






Male psychological violence and its relationship with female sexual desire: a brief overview of Guantánamo province

Violencia psicológica masculina y su relación con el deseo sexual femenino: breve acercamiento en la provincia de Guantánamo

Violência psicológica masculina e sua relação com o desejo sexual feminino: breve abordagem na província de Guantánamo

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: in 1993, psychological violence against women in couples or within the family was officially recognized as a violation of their human rights at the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, Article 12. **Objective:** to assess how some manifestations of male psychological violence relate to female sexual desire in couples assisted at the Unidad de Atención Psicológica de la Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Guantánamo from December 2023 to December 2024. **Method:** a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, multiple-case study was conducted, seeking to describe some of the relationship patterns between the variables studied: male psychological violence and female sexual desire. In-depth interviews, life history, observation, and content analysis were used, allowing the identification of the types of male psychological violence from a gender perspective and how they relate to female sexual desire. The sample consisted of 14 couples,

of which three were selected. Sampling was performed using intentional criteria. **Results:** there were specific manifestations of male psychological violence, such as infidelity, social shame, and underestimation of women's intellectual capacities that affect female sexual desire. **Conclusions:** the influence of some manifestations of male psychological violence on female sexual desire depends on each woman's subjective personality and the dynamics of each couple.

Keywords: violence; male psychological violence; female sexual desire; gender



RESUMEN

Introducción: en 1993 la violencia psicológica contra las mujeres en la pareja o en la familia, fue oficialmente reconocida como una violación a sus derechos humanos, en la Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas sobre Derechos Humanos, artículo 12. **Objetivo:** valorar cómo se relacionan algunas manifestaciones de la violencia psicológica masculina con el deseo sexual femenino en parejas asistidas en la Unidad de Atención Psicológica de la Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Guantánamo en el periodo diciembre 2023 - diciembre 2024.

Método: se realizó una investigación cualitativa, exploratoria, de tipo descriptiva, de casos múltiples, que pretende la descripción de algunos de los patrones de relación entre las variables estudiadas: violencia psicológica masculina y deseo sexual femenino. Se utilizó la entrevista en profundidad, la historia de vida, la observación y el análisis de contenido, lo que permitió identificar los tipos de violencia psicológica masculina, desde una perspectiva de género y cómo se relacionan con el deseo sexual femenino. El universo estuvo conformado por 14 parejas, de ellas, se escogieron tres parejas. El muestreo por criterio intencional.

Resultados: existieron manifestaciones específicas de la violencia psicológica masculina, como la infidelidad, la vergüenza social y la subestima a las capacidades intelectuales de la mujer que afectan el deseo sexual femenino. **Conclusiones:** la influencia de algunas manifestaciones de la violencia psicológica masculina sobre el deseo sexual femenino, se presenta en dependencia de la configuración subjetiva de la personalidad de cada mujer y de la dinámica de cada pareja.

Palabras clave: violencia; violencia psicológica masculina; deseo sexual femenino; género

RESUMO

Introdução: em 1993, a violência psicológica contra a mulher no casal ou na família foi oficialmente reconhecida como violação de seus direitos humanos, na Conferência das Nações Unidas sobre Direitos Humanos, artigo 12. **Objetivo:** avaliar como algumas manifestações de violência psicológica masculina estão relacionadas ao desejo sexual feminino em casais atendidos na Unidade de Atenção Psicológica de la Universidad de Ciencias Médicas de Guantánamo no período de dezembro de 2023 a dezembro de 2024. **Método:** foi realizada uma investigação qualitativa, exploratória, descritiva, de casos múltiplos, que visa descrever alguns dos padrões de relação entre as variáveis estudadas: violência psicológica masculina e desejo sexual feminino. Foram utilizadas entrevista em profundidade, história de vida, observação e análise de conteúdo, que permitiram identificar os tipos de violência psicológica masculina, na perspectiva de gênero e como elas se relacionam com o desejo sexual feminino. O universo foi composto por 14 casais, dos quais foram escolhidos três casais. Amostragem por critérios intencionais. **Resultados:** existia manifestações específicas da violência psicológica masculina, como a infidelidade, a vergonha social e a subestimação das capacidades intelectuais das mulheres que afetam o desejo sexual feminino. **Conclusões:** a influência de algumas manifestações da violência psicológica masculina no desejo sexual feminino apresenta-se em função da configuração subjetiva da personalidade de cada mulher e da dinâmica de cada casal.

Palavras-chave: violência; violência psicológica masculina; desejo sexual feminino; gênero

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INTRODUCTION

The study of the psychological component of personality has always been a challenge for researchers and for the scientific approach itself, due to the wide diversity of biological, social, sexual, cultural and pleasurable factors, among others, which interrelate and give rise to certain experiential states, as can happen in the relationship between male psychological violence and female sexual desire.

In this direction, the authors of this study agree with the assessments offered by Wert et al.⁽¹⁾, when they clarify that psychological violence in couple relationships is any omission or action that causes anguish, pain or emotional disturbance, as well as affecting the self-esteem, the self-image of the person to whom it is directed, in order to be considered effectively as psychological violence damage, even with indicators of this type of violence, it must have a negative impact on the subjective component of the victim.

According to Teixeira,⁽²⁾ any analysis of this type of violence and its consequences should consider that it often goes unnoticed, either because it is naturalized or because it does not damage the affective-subjective framework of the victim. However, in Brazil, according to Pereira dos Santos et al.⁽³⁾ between 2011 and 2021, more than 655 thousand acts of psychological violence were registered, predominantly directed against women.

This is confirmed in a UN-WOMEN study^(4,5) showing facts and figures on violence against women, this shows that adolescent girls are at greater risk of intimate partner violence than adult women. By the time they reach the age of 19, almost one in four adolescents (24%) who have been in a relationship have already suffered physical, sexual or psychological abuse by their partner.

These data illustrate how male psychological violence against women in a relationship can affect the normal development of their personality, the healthy enjoyment of their sexuality in general and their pleasurable sexual experiences in particular, conditioned by the phases of the human sexual response, specifically, the phase of sexual desire.

The sexual desire phase was included to the rest of the phases of the human sexual response by Dr. Singer Kaplan⁽⁶⁾ and defined as a specific sensation that moves the individual to seek sexual experiences or to be receptive to them. This contribution broadens the scientific view of the other phases of the human sexual response proposed by Masters and Johnson: arousal, plateau, orgasm and resolution.

Since then, it has been studied by several authors: Uribe-Serrano and Méndez-Vargas,⁽⁷⁾ Espitia De La Hoz⁽⁸⁾, Torrado Ramos et al.⁽⁹⁾, among others. Research contributions from 1979 to the present have allowed sexual desire to be placed at the beginning of the other phases of the human sexual response, but also accompanying each of them under the influence of physiological, hormonal, endocrine, psychogenic factors, among others.



This variety of factors makes it difficult to study the relationship between male psychological violence and female sexual desire;^(7,8,9) although the relational logic between these variables seems to be more evident in the care practice. In this regard, Cabello⁽¹⁰⁾ refers that in consultation he has noticed that there are women with lack of sexual desire derived from a couple conflict, even when it has been diagnosed that its neurophysiological basis is normal. Likewise, if at a cognitive and affective level the couple is doing well and there are effective stimuli, but the couple is not functioning in harmony, it cannot be considered that this woman has pathology of desire, even if she says otherwise.

This complex interweaving of influences between factors in the study presented leads the authors to explore the knowledge of the subject in the province of Guantánamo, Cuba, given its presence in Sexology clinics and the marked under-recording of reported facts.

In this regard, Molina Martínez⁽¹¹⁾ states that family physicians, for example, have not defined in their health area which and how many women are subjected by their partners to manifestations of psychological violence. Moreover, it is a difficult subject for them to address because they do not have the necessary skills to demystify the cultural patterns that sustain the phenomenon and, consequently, to propose strategies to address the problem and provide a solution.

This reality establishes a great challenge and dissatisfaction in the provision of medical, sexological and psychological services. Precisely for this reason, this study is conceived to allow a primary, exploratory approach to the patterns that support the relationship between these complex variables in the context of Guantánamo. For this reason, the following research problem is posed:

How are some manifestations of male psychological violence related to female sexual desire in couples assisted at the Psychological Care Unit of Medical Sciences University of Guantánamo in the period December 2023 to December 2024?

Consequently, the general objective is established as follows: to assess how some manifestations of male psychological violence are related to female sexual desire in couples assisted at the Psychological Care Unit of the Medical Sciences University of Guantánamo, Cuba, in the period December 2023 to December 2024.

METHOD

A qualitative, exploratory, descriptive, descriptive, multiple cases research was carried out in couples assisted at the Psychological Care Unit of the University of Medical Sciences of Guantánamo, Cuba, where out of the 14 couples assisted, three were chosen according to the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:



Inclusion criteria:

- Women victims of psychological violence, willingness to collaborate in the research, ages 18-35 years, with regular menstrual cycles, marital time up to 10 years.

Exclusion criteria:

- History of personal and couple sexual disorders, known organic conditions affecting sexual desire, psychiatric diagnosis, women victims of sexual and physical violence, consumption of any drug.

Methods and techniques

Phenomenological method: made it possible to describe the manifestations of male psychological violence and its relationship with female sexual desire from the meanings and daily experiences at the subjective level and as couples.

Biographical method: it contributed to show the subjective testimony of the members of the couples, through the information offered in the assessments and events of their own existence, building a life history.

In-depth interview: facilitated the identification of the variables under study, specific to each member of the couple, in the knowledge of the quality of the family relationship and the conditioning factors of their behavior.

Content analysis: made it possible to decode the messages transmitted in the communication between the members of the sample and to deepen the knowledge of the internal organization of these messages.

Observation: of great value during the application of the psychological tests, based on the preparation of a guide that took into account: facial expression, posture, gJanral behavior, oral expression, physical appearance, and attitude towards the task, attitude towards the examiner, anxiety and depression indicators.

Life history: this allowed access to and interpretation of the personality configuration of the subjects in the sample with respect to the phenomenon studied.

The gJanral procedure for the application of the techniques and the qualitative analysis was structured in six sessions, in which the following actions were carried out: inquiry about the reason for the consultation, initial and in-depth interview, identification of the study variables, collection of informed consent, work with the sample individually, application of different techniques, complementary studies by Endocrinology and Gynecology consultation, review of complementary studies, and couple therapy with emphasis on the humanistic, behavioral and rational emotive-behavioral approaches.



The qualitative analysis focused on the collection of data obtained from the different techniques used. The recurrent data were codified as research categories and converted into units of analysis through data triangulation. The units of analysis made possible the study of the results, their discussion and the elaboration of the main findings and conclusions of this research.

Informed consent was requested, explaining the objectives and general procedures, the right to participate voluntarily in the research, to abandon it if they considered it, to anonymity, without affecting the quality of the health service provided, in compliance with ethical parameters.

RESULTS

The presentation of the qualitative results is based on the construction of units of analysis.

Unit of analysis: patriarchal culture as a conditioning factor of male psychological violence.

Sub-unit of analysis: male infidelity.

In this direction, in two women in the sample belonging to couples 1 and 2, as a result of infidelity, the dynamics of their relationships were determined, which had a strong impact on their affective processes and marital harmony.

In couple 1, six years ago, the male infidelity occurred. At present, the woman said during the in-depth interview, "What kills me about my partner is the memory of the infidelity, other things not so much".

In couple 2, eight years ago, the husband was unfaithful and from this extramarital relationship a girl was born. Despite the time that has passed, the woman said: "Yes, it affects me when I remember him, because I have dedicated the best of my life to him".

As a point of interest, it was found that in the family environment where these two women grew up, there were also episodes of male infidelity by their fathers, which established similarities in terms of emotional climate, psychological identification and the level of tolerance or not towards these male behaviors.

Woman 1 said: "Men used to *know how to do things* without their wives knowing about it. My father has always had a car and even when I grew up, when I saw the car in a strange place, I would honk the horn and he would immediately get out, but with a lot of respect. Now it's not like that, men don't know how to do their own thing".

Woman 2 said: "Daddy has always loved mommy very much, they have always tried to be very close even though he has had his *runs with other women*. He would say goodbye to the funeral duels in the town where we lived because he had a lot of ease of expression, and that caught the attention of the women, but I never heard or saw mommy fight for this or she never knew about it or turned *a blind eye*."



As for woman 3, for her the real or suspected infidelity of her partner did not cause her psychological alterations, at least at a conscious level. She commented: "When he drinks he insults me, offends me, fights a lot, but I don't pay attention to him, after the drunkenness he soon gets over it and sometimes he doesn't remember; he is not like other drunks who make a spectacle of themselves and hit on women. *I have my own mechanics*".

Subunit of analysis: typology of male psychological violence against women.

In the in-depth interviews conducted with the men in the sample, two of them confirmed the veracity of their partners' testimony; they recognized that they react with verbal aggression, expressed in shouts, insults and emotional manipulation, when their partners do not accede to their demands for affectionate attention or when they are not in a position to "agree" with their points of view.

In this sense, the woman of couple 1, commented in the in-depth interview: "I cannot say that he is bad, neither with me nor with anyone (...) he is the one who generates feelings of guilt in me when I do not run for what he demands, when I complain about his bad temper in front of people (lack of impulse control) (...) he is like a spoiled child (...) he is the son of old people, the youngest of his brothers, that must be why he behaves like that". She continued: "fights between us are not frequent, we get along quite well, but the moments of fights leave me nervous for days. He advises me, he tells me how to behave, but I don't listen to him, that makes him uncomfortable".

Woman 2 stated that on weekends, with the visit of her husband's daughter (born from an extramarital relationship) to the home that the couple shares in common, a recurrent negative situation occurs for her spiritual state. She expressed: "The doorbell rings, I open the door and see that it is her, I feel the world falling down. I don't have to go through this; no one has the right to spoil the tranquility of my house. It's not the girl, it's what she represents. I tell him, he tells me that he has just accepted it, that it is over, that the child has the right to be near her father and siblings at least on weekends".

As for woman 3, it is a married couple with two children. The man said that he suffers from alcohol dependence, he is a factory manager. She expressed: "Alcoholics do not work, they walk dirty, they sleep in the early mornings in the doorways of other people's houses and he does not do any of that". She continued: "The biggest difficulty in my relationship is that he drinks frequently. He drinks, offends me, fights a lot, I don't listen to him, he goes to bed and it passes".

Unit of analysis: men's appraisal of male psychological violence and its relation to female sexual desire.

The three men in the sample tended to minimize the harmfulness of psychological violence when compared with other forms of violence in the context of a couple's relationship, and showed that they were insecure, distrustful and blackmailed when faced with the certainty that their partner's sexual desire would diminish.



These men made a logical-verbal discourse about the equality that should exist between men and women in all spheres of the family and society, in accordance with the expectations that are expected of their behavior in the couple relationship; however, it is incoherent with their actual behavior.

The man in couple 1 said: "My wife does not have every reason to be upset at the present time. It is true that the infidelity happened. I do not consider a woman inferior to a man, nor should she be submissive to him. Both have equal rights wherever they stand (...), neither should be unfaithful. In my case, I apologized, I recognized my mistake and that was it (...), ah, but when you least expect it, the woman comes back with the subject (...)"

This man considered that the decrease in his partner's sexual desire, as a result of the "supposed manifestations of psychological violence on her part", is a fictitious argument and that, in reality, there must be other reasons that affect her, such as the unpleasantness at work and the health situation of his father, who is a diabetic with decompensated diabetes (amputation of his left leg). "(...) Women are not machines, I really think that this (infidelity) cannot be affecting her as much as she says, she works a lot and she has to get tired (...), *but let me be clear (...)*".

The man in couple 2 said: "this marriage is no longer working; I know that she sometimes has relations with me because of my insistence, but if it were up to her, nothing would be done. I was to blame for what happened and that is why she lost love for me (...), she is a good woman in every way. My family adores her".

Unit of analysis: feelings of hostility towards the male figure and its relationship with female sexual desire.

The feeling of hostility in the women of couples 1 and 2 was perceived despite the fact that both recognized positive qualities in their relationships, although they did not specify to what level the expressions of male psychological violence do not allow them to achieve marital well-being.

The woman in couple 1 said: "My relationship has always been characterized by mutual trust. At present, as a result of infidelity, I do not trust him and family unity has diminished".

Later on, she continued: "I love him and sometimes I feel that I even love him, but the memory of so many things kills me. We talk a lot when we go to bed, but if by chance at that moment we touch the subject of grudges, *everything is lost*".

In woman 2, intransigence (an element also referred to by her partner) towards her husband's unfaithful behavior was present as a personality trait. She argued: "Why does he have to look for a partner in the street?" A recurrent question in several psychological techniques performed on her.

She also recognized that the expressions of male psychological violence that most affect her are infidelity and, derived from this, the social shame that this fact produces: "Yes, I am affected by the supposed comments of people in the street, one is left looking stupid, marked forever and this kills my pride, it upsets me (...)".



As for woman 3, she said in the in-depth interview about female sexual desire: "(...) well, if it were up to me, I would have sex every day (sexual relations), but because of the problems he has, we do it two to three times a week (...)". Later she added: "I show a lot of desire, I let him know, sometimes I make advances when I can, because the conditions of the house are not the best" (referring to privacy as a couple).

DISCUSSION

In the couples analyzed, the patriarchal culture as a conditioning factor of male psychological violence, specifically male infidelity, does not allow the couple to meet from a position open to intersubjective communication, where there is relative coincidence between the points of view of both with respect to how they conceive the relationship.

This reality is due to the fact that, in the men in the sample, a sexist education based on the difference between genders was markedly present, whose objectives, in this sense, were aimed at hiding their true feelings and being intransigent with the woman's behavior that goes against the expressions of gentleness and unconditional surrender to the figure of the dominant man and provider. For this reason, they can hardly perceive the changes that have taken place within the feminine meanings of their partners.

As for the women in the study, male infidelity in couples 1 and 2 did not encounter the uncritical tolerance demanded by these men. However, contrary to the behavior expected by the logical-social imaginary, it seems as if the manifestations of psychological abuse by their partners (infidelity), were it not for the public knowledge and the social pressure exerted on female subjectivity, would be more tolerable, even when they recognize the psychological discomfort it causes them.

In this direction, we obtain interesting data in the context of Guantánamo, which coincides with De Castro Magalhães et al.⁽¹²⁾ and Pereira et al.⁽³⁾, among other authors on the subject, when they state that this type of violence in the couple relationship has manifestations that may not be configured as psychological violence, particularly in this sample: infidelity, social shame and humiliation. This reality merits the implementation of awareness-raising, education and prevention actions to reveal the subtle existence of this phenomenon.

This fact is reinforced by the expressions of the women of couples 1 and 2 regarding infidelity. It was inferred that in these women, the impact of male psychological violence on female sexual desire varies depending on factors such as: personal traits, cultural patterns, level of schooling, the dynamics of current cohabitation of the couple and the socio-psychological environment where they developed, among other psychosocial factors, coincidentally also cited by Pereira et al.



These considerations are reinforced by the statements of the woman in couple 3, in which, unlike the other women analyzed, her affective space seemed to suffer less damage as a result of her partner's infidelity or other undesired behaviors. This is a finding of interest to be deepened in other research on the subject in the province of Guantánamo, on the theoretical basis of authors such as De Castro Magalhães et al.⁽¹²⁾ and Pereira et al.⁽³⁾, who refer, in general, that due to the subtlety of psychological violence against women, they themselves are sometimes not even aware of being victims.

Concerning men's assessment of male psychological violence and its relation to female sexual desire, the sample projected in the interviews hostile feelings towards the partner figure, actualization of conflicts, minimization of male psychological violence in relation to female sexual desire, underestimation of women's intellectual capacities and the connotation of social shame in them.

The opinions of the men in the sample made it possible to describe the naturalization, for them, of male psychological violence on female sexual desire, since they did not consider any negative conditioning. They made a logical-verbal discourse coherent to the demands made by society on the mitigation of the phenomenon; however, they betrayed themselves in unconscious explanations overcome by the exercise of gender inequality and images of male power.

Regarding the feelings of hostility of the women in this study towards the male figure and its relationship with female sexual desire, in the women of couple 1 and 2, they focused on infidelity, as the most representative manifestation of male psychological violence, not so in the woman of couple 3 where male infidelity was not present, although frequent claims and offenses were present.

These women's feelings of hostility were identified with particular expressions depending on the impact they have on their affectivity. Infidelity, the social shame produced by being a victim of male psychological violence and the negative behaviors carried out by the male partner, after alcohol consumption, are the manifestations of psychological violence that most affected the women in the sample. These manifestations produced, in two of the women in the sample, difficulties in their sexual desire; although they cannot be sure that it was exclusively due to male psychological violence. In woman 3, the relationship between the main variables of this study did not establish an observable relationship.

This research finding leads to infer that the reason for such a result is argued more by the differences that exist in their life histories, which brings as a consequence that they have different positions of criticism towards the phenomenon of psychological violence, than by the similarities in common of being a victim of this type of violence.



CONCLUSIONS

There are specific manifestations of male psychological violence that affect female sexual desire, causing it to diminish: infidelity, social shame and underestimation of women's intellectual capacities. From a gender perspective, men perceive male psychological violence as an entity of insignificant action on female sexual desire. Women, after becoming aware of the influence of this relationship, give it the explanation of the reason for the decrease in their sexual desire. The manifestations of male psychological violence, in this experience, must be contextualized to the life history of each particular woman, given the subjectivity of its effect on female sexual desire.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

Authors' contribution:

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