



# Intimate Partner Violence: Is it Possible to Evaluate on Similar Way to Men and Women?



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## Abstract

Intimate Partner Violence [IPV] is a complex and multi-determinate phenomenon, there are different theoretical approximations to explain it; some of them are related to internal factors as self-esteem, attachment, or intergenerational transmission of violence, others are focused on external elements. Ecological Model is an alternative in which is possible to consider both, internal and external factors, altogether. On IPV, men and women can become victims and perpetrators; however, per Ecological Model, these facts need different background for their explanation. To be born as a man or as a woman in a patriarchal world poses different challenges and opportunities for each. To Blazquez [1], gender as a key organizer as race, ethnicity or class. Madson et al. [2] to talk about gender socialization point that male and female are in two different subcultures. In general, both, men and women learned to understand the socio-structural context and the internal world in different way. Often, women are socialized to be for others, they bodies are sexualized from early age, they are teaching to no "provoke" an aggression, to be careful about males; males, by other hand, are usually socialized to be proactive, aggressive; men are considered sexual subjects, not sexual objects as women. These lines are about the importance to incorporate gender perspective analysis to the employ similar measurement scales to evaluate IPV on men and women.

**Keywords:** Intimate partner violence; Men; Women; Evaluation; Gender perspective

## Introduction

Violence, per World Health Organization [3], refers to an intentional use of power or physical force against oneself, another person, or against a community or group. In addition, violence is not only carrying out these acts, violence also includes the threat of violent acts. With regards to its consequences, violence produces or has high probabilities of producing pain, death, psychological damage, underdevelopment and deprivations. Intimate Partner Violence [IPV], one of the types of violence, is characterized by being directed against the person with whom one has or had an intimate link, such as marriage or courtship. Currently, it is important to include other forms of intimate relationships such as open or free relationships, those in which people have a sexual and/or affective link, although no apparent commitment is made. Violence is a multi-determined phenomenon, it is a consequence of the confluence and the dialectic relationships between multiple factors, these factors include macro-social, micro-social, and individual elements. Other aspects include legislations and free will. According WHO [4] and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010) considering the diverse perspectives on violence studies, an appropriated model to explained IPV is Brofenbrener's Ecological Model, because it allows "inclusion of risk and protective factors from multiple domains of influence (pp: 20)". The Ecological Model includes four areas: social, community, relational and individual.

Based on the multidimensional perspective, IPV includes ideas, precepts and premises through which violence is legitimized. Ideas, such as gender inequity, religious and cultural beliefs, social norms, and social and economic policies that keep social differentiation between groups and favor discrimination are crystallized on habits, customs, roles, and mass media that influence the appearance of violence [4]. About the area of community variables, these include institutions that mediate between individuals and culture. Community refers also to "spaces" such as school, work, neighborhood, peers and family where norms and precepts are socialized [4,5]. The expression "space" has a social connotation; that school and neighborhood can be construed as groups in which people share problems, interactions and ideology, although it includes buildings or geographic area [6]. The relational area of the model is defined as the immediate context in which violence takes place, this area includes interactional patterns between peers, intimate partner or family members, and other proximal relationships [4,7]. Finally, the Individual area includes biological characteristics, attitudes, personal history, expectations, personality, self-esteem among others [7,8].

On this way, IPV as any other behavior does not occur in a vacuum; then, to understand IPV it is necessary to consider each

person, her/his historic and socio-cultural circumstances, her/his current situation and context; since personal resources until impunity and patriarchal culture on region. Blanco [9] indicates that when a person from a nonviolent context shows violent behavior, her/his behavior can be well explained by personal or individual characteristics; however, when her/his context is hostile and unfavorable, this violence is a better predictor of the behavior.

## Discussion

While both, male and female, are susceptible to experiment violence by his/her partner in heterosexual relationships, it is necessary to analyze the context in which it occurs. Per Panamerican Health Organization [10], women are the principal victims in partners' relationships. In Mexico, statistics about violence against women in partner relationships are worrying: 43.9% of 15 years old women or older suffer violence (economic, sexual, physical or psychological) by their current or previous partner; the lifetime prevalence was between 31.6% and 57.6% (in different regions of Mexico). Added to this, there are a lot of issues that reveal the women's position in the world that confirm the idea of Madson [11], who argue that be born in a body of male of female imply to be born in different subcultures; one of them are related to freedom, public life and access to capital; for women, the other subculture, socialization is focused to be for others, to be kind, and to become mother-wife as top goal. Just as an example of these differences, data from World Economic Forum [12] reveals that are necessary 170 years to close the economic gender gap, considering workforce, time at day for working (paid and unpaid), etc.; about trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation [13], and in rape and sexual torture as weapon of war, women are the principal victims [14]. When women complain about violence, revictimization is common: in Mexico married women do not complain IPV by consider that it is not an relevant issue, and think that their partner will never change (73.8%); some of them are shaming about their family opinion about separation (9.4%); are fearing (8.0%), they don't trust on authority (4.3%) or had no idea that they could complain about violence (6.1%); even, the 9.1% thought that their partner have the right to punish her [15].

While Masculinity is linked to gender domination, honor and aggression; mostly, men are considered as unquestionable providers and the only person capable of defining which behavior is acceptable or not in their interactions. In general, those cultures that have more interpersonal intimate violence have power inequity, and the people who commit violent acts uses physical force, fear and intimidation to oppress her/his partner [16]. To solve the problem to lack of information and data about IPV against men, some researchers [17,18] propose work with similar surveys in both populations. However, this strategy is not the best option when data is analyzed superficially. In some studies, men have higher scores than women in victimization; nevertheless, when it is analyzed with gender perspective, the item content are not similar; women are more victimized when intensity is evaluated, when frequency is evaluated, men are more victimized.

## Conclusion

Under gender perspective analysis, violence against men in partner relationships is recognized as a real and hurting phenomenon, which requires more research to be understand and eradicated; however, the idea that men and women are in similar conditions, rights and obligations is only a legal ideal, each day women are killed by their partner, in Mexico 7 women are murder by be women, everyday; women of all ages are kidnapped/ disappeared, everyday mass media tell them that their bodies area objects by consumption; all of this elements are proposed to be considered to understand IPV according to Ecological Model.

Thereby, when IPV is measured on men and women it is important to have on mind the context in which it takes place. According with some studies [17], men reported higher scores of IPV than women, but, if is more dangerous to be men than women in intimate relationships, what about the high levels of feminicide in intimate relationships? Are reliability and validity enough to get an "objective" conclusion about IPV experimented by men and women when their position on world is ignored? Can economic violence be perpetrated by people whom do not have access to money directly (housewife's labors)? Do female and male have the same subjective experience against violent act? For example, "My partner has forced me to have sex". In Mexico marital rape is not a crime in some regions; it is considered an obligation for female but not for male. Probably, in women, rape is not considered violence, is only one part of marital interaction. Women who ask her partner by sex are generally considered slut or not worthy of respect. Is important to warranty the equality on women and men in real life, not only on International Agreements to conclude that violence against both, women and men, is similar only because numeric data on a survey is similar. Similar scales can by employed by describe IPV on different populations, as long as, context (gender inequality, in this case) is considered.

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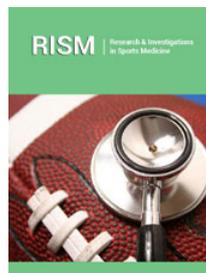
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