THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: HOW PSYCHOLOGY CAN CONTRIBUTE TO ADDRESSING THESE PRACTICES

O PAPEL DAS MÍDIAS SOCIAIS E A VIOLÊNCIA DE GÊNERO: COMO A PSICOLOGIA PODE CONTRIBUIR PARA O ENFRENTAMENTO DESSAS PRÁTICAS

EL PAPEL DE LAS REDES SOCIALES Y LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO: CÓMO LA PSICOLOGÍA PUEDE CONTRIBUIR AL ENFRENTAMIENTO DE ESTAS PRÁCTICAS

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence constitutes a structural phenomenon sustained by historical, cultural, and political inequalities that place women in situations of vulnerability. Based on a literature review, this study investigated the relationship between violence against women, media discourses, and social media dynamics, also considering the contributions of Psychology in addressing this context. Recent national data show that millions of women remain exposed to domestic violence and various forms of aggression, which now also manifest in the virtual environment. The analysis of media production reveals that normalization, victim-blaming, and revictimization continue to be present in journalistic coverage and digital content, reinforcing gender stereotypes and perpetuating discriminatory practices. Psychology, guided by ethical-political principles and the recognition of intersectionalities, plays a central role in prevention, support, and the promotion of women's autonomy, working in articulation with the Protection Network. Although the literature demonstrates advances, a scarcity of studies integrating gender-based violence, social media, and psychological impacts was observed, indicating the need to expand research on how the digital environment influences social perceptions and subjective processes involved in violence against women.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence. Violence Against Women. Social Media. Psychology.

RESUMO

A violência de gênero constitui um fenômeno estrutural sustentado por desigualdades históricas, culturais e políticas que colocam as mulheres em posição de vulnerabilidade. A partir de uma revisão bibliográfica, este trabalho investigou a relação entre violência contra a mulher, discursos midiáticos e dinâmicas das mídias sociais, considerando também as contribuições da Psicologia no enfrentamento desse cenário. Os dados nacionais recentes

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mostram que milhões de mulheres continuam expostas à violência doméstica e às diversas formas de agressão, que hoje também se manifestam no ambiente virtual. A análise da produção midiática evidencia que a naturalização, a culpabilização da vítima e a revitimização seguem presentes em coberturas jornalísticas e conteúdos digitais, reforçando estereótipos de gênero e perpetuando práticas discriminatórias. A Psicologia, guiada por princípios ético-políticos e pelo reconhecimento das interseccionalidades, tem papel central na prevenção, acolhimento e promoção da autonomia das mulheres, articulando-se à Rede de Proteção. Embora a literatura demonstre avanços, observou-se escassez de estudos que explorem de forma integrada violência de gênero, mídias sociais e impactos psicológicos, indicando a necessidade de ampliar investigações sobre como o ambiente digital influencia percepções sociais e processos subjetivos envolvidos na violência contra a mulher.

Palavras-chave: Violência de Gênero. Violência Contra a Mulher. Mídias Sociais. Psicologia.

RESUMEN
La violencia de género constituye un fenómeno estructural sostenido por desigualdades históricas, culturales y políticas que colocan a las mujeres en una situación de vulnerabilidad. A partir de una revisión bibliográfica, este estudio investigó la relación entre la violencia contra la mujer, los discursos mediáticos y las dinámicas de las redes sociales, considerando también las contribuciones de la Psicología en el enfrentamiento de este escenario. Datos nacionales recientes muestran que millones de mujeres continúan expuestas a la violencia doméstica y a diversas formas de agresión, que actualmente también se manifiestan en el entorno virtual. El análisis de la producción mediática evidencia que la naturalización, la culpabilización de la víctima y la revictimización siguen presentes en la cobertura periodística y en los contenidos digitales, reforzando estereotipos de género y perpetuando prácticas discriminatorias. La Psicología, guiada por principios ético-políticos y por el reconocimiento de las interseccionalidades, desempeña un papel central en la prevención, el acompañamiento y la promoción de la autonomía de las mujeres, articulándose con la Red de Protección. Aunque la literatura demuestra avances, se observó una escasez de estudios que integren de manera conjunta la violencia de género, las redes sociales y los impactos psicológicos, lo que indica la necesidad de ampliar investigaciones sobre cómo el entorno digital influye en las percepciones sociales y en los procesos subjetivos implicados en la violencia contra la mujer.

Palabras clave: Violencia de Género. Violencia Contra la Mujer. Redes Sociales. Psicología.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender violence against women is a structural and persistent phenomenon in Brazilian society, crossing different social, historical, and cultural contexts. It is a multifaceted reality, marked by unequal power relations sustained by a macho logic, which legitimizes male domination and naturalizes the violation of women's fundamental rights (SAFFIOTI, 2001 apud LEMOS et al., 2024). This violence can be expressed in different ways, including physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and economic aggression, deeply affecting the integrity and dignity of women (GOMES; OLIVEIRA, 2022).

In Brazil, the impacts of this violence assume alarming proportions. Data from Datasenado, referring to a survey carried out in 2025 with about 22 thousand women, indicate that approximately 3.7 million Brazilian women suffered some type of domestic or family violence in that year alone. These numbers show that, despite legislative advances and awareness campaigns, violence against women remains widely disseminated in everyday social life. Information from Dial 180 reinforces this scenario, pointing out that, among more than 834 thousand calls received by the service, most were related to the search for guidance and referrals, revealing both the recurrence of violence and the constant need for information and institutional support.

Historically, gender violence has been relegated to the private sphere and, for a long time, treated as an intimate problem or justified by discourses that romanticized it, such as the so-called "love crimes". The consolidation of legal and normative frameworks, such as the Convention of Belém do Pará and the Maria da Penha Law, made possible a fundamental change in this understanding, recognizing violence against women as a serious violation of human rights and as an expression of unequal power relations between men and women (ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, 1994; BRAZIL, 2006).

Understanding this phenomenon requires avoiding explanations that reduce it to individual deviations or isolated pathologies. Gender violence is rooted in a patriarchal structure that authorizes practices of control, possession and silencing of the female body and subjectivity, reinforced by gender stereotypes that associate the masculine with power and the feminine with submission (BELISÁRIO; REIS, 2019). In addition, this experience is not evenly distributed. The perspective of intersectionality shows that markers such as race, social class, and territory produce distinct vulnerabilities, making black, indigenous, and transvestite women even more exposed to violence and difficulties in accessing justice (CRENSHAW, 2017).

In contemporary times, this scenario is complexified by the centrality of the internet and social media. In a hyperconnected world, these spaces act simultaneously as

environments for welcoming, circulating information, and strengthening support networks, but also as territories for the reproduction and amplification of gender violence. Data from the UN Broadband Commission indicate that 73% of connected women have already been exposed to some type of online violence, showing that the virtual environment reproduces and sometimes intensifies inequalities and aggressions present in the offline world.

In this context, Psychology is called upon to assume an ethical-political commitment in confronting violence against women, recognizing the subjective impacts of these experiences and acting in an articulated way with other public policies and protection networks. Thus, the present work aims to investigate the relationship between gender violence and social media, analyzing how the virtual environment influences the repercussion of discourses on violence against women and how Psychology can be inserted in this field as a fundamental ally in prevention, reception and promotion of rights.

2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: DEFINITION AND PERSPECTIVES

Violence against women can be defined according to article 5 of Law 11.340, of August 7, 2006 as:

> Domestic and family violence against women is defined as any action or omission based on gender that causes death, injury, physical, sexual or psychological suffering, and moral or property damage: I - within the scope of the domestic unit, understood as the space of permanent coexistence of people, with or without family ties, including those sporadically aggregated; II - within the family, understood as the community formed by individuals who are or consider themselves related, united by natural ties, by affinity or by express will; III - in any intimate relationship of affection, in which the aggressor lives or has lived with the offended party, regardless of cohabitation. (Law 11.340 of August 7, 2006).

The excerpt above shows how violence is an action with multiple aspects and that can happen in different forms and environments but that cause damage to the physical and moral integrity of women, it is known that these violences are inserted within a cultural context through social relations, having a direct intersection with cultural, historical and political aspects (Minayo, 1999 apud Lemos et al 2024).

Historically, the place of the woman was delimited and reduced to a space of submission and that of a subject without wills and rights, these ideals were reinforced by the law existing at the time, such as the Civil Code of 1916, in which it allowed women to work, but only with the authorization of their husband (Blay, 2003 apud Santiago and Coelho, 2011),

all these ideas and perspectives that have been constituted throughout history that cross violence against women.

Over time, measures, rights and laws have been created that ensure more rights and protection for women women, one of the most striking actions is the creation of the Maria da Penha Law, which consists of being a legislation with the objective of:

> to curb and prevent domestic and family violence against women, under the terms of § 8 of article 226 of the Federal Constitution, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women and other international treaties ratified by the Federative Republic of Brazil; provides for the creation of Courts for Domestic and Family Violence against Women; and establishes measures of assistance and protection for women in situations of domestic and family violence.

In the Maria da Penha Law, some types of violence that can be committed against women are evidenced, such as physical violence, which according to the law can be defined as actions of any nature that attack the integrity of women. Another form of violence is sexual violence, which can be understood as acts that force the woman to view or participate in sexual relations against the woman's will. (Law 11.340 of August 7, 2006).

There is also patrimonial violence that consists of any action aimed at removing or destroying the woman's property, personal objects among others, the law also addresses moral violence that is understood as actions that fall under crimes against honor. (Law 11.340 of August 7, 2006).

And finally, the law later added to its creation psychological violence, which is configured as any action, such as manipulation, threat, persecution that emits any type of emotional data on the woman, the law brings as an example the decrease in self-esteem. (Law 11.340 of August 7, 2006).

Violence against women is internationally recognized as a violation of human rights and a social phenomenon sustained by historically constructed gender inequalities. The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the Convention of Belém do Pará, defines violence against women as "any act or conduct based on gender that causes death, harm or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, both in the public and private spheres" (BRASIL, 1996). This definition broadens the understanding of violence beyond the domestic space, allowing it to include institutional, media, and digital contexts, which also produce suffering and violations.

The same Convention ensures that "every woman has the right to a life free from violence, both in the public and private spheres" (BRASIL, 1996), which reinforces the need

to analyze how virtual environments and social media can become spaces for the reproduction of violent practices. By recognizing that violence is not restricted to physical contact, the treaty provides a basis for discussion on symbolic, psychological, and discursive violence, often present in the media exposure of cases of gender violence.

In addition, the Convention of Belém do Pará assigns to States the responsibility of confronting the cultural roots of violence by establishing the duty to "modify the social and cultural standards of conduct of men and women (...) in order to combat prejudices and customs and all other practices based on the premise of the inferiority or superiority of any of the genders" (BRASIL, 1996). This guideline dialogues directly with the criticism of media discourses that naturalize violence, blame victims or reinforce gender stereotypes, contributing to processes of revictimization.

In addition, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees the protection of privacy, honor and reputation by stating that "no one may be the object of arbitrary or illegal interference in his or her private life (...) nor of illegal offenses to their honor and reputation" (BRASIL, 1992). This provision supports the analysis of violence committed in the digital environment, such as vexatious exposure, cyberbullying and the dissemination of content that attacks the dignity of women on social networks.

Although it recognizes freedom of expression as a fundamental right, the Covenant also establishes that its exercise implies duties and responsibilities, and may be restricted when necessary to ensure "respect for the rights and reputation of other people" (BRASIL, 1992). Thus, violent or misogynistic speeches broadcast in the media cannot be legitimized under the argument of freedom of expression when they cause psychological and social damage to women.

These international norms dialogue with national theoretical production by understanding gender violence as a multifaceted phenomenon. As Saffioti points out, it is a "relationship marked by inequality of power based on a macho logic" (SAFFIOTI, 2001 apud SANTOS; MESSIAS, 2025). This inequality is expressed both in direct practices of violence and in the way cases are narrated and socially repercussioned, especially in the media.

In this context, Psychology assumes a central role in coping with violence, since its performance goes beyond the individual clinical field and is articulated with an ethical and political dimension. As Santos and Messias (2025) state, Psychology, guided by ethical-political principles and the recognition of intersectionalities, acts in the prevention, reception and promotion of women's autonomy, in dialogue with the Protection Network. This action becomes even more relevant in view of the impact of social media, which, according to the

authors, directly influence the way cases of violence are reported and reproduced, and can generate new violence against the victim herself (SANTOS; MESSIAS, 2025).

Thus, the articulation between international treaties, national legislation and psychological knowledge shows that confronting violence against women requires integrated actions, capable of transforming institutional practices, media discourses and cultural patterns that still sustain gender inequality.

2.2 THE NATURALIZATION OF GENDER VIOLENCE IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE

Research shows that journalism, in Brazil and in other countries, has historically contributed to the naturalization of violence against women (Belisário; Reis, 2019). This scenario is especially worrying when it is recognized that the media not only informs, but also participates in the construction of social meanings, influencing ways of thinking and acting. Its role involves fostering critical reflection, stimulating social transformation, and monitoring the narratives that circulate in the public debate (ANDI; Galvão, 2011).

In Brazil, this problem accompanies decades of journalistic coverage that, recurrently, portrayed women victims of domestic violence as co-responsible for their own aggression, reinforcing stigmas and implicit justifications for the acts suffered (Blay, 2003). Instead of questioning unequal power structures, many news stories ended up adopting simplifying explanations that shift the focus from the aggressor to the victim's conduct.

As a social and discursive practice, journalism participates in the production of subjectivities and the interpretation of reality (Machado, 2006). However, it is observed that part of the coverage remains stuck in common sense, with superficial analyses and little historical or social contextualization (Souza; Oliveira, 2015). Although sustained by the ideal of neutrality, the journalistic text is crossed by ideologies, especially patriarchal, which are manifested in the narrative choices and framing used (Schwaab, 2007).

The analysis of the discourse shows that the meanings produced by the media are expressed both in what is said and in the silencing. Recognizing this opacity requires understanding that formats, lexical choices and narrative structures produce effects of meaning (Orlandi, 2007). Examples of this logic appear in the coverage of the gang rape that took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, by G1, and in a similar case reported by the New York Times in 2012. Although situated in different contexts, both illustrate patterns of treatment of victims anchored in patriarchal values that cross borders (Belisário; Reis, 2019; Durham, 2013).

2.3 REVICTIMIZATION AND BLAMING FRAMEWORKS

Revictimization occurs when the victim, when seeking protection or recognition, begins to suffer new damage produced by institutions that should welcome him (Freire Filho; Dos Anjos, 2022). In journalism, this is evidenced in discursive frameworks that, directly or indirectly, attribute responsibility to women for the violence suffered (Entman, 1993).

One of the most recurrent mechanisms is the insinuation of guilt based on the victim's behaviors, choices or characteristics (Prado; Sanematsu, 2017). In the New York Times coverage in 2012, for example, details about dress and conduct were mobilized to suggest co-responsibility of the raped woman, resuming discourses historically used to minimize sexual crimes (Durham, 2013). Situations involving the use of alcohol, clothing considered "inappropriate" or presence in certain spaces are often used to relativize violence (UOL Universa, 2020).

Another problematic mechanism is the deviation of focus, when secondary information about the victim's life is highlighted, while the aggressor is given space to justify his actions. In the coverage of the 2016 rape in Rio de Janeiro, elements such as motherhood, drug use, and belonging to certain social groups were used to delegitimize the victim and deflate the seriousness of the crime (Belisário; Reis, 2019). Headlines such as "Wrong was she" explicitly express the process of blaming and reinforce misogynistic discourses (Freire Filho; Dos Anjos, 2022).

The minimization of violence also appears in euphemisms such as "crime of passion" or "defense of honor", which soften the brutality of the acts and hide their structural root based on gender inequality (Agência Brasil, 2019). Femicide, far from being an impulsive gesture, represents the extreme manifestation of continuous cycles of violence (UOL Universa, 2020). The spectacularization of these crimes also contributes to trivializing the suffering of women (Oliveira et al., 2024).

2.4 GENDER VIOLENCE AND ITS SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Violence against women takes various forms physically, psychologically, morally, patrimonially and sexually, as defined by the Maria da Penha Law. It is a structural phenomenon, sustained by gender inequalities and a patriarchal model that organizes social relations and establishes hierarchies (Sousa et al., 2019; UOL Universa, 2020).

With the expansion of digital technologies, this violence has extended to the online environment. Practices such as revenge pornography, stalking, cyberbullying, and sextortion reproduce oppressive dynamics that mostly affect women (Sousa et al., 2019; Poland, 2016).

Analyses of comments in reports on gender violence show that victim-blaming is usually accompanied by minimizing the actions of the aggressors, reaffirming the idea of women as male objects or properties (Lermen; Cúnico, 2018). In the domestic sphere, this naturalization is even more intense, sustained by cultural beliefs that discourage external interventions in marital conflicts (IPEA, 2014).

The typification of femicide by Law No. 13,104/2015 represented a legal advance, but legal changes are not enough to alter deeply rooted practices and discourses (Lermen; Cúnico, 2018). Social conceptions persist that maintain and justify violence.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is characterized as a qualitative research, of bibliographic and documentary nature, with the objective of analyzing gender violence, its psychosocial consequences and the way this phenomenon is constructed and reproduced in media discourses. The choice for this approach is based on the possibility of understanding the phenomenon of violence beyond statistical data, considering its social, cultural and subjective meanings.

The selection of scientific articles used as a basis for the research followed criteria of scientific rigor and thematic relevance. Empirical, peer-reviewed studies that presented consistent methodological designs capable of deepening the understanding of gender-based violence were prioritized, with special attention to discussions on psychological violence, gaslighting, resilience, and interventions with perpetrators. The bibliographic search was carried out in databases recognized for their academic credibility, such as PubMed, Virtual Health Library (VHL), Web of Science, SciELO and Sage Journals, using specific descriptors related to the theme, combined by Boolean operators.

In addition to the scientific literature, the study included the analysis of journalistic articles published on portals of great reach and visibility, such as Yahoo and Terra. The choice of these vehicles is justified by the fact that they allow readers to interact through comments, which makes it possible to observe the social construction of the discourses, as well as the presence of mechanisms of blaming, naturalization of violence and revictimization of women.

To ensure the quality and coherence of the corpus analyzed, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were defined. As inclusion criteria, publications from the last ten years were considered, in order to ensure the timeliness of discussions in the face of recent legislative and social changes, such as the typification of femicide. Studies published in Portuguese, English and Spanish, peer-reviewed empirical articles and studies that directly addressed the keywords of the research, such as psychological violence, gaslighting, resilience, femicide

and media, were included. In the case of media analysis, only news that presented at least ten comments from Internet users were included, enabling the analysis of the discursive interaction.

The exclusion criteria included the removal of gray literature, such as theses, dissertations, and books, with the aim of maintaining the methodological uniformity of the material analyzed. Articles that were not available in full, duplicate studies in different databases, and studies that presented methodological weaknesses, such as lack of clear theoretical foundations, very small samples, or insufficient description of intervention procedures, were also excluded. Studies carried out with populations outside the scope of the research, such as samples exclusively under 18 years of age or contexts that did not dialogue with the analysis of gender relations in the patriarchal model, were also discarded.

These methodological choices allowed the construction of a consistent corpus, capable of offering theoretical and analytical subsidies that go beyond explanations based on common sense. At the same time, they made it possible to identify important gaps in the literature, especially the scarcity of qualitative studies that prioritize listening to the life stories of women victims of violence in a contextualized way, reinforcing the need for new investigations committed to the ethical and political confrontation of gender inequalities.

4 DISCUSSION

The critical investigation of the theoretical exploration carried out showed that behaviors linked to gender violence, such as blaming the victims, and the naturalization of violence in society and in the virtual environment are not practices committed in isolation, but are direct reflections of the patriarchal culture, which reaffirms the domination of the male gender in society as the author Saffioti describes. The literature found is in line with the objectives of this study to investigate the influence of media and social networks and perceptions about gender violence, it was also identified that media discourses and opinions of comments on social networks often end up causing revictimization, the focus of this discourse shifts from the aggressor and the crime to the behaviors of women, Figures of speech are often used to mask the structural nature of the problem.

This dynamic makes the virtual environment become a fomenter of symbolic violence and associated practices such as cyberbullying, naturalizing behaviors such as the exposure of these women, going against the laws and guarantees of the dignity and honor of women, such as the Maria da Penha Law and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A fundamental divergence was observed in the literature found, because although social media provide contact, proximity, and welcoming between groups, they are

simultaneously spaces for reproduction and intensification of violence. There is a significant gap in qualitative studies that seek to investigate the specific psychological impacts of violence in the virtual environment by listening to the life stories of these women, and without placing them in a place where they have to go through violence again.

Most research still focuses on statistical data, this scarcity of integrated investigations demonstrates the need to deepen the theme of how the digital environment influences not only the social view, but the subjective processes and the psyche of the victims, which carry deep marks beyond the physical damage.

In this way, Psychology is guided by the promotion of dignity, autonomy and equality, assuming an active stance in the prevention of discrimination and violent practices (CFP, 2005). Understanding violence requires situating it historically and recognizing its presence in systems that reproduce inequalities (MARTÍN-BARÓ, 2017).

In this sense, intersectionality becomes fundamental, as it shows that experiences of vulnerability are built by the intersection of different social markers, gender, race, class, disability that produce different forms of oppression (CRENSHAW, 2017; CFP, 2024). This view avoids generalizations and guides practices that are more sensitive to the specificities of each subject.

Violence against women is a social phenomenon and also a public health issue. Intervening in this field implies understanding how gender inequalities structure relationships and sustain abusive cycles (BRASIL, 2006; CREPOP, 2013). The Maria da Penha Law defines different forms of physical, psychological, sexual, moral and patrimonial violence that guide professional practice.

Among psychological violence, gaslighting stands out for the subtlety of manipulation strategies, which destabilize the victim's perception and make it difficult to break the abusive relationship (SWEET, 2019). In these situations, welcoming, strengthening autonomy, and empowerment processes are essential for reconstruction and resistance (BATLIWALA, 1994 apud SANDENBERG, 2006). Resilience, understood as a dynamic and relational process, also contributes to overcoming violence (YUNES, 2003; HOWELL et al., 2018).

The work is articulated with the Network for Attention and Protection of Women, especially through specialized services that offer psychosocial support and guidance to overcome the cycle of violence (CREPOP, 2013).

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The present work aimed to deepen the studies on violence against women and social media, seeking to understand how violence against women has been presented and the role

of the media as one of the opinion-forming vehicles and the possible ways that Psychology can contribute to combat this violence. From the literature review, it was possible to understand in a more profound way that social media do have an impact on the way cases of violence are reported and reproduced can cause a new violence towards this victim.

The research also made it possible to show through the research carried out that Psychology has an ethical and political role in acting against violence against women, the look of this area becomes fundamental for the woman victim of violence, because it is known that violent actions affect not only the physical and biological scope, it also leaves marks on the psyche and psychological knowledge is necessary in these cases. However, it is also perceived that, although the theme about gender violence and the media is of great relevance to society, as technology permeates daily life, this theme still deserves a greater focus in the scientific literature. Thus, it is essential to explore this relationship and its nuances with the technological advances that arise.

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