

## Violent Mother and Abuse towards Children: A Qualitative Approach

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**Abstract:** Child abuse is considered any act by action or omission that harms or children. The child who is a victim of child abuse doesn't defend themselves from attacks by adults, which places them in a vulnerable position in an aggressive or careless adult. Children who suffer abuse have multiple problems in their physical, emotional, cognitive and socio-affective development. So most of the research on this problem have focused on the child as main recipient of abuse.

However in the present investigation tour around the figure of the mother, with initial premise would happening subjectively in a mother when he mistreats actively or passively to their children?

Among the obtained results were detected features in common between mothers and that they had been victims of child abuse during his childhood, had lacked affection by parents, as well as lack of attention, suffered beatings and disqualifications. Hence the difficulties of these mothers to provide their children a climate of trust, respect and love, because from his universe is subjective is how you must set interaction with their children.

**Key words:** violent mothers, subjectivity, abused child

### 1. Introduction

Child abuse has become a problem that increases at an alarming rate. Even though there are not precise figures of the magnitude of it, it can be inferred that their presence is increasingly evident. For this it is necessary to spread the knowledge about this problem at all levels, in order to prevent it, identify it and initiate its therapeutic approach early, thus avoiding the consequences and effects so intense that has on human beings.

Abuse towards children is not a new problem, throughout the history of mankind can be found that abuse, abuse and negligence towards minors has been a constant. The justifications of child abuse have been different at different historical times ranging from the sacrifice of children to please the gods or improve the species, to one of the greatest temptations which is to impose very severe disciplinary standards that include physical, psychological abuse and neglect as standards of education.

Is that un child is maltreated when their physical health or mental or its security they are in danger, either by actions or omissions carried out by the mother or the father or other persons responsible for their care, resulting in abuse by action, omission or neglect.

Abuse children is a serious social problem, with cultural and psychological roots that can occur in families of any economic and educational level.

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### **1.1 Classification of Abuse**

Child abuse is a pattern of abusive behavior directed toward the child and that affects the aspects physical, emotional or sexual, as well as a attitude negligent towards the minor, from which it causes threat or damagereal that affects their health and wellbeing. Child abuse can be classified into abuse by abuse and action by default.

×ⓈAbuse by action:

×ⓈFetal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological or emotional abuse.

×ⓈAbuse by default:

×ⓈIs the abandonment or neglect, which is subdivided: Physical abandonment and neglect and educational neglect.

The United Nations Organization for children (UNICEF, for its acronym in English) in 1996 reported in: West and central Africa it is estimated that up to 20% of the children were developing various work activities; in Eastern and southern Africa is observed that “it is increasing the number of families whose head is a child”, and this agency intensifies strategies aimed at the special protection of children victim of negligence, abused, prostitution and street children. In East Asia and the Pacific social changes occurred relate to an explosive increase in children who require protection because they are forced to work or to go to the streets. In South Asia children working range between 35 and 88 million, many of whom work in dangerous situations and exploitation. America and the Caribbean shows that in countries as Argentina, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela, due to the increase of socio-economic tensions and unemployment and declining wages, increased rates of violence, insomuch that in countries such as Colombia and Guatemala these constitute one of the main causes of death in the 5-year-old 14 group. The socio-economic unrest in central and Eastern Europe, in independent and Baltic States, have been reflected in fewer marriages, divorces increase and increase violence in the home. “High inflation continued ravaging the Slavic countries of the former Soviet Union and unraveling more and more the social fabric of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Women and children were the main victims of the Caucasus, as well as in some sectors of the central Asian republics, where the institutions of the State could not cover the costs of essential services” (Gorita, 1996).

In Mexico, the prevalence of children with child abuse; is not known with certainty studies of Loredó (1994), Foncerrada-Moreno (1982) and Loredó-Abdullah (1986) show only partial aspects of this problem, so it is necessary to establish research strategies appropriate for their detection.

In 1995, the UNICEF estimated that the population under the age of 19 in Mexico represented 47% of the total number of the inhabitants of the country and that the 0–4 age group corresponded to 25.8%, so that concern “are the children who live in conditions of extreme poverty or who belong to ethnic groups, mainly small children for being more vulnerable to infectious diseases children five years malnutrition, abuse and mistreatment” (Accounts, 1996).

In 1993, the Attorney General of Justice of the Federal District in Mexico reported that sexual abuse was the second place of the crimes reported in this institution; the incidence was of 24.1%, of which almost the total (23.9%), corresponded to attacks that had been carried out towards children under 13 years. Levav et al. (1991) say that in 1991, in the United States of America (USA), reported 2.7 million cases of children abused or neglected; also in Switzerland, country who has spent whole centuries without wars, one-third of parents impose corporal punishment on their children. Martínez (1993) concerns: “the frequency of child abuse is high, 18% of all children subject to any form of abuse, many die, and others are maimed of lifetime.” In USA, 4000 children die

each year due to injuries caused by an adult. In Spain, executioner (1995) reports that 11.5% of intellectually disabled children are the victims of different types of abuse and physical neglect is the most frequent. Teresinha (1992) means "in Brazil poverty, hunger, diseases, ill-treatment, neglect, illegal prison, physical torture, the permanent threat of death and murder is what face on a daily basis, mostly in recent decades, millions of children, adolescents and young people in school age living in the street. All these forms of violence makes difficult them or impedes attend school." In this country are identified to the street children or one who performs informal work with the concept of lacking child, abandoned, homeless because it is necessarily a minor who uses violence to survive in the city. It is the little thief, drug dealer and offenders, by which some groups of entrepreneurs have been linked with "death squads" to exterminate them, stating that "when a private killed is becoming a benefit to society". 1397 cases of murders of children, adolescents and young people, mostly males, from 11 to 18 years of age, blacks and mulattoes reported January 1987 to July 1988.

The previous picture allows us to locate the child abuse as a global problem, which involved various causes, these studies in several countries show that some of the causes of this problem are; the characteristics of the offender, the attacked, the environment that surrounds them and a spur trigger aggression. There have been various investigations in order to determine the profile of the aggressor and the victim. In this regard has been found that parental figure that more assaults is the mother according to Foncerrada (1982) and Herrada (1992). These studies describe some characteristics of the offender, such as: low self-esteem, depressed individuals with a tendency to depression, neurotic, anxious, alcoholics, drug addicts, impulsive, hostile, with low frustration tolerance, with a perception of inadequate with respect to the child, and with a history of abuse in their childhood.

The structure of personality and psychopathology of women who show an aggressive and violent behaviour is one of the most relevant factors which are designated in the problems of abuse. Reported problems with depression, styles of perception of the mothers, apperception and unrealistic expectations about children, criminal conduct and mothers with failure in the control of impulses and emotions. As for depression, are considered that this affects the way of perceiving reality in abusive mothers.

Found that most of the cases of post-partum depression have a spontaneous remission, but another significant portion of women remains depressed, affecting the emotional bond with their children. Not so, clinical depression that may be a factor of increased risk of child abuse. Although both cases, cause failures in the care of the minor, with resulting neglect and consequently the possible injury by accident. Children of abusive mothers with post-partum depression experience a great learned helplessness, and with one much greater risk of physically mistreating their children, due to the depression, show greater negative emotions toward his children according to Cohn, Cambell, Matias and Hopkins (1990). For its part, Milner (1993) found that abusive mothers depressive symptoms increase parallel to the dissatisfaction, by the household increase the risk of child abuse. Many times, they express that they feel alone, abused, but they mistakenly believe that the child is going out of their lack of sense to life or her solitude, and as this does not happen, then under any pretext to mistreat their children, which also notes on abusive mothers with depression, there is the presence of social isolation and lack of support networks. Downs and Miller (1998) considered as abusive mothers, depression is a frequent part of his personality as sentiment can continuously be sad and sulk without cause apparent, passive and unhappy; with emotional immaturity, and doubts about decisions of everyday life. But also when the disorder refers to one major depression, tend to become careless and present failures in the progress of the care of the children so have no knowledge of whether his son is OK or not, if has covered the basic needs of living. Canton and Cuts (1997) found that the incidence of reports of abuse was higher in depressed mothers, when they presented psychosomatic symptoms.

Sullivan & Knutson (2000) found that among mothers of rural environments dominated by depressive symptoms, high everyday stressors and low social support, so it was considered that these conditions constitute a potential risk to be abusive parents.

When referring to the styles of perception of the mother, apperception and unrealistic expectations about children, Milner and Crouch (1998), support the idea that there are differences in perception, the attribution and the expectations of the behaviour of the children among the abusive mothers and non-abusive. Although mothers at high risk of abuse, present alterations in their appraisal of the favorable characteristics of their children particularly when the child misbehaves. Bowlby (1980) considers that abusive mothers are not able to recognize situations that require management strategies and cannot seek alternatives their problems, probably because they have suffered from lack of maternal, present deficiencies in its own maternity fearing the unrequited love of his son. Woolfolk, Novalany, Gara, Allen and Colt (1995) referred to abusive mothers to have unrealistic expectations about the behavior of their children, asking them more than they can deliver in any activity where they need their children to stand out. But also, they believe that their children are responsible for the difficulties of the family and have a negative perception of the child when it fails their physical and emotional expectations. Briere and Runtz (1990), mentioned that abusive mothers negative characteristics and malicious intentions attributed to their children and projected in a paranoid sense their difficulties about your child, therefore have the impression that the child is the cause of all their problems. Konstantareas and Desbois (2001) mention that mothers have failure in perception because they believe that their children have behavior problems when in fact they do not have them.

Another relevant factor, is criminal conduct, Fendrich, Warner and Weissman (1990) attributed the risk of abuse to the child directly, when there is a high degree of sociopathy by the mother. Although psychosis is rarely involved in child abuse, less than 10% of mothers who abuse their children, have serious mental illnesses and shown a high degree of sadism and perversion to damage the child. Ajuriaguerra (1989) mentions the existence of mothers who mistakenly believe that your child has a rebellion against them and they want their mothers fallen on your maternaje, this being a common feature in behavior and form of those who are considered as psychopaths. Mullick, Miller and Jacobsen (2001) analyzed mothers with mental disability documented, mentioning that this feature coupled with stress factors, physical and social may precipitate a crisis in the care of children. DiLillo, Tremblay and Peterson (2000) mentioned that high levels of poverty, psychiatric disorders and the delinquent conduct, are factors that are associated with child abuse. Nobes and Smith (2000) found that in the case of child abuse, a high percentage (51%) of the mothers had a mental illness. Ampundia and Delgado (2002) found that the women offenders who are institutionalized, can meet the basic needs of the child as long as they have under their care, but show little affection, are unstable and expressed ambivalent towards the minor feelings.

Tellez (1995) mentions that the mothers who physically assault minors are more sensitive to the separation even more everyday and common responses, also have high levels of anxiety or anger. They point out that these mothers present feelings of unhappiness and depression; In addition, they get frustrated easily and respond to the frustration so hostile and aggressive, they are more suspicious and defensive, they react to changes in life with antagonistic style, more in the search for solutions and support for others.

In some investigations it has pointed out that there is a greater tendency to the expression of anger and excitability, as well as a greater disorganization, inconsistent language and strange behavior in the physical abusers. Also an increased frequency of cases found in the physical abusers with antisocial personality and labile personality, Burke, Chandy, Dannerbeck, Watt (1998) indicate that 52% of mothers with problems of physical abuse score above the percentile 95 on a test that evaluates the presence of general symptoms of psychic-type and

severity level. They appreciate a clear presence of depressive symptoms, anxiety and frequent subjective complaints of physical and psychic, upset that correlate significantly with the negative interactions between mothers and children. It seems to be valid the hypothesis that parents with higher levels of emotional and physical distress may have lower thresholds of tolerance to aversive behaviors of children and therefore can react more easily with aggressive and uncontrolled behaviors. Unhappiness, the feeling of inadequacy and low self-esteem are often associated to situations of physical abuse (Azoh, 2003). Perish that abusive mothers have a lower self-concept than mothers without abuse problem and a major inconsistency between the way they perceive themselves and what they perceive as ideal. It is possible that rejection and hostility experienced by some abusive parents in her own childhood or the absence of adequate care conducive to the deficit in the assessment of themselves. It seems normal that parents or violent mothers frequent feelings of incapacity are to improve their lives and their personal situation, which can help to reduce your chances of coping affective way to crisis situations, so that mothers with problems of physical abuse and physical neglect have more depressive-like symptoms, but when self-esteem is assessed, this is lower with respect to the normal population in the case of mothers with problems of physical abuse and not in which have problems of neglect in the care of the children. In different researches work done on the psychological situation of abuse, in the majority of the results, assign greater importance to psychological distress (depression, anxiety, hostility) and the general negative emotional state of the subject. In fact, it can be said that it is being detected a greater presence of what has been tagged as a very neurotic in the abusers, but also raises the hypothesis that alterations of the personality of the subject are related to extreme aggression and violence.

As you can see it is difficult to identify a unique and specific pattern which is to describe profile of mother even, due to the heterogeneity of causes such as, age, evolutionary phases, type of abuse, situations etc. But it is undeniable the vulnerability in which the child is when the relationship mother-child this altered, for various reasons such as, family crisis, rupture of family and affective ties. So this research revolves around the figure of the mother, trying to answer the question that it happens subjectively when a mother abused children?

## **2. Methodology**

This research was conducted in the community support center “Santa Inés” with three mothers who were denounced as “violent mother” with their children, the age of the interviews tilt between the 33 and 45 years old. The social class of the mothers was low and the grade of the three was primary.

In-depth interviews were carried out to mothers, to carry out these interviews was elaborated a list of topics that allowed you to explore subjective factors present in mothers in relation to violence on their children. These interviews were recorded prior informed consent of the women interviewed.

The theoretical framework used for the analysis of the interviews was the symbolic interactionism, considered one of the major theoretical approaches in qualitative methodology, which proposes the following fundamental theses:

- (1) Persons Act on things based on the meaning that things have for them.
- (2) The attribution of meaning to objects is an ongoing process that takes place through symbols.

(3) The attribution of meaning is the product of social interaction in human society. Symbols are signs, gestures, language, etc. The person builds and creates continuously interacting with the world, adjusting means to purposes and end to media, influenced and mediated by the symbolic structures. People are in a constant change

and construction in their dialectical relationship (Blumer, 1969).

From the perspective of symbolic interactionism behaviors are not caused by internal forces (instincts) and external forces (social norms and social structures), but they are the result of personal interpretive reflection of socially derived meanings, in synthesis symbolic interactionism does not describe the behavior, but understand the meaning of behavior.

### 3. Results

The human being from birth, is immersed in a cultural order, around the child built a series of ideals, aspirations, dreams, vital elements for their development, these desires are captured by the child from the first exchanges and care. Every child born in this cultural, dithering in a social class, in an ideal family, this environment began a long complex process in the Constitution of its identity and autonomy as a subject.

This autonomy and identity that acquires the child is expressing in their way of perceiving the world, parents, in a word the child will comply its own subjectivity; a subjectivity that is certainly changing to the same degree that is immersed in a dynamic world. So also our subjectivity is going reinventing in relation to the social world. In this way the social life is us a very particular subjectivity, expressed the way we feel, think, Act; This dithering subjective us link with others and tried to make us understand ourselves.

Let us be clear, even though our subjectivity is expressed in an individual way, that doesn't mean that it is particular, individual, in fact our subjectivity to conform needs the presence of others, "the other me". The individual is a social being who has an identity, conforms to certain rules, has certain purposes, accept certain values, acts according to politically stable enough so that their behavior is predictable by other individuals.

The possibility of bringing to fruition this new social subject, is conditioned by a society in which is born, the dynamic family which fits, and the mental health of parents. As we noted in the introduction in the case of abused children these three aspects appear to be tested. We have particularly emphasized the role played by the **mother**, but as you can see in the in-depth interviews the other aspects are there involved in a complex way. And is that when we talk about child abuse we find ourselves faced the tragic fact, a drama already accomplished, is in that **Act of hitting** where precipitates a single history.

As we pointed out in the introduction, several studies put the mother at the center of the generation of violence, and several studies have pointed to it as depressive, with high levels of anxiety, with low self-esteem, with a degree of sociopath, and some more like a sick mind. "Abusive mothers" label certainly puts them in a place where they themselves not can be decentering of themselves, places them in a role where they closed any possibility of assuming a certain insight, and thus some accountability in the scene of violence, these attitudes of made it clear to simply "not wanting to talk about the issue" and much less in participating in the research.

The mothers who participated in this research, all were reported as violent mothers with the corresponding legal consequences

For the purposes of the research were established categories of analysis in relation to the analysis of the discourse, categories that we will be exhibiting throughout the work: in depth interviews the following aspects were taken as guidelines for research: what is the history of this type of mothers? How are your relationships with others? What subjectively at the time hit their children?

In the interpretation of the interviews we can find the following categories of analysis:

### 3.1 Affective Lack

In different articles on child abuse, it has been repeatedly noted the presence of abuse in the history of the parents themselves, by setting this high levels of correlation and thus reproduction of patterns of violent patterns of education. Behind also battered fathers there seems to be a subjective complaint much deeper and is referred to the lack of affection, lack of love, as they point out in our interviews:

Martha... I have a memory from when I had six years here, my mother, sick to call our attention to everyone, was not affectionate or emotional, never I talked with her, hit me with the iron cable for gait doing mischief with one of my cousins. It is the only time that I can remember that I have stuck with the cable...I felt that my parents did I case, I do not remember having had any approach with them.

Sofia... I remember my childhood and put to think that the best Yes did I lack that delight's MOM, she was not that I give you a kiss and come my child, rather he was indifferent, feel that I rejected because I didn't see any approach or relationship with her, always left me, not know nor study where never asked anything.

Rosario... what I most remember is that my mom left me at the same time my grandparents when I was three months, because my dad left us. I feel that he lived with much pressure from her, we hit and we spoke with many rudeness girl always I lived... with much solitude for not being with my mother, to date I've never felt support it, never had a gesture of affection, or fondling, mocked of my, I was always "the asshole, the silliest, the entumida".

The lack of affection is indicated in these sentences "I felt that my parents did I case", "took me the cuddling...", "It was indifferent", "never had a gesture of affection, or fondling, makes a mockery of my" is some of these phrases can be noticed the indifference which were the subject of unwanted children. If we return to Bowlby (1981) in the profile of children with deprivation and its after-effects, we can find some points of compression on the meaning that acquires the lack of affection. We are interested in highlight two aspects desatacados by Bowlby in children with deprivation (1) no real feeling, inability to feel affection for the people or make real friends; (2) Infuriating inaccessibility for those who try to help. If the above is clear, in the parents with a history of abuse, seems to emerge a certain inability to express affections, love in a real way by their own children, coupled with the difficulties of asking for help, they tend to be a vicious cycle that we must break.

### 3.2 Conflicting and Destructive Relationships

The need for affection is most evident in adolescence, find a "kindred spirit" as one of the interviews, says someone who meets their need to be accepted, with the firm hope find this a different horizon, find love, compression of another, but instead found the following:

Martha...I was introverted in my teens, I wasn't noviera but I felt that if they didn't I suffer, I didn't want to, all my dating relationships were very stormy. When I had 25 years met the father of my daughters this affair was very rare, spoke to me by phone and invited me to go out he told me he was accountant, who worked at the Bank the payment coffee on that occasion, the third time I saw it I got his girlfriend from there began the pilgrimage, and it was an alcoholic I paid all, hotel, food, clothing...Then me pregnant and I get to make an abortion, I unknowingly, then as seven months became pregnant, and I look for a person not to have baby, when I went back to get pregnant, I was three months old and he told me that he was not going to marry me, because it was not the type of woman who liked.

Sofia... already in my teens, hoped that I was going to meet a man who was my kindred spirit, then saw me reaching an age, no child without a husband, and taking care of my parents, thought that if I got married I was going to play a husband who hit me, I run, I would be frustrated because he was taking, I expected my life perhaps

similar to that of my mother. I didn't want to get married with my husband, by everything that made me maiden, walk with women and taking a lot, only was with him that accompany me to the metro... I remember that when this dressed girlfriend cried with great disappointment, doubt that my marriage came out ahead.

Rosario... as a teenager I thought I was going to have a different life. When I met JC. We us well spent, until much later had sexual intercourse and the second is pregnant, we met and then we got married hoped that my situation was going to change that when I married my husband gave me love and understanding but I'm wrong, is the same, I have a worse life, before not they gave me so much trouble now as my husband; the is an alcoholic and gets to cocaine, I hit, it is very indifferent with me, I realized that I didn't want to.

Waiting for love and compression, is the opposite, indifference, contempt, insults, but above all physical abuse, seems to be a constant in family relations

Martha. It was in a very distressing situation even he began to take and taking Valium, took two or three pills, he is drugged, and or that pulling it, didn't sleep seemed that it towards going more crazy, more aggressive. I was always loaded knife and gun, to my always threatening me, was fearful, even make love or desire was because it was very aggressive.

Rosario...I remember my mother telling me that I was a fool for being with him, he told me "the is drug discard" I just I was quiet and I started to cry said what will I do if he no longer want to be with me, back with my mom, I'm going to have a child and always me this giving ill-treatment, I think that's why I clung more to it in the sexual was always indifferent with me, we were two strangers, I was as a device in the House passed and neither saw me. When I was pregnant with my first child I remember that he gave me a balcony and opened my mouth to stop the delegation.

In addition to the experience with parents, the establishment of first love relationships are plagued men abused economically of couples with a history of aggression, violence and drug use, and where relationships are characterized by the lack of love and indifference, turns out to be very illustrative case of Sofia who "dressed bride" feel a great disappointment in several cases the situation that obliges the marriage encounter.

### **3.3 Subjectivity and Violent Act**

In the introduction have highlighted has abusive mothers, has been characterized them as impulsive women, who may not inhibit hits motor immediate response, since our theoretical framework the characterization as a motor response seems to forget the underlying interpretive reflection to the Act itself, and meaning that it acquires; the impulsive act has a sense:

Martha...I remember that my daughter had the largest, as a year, she didn't want to eat and were beaten and spanked or pulled her hair or gave them to eat with a desperation. When I was in kindergarten they left him his task of sticks and balls and I didn't do it and also were shouts and trancazos. After already it was not only that they hit them with objects such as flip-flops, spoons, broom sticks that I had in hand, with that gave them.

Rosario...I think that abuse to my oldest son because in it I see all the problems I've had, I think that by it he stayed with his dad why grabbed more with child. I would like to be like mother it like I was, a loving mother who treats you that you see it that worry, but always end hitting him or telling him of swearing and then I'm feeling guilt.

Although in the literature on abuse said that mothers violent is a great resentment about life and go in search with whom retaliate it; the issue isn't indiscriminate to the interior of the family, even though several members in general be subject to shock, there are subjects where the issue lies more precisely focused, because in them is



meant grudges against the couple, or simply a deadly desire against any Member, obviously this problem in the case of Martha where it can be seen the birth of an unwanted child.

#### 4. Conclusion

While the works from a quantitative point of view give us General patterns that have an impact on child maltreatment, a qualitative perspective shows us the subjective aspects involved in it; in this sense the found data are consistent with other research, but show us a look different from the problems. Recover the subjective aspects, gives us the possibility of establishing psychotherapies individual or group in accordance with the specificity involved in each subjectivity. Although mothers identified as aggressive, meaning that in each one of them entails a realization of its own history.

Different investigations have pointed to child maltreatment as a multicausal problem, and in this sense have been proposed models of epistemological more powerful allowing a higher compression of the problem, so we have the ecosystem model, the model Sociointeraccional, the models emanating from the conception of it resilience, these different angles of investigation enable us to see different perspectives of the abuse, some anchored from the individual processes others more from social issues, some more from epistemological issues, need to think about different contributions not in a linear way, but in a multicausality, where different angles show a complexity of child maltreatment.

Finally, in the abuse are involved subjective and socio-cultural factors, poverty, lack of opportunity, low rates of education, continued to be the factors of violence increasingly more exacerbated.

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