

MEASURING THE PERCEPTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AT UABC LAW SCHOOL,  
CAMPUS VALLE DORADO

*Medición de la percepción de la Violencia contra las Mujeres en la escuela de Derecho de la  
UABC, Campus Valle Dorado*

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### **Abstract**

Despite of the efforts made by civil society and the legal modifications made in the Mexican legislation, the existing violence towards women does not decrease and it shows its normalization in professions like Law that require alternatives based on gender sensitization. This work consists of the results of a survey on perception of violence against women with students of the Law School of the Autonomous University of Baja California in the summer of 2018, which through six dimensions (physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, deprivation, normalization of violence and social capital) tries to understand the factors considered as violent, while presenting a proposal for protocol of attention to this problem in the university campus.

**Keywords:** Violence against women, gender issues, university.

### **Resumen**

A pesar de los esfuerzos realizados por la sociedad civil y las modificaciones legales hechas en la legislación mexicana, la violencia existente contra las mujeres no disminuye y muestra su normalización en profesiones como la ley que requieren alternativas basadas en la sensibilización de género. Este trabajo consiste en los resultados de una encuesta sobre la percepción de la violencia contra las mujeres con estudiantes de la Facultad de Derecho de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California en el verano de 2018, que a través de seis dimensiones (violencia física, violencia psicológica, violencia sexual, privación, normalización de la violencia y capital social) trata de entender los factores considerados violentos, al tiempo que presenta una propuesta de protocolo de atención a este problema en el campus universitario.

**Palabras clave:** Violencia contra las mujeres, cuestiones de género, universidad.

## 1. Introduction

Violence against women is understood as the perpetuated aggression that shows inequality in the distribution of power and the permanence of asymmetric relations between men and women, which has caused, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) obvious discrimination and the permanence of subordinate relations towards the masculine (Rico, 1996).

These behaviors can be approached from a legal perspective in which violence and femicide, labor, educational and income discrimination prevail today, among others that are perceived as normal issues and therefore regularize the relationship of subordination to males. When gender perspective is not understood, legal norms and actions, as well as programs, training and even public policies, fall short of the dimension and consequences they generate, affecting the daily life of our society.

## 2. Outline of violence against women in Mexico

In Mexico, talking about violence against women has become a topic of a daily basis; every day there the news report cases of some kind of violence or femicide in most of the states of the country. Yet, it is also commonly visualized in actions charged of an obvious normality, like in behaviors such as not letting a girl play soccer with the boys, making fun of a man who is crying because “men do not cry”, even the physical aggressions or the death of the person.

According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography 51.4% of the Mexican population is female (INEGI, 2015), and according to the data released on the International day of the elimination of violence against women in 2016:

- 66.1% of women over 15 years old have faced some kind of violence by any aggressor at least once on their lives.
- Young women (between 20 and 34 years old) are the most vulnerable to violence and refer to sexual violence as the most repeated.
- 43.9% have faced assaults by the current or last husband or partner throughout their relationship.
- 81.2% women were already married or united for the first time at 25 years of age.
- In states of the south of the country (Chiapas and Guerrero) 40% of women were married or joined as a couple before the age of 18 (INEGI, 2017).

From the legal point of view, there are sufficient normative provisions in Mexico that force us to consider that the problem of the existence of such high levels of violence against women is not due to lack of legislation, but rather to sociocultural aspects that must be understood together with the legal interpretation.

In February of 2007 was published the General Law of Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence (LGAMVLV), in which in addition to considering the rights, principles and international restrictions within the country, the types are classified. The modalities of violence considered as legally existing in Mexico (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Types of Violence in Law**

<b>Types of Violence</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Psychological violence</li> <li>2. Physical violence</li> <li>3. Patrimonial violence</li> <li>4. Economic violence</li> <li>5. Sexual violence</li> <li>6. Any other analogous form likely to damage the integrity or freedom of women</li> </ol>
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*Source: Elaborated from the LGAMVLV, 2007.*

Article 6 of LGAMVLV establishes the following types of violence:

**“Psychological violence.-** It is any act or omission that damages psychological stability, which may consist of: negligence, abandonment, repeated neglect, jealousy, insults, humiliation, devaluation, marginalization, indifference, infidelity, destructive comparisons, rejection, restriction to self-determination and threats , which lead the victim to depression, isolation, the devaluation of their self-esteem and even suicide;

**Physical violence.-** Is any act that inflicts non-accidental damage, using physical force or some type of weapon or object that may or may not cause injuries whether internal, external, or both;

**Sexual violence.-** It is any act that degrades or harms the body and / or sexuality of the victim and that therefore undermines their freedom, dignity and physical integrity. It is an expression of abuse of power that implies male supremacy over women, by denigrating it and conceiving it as an object” (LGAMVLV, 2007).

This law also creates a national system for the prevention and eradication of violence as well as programs, institutions and procedures for the institutional attention to this problem. In spite of what is contained in the law and the existence of institutions such as the Women's Institute or the

specialized prosecutor's offices for violence against women, institutional, civil and daily life actions continue to be violent and bordering on the fact that women remain a vulnerable group.

As of January 2011, Mexican law equates international treaties signed and ratified to the Political Constitution, that is, all international legislation that has been validated by the Senate of the Republic has the same hierarchical importance as constitutional texts; therefore, the content of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention of Belém do Pará, the recommendations on the protection of Human Rights and on the legal obligations of states to respect, protect and enforce the right of women to non-discrimination and the enjoyment of equality, establish in a “local” way the right of women to live a life free of violence, as well as the obligation of Mexico to adopt relevant local legislation to the subject.

In the Executive Report “Femicide Violence in Mexico, Approaches and Trends 1985-2014” issued by the Women's Institute, the Ministry of the Interior and the United Nations Office in Mexico, women's deaths are discussed with presumption of homicide instead of as “femicide” (Secretaría de Gobernación, Instituto Nacional de la Mujer, ONU Mujeres, 2016).

Regarding the official accounts of violence against women in Mexico, during the first semester of 2018 we requested to the Attorney General of the Republic (PGR) and the INEGI the data about the crimes committed on 2017 against women, emphasizing the number of femicides registered in that period, through the mechanism of free access to information. In the answer to our request, received on March 5<sup>th</sup>, the government agencies sent us the document “National Census of Justice Procuration 2017” made by the INEGI's National Geographic and Statistical Information System, dated October 27, 2017 and updated up to January 16, 2018. In this document, of 1'658,564 antisocial behaviors registered in the files in the year 2016, 9.4% of the crimes and 14.2% of the antisocial behaviors corresponded to family violence actions<sup>1</sup>.

However, according to unofficial data registered by NGOs and social activist, such as María Salguero who has designed the Map of Mexico's feminicides, in 2016 there were 1,844 femicides registries, while in 2017 the cases were 1,824. Comparing official statistics with the contents of this map, it is evident that the institutional awareness in relation to femicide continues to be under registered, which can be explained because in most of the states of the country they report femicides within intentional homicides, which leaves aside the relationship of power, subordination and normalization of violence against women that would be evident when recognized. Also, the magnitude of violence against women is not reflected due to current state legislation and how the concept is defined, which is still foreign to the public ministries with no training on gender issues. Therefore, the slowness and lack of precision to typify the crime and process it as such.

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<sup>1</sup> Family violence refers to that which can be committed by any member of the family against another one, without considering gender affairs between aggressors-assaulted, since it may be relations between parents and children, between brothers or sisters or between people who have as common the existing kinship between them, so there can be no talk of violence against women specifically on this issue.

Fernández (2016) indicates situations circumscribed specifically in the area of the delivery, or lack thereof, of justice that violate women within this area created for the care of crimes or antisocial behaviors to which they are victims, affirming that the exercise of justice towards women is formally supported but inefficient and ineffective in the real world; the women who come to request the shelter and protection of the judicial system are victimized by transferring the responsibility for the crime committed to them and those responsible for the administration of justice tend to defend the men by activating an open complicity modality that protects them above the Human Rights of the victims.

Based on the above, and especially considering the nature of the functions of the future lawyers graduated from the Valle Dorado campus of the Autonomous University of Baja California and the evident need to activate a protocol of attention to violence against women in our faculty, during the first semester of this year we developed the project “The perception of violence against women in law students of the Valle Dorado Campus of the UABC”, with the aim of identifying the knowledge that students have of the behaviors understood as violent against women by legislation in daily use, as well as recognizing in their case behaviors that indicate their normalization, with the following characteristics and results.

## **2. Methodology**

A descriptive, quantitative and exploratory study was designed based on five dimensions, considering the following items: Psychological violence, Sexual violence, Physical violence, Normalization of violence and Social capital. This survey was conducted via Google Drive to a sample of 285 students of the Bachelor of Law whose population is 1,225 students.

The survey consisted of 67 closed questions submitted to a process of validation by judging considering that the document met the requirements of clarity, coherence, relevance and sufficiency, using for its application the Likert scale, except in the case of the Social capital dimension in which it was requested to indicate the existing relationship with the people on whom it is supported.

In the case of the Normalization dimension, we start from the idea of what has operated as a customary behavior, reiterated by repetition and with the conviction that since this is customary it should continue to be; while for the Social Capital it was understood as the support networks created by the interviewees manifested in those who trust to go before situations of risk. These dimensions addressed questions that had as a common element conditions considered as corresponding to the type of violence foreseen in the law (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Dimensions and Variables**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>There is violence when ...</b>
<b>Psychological violence</b>	Women are insulted and made to feel less The woman is humiliated in front of other people A woman is intimidated after a proposal The woman is threatened There is bad talk about a woman
<b>Physical violence</b>	A woman is hit The woman is slapping It plays brusque with the woman A weapon is used against women A woman is injured or injured
<b>Sexual violence</b>	The husband forces a woman to have sex A woman gets catcalled A woman is intimated a sexual encounter A woman is touched against her will A woman is raped A woman who wears provocative clothes is catcalled.
<b>Normalization of violence</b>	I have been in a violent relationship Rude children deserve a spanking One must have the husband happy Men are unfaithful by nature Men must be ugly, strong and formal It is normal to check my partner's cell phone It's normal for my partner to check my cell phone If my partner asks me to, I change my clothes I stopped talking to someone because my partner does not like them. My partner should not have those friends My partner is jealous towards me because he loves me Equality between the sexes is important Pressuring the couple to have sex is normal Having forced sex is a violation My family does not get along with my partner My partner sees the expenses of the house My partner is violent I'm to blame for my partner's outbursts If my partner leaves me, he takes my children My partner has threatened to abandon me My partner drinks more alcohol than he should My partner is addicted to some drug It is the woman's obligation to share the expenses of the house Men must make the important decisions of the family
<b>Social capital</b>	I can tell you about the problems I have with my partner ... and ... I can ask them to call the police in case of violence to ... and to ... If I need financial help, I ask it ... .. and ... If I need help with the care of my children I ask it to ... and to....

*Source: Own elaboration based in dimensions created.*

### 3. Results

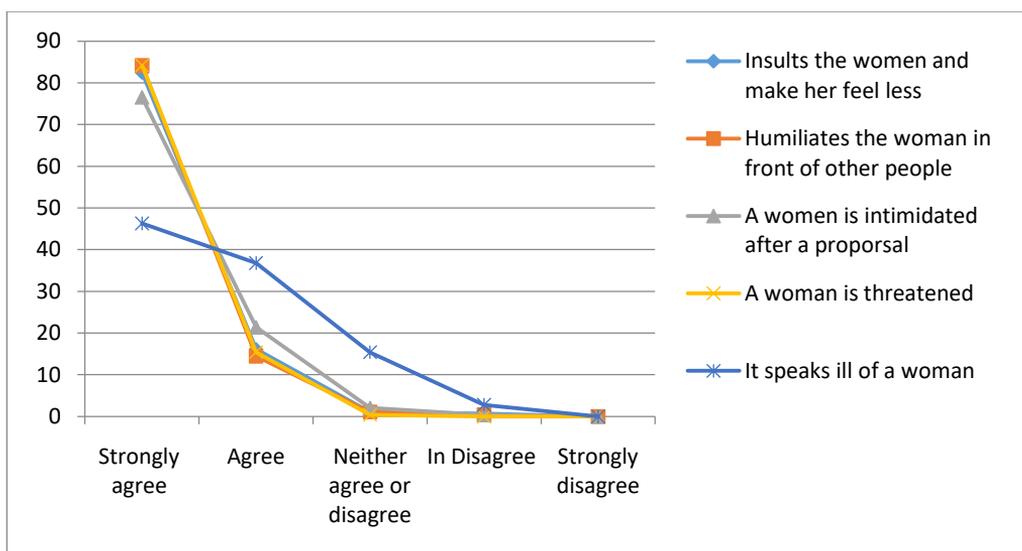
Out of the 285 participants surveyed, 210 were women (73.7%) and 75 were men (26.3%); 165 of them (57.9%) with ages ranging from 18 to 25 years old, followed by 36 (12.6%) from 36 to 40<sup>2</sup>, and by 30 (10.5%) from 26 to 30 years old. Among the respondents 114 reported having children (40%).

Regarding marital status, 174 (61.1%) indicated that they were single, 57 (20%) married, 42 (14.7%) lived in free union, 10 (3.5%) were separated and 2 (0.7%) were widowed.

Regarding the people with whom they live, 126 (44.2%) indicated living with their parents and siblings (in a “traditional” family), 31 (10.9%) 28 (9.8%) live with their partner; 27 (9.5%) live alone; 23 (8.1%) live with their mother; 18 (6.3%) live with their children; 11 (3.9%) live with their mother and children; 7 (2.5%) live with their siblings; 5 (1.8%) live with the father and 6 (2.2%) live with the grandparents.

Of the total number of interviewees, 87 said they were self-supporting (30.5%) while 197 (69.5%) indicated that they depend on the support of someone else.

**Figure 1. Psychological Violence**



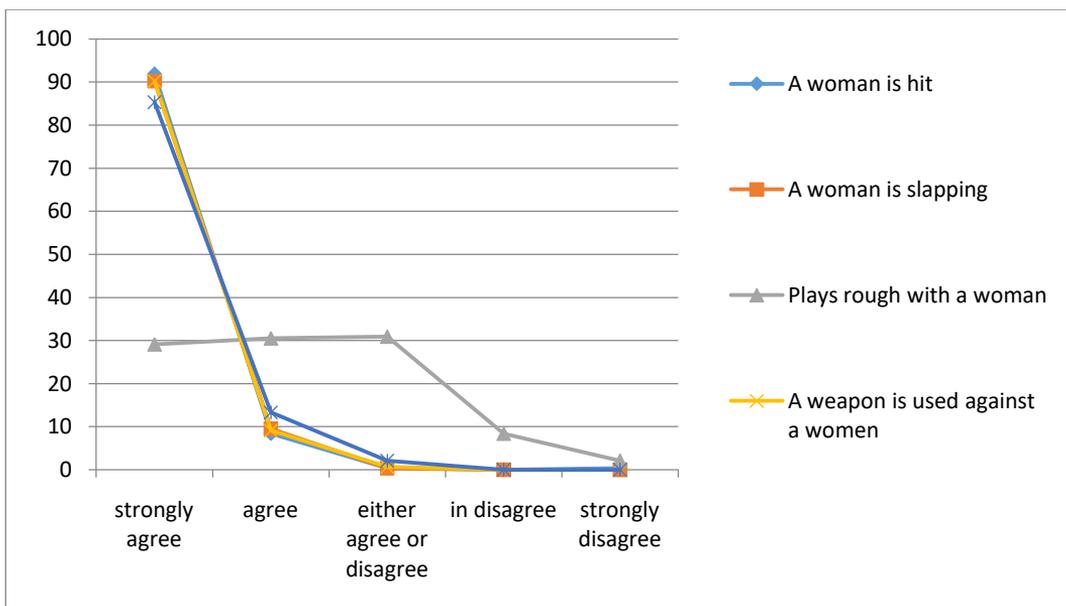
Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey.

<sup>2</sup> The survey was applied to law students of the two existing modalities in the Faculty of Administrative and Social Sciences in Ensenada, México: the Schooled that has classes between Monday and Friday in the morning and evening shift and the Semi-schooled that attend school on Friday afternoon and Saturdays.

Regarding the dimensions analyzed, the one corresponding to Psychological Violence, most of the respondents said they strongly agree that each of the behaviors described in the variables are understood as violent, that is to say, it is understood that there is violence to the woman when insulted (82.5%), humiliated in front of other people (84.2%), intimidated (76.5%), threatened (84.2%) or bad spoken of (46.32%); at the other extreme, none of the respondents disagreed strongly with the statement “there is violence against women when ...” (See Figure 1)

With regard to Physical Violence, the percentage of respondents who completely agree that the behaviors listed as violence towards women are mostly oriented towards the option “strongly agree”, except in the case of the question “plays rough with a woman”, whose highest percentage (30.9) is located in the answer “neither agree nor disagree” (See Figure 2).

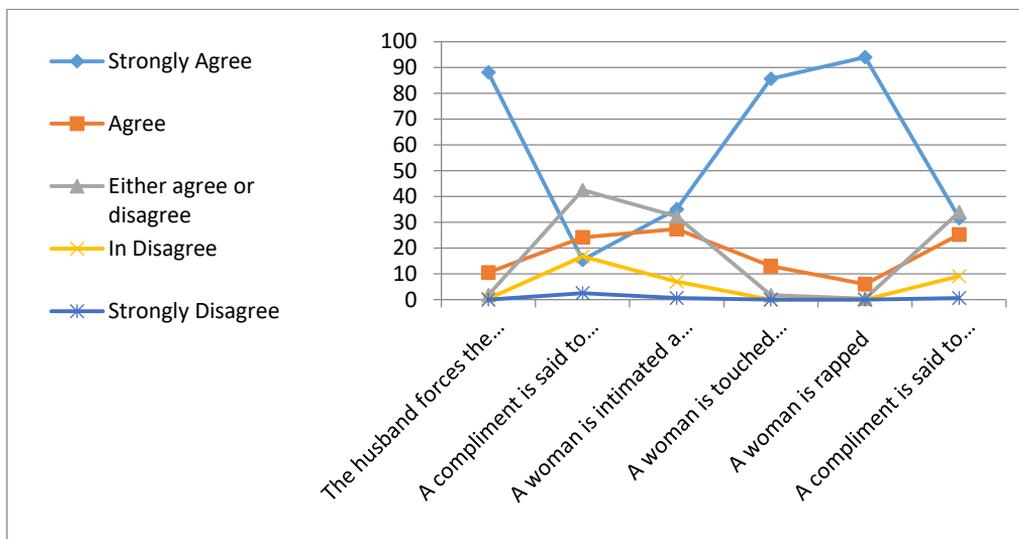
**Figure 2. Physical violence**



*Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey.*

About Sexual Violence (see Figure 3), the tendency observed is towards the “completely agree” response in the behaviors considered as violent; however, when asked about “catcalling women” it is understood that for the majority there is no violence if the woman wears provocative clothing, which indicates that the responsibility for the action of the person doing the catcalling is transferred to who receives it, through the clothes that the victim uses (56.9%).

**Figure 3. Sexual Violence**



Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey.

For the purposes of this investigation, the results of the section corresponding to the Normalization of violence were especially important, since one of our hypotheses conjectures that exist in relation to the low or null denunciation of the criminal conducts carried out against women by the victims, or the little or no attention on the part of the authorities in charge of initiating, pursuing or concluding the procedures derived from these conducts; because violence against women is “understood” as normal, or in other words, society expects women to act understanding violence as a fact of daily life, exercising power over them in such a way that there is no forceful denial reaction to the continuity of these deals.

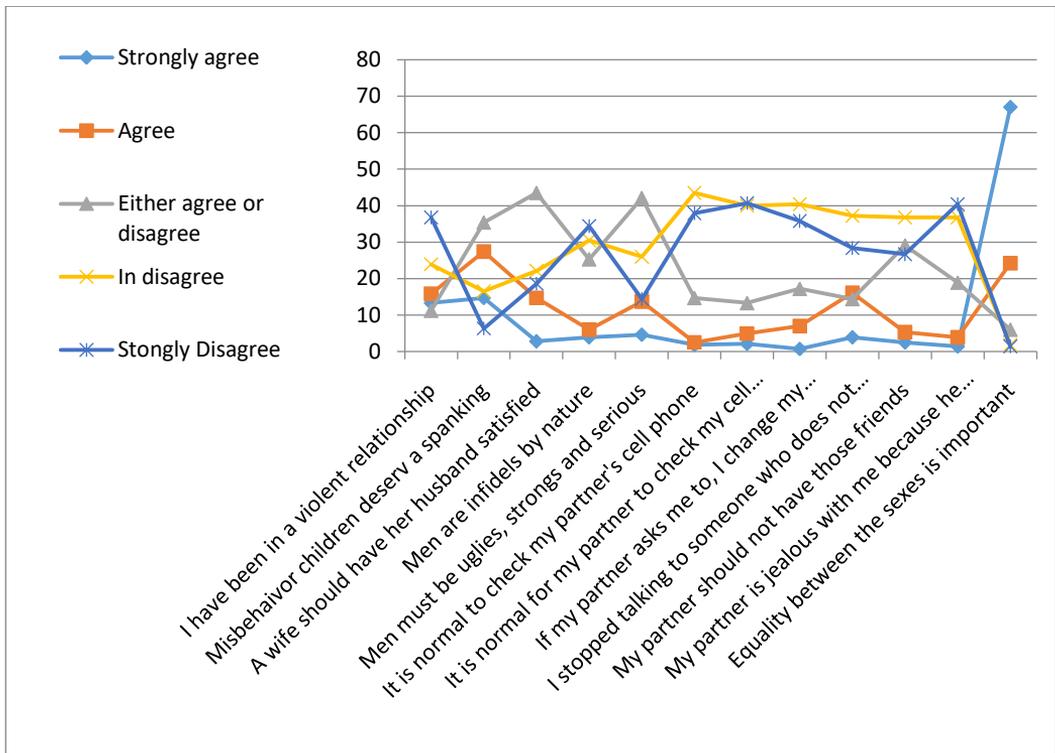
In Figure 4 you can see how the results in relation to the perception of violence are variants, so we will point out the following precisions. Regarding the question “I have been in a violent relationship” 31.4% of women (66) answered “agree” or “strongly agree”, while 26.7% of men (20) answered in that sense. For the question “rude children deserve a spanking” 40.5% of women (85) and 46.7% of men (35) answered “agree” or “strongly agree”. Regarding the question “one must have the happy husband”, 14.3% of women (30) and 25.3% of men (19) are within this range.

To the question “men must be strong”, 14.8% of women (31) and 28% (21) of men said they agreed; to the item “if my partner asks me to, I change my clothes”, the women were “in agreement or very much in agreement” 3% of the occasions (7) and the men 20% (15); In relation to the question “I have stopped talking to people because they do not like my partner” 19% of women (40) and 22.3% of men (17) lean towards “strongly agree”.

In the item “my partner sees the expenses in the house”, 26.7% of the women (56) were “in agreement or strongly agree”, while only 1 male responded in that sense; this affirmation is reversed

in the opposite option for the case of men, since 44% (58) state to be “in disagreement or strongly disagree”; to the statement “it is the obligation of the woman to share the expenses of the house” 43.1% of the women (92) said they agreed, while 54.7% of the men (54.7) made this statement. On the other hand, 6.7% (14) of women and 13.3% (10) of men report that they “agree or strongly agree” that their partner has threatened to leave them; with regard to the option “equality between the sexes is important”, 91% of women (191) and men (68) agree with this questioning.

**Figure 4. Normalization of violence**



Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey.

Finally, and considering that according to the theory of Social Capital this resource is activated by people especially if there is a risk situation, they asked three possibilities in which people who are subject to a situation of violence they can go to someone or consider their network of close support to face the situation, asking them to indicate the relationship (that is, not the name) they have with the person they would go to in case they need help; in this case, when asked “I can tell my relationship problems to ...” the results were “mother” and “girlfriend”.

## **5. Conclusions**

In Mexico, despite the existence of laws and programs that seek to address violence against women as a social problem, there is disagreement between the actions initiated by the authorities that are responsible for the procurement of justice and the needs the population that requires the effective development of its functions face, as well as the results that the authorities report and what is reported through civil society organizations that aim to eradicate violence against women. In the matter of the training of future lawyers, professionals in charge of the investigation, follow-up and administration of justice in matters of violence against women, it is necessary to make known the content of these behaviors beyond what the law lists; that is, it is necessary to recognize that in the daily life the behaviors that are carried out are violent when this happens.

This research showed a high degree of knowledge in the law students to the behaviors that imply physical, psychological and sexual violence. However, in the section devoted to the normalization of violence, it was possible to detect that gender actions exist within the collective conscience that place the actions of each sex in accordance with the stereotype that they have, such as the need of men to be strong or of the vision they have of being the ones who take care of family expenses, or the unexpected finding that it is they who most often accept the change of clothes when the couple asks for it or stop talking to those whom your partner tells them to do so.

These types of affirmations update the need to understand violence as a behavior that, although not exclusively exercised against women, needs to be addressed from the institutional perspective as necessary to demonstrate its recognition and generate public policies and programs that affect the transformation of its possible normalization. Towards the conception of egalitarian relationships, in which the behaviors of exercising power of one sex over the other are not hidden and the full development of society is privileged, and in the specific case of children, who must also be understood as people who must be educated from a violence-free vision, the fact that more than 40% of respondents consider it normal to hit children to educate them shows that in such a delicate scenario within the social structure as is the treatment family or towards children, violence is an accepted response by the elderly.

In relation to the resources of social capital against violence, in each of the cases considered, it was contemplated that the support networks of the respondents correspond to the closest or familiar area, considering then that there are “bonding” relationships in which they deprive the affection and the closeness as trust detonators and as supports and first responders towards known violence. This indicator also matters because violence is generally understood in the couple as a theme of the private sphere of people, giving it a certain syncretism that, when not evidenced, gives permanence and, in the long run, normalizes it, conceiving it as something customary and of which one should not complain, since “thus it has been”.

It is up to the new generations to resolve these inequalities in order to build relations, families, communities and non-violent societies from a different foundation, considering that for such effects they have a normative, administrative system and with inherent public policies and programs.

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