Levendosky, and Von Eye (2005), is an instrument which consisted on 34 items that informed about the frequency of victimisation of different aggressive psychosocial behaviours ($\alpha = .96$).

European Bullying Intervention Project Questionnaire (EBIPQ; Brighi *et alii*, 2012): was used to evaluate violence experience in the school context. A retrospective self-report that measured the involvement in bullying at school ages. It is composed by 7 items for the victimisation scale ($\alpha_{\text{victimisation}} = .87$) and other 7 items for the aggression scale ($\alpha_{\text{aggression}} = .75$), measured with the 5-point Likert scale, which assessed the frequency with which the different behaviours occurred (0=no; 4=almost every day).

Procedure

After a previous contact and after being informed with the organisations of support and assistance for women victims of gender-based violence, data were collected in the facilities of the collaborating organisations and institutions. The participants volunteered to collaborate in this study, guaranteeing them the privacy and anonymity of their data and offering them the necessary support facing the possible difficulties in reading and understanding the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

For this cross-sectional study, data were codified and added to a database for their treatment with the statistical software SPSS 18. We carried out descriptive analyses on the violent experience in different stages of the lifecycle and analyses of average comparisons between the groups we identified as abused women (hereafter, AW) and non-abused women (hereafter, NAW), through analysis tests of contrast of averages and *t*-Student tests and calculating the effect size with Cohen's *d* test (Norman, 2010).

Likewise, a decision tree analysis was carried out as a predictive technique of ad hoc classification in order to value the risk effects that sociodemographic variables and variables of violence experience in other contexts could have on victimisation in adult couples. We used the CRT growing method and the cross-validation method, which assesses the goodness of the tree structure when it is generalised into a larger population dividing the sample into a number of subsamples and generating the tree models right after (Berlanga Silvente, Rubio Hurtado, & Vilà Baños, 2013).

RESULTS

In order to achieve the first objective, a series of descriptive analyses were carried out. They allowed us to know the participants' degree of involvement in violence in each of the considered development moments and contexts. Likewise, we tried to compare whether this involvement was diverse according to the belonging to the AW or NAW group. First of all, we present the data related to childhood, along with data from the family and school contexts. Table 2 shows the obtained results regarding the exposure to violence, not only physical but also psychological violence, by the parents, as well as the involvement in peer violence in the school context. In all the cases, either in the family or school context, the violence experience denoted by the participants was low, reaching levels of non-involvement (0= never or never occur). The exception was found in the case of exposure to violence from the father towards the mother in the family context in the AW group, where the levels slightly increase until 1.43 in physical violence and 2.37 in psychological violence.

Nevertheless, *t*-Student tests showed significant differences between the AW and the NAW groups in 3 studied variables related to the family context: physical and

Table 2. Violence involvement during infancy: Family and School contexts.

		AW		NAW	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Exposure to parents violence	Physical aggression (father toward mother)	1.43	2.04	0.09	0.40
	Psychological aggression (father toward mother)	2.37	2.35	0.61	1.18
	Physical aggression (mother toward father)	0.31	1.08	0.54	0.33
	Psychological aggression (mother toward father)	0.99	1.64	0.22	0.61
School context	Victimisation	0.61	0.79	0.43	0.56
	Aggression	0.28	0.38	0.17	0.34

Notes: AW= abused women; NAW= non abused women.

psychological aggression from the father towards the mother ($t(41.156) = -4.024$; $p = .000$ and $t(45.333) = -4.170$; $p = .168$, respectively) and psychological aggression from the mother towards the father ($t(45.677) = -2.774$; $p = .000$), being always abused women who indicated higher rates of exposure to violence in comparison to non-abused women. Cohen's d test showed that the effect size was high in the first two variables ($d = .90$; $d = .92$) and moderate in the third one ($d = .61$). The variables which referred to violence in the school context did not present significant differences between both groups.

Regarding adolescence, we analysed involvement in violence during the first sentimental relationships. For that purpose, firstly, a sample selection was carried out, considering only those participants who indicated to have had a sentimental experience in this stage ($n = 55$; 26 from the NAW group and 29 from the AW group). Table 3 shows the obtained results in relation to moderate physical, severe physical and psychological aggression and victimisation in adolescent relationships.

Like in the children's stage, involvement in violence in the context of the first couples is very low as aggressors and as victims. Yet, t -Student tests showed significant differences in 4 of the studied variables: moderate physical victimisation ($t(27.168) = -3.417$; $p = .002$), severe physical victimisation ($t(27.215) = -4.030$; $p = .000$), psychological victimisation ($t(41.289) = -3.547$; $p = .001$) and moderate physical aggression ($t(27.193) = -2.135$; $p = .042$). In this way, abused women were those who presented the highest scores in involvement in violence in adolescent couples. Cohen's d test showed a high effect size for the first three variables ($d = .90$; $d = 1.06$; $d = .96$, respectively) and moderate for the fourth one ($d = .56$).

Finally, data of victimisation from adulthood in the context of stable couples were analysed (see Table 4). In this occasion, as it was expected, the NAW group's

Table 3. Violence involvement during adolescence: Dating context.

	AW		NAW	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Moderate Physical Victimisation	0.80	1.21	0.01	0.06
Severe Physical Victimisation	0.83	1.07	0.01	0.06
Psychological Victimisation	1.42	1.07	0.60	0.56
Moderate Physical Aggression	0.23	0.57	0.01	0.03
Severe Physical Aggression	0.09	0.38	0	0
Psychological Aggression	0.71	0.81	0.61	0.58

Notes: AW= Abused Women; NAW= Non Abused Women.

Table 4. Violence involvement during adulthood: Adult couple context.

	AW		NAW	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical Victimisation	1.09	1.03	0.02	0.11
Psychological Victimisation	3.38	0.67	0.30	0.45

Notes: AW= Abused Women; NAW= Non Abused Women.

scores were very low, although not necessarily in non-involvement sections. However, the AW group's scores significantly increased, especially in the case of psychological violence. *t*-Student tests showed significant differences between AW and NAW in physical victimisation ($t(39.976) = -6.539; p = .000$) and in psychological victimisation ($t(68.744) = -23.844; p = .000$), with higher scores in the case of the AW group. The effect size was high in the two measurement variables ($d = 1.44; d = 5.35$, respectively).

In order to address the second study objective, we applied a decision tree analysis methodology which allowed us to advance the relationship and continuation between the violence experience in different contexts and its transfer to the context of adult couples in an exploratory attempt. Likewise, several demographic variables were considered in this analysis, in an attempt to determine the effect, they could have regarding the estimation of the probability of this violent phenomenon.

The violence variables in the children's and youth contexts were independent variables and predictors of the psychological and physical gender-based violence. Nevertheless, a previous correlation analysis was carried out which allowed us to select those variables that were significantly related to gender-based violence. Only the variables related to violence from the father towards the mother in the family context and to physical violence in the context of the first couples showed a significant relationship (Table 5). The variables were dichotomised with answer values of "non-involvement" (absence of violent behaviour) and "involvement". Additionally, demographic variables of age (recodified in age ranges: Under 30, 30-40, 40-50, 50-60, over 60) and of level of studies were included as independent variables.

Measurements of psychological and physical violence against women in adult couples were used as dependent variables. From them, a new variable called gender-based violence was computed. This variable, which was a dependent variable, assumed several answer values which were: "non-involved" (absence of violent behaviour), "involved in psychological violence", "involved in psychological and physical violence", assuming the violence escalation that literature identifies (Vega, Ortega Ruiz, & Sánchez, 2016)

Table 5. Pearson correlation (*r*) analysis between gender-based violence, and violence variables in the children's and youth contexts.

		Physical gender-based violence	Psychological gender-based violence
Psychological aggression (mother toward father)	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.101 (.389)	.204 (.080)
Psychological aggression (father toward mother)	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.135 (.247)	.237 (.041)
Physical aggression (father toward mother)	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.237 (.041)	.259 (.025)
Physical aggression (mother toward father)	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	-.032 (.783)	.122 (.296)
Aggression in school context	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.069 (.551)	.149 (.196)
Victimisation in school context	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	-.031 (.788)	.179 (.119)
Dating Physical Aggression	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.271 (.050)	.111 (.427)
Dating Physical Victimisation	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.549 (.000)	.196 (.159)
Dating Psychological Victimisation	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.142 (.310)	.187 (.181)
Dating Psychological Aggression	<i>r</i> (<i>p</i>)	.110 (.426)	.088 (.528)

and after verifying that there was an overlapping of the involved in physical violence with the involvement in psychological violence, as long as the former one did not occur without the later one. We defined as objective ranks of the tree analysis those which corresponded to involvement in violence.

Figure 1 shows the results: 73.1% of correct global classification (58.6 in psychological and physical violence, 84.2% in psychological violence); 56.7% of the considered participants were involved as victims of psychological violence and

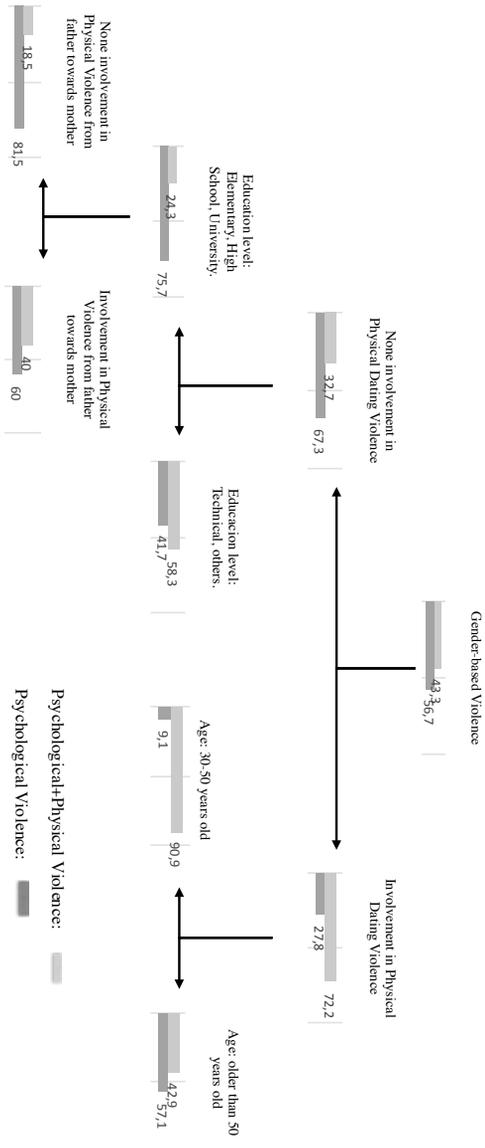


Figure 1. Predictors of gender-based violence.

43.3% as victims of psychological and physical violence. Physical victimisation in the adolescent couple showed to be the best predictor for involvement in violence in the adult couple. The highest probability (90.9%) of being involved in the most severe way of (psychological and physical) violence occurs among those women who have been involved in physical violence in their adolescent couples, aged 30 to 50. This probability of involvement decreases till 42.9% if they are over 50. The highest probability of being involved only in the psychological violence ways at adulthood (81.5%) occurs among those women who had basic education, Spanish Baccalaureate or university studies, and who had not had violence experiences in their adolescent couples or their childhood, especially physical aggressions by the father to the mother. This probability decreased to 60% if these women had experienced violent events from the father towards the mother in their family context.

DISCUSSION

However, the interpersonal violence is a complex phenomenon which is related to the socialisation process, apart from the personality factors. Developing and learning social relationship patterns which have been relevant in the childhood (family coexistence) and later in the first experiences of adolescent dating and building of the first adolescent couples have shown some influence in the way of facing couple conflicts, some of which could be in the origin of gender-based violence (Capaldi *et alii*, 2012; Manchikanti, 2011; Ortega Ruiz, Ortega Rivera, & Sánchez, 2008; Viejo, Monks, Sánchez, & Ortega Ruiz, 2015).

From a psychosocial and developmental-psychology point of view, we have hypothesised that the violent experiences throughout the life of women who have been victims of gender-based violence in their adulthood establish a difference in contrast with those women who have not been victims of gender-based abuse. The obtained results suggest that there are two well-differentiated trends regarding the previous violence experience. Some women express very high rates of violent experience throughout the different life periods and in the different contexts of affective intimate relationship. Meanwhile, another group of women shows almost no previous violence experiences. These values support those studies which indicate that for a specific victim sector, violence becomes a normalisation scheme of the life of affective relationships (Hlavka, 2014; Wood, 2001) which may lead these victims not to be able to identify gender-based abuse as they have been deep in violence problems throughout their lives in the different contexts. This explaining hypothesis could be supported by the results which have pointed out that the group of non-abused women currently express having previously experienced aggressive behaviours, especially of psychological character in other life stages. Perhaps the escalation process underlying as a triggering of physical or sexual violence plays a role in the risk of assuming violent patterns of relationship in the intimacy, with more serious consequences of being involved in physical or psychological aggression in medium-long term for those women who control the so-called escalation process, whereas other are not sensitive to this escalation and find a continuation sequence in an affective life always adulterated by violence (Alhabib *et alii*, 2010; WHO, 2013).

Nevertheless, the most evident results have pointed out significant differences in most of the studied ways of violence when we compare abused women and women

who are not identified as so, being the first ones those who indicate higher violence rates throughout life. These data is coherent with the exposed information provided by previous works which have indicated the relation and co-occurrence of gender-based violence with other types of violence (Abramsky *et alii*, 2011; Campbell *et alii*, 2008; Manchikanti, 2011; Whitfield *et alii*, 2003). Perhaps we should assume that the vicarious learning model proposed by Bandura (1973) somewhat explains a learning of submission and victimisation patterns which is reproduced in every context of affective intimacy, especially from adolescent couples to adult couples.

The results from the tree analysis allow us to delve into these aspects, identifying those variables which increase the probability of being a victim of gender-based violence (psychological violence or in a more serious way adding physical violence). The fact that the victimisation experience in the adolescent couple is the variable with larger predictor weight is particularly relevant: several studies had indicated the important role violent behaviours usually play in the first couples as a risk factor for gender-based violence (Capaldi *et alii*, 2012; Garcia Moreno *et alii*, 2013; Manchikanti, 2011), highlighting how this type of behaviours can easily be transmitted from one context to another, so close regarding the way of relationship they involved, if there is no education process which mediates and helps the principal actors of the dyad to identify aggressive patterns and to modulate them as part of the negotiation of interests that couples entail (Ortega Ruiz, 2010).

Gender-based violence, in its more severe way -which includes physical and psychological abuse-, seems to follow a simple probability pattern, defined by involvement in violence in adolescent couples and by age. Age is a factor which has not been studied (Capaldi *et alii*, 2012; WHO, 2013), although according to the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (2017) in Spain 61.7% of the victims who died due to gender-based violence in 2015 were between 30 to 50 years old, 20% were between 20 to 30; and 18.8% were over 50. It is evident that adult maturity represents the highest risk, being a lower risk at the beginning of the first adulthood and at the beginning of the old age, at least in the fatal ways of gender-based violence.

However, the most widespread way of violence -that one which only includes violent behaviours of psychological character- was defined by a more complex pattern of variables that include, apart from basic, medium or university educational levels, that is, all the cultural levels, not having necessarily experienced family violence and not being involved in physical violence in the adolescent couple. In other words, the least severe violence experience seems to be related to general features of the conditions of the developmental-psychology process and the social characteristics of the participants.

On the other hand, and trying to interpret the similarities and differences between both groups of women who participated in the study and whose most outstanding difference is marked by the severity of the violence experience (physical vs psychological) here established, we could point out that perhaps those women who have not had a vicarious experience having observed gender-based violence between their parents during their childhood, find more difficult to identify this type of violence, whilst those women who have had childhood models are able to identify these violent patterns and perhaps they can soon learn how to break the intimacy relationships which include violence. Nevertheless, the exploratory character of the study is not enough to draw conclusions in this sense, requiring more robust analyses.

Additionally, we must outline the short discriminant value that the school context as a risk factor seems to have, including the bullying phenomenon, so widespread

during the years of primary and secondary school. There are few studies which have provided evidence in this line (Falb *et alii*, 2011). However, the fact that there is no relational pattern comparable to the one which is generated in a couple relationship contributes to the fact that these experiences do not have such a significant impact on the learning of violent patterns or on the transmission of these patterns to the couple context. Thus, other studies which address this relationship in depth will be required to conclude with confidence.

Even so, this study highlights that there are aspects of the psychosocial and developmental-psychology theories that seem to play an important role in the involvement in the phenomenon of gender-based violence. Therefore, given the social problem that violence supposes in the whole world (WHO, 2013), it is important to consider the global value that these results can provide in order to address the problem from the origins. In this sense, the context of adolescent couples is revealed as an essential context to identify violent patterns and to establish more equal and satisfactory relationships for their main actors.

Finally, it is necessary to indicate the limitation that the sample size of this study supposes, given the difficulty that interviewing women who have experienced violent and traumatic processes of that type may suppose. Likewise, we need further studies which delve into the incidence of the therapy process in the processes of memory reconstruction on violent events previously experienced, since they could be very useful in order to value the possible bias that the present study can have: working with women identified as abused women supposes the assumption of certain explicit work with them as part of the recovery treatment of the victim.

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