

INTRAFAMILIAR VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: SUPPORT AND OVERCOMING NETWORK

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Abstract

This investigation has as principal object comprehend the overcoming process of intrafamiliar violence against children overcoming process of the families. It explores authors' opinions about the value of the social and affective support network on the violence practiced by parents against their children overcoming process. It presents results referring to resident families of the city of Petrolina - PE, attended by the Tutelary Council. The data were collected through documental analysis and case study. The interview reports were treated by Bardin's content analysis. Express how the violence occurred in each family represented a difficulty for the participants, existing a tendency from the authors' in not admitting the fact. Finding a motivation that justify the practice of any type of violence against the children was present on the interviewed's words. On the delators' narratives, was observed an inclination to accuse the aggression's authors. The attendance good quality of the service of Tutelary Council was referred by the most interviewed. However, it was perceived a dislocation between the work of the Tutelary Council and the support to the families' services. The participation of the affective network importance is mentioned as the main protection mechanism that they have. They link as challenges on the overcoming of violence episodes the relationship difficulties between author and victim and the lack of attendance by the Tutelary Council. It's pretended to contribute to the efectivation of the children and adolescents' rights, giving elements to the structuration of combat to the intrafamiliar violence networks, and the capacitation on its professionals.

Key words: intrafamiliar violence; child and adolescent; resilience; social and affective network.

INTRODUCTION

The violence inflicted by parents against their children refers to a serious social problem, justified by the strong impact it makes on the lives of the people involved. The comprehension of overcoming process of the families who practice violence against children requires the investigator, not just knowledge about the two phenomenons (violence and overcoming) but also knowledge about the network of social and affective support that the individuals have.

It is classified as violence against children and adolescents in four ways: physical abuse, neglect or deprivation of care, the psychological and the sexual. The physical violence or corporal punishment of children is so understood as "any action that causes physical pain in a child, from a simple slap to the fatal beating"¹. Its manifestations occur by different lesions in the child's body,

depending on the intensity and frequency on which they are used.

Neglect can be defined as difficulties experienced by children, linked to behaviors and attitudes of parents or guardians, which may threaten their development². It is believed that the modality mentioned above, is the most common form of violence practiced by parents, against children. Already the sexual violence against children and adolescents, represents "the involvement of children and adolescents, by adults, through the use of physical force or seduction, aiming the satisfaction and pleasure of them, in acts or games and sexual practices". The family context seems to be the place where most of the cases of such violence, whose practice in most cases, involves people who play the role of caregivers of children and adolescents. The psychological or symbolic violence represents a kind of difficult

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identification. It is stated that "It is the most subjective, although it is very common, the association with physical violence. It leaves deep marks on the development and may compromise the entire mental life"⁴. It is noted that the use of discriminatory and derogatory words, for example, is not always recognized as psychological violence of parents against children.

Network of social and AFFECTIVE support: Possibilities of resilience

By studying the Statute of the Child and Adolescent - (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente ECA), it is noted in its article 13, that "suspected or confirmed cases of abuse against a child or adolescent must be reported to the Tutelary Council of the respective locality, without prejudice to other legal action"⁵. Included in these cases of abuse, there are those caused by parents against children. It begins this way, in the Tutelary Council, the assistance to the cases, proceeding to the necessary referrals to the various institutions of social support available in the cities. And so, it becomes clear what role the agency mentioned above performs, of trigger of networks of support services. So performed from the perspective of developing skills, to enhance human capabilities, in order to improve the health of communities⁶. Support services network or social support network, is then "the group of systems of significant people that make the bonds in relationship received and perceived by the individual"⁷. Several fields of knowledge have long explored the theme of social support networks. These include, the psychology, which emphasizes the research on the influence that social networks exert in the development of the individual during the various phases of the life cycle. In this context, the first support network available, is constituted by the family, early started through the first attachment relationships⁸. Family and friends perform interchangeably, important papers, not only for the emotional and social development of its members, but also for building their social support networks. This is how, the support networks, both social and emotional, well-structured, play a positive role in people's lives, contributing to the prevention in incidents of violence. It is imagined that these networks represent opportunities to show solidarity and support during episodes in which an individual or family pass through difficult experiences. Propositions contained in Brazilian studies on resilience in families, illustrate that the connection of its members to a social network, together with attitudes of awareness adopted by parents in dealing with their children positively influences the attenuation of the negative effects of the risks they are exposed to⁹. The applicability of the concept of resiliency into psychology, does not occur so clearly as in the field of exact sciences, where the term originated, and is used to define materials that show the ability to absorb energy without losing its shape¹⁰. As a field of knowledge, the psychology

investigates resilience, from two perspectives: one discusses resilience, focusing on individual aspects and psychopathology of the human being. Emphasizes therefore that the phenomenon is an individual characteristic which can be found, or not, in people. On the other hand, the positive psychology discusses the resilience in order to understand healthy and successfully aspects of family group. Thus, they intend to contribute to the deconstruction of the "negative outlook" to the familiar world that has as main figure the discrepancies and conflicts"¹¹. In this context, through the facing of crisis situations, resilient families are those who seek adaptive responses, in order to preserve the well-being of the family group¹². Resilience can be translated as the product of harmony between the favorable factors inherent to the individual and those driven by him, through his support network. Denotes thus the need for a sedimented network consisting of service and people, which theory of work focuses on the individual in the social context in which he is inserted. Considering that the participation of the institutional support and affective network in the process of overcoming domestic violence against children and adolescents is essential for the interaction of parents, children and the institutional support and effective network, the objective is to describe the process of overcoming episodes of violence by parents against children, referencing the drive of institutional support and affection network.

METHODS

This investigation was conducted in line with the Tutelary Council in order to be the clearing house for denunciations and calls to all cases of violation of the children and adolescents' rights. 973 records were investigated relating to attendance in 2008, proceeding thus the selection of cases of violence against children and adolescents. Of this total, 42.24% were about intrafamiliar violence of parents against children. The participants were selected by consulting the patient records, which access to information, only occurred after approval of the Department of Labor and Social Action and authorization of the Juvenile Court.

The group consisted of four families assisted in Tutelary Council in Petrolina in 2008, with previous history of intrafamiliar violence against children and/or adolescents. In total, there were the involvement of 13 people, six men and seven women. Two families were single-parent matrifocal, and another a reconstituted family, nuclear extensive, made up of parents, children and grandparents.

Respecting the ethical and legal aspects of research involving humans, the project was approved by the Ethics Committee in Human Research of UNIVASF through the certificate: 0753.0.000.441-10. The children were safeguarded, without the need to interview them. Besides the maintenance of

confidentiality regarding the content answered, fictitious names were used, making an analogy between children and the flowers: Just like flowers, children and adolescents need care to grow and develop in a healthy way. The four families received the names of family: Ana, Paulo, Lúcia e Daniel

The contacts with the participants took place in their homes or workplaces. It was used a script for semi-structured interview containing open questions, consisting of questions grouped into the following aspects: 1. Knowledge of the individuals about the meaning of intrafamilial violence; 2. Perspectives about the mechanisms of control and reduction of the phenomenon in the intrafamilial context and 3. Services evaluation by which they were served.

The average duration of each interview was one hour. The information has been processed by the method of content analysis¹³, which organization of analysis, was guided by three chronological centers established by the method: pre-analysis, process of transformation of raw data, which were examined and grouped into log units, making it easier to accurate description of the characteristics of the content¹⁴ and the conclusive phase, in which the raw results were processed and presented by the researchers' interpretations and inferences.

Basing on the current researchers, who argue resilience as a dynamic process that involves the facing of adverse situations, we attempted to analyze the results of the interviews, in the perspective of identifying personal or family characteristics related to experiences of overcoming: innovation, creation or adaptation. Then we attempted to emphasize apparent aspects of family dynamics present, such as affection, understanding and respect among members and pursuit of resources in social support network.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intrafamilial violence: how occurred in every family

In the initial approach, the interviewees demonstrated difficulties in talking about the subject, presenting an attitude of denial, about the episodes in which they were involved. However, by continuing the conversation, it was observed that the participants were feeling more relaxed, going to make revelations about the way how the violence is presented in each family.

Because, in the case of my girl, she does not live being beaten, not tortured, abused or sexually exploited. Everything happens because Ana does not obey me, nor my husband, with whom I've lived the last four years. Sometimes I beat her, because she is so stubborn (ANA'S MOTHER).

In the statements of both single-parent families, it was noticed some similarities in their intention to blame the perpetrator.

Not like this, argue, but when the father spoke he got changed, I got worried and afraid that something could happen between them. The father was so aggressive talking with him (Paulo) and he did not accept because he (the father), did not raise him since childhood (PAULO'S MOTHER).

I looked for the Tutelary Council, because the prosecutor said that when she was traveling, she had to communicate. The girl was studying, she traveled there, spent a couple of months, without telling me, then I went to the Tutelary Council. The only thing that I thought and I complained, it was because she went to parties, came home and got sleeping and the girl at the time she woke up, she went to the bar to play (LUCIA'S FATHER).

The violence against children and adolescents seem to have a direct relationship with the affective relations firmed between parents and children. So many children feel threatened and neglected, as regards the relationship between affective them and their parents. In this direction, they can not find motivation to believe in their significance in the family¹⁷. However, when analyzing the statements of offenders in three of four families, it is observed that in spite of adversity, it seems to keep the affection between parents and their children.

He is important for me (he's my son). I miss him. He was practically nurtured by his mother alone. (PAULO'S FATHER).

She is everything in my life. It's only me, her and the brother of two years. We are always together, we are very close (LÚCIA'S MOTHER).

They are everything for me. It's another family that I'm nurturing. (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

Ana's mother, however, declares her difficulty in demonstrating this affection.

I feel like kissing, but there is no environment, when we give a kiss, she gives a kick. It's a monster. We make an effort, but for what? It's frustrating to spend nine months expecting a baby, have the greatest pleasure of his birth and suddenly does not support to live with it.

Description of the conflict from complainants and authors

Finding motivation, or explanation for the practice of some form of violence against children, was present in the interviewees' statements. Instead, the authors showed themselves victims of injustice by attributing to the former partners, the responsibility for the difficult living and the lack of dialogue. In the case of Ana, the mother justifies her action, such as educational strategy.

Everything happens because Ana does not obey me, nor my husband. Sometimes I beat her, because she is so stubborn.

Both mother and stepfather, committed physical violence against Anna, alleging to be an educational method when she "deserved", explaining that it was not beating or torture, but it was only spanking to correct her.

By the testimony of the Daniel's grandmother, it is inferred ignorance of the meaning of the violence of parents against children. The physical violence appeared to be naturalized as an educational practice, as expressed by his grandmother and uncle. Analyzing the following statement, it was observed that the interviewee did not recognize negligence as a kind of violence.

I guide him, look! You do not hit him in the head, take a small thin liana, and hit only his legs just to feel it ... I only do it to set an example as well, to know that he has to obey. But I do not know who reported there, I will not say who was. It could only have been the school. It is to explain, they explained, they said we had to be careful with children, and a lot of things. (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER)

The charges present in the next statements blamed former partners for the maltreatment.

Sometimes, the poor girl is there in the street, full of goo, passes the whole day without a shower, with old clothes and dirty. No, such thing, I think too wrong. (LÚCIA'S FATHER)

Right when he arrived, he beat with the belt at night I can not remember well, he cried and cried and went to bed. He hurt with words, and he (Paulo) did not accept, he said: Mom, he didn't raise me. Why would he want to be moral to me now? (PAULO'S MOTHER)

Intervention by Tutelary Council: evaluation of the families

Although the participants have made it clear that they had a warm and welcoming service in the Tutelary Council, they also demonstrated their dissatisfaction about the failures of the agency, in support of families. Discontinuities have been considered in the monitoring of cases as lack of interest and they lamented the absence of visits to their homes. For them, the service "does not work." For them, the contacts would facilitate the understanding of the daily life of each family. They complemented, arguing that to visit the families, would avoid different versions of facts by parents.

After all it does not work, you know? Because we are attended, embarrassed and judged. We were attended only twice by Tutelary Council. The board did not come here for anything anymore (ANA'S MOTHER).

Dude, at least for me I did not think well, if necessary, for me to go there again, I prefer to stay here anyway, because the guy goes out there and not see a result. I never got a visit by Tutelary Council. It was really good they come here to see us in our house, and go in the other house check. Why does not she come here to see our situation and goes to the girl's house to see the situation that the girl lives. The only thing I wanted was that the Tutelary Council, at least it was in people's homes to see. So the council would see where the mothers are with children. Even in the parent's home to see how is the daily of them, right? If just to get

the guy there and have to call someone, I tell a story, then she tells another, and they do not know who to believe, isn't it? (LUCIA'S FATHER).

The good quality of care by the Tutelary Council is referred to by the participants below.

We were attended twice and it was he who tried, I had to go ... I would not let him go alone. Because I was not able to go, the boy go, and the father did not go, because the principal is what? The family, the family had to go, was not a single person (PAULO'S MOTHER).

The assistance was good by the counselor, she served well, but they never visited us. I was well attended, she just advised me, but she didn't guide me to any place outside (LUCIA'S MOTHER).

I went a day, she called me, I attended there, she should go with him, then I went again, but it was only once don't you know? I was well served, I can not speak ill of there. But they didn't guide me. (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

It is understood that each case retains its peculiarities, this way deserving to have individualized attention. Note that the attendance of the Tutelary Council, is the gateway for promoting the children and adolescents' rights.

Mechanisms of Protection

Indicated as a preponderantly element of protection of its components, it is questioned expectations relating to the guaranteeing of this role in family. Therefore, it is understood that in families who experience episodes of violence against their children, this protective aspect, is affected. In the cases studied, the importance of involving of the affective network, formed by the family, extended family and friends, was mentioned by the interviewees as the main mechanism of protection they were given. Affective network weakened represented one of the difficulties to face and overcoming of the problem experienced. In this case, the family felt bit supported.

It's hard because it's only me alone here. It's only me, me and me. So the only place where I attend is my mother-in-law's home. The only person is my mother-in-law. The only people I talk to are with my brothers, then my sister always gives much advice to her talks to her, my brother gives advice, it is the greatest affection. (ANA'S MOTHER)

On the other hand, strengthening the affective network of following families, worked like a protective factor in the process of confronting violence.

These people were very supportive (refers to the family's godmother). That's why he spent seven months or more in his godmother's house (PAULO'S MOTHER).

I count on my mother and his mother. His family? I relate very well. When they see me ... It is ... very well. Lucia? She is the darling of the father's family. (LÚCIA'S MOTHER).

She gets along well with my wife and my other girl. When she gets ... My Goodness with my mother!

She likes a lot my mom It is with my family, my mother, my father, my brothers. There is no difficulty, she can count on these people (LÚCIA'S FATHER).

Here my children, all work together, so everyone helps me, I thank God here, where I live, people always like us; In relation to children, they understand, do not mistreat them. At school, they also contribute (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

Social support network: the services exist. The network doesn't

First of anything else, we must to express the feeling that, unfortunately, did not realize the existence of a network whose service provision pointed "to the possibilities and to the importance of social development in certain communities, the establishment of trust through relationships of trust among its members and the access to information to the institutions and power to take decisions"¹⁹. The expectations were to watch the meeting of representatives of social organizations and public authorities engaged in combating domestic violence against children and adolescents. There was a bunch of disarticulated services with professionals unprepared, which seemed to have no relation to the cause.

In the following approaches, the subjects not only mention the difficulties of accessibility to services, but also ignorance about the existence of the Individual Service Plan, whether the child or his family.

They complained about the discontinuity of care, revealing disappointment both in terms of quality, as the unprepared professionals. They mentioned the lack of contact or visits to their homes by monitoring services. They were unaware of the return of information regarding to the monitoring of their children, to the Tutelary Council.

I honestly had a very bad experience, because we're already feeling embarrassed, then goes to a service, thinking that there will help in some way. So I very calm when this psychologist has come ... she asked who had first arrived, I said it was me. She said: Is it the first attendance? I said 'Yeah.' Then she said: No, you have to expect everyone I serve. I said: 'Woman, I'm working, I have to go back But then she said: No, because it has to be with them (ANA'S MOTHER).

She showed no plan of care, each visit lasted more than half hour. To be honest, it did not help, so I think he improved a bit due to the father had left home. She did not come to me anymore. They have not visited me anymore (PAULO'S MOTHER).

No, before that here, the school, spoke at APAE, I've been with them several times, but it does not solve anything. The Tutelary Council has not sent anywhere, only directed, and saying we had to disciplinary, how can I say? I had to teach (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

The Tutelary Council never called the school; in fact I just received this letter saying that

everything was resolved, that the Tutelary Council had sent him to the psychologist (DANIEL'S TEACHER).

Overcoming violence: did it happen?

The selection of families intended to occur by identifying indicators of overcoming violence, registered in patient records.

However, considering the difficulties of monitoring by the Tutelary Council were not identified such indicators. It was a difficult stage of the study, in which, only upon contact with the participants, is that we can identify or may not the indicators.

Here my children, all work together, so everyone helps me, I thank to God. (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

"I count on my mother, and his mother. With his family I relate very well. Everyone in town knows there: my former mother-in-law is like my second mother" (LÚCIA'S MOTHER).

In the following situations, the mothers reported taking a quiet life with her son after separating from the partner. In a second meeting, she informed about the rapprochement between father and son, attributing this event, had a positive influence in the relationship between the two.

"Nowadays I feel he's different. He is too good. I also get along very well with him without a father, can you understand?" (PAULO'S MOTHER).

"His father called two days before the end of the year and asked him to go to the restaurant. He went, they had lunch together, he said it was okay and that the woman's father is a good person" (PAULO'S MOTHER).

In another situation, Ana's mother demonstrates not have overcome the experience.

"I don't think I've overcome and I won't overcome. I think it will happen only when she gets older, living at her own expense, to be independent, living alone" (ANA'S MOTHER).

Present challenges

Despite the statements translate the awareness about the consequences of these episodes to those involved, unfortunately were observed situations in which the forms of relationships among family members, did not give them the confidence to overcome the adverse conditions experienced. In Ana's family, her mother emphasizes the difficulties of relationship between them.

Related to Paulo's family, the distancing of the father, affected the overcoming of the episodes of violence experienced. Controversy exists about to this aspect mentioned above. Statements present in specific investigations, explain that in adverse conditions, members of a family can gain strength and develop new skills, mentioning as an example, the relationship between parents and children after divorce. In these cases, a parent who doesn't live with the children, may become closer,

more attentive and dedicated, strengthening their connections, despite the end of the union²⁰.

In this study, some authors of the practice of intrafamilial violence, were powerless to confront the experience. It was listed by them as the main difficulties, the access to services, the weakening of the affective network and the behavior of children. In this context, Ana's mother reaffirmed the need to impose limits, showing indignation regarding the perceived permissiveness in some parents. For her, the lack of limits, contribute to the children make mistakes, which could be avoided by good parental education.

I listen to comments such as: "To say that a good mother is a permissive mother who allows everything and see the child going by the wrong way. If my daughter is in this way I will not feel guilty, for this, I offer what I can and I don't fool her about the reality (ANA'S MOTHER).

Through the testimony above, it appears the need for help and guidance to the Ana's mother, about how to educate her. For her the parents also need support and orientation for the best performance of this attribution in relation to their children. She feels wronged by the disapproving judgment of certain people, in respect the manner how to guide her daughter.

I feel mistreated because I feel criticized by many on this situation I think I'm doing the right thing. Some people prefer to raise their children in the illusion (ANA'S MOTHER).

Addition, Daniel's family members and teachers of the school, felt that the lack of family support and school, represented a major difficulty in coping with his problem.

In APAE, isn't it? I've been with them in APAE several times, but it doesn't solve anything. I nurture them as I raised my thirteen children. They cannot relate easily to people, including at school (DANIEL'S GRANDMOTHER).

We actually do not have much support, who to look for, because it is necessary we receive the child, but it is necessary to guide the teacher how to deal with children in situations of this nature (DANIEL'S TEACHER).

To study the resilience facilitated the understanding of the individual faced with the situations of daily life. To investigate the resilience in families, whose parents were authors of violence against their children, kids and adolescents, representing at the same time a challenge, an opportunity to deep in the theme. Came across at different stages of life cycle, either as author or victim exposed to such adversity. The reactions were diversified, even in the same individual occurred changes of reactions in different meetings.

It is understood that the different characteristics presented by the participants influenced, positively or negatively, the process of adjustment to this adversity. In families where there was more interaction among its members, regardless of family type, the promotion of resilience was more evident.

The study is considered relevant, not simply by promoting understanding of this practice, that is present with high frequency in the interfamilial relations, but especially for extending subsidies to the reader, able to contribute to demystify distorted views which only show the phenomenon of domestic violence of parents against children, without, however, show alternatives for overcoming.

It is hoped, to provide elements for the implementation of the Social Support Network and the fight against Domestic and Familiar Violence in Petrolina, contributing to coping and the overcoming of violence by families in order to prevent recurrence and increase the protective factors in families that experience such phenomenon. The elucidation of the community and training of professionals who integrate the services will contribute to the realization of the children and adolescents' rights. In this sense, actions of prevention and reduction of violence, may be implemented through the appropriate care to those involved (victims and their families).

Concerning the participation of affective and social support network in the process of the overcoming of violence, based on the testimony of the families, it was identified a poor performance by institutions which assist families in coping with this problem. Observing that networking does not exist, since the various institutions and departments do not maintain an articulation and sharing with each other. Initially, there is a great effort of the Tutelary Council of the city, as regards the hosting of this public. Despite the small number of advisers, the allocation to meet the children and adolescents' families, occurs in a cozy, however was declared by all participants in the study the lack of monitoring of cases by this body. This discontinuity is attributed mainly to deficiencies in infrastructure and staff. Although the referrals have been duly provided, the statements of the participants worried us, whose reports have demonstrated that the service offered did not influence the process of resilience. In this direction, the monitoring of cases by the Tutelary Council, was impaired, highlighting the need for expansion, not only the number of advisers, but also including work on infrastructure improvement, expansion and maintenance of the physical installations in its building.

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