



MATERNAL EXPERIENCES IN INTRA-FAMILIAL SEXUAL ABUSE OF INSTITUTIONALLY ADMITTED GIRLS

VIVÊNCIAS MATERNAS NO ABUSO SEXUAL INTRAFAMILIAR DE MENINAS ACOlhIDAS INSTITUCIONALMENTE

EXPERIENCIAS MATERNAS EN ABUSO SEXUAL INTRAFAMILIAR DE NIÑAS ACOGIDAS INSTITUCIONALMENTE

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RESUMO

Objetivo: interpretar as vivências maternas e suas ações frente à revelação de abuso sexual em meninas no contexto familiar. **Método:** trata-se de um estudo exploratório, qualitativo, na perspectiva de estudo de caso, por meio da Interpretação de Sentidos. Participaram duas mães que acompanhavam suas filhas acolhidas institucionalmente em distintas unidades de acolhimento por motivo de terem sido violentadas sexualmente. Para a interpretação das entrevistas, discutiu-se e analisou-se o material colhido com base nos referenciais teóricos propostos e reflexões acerca dos casos. **Resultados:** observou-se o predomínio de sentimentos maternos de culpa e incredulidade diante da constatação dos fatos vividos por parte das filhas de terem sido abusadas sexualmente por seus companheiros. **Conclusão:** destacaram-se a necessidade de uma reorganização dos serviços de ponta nesse tipo de atendimento, uma atenção às vulnerabilidades programáticas que ocorrem na Política Nacional de Assistência Social, bem como a efetivação, de fato, das políticas públicas já existentes, porém, ainda pouco delimitadas enquanto especificidades de atuação da Psicologia dentro dos serviços da assistência social.

Palavras-chave: Vivências Maternas; Violência Sexual Infantojuvenil; Serviços de Referências.

ABSTRACT

Objective: to interpret maternal experiences and their actions in view of the revelation of sexual abuse in girls in the family context. **Method:** it is an exploratory, qualitative

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study, from the perspective of a case study, through the Interpretation of Senses. Two mothers participated who accompanied their daughters institutionally sheltered in different shelters due to having been sexually assaulted. For the interpretation of the interviews, the material collected was discussed and analyzed based on the proposed theoretical references and reflections on the cases. **Results:** there was a predominance of maternal feelings of guilt and disbelief in view of the facts experienced by the daughters of having been sexually abused by their partners. **Conclusion:** the need for a reorganization of cutting-edge services in this type of care, attention to programmatic vulnerabilities that occur in the National Social Assistance Policy, as well as the realization of existing public policies, however, still limited as specificities of Psychology performance within social assistance services were highlighted.

Keywords: Maternal Experiences; Children and Youth Sexual Violence; Reference Services

RESUMEN

Objetivo: interpretar las experiencias maternas y sus acciones en vista de la revelación del abuso sexual en niñas en el contexto familiar. **Método:** Es un estudio exploratorio, cualitativo, desde la perspectiva de un estudio de caso, a través de la Interpretación de los Sentidos. Participaron dos madres que acompañaron a sus hijas acogidas institucionalmente en diferentes unidades de acogimiento por haber sido agredidas sexualmente. Para la interpretación de las entrevistas, el material recogido se discutió y analizó en función de los marcos teóricos propuestos y las reflexiones sobre los casos. **Resultados:** predominaban los sentimientos maternos de culpa e incredulidad en vista de los hechos experimentados por las hijas de haber sido abusadas sexualmente por sus parejas. **Conclusión:** se destacó la necesidad de una reorganización de los servicios de vanguardia en este tipo de atención, la atención a las vulnerabilidades programáticas que se producen en la Política Nacional de Asistencia Social, así como la realización de las políticas públicas existentes, aún están poco definidas como especificidades del desempeño de la Psicología dentro de los servicios de asistencia social.

Palabras-clave: Experiencias Maternas; Violencia Sexual Infantil y Juvenil; Servicios de Referencia.

INTRODUCTION

Several terms can be used to define the practice of sexual violence, such as rape, indecent assault or incest. It is based on the considerations,^{1:51} who stated that rape "is when the adult forces the child or adolescent to have vaginal sexual intercourse", referring specifically to girls; that the indecent assault "encompasses other practices, aimed at the sexual pleasure of the perpetrator",^{1:51} regardless of whether the victim is a boy or a girl, and incest is defined as "being a sexual relationship between people related to one another through a bond, formal or informal",^{1:47} that is culturally considered a barrier to sexual relations. We chose to use, in this work, the term sexual abuse which, in its broadest sense, "encompasses incest and is related to transgression".^{1:51}

The World Health Organization (WHO) considers that the most devastating

violence in developmental terms is child sexual abuse and it is estimated that, in the global context, one in five women and one in thirteen men experienced sexual abuse in childhood or adolescence.²

The phenomenon of sexual abuse can occur in an extra or intra-family manner, the latter being more frequent, according to national and international demographic data.³⁻⁵ Intra-family or incestuous sexual abuse occurs in relationships in which the adult who abuses should assume a protective role, even if the bond is not consanguinity.⁶

With regard to the family profile and dynamics of the families experiencing the abusive situation, the families served were, in large part, composed of young people, single parents and low education levels, and most situations of sexual abuse occurred in the intra-family relationship. The victims, on the other hand, were largely girls, of whom the abusers were characterized by their parents and stepfathers.⁷

In the family configurations based on the patriarchal nucleus, the construction of a space is provided where there is the occurrence of gender and intergenerational violence.⁸ When approaching the issue of sexual abuse from a gender perspective, analyzing the power relations in which the girl (victim) is responsible for sexual abuse, the mother / stepmother of these girls is also responsible, pointing out, once again, for blaming the female figure.

In a study that discussed aspects related to maternal reactions to the disclosure of abuse, as well as aspects related to the issue of multi-generationality, it was pointed out that, in general, mothers verbalized anger directed at the person of the abuser and feelings of guilt for the violation daughter's sexual.⁹⁻¹⁰ Most mothers believed in their daughters and took action to denounce, however, they did not always take immediate protective actions to distance their daughters from the alleged abuser or even to quickly take action to denounce. The mother is appointed as a prominent figure, as she can, within this context, experience the experience of sexual violence in three ways: as a victim, witness or perpetrator.¹¹

With regard to disclosure of abuse, in 37.6% of cases, the report of sexual violence was made by the figure of the mother and, in 29% of cases, it was carried out by other relatives; in 15.1%, by institutions involved with the child, such as schools and hospitals, and, in 6.5%, by police department.⁶ When making the complaint of the daughter, the mother breaks with the

transgenerationality of the violence, being able, thus, to free the family in ascending and descending level of blaming itself for the suffered violence, having a breach of the family secret, revealing an unhealthy family cohesion and a hierarchy domination.¹²

Mothers of girls who have been sexually abused may experience a variety of manifestations ranging from anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress¹¹ and may also show supportive and protective reactions, or avoidance / avoidance, ambivalence or indifference.

In the Brazilian context, situations of violence against children and adolescents are monitored by the Service of Protection and Specialized Assistance to Families and Individuals, obligatorily offered by the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance (CREAS), linked to the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger. In 2012, there were 51,340 cases of sexual abuse treated in the country within the scope of the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance.¹³⁻¹⁴

METHOD

The study, at the time exposed, was part of the master's dissertation - Maternal experiences in intra-family sexual abuse of girls institutionally welcomed in Porto Velho (RO) - defended by the Graduate Program in Psychology, academic master's in Psychology, from the Department of Psychology at the Federal University of Rondônia.

This research was conducted under the perspective of a qualitative approach through the analysis of interpretation of meanings about maternal experiences and their actions in the face of the revelation of sexual abuse in girls in the family context.

The method to collect the testimonies was through interviews with a script of semi-structured questions, also recorded in audio, with an average duration of 40 to 50 minutes each, emphasizing the flexibility implicit in this type of research.

It should be noted that, as a way of safeguarding the identity of the interlocuting mothers in the study, it was decided to admit codenames of flowers, thus minimizing their possible identification, similarity or similarity.

As an exclusion criterion, mothers who did not have an adequate level of understanding about the abusive situation experienced by their daughter were characterized as participating in the research.

Three mothers were interviewed, and it was decided to decompose the statements of the first two who, despite having experienced, in different ways, the family situations linked to the sexual abuse process of their daughters, in many points, verbalized statements that converged related to the your aches and pains. The speech of the third mother interviewed was more accentuated as to the feelings of the recent loss that she had before the destitution of the family power of the four children, thus not meeting the main objective of this research.

Thus, it is a study of two cases. The research project was presented to the Special Social Protection Coordination of the Specialized Reference Center for Social Assistance, located in Porto Velho (RO), where the Institutional Reception Service is located, an institution where mothers are accompanied, attended and guided due to the institutional welcoming of daughters.

The project was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rondônia in which it was approved according to Consubstantiated Opinion No. 650. 841, 02/05/2014.

Analysis and interpretation of reports

Scene "1": Mrs. Violet - Suspicious daughter, confident mother

The first scene presented refers to the mother Mrs. Violet, a 44-year-old lady, who attended the fifth grade and worked in general services at a third-party company. She has been married to Mr. Cactus for twenty years. The couple has three children, two boys and a girl, who are: G., 13, who is in 6th grade; M., 20 years old, who did not finish his studies and works with electrical activities and Petal, 10 years old, who is in the 4th year, who is the daughter victim of sexual violence and is institutionally welcomed. Her husband, Mr. Cactus, is 43 years old, attended elementary school and works as a bricklayer.

The daughter, 10-year-old Petal, was institutionally welcomed in September 2014. The documents sent by the Guardianship Council include accusations of sexual violence perpetrated by the child's parent, in addition to the appointment of two neighbors who also appear as abusers.

Scene "2": Mrs. Rose - Mother with a feeling of guilt

The second scene constructed refers to the mother Mrs. Rose, a young lady of 34 years old, who attended the third grade and works as a day laborer at a third party. She declares her marital status as unmarried for never having made her previous marital relationships official.

She has four children, two boys and two girls, who are: G., 18 years old; Sunflower, 14 years old, victim of sexual violence; Y., seven years old and A., three years old. At the time of the occurrence of the facts, there was a recent relationship with the then abusive partner who, until the time of the interview, would not have been deprived of liberty.

The daughter, 14-year-old Sunflower, was institutionally welcomed in October 2014. In the documents sent by the Guardianship Council, it appears that the reason for the reception was an alleged attempt at sexual violence, with the stepfather as the author. In the reception guide, it was possible to identify that the adolescent would have already been a victim of sexual violence on the part of the parent, who was even deprived of freedom. The teenager's brothers were also institutionally welcomed.

RESULTS

The study made it possible to understand the experiences experienced by mothers who have their daughters as victims of intra-family sexual violence. For an understanding of the results obtained, the comments were divided into four guiding axes: "The understanding of family dynamics in the incestuous abusive relationship"; "The (res) feelings presented by the mother regarding her daughter's victimization"; "My daughter was abused ... What now? What do I do?"; "The contribution of CREAS in facing the difficulties faced".

Understanding family dynamics in incestuous abusive relationships

This guiding axis is related to the family routine experienced by the family involved in the process of intra-family sexual violence. In scenes "1" and "2", it is possible to observe the mothers' difficult acceptance of assimilating the abusive experience even in the face of the facts

I do not remember the day, so it was not even she who told me, she told her colleague, the mother of her classmate, then, her mother told me, then, her mother asked me. It was: "Mom, Dad was grappling with me, wanting to touch me, right?" Then, I arrived and talked to him, he said it was a lie! That I hadn't done that, that I wasn't going to do that with his daughter, then, always, when I arrived, I talked to her: "So, my daughter, is your father messing with you?" She said: "No, mom", because she was no longer at home, she was with her classmate, who I would go out and go there after school. (Violet)

[...]but I never thought the guy was going to do something like that and another because he said my daughter was like his daughter, you know? (Rose)

The (re) feelings presented by the mother regarding her daughter's victimization

There is confusion and a tangle of feelings described by the interviewed mothers, among which the following stand out: ambivalence of feelings; feeling of guilt and disbelief at the finding. In this regard, the following excerpt stands out.

But then, I don't understand, I don't know, if he were like that, an aggressive man, you know? Even to the neighbors, if you go to talk in the neighborhood, everything will be fine, no, Cacti is a great person! But only that happened, what am I going to do? That's it, I never thought I was going to pass this on! Especially with my daughter. (Violet)

My daughter was abused [...] What now? What do I do?

This excerpt corroborates the fact that the complaint was not made by the mother and her attempt to clarify for her husband through the following report.

Let him go on with his life, I don't know what it will be like because I didn't take part, despite the fact that they charge me. But it wasn't me who went there, it was her because, sometimes, Cactos puts the blame on me, too. (Violet)

CREAS's contribution to facing difficulties

In this category, the following speeches of mothers emerge about the perspective of CREAS care.

At the moment, when he releases her, the judge takes her home, they will have to know if I can take care of her, right? And I wanted to help her, talk to her, to help her a little bit to help me, I think it is the most you can have, you know? Because she is already a young girl, she is ten years old. And that's it: let the boat run and I take care of it. Because I'm working, I don't know how my financier will be, because he, working, will have to help, right? From a distance, giving money, then, is not as close to home as the family, but he will have to help, so I want help for her, right? Talk to her to see what's going on because she is like this, let's see that, after that, that he leaves, if she will get better, I want this: monitoring. (Mrs. Violet) [Our emphasis]

I think talking to the family, don't you? Talking, getting in touch, I think, for me, these family meetings will be good [...] like this [...] talking, talking like that, you know? For me, I think it will be good! It's what I think. It's just like me and my daughter: we don't get along, neither can my mother and I, but I never got to my mother and said; my daughter, she is not the only daughter and I am, and it hurts me a lot, understand? So, like this [...] I made mistakes (crying), but my mother, she made more mistakes (Mrs. Rose). [Our emphasis]

DISCUSSION

Interpreting maternal experiences in the face of knowledge of the abusive situation is talking about the wounds still open of these mothers and, even at the time of the interviews, they are experiencing the institutional care of their daughters, the punishment or impunity of their partners, distrust and collection of friends, neighbors and family and, like so many others, their own demand and pain in the face of this storm of conflicts and feelings.

When talking about the understanding of family dynamics in the incestuous abusive relationship, the maternal experiences described are permeated by feelings of guilt and disbelief in view of the facts experienced by the daughters, as well as the dysfunctionality in the family dynamics of these relatives highlighted in the aspect of communication.⁹

The relatives, who can appear as support, can also demonstrate feelings of disbelief in the face of the facts, not accepting the victim's verbalization, and sometimes for fear of the financial and emotional helplessness that the validation of the facts can cause.

Regarding the (re) feelings presented by the mother in the face of the victimization of the daughter, debating about the role of the mother and woman in the face of the incestuous abuse of the daughter is important not to put her in a position among those that can be cited (guilty, negligent, passive, silent and

conniving), of which common sense is constantly used as ignorant of the multiple facets of the phenomenon.¹¹

The category "My daughter was abused [...] What now? What do I do?" it concerns the family with a dynamic of violence where the communication aspect is seen as an important factor that presents itself in dysfunctionality in these families.

In the reports of the actions, or lack of them, that were taken by the mothers in the cases discussed here, it was highlighted that the interviewees had feelings of fear of losing their family, especially in the case of Violeta, who verbalized the pressure under which she was charged by the husband, as well as the disbelief of family and neighbors. Rosa, despite being in a recent relationship with the abuser, also had this fear that ended up, when her children needed to be welcomed and later handed over to the father's care, a fact that caused her suffering in the face of the loss of the family formed.¹²

Rose, despite being in a recent relationship with the abuser, also had this fear that ended up, when her children needed to be welcomed and later handed over to the father's care, a fact that caused her suffering in the face of the loss of the family formed, in the face of the abusive experience of the daughters, it is the possibility of "talking", as they name or, then, they receive, both the same as their daughters, assistance from the professionals who make up this service network.

In this sense, still, facilitating spaces for conversations between people, in which their experiences and stories can be legitimized, is a way to mediate both family and community relationships, and through this mechanism, arrangements to overcome adversities and disruption of the circle of narratives, which indicate only fatalities, redundancy, not leading to alternatives.

From this perspective, from the new family arrangements that have been constituted, it is possible to notice the attention given to this public through the National Social Assistance Policy, which brings, in its centrality, the social and family matrix. And these are the same mothers that professionals receive at CREAS for care and monitoring.

In a study on the experience of (un) reception of women victims of rape who seek health services,¹⁵ the authors pointed to the inadequate maternity infrastructure, mainly due to the lack of physical space to approach women with privacy and the insufficient quantity of human resources and to a criticism of the

employees of the services that end up exposing women and spreading rape the victim was victimized, unveiling institutional violence. According to the aforementioned authors, this experience during the care received in health services favors a process of re-victimizing this woman, who already carries the traumas resulting from the rape.

Regarding the care for these women, the Nursing Care Protocol for Women Victims of Sexual Violence has provided the client with comprehensive and humanized care and, for the nurse, greater autonomy in her area of activity, favoring collaborative and interactive work with the multidisciplinary team.¹⁶

CONCLUSION

The subject addressed in this study is of significant relevance because it is an important theme for the performance of Psychology in the fields of the social and health fields, mainly acting in public policies that are part of the protection network.

The debate related to trans-generationality or multi-generationality in the life story of these women speaks for itself. Perhaps, the lack of knowledge that violence can be much broader than imagined did not provide the necessary repertoires for the interpretation of the violence phenomenon by them, but that the interviewed mothers, in fact, also went through a series of violations within their family context is an undeniable fact.

Regarding the maternal difficulty in accepting sexual violence, it was possible to perceive, in the interviewed mothers, that this difficulty is also emphasized by the other family members, whether the victim's brothers, aunts and even the neighbors of this context.

It is registered, as fundamental, the need to rethink public policies to face the phenomenon, as the empowerment in the social assistance policy needs to be directed and executed to the entire support network that surrounds the mothers and relatives of the girls victims.

It is noteworthy that the science of Psychology needs to participate actively in this construction process, in the ways of thinking and acting in the different segments, which include programs to face child and youth sexual violence. It is essential to recognize this violation as a multifaceted phenomenon and that, therefore, to be overcome; it presupposes the combination of different knowledge and competences.

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