

Gender-Based Violence Associated with Hegemonic Masculinity in Vulnerable Women

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Abstract

The article shows the results of a study carried out in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, department of Lima, to demonstrate the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and gender violence. The study was conducted in the light of the Positivist paradigm, quantitative approach, descriptive level, and non-experimental correlational design. The sample chosen in a non-probabilistic intentional way was represented by 49 men between 20 and 60 years of age, participants in workshops of Training for Equality in charge of the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations. The technique used was the survey and two instruments: The gender Role Conflict Scale (Peña, 2017) and the Adaptation of the National Survey on Social Relations (Orrego, 2020). Both instruments presented validity and reliability of 0.962 and 0.991, respectively. The results of the research report the existence of a moderate positive relationship between the variables of hegemonic masculinity and gender violence. According to the specific results, there is a low positive relationship between the need for success, power, and competence and gender violence; a moderate positive relationship between restricted emotionality and gender violence; a moderate positive relationship between affective behavior and gender violence; and, finally, a weak positive relationship between work-family conflict and gender violence.

Keywords: *hegemonic masculinity, gender-based violence.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence refers to the form of violence that occurs in relationships or households and includes manifestations of sexual, physical, or emotional violence or coercion (Hortal, 2023). However, it should be recognized that not all violence in relationships is domestic so gender violence and domestic violence have different meanings. Domestic violence occurs within the home, generally between family members, while gender-based violence is a form of violence that is exercised against someone because of their sex (Hortal, 2023). This form of violence is a social, structural,

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relational, and political phenomenon that occurs systematically in the world (Velásquez et al., 2020) and constitutes power inequality between men and women (Jaramillo-Bolivar and Canaval-Erazo, 2020). It is stated that one in three women in the world suffers from gender-based violence (Klugman, 2017) and the trend is towards increasing cases. As Hortal (2023) points out, it is amplified in digital spaces, mainly against those who actively participate in public affairs and exercise their right to peaceful assembly. However, there are places where gender-based violence is allowed due to its institutionalization. As Eisenbruch (2023) reports, the acceptance of intimate partner violence in Cambodia is rooted in cultural norms that are reinforced in literary texts and proverbs, such as a Women's Code of Behavior in which a mother instructs her daughter how she should act as a wife with the understanding that the man has powers, which are manifested in violent actions. In Indian society, individuals who are born are attributed characteristics of masculinity and manhood, and in that sense, they are taught to become an “ideal Indian man” (Pooja, 2023).

According to Adono Da Silva (2023), patriarchy operates in different forms of gender violence against women in which psychological violence stands out, configured in the most subtle way, which evidences structural aspects of gender inequality in Brazilian society. Many cases end in femicide, which is the murder of women justified or explained because they are females (Silva & Schermann, 2021). In 2019, 35% of homicides in Brazil were classified as femicides (Vieira et al., 2020). In the face of this, the prevention of gender-based violence through a focus on promoting positive masculinities is possible (Pérez-Martínez et al., 2023).

In Latin American societies, psychological violence is widespread, as is the case in Brazil. This type of violence is a modality of domestic and family violence against women (Adono Da Silva, 2023). Psychological violence against women is considered a widespread public health problem (Fapohunda et al., 2021). Male intimate partners are the most identified agents of aggression, and psychological violence is the most frequent, followed by physical violence (Santos et al., 2020). A study conducted in the state of Maranhão, Brazil, with 233 pregnant women found psychological violence to be predominant (18.9%) (Conceição et al., 2021). As a consequence of violence, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disorders develop.

It is any violent action that is gender-based and can result in suffering and harm in various dimensions of a person's life. The abuses perpetrated involve issues of social inequality and gender, highlighting the socially constructed power of men over women (Amarijo et al., 2020), and aggression often occurs in women's homes (Saadi Tosi, 2017). A survey of 302 postpartum women in Brazil revealed that 43% had experienced abuse by their partners throughout their lives; 7.6% had suffered physical violence and 4.6% reported this type of violence during pregnancy (Fiorotti et al., 2018). As evidenced in the study, physical injuries are the most harmful reported by the scientific literature (Souza & Silva, 2019).

This type of violence continues to be a widespread problem in the United States. According to estimates, 433,648 women over the age of 12 are sexually assaulted each year; of that number, three out of four victims do not report their assailants (Schermerhorn et al., 2023). Consequently, there is a current tension between the recognition of sexual violence against women as a widespread problem.

In the case of Peru, in the period from January to November 2020, the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations (2020) provided attention to 23,392 cases of women victims of violence just in the department of Lima. Of this figure, 47.85% of victims were psychologically abused; 37.03% were physically and 14.73% were sexually abused. In the same period, in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, department of Lima, a total of 308 women were treated for violence, with psychological aggression predominating. In the same year, 121 cases of femicide were reported in the country. Aggressiveness was a

major component of the hegemonic masculinity exercised in many of the reported cases (Orrego, 2020). The behavior of men is explained by a patriarchal, misogynist, and macho culture, which strengthens masculinity by using aggression against women as a weapon as a way of defending their masculine identity, which is questioned.

From a theoretical perspective, this social phenomenon can be explained by the assumptions of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 2016). It is inferred that aggressive behavior is transmitted intergenerationally, at the same time that witnessing and/or experiencing violence at critical moments of development (such as childhood or adolescence) leads to modeling abusive behavior in phases of the life cycle (Telzer et al., 2018). Aggressive models that are gestated and developed in the family environment favor aggressive behavior as a way to resolve conflicts or internal problems (Huesmann, 2018). According to this theory, it is possible to understand the risk behaviors of individuals in situations of violence (such as alcohol abuse) (Huesmann, 2018). In addition, the propositions of the theory can also be applied to adopt positive social behaviors that can break the cycles of gender-based violence (Telzer et al., 2018).

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a prototype of the “real” man (Piñeiro, 2023) and aspires to become a self-sufficient, strong, aggressive, hypersexual, violent, and homophobic man (Hellman et al., 2017). Marçal's (2017) stereotypical appreciation goes further when he refers that hegemonic masculinity minimizes the importance of women, whom he considers as passive, subjective, consumer, and dependent; meanwhile, the “man” is cultured, active, objective, and active. This distinction suggests the superiority and predominance of reason over emotion (Hernando, 2018); and, from this hierarchical perspective, women are after men, which explains male superiority. This traditional position promotes counter-hegemony that seeks to modify these idealistic and attitudinal forms. The consolidation of hegemonic masculinity comes from ancient times when masculine representation was represented with male nudity and erect phalluses before the Christian era (Franković & Matic, 2023).

The measurement of hegemonic masculinity according to O'Neil (1995) is based on four dimensions: the need for success, power and competence, restricted emotionality, affective behavior, and the conflict between work and family. The first dimension explains man's need for status concerning others through continuous comparison. The conception of considering oneself to be the best refers to the search for success to place oneself above others and, in this way, prove one's masculinity above all things, including physical and mental health (Perla, 2020). The second dimension refers to the difficulty of having demonstrative-affective relationships and managing their emotions. Emotional restraint has been developed since childhood and represents a weakness associated with cultural aspects; as an example, the phrase: “boys don't cry” is considered a cultural notion. Among so many emotional manifestations, anger is represented by the masculine (Gutman, 2020). As for the third dimension, limited affective behaviors towards other men, it explains the restrictions on the expression of one's thoughts and feelings towards people of the same sex for fear of being considered homosexual. Finally, the fourth dimension refers to conflicts between family and work, which evidences the difficulties men have in balancing work and the family environment; that is, men are configured through work in search of being recognized as such and acquire power as protectors and providers of their families (Ramírez, 2019).

From a cultural ideological perspective, MH highlights the idealized and dominant form of masculinity over femininity and is perceived and endorsed by most members of society (Schermerhorn et al., 2023). For example, in USA society, white hetero-masculine dominance persists and is related to sexual violence against women, yet little is known regarding how men, who are ostensibly privileged in these settings, experience sexual harassment and assault toward women (Fishman et al., 2023).

The feminist theory explains that gender relations occurred long ago for establishing a certain analysis of how historically women suffered oppression and inequality by men. According to Sales (2018), this theory seeks to explain and perceive how in social and sexual spheres the condition of women as a collective is prone to exploitations, oppression, and inequalities to direct routes of actions that seek transformation. Meanwhile, according to the theory of the Social Role of Gender (Eagly, 1987) to guarantee the economic conditions of a society and the means of support, this should be achieved through tasks and activities employing norms. On this basis, the aim is to establish a set of rules that allow assigning to each subject certain responsibilities that must be complied with in public and private contexts. This theory supports a baggage of norms and expectations for women and men that guide and mark in different ways how they should feel, be and act in direct relation to their gender. This explains why women have been assigned mostly domestic roles and men have been assigned roles as providers, aggressors, independent, and leaders in the family (Hernández and Gonzáles, 2016).

The purpose of the article is to demonstrate the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and gender violence in a group of men living in a less socio-economically developed area of the country.

2. METHOD

The research was conducted in the light of the positivist paradigm, with the hypothetic-deductive method, and under a quantitative approach, assuming a non-experimental, descriptive, linear correlational design, at a descriptive level. From a population of 28 thousand men living in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, department of Lima, Peru, a purposive, non-probabilistic sample of 49 men in the age range of 20 to 60 years who have participated in training workshops for equality run by the Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations was chosen. The technique used to collect information on both study variables (hegemonic masculinity and gender violence) was a survey using two instruments: The gender Role Conflict Scale (Peña, 2017) and the Adaptation of the National Survey on Social Relations (Orrego, 2020). Both instruments were subjected to validity criteria through expert judgment and reliability through Cronbach's Alpha whose results yielded indexes of 0.962 and 0.991, respectively. The application of the instruments was done through the Google Form platform due to the restrictions caused by covid-19, forcing the confinement of most of the population. The data were statistically processed using SPSS software, version 26. The general and specific hypotheses were tested using Spearman's Rho statistic because the variables do not present normality and these variables are qualitative since they are assigned qualitative values: high, medium, and low.

3. RESULTS

The results presented below correspond to the test of the general and specific hypotheses:

Table 1 *Correlations between variables and dimensions.*

Hypothesis	Variables correlation	Spearman's Rho	Bilateral significance	N°	Level
General Hypothesis	Hegemonic masculinity* gender violence	.658**	.000	49	Mean positive correlation
Specific Hypothesis 1	Need for success, power, and	.469**	.001	49	Weak positive

	competence* gender-based violence				correlation
Specific Hypothesis 2	Restricted emotionality* gender violence	.650**	.000	49	Mean positive correlation
Specific Hypothesis 3	Limited affectionate behavior towards other men* gender-based violence	.616**	.000	49	Mean positive correlation
Specific Hypothesis 4	Conflict between work and family* gender violence	.301*	.036	49	Weak positive correlation

** . Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (bilateral).

* . Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05 (bilateral).

According to the results, there is a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.658^{**}$ and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) between the variables hegemonic masculinity and gender violence. Consequently, the condition persists that hegemonic masculinity in men in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, Lima, is related to gender violence, although the relationship is moderate. The data represent a 99% confidence interval. According to the specific results, there is a low positive relationship ($r = 0.469^{**}$, and $p = 0.001 < 0.05$) between the dimensions need for success, power and competencies and gender violence, and a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.650^{**}$, and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) between the dimensions of restricted emotionality and gender violence. Likewise, there is a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.650^{**}$, and $p = 0.000 < 0.05$) between the dimensions of need for success, power and competencies, and gender violence, except for the fourth specific hypothesis whose results are given at a 95% confidence interval, while the other specific hypotheses are reported at a 99% confidence interval.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of the research report the existence of a moderate positive correlation between the variables of hegemonic masculinity and gender violence in a group of men in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, which means that, as long as there is acceptance of the beliefs, ideals, and attitudes that reinforce hegemonic masculinity, the naturalization and acceptance of the use of gender violence as a code of conduct and instrument for the subjugation and control of women is institutionalized, especially those who are emotionally, socially and economically vulnerable. This means that the higher the level of hegemonic masculinity among men, the greater the acceptance and use of gender-based violence among male participants in the study. This result coincides with the findings of Pérez-Martínez et al. (2023) in the sense that hegemonic masculinity contributes to the perpetration of different forms of gender violence.

In the face of this problem, abandoning hegemonic behaviors on the part of men and promoting positive masculinity is a strategy that should be employed in interventions to foreground a gender-transformative approach. In this regard, Pooja's (2023) research reports that masculinity and manhood are prior desired and required characteristics of every male individual born in Indian society. They are taught to become an "ideal Indian

man” from the moment they are born. While men who become women's rights activists are generally ridiculed and shunned.

Along these lines, Palmar et al. (2018) found that macho attitudes and behaviors constitute the main factors associated with gender-based violence; that is, men who evidence a strong internalization of masculine roles are significantly identified with behaviors of superiority towards women and employ violence and aggressiveness as forms of control and underestimation.

Valverde (2020) found that the use of gender-based violence has the endorsement and justification of the men who practice it; they manage to maintain an image of authoritarianism and exercise violence to deal with their partner's questioning; these questionings are met with punishments and other forms of control. Likewise, García (2017) found that men who exercise gender-based violence with evident behaviors of hegemonic masculinity have had some type of relationship with the female victim or are close to her. This behavior is circumscribed in the social demand to achieve masculine ideals and mandates that, in the face of women's rejection, produce in them a lack of control and anger.

Gender violence constitutes a multifactorial and structural problem that has its foundations in social and cultural systems that are installed in women's aspects of subordination and inequality (Benavides, 2018). Women learn or relearn in a violent way certain behaviors under the conditions or precepts imposed by society and what it means to be considered a woman in the stages of her life: childhood, puberty, adolescence, and adulthood; likewise, the fact of being a wife and mother, from her sexuality.

These results are consistent with the Social Gender Role theory (Eagly, 1987), which highlights a set of different expectations and social norms assigned to men and women that identify and set the guidelines for how to feel, how to be, and how to act individually or as a group in certain situations. The roles of both men and women provide greater value and importance to different actions and spheres; that is, women are given actions that are mostly domestic and are in a situation of subordination; however, when these forms or socially assigned modes are broken, then violence is produced against them; these forms of subordination are framed in the model of hegemonic masculinity, in which dominant male positions are manifested against women who act as subordinate beings and generate competitions among men themselves (Connel, 1995).

According to the specific results, a low positive relationship was found between the dimension: need for success, power, and competences with gender violence. This result differs from that found by Peña (2017), where 63% of men submitted to the study presented a high level of gender role conflict; regarding the need for power, success, and competencies: 45% high conflict; 57% restricted emotionality; 63% limited affection among men and 63% conflict between work and social relations at a high level. Otamendi (2020) showed that these patterns produce stress and, in the worst cases, cause suicides in the victims.

Along these lines, Magrin & Oliveira (2023) reported that gender-based violence against women is an acute psychosocial problem that requires a male perspective to prevent it. They concluded that multidimensional training of men is needed to reduce hegemonic masculinity and contribute to breaking with gender-based violence.

The research also demonstrated a moderate positive relationship between the dimension: restricted emotionality and gender violence in men in the district of San Vicente de Cañete. In this case, men show a marked interest in expressing their emotions; and, from the theory that explains how the factors limit men to show their emotions, Gutman (2020) explains that emotional restrictions have been molded since childhood as masculine identities represented as weaknesses according to social and cultural mandates, for example: “men do not cry”, which has allowed restrictions for emotional or feeling

manifestations. Faced with this real situation, Romero (2017) proposes a process of transition from hegemonic masculinity to egalitarian masculinity so that there are egalitarian practices in the family environment, with the presence of strengthened and empowered women, a questioning of the authoritarian ways of men, and adequate management of emotions.

In terms of affective behavior and gender-based violence, a moderate positive relationship has been demonstrated in the men who participated in the research in the district of San Vicente de Cañete. This result coincides with what Venegas (2020) found that hegemonic masculinity is a summative construct that develops in the stages of men's lives in direct association with social and cultural norms that give orientation to sexuality in the area of sexual and affective relationships, creating a mask in the face of social pressures to form sexually active men and rejecting feminine behaviors of their peers. Along these lines, research by Russell and King (2020) reports correlations between attitudes of hegemonic masculinity and sexual violence. For example, acceptance of and participation in sexual violence are associated with men's hostile attitudes toward women and endorsement of rape myths. Along these lines, correlational findings show that men with high levels of stress at the idea of not living up to hegemonic standards are more likely to accept and participate in sexual violence, including a greater likelihood of assaulting their intimate partners (Harrington et al., 2021).

Finally, there is a weak positive relationship between the work-family conflict dimension and gender violence. This result coincides with the findings of Peña et al. (2018), where there is a tendency of hegemonic masculinity in the assessments of male participants in the research regarding the role that both men and women play in the home: authority, provider, and carrying out domestic activities; however, there is a tendency to change in ages between 18 and 29 years and between 30 and 39 years, which shows different socializations of mandates and roles assigned to the male gender. In this line of results, research by Russell and King (2020) shows correlations between sexual violence and sexist attitudes. For example, acceptance of and participation in sexual violence are linked to men's hostile attitudes toward women and endorsement of rape myths. In addition, sexual violence has also been linked to threats to masculinity. When men's masculinity is experientially threatened by leading men to believe that they do not measure up to hegemonic masculinity standards, men are likely to sexualize women (Dahl et al., 2015 and blame victims (non-perpetrators) of sexual assault (Munsch & Willer, 2012).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study report the existence of a moderate positive relationship between the variables of hegemonic masculinity and gender violence in the men investigated who live in the district of San Vicente de Cañete, department of Lima, Peru. This demonstrates the persistence of the conditions of the male: “strong”, “macho”, a provider in the family, and “that men do not cry” in the generation of violence against women who are in vulnerable situations and who socially and culturally must fulfill domestic roles in the home and be dependent and passive in front of men. Despite the advances of feminism: empowerment, independence, and autonomy, the direct relationship between hegemonic masculinity and gender violence persists in the group of men investigated. According to the specific results, there is a low positive relationship between the dimension of need for success, power and competence, and gender violence. There is a moderate positive relationship between the dimension of restricted emotionality and gender violence. There is a moderate positive relationship between the dimension of affective behavior and gender violence; and, finally, there is a weak positive relationship between the dimension of conflict between work and family and gender violence.

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