

**OPIICS 2019****International Conference of Psychology, Sociology, Education, and Social Sciences****PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE IN VICTIMS OF INTIMATE  
PARTNER VIOLENCE (IPV): A COMPARATIVE STUDY  
WITH YOUNG MEXICANS**

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***Abstract***

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is considered a public health problem that has implications on personal development. Recent studies indicate that this phenomenon deteriorates the subjective well-being of the victims. The relation between both phenomena have not been studied much in Mexico. Therefore, the objective of the research was determining partner violence as a source of psychological damage. The research participants were 426 young people from the Northern region of Jalisco, Mexico; of these, 39% were men (164) and 61% women (262). The ages of the participants are in the range from 17 to 29 years; their average age is 20, with a standard deviation of 3 years. For the collection of data, the Questionnaire for the Evaluation of Domestic Violence Victims by Colombia's National Attorney General's Office (PGN), the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were applied. The Spearman Test and Kruskal Wallis Test were used to evaluate the variable correlation.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years it has been recognized that violence between couples is a social problem that has attracted international attention. This type of violence has been called domestic violence, intrafamiliar violence, marital rape, intimate partner violence (IPV), among others (Aiquipa, 2015), that makes the investigation of the phenomenon more complicated. By definition, according to Cienfuegos and Díaz-Loving (2010), intimate partner violence comprises any active or passive behavior that damages or intends to harm, hurt or control the person with whom you have or had an intimate, sexual or loving bond. Such behaviors cause at least three types of damage: physical, psychological or sexual, in the short and long term (Buvinic, Morrison, & Orlando, 2005; Puente-Martínez, Ubillos-Landa, Echeburúa, & Páez-Rovira, 2016; WHO, 2011).

According to these effects, Alegría and Rodríguez (2015) have classified couples' violence basically in three ways: psychological, physical and sexual. Psychological violence implies action or omission, and another person is injured without leaving visible traces; it produces damage in the emotional sphere, the main means used is verbal communication. Physical violence refers to non-accidental behaviors that damage physical integrity with minor or serious injuries. And finally, sexual violence refers to any type of physical or emotional pressure exerted by a person to impose unwanted sexual acts by the partner.

The majority of the studies focused on the identification of the types of violence report that among the three types of violence mentioned, psychological violence it is more frequent, followed by physical and, to a lesser extent, sexual violence (Alegría & Rodríguez, 2015; Benavides, 2015; López, Fundora, Valladares, Ramos, & Blanco, 2015; Rodríguez, 2015; Rubio-Garay, Carrasco, Amor, & López-González, 2015).

The findings of an investigation published by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) show that intimate partner violence is the one that is most exerted against women; according to this publication, 38% of murdered women were deprived of life by their intimate partner. Commonly, that violence represents the end of a long history of abuse. The same study reveals that, in Latin America, 29.8% of women have been victims of physical and/or sexual violence by their partners.

Guedes, García and Bott (2014) also consider that 36% of women have suffered intimate partner violence (physical or sexual), so they are more prone to suffer serious injuries than men. For these authors, the consequences of this type of violence can be lasting and far-reaching, therefore it is an important cause of injuries, illnesses and in some cases even death.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Fernández de Juan, Martínez, Unzueta and Rojas (2016) found that in 78% of couples in a sample, some type of violence had been perpetrated or suffered, without significant differences between men and women. The authors found that a higher percentage of men were victims of psychological violence than women, especially verbal violence (95.7% for women vs. 90.2% for men), which implies that approximately the same number of men as women they exerted psychological violence. In contrast, the authors noted that a greater number of women were sexually and economically abused.

For the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO, 2013) intimate partner violence is widespread in the population throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, and the prevalence varies by country.

Between a quarter and half of the women in that region reported receiving some type of violence from their intimate partner.

In Mexico, the study of intimate partner violence has been of great interest in recent decades, mainly due to its high prevalence. Until two decades ago, in Mexico, partner violence could hardly be measured, partly as a result of the poor reporting of victims, and also an outcome of the acceptance of violent behaviors as normal (Castro & Casique, 2009; Trujano & Mendoza, 2000).

This is reflected in some reports such as the National Survey of Violence in Dating Relationships (ENVINO) of the Mexican Youth Institute (IMJUVE) in 2007. In such report it was evidenced that 15.5% of young people, between 15 and 24 years old they had a relationship as a couple had been victims of physical violence, 75.8% psychological violence and 16.5% sexual violence (IMJUVE, 2007).

A decade later, with the National Survey on the Dynamics of Household Relations (ENDIREH) from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) by the Mexican Government, it was discovered that 43.9% of women had ever suffered violence from their partner; it is reported that the predominant violence was emotional, and that it was followed by economical, physical and sexual violence. This report also indicates that of the total number of women who suffered physical violence, 34.8% suffered bruises, fractures, loss of teeth, hemorrhages, sexually transmitted diseases, among other harms (INEGI, 2017). Almost 70% of the total number of abused women did not seek for support neither reported the abuse.

From the aforementioned and in conjunction with other studies, it was inferred that psychological violence by the intimate partner is a problem that women experience more frequently, and apparently this is associated with the manifestation of traditional attitudes towards gender roles and sexist behavior by men and women (Cubillas et al., 2016; de León, 2008).

Despite this trend, it is not discarded that some men are target of their partners' aggressive behaviors, which are predominantly verbal and psychological (Benavides, 2015; López et al., 2015; Moral & López Rosales, 2013; Rey-Anacona, 2017; Rodríguez, 2015). Whilst they are less frequent, the possible bidirectionality in aggression dynamics is not omitted (Moral & López Rosales, 2013).

Recent studies have found that some psychological and sociocultural factors are related to intimate partner violence (Jaen, Rivera, Amorin, and Rivera, 2015; López-Cepero, Rodríguez, Rodríguez, & Bringas, 2014; Puente-Martínez, Ubillos-Landa, Echeburúa, & Páez-Rovira, 2016; Rubio-Garay et al., 2015). Among the main ones are the sociodemographic and personal features of individuals, such as sex, low educational level, poor income, unemployment and social class (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). Other studies show some psychological features associated with partner violence, such as emotional dependence, aggressiveness, deterioration of self-esteem, among others (Alegria, 2016). Other variables include close adherence to religious beliefs and gender attitudes (Aiquipa, 2015; Capaldi et al., 2012; Cubillas et al., 2016; Jaen et al., 2015; Rey-Anacona, 2017). Some studies also show that the duration of the relationship is a factor for the appearance of violent behavior in couples.

A similar explanation is proposed for the legal status of couples and the number of children they have procreated (Moral & López Rosales, 2013). Additionally, research indicates that the violence perpetrated in the couple is gradual and progressive (Arias & Espinosa, 2017; Rodríguez, 2015) and that, regardless of the type of violence, the population finds it difficult to identify violent behaviors in the couple,

simply said, this type of behavior tends to normalize it (García et al., 2013). Moreover, it is also known that the impact of partner violence is maximized when victims do not have enough social support to act as a protective factor (Cienfuegos & Díaz, 2011; de Alencar & Cantera, 2017; Estrada, Herrero, & Rodríguez, 2012; García, Włodarczyk, Reyes, San Cristóbal, & Solar, 2014; Matud, Aguilera, Marrero, Moraza, & Carballeira, 2003; Plazaola, Ruiz, & Montero, 2008).

In other studies, it has been found that the appearance of violent behaviors in couples has serious consequences for the victims (Jaen, et al., 2015; Rubio-Garay et al., 2015). For instance, some research shows that dating violence generates significant damage to integrity (Arias & Espinosa, 2017). According to Watkins et al. (2014) and with Labrador, Fernández and Rincón (2010), physical violence and psychological violence have a negative impact mainly on the physical and mental health of women. According to the WHO (2013), women who are victims of violence present deteriorated both subjective well-being and quality of life. Other authors show that partner violence is related to social interaction problems in victims (García & Matud, 2015; López-Cepero et al., 2014; WHO, 2011).

## **2. Problem Statement**

These findings encourage us to reflect on the perception that victims of intimate partner violence have about their own lives, which may probably be followed by negative feelings and dissatisfaction. According to Cuadra and Florenzano (2003), this can be perfectly framed as a perception of subjective well-being and could be classified into three great conditions. The first, around the assessment of the type of life that the victims of partner violence lead (level of satisfaction with life). The second regarding the predominance of negative feelings or affections, and the third related to the level of happiness they experience.

In the Mexican context, the knowledge of the effects of intimate partner violence on the subjective well-being of victims of violence is still insufficient, so it is pertinent to find out if there are differences in satisfaction and happiness levels according to the type of violence that victims experience.

It is essential to assess the potential damage of each type of partner violence in the subjective well-being, both in women and men, because the deterioration of subjective well-being is related to the additional activation of numerous psychological stressors (Raya et al., 2004).

## **3. Research Questions**

Based on this revision of the available literature, it is considered relevant to answer the following questions: Do people who are victims of intimate partner violence report unhappier and dissatisfied with the life they experience? In other words: Do levels of happiness and satisfaction with life vary depending on the type of partner violence? What is the prevalence of couple violence in the Mexican population segment under study? What are the levels of happiness and satisfaction with life self-reported by the Mexican population segment in the research?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The objective of this article is to provide the necessary evidence to support the hypothesis that the happiness and satisfaction with life levels with life decrease depending on the type of partner violence that some people experience, since they are exposed to various psychosocial stressors, which increase their probability of suffering psychological damage and threaten their quality of life.

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1. Participants

To achieve this purpose, data was obtained and analyzed from an intentional sample of 426 participants, of which 61.5% are women and 31.5%, men; whose ages range between 17 and 29 years, and their average age (M) is 20, with a standard deviation (SD) of 3 years. All are residents of the municipalities of Colotlán and Totatiche, which are part of the Northern Region of Jalisco, Mexico.

### 5.2. Methodological design

An ex post facto and transversal research was carried out. Specifically, the results of the questionnaires applied to a sample of young people were studied. Some of them were interviewed at university campuses and others were located in their private homes.

### 5.3. Measurement tools

An ad hoc inventory was applied to collect sociodemographic data, which contains questions about age, place of residence, gender, educational level, social class, working status, presence of children, economic independence.

In order to observe the violence in couples, the Questionnaire for the Evaluation of Domestic Violence Victims by Colombia's National Attorney Office (PGN) (2006) was used. From this instrument, a series of data on the prevalence and intensity of partner violence were collected. The PGN instrument consists of 23 question items that measure intensity and prevalence based on three types of violence: psychological ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ), physical ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ) and sexual ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ) with a Likert scale with scores ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (many times). The Cronbach Alpha index equals 0.92 in the Colombian context.

The overall assessment of happiness was measured with the Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS) by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999). This consists of four Likert format items, their index is obtained by adding the scores obtained (answer options 1 to 7) and divided by the total number of items on the scale. The value of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.73 in the Chilean version (Vera, Celis, & Córdova, 2011).

Overall satisfaction with life was measured with the SWLS (by its acronym in English) of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985), which consists of five items that measure satisfaction with life through a global evaluation of people. The scale is composed of five items with answer options ranging from 1 to

7. The total score of the scale is achieved by adding the score of the five questions. The minimum score is five and the maximum is 35 points. This scale has been used in numerous studies and has revealed good psychometric properties. The value of Cronbach's Alpha for this scale ranges between 0.79 and 0.89 (Padrós, Gutiérrez, & Medina, 2015).

## 5.4. Process

In a pilot test, an instrument was applied that includes the scales of subjective well-being, the PNG scale of couple violence from Colombia and an inventory of questions to measure sociodemographic features. Subsequently, the same instrument was applied to a large sample of participants. They were read with an informed consent, they were told that their answers were anonymous and that they would be used for research purposes only. A database was afterwards developed and the information collected was analyzed. To measure the level of subjective well-being and the prevalence of partner violence reported by the participants, the scores recorded were added according to the items of each scale. Finally, the statistical tests required for the hypothesis tests were executed.

## 5.5. Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was performed with the SPSS v.24.0 program for Windows (SPSS, Inc.). Based on the tools of this software, the medians and the standard deviations of the continuous variables were elaborated, as well as absolute and relative frequency distributions were made only for the categorical variables. For the hypothesis test, Spearman's Rho analysis was applied for correlation between variables, the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Sample sociodemographic characteristics

An age  $\bar{x}=20$  of years old and  $DE=3$  is observed. 61.5% of them are women and 38.5% are men; 1.4% finished primary education, 9.6% finished junior high school, 44.4% had a senior high school and 44.6% had a bachelor's degree; 37.3% earned monthly income of less than \$ 3,900 (Mexican pesos), 47.2% reported income of less than \$ 7,700, 12.7%, income of less than \$ 16,000 and only 2.8% achieved an income of more than \$ 16,000; due to their employment status, 41.5% were employed and 58.5% were unemployed; 42.7% do not belong to any social security system; Finally, 83.8% is perceived as middle class, 15.7% lower class and 0.5% upper class.

### 6.2. Prevalence of partner violence: types and frequencies

Regarding victimization, 28.9% of participants experience partner violence. According to the types of violence, 22.1% of participants reported psychological violence (24.0% were women and 18.9%, men), 12.2% experienced physical violence (14.5% were women and 8.5%, men), sexual violence was recorded for 11.0% of the sample (12.2% were women and 9.1%, men). These data show that psychological violence has a higher prevalence. In all types of intimate partner violence, the prevalence of the victim's role is higher in women than in men in the sample.

In terms of intensity, the percentages of mild partner violence in all observed dimensions stand out; in the psychological one, the mild degree is equivalent to 87.3%, the moderate one represents 10.6% and the severe one, 2.1%. In physical violence, the mild degree accounted for 96.5%, the moderate one equals 2.1% and the serious one, 1.4%. Finally, in sexual violence, the mild grade accounted for 96.9%, the

moderate grade is 2.1% and the severe grade 0.9%. Regarding sex, in both men and women, similar percentages are observed in the intensity of the reported violence.

A more detailed analysis of the results reveals that the most used psychological violence tactics, both by women and by men, are: the control of the partner's movements, indifferent treatment, infidelity accusations, emotional attacks and humiliations in front of others. Another less frequent ways are: the need to ask the partner for permission to perform certain behaviors, threats of harm and the activation of fear in the partner. Regarding physical violence, both men and women mention more frequently: slaps, blows with objects, thrusts, hair pulling, hand blows and kicks. Strangulation attempts, burns, usage of lethal weapons: such as guns, knives or others are the violent tactics mentioned infrequently. Related to sexual violence, women and men report more frequently: body and sexual performance humiliation, non-consensual sex and degrading sexual activities.

### **6.3. Levels of subjective well-being: happiness and satisfaction with life**

Regarding subjective well-being, it is observed as a general trend that 67.3% of the participants reached a high rate, since, in a range of 0 to; young people in the sample exceeded 0.63 points ( $\bar{x}$ ); also, 30.4% obtained an intermediate level, that is, they reached between 0.3 and 0.6 points; and 2.4% registered a low level, since they registered less than 0.3 points. The distribution by gender shows similar levels to these total levels of subjective well-being; 65, 9% of the womens registered a high level, equal to 69,5% of the men.

Regarding happiness levels, the results indicate that 72.3% of the participants reached a high level (72.1% are women and 72.6% are men); 26.1% have a medium level (25,6% are women and 26,8% are men) and 1.6% register a low level. In the total sum of the scale, whose route is 4 to 28, participants reported an average level of happiness equivalent to 21.9 ( $\bar{x}$ ) (with SD = 4.45); by sex, men recorded 22.4 ( $\bar{x}$ ) (with SD = 4.07) and women 21.7 ( $\bar{x}$ ) (with SD = 4.66). These data suggest that women report slightly less happy than men.

On the other hand, the results of the Satisfaction With Life Scale indicate that 49.3% of the participants feel slightly dissatisfied with their lives, 10.1% report dissatisfaction and 3.5% are very dissatisfied; in contrast, 15.3% are reported neutral, 21.6% are reported slightly satisfied and only 0.2% are very satisfied. As for gender, 54.6% of women report slightly dissatisfied with their lives, 10.7% are dissatisfied and 3.8%, very dissatisfied; in comparison, 12.6% are neutral, 18.3% report slightly satisfied and none were satisfied. In the same area, 3.0% of men report very dissatisfied, 9.1% are dissatisfied and 40.9%, slightly dissatisfied; in contrast, 19.5% of men report neutral, 26.8% are slightly satisfied and .06% are very satisfied.

### **6.4. Relation between subjective well-being and types of partner violence**

On the other hand, Spearman's Rho analysis shows low correlations and negative direction between the categories of subjective well-being and the categories of partner violence. Almost all correlations are less than 0.25, in a negative sense and significant ( $p=0.05$ ); only the correlation between sexual violence and subjective well-being is not significant ( $r= -0, 092$ ,  $p = 0.058$ ).

Finally, the summary of the Kruskal Wallis test makes it possible to reject the null hypothesis of equality of ranks in the measurements of subjective well-being based on the types of partner violence. According to the ranges recorded by the test, this means that the levels of happiness and satisfaction with life are lower in participants who experience psychological violence and physical violence. Sexual violence only has effects on happiness scores; that means that happiness levels are lower in participants who experience sexual violence (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Comparison of the categories of partner violence and subjective well-being

	<b>Felicidad subjetiva [Subjective happiness]</b>	<b>Satisfacción con la vida [Life satisfaction]</b>	<b>Bienestar subjetivo (escala complete [Subjective wellbeing (full scale)]</b>
Chi-square	21,216	6,902	14,588
d.f.	1	1	1
Asymptotic Significance	0,000	0,009	0,000
<b>Factor: Intimate partner violence (full scale)</b>			
Chi-square	22,074	6,944	16,015
d.f.	1	1	1
Asymptotic Significance	0,000	0,008	0,000
<b>Factor: Psychological Violence</b>			
Chi-square	7,550	7,126	4,730
d.f.	1	1	1
Asymptotic Significance	0,006	0,008	0,030
<b>Factor: Physical Violence</b>			
Chi-square	4,586	0,462	3,336
d.f.	1	1	1
Asymptotic Significance	0,032	0,497	0,068
<b>Factor: Sexual Violence</b>			

Source: Own elaboration based on the Kruskal Wallis Test applied with the SPSS v.24.

## 7. Conclusion

The objective of this article has been to provide evidence to support the hypothesis that levels of happiness and satisfaction with life decrease depending on the types of partner violence that some people experience. After examining the evidence provided by the study that has served as the basis for this article, it is concluded that happiness levels decrease with the three types of violence analyzed: psychological, physical and sexual; while satisfaction with life decreases only with the first two; that means that the experience of sexual violence does not seem to affect the levels of life satisfaction reported by some research participants. Despite this exception, which does not allow to fully testing the hypothesis from which the investigation was based, it can be concluded that the experience of partner violence causes damage to subjective well-being, which constitutes a threat to the quality of life between couples.



It should be noted that the total prevalence of partner violence reported in this article (28.9%) is very close to that shown by other studies recently conducted in the Mexican context: one is that of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in which a prevalence of 42% is reported (Kolev, Nowacka, & Ferrant, 2014) the other is that published by Jaen et al. (2015), where a prevalence of 30% is reported in the domestic federative entity "State of Mexico". This document agrees with other publications, in which it is shown that the most frequently reported partner violence is psychological, which is followed by physical violence and then sexual violence (Alegría, 2016; Fernández de Juan et al., 2016; Labrador et al., 2010; Raya et al., 2004).

Likewise, the findings made with the hypothesis tests in this text are consistent with the results of other publications, which show high and significant relationships between partner violence and subjective well-being (Arias & Espinosa 2017; Cienfuegos & Díaz, 2011; Guedes et al., 2014; Plazaola et al., 2008). This article also shows that couple violence negatively predicts the condition of subjective happiness and satisfaction with life, which makes it necessary to intervene comprehensively and conceive this phenomenon as a source of psychological damage.

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that the results of this research have some limitations. This is an intentional sample study with a transversal design that allowed us to find a significant correlation and some covariations between the components of the variables, which, despite this, cannot be considered as a causal relationship. This type of relationship can only be observed with longitudinal and experimental designs. Therefore, we propose that the research of these relationships continue in other social contexts, with random samples and with a longitudinal design, as well as with new moderating variables such as social capital or additional personality factors. There are authors who argue, for example, that the scarce support networks are a risk factor for the development or persistence of violent relationships in couples (Molina & Moreno, 2015). Future research in our national context aims to monitor changes in violence and subjective well-being over time, as well as other personal and socio-cultural moderating variables.

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