

## **PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN DATING VIOLENCE IN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of study is to examine the psychosocial factors that lead to gender-based violence during courtship in university students. A descriptive analysis was conducted where participants were randomly selected, with a minimum of 2 months of dating time, using the dating violence assessment (CUVINO) which consists of 42 reagents in eight different sections. The factors found are substance abuse, co-dependency, insecurity and a very frequently reciprocal pattern of psychological aggression. Eight variables were taken into account as detachment in which 13.7% said that their partner did not show much interest and 21% mentioned that they noticed irresponsibility in their relationship from their partner, humiliation where 15.7% said they received frequent negative reviews of his partner, sexual violence where 13.7% said that he had no good communication with his partner, coercion where 21% of the students responded that they felt psychologically pressured, physical violence where 16.7% said that they had blows in their mostly justified relationship for games. Gender violence in which 31.4% heard mockery from their partner towards other people. The punishment in couples has 34.4%, 25.5% responded that their partner's whims. Nowadays, the way in which women and men conceive love determines the way in which the relationship with their partner is; they understand it as a combination of romanticism and violence.*

**KEYWORDS:** violence, dating, co-dependency and insecurity.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Violence is a phenomenon that occurs in any society and depends on the historical moment in which it is found, the conditions that generate it are established and it occurs when pressure is exerted, whether it is psychic, social and/or biological, against any person, this with the purpose of obtaining some end, whether it is against the will of the victim<sup>1</sup>. In 2001, González and Santana conducted research on violence in young couples between the ages of 16 and 18, in which 36.6% were male and 63.4% were female<sup>2</sup>.

Partner violence is defined as the act or threat of mistreatment by at least one partner towards the other within their relationship, this prevents a good development between both that finally produces a high

sensitivity of the externally and a low sensitivity internally that ends in convulsive behaviors to adjust to the spouse obtain the approval of their partner and obtain security<sup>3</sup>. It is identified if there is violence in the couple by perceiving control towards the other person, constant criticism related to defects, disappearing without reason for some time, threats to end the relationship, denies him/her the power to perform some activities, blames him/her for everything, controls the time of his/her partner, minimizes his/her achievements among other things. Dating violence is an act of harming the partner, thus showing that the aggressor is the one who has power over the person being assaulted without the latter being able to defend himself in such a way that it produces negative behavior in the relationship<sup>4</sup>

When we talk about violence we refer to all kinds of psychological, sexual, isolation and social control abuse. Currently there are different types and on many occasions the abuse begins with small conducts of control or devaluation that we normally justify or pass unnoticed. We can differentiate 4 types:

- a) Psychological violence: It is characterized by the use of threats of harm, shouting, social and physical isolation (not going out or talking to other people, etc.) jealousy and extreme possession, intimidation, degradation, humiliation, insults, constant hurtful criticism, as well as unfounded accusations, attribution of blame for situations that have occurred, ignoring, not giving importance to or ridiculing the needs of the partner.
- b) Physical violence: This refers to the different types of aggression that may or may not leave marks on the body of the person attacked, from the least harsh to the strongest. They can be situations that begin with a pinch and continue with pushes, slaps, fists, kicks, sprains, actions that could sometimes lead to internal injuries, abortions (if the woman is pregnant), disfigurement and even homicide.
- c) Sexual violence: This type of violence is exercised through physical or psychological pressure that imposes unwanted sexual relations through coercion or intimidation.
- d) Economic violence: This is a way of controlling the partner by making him dependent. It includes the control and management of all the money, properties and in general, all the resources of the family<sup>5</sup>.

### **The Cycle of Violence**

Violence usually occurs in three cycles where both men and women are affected.

- a) Phase of accumulation of tensions: During the time in which they live together, they tend to be able to observe different situations of bad moments either by misunderstandings, shouts and inferences. In this situation is when discomfort and tension in the relationship is originated.
- b) Explosive phase: Through the situation by which the couples can be found by means of the tension, they tend to show aggressions either physical or verbal.
- c) Repentance or reconciliation phase: Later, couples after the aggressions are more attentive and loving with their partner, thus seeking forgiveness

### **Risk Factors**

Three factors are considered that may lead to partner violence:

- a) Socio-cultural: Couple violence in this aspect is caused by the lack of support provided by the community and the state. That is why victims tend to suffer abuse and there is no one to change the situation.

- b) Family: This originates through the father figure, since in the largest case he is the one who usually dominates and has control of the home.
- c) Individuals: This aspect is related from the economic dependence, wrong beliefs of the friend and psychological; this generates that one of the two carry out the control of the situation, dominating this way the types of aggressions to the other person<sup>7</sup>.

Some research indicates that violence among young couples may even be higher than in married couples even if they do not reach more delicate consequences and that the more time passes before the first violent episode, the easier it is for the relationship to be maintained despite the aggressions that later tend to be progressive in most couples<sup>2</sup>.

## METHODOLOGY

The young people who participated in this research are students of both genders from the Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México (UAEM) of the Centro Universitario Valle de Chalco, the way they were selected by a convenience sampling, who accepted to participate in answering the instrument of Violence between Dating (CUVINO)<sup>1</sup> which consists of 42 items in Liker scale divided in 8 dimensions, with an alpha of Cronbach of 0.932, the participants must fulfill the following characteristics: a) Be between 18 and 28 years old. b) Be in a dating relationship lasting at least 2 months during the last 6 months. c) Agree to participate in the study voluntarily and in an informed manner. With regard to the criteria for exclusion, the participation of those young people who were or have been married and/or cohabiting with a partner was ruled out. The sample size will be 50 individuals from each of the genders since, according to the central limit theorem, a sample of 30 elements follows normal behavior.

## RESULTS

With regard to the question about the test of love, 9.8% (table 1) said that almost always their partner put certain traps or asked them for passwords to know if they were really faithful or if they really felt love in order to give them access to their devices and therefore to their social networks, 24.5% said no, more than 50% related this question to accessing sex with their partner as a test of love, we are talking about an act of possession over the partner by wanting to know who they are talking to and at the same time limiting it as a sign of love.

Table 1. Data frequency with respect to the test of love question

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Always	4	3.9	3.9	3.9
Almost always	6	5.9	5.9	9.8
Valid Sometimes	15	14.7	14.7	24.5
Never	77	75.5	75.5	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

20.6% (Table 2) responded that they used sex to solve all their problems but most of this percentage mentioned that they only solved the problem for a while and then returned to the fight for the same cause. Normally after sex the body relaxes and becomes stressed but most likely this discomfort remains latent, this may speak to people who are used to avoiding problems and are obviously afraid of conflict.

Table 2. Frequency of data regarding the question about using sex to solve problems between partners

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid Always	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
Almost Always	19	18.6	18.6	20.6
Sometimes	42	41.2	41.2	61.8
Never	39	38.2	38.2	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

With respect to this question 31.4% (Table 3) reported that their partner had made fun of other people from their appearance to their way of being and only half of them had this type of relationship with their partner but only as games. This type of action is considered psychological abuse which goes unnoticed by most individuals and later becomes more aggressive.

Table 3. Frequency of data regarding the question of whether the partner makes fun of women or men in general

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid Always	8	7.8	7.8	7.8
Almost Always	24	23.5	23.5	31.4
Sometimes	34	33.3	33.3	64.7
Never	36	35.3	35.3	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

In this question 21% (table 4) of the respondents answered that their partners were late for their appointments and half of them said that they even arrived in a bad mood due to social factors such as transportation or work and only a quarter of them reported that their partners did not keep promises they had made before, this is due to a lack of commitment, responsibility and interest that many people do not have.

Table 4. Frequency of data regarding the question of whether your partner is late for appointments or does not keep his promises

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid Always	5	4.9	4.9	4.9
Almost always	17	16.7	16.7	21.6
Sometimes	35	34.3	34.3	55.9
Never	45	44.1	44.1	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

22% (table 5) reported that their partners asked them if they were dating someone else or if they liked someone else, most said it was in the form of a joke but, in this case we are also talking about psychological violence by a person with emotional insecurity who may feel that it is not enough for their partner<sup>8</sup>.

Table 5. Frequency of data regarding whether partners talk about relationships they imagine you have

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Always	14	13.7	13.7	13.7
Almost always	9	8.8	8.8	22.5
Valid Sometimes	34	33.3	33.3	55.9
Never	45	44.1	44.1	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

25.5% (Table 6) responded that their partner checked their cell phone and more than half of them confessed that they also checked their partner's cell phone, we are not only talking about invasion of privacy but also lack of trust between the two, some of them mentioned that after this they had conflicts with their partners due to misunderstandings because of incorrect interpretations of the messages. Social networks and messaging applications can become triggers for those suspicions and jealousies that some people have.

Table 6. Frequency of data regarding whether the partner takes away the cell phone, keys or money

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Always	13	12.7	12.7	12.7
Almost Always	13	12.7	12.7	25.5
Valid Sometimes	27	26.5	26.5	52.0
Never	49	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

In this question 21% (Table 7) answered that their partner was on top of them all the time, from asking for passwords and checking social networks to going out everywhere together and in case of not accessing there would be unnecessary fights, this falls into wanting power over the other which is a type of psychological violence and talks about insecure, jealous and low self-esteem people who obviously do not trust their partner. When one partner is healthy, each one comments to the other about their activities during the day without the need to check their cell phone or question each other.

Table 6. Frequency of data regarding whether the couple invades your personal space

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Accumulated percentage
Always	9	8.8	8.8	8.8
Almost always	13	12.7	12.7	21.6
Valid Sometimes	17	16.7	16.7	38.2
Never	63	61.8	61.8	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of social and psychological factors that influence violence during courtship, in a sample of 102 students between 18 and 28 years of age and who are studying in the higher level of studies at a University of the State of Mexico. The first category of the instrument that was applied is DISAPPEARANCE, after the analysis of descriptive statistics this factor is established that there is good communication in at least 60% of the sample and that there really is mutual support between the couple regardless of the situation between the two. A 13.7% reported that they did not feel much interest on the part of their partner in carrying out activities together, since they prefer to do other activities than to spend time together, in addition to feeling manipulated to avoid conflicts of which 21% said that they were due to tardiness or lack of responsibility in fulfilling planned commitments such as problems at work, forgetfulness or difficulties with transport, Speaking of punctuality, communication is an element of great importance especially in the relationship since this way emotions are transmitted and there is interaction between them, in general there are two elements (the sender and the receiver) which are the information that is being transmitted and the way in which it is communicated, this is defined as self-disclosure and the importance of the other person. Positive, negative, reserved and violent communication styles are identified. These elements of communication are auxiliary in the establishment of the relationship, the intimacy and the exchange of emotions, ideas or thoughts<sup>9</sup>. The couple is a common form of interpersonal relationship that involves a process of interaction in which some dependencies and forms of coexistence are developed in shared spaces<sup>10</sup>, the closeness to others can generate rejection or attraction and is the precondition for the establishment of any interdependence which is understood as the association of two people who influence the life of the other persistently, In the experience of each individual, their emotional relationships have been a source of conflict and discomfort, since they have led to toxic and even destructive relationships. However, it has been shown that they are linked to the well-being of people, and the social support they perceive will depend on this, which in the end is a series of benefits for physical and mental health<sup>11</sup>. Feeling affection for the other person modifies one's lifestyle in many ways and it often happens that this action ends up becoming an attachment and that being with someone is so strong that it causes a certain feeling of dependency and even though this process has now normalized it is harmful to both parties. With respect



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to the category of HUMILLATION, 37.3% stated that their partners made constructive criticism which, in addition to being private, helped to improve some aspects of their lives. 15.7% said that some of their partners' comments were not only negative and hurtful, but were also frequent, 4.9% of them occurring in public and often under the influence of alcohol. The couple is a context where strong conflicts tend to appear, which is why it can be one of the main forms of psychosocial stress of greater magnitude for the human being<sup>12</sup>, the prevalence of psychological violence is expressed mainly in insults, criticism, distrust, control and reaches a high level in terms of criticism covering almost half of the samples, criticism in the couple's relationship ranges from being innocent, constructive and helping the partner to improve the relationship, to making deeper judgments that could damage or hurt the other person's self-esteem, psychological well-being arises from an interest in knowing the level of satisfaction with life and refers to full psychological functioning<sup>13</sup>. The consequences described for those who have suffered this type of violence are depressive disorders, deterioration of self-esteem, insecurity, feelings of guilt, and risk of substance abuse<sup>14</sup>.

In the section on SEXUAL violence, 13.7% reported that they did not have very good communication with their partner regarding what they liked during the sexual relationship because they were embarrassed to say what they liked or because they simply felt ignored by their partners. 20.6% responded that they used sex to solve some of the problems they had with their partner but most of these cases were only solved for a while and then the fights that most of the time were due to jealousy returned. 6.9% responded that they sometimes felt forced to have sex because their partner was very insistent, some of them mentioned that it was more frequent when they went to parties and drank alcohol, this is considered risk behavior linked to sexual violence in addition to tobacco use, poor school performance, and early sex. According to the theory of risk and problem behavior, people who engage in this type of behavior are more likely to suffer from this type of abuse, especially women<sup>15</sup>; sexual violence is defined as any type of physical or emotional pressure exerted by a person to impose acts of a sexual nature<sup>6</sup> and is characterized by acts of forced sex, sexual harassment and humiliation, inducement to pornography or prostitution, lewd touching or rape<sup>16</sup>. In the section of coercion 21% responded that their partner was on top of them all the time, they asked for the password of the cell phone and social networks, in case of not accessing there would be consequences, wanting to have power over the other falls into psychological abuse and refers to insecure people, jealous and with low self-esteem who obviously do not trust their partner, 31% reported that their partner was upset when they made plans with friends and tried to convince them not to go based on manipulation and deception. 22% said that they were questioned about whether they had an interest in someone else, the psychological violence exercised in this case can include actions that can make the other person feel bad either by threatening to leave or by saying strong words that hurt the partner<sup>17</sup>, thus showing that the aggressor is the one who has the power to control everything in the life of the person who has been attacked and paralyzing him/her so that he/she can defend him/herself<sup>18</sup>; who dares to use violence to achieve one end and another to configure it; who redefines relationships in a situation of asymmetry and inequality and submission ends up being the only possible way out to maintain the new situation<sup>1</sup>.

Regarding physical violence, most of the respondents related this section to serious beatings or aggressions, when asked about their relationship 16.7% mentioned that they were lightly beaten while

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playing, 40.2% said that they both threw objects at each other but in the same way they justified that it was while playing and they were objects that had not caused them any physical harm, 11%.8% responded that if they had been physically harmed due to fights they had had under the influence of toxic substances, justifying attitudes of physical, verbal violence or coercion are taken as key aspects when analyzing interpersonal relationships. Violence has been linked more to the use of the body to hurt or punish the other person. Many of the people who are raped come to consider these aggressions as a normal practice within their partner relationships<sup>19</sup> and range from the least harsh to the strongest such as hitting, slapping, torturing and in the worst case killing the other person<sup>20</sup>. With regard to gender in this section 31.4% reported that their partner made fun of other people from your appearance to their way of being, and only half of them had this type of relationship with their partner but justifying that they were only games, 2% said they felt forced by their partner to stop doing certain actions only because of their gender (going out alone, doing certain sports or activities), This type of abuse is characterized by possible physical, sexual or psychological harm that occurs either in public or in private and consists of taunting or humiliation to make the other person feel bad about his or her qualities, beliefs or values<sup>20</sup>.

In the section on punishment, 12.7% mentioned that their partner did not agree to have sex when they were jealous or angry about other problems, 34.4% said that their partner stopped talking to them or threatened to leave them if they did not comply with their whims or did not agree to do what was asked of them. The presence of separation anxiety as the main indicator of emotional dependence in couple relationships shows the associated variables that cause violence in courtship<sup>8</sup>. Codependency is an emotional, psychological condition in which the individual finds himself totally alienated, solitary, isolated from the world and from himself; it is a state of loneliness and emptiness that one tries to fill with things from the outside<sup>21</sup> and that develops as a result of prolonged exposure to the practice of an oppressive set of relational rules, within the framework of an affective bond in a dependent person<sup>22</sup>. The feeling of affection for the other person modifies in many ways and it often happens that this action ends up becoming an attachment and that being with someone is so strong that it causes a certain feeling of dependency and even that this process has now normalized is harmful to both parties.

In the area of instrumental violence, 25.5% responded that their partner checked their cell phone and more than half of this percentage admitted that they also checked their partner's cell phone, which later led to scenes of jealousy and fights between them, 5.9%. Mentioned that they were paying for things that the couple asked for from clothes to cell phones, as for the question about stealing, everyone answered no, until they were asked if their partner had taken any belongings without their consent, 4.9% reported that if, mostly clothing, this type of violence is characterized by forcing the other person to be economically dependent on the aggressor, preventing him/her from working or by other means, exercising control over the victim's financial resources or exploiting him/her economically<sup>23</sup>, We are talking about economic violence that is manifested when the aggressor affects the economic survival of the victim and manifests itself through limitations aimed at controlling the economic income of the couple<sup>24</sup>. This can manifest itself in many very subtle ways such as borrowing, showing discomfort for the other partner to pay, taking things from the partner without their consent, deleting photos or documents from their devices without their knowledge, objecting to the lack of trust in the relationship if they do not allow access to their devices such as computers, cell phones, valuables or personal



information. All of these forms of violence derive from emotional blackmail, the purpose of which is to ensure that the aggressor gets everything he wants without asking for it<sup>25</sup>.

Currently, dating is the ideal time for a couple, and this is a socially accepted belief. However, reality shows some very different things, as some young people face violent situations in their relationship, which go unnoticed<sup>26</sup>.

When I started interviewing the people who participated in this research, I could see that at least half of them did not have a structured concept of what violence is and the types of violence that can exist in a dating relationship, and therefore justified their partner's aggressions and the most common associated factors are alcoholism, insecurity, drug addiction, machismo, lack of trust and communication in the couple.

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